

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NIRMALA SECT IN DOABA (1849-2015)

PRE-THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**

SUBMITTED BY
SARLA NIRANKARI
Registration No: – 17503121

SUPERVISED BY
Dr. Dharmjit Singh Parmar
Professor, Department of History
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES



SANT BABA BHAG SINGH UNIVERSITY,
Village:- Khiala, PO:- Padhiana, Distt:- Jalandhar
September- 2022

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September- 2022

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research work embodied in the Thesis entitled "THE CONTRIBUTION OF NIRMALA SECT IN DOABA (1849-2015)" is my own contribution and results of investigations carried out under the supervision of Dr. Dharmjit Singh Parmar Professor, University Institute of Humanities, Sant Baba Bhag Singh University from July 2017 to December 2022. This research work is original and has not been submitted earlier to any University/ Institution for the award of any diploma or degree.

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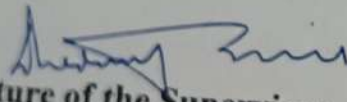
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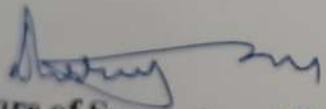
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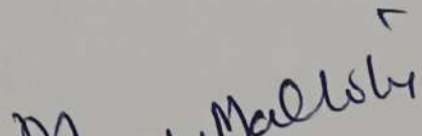


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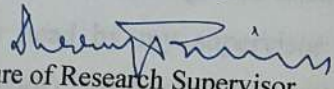
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This is to certify that the work presented in this Thesis entitled "THE CONTRIBUTION OF NIRMALA SECT IN DOABA (1849-2015)" is the own work of Sarla Nirankari, Registration No: 17503121 conducted in the Department of Humanities, Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Jalandhar Punjab, under my supervision. This work has not been submitted earlier to any University/Institution for any research degree to the best of my knowledge.

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Sarla Nirankari

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1.	Nirmal Sant Baba Bhag Singh
2.	Guru Nanak Dev as pioneer Nirmala reformer
3.	Philosophical Perspectives of Nirmala Sect

SERIAL NO.	TITLES OF PAPER PRESENTATIONS
1.	Role of Patriotic Nirmala Saints in Indian Freedom Struggle
2.	New Historicity and Nirmala Sect
3.	Philosophy of Nirmala Sect

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ABSTRACT

The particular proclivity shown towards the Nirmala sect by Guru Nanak Dev in *Adi Granth* is quite peculiar. The birth of Nirmalas can be traced back to Guru Nanak as stated in *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*. According to Nirmalas, in 1686, Guru Gobind Singh sent five Sikhs (Bir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karam Singh, Ram Singh, and Saina Singh) to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit and classical Hindu literature. These scholars further expanded the Nirmala tradition. This class of theologians created wonders in literature, commentary writing, translation, and *Gurmat* literature. Their spiritual sanctity and inclination towards *Vedanta* within the precincts of Sikhism are quite distinctive. The Nirmala sect has a long legacy of scholars who have voluptuously written about the principles of Vedas and *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. Nirmala sect is the most glorious one among the Sikh sects. The Nirmalas are well-versed and scholastic in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Hindi and less in Punjabi. This sect has a long legacy of scholars who have established new traditions of translations, interpretations, and reflections of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Nirmalas could merely do this much literary work because of their alignment with various *deras* (residential arenas). *Deras* are the hub of learning and erudite in India in these days. The longstanding heritage of the Nirmala *deras* have served the masses in about all the fields of life. It is further mentionable that every Nirmala *dera* has consistent legacy in religion, music, medicine and other socio-welfare activities. Numerous famous Nirmala saints and places are indebted to Doaba Region, just as Maqsdpur, Jian, Kaharpur, Mahilpur, Domeli, Santgarh Harkhowal, Santpura Jabbar Maanko, etc. It is essential to mention here that the philosophy of Nirmala's has peculiarly procured very sweeping socio-religious bearings in the society. Their continuous immersion in literary and socio-religious activities makes them positively distinctive from other reform movements and religious sects. The ideology of the Nirmala sect has surfaced in their humanitarian efforts for better social order. Their leadership and guidance for the solution of social problems have turned the call for change in a mass movement for example, Sant Seechewal's (a great Nirmala and preservationist saint of Seechewal Sultan Pur Lodhi) efforts for the environment and Sant Malkit Singh's (a great Nirmala saint and educationist of Sant Pura Jabbar Manko Jalandhar) endeavors for rural education. Furthermore, Nirmala saints were exalted with divine knowledge and education; they had explored high levels of literature, science, axiology, logistics, and the philosophy of *Gurbani*. The classical exegesis and translations of the *Gurbani*, dictionaries, literature, *Chhanda Shastra*, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. In the light of the above discussion, it would be in the fitness of the things to say that the contribution of the Nirmalas in the form of preserving Hindu and Sikh philosophy as regarding them the same has brought about sea changes in the Hindu-Sikh relationships and thus creating solidarity within Sikh society. Moreover, functioning as an intra sect within Sikhism, the Nirmala sect has strengthened and contributed to a large extent, as far as faith in the *Gurbani*, teachings of the ten Gurus, and Vedanta with an outlook of socio-religious reform is concerned.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

In the Sikh religion, the period of Guru Nanak is considered the renaissance period in the religious history of medieval Punjab. The socio-religious conditions of the time of Guru Nanak were precarious. Plenteous religious sects¹ were the chord of contention among the masses. The followers of these sects used to criticize and impose counter charges on each other, which led to unfriendly conflict in society. People have forgotten God, the actual path of religion, and the message of true wisdom. Instead, they got involved in hypocrisy, imposture, betrayal, immorality, and unrighteousness. Guru Nanak emancipated humanity by initiating a pure and undefiled form of worship in these times of unrest, deterioration, and disharmony. Devotion towards God through service to humanity, reminiscence of God, and devout congregations were the significant initiatives in the path of *Bhakti* (devotion) taken by Guru Nanak. He proliferated the eternal principles of musing of God by continuous chanting, equal sharing of gifts of nature, and sturdy belief in a life full of actions (*Naam japo, vand chhakko, and kirat kro*). His way of teaching was based on divine enlightenment and devout faith in God. These principles reinstated the crumbling social structure of society.

The Sikhism expounded by him and the other nine Gurus formed a cohesive Sikh society while gradually, a need had been felt for the conglomeration of temporal power and spiritual authority (*Miri- Piri*). The tenth Guru Gobind Singh initiated armament and edification (*Shastra and shastras*). There was a dreadful need for alterations in the ways of promotion of Sikhism due to the suppressive policies of the Mughal regime. The most peace-loving Sikh community has to take the shape of formidable combatants to procure the interests of the Hindu community. Both literary, as well as weaponry means the existing challenges were dealt with resourcefulness by Sikh gurus. The particular proclivity shown towards the Nirmala sect by Guru Nanak Dev in *Adi Granth* is quite peculiar. The keen interest of tenth Guru Gobind Singh could be better construed by the creation of Khalsa (a class of warriors) and Nirmlas

¹ Sect is a religious group which is connected to a larger group but it differs from main group by virtue of certain refinements, philosophical doctrines, set of opinions or distinctions of belief or practice.



(a class of scholars) in the late seventeenth century. Drastic changes initiated by Guru Gobind Singh for saving the nation by establishing Khalsa and taking the lead to train educationally fit all Sikhs; are pretty significant. The birth of Nirmalas can be traced back to Guru Nanak as stated in *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*.² Bhai Gurdas writes,

“Maareya sikka jagat vich Nanak Nirmal Panth chalayiya

Thaapiya Lahana jeewnde guriyai chhatra firayia”. (vaar 1 pauri 45)³

It could be interpreted that worldly possessions and ownerships are short-lived and ephemeral as dynasties, lineages and empires have their ebb and flow. However, the reign of truth established by Guru Nanak always remains. The propagandists are of the view that Guru Nanak Dev originated this sect as in the old scriptures, the sect's name mentioned in his Bani. Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha refers to ‘Nirmala’ in ‘Mahan Kosh’⁴ as without malign, pure, quite chaste, illuminated, enlightened, unquestioned, and without any stigma or disgrace. Further, the *Saakhi of Bhai Bala*, i.e. *'Makke di Goshat'* consolidates above-cited view point by mentioning as

Kaliyug Nanak Nirmala, gur chela parwan

Pari utaare sabhna, satinam de daan.

Kaliyug Nanak Nirmala, panth chalayo aayi,

*Ved kitebon bahira, japed aik khudayi.*⁵

The above verse communicates that Guru Nanak established the Nirmala Panth to eliminate the sufferings of humanity. The Nirmala Panth has sovereignty over Vedas and confides in the oneness of God. Bhai Bhagirath, the first follower of Guru Nanak Dev to receive *Mool Mantra* indites:

Nirmal Panth chalaiyo, ik vivek bhagat drirhai

² Bhai Gurdas, an influential Sikh writer, historian, preacher and one of the original scribes of the Shri Guru Granth Sahib https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhai_Gurdas

³ www.panjabdigilib.org Accession no. MN-000110
<https://www.searchgurbani.com/bhai-gurdas-vaaran/vaar/1/pauri/45/line/1>

⁴ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha(1981), *Mahan Kosh*, Third edition, Bhasha Vibhag Punjabi University Patiala, p. 2133.

