

Department of Theology and Religion  
The University of Birmingham  
January 2015

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE “FIVE Ks” WITHIN SIKH TEXTS

By  
Parminder Singh Kairo

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree  
of Masters by Research

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**University of Birmingham Research Archive**

**e-theses repository**

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

## Contents

Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	7
1.1: Historical background to the emergence of Sikhs within Punjab.....	10
1.2: The Creation of the Khālsā Panth within Sikh History.....	11
1.3: The Transmission of the Five Ks within the Sikh diaspora.....	18
1.4: Literature Review: Primary sources on the historical origins of the Five Ks .....	23
1.5: Secondary sources on the historical origins of the Five Ks.....	35
1.6: Methodology: Critical Historiography and the origins of the Five .....	42
1.7: Methodological Problems: Translating across Culture and Language .....	45
1.8: Structure of Thesis.....	47
Chapter 2: Eighteenth Century Rahit-nāmā Literature: The Early Formulation of Khālsā Identity and the Five Ks.....	49
2.1: The Eighteenth Century Rahit-nāmā Literature.....	49
2.2: The Creation of the Khālsā Panth within Eighteenth Century Rahit-nama literature	51
2.3: Hindu and Muslim influences in the creation of Khālsā Panth.....	53
2.4: Factionalism within the Eighteenth Century Sikh Panth.....	56
2.5: The early formulation of the 'Five Ks' within the eighteenth century Rahit-nāmā literature.....	60
2.6: Summary.....	64
Chapter 3: Nineteenth Century Literature on the Sikhs: The European Interpretation of Khālsā Sikhs within Modernity .....	66
3.1: The Politics Interpreting across languages.....	67
3.2: Eighteenth Century European writings on the Sikhs.....	68
3.3: Nineteenth Century European writings on the Sikhs.....	70
3.4: General J. H. Gordon (1832-1908) - The British Army and Khālsā Identity.....	73
3.5: The Formulation of the Five Ks within the works of Ernest Trumpp (1828-1885) and Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913).....	76
3.6: Summary .....	81
Chapter 4: Self Representation of the Colonised: The Reconfiguration of 'Khālsā Identity' within the Singh Sabha .....	82
4.1: The British Colonisation of Punjab (1849-1947).....	83

4.2: The Singh Sabha reform movement (1873-1920).....	85
4.3: Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) and the re-configuration of the Khālsā Sikh .....	88
4.4: Kahan Singh Nabhā (1861-1938): The proclamation of Sikh identity in 'Ham Hindu Nahin'. .....	91
4.5: The Singh Sabha formulation of the 'Five Ks'.....	93
4.6: Legally inscribing Sikh identity: the 1950 Sikh Rahit-Marayada.	98
4.7: Summary.....	106
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	108
References .....	112

## Abstract

The Sikhs belong to a heterogeneous community that incorporates diverse identities and religious practises. However, the identity based on the Khālsā Sikh that emerged at the end of the seventeenth century in Punjab is today represented as the 'ideal' Sikh form. The Khālsā Sikh identity requires the maintenance of distinct external symbols (known as the *panj kakārs* or Five Ks). This study seeks to challenge the established view that the Five Ks were first promulgated by the tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh in 1699. It is argued that the convention of the Five Ks actually developed over three centuries and was finally crystallised during the nineteenth century Singh Sabha reform movement. To argue this, the research employs critical historiography to deconstruct texts and examine the cultural conditions that influenced the formulation of the Five Ks. Overall, this research provides valuable insights into the construction of Sikh identity within the Sikh Studies field.

## Acknowledgements

Early research into Sikh identity occurred at a time when it was important for me to understand what it meant to be 'Sikh'. During this time discussions with close friends, Manpreet Harrar, Jagjit Nijjar and Gurpreet Dhillon helped me to understand and appreciate aspects of my Sikh culture and identity.

In 1998, as a Sociology undergraduate I was fortunate to meet Dr. Arvind Mandair - founder of the Sikh and Punjab Studies programme at the University of Coventry. The first Sikh Studies conference at the University of Coventry opened my eyes to the possibility of researching Sikh Identity at a postgraduate level. Dr. Arvind Mandair supervised my undergraduate dissertation on cultural identity which was awarded the Rosie Gandolfi Memorial Prize. He actively encouraged me to further read and develop my own critical thinking.

Through my association with Dr. Arvind Mandair, I was introduced to Dr. Balbinder Bhogal who is currently Associate Professor in Religion at Hofstra University, New York. Dr. Balbinder Bhogal has since provided support and pearls of wisdom during some difficult times for which I am eternally grateful. Today, they both continue to be inspirational role models in the field of Sikh Studies.

In 2001, during my MA in Philosophy and Social Theory at the University of Warwick, Dr. Roger Trigg also encouraged me to develop my own critical thinking towards the study of religion. After successfully completing the course I decided to pursue a postgraduate degree at the University of Birmingham.

At Birmingham, my supervisor Dr. Jagbir Jhutti-Johal has been instrumental in guiding and developing my thinking as an academic. Her valuable insights and criticisms have been crucial throughout the whole research process. She has also supported me through extremely difficult times and without her support this thesis would never have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge Ruth Harrison and Sue Anderson at Student Support for providing valuable advice.

Over the years, my family have observed me becoming more and more obsessed with my academic work. They have always been there for me and encouraged me to achieve all my ambitions and goals in life.

I would especially like to thank my patient and dear wife Jyoti who has sacrificed so much for my academic pursuits. She has continued to support me throughout the whole process by giving me the necessary space and time to complete my work.

Finally, I have to mention my beautiful three-year-old son Aaron. He has curiously watched his father with his head in books or in front of the laptop. After years of perseverance this thesis is finally complete and I feel liberated. It is to my son Aaron Rishi Kairo that I dedicate this work. I hope he is proud of his father.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The concept of 'identity' is central to this study which explores the formation of Sikh identity and the Five Ks. According to Lacan (1977), the process of identity formation occurs in the unconscious mind that helps us to feel complete, unified and stable. In comparison, materialist perspectives argue that 'identity' is formed within socio-economic intersections within society. There are many perspectives on the concept of 'identity' but most agree that the formation of identity is an ongoing complex process. Individual subjects and groups learn how to negotiate their identity through various categories such as: geographic location, language, race, caste, history, religion, gender and so on. These categories provide the subject or group with the necessary context to form and construct a distinct identity.

Since the fifteenth century, 'Sikh identity' has evolved to represent a wide range of different traditions, beliefs and practises. However, today the majority of popular literature defines 'Sikh identity' in relation to five external signifiers:



*All Sikhs are required to wear the five Ks. (Butalia: 2004: 347).*

*...members of the Sikh religion should wear the five things which show they are Sikhs...*

*Each one reminds Sikhs of something important about their religion (Penney: 1999: 8).*

*Most commonly, Sikhs are defined by their adherence to the five Ks, the five physical markers of Sikh belief... (Mooney: 2011: 79).*

These five external signifiers known as the '*pañj kakārs*' or 'Five Ks' are accepted as follows:

1. *kes* or *kesh* (uncut hair)
2. *kanghā* (wooden comb)
3. *karā* (wrist bangle of either iron or steel)
4. *kirpān* (small dagger or sword)
5. *kachh* (cotton undergarment)

There is no particular order in which they are presented as most Sikhs view each one as sacred. They are popularly referred to as the '*pañj kakārs*' or 'Five Ks' because they all begin with the *Gurmukhī* character "*kakkā*" which represents the same sound as the roman letter '*k*' (from here on we shall refer to them using the English term - 'Five Ks'). The Five Ks are

mandatory for initiated Sikhs or Khālsā<sup>1</sup> (pure) Sikhs who are required to wear them at all times. But what are the historical origins of the 'Five Ks' and how have they become such an integral part of Sikh identity?

It is widely accepted that Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708)<sup>2</sup> undertook the task of re-organising the Sikhs in creating a new religio-political order - the 'Khālsā'. According to Sikh tradition, 'Khālsā identity' was clearly defined by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 at which point Sikhs were required to be baptised by the sword (*khande ki pahul*), follow a code of conduct (*rahit*) and maintain the Five Ks (*panj kakārs*). The introduction of these external signs turned a dispersed group of Sikhs into one that possessed a distinct identity (McLeod: 2003). Goodrum (2001) points out that, 'techniques of fashioning the body are a visible form of acculturation in which identities are created, constructed and presented...' (Goodrum: 2001: 87). Therefore, it can be argued that Khālsā identity was constructed through the process of shared external articles (Five Ks). These external articles also reflected Sikh ideals at the end of the seventeenth century.

However, this study questions the historical origins of the Five Ks by re-tracing the formulation of the 'Five Ks' within historical literature on the Sikhs. Therefore, this study employs the method of critical historiography in an attempt to understand the systematic way in which the Five Ks have been formulated within dominant texts and discourses. This research argues that Sikh reformists towards the end of the nineteenth century helped to forge a 'uniform' Sikh identity that introduced the convention of the Five Ks. This study provides new critical insights into the way in which Khālsā Sikhs and the Five Ks have been interpreted throughout Sikh history. But let us first begin with a discussion on the emergence of the Sikhs within Punjab.

---

<sup>1</sup> The word 'Khālsā' derives from the Arabic/Persian khālisā meaning 'pure'. During Mughal rule in India the term Khālsā had referred to land under the direct control of the ruler.

<sup>2</sup> These dates correspond to the duration of Guruship.

## 1.1: Historical background to the emergence of Sikhs within Punjab.

The term 'Sikh'<sup>3</sup> is commonly defined as learner or disciple of the Guru. Sikhs are often described as belonging to the 'world's youngest religion' as the faith originated around the fifteenth century, in the Punjab region of Northern India (which today falls into the present day states of India and Pakistan). The Sikh faith emerged during the medieval *Bhakti* (devotional) movement that introduced the *Sant parampara* (tradition) in Punjab. The *Sant parampara* was an amalgamation of the *Vaisnava* and *Nath* philosophy that celebrated internal devotion also known as *nirguna sampradyā*. The most popular devotional writings from this tradition are attributed to poets such as Ramanand (c. 1400-1476), Namdev (c. 1270-1350), Kabir (c. 1450-1518), Farid (c. 1173-1266) and Ravidas (c. 1450-1520). This body of devotional writings mainly covered themes of suffering in separation (*viraha*), dissolving of the ego (*hauma*) and stressing the importance of remembrance (*simran*) (McLeod: 1968). Nanak Dev (1469-1539) who is often referred to as the first Sikh Guru also belonged to the *Sant parampara* tradition.

Guru Nanak's<sup>4</sup> devotional writings or *bānī* heavily criticised caste prejudice, ritualism and idol worship that was prevalent across Punjab. The Sikh Gurus that followed continued to attract disciples with the introduction of new devotional writings, socio-religious institutions and religious practises. As a result, these followers began to identify themselves through newly formed congregations, known as *sangats*. The growing popularity of the Sikh Gurus can be viewed as the early formation of 'Sikh' identity (Oberoi: 1997). However, towards the end of the

---

<sup>3</sup> The term 'Sikh' is closely related to the Punjabi verb '*sikhna*' (to learn) and to the Sanskrit '*shishya*' (disciple).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed account on the life of Guru Nanak see McLeod: 1968.

seventeenth century 'Sikh' identity was to undergo radical transformation under the final Guru, Gobind Singh (1675-1708) who created the Khālsā Panth.

## **1. 2: The Creation of the Khālsā Panth within Sikh History.**

According to Grewal (1972) Sikh identity has developed in relation to Mughal rulers in India (1526-1857). For instance, there was relative harmony during the sixteenth century between the Mughal rulers and the early Sikh Gurus (Guru Nanak to Guru Ram Das). However, following the death of the Mughal ruler Akbar (1542-1605), the social and political climate dramatically changed. His successor Jahangir (1569-1627) executed the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev (1563-1606) for supporting his rival Khusrau (1587-1622). As a result, Guru Arjan Dev was to become the first Sikh martyr, and his death was to have a significant impact upon his son - Hargobind (1595-1644) who was to become the next Sikh Guru.

In response to the growing threat of Mughal persecution, Guru Hargobind took up arms through displaying two swords, referred to as *pīrī*, signifying spiritual authority and *mīrī*, signifying temporal authority (Shani: 2010). According to Cole (1982) Guru Hargobind was the first Sikh Guru to recognise the semiotic potential of the body for constructing a distinct identity. The introduction of maintaining arms was a significant shift in the transformation of Sikh identity during the seventeenth century. During the tenure of the seventh Guru, Har Rai (1630-1661) and the eighth Guru, Har Krishan (1656-1664) there was relative harmony between the Sikhs and the Mughals. However, this was again soon to change under the new leadership of the Mughal ruler - Aurangzeb (1658-1707).

In 1675 AD the Mughal authorities executed the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) for actively resisting Mughal imperial policies. Subsequently, his son Gobind Rai was proclaimed

the tenth Guru, and thereafter known as Guru Gobind Rai in 1675 and Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Guru Gobind Singh began to mobilise large armies in preparation for armed struggles against the Mughals. The central objective for the Sikh Guru at this stage was to create an army of loyal and brave Sikhs who were easily recognisable amongst the wider Sikh Panth.

According to Sikh tradition, Guru Gobind Singh sent a *hukam-nāmā* (letter of authority) summoning his followers to Anandpur Sahib on *Baisakhi* day<sup>5</sup> in March 1699 (McLeod: 1989). It is believed that on this day the Guru drew his sword and demanded the head of a loyal Sikh who would willingly sacrifice their life for the Sikh Panth. The demand was repeated, but most Sikhs were afraid to step forward. After some hesitation, five volunteers responded to the Guru's call and finally came forward one at a time. The five volunteers belonged to different castes:

- Daya Ram (1661-1708) - *khatri* clan (shopkeeper)
- Dharam Das (1666-1708) - *jatt* clan (farmer)
- Himmat Rai (1661-1705) - *kumhar* clan (water carrier)
- Muhkam Chand (1663-1705) - *chhimba* clan (tailor)
- Sahib Chand (1662-1705) - *nai* clan (barber)

Each volunteer was taken into a tent by the Guru, and each time the Guru would return alone with blood on his sword. It was assumed at the time that the volunteers had been ritually sacrificed. However, to the amazement of the crowd, all five volunteers later emerged from the tent unharmed. The original five volunteers became known as the *panj piāre* (five beloved), who are today present in all initiation ceremonies. However, there is some debate amongst scholars over what actually occurred within the tent. For instance, Kartar Singh (1951) argues that the

---

<sup>5</sup> Harvest festival celebrated throughout the Punjab region.

sacrifice of five goats within the tent would explain the blood on the Guru's sword. On the other hand, Sahib Singh (1967) believes that the five volunteers were miraculously brought back to life after being slaughtered. McLeod (1989) rightfully points out that: 'It matters little whether five volunteers were actually summoned [alive again] or whether five goats were actually slain. The overriding fact is that the belief in the story has unquestionably contributed to the subsequent shaping of conventional Sikh attitudes' (McLeod: 1989: 29).

It is also believed that Guru Gobind Singh began the process of formally initiating the five Sikh volunteers shortly after they were all summoned. According to Pashaura Singh (1999), *patashas* (sugar crystals) were added to *jal* (water) which he states symbolised purity. This was then stirred with a *khandā* (a double-edged sword) in a *sarb loh da batta* (iron vessel) producing what is commonly referred to as *amrit* (sweetened water). In the writings attributed to Guru Gobind Singh such as the Dasam Granth<sup>6</sup> it is evident that the *khandā* (double-edged sword) had been described as possessing the divine power of *Akāl Purakh* (timeless being). The Guru sanctified the *amrit* by reciting five liturgical prayers which included the *Japji* of Guru Nanak, the *Jap*, *swayyas* and *chaupai* composed by himself and the *Anand* composed by Guru Amar Das. The Guru then gave the five volunteers the sanctified *amrit* to drink. The *amrit* was to become the 'nectar of immortality' that would transform 'sparrows into hawks' (Pashaura Singh: 1999: 157).

In addition, the act of drinking *amrit* prepared within one single bowl symbolised the absolute equality of all initiates. The *amrit* was also sprinkled five times over their hair and eyes symbolising the purification of their body and mind. The volunteers were radically transformed with the introduction of this new initiation ritual referred to as *khande di pāhul* (baptism of the sword). The *khande di pāhul* initiation replaced the older system of *charan pāhul* in which water

---

<sup>6</sup> The earliest Dasam Granth manuscript dates back to 1713 is in the custody of Raja Gulab Singh Sethi and kept at Hanuman Road, New Delhi.

poured over the Guru's feet was used for the purpose of initiation. Lastly, the initiated Sikhs repeated the following declaration: *Vahiguru Ji Ka Khalsa! Vahiguru Ji Ki Fateh!* (Khālsā belongs to the Wonderful Lord! Victory belongs to the Wonderful Lord!) (Cole: 1982: 69). Today, the baptism ritual is more commonly known as *amrit pāhul* or *amrit sanskār* and may differ in method amongst various Sikh groups (Cole: 1982). This form of ritual can be understood as an effective means of mediating tradition, giving those that are baptised a sense of cultural continuity and self-identity (Douglas: 2002).

The initiated five volunteers became the nucleus of a new order referred to as the Khālsā Panth (Pashaura Singh: 1999). Through the process of initiation, Khālsā Sikhs had undergone 'a sacramental 'passage', a death-like experience for their celestial vision of and interface with the Spirit-Destroyer and Creator at the same time' (Ahluwalia: 1999: 65). Khālsā Sikhs were also to reject hereditary caste loyalties replacing them with loyalty to the Guru and the Khālsā Panth. For example, previous surnames associated with one's caste were to be replaced with 'Singh' (lion) for males and 'Kaur' (princess) for females (McLeod: 1995: 198, 119). Therefore, Khālsā Sikhs disrupted existing heredity ties replacing them with new forms of identification based on notions of equality.

However, Jakobsh (2003) argues that during the tenure of Guru Gobind Singh women were rarely initiated into the Khālsā Panth. Furthermore, she states that the 'transformation from the masculine to hypermasculine ethos' was made complete with the founding of the Khālsā 'brotherhood' (Jakobsh: 2003: 44). In other words, the central importance attached to the role of the Sikh male was embodied within the very creation of a masculine Khālsā identity. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (2005) challenges this view by arguing that the female form was crucial in Guru Gobind Singh's vision in creating the Khālsā Sikh. For example, she highlights the role of the goddess Devi who was consulted by the Guru before the creation of the Khālsā.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, central authority was passed over to the collective body of the Khālsā and the Adi Granth.<sup>7</sup> The abolition of personal guruship marked a significant transformation in the formation of the Sikh Panth because Khālsā Sikhs were now viewed as orthodox Sikhs (Singh, Sangat: 1995). The term ‘Khālsā’ now began to take on militaristic connotations and meanings amongst the Sikhs of Punjab (Oberoi: 1997). .

Sikh historians tend to offer two main reasons for the creation of Khālsā Sikhs. For instance, historians such as Sangat Singh (1999) argue that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khālsā Sikhs in response to the extreme Mughal oppression experienced at the end of the seventeenth century. The creation of the Khālsā Panth encouraged Sikhs to become brave and courageous soldiers at a time of great conflict. However, historical narratives such as these focus exclusively on external conflict and often ignore internal problems that were also prevalent within the general Sikh Panth.

Alternatively, historians such as Cole and Sambhi (1998) argue that the main objective for creating the Khālsā Sikhs was to replace the authoritative power held by the Sikh *masands*. The *masands* were originally set up by the fourth Guru, Ram Das (1534-1581) and were understood as representatives of the Guru. Their main function was to raise and collect revenues for the Sikh Guru; they were also commissioned to preach to distant *sangats* (congregations). However, by the end of the seventeenth century they had become corrupt and independent, mainly because they refused to forward collections made to the Guru.

He [Guru Gobind Singh] was speaking to break the power of the Masands  
(regional supervisors of the collection of tithes). They had been appointed by

---

<sup>7</sup> The term refers to the ‘first book’ or early Sikh scripture compiled by Guru Arjun in 1604.



an earlier Guru but by now they were almost independent. (W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi: 1998: 96)

Therefore, according to Cole and Sambhi (1998) Guru Gobind Singh decided to abolish the *masands* by creating Khālsā Sikhs who would be under the direct command of the Guru. It is argued that the creation of the Khalsa was to restore social equilibrium by eliminating tension within the wider Sikh Panth.

In addition, it can be also argued that there is a third less mentioned reason for the creation of the Khālsā which is located in the Dasam Granth text. The Dasam Granth text describes the creation of the Khālsā as a cosmological event rather than an historical one because Guru Gobind Singh was instructed by *Akāl Purakh* (timeless being). For example, the section titled *Bachitra Natak* of the Dasam Granth narrates that the objective behind the decision to create the Khālsā was to bring those back that had strayed from the righteous path (José: 2006).

Overall, the creation of the Khālsā Panth in Sikh history is considered to be one of the most significant events in the formation of a collective Sikh identity. Furthermore, historians such as Sangat Singh (1995) believe Khālsā Sikhs to be 'true Sikhs' because they represent the ideals of the Sikh Gurus:

Guru Gobind Singh did not deviate from the guideline laid down by Guru Nanak. Rather he brought to culmination the salient aspects of Guru Nanak's philosophy (Singh, Sangat: 1995: 65).

Sangat Singh (1995) in his book, *The Sikhs in History* claims that the same 'inner light' was carried from the first guru to the last who eventually transformed spiritual knowledge into practise through the creation of the Khalsa Panth. Similarly, Jhutti-Johal (2011) states in the

preface of her book, *Sikhism Today* that, 'The *Khālsā* gave Sikhs an external identity which supported the internal identity as given by Guru Nanak' (Jhutti-Johal: 2011: i).

However, such perspectives rely upon a 'linear' model of Sikh history that overlooks the individual context of each Sikh Guru. The linear model of Sikh history assumes that all the Sikh Gurus were working towards the same desired result, i.e. the creation of the *Khālsā*. Can the philosophical and theological principles delivered over two hundred years through different Sikh Gurus be reduced to the creation of the *Khālsā*?

McLeod (1989) offers an alternative view to the creation of the *Khālsā* Panth within Sikh history. He argues that there was an 'ideological departure' from Nanak's 'inward' religious identity to Guru Gobind Singh's 'external' form. In other words, there is a noticeable 'difference' between the 'pacifism' of the Nanak and the 'militancy' and 'violence' associated with Guru Gobind Singh. However, McLeod's perspective of Nanak's ideology being diametrically opposed to that of Guru Gobind Singh also proves to be problematic. His perspective relies on the same linear model of Sikh history when he argues that there is a 'break' with early Sikh tradition with the creation of the *Khālsā*.

To overcome this logical problem and reconcile the two so-called 'extremes' Bhogal (2007) introduces a radical model of Sikh history. He introduces the 'continuity-in-difference' model of Sikh history that can help us understand the radical changes brought about by Guru Gobind Singh through the creation of the *Khālsā* (Bhogal: 2007:104). This model of Sikh history accepts 'differences' in ideology between the various Gurus but more importantly views these 'differences' as necessary for the survival of the general Sikh Panth. Bhogal (2007) argues that each Sikh Guru introduced new measures to tackle specific problems unique to their context.

The creation of the Khālsā and external signifiers was a necessary measure for Guru Gobind Singh. According to Pashaura Singh (1999) 'the five Ks are understood as outer symbols of the divine word, implying a direct correlation between *bani* ('inspired utterance') and *bana* ('Khālsā dress'). Putting on the five Ks along with the turban (in the case of male Sikhs) while reciting prayers symbolizes that the Khālsā Sikhs are dressed in the word of God. Their minds are thus purified and inspired, and their bodies girded to do battle with the day's temptation' (Singh, P: 1999: 155).

Douglas (2002) argues that the human body is not merely a biological entity but the most important site for the presentation of cultural and religious symbols demonstrating loyalty to a particular group. Therefore, it is argued that the formulation of the Five Ks helped organise and distinguish between those that were considered as outsiders or insiders to the Khālsā Panth.

However, since the introduction of Khālsā identity and the Five Ks, the Sikhs have faced challenges in the form of prejudice and discrimination. The next section discusses how the Five Ks and the turban gained further importance for Sikhs that settled abroad in Britain. Thus, preparing the ground for a discussion of the evolution of the Five Ks within Sikh texts.

### **1.3: The Transmission of the Five Ks within the Sikh diaspora.**

Darshan Tatla (1999) and Gurharpal Singh (2005) demonstrate the importance of regional and international factors in the formation of Sikh identity within Britain. More specifically, their work provides examples of early challenges posed to the Five Ks and the turban since the 1950s. Khālsā Sikhs increased their visibility through their external appearance, making them different

not only because of their skin colour but overall appearance. During early Sikh settlement the pressure of social integration and fear of racial abuse often led to the removal of external signifiers. The removal of the *kes* and turban was a difficult decision for many Sikh males who took great pride in their traditional and religious appearance. It is argued that the physical dislocation during the migration process disrupted the continuity of the *kes* as a central signifier for Sikh males.

The turban and *kes* were transformed from symbols of loyalty to the British Empire to symbols of shame.<sup>8</sup> For instance, in Britain, wearing external signifiers such as the Five Ks restricted employment opportunities since employers desired Sikhs to remove the Five Ks and turban. Sikhs that maintained the Five Ks and the turban also experienced discrimination in education because they were not protected by British law.<sup>9</sup> It is argued that the Five Ks and the turban challenged secularisation which in turn attempted to relegate the practise of religion into the private sphere. As a result, many Sikhs decided to remove the Five Ks but some Sikhs responded with resistance to the removal of the *kes* and turban.<sup>10</sup>

It was the dramatic events of 1984 in Punjab that led to the politicisation of the Five Ks within global politics particularly in the UK, US and Canada. The 1980s Khalistan movement in Punjab represented the culmination of struggles to establish Sikh political sovereignty in response to

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Story of the Turban* (2012) BBC ONE, 12 April. 2320hrs.

<sup>9</sup> After a long campaign that lasted up to five years there was finally victory for the Sikh community in Britain. On 23 March 1983 the House of Lords overturned the decision of the lower courts. Sikhs had successfully challenged anti-discriminatory laws to broaden the definition of an 'ethnic group' to include Sikhs. The right to wear a turban in Britain was now protected by British law because Sikhs were now recognised as a separate ethnic group under the act (Gurharpal Singh: 2005).

<sup>10</sup> For example, in the late 50s, Sikhs mobilised to protest against Manchester City council's transport department. In this particular case, an employee Sunder Singh Sagar was refused the position as bus conductor because he would not remove his turban to wear a cap. In response, Sagar offered to wear a blue turban with the transport badge but this was turned down. As a result, with the help of local Gurdwaras he launched a campaign which took almost seven years to finally allow Sikhs to wear the turban in Manchester City council's transport department (Gurharpal Singh: 2005).

Sikh perceptions of Hindus reasserting their supremacy in Punjab.<sup>11</sup> Khālsā Sikhs in Punjab mobilised and passed a resolution to form an independent sovereign state referred to as Khalistan (land of pure). The Khalistani discourse which initially began as a communal movement was soon to become an ideology that appealed to Sikhs across the globe. Therefore, the Khalistani discourse employed the Five Ks to demarcate political and cultural boundaries for the proposal of the new Sikh state. As a result, the Five Ks became equated with Sikh militancy which subsequently further alienated Sikhs within the diaspora (Fenech: 2000).

Over the last decade, there has also been an increase in internet websites<sup>12</sup> dedicated to the preservation of the Five Ks through the Khalistani discourse. These websites include images of famous Khālsā Sikh martyrs who in the imagination of diasporic subjects are transformed into valorised heroes. The concept of the '*sant-sipahi*' or saint-soldier becomes particularly attractive to Sikh youth who highly admire the Khālsā form expressed through the Five Ks. Shani (2005) points out that Khālsā identity is no longer limited to a specific territory but is now part of a global "cyber-spatial" identity. Therefore, new technologies have helped to re-affirm the importance of the Five Ks and the centrality of the Khālsā Sikh within a global context (Axel: 2005).

The increased visibility of some the Five Ks within British society has also been the cause of many recent discriminatory cases. However, unlike early discriminatory cases that involved the *kes* and the turban, recent cases focus on other Ks such as the *karā* and *kirpān*. Khālsā Sikhs

---

<sup>11</sup> In 1978 a clash between orthodox (Dam Dami Taksal) Khālsā Sikhs and Nirankaris in Punjab resulted in the death of thirteen Sikhs and many injured. The supporters of Khalistan viewed the Nirankaris as outsiders to the Sikh Panth.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.khalsakids.org/explaining.php> and <http://www.sikhnet.com/> (Accessed: 15 November 2010). Sikh youth are constantly exposed to Khālsā ideals and the Five Ks through these internet websites. These websites electronically archive historical texts, images and clips that can be viewed and downloaded from almost anywhere. The ever-expanding internet connects Sikhs around the world in the form of a 'cyber-sangat'. Sikh youth communicate with each other through internet discussion forums where they can freely debate issues regarding Khālsā identity (Axel: 2005).

currently have the legal right to maintain the Five Ks in schools across Britain.<sup>13</sup> Despite this legal exemption there have been public concerns about carrying the *kirpān* and *karā* in public places such as schools.<sup>14</sup>

Kohli (2010) argues that practising Sikhs should not be allowed to wear *kirpāns* in schools because of the involved dangers. Kohli (2010) suggests a small *kirpān* shaped pendant approximately two centimetres in length to be worn instead around the neck. He explains that the miniature *kirpān* pendant fulfils the 'symbolic' requirement of wearing the Five Ks at all times. However, Sikh community leaders have been outraged by Kohli's remarks to reduce the *kirpān* to the status of mere 'symbol' in the form of a pendant.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in debates on the significance of the Five Ks there is a shift in the meaning we attach to the *kirpān*, for example, its 'practical' use in conflict, 'ceremonial' use in rituals to the status of religious 'symbol' and even 'threat'.<sup>16</sup>

Turner (1995) argues that religious symbols are 'multivocal' because they do not have fixed meanings but can be interpreted through a variety of different positions. Since the events of 9/11, Khālsā external signifiers are now contextualised against the backdrop of fear that has

---

<sup>13</sup> At present current legislation in the UK such as the Criminal Justice Act (1988) includes a legal exemption under section 138 for practising Sikhs to carry a *kirpān* exceeding the length of three inches for 'religious reasons' (Gurharpal Singh: 2005).

<sup>14</sup> For example, in 2009, a 14-year-old Sikh boy was refused entry into a school in Barnet (North London) because he wore a *kirpān*. The Board of Governors decided that it was a health and safety risk and proposed that the student wear a much smaller two-inch *kirpān* welded into a wooden sheath. The family of the student argued that the miniature dagger was not considered to be a genuine *kirpān*. Furthermore, Sir Mota Singh, a high profile Sikh member of the judiciary argued that stopping a practising Sikh from wearing the *kirpān* which forms part of mandatory Five Ks was an infringement of the child's right to practise his/her religion (BBC :2009). In July 2008, Sarika Watkins-Singh a fourteen-year-old Sikh girl won a High Court discriminatory case after being excluded from her school for wearing the *karā*. The student was asked to remove her *karā* at Aberdare Girls' School in South Wales because it was seen as an item of jewellery which was in violation of the school's 'no jewellery' rule. According to her lawyer Mr Justice Silber, the *karā* had been misunderstood as an item of jewellery as opposed to a sacred religious symbol that represented "God's infinity". Sarika Watkins-Singh viewed her *karā* as a symbol of her Sikh faith and was proud to wear it as a 'Welsh and Punjabi Sikh girl' BBC (2008). The case finally found the school guilty of indirect discrimination under British Race Relations and Equality laws.

<sup>15</sup> Sir Mota Singh argues that the *kirpān* should be in the actual form of a sword that can be used to defend innocent people (Kohli: 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in 2001 in America the Department of Transport in Britain decided that *kirpāns* would no longer be worn at airports by Sikh airport workers and travellers. However, in 2002 after extensive pressure from Sikhs, the British Airport Authority at Heathrow issued new guidelines for Sikhs on wearing *kirpāns* at airports. The new guidelines stated that the size of the *kirpān* blade is to be less than three inches and that it is to be worn discreetly under clothes. The new guidelines only applied to Sikh staff working at the airport; currently all public Sikh travellers are asked to hand their *kirpāns* over which are then to be returned at the end of their journey (Singh, G.: 2005).

been generated through global media (Ahluwalia: 2011). Puar (2008) states that Khālsā Sikhs are now interpreted through a new visual category, the 'terrorist look-alike' or those who 'look like terrorists' (Puar: 2008: 54). As a result of the conflation between Sikhs and terrorists, some Sikhs have been targets of hate crimes.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, Verma (2006) argues that since 9/11 young Khālsā Sikhs now face the dilemma of whether or not to maintain the Five Ks and turban.

Jasjit Singh (2010) provides an important study that attempts to understand what identity means to young Sikhs in contemporary British Society. He argues that Sikhs are normally taught about the importance of the Five Ks at a young age within the Sikh community. For example, young Sikhs are aware of the importance attached to uncut hair whether they adhere to these practices themselves. However, for many Sikhs in the British diaspora, the Five Ks and the turban are also viewed as pre-modern artefacts that have no place within a modern society. As a result, they negotiate and construct new meanings associated with the 'traditional' Five Ks. For example, many non-practising Sikhs in the diaspora wear the *karā* as a 'symbol' of being Punjabi/Sikh rather than having any intention of becoming a baptised Khālsā Sikh. Therefore, the traditional meanings attached to the Five Ks and the turban are constantly disrupted and modified in order to survive modernity.

As a result, there is anxiety amongst Sikh leaders who predict the disappearance of the Five Ks within a couple of generations. Sikh leaders believe that wearing the Five Ks and the turban should be encouraged because Sikh youth are becoming 'too westernised'. Sikh leaders continue to give talks at local gurdwaras to encourage non-practising Sikhs to become fully fledged Khālsā Sikhs. They also believe that third and fourth generation Sikh parents should encourage their children to keep their *kes* from birth to preserve Sikh identity. For them the act

---

<sup>17</sup> The first major case of hate crime occurred in America on 15 September 2001 in which Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner in Arizona, was murdered. The most recent case involved the shooting of Sikh worshippers on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2012 at a gurdwara in Wisconsin, America.

of cutting the *kes* and rejecting the Five Ks is seen as an act of sacrilege and betrayal (Jasjit Singh: 2010).

Therefore, the need to further discuss and understand the origins of the Five Ks has become a matter of importance for Sikhs around the world. This study is important because it attempts to examine the evolution of the Five Ks within historical literature and demonstrate how and why these external signifiers assumed importance. The next section discusses the historical evolution of the Five Ks within key Sikh texts.

#### **1.4: Literature Review: Primary sources on the historical origins of the Five Ks.**

According to Prof. Lal Singh (2009) the term 'Khālsā' can be traced in an early verse composed by Bhagat Kabir:

*Kaho Kabir Jan Bhae Khalsa Prem Bhagat Jah Jani*

Says Kabir, he who understands loving devotion becomes Khālsā

(GGS, Sorath Kabir: 654).

Prof. Lal Singh (2009) argues that according to the central Sikh text - Guru Granth Sahib, the Khālsā is not defined in relation to the Five Ks but as an individual who devotes themselves to



God. This view is reinforced by the fact that the Guru Granth Sahib incorporates the writing of Muslims, Hindus, Brahmins, Khatri and untouchables all of whom did not maintain the Five Ks. Furthermore, he states that there is no passage within the Guru Granth Sahib prescribing the maintenance of kes or any of the Five Ks. In fact, he quotes the following three passages as criticisms for those that attach importance to kes:

*'Ik jata bikat bikrall khul ghar khovhi'*

Some look hideous with their hair uncut, matted and dishevelled. They bring dishonour to their family and ancestry. (Nanak: GGS: 476)

*'Banke bal pag sir deri. Ih tan hoigo bhasam ki dheri'*

One makes his hair beautiful and wears a stylish turban on his head, but in the end, the human body shall be reduced to a pile of ashes.

(Ravidass: GGS: 659)

*'Kabira preet ik seo ke-ay an dubhada ja-ey, bhavai lanbay kaysh kar bhavai gharar mudha-ey'*

When one is in love with the Lord, duality and alienation depart. It is immaterial whether one has long hair or a bald head.

(Kabir: GGS: 1365)

However, Prof. Lal Singh (2009) fails to acknowledge that the above references were made in response to ancient yogic practises and were composed before the introduction of the Five Ks in Sikh history. The theological meaning of the term 'Khālsā' located in the GGS was later transformed in Sikh tradition in response to aggressive imperial policies. Subsequently, the term 'Khālsā' became confined to those that underwent *khande di pāhul* initiation and maintained the Five Ks. Nonetheless, Prof. Lal Singh (2009) argues that the passages above demonstrate the insignificance of external symbols for the purpose of spiritual attainment. To support this claim Prof. Lal Singh (2009) and Thakar (2005) refer to Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1713) who refused to maintain all of the Five Ks; nonetheless he was still considered to be a valued disciple of Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhogal (2001) stresses the importance of Sikh praxis that can be reflected in the Five Ks, but not limited to them. He suggests that the instruction to maintain the Five Ks should not be viewed as the 'final' form of Sikh identity since the GGS welcomes change and diversity as opposed to frozen truths. '*sacu purana hovai nahi*: The Truth does not get old...' (Nanak: GGS: 955). This view may find support amongst liberal Sikhs but it may be dismissed by Sikhs who view the Five Ks as an essential requirement for modern Sikhs. Prof. Lal Singh (2009), Bhogal (2001) and Thakar (2005) suggest that a 'true' Sikh should be defined in accordance with the tenets located in the GGS as opposed to the Five Ks stressed in the Khālsā *rahit*.

According to Sikh tradition, Guru Gobind Singh imparted a *rahit* (code of conduct) during the creation of the Khālsā Panth in 1699. The *rahit* provided Khālsā Sikhs with instructions specifying correct modes of behaviour, rituals and practises. It is widely believed that as part of the *rahit*, Guru Gobind Singh instructed all initiated Sikhs to maintain five corporeal signs known

as the *panj kakārs* or 'Five Ks'. In addition to the Five Ks, it is believed that Khālsā Sikhs were also required to wear a turban which is also referred to as a *pagri* or *dastār*.<sup>18</sup> Today, all initiated Sikhs wear the Five Ks regardless of caste or factional loyalties because they are an essential part of Khālsā identity.

However, this research demonstrates that the majority of published literature on the Sikhs provides little or no empirical evidence on the origins of the 'Five Ks'. Subsequently, this study challenges the traditional narrative because there is no mention of the 'Five Ks' in any major historical text until we reach Singh Sabha reformist literature published at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup> Singh Sabha reformers attempted to construct a distinct Sikh identity that separated Sikhs from their Hindu counterparts. Through the publication of popular literature they were responsible for finally introducing the convention of the Five Ks as we understand it today. Therefore, it is argued that the convention of the Five Ks actually evolved in response to changing historical circumstances towards the end of the nineteenth century. The following section critically reviews existing literature that helps us to understand the historical origins of the 'Five Ks'.

According to Mansukhani (1989) the earliest reference to five external articles can be found in one particular *hukam-nāmā* (letters of command) which was issued at the end of the seventeenth century. The *hukam-nāmās* were instructions sent out by the Sikh Gurus to dispersed followers all over Punjab. In his article titled *Sikh-Rahat-Maryada and Sikh symbols*

---

<sup>18</sup> Throughout Sikh history the lengthy cloth tied around the head has often varied in style, size and colour signifying religious and cultural differences. Before the creation of the Khālsā, males in the Punjab wore the turban as a symbol of holiness, honour and respect. The turban acquired additional significance for Khālsā Sikhs as it served as head protection during warfare. Although technically the turban does not form part of the Five Ks, it has nonetheless become an integral part of Khālsā identity precisely because it covers and protects the *kes*.

<sup>19</sup> The Singh Sabha reform movement began in the nineteenth century in response to the proselytizing actions of Hindus and Christians.

Mansukhani (1989) reproduces a copy of the *hukam-nāmā* sent by Guru Gobind Singh to the *sangat* (congregation) dated 23 May 1699 AD:

*Sarbat sangat Kabul Guru rakhe ga  
Tusa ute asadee bahut khusi hai  
Tusi Khande Da Amrit Panja to lena  
Kes rakhne...ih asadee, mohur hai;  
Kachh, Kirpan da visah nahee karna  
Sarab loh da kara hath rakhna  
Dono vakat kesa dee palna karna  
Sarbat sangat abhakhia da kutha  
Khave naheen, Tamakoo na vartana  
Bhadni tatha kanya-maran-vale so mel na rakhe  
Meene, Massandei, Ramraiye ki sangat na baiso  
Gurbani parhni...Waheguru, Waheguru japna  
Guru kee rahat rakhnee  
Sarbat sangat oopar meri khushi hai.*

*Patshahi Dasvi, Jeth 26, Samat 1756.*

Through the Grace of our true Immortal Lord,  
To the entire sangat at Kabul.  
The Guru will protect the Sangat,  
I am pleased with you all.  
You should take baptism by the sword, from Five Beloveds  
Keep your hair uncut for this is the seal of the Guru,  
Accept the use of shorts and a sword.

Always wear iron Kara on your wrist,  
Keep your hair clean and comb it twice a day.  
Do not eat Halal (Kosher) meat,  
Do not use tobacco in any form,  
Have no connection with those who kill their daughters  
Or permit the cutting of their hair.  
Do not associate with Meenas, Massands and Ram-raiyas (anti-Sikh cults)  
Recite the Guru's hymns.  
Meditate on "The Name of our Wonderful Lord",  
Follow the Sikh code of discipline,  
I give the entire sangat my blessing.

(Signature of 10th Guru, Jeth 26, 1756 Bikrami (23 May 1699) cited in Manasukhani, G. S. 1989:  
176-177)

The date of this *hukam-nāmā* indicates that it was written just after the establishment of the Khālsā in April 1699. This *hukam-nāmā* attributed to Guru Gobind Singh clearly mentions the necessity for Sikhs to maintain certain external articles such as the shorts, sword, uncut hair, and *karā*. However, the *kanghā* is not listed, although reference is made to Sikhs combing their hair. Therefore, it is also important to note that this text does not refer to external articles as *panj kakārs* or the Five Ks.

Pashaura Singh (1999) and McLeod (2003) question the authenticity of this *hukam-nāmā* on two grounds. Firstly, the *hukam-nāmā* seems to be produced at a much later date than implied because of its use of language and handwriting style which both lack the Guru's seal. For this very reason the *hukam-nāmā* is not included in Ganda Singh's (1967) significant collection of *hukam-nāmās* in Sikh history. Secondly, the *hukam-nāmā* is spurious because it is in direct

contradiction with the majority of early eighteenth century sources that followed. In other words, no other primary text produced around the same time can confirm the instruction to maintain the Five Ks.

Alternatively, Ganda Singh (1967) states that there is early primary evidence suggesting that Guru Gobind Singh required Khālsā Sikhs to maintain *panj hathiār* or five weapons. He quotes a *hukam-nāmā* dated S. 1759 (1702 CE) – attributed to Guru Gobind Singh that clearly instructs Sikhs to wear five weapons: ‘Appear before the Guru wearing five weapons’ (*hathiar panja bann ke darshan avana*) (*hukam-nāmā* (1702 CE) cited in Ganda Singh: 1967: 179). Fauja Singh (1971) in his article titled, *Foundation of the Khālsā Commonwealth – Ideological Aspects* also supports the thesis that Guru Gobind Singh actually instructed Khālsā Sikhs to maintain five weapons as opposed to the Five Ks. He explains that the instruction to maintain five weapons was the result of Sikhs who had concealed themselves during the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. Therefore, Fauja Singh (1971) argues that the Five Ks actually evolved out of the original instruction to wear five weapons. For instance, the original instruction included the *kirpān* and *karā* and the remaining three items (*kes*, *kanghā* and *kachh*) were added later to formulate the convention of the Five Ks.

However, Pashaura Singh (1999) argues that the tradition of maintaining five weapons or *panj hathiār* was established before the inauguration of the Khālsā in 1699. According to him the tradition of maintaining five weapons (that included the sword, disc, arrow, noose, and gun) was introduced during the tenure of Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) (Pashaura Singh: 1999 156). The *gur-bilās*<sup>20</sup> (‘splendour of the Guru’) literature produced during the eighteenth century also mention maintaining weapons but they differ because they include references to other external

---

<sup>20</sup> The various *gur-bilās* mainly focus on the heroic qualities of the Sikh Gurus.

articles. The most relevant text is Koer Singh's *Gurbilās Pātashāhī Das* completed in 1751 which mentions the following five articles:

*Dohara: shastr mel gur sabad so, kachh kesan sad prem, karad rakhani panch ey tajai  
na kab hi nem*

One should always love the company of weapons [*shastar*], the Guru's word (*gur shabad*), *kachh* (underwear) and *kes* (hair). The wearing of the sword (*karad*) makes the total five, and one should never abandon them from the daily disciple (trans. Pashaura Singh: 1999: 162).

The text refers to *kachh*, *kes*, and *karad*, *shāstar* and *gur shabad* (the Guru's Word), and later the text mentions the *kanghā*. However, these items do not correlate with the widely accepted Five Ks for the following reasons. Firstly, the items mentioned in the complete text amount to six, and secondly, two of these items do not begin with the letter 'k' (McLeod: 2003). Therefore, it can be concluded that the early *hukam-nāmā* and *gur-bilās* literature fail to mention the convention of the Five Ks.

There is a significant shift in understanding Khālsā identity with the arrival of the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* (code of conduct manuals) that focus exclusively on Khālsā practises and moral behaviour. They provide valuable evidence on how Khālsā Sikhs were defined during the eighteenth century and for this reason they will be examined in detail within the next chapter. For this discussion it is important to note that the most relevant early *rahit-nama* text is *Srī Gur Sobhā* (1711) attributed to Sainapati. The text clearly states that Guru Gobind Singh instructed Khālsā Sikhs to obey three main injunctions: (1) leave *kes* uncut; (2) carry *hathiar* (weapons); and (3) renounce *hukah tiag* (smoking tobacco) (Pashaura Singh: 1999). The text confirms the

importance attached to maintaining *kes* and carrying *hathiar* but nowhere do we find any reference to the convention of the Five Ks.

The later text *Guru Kīān Sākhīān* written in 1790 by Svarup Singh Kaushish moves closer to the convention of the Five Ks. The text mentions the following external items that are to be worn by initiated Sikhs; these include the *kanghā*, *karad*, *kesakī*, *karā*, and *kachh*. This text is important because it mentions all five items beginning with the letter K. However, it differs from the conventional Five Ks because it refers to *karad* instead of the *kirpān* and *kesakī* (small turban) instead of the *kes* (Malhotra: 2009). However, McLeod (2003) points out that the language contained within this text is far too modern to belong to the eighteenth century. In fact *Guru Kīān Sākhīān* text contains some English words which would suggest that it was more likely written in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of the British.

For Sikhs the most important sacred text is the *Adi Granth* more commonly referred to as the *Guru Granth Sahib*<sup>21</sup>. This sacred text provides no reference to the Five Ks mainly because it focuses on Sikh theology rather than prescriptions related to external identity. Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636) often referred to as the original scribe for the *Adi Granth* is also known for his text *Varan Bhai Gurdas* written in 1636. This primary text is important because it contains a reference to 'five garments' or *panj kapare* to be worn by Sikh males. These 'five garments' include the turban (*pag*), scarf (*dupatta*), a long shirt (*cholara*), waist-band (*pataka*) and an undergarment (*kachh*).<sup>22</sup> These garments do not correspond to the widely accepted Five Ks, however, the text does allude to the importance attached to the number five in Sikh tradition.

---

<sup>21</sup> Guru Gobind Singh added Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns to the *Adi Granth* - this second rendition became known as *Guru Granth Sahib*.

<sup>22</sup> *Varan Bhai Gurdas* 2: 11.



According to McLeod (2003) and Pashaura Singh (1999) the number five had already assumed significance within the Sikh tradition prior to the creation of the Khālsā. For instance, in his *Japji*<sup>23</sup> Guru Nanak described the five *khands*<sup>24</sup> or five realms of spiritual development. Furthermore, within the Adi Granth we discover constant references to the five vices: lust (*kām*), anger (*krodh*), greed (*lobh*), attachment (*moh*) and pride (*hankār*). According to Pashaura Singh (1999), ‘Guru Nanak’s ideal of *panch* later on became the inspiration of Guru Gobind Singh’s selection of the Five Beloved Ones (*panj piāre*) on Baisakhi Day 1699’ (Pashaura Singh: 1999: 157). This point demonstrates the importance attached to the number five in early Sikh tradition during the compilation of the Adi Granth.

In addition to the Adi Granth, the Dasam Granth is also revered amongst Sikhs. The text was originally known as *Dasvīn Pātashāh kā Granth*, (The Granth of the Tenth Master) but is now commonly referred to as the Dasam Granth (McLeod: 2003: 62).<sup>25</sup> The origins of the Dasam Granth text are obscure but it is traditionally attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. McLeod (1995) argues that only portions of the Dasam Granth can be attributed to Guru Gobind Singh,<sup>26</sup> nonetheless the text provides some context to the historical origins of the Five Ks. For instance, the portion titled *Shastar Nam-mala* describes in detail the *kirpān* (sword) being powerful and almighty. Therefore, according to Pashaura Singh (1999) it is no surprise that *kirpān* was a prominent symbol in the creation of the Khālsā and later to become one of the Five Ks. Although

---

<sup>23</sup> M1, Japji, 34-37, AG, 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> These are as follows: Realm of Duty (*dharmā khand*), Realm of Knowledge (*gyān khand*), Realm of Endeavour (*saram khand*), Realm of Fulfilment (*karam khand*), Realm of Truth (*sach khand*) - see Pashaura Singh (1999).