⁵ *Makke di Goshat* Pauri 40 Sikh Reference library Amritsar no. 6535 , cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardya*, p.32.



Sadhan kathin chhadayi ke, guru chele ki reet chalayi

Kaliyug Nanak kala dikhayi (Vaar Bhagirath Pourhi 33)⁶

The above verse indicates that the founder of Nirmala Panth, Nanak, had strengthened the devotion of devotees through master and disciple (*Guru-chela*) tradition. Mahant Ganesha Singh, an eminent scholar of the Nirmala sect, accomplished that Shri Guru Nanak Dev was the prime mover of Nirmala Panth. Giani Gian Singh had presented the antiquity of the Nirmala Sect in his book named *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. According to him, the common Sikhs were leading family life (*Grihastha*), whereas who led the life of renunciation were called Nirmalas.⁷ To confirm this opinion, he had given *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* references, where the 'Nirmal' word had been used by Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjun Dev, and in the works of Bhattas.⁸ This is assumed that this word hails from the Guru Nanak Bani, and therefore this sect owes its lineage to Guru Nanak Dev. Gian Singh had discussed the issue of Guru Nanak as the founder of the Nirmala sect in his *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. He explores that Guru Nanak Dev got divine enlightenment by diving into *Bein* river of Sultanpur Lodhi, and after this, he started proliferating this knowledge by making Bhagirath his first disciple. Then he initiated Nirmala Panth.⁹ This fact is confirmed by Nirmala scholar Bhai Gurdas in Vaaran 11, who had discussed Bhai Bhagirath (the first recipient of *Mool Mantra* from Guru Nanak Dev) by giving the reference of the follower of Guru Nanak of Shelsiha village.¹⁰

Various theories given by different scholars appear to be illogical to the investigator's conviction as one feels its birth was given at the time of the founder of the Sikh faith,

⁶ www.aspirateur.co/janam-sakhi-guru-nanak-dev-ji-33

⁷ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, Kankhal, p.7. Hereafter cited as Giani Gian Singh, *Nimala Panth Pradeepika*, p.7.

⁸ Jasbir Rai Singh (1981), *Sabadi ratte so Nirmale*, M.3, *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, p27; *Nanak Nirmal Ujjale jo rate Hanayi* –M.1. *ibid*, p57; *Nanak Sant Nirmal bhaye* -M5, *ibid*, p297; *Nirmal Bhekh Apaar* -S.M. 5ke, *ibid*, p1409; *Satguru ki sewa Nirmali Nirmal Janu hoi so sewa ghale*-M. 5, *ibid*, p.304. cited in Pritam Singh, (Ed.) *Nirmal Samapardaya*, Guru Nanak Studies Centre, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, p.3. Hereafter cited as Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samapardaya*, p.31.

⁹ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰ *Shelsiha Vichi aakhiye, Bhagirathukali gun gaave Vaaran Bhai Gurdas* part A. cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samapardaya*, p.32.



i.e., Guru Nanak Dev. The origin of Nirmlas can be broadly categorized into four beliefs as far as the investigator's perception is concerned. The proponents of the first belief, such as Bhai Gurdas, Mahant Ganesha, Giani Gian Singh, and Mahant Dayal Singh, believed that Guru Nanak Dev was the founder of the Nirmla sect. In contrast, the second group of faith, consisting of Pandit Gulab Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Teja Singh, stood in sharp contrast to the first faith. It defended the opinion that the tenth Guru Govind Singh formally founded the Nirmala sect. Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh have also denoted the concept of two theories of the Nirmalas' origin.¹¹ The third belief consisting of Paramjit Singh Mansa, Sher Singh, and Teja Singh, advocated that the Nirmala sect developed as a separate offshoot of the Sikh religion. Paramjit Singh Mansa has also cited and propped up the concept of three theories.¹² The fourth faith, comprising Shamsheer Singh, Teja Singh, and Sohan Singh Josh, was of the opinion that the Nirmala sect had its emergence as the result of socio-religious movements.

From Guru Nanak Dev to the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh, the traditions of the Nirmala sect are deeply concomitant, which could be substantiated by the book "*Sampardaya Vanshavali*."¹³ The oldness and comprehensiveness of this sect are predictable in this text. Here it is essential to mention that the sapling planted by Guru Nanak was well taken care of by his descendants up to the tenth Guru. The tenth Guru Gobind Singh bequeathed a new contour to the Nirmala sect. He had special adoration for literature which could be easily observed through his keen participation in the scholastic discussions in his court at Paonta Sahib. Most of the poets of his court had contributed profusely to the creation of magnificent literature. Similarly, the Nirmala saints have

¹¹ Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh(2012), *History Of The Sikhs and Their Religion, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Darbar Sahib Complex Amritsar*.pp.390-391.

¹² Pramjit Singh Mansa (2009), *Nirmala Panth da Itihas (Part I)*, Dr. Chatar Singh and Jeewan Singh Mai Sewan Bazar, Amritsar, ISBN:817601-968-7, pp.17-26. Hereafter cited as Pramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmala Panth da Itihas (Part I)*, p. 17.

¹³ Mahant Hari Singh Vaidraj, *Nirmal Bhekh da Sankhep Itihas ate Sampardaya Vanshavali*, cited in Dr. Har Bhajan Singh(ed.2011), *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurubani Viyakhyakaari* Punjabi University Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra, Dehradun, pp.34-35. Hereafter cited as Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurubani Viyakhyakaari*, p. 177.



wrote about social concerns and welfare, cultural ethics and consciences, social prominence of various castes, strata, genders, and elements; vivaciousness of devotement and disinclination for social adherence; compliance with duties, and socially prohibited behavior on the basis of religion are predominantly cultural standards.¹⁴ Sikh religion consists of all these virtues lucidly in itself. Enthused by these principles and ordered by Shri Guru Gobind Singh, Nirmlas have hung over the whole country.¹⁵ In Punjab, numerous saints and scholars have notably contributed to the honing and elevation of Sikhism. However, the lack of cohesion, understanding, and solidity among different spiritual cults has been vehemently felt by the Nirmala scholars. Due to legendary supremacy, the Nirmala sect became a link between the different factions as it dealt skilfully with the linguistic complexities of the Sanskrit language. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh had manifestly understood the importance of the Sanskrit language in the social implications and social acceptance of his crusade in the nation. He knew that no movement could get national acknowledgment without this literary base. Therefore, he did not want to accept his love for Sanskrit as an ongoing need but as the undying and lasting requisite for nationalism.¹⁶ He was thriving and discerned that without perceiving Indian literature and traditional philosophy, it was incredible to reconstruct a stable and immaculate society. Further, his literary inclination led him to create a laureates class named the Nirmala. He wanted to provide proper education and training to his disciples to shape them into composed literary sanguine followers to eradicate sins of superstitions and vices of illiteracy. One group of historians stated that he founded the Nirmala Sikh erudite tradition in the late 17th century when he sent five Sikhs (disciples) to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit and Hindu religious texts.^{17, 18} According to Nirmalas, in 1686, Guru Gobind Singh sent five Sikhs (Bir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karam Singh, Ram Singh, and

¹⁴ Manmohan Sahgal (1970), *Guru Granth Sahib aik Sanskritik Sarvakshan*. Patiala: Bhasha Vibhag, p 102.

¹⁵ Nirmal Kumar Kaushik(2011), Nirmal Santon ka Hindi Sahitya, in *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurubani Viyakyakaari*, Har Bhajan Singh, p.177.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p.177.

¹⁷ Sulakhan Singh (2001), Heterodoxy in Sikhism: An Exposition of some Sectarian Developments, *Punjab History Conference*, Punjabi University Publications Bureau Patiala, pp.77-78.

¹⁸ Purnima Dhavan (2011), *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making Of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799* Oxford University Press New Delhi, pp.221.



Saina Singh) to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit and classical Hindu literature. These scholars further expanded the Nirmala tradition.¹⁹ In 1699 these saints returned, and at the time of the creation of *Khalsa Panth*, they had been baptized by Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Daya (two of five disciples *panj payaare*). These five Sikhs(saints)are called the Nirmalas.²⁰ The Guru bestowed ten blessings on the Nirmalas. He blessed Nirmala saints to put on specific garbs, adore themselves with the virtues of contentment, persistent in promotion of Sikhism through interpretation of Gurbani, involvement in the world like observers not absorbers, full of equanimity, beyond the bondages of observances, rites and superstitions, satisfaction with the food whatever is available, the sacrifice of worldly pursuits for the divine bliss and finally sponsoring Sikhism.²¹

This class of theologians created wonders in literature, commentary writing, translation, and *Gurmat* literature. Their spiritual sanctity and inclination towards *Vedanta* within the precincts of Sikhism are quite distinctive. The Nirmala sect has a long legacy of scholars who have voluptuously written about the principles of Vedas and Shri *Guru Granth Sahib*. Nirmala sect is the most glorious one among the Sikh sects.²² The Nirmalas are well-versed and scholastic in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Hindi and less in Punjabi.²³ However, their contribution to Punjabi literature is nonetheless important. This sect has a long legacy of scholars who have established new traditions of translations, interpretations, and reflections of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Their literature is a milestone to the learners of the *Gurbani*²⁴, *Bhagat Bani* (poetry of saints) in the holy *Adi Granth* as it is in their mother tongue. They also prepared

¹⁹ Madanjit Kaur (2007), *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical and Ideological Perspective*, Unistar Books, Chandigarh. ISBN 978-81-89899-55-4. p.198.