<sup>25</sup> It is suggested in Sikh tradition that the famous martyr Mani Singh who was the main custodian of Harmandir Sahib from 1721 to 1738 collected the manuscripts: see McLeod (2003).

<sup>26</sup> These include the *Jāp*, an autobiographical piece entitled *Bachitar Nātak*, the rebellious letter to the Emperor Aurangzeb referred to as *Zafar-nāmā* (Epistle of Victory) written in 1705 and *Akal Ustati* (Praise to the Timeless One) which describes God as ‘*Sarab Loh*’ (All Steel). The rest of the contents not attributed to Guru Gobind Singh written in Brajhasha language include, *Benati Chaupai*, *Chandi Charitra*, *Chandi ki var*, *Chaubis Autar*, *Gian Prabodh*, *Hikayat*, *Pakhyān Charitra*, *Shastar Nam-mala*, and *Das Savayyas* many portions of which have been translated from Sanskrit.

the Dasam Granth attaches great importance to the *kirpān*, it however fails to mention the convention of the Five Ks in relation to Khālsā Sikhs.

On the other hand, the *Sarab Loh Granth*, an important eighteenth century text does mention external articles directly related to Khālsā Sikhs. Pashaura Singh (1999) points out that this text describes, '*kachh, kes* and *kirpān* as three important 'signs' (*mudras*) of the amrit-dhari [Khalsa] Sikh (*kachh kes kirpanan mudrit gur bhagatan ramdas bhae*).<sup>27</sup> Each of them represents a particular symbol system, the *kachh* representing 'five garments', *kes* representing bodily symbols, and the *kirpān* representing 'five weapons' (Pashaura Singh: 1999: 160). The text supports the claim that three *mudras* were a prominent part of the Khalsa *rahit* during the eighteenth century. However, the text only refers to three external articles and not five by failing to include the *kara* and *kangha*.

Nonetheless, there is one early eighteenth century source that moves closer to the formulation of the Five Ks. Sikh historians often quote it to support their claim that the convention of the Five Ks was introduced by Guru Gobind Singh at the end of the seventeenth century. The source is a Persian couplet attributed to Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1713):

*nishan-i-sikkhī in pañj haraf kāf*  
*hargiz nā bāshad in pañj mu' āf;*  
*Kara, karad kachha, kangha bi dan,*  
*Bina kes hech ast jumla nishan.*

---

<sup>27</sup> See Singh Sahib Baba Santa Singh, ed., *Sampuran Sateek Sri Sarab Loh Granth Sahib Ji*, Part III (Anandpur Sahib: Shiromani Panth Akali Buddha Dal, n.d.), 496.

The Five Ks are the emblems of the Sikh. These five are most incumbent, steel bangle, big knife, shorts and a comb; without unshorn hair the other four are of no significance.

(Nand Lal cited in McLeod: 2003: 204-205)

This particular couplet confirms the importance attached to the Five Ks during the early eighteenth century. However, it differs from the modern version of the Five Ks because it lists *karad* instead of the *kirpān*. McLeod (1995) argues that the couplet cannot be attributed to Nand Lal for two reasons. Firstly, Nand Lal was not an initiated member of the Khālsā himself because he failed to use the surname 'Singh'. Thus, it would have been highly unlikely for someone to have written such a couplet if they did not wear the Five Ks themselves. Secondly, this particular couplet is not included in earlier Persian works attributed to Nand Lal which suggests that it was inserted at a later date.

Overall, there are no reliable primary sources that mention the convention of the Five Ks as instructed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. The majority of the primary sources are limited in providing any reference to the introduction of the Five Ks, so where did the convention of the 'Five Ks' come from? This study will attempt to answer this crucial question but before we do let us examine some secondary sources that help us to understand the historical origins of the Five Ks.

### 1.5: Secondary sources on the historical origins of the Five Ks.

The formation of Khālsā identity has been at the centre of most academic debates amongst contemporary scholars on the Sikh religion. As a result, there is no shortage of secondary literature discussing the 'importance' of the widely accepted Five Ks. Batra (1979) in his book *Leadership in its finest mould: Guru Gobind Singh* discusses the Five Ks in terms of military and combat functionality, e.g. the *kachh* was ideal for fighting in battles. Batra (1979) argues that by introducing the Five Ks Guru Gobind Singh required Khālsā Sikhs to be highly visible soldiers. However, scholars such as Batra (1979) fail to provide sufficient evidence on when the Five Ks were actually introduced. Moreover, Batra (1979) fails to develop any critical analysis on how the meanings attached to the Five Ks have changed over time.

For instance, scholars such as Santokh Singh (1991) in his book *The Sword of the Khālsā* discuss the Five Ks in terms of their religious and spiritual significance:

*Keshas* (hair) being nature's gift requires preservation... *Kanga* (comb) is required for keeping the hair clean and tidy. By keeping the comb a Sikh is reminded to keep mind under control... *Kara* (steel bangle) binds the Sikh with a strong unbreakable link to his faith. The complete unbroken circle symbolises the unbroken continuity of existence... *Kirpan* (Sword) is symbolic of three main features - cutting the individual self from the immortal universal self... and declaration of sovereignty over oneself... *Kachh* (underpant) was intended to symbolise the spiritual and mental breakaway from traditional dress (Singh, Santokh: 1991:17-18).

Santokh Singh's (1991) understanding moves away from earlier militaristic interpretations as he views the Five Ks as 'symbols' of Sikh identity. He also introduces notions of nature and cosmology in his understanding of the Five Ks. The Five Ks have also been interpreted as constant reminders of disciplined and moral behaviour. For instance, it is suggested that the *kach* reinforces moral values by symbolising self-control, the *karā* symbolises abstinence from immoral acts and the *kanghā* cleanliness of the body and mind (Dimpy Gurvinder Singh: 1996).

Similarly, Uberoi (1975) employs a structural method to understand the historical significance of the Five Ks. He attempts to examine the ideological meanings and social functions attached to certain Sikh external signifiers. He argues that the Sikh symbol of *kes* is associated with the ceremony of initiation that sought to invert Hindu practices of cutting hair amongst *sannyasis*.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, there was a deliberate attempt to construct a distinct external Sikh identity that would renounce former modes of being.

Furthermore, historians such as Gandhi (1978) continue to describe *kes* as a symbol of holiness using Jesus as an example of an important historical figure who maintained his long hair and beard. Gandhi (1978) employs an aesthetic approach to understanding the *kes* as being beautiful, mystical and most important a 'gift' from God. On the other hand, Kaur (1997) interprets *kes* within the realms of scientific reasoning. For instance, she provides a detailed account of the biological necessity for Sikhs to maintain unshorn hair because hair produces Vitamin D, necessary for healthy living. The use of science to justify the importance of the *kes* has gained momentum in recent times especially amongst the younger generation of Khālsā Sikhs.

---

<sup>28</sup> Ascetic renunciates who claim to have reached the last stage of life.

The section above has demonstrated how the Five Ks are interpreted within secondary sources on the Sikhs. For instance, traditional meanings associated with the Five Ks can be transferred into a modern context that may produce endless systems of meanings. However, these writings have been largely descriptive rather than analytical because they fail to investigate the historical origins of the Five Ks. The historical origins of the Five Ks has been an area of research that has been largely neglected because the majority of scholars such as Teja Singh (1963) and Harbans Singh (1994) assume that the Five Ks were originally introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

Teja Singh (1963) and Harbans Singh (1994) defend the traditional narrative of the Five Ks being introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. It is argued that Guru Gobind Singh had been disappointed with Sikhs that stood and watched the execution of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. As a result, Guru Gobind Singh formulated the Five Ks as highly visible external articles so that Sikh followers could be easily identifiable. Therefore, according to these historians the Five Ks ensured that the newly established Khalsa Sikhs could be distinguished from other religious communities (Shani: 2010). However, these historians fail to provide sufficient primary evidence to support the claim that Guru Gobind Singh instructed Khalsa Sikhs to maintain the Five Ks in 1699.

This type of scholarship often leads to romantic interpretations because the historians 'promote' and 'defend' the uniqueness of the Five Ks. Ballantyne (2006) argues that this type of scholarship can be described as 'Khālsācentric' precisely because it views the Five Ks free from empirical analysis. These historians neglect to consider the possibility that the formula of the Five Ks may have been introduced at a later date in Sikh history. In response to Khālsācentric literature a number of scholars have challenged the assertion that the Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. For example, Kushwant Singh a prominent historian wrote:

We are not even sure of the exact details of what transpired at Anandpur Sahib on Baisakhi (April 13) in the year 1699. I am pretty certain that the requirement of the five 'Ks' was not spelt out there: Sikh Gurus before Gobind Singh were wearing their hair and beards unshorn and to this day no one has been able to explain the significance of the *kadda* (steel bracelet) to me (Khushwant Singh: 1999: 1).

Similarly, W.H. McLeod also believes that the requirement to maintain the Five Ks was not spelt out at the inauguration of the Khālsā in 1699. McLeod (2003) argues that it is the objective of the historian to question historical references in the search for deeper knowledge. However, in his article titled, *Cries of Outrage: History versus Tradition in the study of the Sikh community* (1994) he acknowledges that to study what 'others' hold sacred is a difficult task especially when you are viewed as an 'outsider' to that tradition. As a result, some of McLeod's research has been the target of fierce polemics because of its perceived threat to traditional beliefs.

In his book, *Sikhs of the Khālsā: A History of the Khālsā Rahit*, (2003) he adopts an empirical approach to understanding the historical origins of Khālsā identity and the Five Ks. His book is divided into two parts: the first part interprets eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature and the second part includes English translations of key *rahit-nāmās* which provide some of the earliest definitions of Khālsā Sikhs. McLeod (2003) challenges the traditional view that Guru Gobind Singh introduced the convention of the Five Ks in 1699:

...the Five Ks are not a part of the Rahit until we reach the Singh Sabha reformation.<sup>29</sup> Guru Gobind Singh did not include them in his instructions at

---

<sup>29</sup> Singh Sabha Reform Movement (1873-1920) was instrumental in constructing a uniform identity that was modelled upon Khālsā Sikhs. The reform movement developed in the later part of the nineteenth century as a reaction to colonial forces.

the founding of the Khālsā; they do not appear during the following century and three quarters; and they make their appearance only when Singh Sabha reformers were convinced that the Guru *must* have introduced them (McLeod: 2003: 204).

According to McLeod (2003) there is no eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* that clearly supports the claim that the Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. This conclusion is controversial because it challenges the widely held belief that they were originally introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. In a later article titled, *The Five Ks of the Khālsā Sikhs* (2008) he points out that the problem with most traditional understandings of the Five Ks is that they rely on sources written by Sikh reformers towards the end of the nineteenth century.

J.S. Grewal (1998) also accepts that early primary sources do not mention the convention of the Five Ks introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. However, in contrast to McLeod (2003), Grewal (1998) believes that the Five Ks were already part of the Khālsā apparel during the inauguration of the Khālsā in 1699. Grewal (1998) argues that Singh Sabha reformers in the late nineteenth century simply systematised the intention of the last Guru by introducing the term “Five Ks”. Therefore, Singh Sabha reformists were the first to write down the convention of the Five Ks that was until then passed down through oral transmission. Grewal (1998) argues that we must make a distinction between the later formulation of the Five Ks and the five external signifiers that were already accepted within the oral tradition.

The oral tradition was important because the majority of people in early Punjab were illiterate and would therefore transmit knowledge down from one generation to another through revered *sants* or holy men. The process of oral transmission required rigorous memorisation and recitation on the part of the facilitator. It is plausible to argue that the convention of the Five Ks



existed through the oral tradition before they were actually recorded in textual form. However, it would be very difficult to re-trace the historical origins of the Five Ks within oral tradition because you cannot contact people that no longer exist. Nonetheless, Grewal (1998) criticises McLeod's empirical approach for neglecting the oral tradition in which knowledge was transmitted. In response to this criticism McLeod (2003) writes:

There is no intention of denying that all five items may have been worn by Khālsā Sikhs since the very earliest days of the order. It is true that only the *kes*, *kachh*, and *kirpān* may have been specified, but it can still be assumed as at least probable that the *kanghā* and *karā* would have been a part of their standard dress. But this is not the subject at issue. The subject concerns the question whether or not Guru Gobind Singh decreed these Five Ks as a part of the Rahit which he promulgated at the inauguration of the Khālsā (McLeod: 2003: 212).

McLeod (2003) is not challenging the existence of the Five Ks at the inauguration of the Khālsā in 1699, but is instead arguing that there is no historical evidence supporting the claim that it was Guru Gobind Singh who instructed Khālsā Sikhs to maintain Five Ks. Hence, according to McLeod (2003) the instruction to maintain the Five Ks evolved much later towards the end of the nineteenth century within Singh Sabha literature.

Harjot Oberoi's book, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition* (1995) also supports McLeod's conclusion. Oberoi's (1995) study offers important insights into the formation of Khālsā identity and the Five Ks within nineteenth century Punjab. He argues that the Singh Sabha reformist literature, 'reified the outward symbols of the faith' (Oberoi: 1994:334). In other words, Singh Sabha reformers published literature that

emphasised Guru Gobind Singh's instruction for Khālsā Sikhs to maintain the Five Ks. This interpretation gained hegemony and became widely accepted amongst Sikhs towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Similarly, Pashaura Singh (1996) argues that the convention of the Five Ks evolved much later within the nineteenth century. For example, he states, 'the full significance of the 'Five Ks' developed slowly within the Sikh Panth' (Pashaura Singh: 1996: 165). Pashaura Singh (1996) argues that Singh Sabha reformers replaced the 'five weapons' with 'five religious symbols' as a response to the British colonial ban on carrying weapons during the nineteenth century. The traditional five weapons were perceived as a threat to British colonists but they accepted the *kirpān* as an important part of Khālsā identity. Therefore, it is argued that the convention of the Five Ks developed in response to the British colonisation of Punjab (1849-1947).

Richard Fox (1990) also offers some useful insights into the impact of British colonisation upon Khālsā identity. His book, *Lions of Punjab* (1990) examines census reports and army recruitment records to demonstrate how British military officials admired the martial characteristics of the Khālsā Sikhs. Fox (1990) argues that Khālsā Sikhs that maintained the Five Ks were specifically recruited into the British army because they were viewed as loyal, obedient and disciplined. However, his work can be criticised for overstating the British impact upon the formation of Khālsā identity because he views Khālsā Sikhs as passive subjects. This type of reductionism may help to explain 'why' certain groups were open to manipulation, but it ignores the dynamic role of the indigenous Sikh subject. We have briefly outlined some of the main arguments put forward by authors on the historical origins of the Five Ks. We shall now discuss how this research contributes to the ongoing debate on the origins the Five Ks.

## 1.6: Methodology: Critical Historiography and the origins of the Five Ks.

There is a debate within current literature as to when the Five Ks were actually introduced and secondly, what the five actual items were. When considering the historical origins of the 'Five Ks' there seems to be two opposing schools of thought. The 'traditional' school of thought reconfirms the claim that the Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699, and most Sikhs would certainly uphold this view. However, the second, more 'critical' school of thought uses empirical analysis to demonstrate that the Five Ks evolved much later on throughout Sikh history. This study adopts a 'critical' approach to investigating the historical evolution of the Five Ks because it is argued that there is no satisfactory evidence to support the claim that the Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. However, this is not to say that Khālsā Sikhs did not maintain external signifiers but rather that the Five Ks were not specified by Guru Gobind Singh.

This study demonstrates how the Five Ks were formulated within Singh Sabha literature published in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, this study is an extension of Hew McLeod's (2003) research which supports his conclusion that the formula of the Five Ks was first published in Sumer Singh's *Khālsā Panchāsikā* (1883) (McLeod: 2003: 208). However, McLeod's (2003) study is limited because he offers a very brief sketch (approx. 9 pages) on Sikh texts that mention the Five Ks. The section is structured as a chronological list that is both short and mainly descriptive.

McLeod (2003) accepts the prominence given *panj hathiār* or five weapons during the eighteenth century but provides no explanation on how these later evolved into the Five Ks.

Overall, McLeod (2003) fails to provide in-depth context and critical analysis on the evolution of the Five Ks within Sikh texts.

This research goes further than McLeod's (2003) study because it attempts to examine the reasons 'why' and 'how' the Five Ks emerged within nineteenth century literature. For example, this study attempts to critically discuss the following questions:

- How Sikhs in the eighteenth century attempted to formulate the Five Ks as a 'reaction' to dominant religious practises at the time?
- How Europeans in the nineteenth century laid the foundations for a modern 'uniform' Sikh identity modelled on the Khālsā Sikh?
- How Singh Sabha scholars were influenced British colonisation (1849-1947) and the resurgence of neo-Hinduism in the formulation of the Five Ks?

It also differs from previous studies because it also discusses the different meanings associated with the Five Ks throughout different historical periods including challenges faced within the Sikh diaspora discussed earlier in this chapter. Therefore, this study provides a more complete and detailed historical narrative on the evolution of the Five Ks than McLeod (2003). For example, his study concludes the evolution of the Five Ks with the publication of Sumer Singh's *Khālsā Panchāsikā* (1883). This study continues to examine the evolution of the Five Ks up until the publication of the modern 1950 *Sikh Rahit Maryada* which is today viewed as the official *rahit* for Sikhs around the world.

This study mainly employs Critical Historiography to deconstruct and critically analyse the formulation of the Five Ks within key historical texts. This method allows us to adopt a new and

creative way to read history that challenges the linear and narrative model of history (Bann: 1981). Historians such as Hew McLeod (2003) adopt an empiricist 'objective' approach to understanding Sikh texts through a linear model of Sikh history. Critical Historiography introduces epistemological relativism as accepting that no positions can be unproblematically endorsed over others and that 'objective truth' is unattainable. This approach views historical texts as a form of communication that requires continuous critical reflection (Pihlainen: 2011).

Therefore, the method of Critical Historiography allows to depart from McLeod's (2003) study and understand the dominant historical movements that helped shape our modern understanding of the Five Ks; for example, the ideological, social and political context of the various writers in their formulation of the Five Ks. This study departs from previous studies that is limited to systematically accessing meaning within texts but instead attempts to understand meanings beyond the text. Therefore, this study provides valuable insights into the way in which the convention of the Five Ks evolved within Sikh literature and beyond.

This research was mainly library-based because it involved examining key historical texts. It was largely based at the following libraries - University of Birmingham, University of Warwick, The British Library (London), School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and Hofstra University (New York, USA). A considerable amount of time was involved in collecting and analysing primary sources such as census reports, administrative ethnographies, travel narratives, histories, newspapers, pamphlets and legal documents. Many of these sources contained nothing of relevance to this study. The most valuable primary source containing the earliest references to some of the Five Ks are the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* texts. The following representative sample was carefully selected:

- I. *Sainapati's Sri Gur Sobhā* (1711 CE)

- II. *Tanakhāh-nāmā* (1718-19 CE)
- III. *Prahlād Rāi Rahit-nāmā* (1730 CE)
- V. *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā* (1740-1765 CE)
- VI. *Desā Singh Rahit-nāmā* (late eighteenth century)
- VII. *Dayā Singh Rahit-nāmā* (late eighteenth century)

These key eighteenth century texts will form the basis of a more in-depth discussion into the historical origins of the Five Ks in the following chapter. The *rahit-nāmā* texts provide valuable qualitative data on how Khālsā Sikhs were defined during the eighteenth century immediately after the creation of the Khālsā. However, we must be aware that there are important distinctions between historical texts and religious praxis. The *rahit-nāmā* texts provide us with an idealised representation of Khālsā Sikhs which does not necessarily take into consideration different practises that may have existed during the eighteenth century. In addition, this study also examines primary sources written by early Europeans and Singh Sabha reformers across the nineteenth century. These include the work of John Malcolm (1769-1833), Joseph Davey Cunningham (1812-1851), Ernest Trumpp (1828-1885), Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913), Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) and Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957). Moreover, these significant texts will be critically analysed and discussed in relation to the formulation of the Five Ks.

### **1.7: Methodological Problems: Translating across Culture and Language.**

The main methodological problem in this study was the difficulty in translating and understanding primary sources. For any scholar there are epistemological problems associated

with interpreting texts from old Punjabi/Gurmukhi across into English. Furthermore, I have a limited ability in reading and criticising original Punjabi/Gurmukhi sources. Also, due to time constraints it was difficult to locate some of the rarer Punjabi/Gurmukhi sources. As a result, this research relied heavily on reputable English translations provided by leading scholar W. H. McLeod. To avoid over reliance on a single translation fellow colleagues such as Manpreet Harrar verified translations and helped to deconstruct key terms within some of the older Punjabi texts e.g. *rahit-nāmā* literature. This collaborative approach to translating and interpreting texts offered more insights and a deeper understanding. However, my reliance on others and sources in English may also be liable to error, one should be aware of this danger when reading this thesis.

Mandair (2006) argues that the process of cross-cultural translation should also attempt to deconstruct assumptions embedded within English categories. The process of interpreting of historical texts can therefore be brought into question because it is not free from bias. Moreover, Gadamer (1975) points out that all translations are subjective because the translator cannot suspend their own 'cultural baggage'. Therefore, we must be careful in how we translate key terms across different languages and cultures.

As a result, this study attempts to remain sensitive to the original texts by being aware of different linguistic structures and styles. For example, Punjabi/Gurmukhi terms are used alongside English translations to allow the reader to check the accuracy of the translation. The closest approximations of English terms have been carefully selected and in some cases footnotes have been used to explain difficult terms including the etymology of the word. In addition, diacritics and transliteration are used where appropriate and italics are used to emphasise key terms that are normally found in the Punjabi language. Finally, the University

guidelines on referencing have been followed but for authors with the surname Singh, full names have been used to avoid confusion between authors.

### **1.8: Structure of Thesis.**

The thesis is organised in chronological order to allow the reader to follow key developmental stages in the formation of the Five Ks. The chapters provide an in-depth analysis of significant texts belonging to a particular century. There is also a thematic link from one chapter to the next reflecting the continuation of the historical narrative on the Five Ks. The chapters are briefly outlined as follows:

Chapter 2 entitled, '*Eighteenth Century Rahit-nāmā Literature: The Early Formulation of Khālsā Identity and the Five Ks*', provides the necessary background to understanding early Khālsā identity formation. The chapter will begin with a discussion on some of the earliest definitions of Khālsā Sikhs within the eighteenth century. The chapter will examine some of the earliest references to external signifiers within the *rahit-nāmā* literature. This chapter demonstrates how the compilers of the various *rahit-nāmās* were moving towards creating a distinct Khālsā identity. However, the eighteenth century *rahit-namas* fail to mention the convention of the Five Ks believed to be introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

Chapter 3, '*Nineteenth Century Literature on the Sikhs: The European Interpretation of Khālsā Sikhs within Modernity*', moves on from early traditional Sikh texts to discussing nineteenth century European writings on the Sikhs. This chapter unravels modernist presuppositions inherent within European writings on Khālsā Sikhs and their external signifiers. This chapter will



discuss the ideological constraints within the politics of cultural translation. It is argued that European literature on the Sikhs homogenised difference and laid the foundations of a modern 'uniform' Khālsā identity that eventually required the Five Ks.

This form of cultural translation was to be appropriated by the later Singh Sabha reformers (1873-1920) discussed in Chapter 4, '*Self-Representation of the Colonised: The Re-configuration of the 'Khālsā' within the Singh Sabha episteme*'. These Singh Sabha reformers endorsed a uniform 'Khālsā' identity that not only introduced but reinforced the importance attached to the Five Ks. The convention of the Five Ks became widely accepted through the circulation of published Singh Sabha texts towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Singh Sabha formulation of the Five Ks has also been appropriated throughout the Sikh diaspora.

## **Chapter 2: Eighteenth Century *Rahit-nāmā* Literature: The Early Formulation of Khālsā Identity and the Five Ks.**

The eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā*<sup>30</sup> literature proves to be a valuable source in understanding the early formulation of the Five Ks. In fact, much of what we know today about Khālsā Sikhs can be traced back to this body of literature which is regarded as the earliest proclamation of Khālsā identity. These texts discuss the fundamental beliefs, ideals and practises essential to Khālsā Sikhs during the eighteenth century. The texts also describe the moral and social injunctions that were placed upon Khālsā Sikhs during the tenure of Guru Gobind Singh. This chapter will critically examine the *rahit-nāmā* literature and discuss references made to external signifiers. It is argued that the *rahit-nāmā* literature describes certain external signifiers that are mandatory for Khālsā Sikhs, however, these are not listed as the widely accepted *panj kakārs* or Five Ks. Therefore, the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* challenge the widely accepted view that Guru Gobind Singh instructed Khālsā Sikhs to maintain the Five Ks.