²⁰ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, p.23.

²¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2009), *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, Sriman 108 Balwant Singh Secretary Shukdev Kuti-Rattan Kankhal Haridwar, pp. 24-34. Hereafter cited as Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp.24-34.

²² Jagmel Singh (2019), *Nirmal Sampardaya Rachit Punjabi Sahit: Sarvekhan Te Mulyankan*, crl.du.ac. in/Doc.Bib/2019/Punjabi. Pdf

²³ Surendra Singh (1981), *Nirmal Santan di Punjabi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya*, p.247.

²⁴ *Gurbani* is the text of Sikhism's holy scripture or the word of Shri Guru Granth Sahib. In general, hymns in the central text of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, are called *Gurbani*.



dictionaries of different languages to comprehend the holy *Adi Granth*. Nirmala scholars produced *Guru Girdaarth Kosha*, considered the landmark literary art piece and breakthrough in contemporary literature.

A few scriptures and books of Nirmala saints with their authors are listed here such as.

Pandit Gulab Singh: *Mokh Panth, Parbodh Chandrolya Natak, Bhavrasamrit, Adhytma Ramayan*; Pandit Tara Singh: *Gurmat Nirnaya Sagar, Guru Teerath Sangrahi, Guru Girarth Kosh*; Pandit Sadhu Singh Patiala: *Guru Sidhant Ravi, Shri Mukhwak Sidhant Jyoti, Shri Dwie Panth Pardeepika*; Pandit Gurdit Singh: *Gurmat Sidhant Saar*; Pandit Nihal Singh Lahori: *Nirmal Prabhakar, Sikhi Parbhakar Akaal Natak*; Pandit Nihal Singh Boha: *Chakradhar Charitra Charu Chandrika*; Sant Nihal Singh: *Kavindra Parkash*; Pandit Govind Singh *Itihas Guru Khalsa*. Being the laureates in Sanskrit, their language is pro-Sanskrit. Hence it is a little bit tough than other regional languages. For example,

Sidhi Ki Sugam Saar Chandrika by Pandit Sada Singh; *Guru Komudi* by Pandit Kaur Singh; *Guru Sidhant Parijat* by Pandit Hara Singh; *Guru Nanak Stotra* by Pandit Gurditt Singh; *Guru Stotra* by Baba Prem Singh, *Jap Ji Sahib in Sanskrit* by Nihal Singh are the famous compositions of Nirmalas.²⁵ The commentaries list provided by these Nirmala saints is quite extensive. Bhai Santokh Singh wrote *Jap Ji Sahib Garab Ganjaniteeka*; Pandit Tara Singh Narottam wrote *Bhagat Bani, Jap Ji, Rahiras*, the commentary of *Keertan Sohilla*²⁶ and the scholars like Pandit Narain Singh, Sant Dayal Singh, Sant Nirankar Singh, Sant Tara Singh, Sant Dewa Singh, and Sadhu Gurditt Singh introduced Nirmala.

Most of the literature on Nirmala saints is published in Sanskrit or Hindi. In other words, Nirmala scholars had used Sanskrit as a semitic and literary language as per the demands of their content beyond the existing conditions. It implies that these scholars had the upper hand in the ancient language. It had been found in intensive

²⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp.97-99.

²⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 66-67..



research that most of the work of Nirmalas is unpublished or out of print. Even their poetics have also been disused and less evaluated²⁷. The scholars are of the opinion that if this sect's works are published and widely made available, there will be a significant change in the history of Punjabi literature.

It is essential to state that Nirmalas could merely do this much literary work because of their alignment with various *deras*²⁸ (residential arenas). These scholars were linked with some or other *sampradaya* of Nirmalas and their *deras* where *Gurukul* (a school of Vedic age style) type teaching-learning process continued. Deras are the hub of learning and erudite in India in these days. A *Dera* is technically the headquarters of a group of devotees who follow the teachings of a particular spiritual guru and generally have a living representative of the Guru who is equally revered. The representatives of the Guru who hold the (headship) *gaddi* are normally appointed by their predecessors.²⁹

To better comprehend the history of *deras*, it is necessary to go back to the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh sent five of his followers named Sant Karam Singh, Sant Ram Singh, Sant Ganda Singh, Sant Veer Singh, and Sant Saina Singh to Kaashi to learn Vedas and other scriptures in Sanskrit. These learned saints spread education to the Sikh masses. Sham Sher Singh Ashok has aptly said, "It is not appropriate to disapprove saffron or white clothes of Nirmala saints, and their outfit should not be criticized in principle. Shri Guru Gobind Singh did not want to delimit Sikhism to Punjab only. Hence, Nirmala saints were given the freedom to advertise Sikhism after returning from Banares. They were sent to every part of the country. Except for Anandpur, they accompanied Guru Gobind Singh to Malwa, Damdama, and Nanderh. Pandit Karam Singh and Dargaha Singh daily recited and narrated old

²⁷ Jagmel Singh (2019), *Nirmal Sampardaya Rachit Punjabi Sahit: Sarvekhan Te Mulankan*, Ph.D. Thesis Prof. Rawel Singh Th.23913, crl.du.ac.in/Doc.Bib/2019/Punjabi.pdf.

²⁸ The word *Dera* derives from the Persian word *Derah* or *Dirah*, which literally means a camp, abode, monastery or the extended residential sites of in Gurudwaras made for learning and living of religious leaders; frequently just glossed as sect.

²⁹ Dev Kumar (2018), *Mushrooming of deras in Punjab: A Critical review*, Research Guru Online Journal of Multidisciplinary Subjects vol. 12 issue 3. pp. 237-244.



scriptures at Nanderh (South).³⁰ These Nirmala saints were allowed to put on the robes in white, orange, or whitish. Guru Gobind Singh blessed Nirmala saints to be proficient in *Vedantas* and the *Khalsa* to be an authority in weapons. Guru Gobind Singh blessed Nirmala Panth to be famous in two ways, *Bhakti Marg* (the way of wholesome devotion), which will eradicate the darkness by the light of knowledge, and the other will be *Khalsa Panth* (the path of war). *Khalsa Panth* will take the weapon for the safety of humanity. In 1704, after overcoming many difficulties of wars and royal conflicts, Guru Gobind Singh arrived in Nanderh (South India) at the invitation of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. After the sad demise of Shri Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the two followers amongst the five most beloved disciples named Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh accompanied him to Nanderh. The sorry departure of Shri Guru Gobind Singh led all warriors to depart from warfare and get involved in the Nirmala ideology. Giani Gian Singh says, "Daya Singh, Saina Singh, Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Garja Singh, and Ram Singh left the weapons and accepted the code of conduct of Nirmlas."³¹

Giani Gian Singh had revised his version in *Nirmala Panth Preepika* and admitted, "When Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji left this mortal world, most of these disciples shifted to Punjab. Many of them joined the army of Banda Bahadur. The rest of the disciples wanted to live in peace and congregation just as Bhai Dargaha Singh, Saina Singh, Deep Singh, Chananna Singh, Punjab Singh, Muhar Singh, Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Ram Singh, Beet Singh, Sewa Singh, Sameer Singh, Chandan Singh etc. stayed with Sahib Ram Kaur (Baba Gurbaksh Singh) at Ravidas Pura. Bhai Gurbaksh Singh kept these saints in 1719 at his dera and had intensive discussions on the life sketch of Shri Guru Gobind Singh."³² In the Misal period, the Nirmalas blossom significantly. Phulkiyan State patronized the Nirmalas to become a

³⁰ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1981), *Nirmale sadhuan di Sikh dharam nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.149.

³¹ Giani Gian Singh(1973), *Shri Guru Granth Parkash*, Part 3 (edited by Giani Kirpal Singh) Manmohan Singh Barar Counselor Amritsar p.1726-27.