### **2.1: The Eighteenth Century *Rahit-nāmā* Literature.**

According to Sikh tradition, the original Khālsā *rahit* was promulgated by Guru Gobind Singh at the inauguration of the Khālsā in 1699. The *rahit* not only placed new injunctions upon Khālsā Sikhs but also re-confirmed existing beliefs and practises. After the death of the Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, it became apparent that there was a need for Sikh beliefs and practises to be

---

<sup>30</sup> The *rahit-nāmās* can be understood as codes of conduct that record the rare testimonies of Sikhs from the eighteenth century. The script employed in each of the *rahit-nāmā* is Gurmukhi and the language Punjabi. The *rahit-nāmā* texts would have only been accessible to a small number of literate Sikhs who could read the script. As a result, the content of these texts would have been mainly transmitted orally to the members of the Sikh Panth. This method required rigorous memorisation to accurately repeat the content of the *rahit* to others.

clearly defined. As a result, prominent Sikhs during the eighteenth century began to document *rahit* injunctions specific to Khālsā Sikhs. The following key *rahit-nāmā* texts have been instrumental in shaping Khālsā identity:

- I. Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobhā* (1711 CE)
- II. *Tanakhāh-nāmā* (1718-19 CE)
- III. *Prahlād Rāi Rahit-nāmā* (1730 CE)
- IV. *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā* (1740-1765 CE)
- V. *Desā Singh Rahit-nāmā* (late eighteenth century)
- VI. *Dayā Singh Rahit-nāmā* (late eighteenth century)

Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobhā*<sup>31</sup> is not strictly classified as a *rahit-nāmā* but nonetheless provides important evidence on injunctions placed upon Khālsā Sikhs, therefore for the purpose of this study it has been placed within the larger body of eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature. The *Prem Sumārag* text which is regarded as one of the earliest *rahit-nāmā* has been omitted from this analysis because it largely provided evidence on *Sanātan* Sikhs as opposed to Khālsā Sikhs. The *Sākhi Rahit ki* text has also been omitted from the above list because according to McLeod (2003) it is not easily dated as belonging to the eighteenth century.

The dates above for the *rahit-nāmā* literature correspond with McLeod's (2003) study which have been widely accepted as being accurate. However, according to Malhotra (2009) historians such as Grewal and Mann argue that the *Tanakhāh-nāmā* and *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā* were both composed in the lifetime of Guru Gobind Singh. Despite the difficulty in dating certain *rahit-nāmās*, the compilers began to describe a distinct Khālsā identity by documenting

---

<sup>31</sup> The text is normally classified as a *gur-bila* which focuses on the heroic actions of the Gurus.

what they believed to be the 'original' *rahit* (code of behaviour) instructed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

However, as we discover in this chapter the various eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* vary in content and style. McLeod (2003) argues that the *rahit-nāmās* may have been composed by a combination of authors which would explain some of the changes in structure and language. This suggests that some of the *rahit-nāmā* sources are not entirely reliable because of deliberate changes found in later versions. Therefore, we must be careful in interpreting the *rahit-nāmās* because they do not contain the actual views of Guru Gobind Singh but rather the particular interpretation of the author.

We have selected relevant sections to provide a basis for discussing the formulation of eighteenth century Khālsā identity and the Five Ks. The eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature does not support a 'fixed' definition of the Khālsā Sikh but does agree that Khālsā Sikhs were to occupy a central position within the Sikh community during the eighteenth century. The creation of the Khālsā Panth was the most important historical event in the formation of early Khālsā identity. The traditional account of the creation of the Khālsā Panth has been normally transmitted orally throughout the Sikh community. However, the *rahit-nāmās* are the first texts to document in detail the creation of the Khālsā Panth towards the end of the seventeenth century.

## **2.2: The Creation of the Khālsā Panth within Eighteenth Century *Rahit-nama* literature.**

The earliest version of a *rahit-nāmā* text is said to be Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobhā* completed in 1745 by Sainapati, a court poet present in the *darbar* of Guru Gobind Singh. The text is important because it provides us with the earliest reference to the creation of the Khālsā Panth.

The text states that the reason for the creation of the Khālsā Panth was to 'complete' the moral vision outlined by earlier Sikh Gurus. The text also describes how it was imperative for Guru Gobind Singh to abolish the *masands* (representatives of the Guru) and replace them with the Khālsā. The *masands* were becoming increasingly corrupt because they retained donations that were to be issued to the Guru. Consequently, Guru Gobind Singh issued a *hukam-nāmā* towards the end of the seventeenth century that requested followers to dissociate themselves from the *masands* (Oberoi: 1997):

'Abandon the masands; meditate on the one Lord': this was the command that was issued at the time [of the creation of the Khālsā]. (*Srī Gur Sobhā*: 5: trans. McLeod: 2003: 268)

According to the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā*, Guru Gobind Singh sent a *hukam-nāmā* or letter of command to summon Sikhs to the centre of Anandpur on the day of Baisakhi. The actual date for the creation of the Khālsā Panth at Anandpur is debated within the *rahit-nāmā* literature. For example, Sainapati's *Gur Sobhā* gives the date as 1695, whilst the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* gives the date as 1697. Despite these differences within the various *rahit-nāmās*, 1699 has become the official date that is widely accepted amongst Sikhs today (McLeod: 1995).

The *rahit-nāmā* literature continues to describe the day that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khālsā Panth. For instance, Sainapati's *Gur Sobhā* describes how the Guru demanded the head of a loyal Sikh who would lay down their life for the Sikh faith. The *rahit-nāmā* literature slightly varies on what actually happened next as regards to the five volunteers. However, most agree with the *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* which states that the Guru sacrificed the five volunteers only to then later reveal all five Sikhs unharmed. The five Sikhs were then dressed and required

to undergo initiation which Sainapati's *Gur Sobhā* refers to as '*khande di pāhul*' (McLeod: 2003:197). The new initiation ceremony included sacred water which was stirred with the *khāndā* (sword). It replaced *charan pāhul*<sup>32</sup> which used water touched by the Guru's feet. The *rahit-nāmā* literature states that those who failed to undergo *khande di pāhul* initiation were to be viewed as heterodox. The introduction of the new initiation ritual marked an important shift in the formation of a distinct Khālsā identity (Oberoi: 1997).

The *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* states the guru then gave corporate power to the five volunteers who were now referred to as the *panj piāre* (five beloved). The Guru then requested to be baptised in the same manner by the *panj piāre*. Sainapati's *Sri Gur Sobhā* text describes how Khālsā Sikhs assumed the surname Singh replacing their hereditary names (McLeod: 2003:199). This radical act altered the traditional power relations between the Guru and his disciples who were now deemed as equals. This was in direct violation of established caste rules and for this reason Brahmans and Khatriis refused to become Khālsā Sikhs. As a result, the Khālsā initiation attracted many lower caste followers who could now elevate their social position in Punjabi Society (Gandhi: 1978).

### **2.3: Hindu and Muslim influences in the creation of Khālsā Panth.**

The most prominent feature located in some of the *rahit-nāmās* is the discussion of the role of the Hindu goddess, referred to as Devi in the creation of the Khālsā Panth. The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā*<sup>33</sup> describes in detail how Guru Gobind Singh sought the blessing of the goddess,

---

<sup>32</sup> The *charan pāhul* method of initiation was still practised by *Udāsī* and *Nirmalā* Sikhs.

<sup>33</sup> The longest *rahit-nāmā* text is the *Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā* which covers almost every aspect of Sikh life. The text is attributed to Chaupa Singh who is believed to be a later tutor of Guru Gobind Singh. He was most likely a

prior to the creation of the Khālsā. It is argued that the goddess provides the necessary power and strength required for Khālsā Sikhs to fight in battle. The only other *rahit-nāmā* to mention the importance attached to the role of the goddess is the *rahit-nāmā* attributed to Daya Singh.<sup>34</sup> The *Daya Singh rahit-nāmā* differs from other eighteenth century texts because it states that the Khālsā can 'only' be created through the mediation of Brahmans who can summon the goddess. Dhavan (2007) argues that the text is biased towards Brahmans because it attempts to secure greater patronage for them during the eighteenth century.

The *Daya Singh rahit-nāmā* also states that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khālsā Panth to end moral depravity within *kaliyuga* (age of darkness). For example, the text refers to Kalki Avatar (destroyer of sin) who would be the last incarnation of Vishnu signalling the end of kaliyuga. This text clearly draws on Hindu mythology to reinforce the importance attached in creating Khālsā Panth (McLeod: 2003). During the eighteenth century, Hindu mythology and practises continued to influence the Sikh Panth. For example, the *rahit-nāmā* attributed to Desa Singh states that Khālsā Sikhs should respect cows as sacred animals and protect the Hindu Brahmans from their enemies. The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* also supports the continuation of the *shraddh* ceremony which is normally performed for the deceased.

However, some of the injunctions contained within the *rahit-nāmās* are directly placed against what are considered to be degenerate Hindu customs and practises. For example, the *rahit-nāmās* place injunctions against the worship of Hindu idols, wearing the sacred Hindu thread and visiting Hindu places of pilgrimage. The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* states that Brahmans are no longer required to conduct Sikh marriages and other rituals. The text clearly reinforces Sikh

---

Chhibbar Brahman because the text requests preferential treatment to be given to Brahmans as opposed to the rapid influx of Jats (McLeod: 2003).

<sup>34</sup> Daya Singh is traditionally believed to be one of the original *panj piāre*. However, the *rahit-nāmā* is dated after the death of Daya Singh. This work is also expressed in modern Khari Boli which indicates that it can be dated towards the end of the eighteenth century.

collective identity separate to that from the Hindu. The various authors of the *rahit-nāmās* both approve and disapprove of particular Hindu customs and beliefs. Thus, it is argued that Khālsā identity was shaped by the existing dominant Hindu culture prevalent within eighteenth century Punjab (McLeod: 2003).

In addition, there is also a deliberate attempt within the *rahit-nāmās* to separate Khālsā Sikhs from the Muslims. This reflects the political climate at the time because during the first part of the eighteenth century there was intense conflict between Khālsā Sikhs and the Mughals. Soon after the fall of the Mughals, Khālsā Sikhs continued to participate in battles against the invading Afghan armies led by Ahmad Shah Abdali (1722-1773). The common enemy for Khālsā Sikhs at this point were the Muslim rulers and invaders.

This *Daya Singh rahit-nāmā* reflects extremely anti-Muslim sentiments because the author criticises all those that worship Muhammad. The text forbids Khālsā Sikhs to eat *kutthā* (halal) meat which is directly against Khālsā *rahit*. In addition, the *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* warns Khālsā Sikhs to never trust a Muslim. However, this text goes much further by stating that it is the duty of the Khālsā Sikh to destroy Muslims (Oberoi: 1997). The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* shows considerable hostility towards beliefs and practises associated with Muslims. These anti-Muslim injunctions within the *rahit-nāmās* increased the separateness of Khālsā identity from their 'common enemy'. Therefore, the external conflict with the Mughals and Afghans throughout the eighteenth century had a major impact on the formation of early Khālsā identity.

Oberoi (1999) points out the Khālsā code of conduct emphasised within the *rahit-nāmā* literature was 'reactionary' to the dominant religious practises at the time. The *rahit-nāmās* confirm that the creation of the Khālsā Panth marked a significant rupture in existing religious practises in



contrast with both Hindus and Muslims. However, during the eighteenth century the *rahit-nāmās* also confirm evidence of internal conflict within the Sikh Panth that led to factionalism.

#### **2.4: Factionalism within the Eighteenth Century Sikh Panth.**

The eighteenth century Sikh Panth was 'heterogeneous' with the existence of many traditions and practises. This allowed different groups to flourish and create a sense of identity within the wider Sikh Panth. For instance, the *sahajdhārī* group that included *udāsīs* and *nirmalās* continued to maintain important roles such as collecting revenue and managing the gurdwaras. The *sahajdhārīs* existed prior to the creation of the Khālsā and could trace their origins back in history. Khālsā Sikhs quickly forged an internal alliance with *sahajdhārī* Sikhs who would continue to carry out social duties for the wider Sikhs Panth. This allowed Khālsā Sikhs to focus and prepare for upcoming battles against the Mughals and later the Afghans (Oberoi: 1997).

The *sahajdhārī* Sikhs held a firm belief in the Sikh Gurus but they did not consider the Khālsā *rahit* applicable to them. For this reason they refrained from being baptised through *khande di pāhul* and maintaining external signifiers, e.g. *Udāsī* Sikhs refused to maintain weapons. Instead, they continued to mat their hair, renounce the material world and reject the authority of the *panj piāre* which was central to Khālsā Sikhs (McLeod: 1995). It is argued that *sahajdhārī* and Khālsā Sikhs signified opposites within the Sikh Panth, this point is reflected within the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature (Oberoi: 1997).

The *rahit-nāmās* refer to *sahajdhārīs* as those who have not been initiated through *khande di pāhul*. The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* states that a loyal 'Gursikh' (Sikh of the Guru) must

receive *khande di pāhul* initiation. Similarly, Sainapati's *Gur Sobha* states that Guru Gobind Singh required 'all' Sikhs to become members the Khālsā. The text goes on to describing Khālsā Sikhs as *gurmukhs* (followers of the Guru) and everyone else as *manmukhs* (follower of one's own mind). Sainapati's text clearly represents the Khālsā Sikh as the ideal Sikh form and therefore relegates *sahajdhārīs* to the periphery (Oberoi: 1997). It is evident that the eighteenth century *rahit-namas* clearly represent Khalsa Sikhs as the 'ideal'.

However, we must note that not all Sikhs including Guru Gobind Singh's closest disciples such as Bhai Nand Lal were required to become Khālsā Sikhs. It is also debated amongst scholars whether Sainapati himself received *khande di pāhul* initiation because he does not employ the surname 'Singh' (McLeod: 2003). Consequently, McLeod (2003) argues that, 'it is not possible to affirm definitively that all who were regarded as Sikhs of the Khālsā had in fact been formally initiated as members' (McLeod: 2003: 8).

Lal (1999) sheds some light on the position of *sahajdhārī* Sikhs within the eighteenth century. He argues that the category of 'Khālsā Sikh' during the time of Guru Gobind Singh actually included *sahajdhārī* Sikhs. According to Lal (1999), this significant point is supported by an early eighteenth century *hukam-nāmā* which states that Guru Gobind Singh gave full recognition to *sahajdhārī* Sikhs as 'his' Khālsā:

By the command of the Guru, to the entire sangat of Phirag [which] is my  
Khālsā: The Guru watches over you... Arm yourself and come for darshan.  
(10 Phaggan, Sammat [17]58 in Singh Ganda: 1967 cited in McLeod: 2003:  
37)

The *hukam-nāmā* is dated as written in 1702 CE, immediately after the inauguration of the Khālsā. However, it is not clear from this passage what is meant by the entire ‘*sangat of Phirag*’. Despite this uncertainty within this particular *hukam-nāmā*, the *rahit-nāmās* clearly state that Khālsā Sikhs should be formally initiated through *khande di pāhul*. Furthermore, the *rahit-nāmā* literature represents the Khālsā Sikhs as ‘orthodox’ and encourages all Sikhs to become members of the newly established Khālsā Panth (Dhavan: 2007).

The eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature also refers to groups such as the panj mel, or five reprobate groups that Khālsā Sikhs must avoid. The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* states that some of these groups belonged to the rival Sodhi sub-caste lineage, which included the descendants of Prithi Chand (1558-1618), Dhir Mal (1627-1677) and Ram Rai (1646-1687) (McLeod: 2003). It is believed that Guru Gobind Singh wanted to remove the threat posed by competing seats of authority to the orthodox line of ten Sikh Gurus (Pashaura Singh: 1999). The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* explicitly states that Khālsā Sikhs should avoid these five reprobate groups. Moreover, it reminds Khālsā Sikhs of the *tanakhas*<sup>35</sup> associated with those who disobey this command. Therefore, the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* begins to demarcate new religious boundaries by distancing Khālsā Sikhs from groups that are labelled as ‘deviant’ including Bandai Sikhs.

According to Sikh tradition, in 1708 Guru Gobind Singh transferred corporate leadership to the Adi Granth and appointed Banda Bahadur (1670-1716) as *Jathedar* of the Khālsā panth.<sup>36</sup> Banda Bahadur attracted followers mainly from *jat* peasantry who persisted at the margins of Punjabi society. He was particularly known for his heroic struggle against the Emperor Bahadur

---

<sup>35</sup> The word *tanakha* means fine or penance imposed on a member of the Khālsā that breaks the *rahit*.

<sup>36</sup> Banda Bahadur was originally known as Lachman Das. It is believed that Guru Gobind Singh gave a *hukam-nāmā* addressed to the Sikhs to obey the leadership of Banda Singh or Banda Bahadur who had recently been appointed *Jathedar* of the Khālsā Panth.

Shah which is understood as a political triumph for Khālsā Sikhs. However, according to Sangat Singh (1991), Banda Bahadur violated Guru Gobind Singh's instruction to give corporate leadership to the council of *panj piāre*. Instead, Banda Bahadur emerged as the absolute leader of the Khālsā Panth. Furthermore, he introduced factionalism within the Khālsā Panth by instructing his followers to wear red as opposed to the traditional blue, to become vegetarian and employ a new slogan '*fateh darshan*' (McLeod: 1995).

As a result, Banda Bahadur's reputation was tarnished amongst Khālsā Sikhs who strongly identified with Mata Sundari (1666-1708) widow of Guru Gobind Singh. These Khālsā Sikhs who were now under the leadership of Mani Singh (1673-1738) became known as the '*Tat Khālsā*' (pure Khālsā). The Khālsā Panth within the early eighteenth century was now split into two factional groups - the 'Bandai Sikhs' and the 'Tat Khālsā'. The *rahit-nāmā* literature reflects this tension between the two groups; all the *rahit-nāmās* are supportive towards the Tat Khālsā group. For example, the *Tanakhāh-nāmā*, *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* and the *Prahlād Rāi rahit-nāmā* all include an injunction against the wearing of red clothing (*sūhe*) associated with the Bandai Sikhs.

According to Sikh tradition, the Akalis (Immortals) later known as the Nihangs, also felt that Banda Bahadur was subverting the tenets of Guru Gobind Singh. During the eighteenth century the Akalis were feared warriors who revered weapons (*shastars*). Sangat Singh (1999) argues that they were established by Banda Bahadur to only later turn against him. The *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* is the only text that contains a definition for Akali Nihang Sikhs. The text discusses practises that are associated with this group such as eating goat killed with a single blow (*jhatkā*) and the consumption of intoxicants (*bhang*) before battles (Pashaura Singh: 1999).

During the early eighteenth century there was factionalism within the Sikh Panth between competing groups claiming to be 'true' representatives of the Guru. These distinct groups followed beliefs and practises that they considered to be authentic and sacred. However, the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* represent the Tat Khālsā group as the 'normative' tradition because it is believed that they followed the *rahit* delivered by Guru Gobind Singh (McLeod: 2003). Throughout the later part of the eighteenth century the Tat Khālsā Sikhs continued to observe *rahit* rigorously which included the instruction to maintain certain external signifiers.

## **2.5: The early formulation of the 'Five Ks' within the eighteenth century *Rahit-nāmā* literature.**

The *Tat Khālsā* episteme within the *rahit-nāmās* marked a significant departure from early modes of Sikh identity. According to the *rahit-nāmās* those that underwent *khande di pāhul* were also instructed to maintain certain external signifiers. The importance attached to maintaining external symbols was reinforced through the persecution Sikhs faced during the eighteenth century. The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* points out that the introduction of shared external signifiers allowed Khālsā Sikhs to feel part of a distinct community of followers who stood out amongst the crowd. Therefore, there was a deliberate attempt to construct a distinct Khālsā identity through the introduction of external symbols. However, a closer examination of the *rahit-nāmās* reveals conflicting opinions over what these external symbols were to be for Khālsā Sikhs.

According to McLeod (2003) the earliest *hukam-nama* S.1759 (1702 CE)<sup>37</sup> attributed to Guru Gobind Singh describes how the Guru instructed Sikhs to maintain ‘five weapons’ or *panj hathiār*. The ‘five weapons’ are said to be the sword (*kirpān*), bow (*kamān*), musket (*bandūk*), a dagger (*katār*), and a lance (*nezā* or *barchhā*) or quoit (*chakkar*). Furthermore, it is believed that Banda Bahadur also instructed his Sikhs to maintain *panj hathiār* which challenged Kshatriyas and Rajputs who traditionally reserved the right to maintain arms. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Sikhs had become accustomed to wearing ‘five weapons’ (*panj hathiar*).

As a result, the instruction to wear ‘five weapons’ can be found in the *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* and Sainapati’s *Gur Sobha*. The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* does not mention ‘five weapons’ but does highlight the importance of maintaining weapons or *shastars*. Similarly, the *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* states that a Khālsā Sikh should never be without his weapons because he is now classified as a warrior. The emphasis placed upon Khālsā Sikhs to maintain weapons was the result of growing tensions between Sikhs and Mughals during the eighteenth century.

The *rahit-namas* seem to agree that amongst the various weapons worn by Khālsā Sikhs the sword or *kirpān* is of central importance. For example, the *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* text specifies that the *kirpān* should be worn at all times by Khālsā Sikhs. Moreover, the text also includes a description of a ritual for worshipping the *kirpān* called ‘*kari pūje*’. The remaining *rahit-nāmās* use various terms for the *kirpān* such as the *karad*, *lohe kī karad* and *srī-sāhib*. Therefore, the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* attach great importance to maintaining the *kirpān* which may have evolved from the Guru’s original instruction to bear weapons.

However, the *kachh*, *kanghā* and *karā* which form part of the Five Ks are only mentioned within some of the *rahit-namas*. The *kachh* were practical shorts worn by Khālsā Sikhs involved in

---

<sup>37</sup>See *hukam-nāmā* no. 59 in Ganda Singh: 1967: 179.

battles during the eighteenth century. The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* and *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* are the only texts that mention the *kachh* (breeches). The *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* goes further in giving precise measurements regarding the length of the *kachh*. The *kanghā* or comb normally used to keep the *kes* in order was kept under the turban - the *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* is also the only text that mentions the *kanghā*. Finally, the *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* is the only eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* that mentions the *karā* (bangle). This suggests that the *rahit-namas* did not attach great importance to the *kachh*, *kanghā* and *karā* since they are only mentioned briefly in scattered form.

On the other hand, the maintenance of *kes* (hair) has been a dominant feature in the *rahit-nāmā* literature. The earliest source, Sainapati's *Gur Sobha* states that the Guru required his Khālsā Sikhs to leave their hair uncut. Furthermore, the text instructs Khālsā Sikhs to have nothing to do with those that cut or shave their hair (*sir-gum* or *bhaddar*). This injunction attracted much criticism from those who supported the old Hindu custom of shaving the head for a deceased relative. The *Gur Sobha rahit-nāmā* explicitly describes the *kes* as the prime symbol for Khālsā identity. Gupta (1999) suggests that the Guru prescribed the *kes* for the Khālsā Sikhs because it was the general practice for Kshatriya warriors at the time.

The *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* text also instructs Khālsā Sikhs to have nothing to do with those that cut or shave their hair. The text stresses the importance of maintaining *kes* as a method to preserve honour, strength and vitality for Sikh males (Verma: 2006). Alternatively, the *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* imparts a theological justification for the preservation of *kes*. The text regards cutting *kes* as a sin because human hair is a sacred gift from the God (*hari*). Pashaura Singh (1999) argues that by 'sanctifying the hair with *amrit* he [Guru Gobind Singh] made *kes* 'the official seal of the Guru' (*kes guru di mohar hai*). Therefore, the cutting of 'bodily hair' was strictly prohibited (*bajjar kurahit*)' (Pashaura Singh: 1999: 159).

The *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* outlines practical ways in which to look after the kes including ways in which it should be tied up under the turban (*dastar*, *sirtag* or *pagri*). Throughout the eighteenth century the turban became significant during times of conflict making Khālsā Sikhs easily recognisable. Although the turban does not form part of the Five Ks it receives frequent attention within the *rahit-nāmā* literature. For example, the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā*, *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* and the *Tanakhāh-nāmā* state that the turban should be tied fresh every morning. Moreover, the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* lists offensive acts related to the turban:

He who pulls another Sikh's turban,

He who knocks off another Sikh's turban,

The Sikh who, when his turban happens to fall off, fails to express regret,

He who puts on a turban which is already tied,

He who sleeps without a turban,

He who removes his turban before eating

(*Chaupa Singh Rahit-nāmā*, trans. W.H. McLeod (1987), numbers 297,312-13,323,334,478,542 cited in Singh and Barrier: 1999: 59).

The *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* argues that the turban is to be worn by all initiated Khālsā Sikhs and that this practice is limited to men (McLeod: 1987). This *Chaupā Singh rahit-nāmā* also prohibits women from receiving *khande di pāhul* initiation, which is said to be reserved only for men. Furthermore, the *rahit-nāmā* warns Khālsā males to be cautious towards woman because they are considered to be dishonest. The text then describes the domestic duties of Sikh women and reaffirms that the Khālsā Panth was strictly a male order. Therefore, during the eighteenth



century the Khālsā Panth was essentially male-dominated and supportive of a masculine identity.

Overall, the early eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* do not mention the instruction to maintain the Five Ks, although certain *rahit-nāmās* move closer to a formulation of the Five Ks, e.g. in a later version of the *Chaupa Singh rahit-nāmā* five articles are listed, the first three are the *kachh*, *kirpān* and *kes*. However, the remaining two items are *bāni* (sacred scripture) and *sādh sangat* (congregation of the faithful) (McLeod: 1987). In addition, the *Desā Singh rahit-nāmā* moves closer to the category of the 'Five Ks' because the author instructs Khālsā Sikhs to wear the *kachh*, *kirpān*, *kanghā* (comb), *karad* (knife) and *dasatār* (turban). But the last two articles do not correspond with the conventional Five Ks because *dasatār* and *karad* are listed instead of *kes* and *karā*. Finally, the *Dayā Singh rahit-nāmā* states that Khālsā Sikhs are required to maintain the *kachh*, *sri-sāhib* (sword), *lohe kī karad* (knife), *karā* and *kes*. Again, these five articles do not correspond with the conventional Five Ks because the *kanghā* is clearly missed out (McLeod: 2003).

## **2.6: Summary.**

Having examined the various *rahit-nāmās* it is evident that Guru Gobind Singh imparted a *rahit* specific to Khālsā Sikhs. Most Sikhs believe that this *rahit* has remained unchanged since it was delivered by Guru Gobind Singh at the end of the seventeenth century. The various eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* have attempted to transmit what they believe to be the original *rahit*. However, the precise form of the *rahit* still remains a matter of debate because the *rahit-nāmās*'

stated requirements for Khālsā Sikhs differ. Nonetheless, the *rahit-namas* helped to shape Khālsā identity throughout the eighteenth century.

The early *rahit-nāmā* literature introduced new inventive rituals, shared codes of conduct, bodily symbols, social customs and mythical narratives. They also urged Khālsā Sikhs to obey injunctions and to maintain certain external articles. However, none of these external articles are listed together as the 'Five Ks' but are instead scattered across various sections of the texts. The *rahit-nāmās* also differ in terms of the importance they attach to each external article but most agree that maintaining *kes* and weapons is central to Khālsā identity. Therefore, it can be argued that the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature challenges the widely accepted belief that Guru Gobind Singh instructed Khālsā Sikhs to maintain the convention of the 'Five Ks'.

It may have been probable that the Five Ks were worn since the establishment of the Khālsā order in 1699 but the *rahit-nāmā* texts do not provide any evidence. The *rahit-nāmā* texts provide evidence that Khālsā Sikhs were expected to wear weapons but these were not the Five Ks as they did not all begin with the letter 'K'. However, this chapter suggests that the Five Ks actually evolved out of the original instruction to maintain *panj hathiār*. For instance, we can conclude that the main purpose of these early texts was to construct and preserve a distinct 'Khālsā identity' at which point the convention of the 'Five Ks' was still evolving. However, the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature failed to dissolve heterogeneity within the Sikh Panth because those who refused to adopt the Khālsā form continued to be called Sikhs. This became a significant problem for European writers discussed in the next chapter who attempted to construct a uniform Sikh identity modelled on the Khālsā Sikh.

## Chapter 3: Nineteenth Century Literature on the Sikhs: The European Interpretation of Khālsā Sikhs within Modernity.

Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors and systems.

(Bassnett and Trivedi: 1999: 2)

Early European literature on the Punjab published during the nineteenth century offers valuable insights into the way Sikhs were defined. This chapter examines the way in which Khālsā Sikhs were defined by prominent European writers such as John Malcolm (1769-1833), Joseph Davey Cunningham (1812-1851), John Gordon (1832-1908), Ernest Trumpp (1828-1885) and Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913). This chapter will also discuss the formulation of the Five Ks within their published texts. It is argued that these writers homogenised difference within the Sikh Panth and laid the foundations for a modern 'uniform' Sikh identity modelled on the Khālsā Sikh.

### 3.1: The Politics Interpreting across languages

The eighteenth century Enlightenment movement within Europe emphasised the importance of rationality over tradition. Consequently, European intellectuals such as G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831) interpreted Indian culture as being trapped in the past since it had not reached the same level of science and progress found in the West. He argued that traditional societies steeped in superstitious belief had to give way to modern and progressive societies. As a result, the early Europeans that travelled to India labelled Indian cultural practises and beliefs as being 'backwards' (Halbfass: 1988). Nonetheless, European travellers were determined to classify the native people of India into clearly defined categories (Arvind Singh: 1995). This laborious task involved interpreting and translating historical and religious texts.

However, the inability to understand the native language proved to be a major problem even with the help of the natives themselves. The hegemony associated with the English language and its interpretive categories posed serious hermeneutical problems for the production of translations. Maan (2005) argues:

...the production of textual translations, dictionaries and grammar books by the British in India converted Indian languages (Persian, Sanskrit, Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi) into instruments of colonial rule. The lack of correspondence between Indian and British linguistic, conceptual and even metaphysical systems was compensated for in translation. Discursive formations established correspondences, artificial correspondences, that would make the unfamiliar comprehensible. (Maan: 2005: 221)

Bhogal (2001) points out that when European translators approached religious texts they were constrained by the invariance within grammatical formulations, historical formations and cultural practises. Moreover, indigenous terms were aligned with Christian terms to reach a “compromise” between the two languages. In other words, meanings could be determined and translated through a ‘supposed synonym’. Bhogal (2007) refers to this as ‘horizontal translations’ in which the European culture becomes the privileged referent in the process of cultural translation.

Early European writers such as William Jones (1746-1794), Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837) and Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) focused primarily on the dominant Hindu and Muslim religions of India. During this period, little was known about the Sikhs of Punjab apart from the common reference that they were a ‘sect of the Hindoos’. However, with the expansion of the East India Company there was an increase in the arrival of European Indologists to the Punjab. The Indologists employed native collaborators to help them translate traditional Sikh texts for the purpose of classification. These early European accounts were published and circulated around Europe. The following section examines early European writings on the Sikhs with particular reference to Khālsā identity and the convention of the Five Ks.

### **3.2: Eighteenth Century European writings on the Sikhs.**

During the eighteenth century the earliest published known account on the Sikhs was written by Colonel A.L.H. Polier. His work titled, *The Siques* (1780) provided a sketchy ethnographical account on the mannerisms and customs of the Sikhs. In his text Polier (1780) makes no reference to the Five Ks but he does note that some Sikhs wore ‘iron bracelets’ on one arm and

maintained their 'hair and beards'. He later observed that Sikhs also wore a combination of garments that including 'a pair of blue drawers' (Ganda, Singh: 1962: 63-64). His text is important because he is the first European to observe Sikhs as maintaining certain external signifiers.

However, the writings that followed mainly focused on the historical 'origins' of the Sikh religion. For example, Major James Browne in *The History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs* (1788) concluded that Sikhs 'bear a kind of relation to the *Hindoo* religion' possibly a 'reform movement'. Browne's (1788) texts mention very little about the Khālsā Sikhs and their external identity, although he does describe the dark blue dress that Sikh soldiers wear giving Sikhs a 'collective' appearance. This observation confirms the popularity of the deep blue colour worn by Sikhs during the eighteenth century. Moreover, Browne (1788) believes that the instruction to wear a dark blue dress to be part of the original *rahit* delivered by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. Ganda Singh (1962) challenges this view:

Guru Gobind Singh never ordered his Sikhs to put on the dress of any particular colour. The zealous Nihangs however patronized the dark blue colour used by the Guru during his escape from Machhiwara (Ganda Singh: 1962: 17).

It can be argued then that Browne's early observations were specific to Nihāng Singhs rather than Tat Khālsā Sikhs. In contrast to blue garments, George Forster (1798) in *A Journey from Bengal to England* observes Khālsā Sikhs dressed in the colour white:

In this matter I speak from a personal knowledge, having in the course of my journey seen two of their parties, each of which amounted to about two hundred horsemen. They were clothed on white...and their arms were preserved in good order: the accoutrement,

consisting of primary horns and ammunition pouches, were chiefly covered with European scarlet cloth, and ornamented with gold lace (Forster: 1798: 288).

The different colours that were observed by the Europeans reflected the different bands within the Khālsā Panth during the end of the eighteenth century. However, Forster's (1798) observations also do not mention the 'Five Ks' but he does mention Khālsā Sikhs that 'permit the growth of the hair of the head and beard, they generally wear an Iron Bracelet on the left hand' (Forster: 1798 cited in Ganda Singh: 1962: 79). Therefore, Forster's (1798) observation is important because it provides a brief reference to the *kes* and the *karā* as external signifiers for Khālsā Sikhs during the eighteenth century.

The majority of writings on the Sikhs published during the eighteenth century were in the form of general surveys that documented religious institutions and mannerisms. They provided a valuable source of information on the Sikhs within the last quarter of the eighteenth century. However, these observations provided little commentary on Khālsā Sikhs and their external identity. Finally, during the first part of the nineteenth century, the East India Company commissioned new works that began to discuss Khālsā identity and practises in much more detail.

### **3.3: Nineteenth Century European writings on the Sikhs.**

Sir John Malcolm completed and published his famous book, *Sketch of the Sikhs* in 1812. His book was a departure from previous European interpretations which lacked any analysis of

traditional Sikh texts. Malcolm (1812) employed *Nirmalā* scholars<sup>38</sup> to help him translate and interpret traditional Sikh texts. Malcolm (1812) states that under the tenure of Guru Gobind Singh, the early Nanak Panth evolved into the distinguished Khālsā Panth. Moreover, Malcolm (1812) argues that the Sikh religion is now to be viewed as a 'separate' religion because it rejected Hindu superstition, idolatry and polytheism (Ballantyne: 2006). Therefore, according to Malcolm (1812) the Sikhs succeeded in establishing a new religious identity which was formalised with the introduction of Khālsā Panth.

However, Malcolm's (1812) work fails to make any reference to the convention of the Five Ks, although he does describe the Akalis as those that wear steel bracelets or bangles. In a footnote he adds that, 'all *Sinhs* do not wear bracelets' but must carry some item of steel, 'which they generally have in the shape of a knife or a dagger' (Malcolm: 1812: 253). Malcolm also observes that those who undergo Khālsā initiation are presented with 'five weapons' (Malcolm: 1810: 285). He states that the 'five weapons' which included a sword, a firelock, a bow and arrow, and a pike were presented to the new initiate (Malcolm: 1812: 146-7). Malcolm's observations are crucial because he confirms that Khālsā Sikhs were instructed to maintain 'five weapons' as opposed the widely accepted 'Five Ks'. His work marked a significant shift away from gathering information for 'survey' purposes to an 'interpretive' approach that attempted to understand and discuss Sikh identity within a cultural context.

European writings on Sikh history were brought together in J.D. Cunningham's (1849) *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*. Cunningham (1849) was one of the first European observers to discuss Khālsā Sikhs in detail by interpreting and

---

<sup>38</sup> The *Nirmalā* scholars were part of an interpretive school that supported the idea that Nanak was a 'reformer' of Hindu traditions.



translating the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā*. Cunningham (1849) admired the martial characteristics of Khālsā Sikhs and was very optimistic about their survival:

This feeling of the Sikh people deserves the attention of the English, both as a civilized nation and as a paramount government. Those who have heard a follower of Goroo Govind declaim on the destinies of his race, his eyes wild with enthusiasm and every muscle quivering with excitement, can understand that spirit which impelled the naked Arab against the mail-clad troops of Rome and Persia... The Sikhs do not form a numerous sect, yet their strength is not to be estimated by tens of thousands, but by the unity and energy of religious fervour and warlike temperament. They will dare much, and they will endure much, for the mystic *Khālsā* or commonwealth; they are not discouraged by defeat, and they ardently look forward to the day when Indian and Arabs, and Persians and Turks, shall all acknowledge the double mission of Nanuk and Govind Singh. (Cunningham: 1849: 15-16)

Cunningham's analysis begins to develop the notion of a 'Sikh nation' which according to him was established with the creation of the Khālsā. He therefore interprets the Khālsā Panth as a political tool as well as a religious category. Cunningham (1847) also makes a significant observation during the *khande di pāhul* initiation ceremony:

Women are not usually, but they are sometimes, initiated in form as professors of the Sikh faith. In mingling the sugar and water for women, a one-edged, and not a two-edged, dagger is used. (Cunningham: 1849: 346)

Cunningham's work confirms that women were initiated into the Khālsā Panth during the nineteenth century. However, according to him they were initiated through a different baptism ritual. Similar to previous European observers he makes no reference to the instruction to maintain the 'Five Ks' either for men or women. Instead, he briefly states the following:

They should have one form of initiation... their locks should remain unshorn... they should all name themselves Singhs... (Cunningham: 1849: 66).

Early European writers that observed Sikhs in the Punjab all agreed that *kes* was important amongst Khālsā Sikhs. However, with the British colonisation of Punjab, Khālsā identity attracted much attention especially from British army officials.

### **3.4: General J. H. Gordon (1832-1908) - The British Army and Khālsā Identity.**

Following two Anglo-Sikh wars in 1845-6 and 1848-9 the Punjab was finally annexed by the British in 1849. The British had been extremely impressed with the fighting abilities of the Sikhs during these battles. For example, General J. H. Gordon in his 1883 book, *The Sikhs*, records how the British admired the strength of the Sikhs during the two Anglo-Sikh wars. This view is supported by other military books and journals produced at the time:

There are many warlike races in India whose military qualities are of high order, but of these the Sikh indisputably takes the leading place as a thoroughly useful and reliable soldier. (Bingley: 1898: 116)

The Sikh is a fighting man and his fine qualities are best shown in the army, which is his natural profession. Hardy, brave and of intelligence; too slow to understand when he is beaten; obedient to discipline; attached to his officers; and careless of caste prohibitions he is unsurpassed as a soldier in the East. (R. W. Falcon, 1896, Handbook on Sikhs for Regimental Officers, cited in Fox: 1990: 144)

Gordon (1883) attempts to locate in Sikh history the point at which Sikhs became a martial race. He views the death of Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606) as the 'turning point' because it forced Guru Har Gobind (1595-1644) to adopt a militaristic Sikh identity:

His [Guru Arjan's] death was looked upon as that of a martyr to the faith. It inflamed the religious passions of the peaceful sect, converting them into a warlike community ready to defend their religion with the sword. This became the turning-point of their history, and developed the struggle which changed the whole character of the reformatory movement (Gordon: 1883: 12-13).

This militaristic Sikh identity was later developed by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) who also reacted to the death of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) by taking up arms:

He [Guru Gobind] called upon his disciples by all that was dear to them, in defence of their faith and in the name of their martyred Guru [Tegh Bahadur] to exchange their rosaries and ploughs for swords: now was the time to raise their fallen race and to overthrow the hated Mohammedans, who were bent on subverting their religion. There could be no religious freedom while the Muslim ruled the land. (Gordon: 1883: 15)

Gordon (1883) views the death of Guru Tegh Bahadur as the main catalyst in creating the Khālsā Panth. He also describes how the *khande di pāhul* ceremony elevated the social position of Jat peasantry and lower castes. This act offended the Rajputs and Brahmans who were steeped in caste prejudice and hierarchy. Thus, Gordon (1883) views the creation of the Khālsā Panth as incorporating modernist notions of 'equality' because it challenged existing caste structures within Punjab.

Furthermore, he describes "Govindhi Sikhs" as those commanded to wear certain 'outward signs' of the brotherhood and affix the warrior designation of "Singh". However, he fails to discuss what these 'outward signs' are and does not mention the 'Five Ks' throughout his work. Overall, Gordon (1883) makes a clear distinction between the 'Sikhs of Nanak' and 'Khālsā Sikhs' whom he described as being brave, courageous and loyal men.

The British army in Punjab also made a similar distinction between Khālsā Sikhs and other forms of Sikhs. They observed how the 'martial' characteristics were unique to Khālsā Sikhs only who took great pride in being described as warriors. The British colonial understanding of Khālsā Sikhs being a 'martial race' became the dominant category for classifying the Sikhs. The martial characteristics of the Khālsā Sikhs also reflected British ideals of 'manliness' and 'masculinity'. Oberoi (1997) views the British attraction to the Khālsā Sikhs as being created within a 'fantasy of difference' in which the martial characteristics of the Sikh were juxtaposed with the effeminate Hindu (Mandair, N: 2005).

The British military officials greatly admired the fighting spirit and discipline of the Khālsā Sikhs. Subsequently, the Punjab became a recruiting ground for the British army in which the Sikhs were over-represented (Fox: 1990). Bernard Cohn (1996) who examines the role of Sikhs in the British army states, 'Only those Sikhs who looked like Sikhs – wearing those badges of

wildness, the beard and unshorn hair – were to be enrolled’ (Cohn: 1996: 109). Furthermore, on being enlisted, Sikhs were required to undergo Khālsā initiation and display certain external signifiers:

Unmindful of the complex nature of Sikh tradition and the immense spectrum of doctrines and practises among the Sikh public, philistine army commanders enforced an extremely narrow, functional and mechanistic definition of the Sikh faith. Only those who carried the five symbols were deemed genuine Sikhs’ (Oberoi: 1994: 361).

Although it is not certain at this stage what these ‘five symbols’ were, the British Army certainly became an institution that attempted to preserve Khālsā external signifiers. These external signifiers acquired new significance because they were now transformed into symbols of loyalty to the Empire. Therefore, the British Army considered itself to be the saviour of the Sikh ‘martial race’ because they specifically recruited Khālsā Sikhs (Oberoi: 1997). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the external Khālsā form was to become the standard appearance of most Sikhs within the army.

### **3.5: The Formulation of the Five Ks within the works of Ernest Trumpp (1828-1885) and Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913).**

In 1877 Ernest Trumpp<sup>39</sup> was the first European to publish a partial English translation of the Adi Granth.<sup>40</sup> However, his book titled, *The Adi Granth or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs* was not well-received by Sikhs because it included negative remarks about the Adi Granth and the

---

<sup>39</sup> He was a German philologist who was funded by the Punjab Administration.

<sup>40</sup>The Adi Granth scripture is mainly written in Punjabi with Gurmukhi script.

Dasam Granth. During the eighteenth century Khālsā Sikhs attached great importance to the Dasam Granth attributed to Guru Gobind Singh. The text had considerable influence on the formation of Khālsā identity because it inspired military valour and courage. The Dasam Granth text also performed a symbolic role embodying important cultural and religious myths. However, Trumpp (1877) completely dismissed the sacred text and then went onto criticising the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās*:

These injunctions are laid down in a number of so-called *Rahit-nāmas* or books of conduct, which all pretend to be dictated by the Guru himself, but none of which appear to be genuine, as they vary greatly, and were, as may be easily proved, all composed after the death of the Guru, some of them even as late as the end of the last century. They cannot therefore be adduced as a direct testimony of what Govind Singh himself ordained and introduced into the Khālsā, but only as an evidence of the later development of Sikhism. (Trumpp: 1877, cxiii)

Although Trumpp (1877) challenged the authenticity of the *rahit-nāmās*, he was one of the first Europeans to move closer to the formula of the Five Ks. His text records ‘five compulsory items’ to be maintained by Khālsā Sikhs:

He must always have things with him which all commence with the letter *Kakka* (i.e. K), viz.: *the hair* ([*kes*] which must not be cut), a *comb* [*kanghā*], a *knife* [*karad*], a *sword* [*kirpān*], and breeches reaching to the knee [*kacch*], otherwise he would not consider him as his disciple. (Trumpp: 1877: xci)

If Trumpp (1877) had replaced *karad* with *karā* he would have finally arrived at the Five Ks that are widely accepted today. Nonetheless, he was the first European to record the fact all five compulsory signifiers began with the letter K. Trumpp's (1877) overall dismissal and criticism of Sikh traditional texts was a huge blow for the Sikhs in Punjab. In response, it was Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913) who came to the rescue by demonstrating the uniqueness of the very same traditional texts.

Max A. Macauliffe (1841-1913)<sup>41</sup> was encouraged by Sikh elites<sup>42</sup> in Punjab to write a response to Trumpp's (1877) criticism of the Sikh faith. His major six-volume study entitled '*The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*' (1909) still remains one of the most authoritative books on the Sikhs. In contrast to Trumpp (1877) his translations of Sikh texts were written in a simple language free from *purānic* influence. His central thesis, similar to Cunningham (1849) portrayed Sikhs as belonging to a new religion separate from the Hindus. He defines a Khālsā Sikh as follows:

He who repeated night and day the name of Him, whose enduring light is unquenchable, who bestoweth not a thought on any but the one God. Who has full love and confidence in God, who puteth not faith even by mistake in fasting, or worshipping cemeteries, places of cremation, or jogis' places of sepulcher. Who only recognizeth the one God and not pilgrimage, alms, the non-distraction of life, Hindu penances or austerities and in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shineth, he is recognized as a pure member of the Khalsa (Macauliffe: 1909: 93-4).

---

<sup>41</sup> At the time Max Macauliffe was the divisional judge in Punjab.

<sup>42</sup> Kahan Singh Nabha was a central member of the Sikh elites.

Macauliffe (1909) believed that Sikh ideals taught by the Sikh Gurus were reflected in the Khālsā Panth. However, he was concerned that these Sikh ideals were being watered-down by dominant Hindu influences within Punjab. For him the solution to this problem was to promote the powerful message of Guru Gobind Singh and encourage all Sikhs to become Khālsā Sikhs (Ballantyne: 2006). As a result, Macauliffe (1909) re-confirms the importance attached to *kes* for baptised Khālsā Sikhs:

He who weareth long hair, without receiving baptism is a hypocritical and ignorant Sikh. I will not show myself to him. It is best to adopt one religion and not distract one's mind with others. They who call themselves my Sikhs and stray to other creeds are sinners. Let him who calleth himself a true Sikh of mine, accept baptism and do good acts, so shall his previous sins all depart on his seeking the Guru's protection.

(Macauliffe (1909) vol 5: 157-159).

Macauliffe also begins to formulate the convention of the 'Five Ks' in an earlier article titled, *The Sikh Religion Under Banda, and its Present Condition* (1881). When describing the key characteristics of an orthodox Sikh he writes:

All orthodox Sikhs must always have five appurtenances whose names begin with the letter K. They are spoken of by the Sikhs as the five Ks, and are – the Kes or long hair, the Kirpan, a small knife with an iron handle round which the Kes, thus rolled, is fastened on the head, the Kachh or drawers, and the Kara, an iron bangle for the wrist. (Macauliffe: 1881: 162)



Macauliffe (1881) moves closer to the formulation of the Five Ks by describing five appurtenances in his definition of an orthodox Sikh. However, it is immediately transparent that his account omits the *kanga* which means that he only lists four appurtenances. Therefore, Macauliffe (1881) became the first European to move closer to the formulation of the Five Ks but failed to provide a complete list of all five items. Nonetheless, his work attempts to represent Khālsā identity as the 'ideal' Sikh form. Macauliffe (1881) stressed the importance of reviving the Khālsā tradition to rescue Sikhs from being absorbed within the dominant Hindu discourse.

After Macauliffe's (1909) published translation there was a significant decline in European writings on the Sikhs. This decline was partly due to the changes in political circumstances and the colonial agenda.<sup>43</sup> However, the term 'Sikhism' began to gain currency in which the suffix "ism" often drew together a wide variety of different traditions and practises. The suffix "ism" allowed European writers to separate the Sikhs from other faiths. This modernist drive to construct religious boundaries has been appropriated in literature on the Sikhs ever since.

---

<sup>43</sup> The Amritsar massacre in 1919 transformed the relationship between the British and Sikhs. There was a rapid distancing of the Sikhs from the British during the struggle for independence. The privileged military and civil service positions that Sikhs occupied under the British became less prominent. Many fragmented Sikh organisations mobilised together to join in the anti-colonial movement. Fox (1990) points out that colonial stereotypes of Sikhs being brave 'martial warriors' were being employed by Sikh leaders to fight against colonialism.

### 3.6: Summary

This chapter has examined some of the most significant early European texts written on the Sikhs. Europeans observed and recorded data on Sikhs that were used to construct a modern uniform Sikh identity. The majority of this literature on the Sikhs was concerned with interpreting traditional texts as opposed to documenting external signifiers. Trumpp (1877) and later Macauliffe (1881) were the first European writers to move close to the formulation of the Five Ks. Moreover, Macauliffe (1881) believed that the Five Ks were given by Guru Gobind Singh during the inauguration of the Khālsā although he failed to list them. On the other hand, Trumpp (1877) in his examination of the eighteenth century *rahit-nama* literature was not convinced.