³² Giani Gian Singh(1962), *Nirmal Panth Preedipika*, pp.10-11.



prominent religious order.³³ Sardar Dhyan Singh of Shahbaad willed his state(property) to Karam Singh Nirmala.³⁴ In 1766, Satta Singh Bahirwala offered seven villages to Bhagat Singh Nirmala, although the latter declined the offer. Sardar Jai Singh's daughter-in-law offered two villages to the Nirmal dera at Kankhal.³⁵ Sardar Ganda Singh of Bhangi Misl offered 13 villages to Jai Singh Nirmala. In 1796 Maharja Ranjit Singh also granted a sanad of land to Nihal Singh Nirmala. The Nirmlas passed on the properties to Udaasi Akhara of Santokh Das on both occasions,³⁶ The development of the Nirmala Sect in the Pre and Post Maharaja Ranjit Singh Period is quite noteworthy. The Sardars of Sikh Misals offered land holdings to the Sadhus of Nirmala Deras, which can be seen in the form of *Patta*(land written record). Bhai Dargaha Singh Nirmala came from Abchal Nagar and lived in Kanbal in 1710. He had helped Hakim Rai Ahmad against Rohellas. Hakim allowed them to take hold of the land of their interest and, in 1726, also wrote a *sanad*(land record) of it.³⁷ Pandit Gulab Singh took the land on Patta in 1743 at Kurukshetra. In 1752 Bibi Pardhan Kaur, the daughter of King of Patiala, i.e., Ala Singh, gave the sanad (land endowment) of 30 villages to Mahant Nikka Singh of dera Baba Gandha Singh. In 1764 Sardar Bagga Singh gave a land deed(Patta) of Pargana Sujampur to Lakha Singh Nirmala. Sardar Satta Singh Naqayi donated the land of seven villages to Bhagat Singh Nirmala, who told the most exciting story of Mahabharat. In 1789 Jai Singh Kanhaiya donated 4 villages to Bhai Dargaha Singh Nirmala. In 1796 Sardar Ranjit Singh of Shukarchakkiyan Misal donated equal land deeds to Santokh Singh and Pandit Nihal Singh for translating Jap Ji Sahib into Sanskrit. From these land deeds, it is clear that in the period of Sikh Misls, landholdings had been offered to Nirmala saints. A few of them had started to build their deras there. Landholdings offered to Baba Dargaha Singh before the Misal period show his proximity to Guru

³³ Pashora Singh: Louis E.French (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, O.U.P. ISBN978-0-19-100412-4, pp. 377-378.

³⁴ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

³⁵ Surjit Singh Gandhi (2007), *History of Sikh Gurus Retold: 1606-1708 CE*, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, pp.971-974.

³⁶ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.35.



Gobind Singh. Another essential source is '*Shri Moksh Panth Parkash*', written by Sadhu Gulab Singh in 1779. It informs that Guru Gobind Singh divided his disciples into two groups. The first group was of brave warriors, and the second group was of intellectuals of religion and philosophy which were called Nirmalas.^{38, 39} The land holdings received by the Nirmala Sadhus make it clear that they were keener on attaining and delivering education than on worldly pursuits. It is also assumed here that Sant Dargaha Singh was the contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh. Nirmalas probably did not participate in the post-Guru Gobind Singh struggle of Banda Singh Bahadur. As the oppression policy of the British against Sikhs was very high in Punjab, they established their deras out of Punjab like Sant Dargaha Singh at Kankhal.

In Punjab, Sant Koir Singh founded the first Nirmala dera named Bunga Nirmala dera in 1750. Until then, conditions at Amritsar had improved a lot. In 1747 Sodhi Sikhs constructed a bunga (pedestal) in Amritsar. In 1755, an Udaasi saint alias Sant Santokh Singh had also built an Akharha bunga in Amritsar.⁴⁰ Mahant Diyal Singh writes in his book named '*Baba Nanak ji da Nirmal Panth*' writes, "In Sammat 1860, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime was in full swing. He used to be very kind and loving to *Guru Sikhs* (followers), especially with those who were baptized. In this peacetime, numerous Nirmala saints like Shri Maan Sant Mastaan Singh Marajh, Pandit Maan Singh Kureriye, Pandit Nikka Singh Barnala, Pandit Gulab Singh writer of *Mokh Panth*, Sant Chet Singh Kabaliye, Mahant Tota Singh Theekariwala, Mahant Gurdiyall Singh Gandhiyan, Sant Khajan Singh Dugadhari Chakwal, Thakur Diwan Singh

³⁸ *Shri Gobind Singh ji he pooran Avtar I*
Rachyo panth bhav so pargat di vidh ko visthar II-86
Aekan ke kar Khadag de, dooj bal bahu vustaar I
Paalan bhumi ko karyo dushtan mool udhaar II-87
Oaran ki bhikh vimal matti, dini dharma vivek I

Nirmal Bhakhe Jagat tihan eho Braham so eik II- 88

-Pandit Gulab Singh, (1779), *Aadhyatam Ramayan*, G.N.D.U. Library Amritsar no S.S. I.C.I., p590, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.36.

<https://archive.org/details/adhyatamramayanbysadhugulabsingh1783cemssno1471gurumukhipanjuni egangotry-33>.

³⁹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (1998), *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, Shri Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, Haridwar. p.6. Hereafter cited as Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.6.

⁴⁰ Mahant Ganesha Singh (1937), *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, Mahant Hari Singh, Gali Bagh wali Amritsar, pp.185-93. Hereafter cited as Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, pp.185-93.



Mangwal, Thakur Mela Singh Nanagali Sahib Poonch, Sant Bela Singh Khadur Sahib, Sant Mall Singh Pandori, Sant Uttam Singh Lamme Jageer, Sant Baraj Singh Sekhwan, Sant Bhag Singh Gandharhiye, Sant Rann Singh Harike; were the great philanthropists of Nirmala sect who spread baptism in their regions like Majha, Malwa, Doaba⁴¹, Dhoni, Pothehar and Poonch, etc. Out of Punjab, like Kashi, many other places became the hub of learning. Pandit Sada Singh Karta Adwait Sidhi, Pandit Sant Singh, Pandit Hara Singh, etc., proliferated *Gurmat* principles in near and far areas.⁴² They have been one of the procession participants in Kumbh Mela.⁴³ They were early missionaries who traveled and spread Sikhism among the masses.⁴⁴ The greatness of the Nirmala sect lies in the fact that most of its scholars were entirely dedicated to Sikhism and Gurmat expansion. Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed is considered the principal and first contributor of the Nirmala sect. Nirmalas scholars could contribute plentifully only because of the patronage of various deras. Contributions of Nirmala saints in Guru Ka Bag Morcha, Chabiyon ka Morcha and Jaiton Morcha (movement) in the freedom struggle of India (specifically Punjab) are nonetheless important. The tortures endured by these saints in the British jails are impossible to be inscribed and elucidated.⁴⁵ The well-wishers of the Sikh state like Baba⁴⁶ Veer Singh, Baba Maharaj Singh and Baba Khuda Singh, Sardar Chattar Singh, Sardar Sham Singh Attari, and Sardar Jawahar Singh Nalua knew about the political crisis of Punjab state after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but they were helpless in front of the traitors of Sikh state. The British conspired to break the supremacy of Sikhs by

⁴¹ Doaba is also known as Bist Doab; is an area that lies between the Beas River and the Satluj River and it consists of the districts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Hoshiarpur and Nawanshahr.

⁴² Mahant Diyal Singh (1935), *Baba Nanak Ji da Nirmal Panth*, Kirpa Sagar Press, Lahore, pp.50-51.

⁴³ Nityananda Misra(2019), *Kumbha: The Traditionally Modern Mela*, Bloomsbury Academic U.K., ISBN 978-93-88414-12-8. pp.79-80.

⁴⁴ Nirmala Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Volume III, Punjabi University, Patiala. pp. 236-237.

⁴⁵ Shamsheer Singh Ashok(1981), *Nirmale sadhuan di Sikh dharam nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya*, p.157.

⁴⁶ Baba a Persian word meaning 'father' or 'grandfather' or 'wise old man', was one of Guru Nanak's honorific titles during his lifetime and followed by other nine gurus too. Apart from them, the title is also applied to one who has combined piety with the exercise of a secular authority of a religious group.



creating rifts of hatred, dishonesty, and treachery amongst them. Baba Veer Singh and Baba Maharaj Singh sacrificed their lives to extinguish this fire of hatred and betrayal, and they bore countless intolerable tortures.

However, at times of great turmoil, these saints succeeded in extending and promoting Sikhism because of their strong connections with various deras in and out of Punjab. As mentioned earlier, these deras were very dynamic, resulting in triggering literature enterprises and intensifying Sikhism in the nook and corner of the country. Basically, after establishing Nirmal Ashram Haridwar, several offshoots of the Nirmala Sect sprang by the followers of Bhai Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, etc., and many others, which were further named after the name of the pioneer of *Sampradaya* (sect). For the promotion of the Sikh religion, several *Sampardayas* were formed, and their number reached 12. Furthermore, additionally, 16 *Sampardayas* (including *Katayi*) were added by Mahant Ganesha and Mahant Dayal Singh.⁴⁷ Mahant Dayal Singh has divided the whole Nirmala sect starting from Pakistan to the present times in 33 *sampradayas*.⁴⁸ These *Sampardayas* had been denominated in three categories just as most of *Smopardaya* got famous, which were named after the places, villages, and towns of those great saints who belonged to those places. This category includes Nauringabad, Hoti Mardan, Dubharni, Barnala, Drolli, Mukatsariyan, Zalal, Sikhwan, Thekariwala, Daudahar, Nangali Sahib. Khaduriyan, Bilongi, Kaashi, Brindabniye, Damdamiye and Ayudhiya vaasi etc. The second category is named after individual names just as Thakuran, Thakur Gurumukh Singh, Baba Kooma Singh, Thakur Bahal Singh, etc. Similarly, the third category includes *Sampradaya* of Western Pakistan. Thus categorization based on regions is also noteworthy. For example: Dhoni Pothehar *Sampardaya*, Kendari *Sampardayas*, Doaba *Sampardayas*, Malwa *Sampardayas* and Misslaneous *Sampardaya*. In Doaba region Hoti Mardan is the major active *sampardaya*. Baba Karam Singh was the founder of

⁴⁷ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1981), *Nirmala Sadhayan di Sikh Dharam nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.152.