However, this study differs from McLeod (2003) because it provides a detailed analyses of Macauliffe's (1881) early attempt at formulating the Five Ks. The next chapter will demonstrate how nineteenth century Singh Sabha reformers mirrored Macauliffe's (1881) work in the formulation of the modern Five Ks. Singh Sabha reformers such as Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) viewed Khālsā Sikhs as the legitimate representatives of the Sikh faith.

## Chapter 4: Self Representation of the Colonised: The Reconfiguration of 'Khālsā Identity' within the Singh Sabha Episteme.

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, in intellect (Taken from Thomas Macaulay's famous 1835 'Minute on Indian Education' in Ashcroft et al.: 1995:430).

In response to the British colonisation (1849-1947) and the resurgence of neo-Hinduism during the end of the nineteenth century Sikhs launched a reform movement to re-configure Sikh identity. The Singh Sabha reform movement (1873-1920) was instrumental in constructing a Sikh identity that was modelled upon Khālsā Sikhs. Singh Sabha reformers such as Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) and Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) began to revive the Tat Khālsā tradition<sup>44</sup> which they believed to reflect the 'true' intentions of the Sikh Gurus. The Singh Sabha elites published and circulated influential texts which are examined in this chapter. These texts provide significant evidence for the formulation of Khālsā identity and the Five Ks during the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. It is argued that the Singh Sabha interpretation was based upon principles of colonial modernity<sup>45</sup> that emphasised the

---

<sup>44</sup> This tradition refers to those that claim to be 'pure' or 'true' Khālsā.

<sup>45</sup> Colonial modernity refers to the relationship between colonial ideology and notions of power of modernity and technology. It is often argued that the British through colonisation introduced a specific idea of modernity to India

importance of a uniform Sikh identity separate from the Hindu. As a result, Singh Sabha reformist literature represented Khālsā Sikhs as 'distinct' through the introduction of the modern Five Ks that are widely accepted today.

#### **4.1: The British Colonisation of Punjab (1849-1947).**

The Sikhs of Punjab did not simply 'encounter' the British but were radically 'transformed' through the process of colonisation. This transformation has been described by writers such as Cohn (1996) as the transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity'. The notion of 'colonial modernity' emphasised the importance of progress which allowed the British to legitimise their domination over the natives. The colonisation process in Punjab introduced structural changes in administration, education, economics and technology. The introduction of railways and the postal system provided new modes of cultural exchange, social mobility and employment.

The colonisation of Punjab also brought about significant changes to the way traditional religious identities were understood. For instance, the colonial policy of 'divide' and 'rule' heightened the manner in which religious groups perceived each other (Ahluwalia: 2006). Furthermore, during the early nineteenth century Punjab experienced an increase in Christian missionary stations which sought to impart Christian values to the local population.<sup>46</sup> The evangelical message was transmitted through social and educational activities. The missionaries viewed Christian doctrine as being superior to native religious beliefs.

---

through new practices and institutional forms. This form of modernity attempted to universalise and control religious and cultural differences.

<sup>46</sup> In 1813 the East India Company revised its charter to include the introduction of Christian missionaries who wanted to establish their churches and schools (Singh, D: 2004).

Subsequently, the missionaries felt they had a moral duty to save members of the 'heathen nation' who continued to practice degenerate customs such as female infanticide.

During this period, William Carey (1819) translated portions of the Old Testament into Punjabi which began to attract many 'lower-caste' Sikhs to Christianity. The Sikh natives began to witness an increase in the number of Christian converts who desired to elevate their social position within Punjabi society.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the people of Punjab also witnessed the conversion of their last ruler Maharaja Duleep Singh in 1853. The increased threat of converting to Christianity challenged the traditional hegemony of Sikh and Punjabi culture. As a result, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards we begin to see Sikh groups mobilising in order to preserve their own traditions and collective identity.

Such groups included the *Kuka* or *Nāmdhāri* Sikhs who were easily recognisable with their white turbans tied horizontally across their foreheads. Under the leadership of Baba Ram Singh (1816-1885) they strongly believed that the British had annexed the Punjab through deception. In 1872 the *Nāmdhāri* Sikhs attempted to rebel against the British and Christian missionary reforms by boycotting European goods and services including the trains, postal service, English garments and schools (Oberoi: 1997). The *Nāmdhāri* Sikhs continued to distance themselves from the influences of 'colonial modernity' but they were unable to make significant changes within Punjab. On the other hand, the Singh Sabha reform movement (1873-1920) in Punjab attempting to accommodate 'colonial modernity' were responsible for recasting Sikh tradition (Oberoi: 1997).

---

<sup>47</sup> After the annexation of Punjab in 1849, Christian missionaries increased their activities in central Punjab resulting in increased conversions to Christianity. Christian missionaries attempted to spread the message of the gospel through mission stations placed in Jullundur, Ambala, Lahore, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepore, and Moga. Many believed the Sikhs to be more receptive to the Christian message because the Sikhs were described as a community that rejected the caste system. Therefore, Sikhs were targeted through the development of evangelistic educational work and Christian hospitals. These activities were soon to be viewed as a threat to local practices and traditions (Singh, D: 2004).

#### **4.2: The Singh Sabha reform movement (1873-1920).**

The introduction of the English school system in Punjab became a very powerful tool for the transmission of British cultural values. The enculturation of educated Sikh elite allowed them to disengage themselves from the status of mere objects of study to becoming legitimate representatives of the Sikh faith. By the late 1860s the British education system in Punjab produced a generation of modern Sikh scholars who could read and understand in English and the Punjabi language. The colonial experience was somewhat ambivalent for members of a Sikh elite who later became known as the Singh Sabha reformers (1873-1920). The Singh Sabha reformers felt a sense of loyalty to the British for providing employment and educational opportunities, but the same time they also feared the survival of their religious identity amongst the growing popularity of evangelists and Hindu revivalists.<sup>48</sup>

The Singh Sabha reformers believed that Sikhs in the Punjab had adopted lifestyles inconsistent with the teachings of the Sikhs Gurus. Their main objective was to re-interpret Sikh history and traditional texts to revive Sikh ideals and practises. But it was the introduction of print technology that allowed the Singh Sabha reformers to disseminate their ideas throughout Punjab. These prolific Sikh writers promoted religious and social reform through the publication and circulation of journals, tracts, newspapers and books. The Singh Sabha reform movement in Punjab transformed the way Sikh identity was to be understood. However, opposing views on

---

<sup>48</sup> In 1875 the Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayanand criticised the Sikh faith in Punjab. The Arya Samaj group argued that the Sikhs were a branch of Hinduism and not a separate religion. Swami Dayanand further argued that Sikh scriptures were derived from the Hindu Vedas and therefore placed little value on the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. He also encouraged those belonging to other faiths to covert to Hinduism which was viewed as the dominant faith of India (Oberoi: 1997).

Sikh identity led to an internal power struggle between two dominant Singh Sabha groups – the Amritsar and Lahore branches (Oberoi: 1997).

The first Singh Sabha group was formed in Amritsar<sup>49</sup> in 1873 under the leadership of Khem Singh Bedi (1832-1904). The Amritsar Singh Sabha adopted formal rules of membership and appointed mainly wealthy landowners. The Amritsar Singh Sabha supported the continuation of older *paramparās* (traditions) such as the *Nirmalās*, *Udāsīs*, *Nanak-panthis*, *Khālsā Singhs*, *Seva-panthis*, *Akali Nihangs*, *Nirankārīs*,<sup>50</sup> and *Nāmdhārīs*.<sup>51</sup> As a result, the Amritsar reformers became known as *Sanātan* (traditional) Sikhs because they adopted an older and more conservative approach to defining the 'Sikh' (Jakobsh: 2003). The *Sanātan* Sikhs argued that the Sikh Panth was part of the wider Hindu faith because practises and rituals continued to overlap.

Moreover, they also argued that it wasn't mandatory for all Sikhs to undergo the *khande di pāhul* initiation or to follow the strict injunctions specified in the *rahit-nāmās*. As a result, Sikhs that refrained from undergoing *khande di pāhul* initiation and wearing Khālsā external symbols were defined as *sahajdhārī* Sikhs. In the *Sanātan* discourse the Khālsā Sikh was not at the centre of the definition of a Sikh since the Khālsā way of life was not suitable for all individuals in Punjab. Therefore, the *Sanātan* discourse continued to accept religious and cultural diversity amongst the Sikhs. However, this view was challenged not only by the British but mainly the Lahore Singh Sabha branch who viewed religious diversity within the Sikh Panth as a threat to the survival of Sikh identity.

---

<sup>49</sup> Although later Singh Sabha divisions could be located in countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong and Burma.

<sup>50</sup> *Nirankārīs* (worshippers of the formless one) followers of Baba Dyāl Dās (1783-1855).

<sup>51</sup> *Nāmdhārīs* (name-bearing) followers of Baba Ram Singh (1816-1884).

The second Singh Sabha group was established in Lahore in 1879 and was led by lower-middle-class Sikhs such as Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh. The Lahore Singh Sabha heavily criticised *Sanātan* Sikhs who entrenched themselves in practises that were considered to be 'Hindu', e.g. idol worshipping and upholding caste prescriptions. The Lahore Singh Sabha viewed these popular customary practises as being based on superstition and irrationality. According to the Lahore Singh Sabha 'Hindu' practises and beliefs were 'degenerate' and were also responsible for the deterioration of Sikh ideals (Singh, Sangat: 1995). As a result, the Lahore Singh Sabha made it their moral duty to rescue Sikhs from the threat of 'Hindu' resurgence in the form of movements such as the *Arya Samaj*.<sup>52</sup>

The Lahore Singh Sabha began to employ the colonial model of religion to represent the Sikh faith as moral and progressive. Moreover, the colonial model provided the impetus for Sikh reformers to construct a modern uniform 'Sikh' identity separate from the Hindu. According to the Lahore Singh Sabha the Khālsā Sikh was the ideal Sikh form that represented the 'true' intentions of the Sikh Gurus, e.g. the Khālsā Panth promoted 'egalitarian' social values. For this reason, the Sikh reformers in Lahore became known as the 'Tat Khālsā' ('pure' or 'true' Khālsā).<sup>53</sup> In the late nineteenth century tensions between the two Singh Sabha groups intensified. For instance, the *Sanātan* Sikhs believed that descendants of the Sikh Gurus had the right to sit on cushions before the Guru Granth Sahib. The Lahore Singh Sabha overturned this practice arguing that no-one should be given preferential treatment in front of the Guru (McLeod: 1995).

Furthermore, the Lahore Singh Sabha launched a campaign to eliminate so-called 'Hindu' customs and rituals and encourage all Sikhs to become baptised Khālsā Sikhs. The printing

---

<sup>52</sup> The *Arya Samaj* gained momentum in 1875 throughout Punjab calling for a return to the authority of the Vedas (Sihra: 1985).

<sup>53</sup> The term was originally used to mean those that opposed Banda Bahadur in the eighteenth century.



press gave the Lahore Singh Sabha power and control over the production of influential texts. For example, from 1886 they began printing various weekly newspapers such as the *Khālsā Akhbar* (newspaper) which discussed topics concerning Khalsa identity and practises. The newspaper also heavily criticised the *Udāsīs* for corrupting the Sikh faith by introducing popular 'Hindu' customary practises (Aggarwal: 2010). In addition, Tat Khālsā exponents such as Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) began to re-interpret Sikh traditional sources to re-configure the Khālsā Sikh as the 'ideal' form.

#### **4.3: Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) and the re-configuration of the Khālsā Sikh.**

Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957) was one of the most prolific Singh Sabha writers who produced scriptural commentaries and biographies on the Sikh Gurus. He also employed the Victorian novel form to produce popular fictional literature that promoted Khālsā identity. In his much celebrated Punjabi works such as *Sundarī* (1898), *Bijay Singh* (1899) and *Satvant Kaur* (1900), he emphasised the importance of Khālsā external symbols, initiation and the *rahit*. His first novel *Sundarī* (1898) attempts to encourage all Sikhs to become practising Khālsā Sikhs. In his text he describes how Sikhs suffered gruesome deaths under Mughal rule because they defended their external identity (Oberoi: 1997). Moreover, he criticises those who have abandoned the Khālsā way of life:

Look at yourself and see whether or not the decline of the Sikh nation is caused by your own very hands. Leaving your God and your true Gurus, you worship stones, trees, idols, tombs and saints. Forgetting Sikh religion, you rot in another religion. Turning your back on the true Gurus you teach someone else's religion to your offspring too. Your children will grow to be

half-baked like you—Sikh on the head, Brahmin around the neck and Muslim below the waist. (*Sundarī*, Amritsar 1972, quotation translated by S.S. Dulai, 'The Political Novel in Punjab', Contributions to Asian Studies, vol 6, 1975, p.51)

Bhai Vir Singh warns Sikhs about the dangers of the Sikh religion and identity disappearing. As a result, he employs the narrative of the 'martyr' to encourage Sikhs to adopt the Khālsā form. His text describes in detail the suffering endured by Khālsā Sikhs during eighteenth century conflict with the Mughals, e.g. Sikhs being boiled alive, sawn in half, scalped and decapitated.<sup>54</sup> Fenech (2000) argues that the idea of 'persecution' strengthened notions of collectiveness and inspired Sikh subjects to embrace the Khālsā form. The narrative of the brave Khālsā warrior is continually reiterated within his novels that represent Khālsā Sikhs as 'true' Sikhs. It is evident that Bhai Vir Singh's objective was not simply to narrate fictional stories about heroic Sikhs but for his readers to enact the characters within his texts.

His writings repeatedly stress the importance of undergoing *khande di pāhul* initiation (Fenech: 2000). For example, in his novel *Sundarī* (1898) Bhai Vir Singh discusses how the *khande di pāhul* ritual was revolutionary in its attempt to remove caste distinctions and social divisions. Moreover, the *khande di pāhul* ritual was the 'only' way to transform the oppressed Punjabis into brave new Khālsā warriors. In his novels *Bijay Singh* (1899) and *Satvant Kaur* (1900) the central characters undergo this transformation from being passive Hindus into newly formed Khalsa warriors<sup>55</sup> or from being 'effeminate' and 'immoral' into 'virtuous' and 'moral' individuals (Oberoi: 1997). According to Bhai Vir Singh, *sahajdhārīs* could not call themselves Sikhs because they

---

<sup>54</sup> Examples include the death of Guru Tegh Bahadur under the imperial leadership of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), Mani Singh who was executed by the Mughal governor Zakaria Khan of Lahore in 1738, Mehtab Singh who was arrested and crushed to death in 1744 and finally, Bhai Taru Singh who had his scalp removed in 1745 (McLeod: 1995).

<sup>55</sup> In *Bijay Singh*, the central character Ram Lal is converted to Sikhism through Khālsā initiation. In *Sarwant Kaur* the central protagonist is again converted to Sikhism through Khālsā initiation.

had failed the *khande di pāhul* initiation. Furthermore, he criticised the *charan pāhul*<sup>56</sup> initiation still practised by *sahajdhārīs* as being outdated and offensive. He argued that only those that had taken *khande di pāhul* initiation had the right to call themselves a 'Sikh'. Therefore, those who adopted the Khālsā form were considered 'true Sikhs', relegating *sahajdhārīs* to the periphery.

Bhai Vir Singh's text also encouraged women to undergo *khande di pāhul* initiation which he believed was open to all. He argued that the Khālsā Panth upheld modernist ideals such as social and gender equality as opposed to Hindu customs in which women accepted a subordinate position. For example, in *Sundarī* he narrates how the central female character sheds her traditional inferior position through taking *khande di pāhul* initiation and becoming a Khālsā Sikh. The central character *Sundarī* announces the following:

I beseech you to regard your women folk as equals, not your inferiors... In the Hindu books of law (*shastras*) woman is placed in the lowest caste (*sudra*) whereas the ten Gurus have praised her. Sikh scripture (*Guru Granth Sahib*) eulogizes woman and gives her the right to engage fully with the sacred texts.

(Singh Vir, 1898,122 trans. Mandair, N. 2005: 49)

The statement from a novel asserts that the Sikh faith embraces a positive position for women in comparison with the Hindu tradition. Therefore, it is argued that his text *Sundarī* (1898) can be understood as an important manifesto for promoting gender equality within the Sikh Panth. Singh, N. (2005) points out that Bhai Vir Singh's notion of 'equality' within the *Sundarī* text was based on making the female character more 'masculine'. For example, Bhai Vir Singh re-

---

<sup>56</sup> The pre-Khālsā method of initiation involving the Guru touching the water with his toe that was to be drunk by the initiate, mainly practised by Hindus.

inscribes masculine Khālsā signifiers such as the turban and *kirpān* onto the central female character. Moreover, nowhere in his fictional works is there any mention of the 'Five Ks' apart from the frequent references to *kes* and *kirpān*. Finally, Tat Khalsa exponents such as Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) begin to move closer to a form of Khālsā identity that clearly incorporates the 'Five Ks'.

#### **4.4: Kahan Singh Nabhā (1861-1938): The proclamation of Sikh identity in '*Ham Hindu Nahin*'.**

Kahan Singh Nabhā<sup>57</sup> (1861-1938) was one of the main protagonists of the Tat Khālsā discourse. He also advocated that Sikh doctrines, rituals and practises be preserved by distancing them from their Hindu origins. In 1898, he wrote the highly influential polemic text, *Ham Hindu Nahin*<sup>58</sup> (We are not Hindus) which attempted to define Sikh identity. The text was structured as a series of dialogues between a Hindu and Sikh discussing the differences between the two faiths. Kahan Singh Nabhā does not deny that Sikhs emerged from the Hindu faith, but he does argue that it is now a distinct religion:

Beloved brothers in the Panth of Guru Nanak, I am fully persuaded that you will recognize your separate identity as the Sikh community and that you will know beyond all doubt that we are not Hindu (Kahan Singh Nabha, '*Ham Hindu Nahin*' trans. by McLeod: 1984: 136).

---

<sup>57</sup>Kahan Singh Nabha gets his name from the state of Nabha where his father was a *granthi* (ceremonial reader of the Sikh scriptures).

<sup>58</sup> The text '*Ham Hindu Nahin*' was first written in Hindi and later published in Punjabi to ensure accessibility to a wider audience.

Kahan Singh Nabhā turned to the prescriptive tradition of the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* to help him construct a distinct version of the Khālsā identity. This extensive body of literature allowed him to recast Sikh tradition to represent Khālsā Sikhs as the ideal (McLeod: 2003). However, he came across sections of the *rahit-nāmās* that were in conflict with his own views. For example, some of the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* described Guru Gobind Singh worshipping the goddess Devi prior to the creation of the Khalsa. According to Kahan Singh Nabhā some of the *rahit-nāmā* literature had been corrupted by *Udāsī* and *Nirmalā* Sikh commentators who were influenced by the prevailing Hindu culture.

As a result, Kahan Singh Nabhā edited sections of the *rahit-nāmā* literature that were contradictory to the Khālsā way of life. Oberoi (1997) explains that, while some of the modifications were subtle, others were obvious in ‘erasing’ Hindu practises that were based on superstition and ritual trappings. This process allowed Kahan Singh Nabhā to construct a highly uniform Sikh identity based on the Khālsā form. Mandair, N. (2005) points out that the denial of the proximity with the Hindu tradition served to establish the Khālsā as the ‘true’ representative of the Sikh.

However, despite representing Khalsa Sikhs as the ‘true’ representatives of the Sikh faith Kahan Singh Nabhā failed to make any reference to the convention of the ‘Five Ks’. In his later text, *Gurushabad Ratanākar Mahān Kosh* (1931) he describes the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas in which there is a reference to ‘five garments’ (*panj kapare*) worn by Sikh males. The ‘five garments’ include the turban (*pag*), scarf (*dupatta*), a long shirt (*cholara*), waist-band (*pataka*) and an

under-garment (*kachh*).<sup>59</sup> These external signifiers do not correspond to the modern convention of the Five Ks which is widely accepted today.

#### 4.5: The Singh Sabha formulation of the ‘Five Ks’.

The nineteenth century Singh Sabha reformers continued to interpret eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* to provide Sikhs with a distinct external identity. However, as demonstrated in Chapter 2 the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature had failed to provide a coherent list of external signifiers since they were all scattered in various *rahit-nāmās*. There was also a disagreement on what the external signifiers were, the actual number and even the importance attached to each of them. In response to this problem the Singh Sabha reformers began to dismantle, select and re-arrange sections of the *rahit-nāmās* to produce a consistent and coherent list of external signifiers. As a result, it is during the latter part of the Singh Sabha movement that we finally begin to see the emergence of the ‘Five Ks’.

The first major attempt to formulate external signifiers for Khālsā Sikhs can be found in Santokh Singh’s *Srī Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granth* also known as *Sūraj Prakāsh* (1844). The text lists three external signifiers: ‘*kes kachh karad gurū kī tīn mundrā ih*’ (*kes*, *kachh* and *karad* are the three seals of the Guru) (Santokh Singh: 1844 cited in Vir Singh: 1965: 5060). The *Sūraj Prakāsh* (1844) text emphasised the *kes* as being the first *mundrā* because it had already assumed importance for Khālsā Sikhs within the eighteenth century (McLeod: 2003). Kahan Singh Nabha also confirms the importance of three *mundrās* (*kes*, *kachh* and *kirpān*). These three signifiers continued to be referred to as *tīn mundrā* in later Singh Sabha texts and eventually became part of the official insignias of the Khālsā Panth (Pashaura Singh: 1996). Therefore, the early

---

<sup>59</sup> See Kahan Singh Nabha’s *Gurushabad Ratanākar Mahān Kosh* p.792.

concept of *tīn mundrā* is crucial in understanding the formulation of the Five Ks during the nineteenth century. The concept of *tīn mundrā* was a deliberate move towards a consistent list of external Khālsā signifiers that could be easily remembered by Sikhs in Punjab.

In 1876, Budh Singh's *Khālsā Shatak* was the first published Singh Sabha text to increase the external signifiers from three to four items. His text describes the four articles as *kes*, *kachh*, *kanghā* and *karad* (Budh Singh: 1876 cited in Piara Singh Padam: 1989: 51). The term *karad* was employed instead of the *kirpān* but the *karā* was not mentioned at all (McLeod: 2003). Budh Singh's formulation is important because he omitted any external symbols in the *rahit-nāmās* that failed to begin with the letter 'k'. Therefore, it was the first Singh Sabha text to explicitly state that all external signifiers were to all begin with the letter 'k'.

Gian Singh (1822-1921) moved even closer to the formulation of the 'Five Ks' with the publication of *Srī Gurū Panth Prakāsh* (1881), popularly known as the *Panth Prakāsh*. His text describes five external signifiers that are regarded as compulsory for Khālsā Sikhs (Gian Singh: 1880: 233). However, these five external signifiers remain scattered within his text and are therefore not given as a coherent list. His text is important because he confirms that there are five external signifiers in total and that they again all begin with the letter 'k'. However, the first Singh Sabha reformer to describe the 'Five Ks' as a coherent list was Sumer Singh in his *Khālsā Panchāsikā* (1883):

*kacch kes kirpān priy kanghā karā sadīv/*

*Jo dhārat tārat nahīn soī khālsā daīv/*

The *kacch*, the *kes*, the treasured *kirpān*, the *kanghā*, the eternal *karā*,

He who wears these will ever be steadfast; thus is the Khālsā hallowed  
(Piara Singh Padam: 1989: 181 trans and cited in McLeod: 2003: 208).

Sumer Singh's (1883) formulation of the 'Five Ks' finally brought together dispersed external items described in *rahit-nāmās* and those worn by Sikhs at the time. He realised the importance of creating a consistent list that would be easily accepted. The significance attached to the number five within Sikh tradition was one of the reasons for the wide acceptance of the Five Ks. His text over-emphasised the importance attached to external appearance, thus, the Sikh body became an over-determined site for constructing a modern Sikh identity. The Tat Khālsā discourse had reified external Khālsā signifiers by attaching unprecedented importance to them. The convention of the Five Ks was finally written down and the five signifiers became the authentic markers of Khālsā identity (McLeod: 2003: 208).

The convention of the Five Ks was later popularised in Singh Sabha texts that followed, e.g. Gian Singh's work, *Tavarīkh Guru Khālsā* (1891) also presented the external items in a formal list. This text outlines the original *rahit* delivered by Guru Gobind Singh as follows:

You must always wear a kachh, kirpan, kes, comb (*kanghā*) and wrist-band (*karā*)... From today you belong to the Sodhi lineage of the Khatri caste of the Khālsā. Your name is Singh and your abode is Anandpur. Your birth-place is Kesgarh, you are the sons of the one Guru, and you have abandoned your previous status

(Gian Singh: 1891 *Tavarīkh Guru Khālsā*, vol 1 pp. 860-1 trans and cited in McLeod: 2003: 47).



Gian Singh (1891) placed an emphasis on maintaining the 'Five Ks' but more importantly in contrast to Sumer Singh (1883) he states that the Five Ks were the original instructions given by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. However, Kahan Singh Nabhā in his later text *Guramat Sudhākar* (1901) differs from previous Singh Sabha writers because he acknowledges that there is little documentary evidence to support this claim:

When Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib dispensed *amrit* he delivered the instruction that the *kes* should be maintained, the *kachh* should be worn, and that a *kirpān* (sword) should be carried. At the time instructions were not given that either of the three or five Ks should be worn. After some time it was promulgated in the Rahit that Five Ks should be maintained (viz. 1. *kes*, 2. *kachh*, 3. *kirpān*, 4. *kanghā*, 5. *karā*). Although this instruction was new there was nothing false about the Rahit promulgating Five Ks, for the old literature makes it clear that in the time of the tenth Guru the Five Ks were maintained by the Singhs. No one doubted the *kes*, *kachh* and *kirpān*, which left the *kanghā* and the *karā*. The Tenth Master, when he twice decreed the wearing of the *kanghā*, sanctioned it a fourth K. In the same way, the wearer of the plume, gave orders that wrist-rings (*karā*) of pure iron should be worn in gatherings of the Khālsā and thus acquire sanctity (Kahan Singh Nabha: 1901: 467 trans and cited in McLeod: 2003: 211).

Kahan Singh Nabhā recognises that there is very little evidence to support the claim that Guru Gobind Singh required Khālsā Sikhs to maintain the Five Ks. He suggests that the two remaining items, *kanghā* and the *karā* were instructions added to the three primary symbols at the beginning of the eighteenth century. However, in his later text *Gurushabad Ratanākar*

*Mahān Kosh* (1931) he changes this view by claiming that all Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh at the inauguration of the Khālsā. He also reaffirms the importance of the Five Ks by describing them as mandatory for all Sikhs (Kahan Singh Nabhā: 1931: 29). Overall, Kahan Singh Nabhā's collective works made a major contribution to the understanding of Khālsā *rahit* and the propagation of the Five Ks.

Pashaura Singh (1999) points out that, 'the formulation of the convention of the 'Five Ks' became evident from the literature produced as a result of Singh Sabha's new definition of orthodoxy. Although these substantive symbols were already there in the early tradition, their formalization in the late nineteenth century enhanced their value' (Pashaura Singh: 1999: 165). For Singh Sabha reformers the 'written' formulation of the Five Ks was crucial in recasting Khālsā identity as the 'ideal'. It allowed Singh Sabha scholars to separate Khālsā Sikhs from *Sanātan* Sikhs, with the former now recognised as having a distinct external identity. Therefore, the early Tat Khālsā objective to create a modern Sikh identity had been achieved by the end of the nineteenth century through the introduction of the Five Ks.

From this point onwards the Five Ks became a significant part of 'Khālsā identity' in the majority of literature that was published. The external signifiers that were scattered in previous *rahit-namas* had now assumed new significance in the form of an actual convention - the 'Five Ks'. The Five Ks became widely accepted amongst the majority of Sikhs in the early twentieth century especially through the support of the newly formed organisation discussed in the next section.

#### 4.6: Legally inscribing Sikh identity: the 1950 Sikh Rahit-Marayada.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Tat Khālsā leaders began to mobilise and represent the Sikh community as a whole in Punjab. In 1902, Tat Khālsā leaders established a central Sikh organisation known as the Chief Khālsā Diwan (hereinafter CKD). The CKD continued to promote the main objectives set out by Tat Khālsā intelligentsia, that is represent the Khālsā Sikh as the 'ideal' (Oberoi: 1997; Leonard: 2007). The CKD gained success with the passing of the 1909 Anand Karaj Marriage Act. The 1909 Act legitimised Sikh marriage in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib (*Anand Sanskār*). This alienated groups such as the *Nāmdhāris* who continued to marry in the traditional method of walking around the Hindu Vedic fire. The 1909 Act was radical because it overtly criticised Sikhs who participated in practises associated with Hindus. The 1909 Act attempted to separate Sikhs from their Hindu counterparts in establishing a separate uniform Sikh identity. This marked an important transition in the formation of Sikh identity because it codified Sikh practises and rituals within a legal context.

*Sanātan* Sikhs that included *sahajdhārīs*, *nirmalās* and *udāsīs* continued to reject the convention of the Five Ks because they followed their own particular *rahit*. In response to number of existing *rahits* the CKD set up a committee<sup>60</sup> in 1910 to construct a modern *rahit-nāmā* for all Sikhs to observe. After the preparation of a draft and further amendments the new *rahit-nāmā* was approved and published in 1915 under the title *Guramat Prakāsh Bhāg Sanskār*. This was a significant achievement for the CKD because they had finally produced a 'systematic' text that could clearly define the 'Sikh'. The text predominantly focused on outlining Sikh rites involving

---

<sup>60</sup>The committee members included Bhai Teja Singh, Sant Gurbakhsh Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Bhai Takht Singh, and Trilochan Singh.

birth, initiation, marriage and funerals that were now to be conducted in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. More importantly, the *Guramat Prakāsh Bhāg Sanskā*r represented initiated Khālsā Sikhs, who maintained the Five Ks as the 'ideal', therefore relegating *Sanātan* Sikhs towards the periphery.

However, this early version of a universal *rahit-nāmā* failed to attract support from the general Sikh population because it was far too detailed and lengthy. The CKD publication of the *Guramat Prakāsh Bhāg Sanskā*r received further criticism from its rival organisation the Panch Khālsā Divan (hereinafter PKD). The PKD was founded in 1907 by Teja Singh Bhasaur (1867-1993) who maintained more extreme views on how to define the 'Sikh'. According to Teja Singh all baptised Sikh women were to wear the turban because this practice could be traced back to the time of Guru Gobind Singh. As a result, he openly refused to administer *khande di pāhul* to women who refrained from wearing the turban (Oberoi: 1997). He also insisted that all indicators of caste such as surnames should be renounced and replaced with 'Singh' for men and 'Kaur' for women. Teja Singh agreed with the CKD that only Khālsā Sikhs who maintained the Five Ks could be regarded as 'true' Sikhs.

In 1920, Tat Khālsā leaders reformed and founded the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) replacing the old CKD organisation. The Sikh Gurdwara Reform Act 1925 introduced by the British was instrumental in transferring ownership of the gurdwaras from the hereditary *mahants* (custodians) to the SGPC. As a result, the SGPC quickly established itself as the statutory regulatory body for the management of gurdwaras. Furthermore, the 1925 Act allowed the SGPC to restructure sacred space by removing what they defined as 'Hindu' icons and practises within the gurdwaras. The 1925 Act also included a 'legal' definition of a Sikh that could be employed in Law Courts across India. For example, section 2(9) of the Gurdwara Reform Act 1925 defined the Sikh as follows:

...a person who professes the Sikh religion, more specifically a person who would affirm their belief in the Guru Granth Sahib, ten Gurus and have no other religion.

Oberoi (1997) claims that the above definition of 'Sikh' was too broad because it included both those that maintained the Five Ks and those that did not. For example, according to the definition *Sanātan* Sikhs and *Khālsā* Sikhs were deemed equal. However, the text does outline the process of imposing chastisement on those who have broken *rahit*. The 1925 Act failed to clearly represent *Khālsā* Sikhs who maintained the Five Ks as the 'ideal'.

Following this failure, the SGPC set up a commission to publish a more concise document. The sub-committee for this critical task included leading *Tat Khālsā* exponents such as Professor Teja Singh, Kahan Singh Nabhā, Vir Singh and Jodh Singh. These *Tat Khālsā* exponents played a central role in determining the contents of a new universal Sikh document that would represent the *Khālsā* Sikh as the 'ideal'. Professor Teja Singh published an abbreviated version in his 1937 book *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions*, an authorised version was published in 1950, referred to as the *Rahit Maryādā*. The 1950 *Rahit Maryādā* stated its objective as follows:

The Rehat Maryada is the Official Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions. There were a number of unsuccessful attempts in the eighteenth century following the death of Guru Gobind Singh to produce an accurate portrayal of the Sikh conduct and customs. These attempts were contradictory and inconsistent with many of the principles of the Gurus and were not accepted by the majority of the Sikhs. Starting in 1931, an attempt was made by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.) to produce a

modern standard Rehat. These efforts involved the greatest Sikh scholars and theologians of this century who worked to produce the current version. The document produced has been accepted as the official version which provides guidelines against which all Sikh individuals and communities around the world can measure themselves. The Rehat Maryada is the only version authorized by the *Akāl Takhat*, the seat of supreme temporal authority for Sikhs. Its implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism (SRM: 1950: 1).

The 1950 *Rahit Maryādā* supports the notion of a 'uniform' Sikh identity that has clear identifiable boundaries. It has been sanctioned by the highest seat of authority, the *Akāl Takhat* which provides the text with considerable influence throughout the Sikh Panth. The text is divided into two parts that includes personal conduct (*shakhasī rahinī*) and 'panthic' conduct (*panthak rahinī*). The text also instructs Sikhs to abstain from practises that are normally associated with Hindus, e.g. incantation, horoscopic dispositions, and ancestor worship. The text provides a concise definition of a 'Sikh' with reference to Khālsā initiation:

A Sikh is any person who believes in God (Akal Purakh); in the ten Gurus (Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh); in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, other writings of the ten Gurus, and their teachings; in the **Khālsā initiation ceremony instituted by the tenth Guru** [bold mine]; and who does not believe in any other system of religious doctrine. (Sikh Rahit Maryada 1950 cited in McLeod: 1982: 79)

The definition of a 'Sikh' above has become standardised and is now accepted by the majority of Sikhs. It is continually employed within academic debates, legal disputes and public

discourse (Takhar: 2005). The 'Sikh' continues to be defined in relation to the 'Khālsā', even though Khālsā Sikhs only represent a minority within the Sikh Panth as a whole (Aggarwal: 2010). The reference to the Khālsā initiation ceremony marginalises groups such as the *udāsīs*, *nirankārīs* and *kesdhari* Sikhs who do not practice Khālsā initiation. The text is much more refined than the 1915 *Prakāsh Bhāg Sanskār* because it does represent the Khālsā Sikh as the 'ideal'. As a result, those that fail to maintain the Five Ks such as *sahajdhārī* and *kesdhārī* Sikhs are to be relegated to the periphery. The text certainly assumes that all Sikhs have a desire to become baptised Khālsā Sikhs and maintain the Five Ks.

For instance, the significance of *kes* as one of the Five Ks is recorded in Chapter X which states that Sikhs should retain the hair of their children:

A Sikh should, in no way, harbour any antipathy to the hair of the head with which his child is born. He should not tamper with the hair with which the child is born... A Sikh should keep the hair of his sons and daughters intact (SRM: 1950: 13).

Chapter XIII warns initiated Khālsā Sikhs not to colour their hair as it is a form of dishonouring. The 1950 *Rahit Maryādā* text contains numerous references to *kes* as being extremely important and sacred for Sikhs. The text also includes a specific reference to the *kachh*:<sup>61</sup>

For a Sikh, there is no restriction or requirement as to dress except for he must wear *Kachhehra*<sup>62</sup> and turban. A Sikh woman may or may not tie turban (SRM: 1950: 13).

Finally, the text states that the Five Ks should be worn by all Sikhs during the baptism ceremony:

---

<sup>61</sup> A drawer-type garment fastened by a fitted string round the waist, very often worn as underwear.

<sup>62</sup> This is another term for *kachh*.

The person to be baptized should not be of very young age; he or she should have attained a plausible degree of discretion. The person to be baptized must have taken bath and washed the hair and must wear all five K's - Kesh (unshorn hair), strapped Kirpan (sword), Kachhehra (prescribed shorts), Kanga<sup>63</sup> [sic] (Comb tucked in the tied-up hair), Karha<sup>64</sup> [sic] (Steel bracelet). He/she must not have on his/her person any token of any other faith. He/she must not have his/her head bare or be wearing a cap. He/she must not be wearing any ornaments piercing through any part of the body (SRM: 1950: 19).

The 1950 *Rahit Maryādā* confirms the importance attached to the Five Ks for those that become Khālsā Sikhs through baptism. Furthermore, the text claims that the Five Ks were originally instructed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as opposed to being formulated at a later date. It is argued that the Tat Khālsā ideals have been incorporated within this single systematic text that attempts to define the Sikh identity.

However, the majority of Sikhs around the world are unaware of the contents of the modern 1950 *Rahit Maryādā*. Nonetheless, the document is applied in various degrees and its precepts are generally followed by those that claim to be 'orthodox' Sikhs. As a result, the document has become a universal statement on normative Sikh beliefs and practises. According to the SGPC, there is now a clear document that defines what it means to be 'Sikh' in accordance with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Furthermore, the SGPC believe that the text has helped to dissolve differences inherent in the *rahit* described within the various eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās*. Takhar (2005) points out that no single group can speak for the entire Sikh Panth since we continue to discover multiple interpretations of the Khālsā and the *rahit*.

---

<sup>63</sup> The spelling differs from the gurmuki word *kanghā* but is referring to the same item.

<sup>64</sup> The spelling differs from the gurmuki word *karā* but is referring to the same item.



The 1950 *Rahit Maryada* text is not accepted in its entirety by all Khālsā Sikhs because it fails to represent the diversity that continues to exist within Sikh practises. For example, the Khālsā Sikhs that associate themselves with the Damdami Taksal<sup>65</sup> institution challenge the 1950 *Sikh Rahit Marayādā*. The Damdami Taksal Sikhs have their own code of conduct referred to as the *Gurmat Rehat Maryada*. The text differs from the 1950 *Sikh Rahit Marayādā* in the following ways - the left knee should be placed on the ground instead of the right knee during initiation, the left hand is to hold the sword and not the right and finally the whole *Mul Mantar* is to be read instead of the abbreviated version. These differences are fundamental to Damdami Taksal Khālsā Sikhs who believe that their *rahit* can be traced back to Guru Gobind Singh (McLeod: 2003).

The *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs<sup>66</sup> (*kukas*) also continue to follow their own *rahit* that includes the belief in the personal line of living Gurus. The *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs have a highly visible identity because they normally wear white turbans and a rosary (*mala*) around their necks. The *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs are pacifists and therefore maintain a small symbolic *kirpān* tied to their *kanghā*. In contrast, Akali Nihangs<sup>67</sup> are known for not only wearing the conventional Five Ks, but also several weapons that include sharp-edged *sarbloh* quoits and *chands* (crescent moon with a sword in the middle). The Nihang Sikhs re-assert a masculine Khālsā identity that can be traced back to Khālsā Sikhs in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

The Akhand Kirtan Jatha, hereafter AKJ, also employ their own *rahit* referred to as the *Guramati Bibek* or '*Rahit Bibek*' published in 1946. This particular *rahit* was written by Bhai Randhir Singh

---

<sup>65</sup> This educational institution is said to be founded by Guru Gobind Singh and became responsible for teaching the correct way for reading and reciting the Sikh scriptures (Grewal: 2010). It was more recently run by the controversial Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale where he himself trained in reciting and memorizing the Guru Granth Sahib.

<sup>66</sup> *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs, whose main base is Bhaini Sahib in Punjab founded by Ram Singh, who was influenced by Balak Singh (1799-1862).

<sup>67</sup> Akali Nihangs claim to be one of the first martial orders introduced by Guru Har Gobind.

(1878-1961) who founded the AKJ movement. The AKJ *rahit* differs in its description of the conventional Five Ks because the *kes* is replaced with a small under-turban referred to as *keskī*. The *keskī* is to be worn by both men and women, however for men the *keskī* is normally worn under the turban when in public. The instruction for initiated women to wear *keskī* can be traced to Teja Singh's<sup>68</sup> 1911 *rahit-nāmā* entitled *Khālsā Rahit Prakāsh*. As a result, women that are initiated are easily recognisable within the Sikh Panth because of this distinct difference in external identity (McLeod: 2003). The AKJ movement employ the modernist notion of 'gender equality' in encouraging women to wear the *keskī*. This demonstrates that the convention of the Five Ks located in the 1950 *Rahit Maryādā* is open to interpretation in certain contexts.

For example, in the case, 'Gurleen Kaur, et al. vs. State of Punjab 2008-09', the petitioner Gurleen Kaur was denied admission into a medical college<sup>69</sup> because she plucked/trimmed her facial hair. The medical college argued that trimming hair went against college conditions for acceptance outlined below:

A candidate will be considered Sikh/belonging to Sikh Community if he practices the Sikh faith, and maintains Sikh appearance, i.e. he/she does not cut or trim hair and wears turban (in case of male candidates) and has the word "Singh/Kaur" with his/her name, has faith in the Ten Sikh Gurus and Sri Guru Granth Sahib only, and does not owe allegiance to any other sect or religion. (Extract (1) in prospectus - see report Gurleen Kaur, et al. vs. State of Punjab. 2009: 6)

It was decided by the counselling committee that included Sri Avtar Singh Makkan (President of the SGPC) that the petitioner Gurleen Kaur was rightly denied admission because she plucked/trimmed her eyebrows. Those that supported such a view agreed that definition of the

---

<sup>68</sup> Teja Singh of Bhasaur (1867-1993) maintained that all baptised Sikh women were to wear the turban because this practice could be traced back to the time of Guru Gobind Singh.

<sup>69</sup> The Sri Guru Ram Das Institute of Medical Sciences and Research in Amristar.

*kes* included all bodily hair that was an integral part of Sikh identity. The case is complex and has been particularly important because it highlights the problems associated with defining 'Sikh' in relation to the Five Ks. For example, the issues for Khālsā women colouring hair, removing facial hair, and having piercings are not discussed within the 1950 Sikh *Rahit Marayādā*. Nonetheless, the case reinforced the importance attached to *kes* as a symbol of Sikh identity. The case also attracted much global interest involving authoritative organisations and diasporic community leaders who stressed the importance of maintaining the Five Ks. For example, Santokh Singh (1991) argues that every individual born into a Sikh family should become a Khālsā Sikh and maintain the Five Ks. This view has been defended by prominent Sikh leaders who view the Five Ks as mandatory for all Sikhs, these community leaders propose a 'closed' definition of the Sikh.

#### **4.7: Summary.**

Sikh identity was largely fluid until the dramatic rise of the Singh Sabha movement during the nineteenth century. The Tat Khālsā discourse radically re-interpreted eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* in an attempt to eradicate internal differences within the wider Sikh Panth. Singh Sabha polemic literature formulated a version of Sikh identity that represented the Khālsā as the ideal Sikh's form. This chapter has demonstrated that the convention of the Five Ks was actually formulated within Singh Sabha literature at the end of the nineteenth century. The formulation of the Five Ks reflected the sanctity of the number five that was already accepted within Sikh

tradition. In literature that followed the convention of the Five Ks was to become the central part of Khālsā identity.

Towards the early decades of the twentieth century the importance attached to the Five Ks was further legitimised through dominant ideology transmitted through organisations such as the CKD and SGPC. The SGPC produced a modern document - the 1950 Sikh *Rahit Maryada* which defined the Sikh in relation to the Five Ks. However, the content of the 1950 Sikh *Rahit Maryada* has also been criticised for not reflecting the diversity inherent within the wider Sikh Panth.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Sikh identity in the early Guru period was fluid but with the emergence of Khālsā Sikhs at the end of the seventeenth century we begin to see the introduction of concrete external identity markers. According to Sikh tradition the original Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 and have remained unchanged since. This view has been transmitted through the oral tradition, written texts and more recently electronic and global media. However, this study has demonstrated how the convention of the Five Ks was actually introduced much later during the nineteenth century. The formulation of the Five Ks occurred throughout Sikh history especially with changes introduced by various dominant rulers and social reformers. This thesis has critically examined the formulation of the Five Ks within key historical texts since the eighteenth century.

In the eighteenth century the martial aspects of Sikh identity became increasingly important due to hostility faced with Mughals and later Afghans. The early eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature provided the first textual attempt to formulate a standard version of Khālsā identity. The *rahit-nāmā* texts certainly provide evidence that Khālsā Sikhs were expected to wear *panj hathiār* or five weapons. However, this study challenges McLeod (2003) by suggesting that the Five Ks actually evolved out of the original instruction to maintain *panj hathiār* demonstrated in Chapter 2.

Nonetheless, the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature had failed to list the Five Ks and instead discussed them as individual and scattered items. The individual signifiers such as the

*kes* and *kirpān* were certainly prevalent but they were not referred to as the Five Ks or “*pañj kakārs*” until we reach the nineteenth century.

The early nineteenth century literature brought about significant changes in the way Khālsā Sikhs were to be defined. The Europeans translated the Sikh religion into modernist cultural idioms and categories that produced new meanings. In response to Ernest Trumpp (1828-1885), Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841-1913) argued that the Sikhs belonged to a separate and distinct religion. Macauliffe attempted to construct a uniform Sikh identity by negating pluralistic differences which existed at the time. In his writings there was a deliberate attempt to construct a religious identity modelled on the Khālsā Sikh. During the British colonisation of Punjab (1849-1947) Khālsā identity was also transformed through the British army who admired the ‘martial’ discipline of the Khālsā Sikh. However, early European writings in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century also failed to list the Five Ks as they are understood today.

The Singh Sabha reformers appropriated colonial ideology within their writings that re-configured the Khālsā as the ‘true’ representative of the Sikh faith. During this period the Tat Khālsā discourse began to construct a dominant version of Khālsā identity through creating rigid boundaries. The Tat Khālsā ideology was diametrically opposed to the *Sanātan* tradition which supported a pluralist understanding of Sikh identity. The Tat Khālsā exponents began systematically re-interpreting the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* which they believed had been corrupted. They selected and rejected sections to eliminate *purānic* or Hindu influences, superstitions, caste and gender prejudices. This served as a method to isolate a ‘pure’ Khālsā identity which reflected modernist and rational principles.

Singh Sabha scholars radically reinterpreted the eighteenth century *rahit-nāmās* to formulate the modern version of the Five Ks. This study demonstrates that it was only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that the Singh Sabha/Tat Khālsā exponents concentrated on consolidating Khālsā identity through the formulation of the modern Five Ks.

McLeod (2003) states that Singh Sabha scholars were convinced that the Five Ks were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699, even though they were not listed as the Five Ks within early eighteenth century *rahit-nāmā* literature. However, this study differs from McLeod's (2003) conclusion as it demonstrates in Chapter 4 how Singh Sabha elites such as Kahan Singh Nabhā (1861-1938) were very much aware that Guru Gobind Singh did not include them in his instruction at the founding of the Khālsā. It has been argued that for Singh Sabha reformers the 'written' formulation of the Five Ks was crucial in recasting Khālsā identity as the 'ideal'. It allowed Singh Sabha scholars to separate Khālsā Sikhs from *Sanātan* Sikhs, with the former now recognised as having a distinct external identity.

Sikhs by the first decades of the twentieth century were conscious that they were a distinct community with a corporate Khālsā identity (Oberoi: 1997). The radical changes that were introduced by Tat Khālsā exponents were now viewed as Sikh tradition. Moreover, those who refrained from Khālsā initiation and the Five Ks were not to be considered as 'true Sikhs'. Subsequently, the SGPC produced the modern 1950 *Sikh Rahit Maryada* as the official *rahit* or prescriptive manual for all Sikhs which represented Khālsā Sikhs as the 'ideal'. This influential text also re-confirmed the importance of maintaining the Five Ks and since continues to be employed in debates on Sikh identity around the world.

Many contemporary scholars and community leaders continue to transmit the Tat Khālsā episteme within the British diaspora. Although Khālsā Sikhs form a minority they maintain an

exclusive position of power and authority within the Sikh diaspora. Today, the Sikh community unequivocally accepts that Guru Gobind Singh instructed Khālsā Sikhs to maintain the Five Ks in 1699. Furthermore, since 9/11 and the July 2005 bombings in central London Sikhs have responded by re-defining the Five Ks and the turban for a global context. This objective is shared by various Sikh organisations that are working together to educate the lay population about Sikhs who have been mistaken for Muslims or terrorists.

However, throughout the Sikh diaspora we also witness Sikh youth challenging and debating the importance attached to the Five Ks. Many young Sikhs argue that ethical and moral actions are more important than simply displaying the Five Ks. For these individuals the Five Ks are becoming less and less relevant in a globalised world that seeks to increase interconnectedness between societies and individuals.

Finally, this study is crucial because it helps us understand the way Sikh identity is (re)constructed throughout history. This study has demonstrated how the Five Ks evolved within Sikh historical texts and how the formula was finally published within the nineteenth century literature produced by Sikh elites. However, this research is not the final word on the Five Ks but contributes to ongoing discussions and debates regarding the subject of identity formation. It yet remains to see how the Five Ks will transform in the future through further advances in technology and communication.



## References

Aggarwal, N. K. (2010) "Violations of Parole: Language, Religion, and Power Among the Modern Udasi Movement and the SGPC". *Sikh Formations*, 6 (1) pp. 77-93.

Ahluwalia, J. S. (1999) *The Doctrine and Dynamics of Sikhism*. Patiala: Punjabi University.

Ahluwalia, P. (2006) "Inventing Home: (Re) Membering the Nation". *Sikh Formations*, 2 (2), pp. 103-114.