⁴⁸ Jasbir Rai Singh (1981), *Nirmal Dere: Itihas te Parbandh*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, pp. 66-67.



this *Sampardaya* in Dera Hoti Mardan in Pakistaan.⁴⁹ This sprouted from Naurangabad *Sampardya*. It became famous on the name of its dera. This *sampardaya* had profusely contributed to the literary sphere. The great Nirmala scholars wrote not only scriptures in Sanskrit but also proliferated Sikhism through Guru Granth Sahib's descriptions and narratives. Pandit Ram Singh, Pandit Prem Singh, and Pandit Jeewan Singh were the most reverend and brilliant scholars of this *Sampardaya*. Mahant Dayal Singh, who wrote the books like '*Nirmal Panth Darshan*' '*Giyan Bhumika*', belonged to this *Sampradaya*.⁵⁰ The most illuminating stars of Nirmala Bhekh, who had plentifully earned respect in advertisement and promulgation of Sikhism, belonged to this sect. The saints like Sant Ishwar Singh of Rarha, Sant Jawala Singh Harkhowal, Sant Hari Singh, Sant Bhagwan Singh Reru, Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur, Sant Baba Bhag Singh, Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, Sant Baba Dilawar Singh ji Braham ji, Sant Baba Sarwan Singh, Sant Baba Manmohan Singh and Sant Baba Janak Singh, etc., all belonged to Hoti Mardan *Sampardaya*. Sant Karam Singh had the disciples Sant Attar Singh and his further followers Sant Ishwar Singh & Sant Bhagwan Singh. Baba Karam Singh Hoti Mardan had the follower, Baba Aaya Singh, and Baba Aaya Singh had Sant Jawala Singh Harkhowal. Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur (founder of Dera Santpura Jabbar Maanko) was the disciple of Sant Harnam Singh, who was the disciple of Sant Karam Singh. Dera Maqsdpur is the huge dera at this time in Kapurthala (Doaba region). The related deras of this *Sampardaya* are Rarha Sahib, Harkhowal, Rerhu Sahib, Kaharpur, Maqsdpur, Haridwar, and Delhi. These saints and deras are the real spiritual epoch-makers among the masses. It could be concluded that the Nirmala sect has strong origins in Punjab, particularly in the Doaba region.

A need had been felt to find out the literary resources of Nirmalas and their voyage in various fields like literature, science, axiology, logistics, and philosophy of the *Gurbani*. It was further envisioned to explore the present status of different Nirmala deras of Doaba (Punjab) and overview their socio-cultural contributions literally. The

⁴⁹ Diyal Singh Mahant (1981), Shajra Sampardaya Hoti Mardan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya* p. 71.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.71.



study is related to the Nirmalas expositions in the Doaba region in Punjab. The investigator has gone through numerous books, papers, and documents for a better understanding of the research, so here is a brief review of the literature available on this topic.

1.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Review of literature related to the Nirmala sect:

John Malcolm⁵¹ in his book *Sketch of the Sikhs: Their Origin, Customs, and Manners* has indicated the academic aspect of the Nirmalas. Malcolm is perhaps the first British historian of the Sikhs who carries a brief reference to the Nirmalas in his above cited scholarly work, written during the first half of the 19th century. He thinks that Nirmalas constituted 'a learned class of the Sikhs' having very peaceful habits. They learned Sanskrit, mastered the contemporary sciences, and became a sophisticated class. As a result, they started to play the role of mentors to the Sikh society.

H.H. Wilson⁵² in his book, *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of the Hindus, Society for Resolution of India Literature*, has diagnosed them as “able expounders of the Vedantic Philosophy” by giving some references to their beliefs and practices. He pointed out that the erudite learning of the philosophy of Vedas has made Nirmalas distinctive scholars. According to Wilson, various transliterations by these scholars had surprised the literary world.

J.D. Cunnigham⁵³, a very famous early 19th-century British historian of the Sikhs, has also mentioned in his book named *History of Sikhs* about the Nirmalas besides more than a dozen other denominations, castes, and groups among the Sikhs. Towards the close of the 19th century, some other British administrators like Rose and Denzil

⁵¹Malcolm John(1981), *Sketch of the Sikhs: Their Origin, Customs, and Manners*, Vinay Publications, Chandigarh, 1981, p-107.

⁵² Wilson H.H. (2020), *Essays and Lectures on the Religion of the Hindus, Society for Resolution of India Literature*, vol. I, Gian Publishing House New Delhi, p-196.

⁵³ J.D. Cunnigham (1972), *History of Sikhs*, S. Chand, and Co; New Delhi, Appendix XXI, P-348.



Ibbetson⁵⁴ has also made significant references to the Nirmalas' historical background, clearly by stating that Guru Gobind Singh founded the sect. Unfortunately, many other British or western writers of the Sikhs in the early 20th century, such as A.H. Bingley and Major A.E. Barstow, have to follow their predecessors.

Karamjit K. Malhotra⁵⁵ in his book '*The Eighteenth Century in Sikh History Political Resurgence, Religious and Social Life, and Cultural Articulation*' had specified a passing reference to Nirmalas saints. Karam Singh used to talk about Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's (a Sardar of Ranjeet Singh) kindness to him. He further referred that another category of Sikh grantees was the ascetic Nirmalas, who lived patronage for propagating the Sikh faith. Malhotra admitted that Malcolm had talked about three 'religious tribes' among the Sikhs: The Akalis, the Nirmalas, and the Shahids. The Akalis were staunch Sikh followers of the days of Guru Gobind Singh. They had the sole direction of the religious ceremonies in Amritsar, where they resided as its guardians. The Akalis were entitled to convene the national meeting and regulate its proceedings. The Nirmalas were acknowledged for their quiet and peaceable habits. Their duty was to read and expound the *Adi Granth*. Any Sikh could join their order. Malcolm brackets the *Shahids* with Nirmalas. Malhotra tells about another tribe among the Sikhs known as *Nanak Putras* (descendants of Guru Nanak), who did not recognize the institutions of Guru Gobind Singh, but who revered by his followers. Malhotra had again referred to the difference between the Khalsa and the non-Khalsa. But at the end of the century, Singh consisted of two main categories: the Khalsa (now equated with the Kesdhari Singhs) and the non-Khalsa (called Khulasa). Within the general category of Khalsa, there were two distinct groups: the Akalis or Nihangas and the Nirmalas.

⁵⁴ H.A. Rose (1970), *Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province*, Languages Deptt. Punjab, Patiala (First published in 1883), Vol.1, P-709, and Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes*, Neeraj Publishing House, Delhi, 1916 (Reprint 1984), p.228.

⁵⁵ Karamjit K. Malhotra (2016), *The Eighteenth Century in Sikh History Political Resurgence, Religious and Social Life, and Cultural Articulation* Oxford University Press Y.M.C.A. Library Building, 1 Jai Singh Road, New Delhi, 110001. ISBN-13:978-0-19-946354-1, pp.72,86,197-198, 285.



W.H. Mcleod⁵⁶ has written an account of traditions (*Rahits*) in *Sikhs Of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit* of set by the Nirmalas. This study has focussed on the conception and development of the concept of Rahit. The unchallenged hold and place of it in the Sikhs is considerable. Traditionally the Khalsa Rahit has begun from the times of Guru Gobind Singh at the establishment of Khalsa. It was supposed to be continued to the following generations as it is. Nevertheless, it is believed that in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Rahit was corrupted by ignorant Sikhs or by commentators who brought it closer to current Hindu faiths. Brahmanical and Vedantic thoughts came in Sikh Rahit by Nirmalas and Udasis. Udasis or the Nirmalas introduced changes or corrupted these Rahits by incorporating Brahamnal ideals.