———. (2011) "At Home in Motion: Evolving Sikh Identities". *Sikh Formations*, 7 (2), pp. 95-109.

Ashcroft, B. Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (eds) (1995) *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.

Axel, B. K. (2001) *The Nation's Tortured Body: Violence Representation, and the Formation of a Sikh Diaspora*. USA: Duke University Press.

———. (2002) "Diasporic Imaginary". *Public Culture*, 14 (2), pp. 411-28.

———. (2005) "Diasporic Sublime: Sikh Martyrs, Internet Mediations, and the Question of the Unimaginable". *Sikh Formations*, 1 (1), pp. 127-154.

Ballantyne, T. (1999) "Resisting the 'Boa Constrictor' of Hinduism: The Khalsa and the Raj." *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 6 (2), pp. 195-216.

———. (2006) *Between Colonialism and Diaspora: Sikh Cultural Formations in an Imperial World*. USA: Duke University Press.

Barrier, N. G. (1970) *The Sikhs and their Literature: A Guide to Tracts, Books and Periodicals, 1849-1919*. Delhi: Manohar Book Service.

———. (1989) "The Singh Sabhas and the Evolution of Modern Sikhism, 1875-1925", in Baird, R. D. (ed.) *Religion in Modern India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, pp.

———. (1995) "Tradition and Sikh identity in the Modern World". *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 2(1), pp. 103–112.

———. (2000) "Competing Versions of Sikh Religion and Politics: The Chief Khalsa Diwan and the Panch Khalsa Diwan, 1902-1928". *South Asia*, 23 (2), pp. 33-62.

———. (2006) "Trauma and Memory within the Sikh Diaspora: Internet Dialogue". *Sikh Formations*, 2 (1), pp. 103-114.

Bann, S (1981) "Towards a Critical Historiography: Recent Work in Philosophy of History". *Philosophy*, 56 (2), pp. 365-385.

Barrier, N. G. & Dusenbery, V. A. (eds) (1989) *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and Experience Beyond Punjab*. Delhi: South Asia Books.

Bassnett, S. & Trivedi, H. (eds) (1999) *Post-colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Batra, R. (1979) *Leadership in its Finest Mould: Guru Gobind Singh*. Amritsar: SGPC.

Baumann, G. (1996) *Contesting Culture: Discourses of Identity in Multi-ethnic London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

BBC (2008) *Sikh Girl Wins Bangle Law Battle*. Available at:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/7529694.stm> (Accessed: 10 October 2011).

BBC (2009) *Boy's Sikh Dagger in School Ban*. Available at:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/8304088.stm> (Accessed: 15 October 2009).

Bell, Catherine. (2010) *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bhangu, Ratan Singh. *Prachin Panth Prakash*. [1935] reprint New Delhi: Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, 1993.

Bhugal, B. (1995) 'Interpretive Ideals Concerning Sikh-ism and *Gurbani*' in *The Sikh Reformer*. Issue 6 Oct 1995 p19-22.

———. (2001) *The Word of Guru Nanak: Hermeneutics, Nonduality and Skilful Means*.

Unpublished PhD Thesis, SOAS.

———. (2007) "Text as Sword: Sikh Religious Violence Taken for Wonder." In *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*. R.King and J .Hinnells, eds. pp. 107-135.

Bingley, A. H. (1898) *The Sikhs*. Delhi: National Book Shop.

Brard, G. S. (2007) *East of Indus*. New Delhi: Hemkunt.

Butalia, T. S. & Small, D. (2004) *Religion in Ohio: Profiles of Faith Communities*. U.S.A.: Ohio University Press.

Chibbar, Kesar Singh. *Bhai Kesar Singh Chibbar Krit Bansavalinama Dasam Patshahian Ka*.

Padam, P. S. (ed.) (1997) Amritsar: Singh Brothers.

Chopra, R. (2010) "Commemorating Hurt: Memorializing Operation Bluestar", *Sikh Formations*, 6 (2) pp. 119-152.

Cohn, B. S. (1996) *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Cole, W. O. (1982) *The Guru in Sikhism*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

———. (1984) *Sikhism and Its Indian Context 1469-1708*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.

Cole, W. O. & Sambhi, P. S. (1977) *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism: Sikh Religion and Philosophy*. London: Curzon Press.

Cunningham, J. D. (1849) *History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*. New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Ltd.

Deol, J. (1998) "The Minas and Their Literature". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 118 (2) pp. 172-84.

———. (2001) "Eighteenth-century Khalsa Identity: Discourse, Praxis and Narrative", in Shackle, C. Singh, G. & Mandair, A. (eds) *Sikh Religion, Culture and Ethnicity*. London: Curzon Press, pp. 25-46.

Dhavan, P. (2007) "Redemptive Pasts and Imperilled Futures: the Writing of a Sikh History", *Sikh Formations*, 3 (2) pp. 111-124.

———. (2011) *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Douglas, Mary (2002) *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New Edn. London: Routledge.

Falcon, R. W. (1896) *Handbook on Sikhs for the Use of Regimental Officers*. Allahabad: Pioneer Press.

Fenech, L. E. (2000) *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition: Playing the 'Game of Love'*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (2008) *The Darbar of the Sikh Gurus: The Court of God in the World of Men*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Forster, G. (1798) *A Journey from Bengal to England, Vol 1*. London: R. Foulder.

Fox, R. (1990) *Lions of Punjab: Culture in the Making*. USA: University of California Press.

Gandhi, S. S. (1978) *History of the Sikh Gurus: A Comprehensive Study*. Delhi: Gur Das Kapur and Sons Ltd.

Goodrum, A. (2001) "Land of Hip and Glory: Fashioning the 'Classic' National Body", in Keenan, W. (ed.) *Dressed to Impress: Looking the Part*. Oxford: Berg, pp. 85-104.

Gordon, J. H. (1883) *The Sikhs*. Patiala: Punjab Languages Department.

Grewal, H. (2010) "Who Desires the Rhinoceros? Prosaic Poetical and Mnemonic Visual Refractions of Violence in the Wake of Operation Blue Star". *Sikh Formations*, 6 (2), pp. 193-219.

Grewal, J. S. (1972) *From Guru Nanak to Maharajah Ranjit Singh: Essays in Sikh History*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak University.

———. (1997) *Historical Perspectives on Sikh Identity*. Patiala: Punjabi University.

———. (1998) *Contesting Interpretations of the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi: Manohar.

———. (ed.) (2004) *The Khalsa: Sikh and Non-Sikh Perspectives*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Grewal, J. S. & Bal, S. S. (1967) *Guru Gobind Singh: A Biographical Study*. Chandigarh: Punjab University.

Grewal, J. S. & Banga, I. (eds) (1999) *History and Ideology: The Khalsa over 300 Years*. New Delhi: Tulika.

Grewal, J. S. & Habib, I. (eds) (2001) *Sikh History from Persian Sources: Translations of Major Texts*. New Delhi: Tulika.

Gupta, S. K. (1999) *Creation of the Khalsa: Fulfilment of Guru Nanak's Mission*. Patiala: Punjabi University.

Hall, S. (1996) "The West-and-the-Rest: Discourse and Power", in Hall, S. & Gieben, B. (ed.) *Formations of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 184-227.

High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh. (2009) *Gurleen Kaur and Others versus State of Punjab and Others*. Available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/15971334/KuarvPunjab509> (Accessed: 20 October 2011).

Jagdev, B. S. (2009) "Who is a Sikh?" *The Sikh Bulletin*, 11 (3/4), pp. 8-12.

Jakobsh, D. (2003) *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (2004) “Constructing Sikh Identities: Authorities Virtual and Imagined”. *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 1 (10), pp. 127-142.

Jhutti-Johal, J. (2011) *Sikhism Today*. London: Continuum.

José, F. L. (2006) “The Khanda and the Dhulfiqur: Sikh-Shi’a Parallelisms and Crossings in History and Text, Concept of the Divine Guide and Sacred Chivalry”. *Sikh Formations*, 2 (2), pp. 153-179.

Kalra, V. (2005) “Locating the Sikh Pagh”, *Sikh Formations*, 1 (1) pp. 75-92.

Kaur, Birendra. (1997) “Human Hair – A Biological Necessity”. *The Sikh Review*, 45 (1), pp. 41-44.

———. (2001) *On Sikh Identity*. Amritsar: Singh Brothers.

Kaur, Madanjit. (1989) “The Creation of the Khalsa and Prescribing of the Sikh Symbols” in Mann, J. S. & Saraon, H. S. (eds) *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*. India: South Asia Books, pp. 195-213.

———. (ed.) (2000) *Guru Gobind Singh and the Creation of the Khalsa*. Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.



Kaur, Rajinder. (1992) *Sikh Identity and National Integration*. New Delhi: Intellectual Publishing House.

Kohli, H. S. (2010) "Mightier than the Kirpan", *The Guardian*, 9 February, p. 35.

Lacan, J. (1977) *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. London: Tavistock.

Lal, B. H. (1999) "Sahajdhari Sikhs: Their Origin and Current Status with the Panth", in Singh, Pashaura. & Barrier, N. G. (ed.) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Leonard, K. (2007) "Transnationalism, Diaspora, Translation: Comparing Punjabis and Hyderabadis abroad". *Sikh Formations*, 3 (1) pp. 51–66.

Maan, A. (2005) "Post-Colonial Practices and Narrative Nomads: Thinking Sikhism beyond Metaphysics". *Sikh Formations*, 1 (2), pp. 217-227.

———. (2007) "Narrative Authority: Performing the Postcolonial Self". *Social Identities*, 13 (3), pp. 411–419.

Macauliffe, M. A. (1881) "The Sikh Religion under Banda and its Present Condition", in Singh, Darshan. (ed.) (1999) *Western Image of the Sikh Religion: A Source Book*. New Delhi: National Book Organisation.

———. (1909) *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors Vol 1-6*. Amritsar: Satvic Books.

Madra, A. S. & Singh, P. (eds) (2004) *Sicques, Tigers, or Thieves: Eyewitness Accounts of the Sikhs (1606–1810)*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. (1999) *Warrior Saints: Three Centuries of the Sikh Military Traditions*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Malcolm, J. (1812) *Sketch of the Sikhs: Their Origin, Customs & Manners*. Chandigarh: Vinay Publications.

Malhotra, K. (2009) "Contemporary Evidence on Sikh Rites and Rituals in the Eighteenth Century". *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 16 (2), pp. 179-197.

Manasukhani, G. S. (1989) "Sikh-Rahat-Maryada and Sikh Symbols" in Mann, J. S. & Saraon, H. S. (eds) *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*. India: South Asia Books, pp. 174-91.

Mandair, A. (1995) "Interpreting the 'Interpretive Process': The Ambivalence of Tradition in the Representation of Sikh Culture". *The International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 2 (2), pp. 217-238.

———. (1996) "Writing Otherwise than Identity: Translation and Cultural Hegemony", in Singh, P. and Thandi, S. S. (eds) *Globalisation and the Region: Explorations in Punjabi Identity*. Coventry: Association for Punjab Studies.

———. (2003) “What if *Religio* Remained Untranslatable?”, in Goodchild, P. (ed.) *Difference in Philosophy of Religion*. Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 87-100.

———. (2004) “The Unbearable Proximity of the Orient: Political Religion, Multiculturalism and the Retrieval of South Asian Identities”. *Social Identities*, 10 (5), pp. 647-663.

———. (2005) “The Politics of Nonduality: Reassessing the Work of Transcendence in Modern Sikh Theology”. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 74 (3), pp. 646-673.

———. (2006) “Hegel’s Excess: Indology, Historical Difference and the Post-secular Turn of Theory”. *Postcolonial Studies*, 9 (1), pp. 15-34.

———. (2007) “Interdictions: Language, Religion & the (dis)Orders of Indian Identity”. *Social Identities*, 13 (3), pp. 337–361.

———. (2009a) “The Politics of Non-duality: Unravelling the Hermeneutics of Modern Sikh Theology”, in Pemberton, K. & Nijhawan, M. (eds) *Shared Idioms, Sacred Symbols, and the Articulation of Identities in South Asia*. New York: Routledge, pp. 54-77.

———. (2009b) *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Mandair, A. & Zene, C. (2005) “Dialogue as the Inscription of ‘The West’ ”. *Social Identities*, 11 (3), pp. 171-175.

Mandair, N. (2005) "(En) gendered Sikhism: The Iconolatry of Manliness in the Making of Sikh Identity". *Sikh Formations*, 1 (1), pp. 39-55.

———. (2007) "Re-enchanting Englishness: Multiculturalism and the Matter of Britain". *Social Identities*, 13 (3), pp. 283-306.

———. (2009) "An Approximate Difference: Proximity and Oppression in the West's Encounter with Sikhism". *Sikh Formations*, 5 (2), pp. 85-101.

Mansukhani, G. S. (1989) "Sikh-Rahat-Maryada and Sikh Symbols", in Mann, J. S. & Saraon, H. S. (eds) *Advanced Studies in Sikhism*. India: South Asia Books, pp. 176-178.

McLeod, W. H. (1968) *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

———. (ed.) (1984) *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———. (1987) *The Chaupa Singh Rahit-Nama*. Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

———. (1989) *Who is a Sikh? The Problem of Sikh Identity*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (1994) "Cries of Outrage: History versus Tradition in the Study of the Sikh Community". *South Asia Research*, 14 (2), p. 129.

———. (1995) *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (1997) *Sikhism*. London: Penguin.

———. (2000) *Exploring Sikhism: Aspects of Sikh Identity, Culture, and Thought*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (2003) *Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

———. (2006) *Prem Sumārag: The Testimony of a Sanatan Sikh*. USA: Oxford University Press.

———. (2008) "The Five Ks of the Khalsa Sikhs". *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 128 (2), pp. 325-331.

Mooney, N. (2011) *Rural Nostalgias and Transnational Dreams: Identity and Modernity among Jat Sikhs*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Nabha, Kahan Singh. (1898) *Hum Hindu Nahin*. Giani, Gurdit Singh (ed.) (1973) Amritsar: Shri Guru Singh Sabha Shatabdi Committee.

———. (1901) *Gurumat Sudhākar*. Amritsar: Vazir Hind Press.

———. (1931) *Gurushabad Ratanākar Mahān Kosh*. Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag.

Oberoi, H. (1987) "From Punjab to "Khalistan": Territoriality and Metacommentary". *Pacific Affairs*, 60 (1), pp. 26-41.

———. (1993) "Sikh Fundamentalism: Translating History into Theory", in Marty, M. E. & Appleby, R. S. (eds) *Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economics, and Militance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 256-287.

———. (1995) "The Making of a Religious Paradox: Sikh Khalsa, Sahajdhari as Modes of Early Sikh Identity", in Lorenzen, D. N. (ed.) *Bhakti Religion in North India: Community Identity and Political Action*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 35-66.

———. (1997) *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Padam, Piara Singh. (ed.) (1989) *Rahit-nāme*. Amritsar: Bhai Chatar Singh Jivan Singh. 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

Penney, S. (1999) *Sikhism*. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Publishers.

Pihlainen, K. (2011) "Critical Historiography in the Entertainment Age". *Historein* 10, pp 106 - 116. Available at: <http://www.historeinonline.org/index.php/historein/article/view/10>. (Date accessed: 04 Jan. 2015).

Puar, J. K. (2008) "The Turban is not a Hat: Queer Diaspora and Practices of Profiling". *Sikh Formations*, 4 (1), pp. 47-91.

Rai, R. & Reeves, P. (eds) (2008) *The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and Changing Identities*. Oxon: Routledge.

Sainapati. *Kavi Sainapati Krit Sri Gursobha*. Singh, Ganda. (ed.) (1967) Patiala: Punjabi University.

Sethi, J. S. (2009) *The Judgement: Gurleen Kaur v. The State of Punjab*. Available at: [http://www.sikhchic.com/resource\\_library/the\\_judgment\\_gurleen\\_kaur\\_v\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_punjab](http://www.sikhchic.com/resource_library/the_judgment_gurleen_kaur_v_the_state_of_punjab) (Accessed: 19 July 2011).

Shackle, C. (2002) "Sikhs and Modernity", in Fletcher, P. Kawanami, H. & Smith, D. (eds) *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*. London: Routledge, pp. 68-81.

Shackle, C. & Mandair, A. (eds) (2005) *Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Selections from the Sikh Scriptures*. Oxon: Routledge.

Shani, G. (2005) "Beyond Khalistan? Sikh Diasporic Identity and Critical International Theory". *Sikh Formations*, 1 (1), pp. 57-74.

———. (2010) "The Memorialization of *Ghallughara*: Trauma, Nation and Diaspora". *Sikh Formations*, 6 (2), pp. 177-192.

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. (1959) *Sikh Reht Maryada*. Available at: <http://www.sgpc.net/sikhism/sikh-dharma-manual.html> (Accessed: 12 December 2011).

Sihra, K. S. (1985) *Sikhdom*. England: Sikh Commonwealth.

Singh, Attar. (1873) *Sakhee Book: Or, the Description of Gooroo Gobind Singh's Religion and Doctrines...* India: Forgotten Books.

Singh, Bhagat Lakshman. (1923) *Sikh Martyrs*. Madras, Ganesh and Company.

Singh, Bhagat. (1978) *Sikh Polity: In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*. New Delhi: Oriental.

Singh, Chetan. (1991) *Religion and Empire: Punjab in the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Singh, Darshan. (ed.) (1999) *Western Image of the Sikh Religion: A Source Book*. New Delhi: National Book Organisation.

———. (2004) *Western Perspectives on the Sikh Religion*. Amritsar: Singh Brothers.

Singh, Dimpy. (1996) "Amrit Chhakna-When?" *The Sikh Review*, 44 (10), pp. 67-68.

Singh, Fauja. (1971) "Foundation of the Khalsa Commonwealth – Ideological Aspects", in Singh, *The Panjab Past and Present Vol 1*. India: Punjab University, pp. 197-210.

———. (ed.) (1978) *Historians and Historiography of the Sikhs*. Delhi: Oriental Publishers.

———. (1996) *Hukamnāmās: Srī Guru Tegh Bahādur Sāhib*. Patiala: Punjab University.



Singh, Ganda. (ed.) (1984) *The Singh Sabha and Other Socio-Religious Movements in the Punjab in the Past and Present*. Patiala: Punjab University.

———. (1973) “Raj Karega Khalsa’ Couplet”. *The Punjab Past and Present*, 7 (1), pp. 173-175.

———. (ed.) (1967) *Hukam-nāme: Guru Sāhibān, Mātā Sāhibān, Bandā Singh ate Khālsā jī de*. Patiala: Punjab University.

———. (ed.) (1962) *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*. Calcutta: Maitra.

———. (1972) *Guru Gobind Singh’s Death at Nanded: An Examination of Succession Theories*. Bhatinda: Guru Nanak Foundation.

Singh, Gian. (1880) *Panth Prakāsh*. Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag.

Singh, Gian. (1891) *Tavarīkh Guru Khālsā*, vol 1. Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag.

Singh, Gurbhagat. (1999) “Vaisakhi of 1699: Rupture of the Indian Grand Narratives”. *International Journal of Punjab Studies*. 6 (2) pp. 187-94.

Singh, Gurharpal. (1999) “A Victim Diaspora?: The Case of the Sikhs”. *Diaspora* 8 (3), pp. 293-307.

———. (2005) “British Multiculturalism and Sikhs”. *Sikh Formations*, 1 (2), pp. 157-173.

Singh, Gurharpal. & Tatla, Darshan Singh. (2006) *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community*. London: Zed Books.

Singh, Gurmukh. (2011) *Why Sikh Identity?* Available at:  
[http://www.sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smsarticles/advisorypanel/gurmukhsinghsewauk/why\\_sikhidentity.html](http://www.sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smsarticles/advisorypanel/gurmukhsinghsewauk/why_sikhidentity.html) (Accessed: 16 April 2011).

Singh, Harbans. (1994) *Heritage of the Sikhs*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Singh Harleen. (2006) "Tur (Banned) Masculinities: Terrorists, Sikhs, and Trauma in Indian Cinema". *Sikh Formations*, 2 (2), pp. 115-124.

Singh, Jasjit. (2009) "British Sikh Youth: Identity, Hair and the Turban", in Collins-Mayo, Sylvia, and Dandelion, Pink. (eds) *Religion and Youth*. Surrey, GBR: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, pp. 131-138.

Singh, Jyotsna. (1996) *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: "Discoveries" of India in the Language of Colonialism*. London: Routledge.

Singh, Kartar (1951) *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*. Ludhiana: Lahore Book Shop.

Singh, Kharak (ed.) (1999) *Khalsa and the Twenty-first Century*. Chandigarh: Institute of Sikh Studies.

Singh, Khushwant. (1999) *Khalsa Birthday Bash*. Available at:

<http://www.tribuneindia.com/1999/99apr10/saturday/aboveall.htm> (Accessed: 12 November 2009).

Singh, Mohinder. (2000) *Sikh Forms and Symbols*. New Delhi: Manohar.

Singh, Nikky-G. Kaur (1991) "Poetics as a Hermeneutic Technique in Sikhism", Timm, J. R. (ed.) *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 245-270.

———. (2005a) "Re-membering the Body of The Transcendent One: Kristeva's Semiotics and Sikh Scripture". *Sikh Formations*, 1 (2), pp. 201-216.

———. (2005b) *The Birth of the Khalsa: A Feminist Re-Memory of Sikh Identity*. New York: State University of New York Press.

———. (2007) "Translating Sikh Scripture into English". *Sikh Formations*, 3 (1), pp. 33-49.

———. (2008) "Thinking Differently in the Context of Sikh Religion", in Cheetham, D. & King, R. (eds) *Contemporary Practice and Method in the Philosophy of Religion: New essays*. London: Continuum, pp. 117-132.

Singh, Nripinder. (1994) "Rahitnamas and Aggrandizement of Khalsa Tradition", in Singh, Dharam (ed.) *Sikhism and Secularism: Essays in Honour of Prof. Harbans Singh*. Delhi: Harman Publishing House, pp. 301-323.

Singh, Pashaura. (1999) "Formation of the Conventions of the Five Ks". *International Journal of Punjab Studies* 6, pp. 156-67.

———. (ed.) (2011) *Sikhism in Global Context*. India: Oxford University Press.

Singh, Pashaura. & Barrier, N. G. (eds) (1996) *The Transmission of Sikh Heritage in the Diaspora*. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. (eds) (1999) *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change*. New Delhi: Manohar.

———. (eds) (2004) *Sikhism and History*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Singh, Patwant. (1999) *The Sikhs*. London: John Murray Publishers Ltd.

Singh, Sahib. (1967) *Life History of Guru Gobind Singh*. Jullundar: Raj Publishers.

Singh, Sangat. (1995) *The Sikhs in History*. New Delhi: Uncommon Books.

Singh, Santokh (1844) *Srī Gur Pratāp Sūraj Granth*, vols 5-14 of *Srī Gur Sūraj Granthānālī*, Vir Singh (ed.), Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar; 4<sup>th</sup> edition. 1962-65.

Singh, Santokh. (1991) *Sword of the Khalsa*. India: Gujral Printers.

Singh, Sulakhan. (1999) *Heterodoxy in the Sikh Tradition*. Jalandhar: ABS Publications.

Singh, Teja. (1963) *The Religion of the Sikh Gurus*. Punjab: SGPC.

———. (1978) *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions*. Punjab: Khalsa Brothers.

Singh, Trilochan. (1977) *The Turban and the Sword of the Sikhs: Essence of Sikhism*. London: Sikh Missionary Society U.K.

———. (1994) *Ernest Trumpp and W. H. McLeod as Scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture*. Chandigarh: International Centre of Sikh Studies.

Takhar, O. K. (2005) *Sikh Identity: An Exploration of Groups Among Sikhs*. Hants: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Tatla, D. S. (1999) *The Sikh Diaspora: The Search for Statehood*. London: UCL Press.

———. (2006) "The Morning After: Trauma, Memory and the Sikh Predicament". *Sikh Formations*, 2 (1), pp. 57-88.

———. (2012) "The Unbearable Lightness of Diasporic Sikh Nationalism! From Anguished Cries of 'Khalistan' to Pleas for 'Recognition'". *Sikh Formations*, 8 (1), pp. 59-85.

*The Story of the Turban* (2012) BBC ONE, 12 April. 2320hrs.

Trumpp, E. (1877) *The Adi Granth or the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs*. New Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal.

Turner, V. (1995) *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New Jersey: AldineTransaction.

Uberoi, J. P. S. (1975) "The Five Symbols of Sikhism", in Singh, H. (ed.) *Perspectives on Guru Nanak*. Patiala: Panjabi University, pp. 502-513.

———. (1999) *Religion, Civil Society and the State: A Study of Sikhism*. India: Oxford University Press.

Verma, R. (2006) "Trauma, Cultural Survival and Identity Politics in the Post-9/11 Era: Reflections by Sikh Youth". *Sikh Formations*, 2 (1), pp. 89-101.