Sher Singh⁵⁷ in his work entitled *Philosophy of Sikhism*, has mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh was responsible for the development of two great movements in the development of the Sikh religion. The first was the practical institutionalization of the Sikh view of life, and the other was to apply a theological and philosophical background to the institutional side of religion. The focus of attention on present work is the second one. He opines, "To achieve the latter end, he gave birth to two classes of people among the Sikhs. Theologians and expositors of the *Adi Granth* were known as the *Gianis*. Scholars of Hindu Philosophy and comparative religion were called the Nirmalas, sometimes known as the *Pandits*, because of the high learning." Guru Gobind had sent five of his Sikhs to Banaras to peruse classical learning from the *Pandits*. He knew that the unyielding Hindu *Pandits* would not allow any householder to have this learning. Guru did not want that the great treasure of Indian wisdom become inaccessible to commoners just because of their birth or position in life. So he sent his five disciples to Banaras. On account of their hard grind, they succeeded in attaining exhaustive knowledge of *Vedas* and *Shastras*. On their return, Guru Ji bestowed the title of 'Nirmalas' to them. This Nirmala sect became instrumental in bringing a higher reputation to the Sikh religion. This sect mainly

⁵⁶ Mcleod W.H. (2003), *Sikhs of The Khalsa A History of the Khalsa Rahit*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp. 5-6.

⁵⁷ Singh Sher (1965), *Philosophy of Sikhism*, S.Jiwan Singh, Proprietor, Sikh University Press Lahore, pp. 3-6.



formed the scholars of Vedanta in Sanskrit, but they kept themselves aloof from the typical *Sanantan* effect. Since the birth of this sect, Nirmalas have created an aristocratic social group that has promoted *Vedanta* and acclaimed the Sikh philosophy.

Pritam Singh⁵⁸ has written the book *Nirmala Sampradaya*. In this study he had thrown spotlight on the contribution of various sects in Sikhism. The unavailability of historical facts has made it quite challenging to explore the very beginning of these sects. The first group of promoters of the Sikh religion could be called '*Udasis*.' The *Udasis* have been instrumental in extending the maxims and principles of Sikhism since Guru Har Gobind Sahib, not only in India but also abroad. Similarly, another sect, i.e., Nirmala, has not only kept itself to the core teachings of *Nanak Panth* but also preserved its writings and manuscripts. Moreover, the kind cooperation of the Head of Kankhal(Haridwar), Sant Sucha Singh, inspired the organizer to conduct a national seminar on the history and present the contributions of Nirmalas in Punjab and all of India. Thus a seminar was convened, and the reports and presentations of various scholars on the Nirmala sect were compiled into a book. This book is an excellent source of the history of the Nirmalas.

Paramjit Singh Mansa⁵⁹ in '*Nirmal Panth da Itihas*(Part I) described various Nirmala deras and their luminaries in detail. This work contains details about various pioneering saints of Nirmala Panth such as Sant Rajinder Singh Shastri Lahore, Sant Diyal Singh Lahore, Sant Narain Singh Lahore, Shri Man Mahant Thaman Singh Bhitewar, Shri Giani Bishan Singh Amritsar, Shri Giyani Sundar Singh ji Katha Wale, Shri Swami Sant Singh Ji Virakt(Tribela) Hall Rishi Kesh, Shri 108 Shri Man Pandit Daya Singh founder Shri Mahant Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, Shri 108 Shri Man Pandit Jeewan Singh Ji Kaashi Shri Mahant Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, etc. Philosophy and maxims and rules of Nirmalas are discussed in detail in this book.

⁵⁸ Pritam Singh (1981), *Nirmala Sampradaya*, Proceedings of National Seminar, Guru Nanak Studies Centre Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar.

⁵⁹ Prarmjit Singh Mansa (2009), *Nirmala Panth da Itihas (Part I)*, Chatar Singh and Jeewan Sigh Mai Sewan Bazar, Amritsar, ISBN:817601-968-7



Paramjit Singh Mansa⁶⁰ had inscribed *Nirmala Panth Da Itihas*(Part II)' also. This study is the perusal of the Ist part. Moreover, in its preface, the writer has enclosed the preface by Sant Dayal Singh Lahore Darwaja Shran Wala Haal Dera Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar. The painstaking efforts of Sant Dayal Singh to initiate research of Nirmalas and the compilation of various biographical sketches is the primary specialty of this work.

Paramjit Singh⁶¹ in his book *Pandit Tara Singh Narottam: Jeewan te Rachna (Shri Gurmat Nirnya Sagar de Sandarabh vich)*, has highlighted the literary contributions of Nirmala Sant Pandit Tara Singh Narottam and his masterpiece named " *Shree Gurumat Nirnya Sagar* ."He was a follower of Pandit Gulab Singh. He could be called the '*martand*'(*outstanding genius*) of Nirmala Bhekh. In all the parts of this book, Nirmala literature, saints, and their linkage with Guru Nanak are generally mentioned.

Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru⁶² (2004) *Kotha Guru di Gaurav Gatha* published by Giani Kaur Singh of Village Kotha Guru District Bhatinda. This work contains very authentic and historical knowledge about the village of Kotha Guru. Giani Balwant Singh is one of those scholars who has successfully done selfless service to society. He elaborated on the socio-religious contributions of Nirmalas in detail. Being Nirmala Panthi Saint, he had exclusively served the society by writing the books like 'Nirmal Panth Bodh.' This book could be called the encyclopedia of Nirmala Panth. The historical description of the village Kotha Guru is full of details with solid and real proofs.

⁶⁰ Prarnjit Singh Mansa (2009), *Nirmala Panth Da Itihas*(Part II), Chatar Singh and Jeewn Sigh Mai Sewan Bazar Amritsar, ISBN:81-7601-969-9.

⁶¹ Paramjit Singh Mansa (2009), *Pandit Tara Singh Narottam: Jeewan ate Rachna (Shri Gurmat Nirnya Sagar de Sandarabh vich)* Dr. Chatar Singh and Jeewan Sigh Mai Sewan Bazar, Amritsar.

⁶² Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2004), *Kotha Guru di Gaurav Gatha*, Giani Kaur Singh of Village Kotha Guru District Bhatinda.



Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru⁶³ has carved *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*. It is an excellent work containing broader aspects of the Nirmala sect and Nirmala saints. Damadami Taxal, socio-religious and political contributions of the Nirmalas are highlighted in this book. Sant Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad, Baba Maharaj Singh, and Baba Khuda Singh sacrificed their lives for the Panth and challenged British atrocities. The oneness with masses in all seasons of life has given a distinctive identity to the Nirmala sect.

Dr. Rai Jasbir Singh⁶⁴ in his book *Sikh Itihas Lok Dhara de Darshan* has critically analysed the beginning of the Nirmalas from the period of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. In the composition '*Nirmala Bans Vriksha*', the Mahant Ganesha Singh has thrown light on the establishment of Nirmala Sampradaya. The writer has investigated the various sources of the launching of Nirmalas extensively.

Dr. Kulwinder Singh⁶⁵ in *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan* has compiled the lectures of various scholars on the philosophy of the Nirmalas and their contributions to society. The functioning of the Nirmalas, their literary hand-outs, biographies of the Nirmala Saints like Shri Mahant Baba Mehtab Singh, Saint Shri Mahant Ji, and Shri Sucha Singh, etc. have been elaborated predominantly. The contribution of Nirmala saints in ancient literature is bountiful.

Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh⁶⁶ in *History of the Sikhs and their religion*, have highlighted the elevated place of the Nirmala sect in the sub-sects of Sikh tradition. They have given significant hints on the origins of the Nirmala Sect. Two point of views rendered by them contain Guru Nanak Dev as its exponent and other opinion confirm the tenth Guru Gobind Singh as its proponent. Guru Gobind Singh's role to inspire five Sikh followers to gain Sanskrit knowledge at Kashi and shaping them into

⁶³ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2004), *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, Giani Kaur Singh Village Kotha Guru District Bhatinda-151206.

⁶⁴ Dr. Jasbir Rai Singh (1979), *Sikh Itihas Lok Dhara de Darshan*, Naveen Publications, Amritsar.

⁶⁵ Dr. Kulwinder Singh (2011), *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, Proceedings of Seminar Nirmala Ashram Rishikesh.

⁶⁶ Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh(2012), *History of the Sikhs and their religion*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Darbar Sahib Complex, Amritsar.



Vedantic scholars fused with Sikhism; is emphatically explained in this chapter. The organisational development of the Nirmala sect, primary residential basis in Kankhal Haridwar, their rules and regulations named *Dastur-ul-Amal*; momentous role in the promotion of Sikhism and contributions of Nirmala Scholars in almost all vernacular languages of North India etc, are discussed in detail in this chapter. Certainly this chapter brings forth illuminating information about the Nirmala sect.

Giani Gian Singh⁶⁷ has authored the book *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. He had produced shreds of evidence for the initiation of the Nirmla Panth from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh Ji. He had given detail of ten blessings to Nirmalas bestowed by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Gian Singh had cleared many doubts by presenting the question-answer type of narration of Nirmala Panth. The rules and regulations of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara are also summarised in this book.

Darshan Singh Tatla⁶⁸ in *Nurturing the faithful: The role of the Sant among Britain's Sikhs* has elaborated the vivid role of the Nirmala Sant. He has elucidated the factors which have sustained the religious and cultural orientation of Sikhs in Britain and the role of the visiting Nirmala Saints. It is momentarily important, though seldom studied. Sants have shaped the lives of many of their Sikh disciples directly, inspiring others to uphold the religious ideals, and have contributed in several ways to the community's causes and spiritual traditions. The paper contributes towards an understanding of the growth and multiplicity of the Sant's role among the British Sikh community.

Sarbjit Singh⁶⁹ in his book *Vishav Dharam Bani, Granth (Punjabi) Sampradaya Ate Chintak (Part III)* has enclosed the principles of various religions and their philosophy. He had pointed out that any religion could have many more sects in it. It should be well taken that there could be numerous sects, but all have to abide by the

⁶⁷ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, (edited by) Sant Inder Singh Chakravarty, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal District, Saharanpur.

⁶⁸ Darshan Singh Tatla (2011), *Nurturing the faithful: The role of the Sant among Britain's Sikhs*, pp. 349-374 | Published online: 23 Feb 2011 [https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X\(92\)90044-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X(92)90044-5)

⁶⁹ Sarbjit Singh (2007), *Vishav Dharam Banni, Granth (Punjabi) Sampradaya Ate Chintak (Part III)*, Publications Bureau Punjabi University Patiala.



core principles of the specific religion compulsorily. For example, Catholics and Protestants are two sects in Christianity, but Bible and Yeeshu Masih are the basis. Similarly, in Islaam are Shia and Sunni sects, but both belief in Muhammad Sahib. Hindu, Budh, Jain, or any other religion spin around its sacred books and the holy messages/discourses. About the Sikh religion, the editor admits that Guru Nanak Ji founded it, and all the Gurus nurtured it appropriately. Several new sects sprang from it and contributed profusely to its growth. Among these essential sects are Udasis, Nirmalas, Sewa Panthis, and Gianis. This book comprises the detail of various sects of the religions mentioned above. In this book, the Nirmal Samradaya's philosophy, founders, and contributions as given in detail by Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru are also explicated in detail.

Teja Singh and Ganda Singh⁷⁰ *A Short History of The Sikhs*. The present work is almost the first attempt to write a history of Sikhs from a secular point of view. The writers have divided their content into three parts. First is of ten Gurus, i.e., from 1469-1708. The second part deals with political foundations like Sikhs under Banda Bahadur(1708-1716). Moreover, the third part deals with divisions among Sikhs, just as Khalsa and other denominations like Udasis and the Nirmala Sadhus and Bandeis, etc. Among these, the Nirmalas, the baptized saints, remained aloof and safe because of their missionary activities. They primarily promoted Sikhism in the Malwa region. The writer acknowledges, "They were at one with the Khalsa in the manner and belief. Only they did not marry".

Pakhar Singh Droli⁷¹ *Dera Santpura(Jabbar)* published by Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society Khiala Padhiana Jalandhar. The major attractions are the detailed account of the Nirmala Dera Sant Pura Jabbar Manko, its history, biographical sketches of different saints, and a few selected abstracts from the selected speeches of Dera.

⁷⁰ Teja Singh and Ganda Singh (1989), *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Publications Bureau Punjabi University Patiala.

⁷¹ Pakhar Drolli Singh (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Propakriyat Da Kender: Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji Dera SantPura Jabbar*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society Khiala, Jalandhar.



Kulwinder Sachdeva⁷²(1992) presented a paper on the 'Problem of Historical Origin of the Nirmalas' at the conference. He had raised the problem of the historical origin of Nirmalas. He had referred to the British administrators such as H.A. Rose and Ibbetson. The writer had critically analyzed the works of different Sikh historians and their considerations about the Nirmalas' place in Punjab history. He had given a passing reference to the works of Surender Singh's *Nirmala Santan Di Punjabi Sahit nu Den*; Harjeet Kaur Madan's *Tara Singh Narotam: Viaktitive and Krititive*; and Pritam Singh's *Nirmal Sampradaya*. In addition, he had critically examined Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Parkash*. Giani Gian Singh had stated that Guru Nanak Dev himself founded Nirmala Panth. Another Nirmala scholar of the late 19th century who had expressed almost the same point of view regarding Nirmalas origin is Mahant Ganesha Singh. He wrote '*Nirmal Bhushan*.'

Kotha Guru⁷³ has given a good account of the origin of the Nirmala Sect and the great legacy of the Nirmala Sect in his book '*Nirmal Panth Bodh*'. This book is full of high niceties of leading saints and deras of Nirmlas of Punjab, India, and Nepal. The history of the Nirmala Sect from Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh has been elaborated prudently with historical wisdom. The keen inclination of the tenth Guru about the learning of Hindu scriptures in *Sanskrit* by Sikhs and inspiring Pandit Raghunath to teach Vedanta to Sikhs was indeed a great initiative. In 1686 he had sent five of his disciples named Sant Karam Singh, Sant Ram Singh, Sant Ganda Singh, Sant Veer Singh, and Sant Saina Singh to Kaashi to get complete knowledge & education in Sanskrit and afterward educate their fellow Sikhs the same. This is a great effort to give all sorts of descriptions about various contributions of Nirmala saints just as the expansion of Sikh religion, sacrifices for the proliferation of Gurbani, meditation, medication, Dama dama printing press, preservation of old scriptures by rewriting and translating the books of Sikh history in Sanskrit and other

⁷² Kulwinder Sachdeva (1992), Problem of Historical Origin of the Nirmalas, *Punjab History Conference 25th session, Proceedings*, Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University Patiala, pp.228-232.

⁷³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (1997), *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh, Nirmal Panth da Khoj Poorat Pooran Itihaas*, Shri Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar.



languages, freelancing and much more. Various languages like Punjabi, Braj, Hindi, and Sanskrit were taken as a medium of literature by various Nirmala saints. This book gives profound glimpses of different Nirmala saints who profusely served the sect and extended unfathomable services to humanity. Pandit Gulab Singh, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, Bhai Santokh Singh, Giyani Giyan Singh, etc., saints have been discussed in this book. Baba Dargaha Singh's significant contribution to establishing Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kanbal Haridwar in 1862 is one of the glaring attractions of the Nirmala sect.

Mahant Teja Singh⁷⁴ in his book '*Nirmal Darpan*' has underlined the leading deras of the Nirmala sect with their district-wise details. In 1993 at the death of Shri Mahant Pandit Balwinder Singh Shastri, it was found that a directory of the addresses of all the Nirmala deras was needed. Hence this is a handbook that contains the minimum information of every dera. The basic information about almost all Nirmal deras, the rules and regulations of the establishment of deras, and the life sketches of great saints with their tenure, and at the end, the comprehensive list of deras make this little book precious.

Paramjit Singh⁷⁵ in *Nirmal Panth da Bahumukhi Yogdan* has evidently clear that Nirmala saints have given social and spiritual leadership to the society. Nirmala sect has provided the direction to education from Gurukul to modern schools. However, education was the privilege of the upper caste only. In the Buddha religion, all monks were equally educated. Thus the number of Buddha disciples was quite significant compared to other religions. Muslims preferred the education dissemination in the madrasas(mosques) and filled the learners with the faith fear for God. Britishers converted the education delivery from religious places to schools, colleges, and universities. Nirmala sect proved a great asset in imparting religious and multilateral education to the common people. The most important centers of learning established

⁷⁴ Mahant Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Mahant Nahar Singh Shri Guru Nanak Nirmal Virakat Kutiya near Granthi Baag Ropar.

⁷⁵ Paramjit Singh (2011), *Nirmale Santan Vallon Gurukul Parnali ton adhunik Vidiya Parnali Tak*, cited in Kulwinder Singh (Ed.), *Nirmal Panth da Bahumukhi Yogdan*, Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh Uttarakhand, p.32-33. Hereafter cited as Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth da Bahumukhi Yogdan*,p 32-34.



by Nirmalas are the akharas of Banaras, Kankhal, Rishikesh, Amritsar, Lahore, Jammu, Patiala, Damadama Sahib, etc. These scholars were dexterous in the religious and philosophical debates. They maintained the legacy of Gurukul.

Mrigendera Singh ⁷⁶ in *Punjab History Conference* has expounded the situation when Guru Gobind Singh faced the challenges of a mighty emperor like Aurangzeb on the one hand and increasing deterioration of values on the other hand. To encounter an imperial challenge, he created the powerful Khalsa, reasonably competent to fight oppressiveness. For the propagation of the teachings of the Gurus, he launched a separate order named the Nirmalas. *Guru ji* established a new order of Sikhs to make a comparative study of religion and also teach Sikhism in the context of classical Indian tradition. As per the wish of Guru Gobind Singh, the Khalsa always sought the advice of Nirmalas, and they gave them great support. The leaders of Khalsa considered Nirmalas their right arm, the first wing, the wise councilors to guide them in all matters of peace and war. He also gave details about land endowments given to Bhai Daragaha Singh by Rai Ahmad of Nazibabad. In 1726 A.D. grant was withdrawn despite sanad being left with Nirmala saint by Rai, which is now in Mahant Gulab Singh's Dera. The second gift from the house of Baba Ala Singh (the founder of Patiala state) to the Nirmalas was made by his daughter, Biwi Pardhan. It was a gift of 30 villages to Sant Nikka Singh (who translated the '*Yoga Vashishtha*' into Braj and wrote it in the Gurumukhi script) in 1752. However, the Sant refused to accept such a significant grant for his maintenance and only took one village by the name of Khudi near Barnala. Likewise, many other places like Barnala, Adamawa, and Singhal were given gifts to the Nirmalas for their services rendered to the Khalsa in their hard days. Patiala State *Muhafiz Khana* records and the Nirmala Panchayati Akhara at Kankhal, state that Sardar Dhayan Singh of Shahabad (Ambala) willed his estate to Sant Karma Singh Nirmala. Similarly, Sardar Ganda Singh of the Bhangi Misal gave thirteen villages to Sant Jai Singh Nirmala. He did not accept them for himself but gave them away to the Udasi Dera of Santokh Das. For this reason, the Udasis of that dera mentions the name of Sant Jai Singh in their ardaas (prayer) daily

⁷⁶ Mrigendera Kanwar Singh (1968), Niramal Panth, *Punjab History Conference* Punjabi University Publications Bureau Patiala, p.115.



to this day. Similarly, the *Parganas* (land gift) of Sujanpur by a patta given to Sant Lakha Singh by Sardar Amar Singh Bagha was not accepted. Sardar Satta Singh of Bahirwala of the Nakai Misal, a *patta* of seven villages, was again rejected by him. This *patta* still exists in the Bunga of Mana Singhwala Amritsar. Another offer declined by a Nirmala Saint Suba Singh offered by Sardar Gujjar Singh of Gujrat is vital to be stated here. Sardar Jai Singh of the Kanhiya Misl gave a patta of four villages to Sant Dargaha Singh Nirmala at Kankhal in 1789. This offer was turned down, but his successor, Mahant, accepted it. Nirmalas established a democratic institution to meet thousands of devotees' academic and other social needs by establishing 'Panchayati Nirmala Akhara. In its opening, all the rulers under the leadership of Maharaja Narendra Singh of Patiala participated in the buildings known as *Dharam Dhvaja*. These Nirmala Akharas have done outstanding and immortal work in the field of a comparative study of classical philosophy, mainly in Sanskrit, Hindi, Punjabi Braj, Devnagari, and Gurumukhi.

Sarita Rana's⁷⁷ *Giani Gain Singh Di Nirmla Panth Pradepika(1891 A.D.) Da Alochnatamk Adiyayn* contains the first chapter full of the details about edition and *Nirmal Panth Pradipika*. In the second chapter, the original text is dealt with description. The novel work was given a very intensive study. In the 16th and 17th centuries, numerous sects prevailed. These sects initially arose from the conflict of Gurudom, just as Udaasi, Meena, Dheermaliye, and Ram Rahiye are the main sects. Giani Gian Singh had indicated all types of saints and factions. However, important of them are Hundaliye/ Niranjaniye, Gangusahiye, Nirmala, Sewa Panthi, Heeradaasi, Gulabdasiye etc. from all these sects, Nirmalas and Sewapanthis became most successful. Giani Gian Singh himself was a Nirmala; hence *Nirmal Panth Pradipika* is a matchless composition of Nirmala history and traditions. The main objective is to highlight the roots and growth of this sect. The author gives the example of an old tree. The old and widespread branches of which are related and matched with the antiquity of Nirmala Panth. The source of Giani Gian Singh's write-ups is the medieval history, his travelogues, prevalent Hindi and Sanskrit literature, and the oral

⁷⁷ Sarita Rana (2017), *Giani Gain Singh di Nirmal Panth Pradipika da Alochnatamak Adhiyayn*, Lok Geet Parashan, Mohali Chandigarh, p .15.



history available. He was also highly influenced by Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, who had helped him to complete his works. His book is a summary of Vedic and the teachings of Sikh Gurus. This book is the historical proof of the social and cultural developments of the times. It contains specific historical references, for example, the foundation of Nirmala Akhara, the conflict of Nirmalas at Hazoor Sahib and Nanderh, their royal administration, and much more. This book is an excellent source of information on countless contemporary traditions. Giani Gian Singh had stated the vast interest and knowledge of Guru Gobind Singh in Hindu and Sanskrit literature. The author has pointed out the versatility of Nirmala scholars in Hindi and Sanskrit. For example, Pandit Nihal Singh wrote a commentary on Jap Ji Sahib. The author opined that Nirmala Scholars had been dexterous in writing, translation, research, Ayurveda, and q historiography.⁷⁸ This book is an expert and calculative study of *Nirmal Panth* by Giani Gain Singh.

Sukhdayal Singh⁷⁹ (1992) has pointed out the magnificent contribution of Giani Gian Singh in his book *Giani Gian Singh Diyan Likhatan da Sahi Roop* and appreciated him for his outstanding compositions like *Shri Guru Panth Parkash*, *Twareekh Guru Khalsa*, *Twareekh Shamsheer Khalsa*, *Twareekh Panth Khalsa*, and *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. It is ardently clear that Giani Gian Singh was an archetypal scholar. He was undoubtedly a Nirmala saint and one of the founders of Singh Sabha. Moreover, Giani Gian Singh had excellent relations with the kings and royal dynasties. It is quite a surprising fact that he was nonpartisan in such a state of affairs. He wrote whatever his conscience allowed. Neither Singh Sabha nor Nirmala sect could influence him. Similarly, no royal or local agency could control his pen and expression.

Paramjit Singh⁸⁰ in *Punjab History Conference 33 Session* has explicated that Pandit Tara Singh Narottam was a multifaceted personality among the Nirmala Saints. He was a great orator and intensive explorer of the Gurbani. In addition, he was a

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.15.

⁷⁹ Sukhdayal Singh (1992), *Giani Gian Singh Diyan Likhatan da Sahi Roop*, *Punjab History Conference, 25th session Proceedings* Publications Bureau Punjabi University Patiala, pp. 51-69.

⁸⁰ Paramjit Singh (2002), *Pandit Tara Singh Narottam—Ik Shakhsiyat*, *Punjab History Conference, 33 Session Proceedings* Publications Bureau Punjabi University Patiala, pp.94-95.



prominent literary figure. Mahant Dayal Singh writes in his book *Nirmal Panth Darshan* that Pandit Tara Singh was an outstanding scholar who was skilled in six *Puranas* and an expert on the *Gurbani*. Moreover, he was not only familiar with the religion but also the history of the Gurus.

Sarita Rana⁸¹ (2017) has done her Ph.D. thesis on *A critical editing of Giani Gian Singh's Nirmala Panth Pradeepika A.D.(1891)*. To highlight the works and life of Giani Gian Singh, this book named *Giani Gian Singh's Nirmala Panth* was written. This book consists of eleven chapters. Giani Gain Singh's life, sectarian developments of his times, the historical significance of *Nirmala Panth Pradeepika*, Nirmala establishments, state patronage, and Nirmala Mahants' response is discussed in detail. In addition, the organizational structure and beliefs of Nirmalas are discussed in consecutive chapters.

Gurmeet Singh⁸² in his book *Nirmal Sampardayi Nirmal Panchayati Akhara ate Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh* has done miraculous work on the conceptual forming of Nirmal Sampradaya in general and Nirmal Panchayati Akhara and Nirmala Ashram Rishikesh in particular. He has given a contemplative view of the history of the sect. He presented the history of the Nirmala sect in an exceptionally interesting way. Their distinctive approach to Sikh ideology is discussed in a thought-provoking way. The contributions to Punjabi literature by Nirmala saints are markedly noted and appreciated by him.

Harbhajan Singh⁸³ in his book *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari* has illuminated the Nirmala sect and its deep imprints in Punjab. It has represented the Punjabi language, Gurumukhi Script, and standards of living in the near and far areas of the country. Keeping in view their contributions Punjabi University conducted a seminar titled 'Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari' on 11-12 Feb.2010 by

⁸¹ Rana Sarita (2017), *A critical editing of Giani Gian Singh's Nirmala Panth Pradeepika A.D.(1891)*, Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd. S.A.S. Mohali Chandigarh.

⁸² Gurmeet Singh (2009), *Nirmal Sampardayi Nirmal Panchayati Akhara ate Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh*, Chatar Singh Jeevan Singh Amritsar.

⁸³ Harbhajan Singh (2011), *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari*, Seminar Proceedings Punjabi University Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kender 20 Preetam Road Dehradioon.



Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kender Dehradun. In this seminar, highly intellectual scholars participated and presented their research papers on Nirmala's specific the *Gurbani* explanation practices, multifaceted Nirmal literature, contributions in Sanskrit, Hindi, and Punjabi literature: the classical exegesis and translations of the *Gurbani*, and a comparative view of *Ram Cherit Manas nad Adhaytam Ramayan*, etc. This seminar proceeding is a ground-breaking effort to highlight the Nirmala scholars and their influence.

A review of literature of numerous studies, highlights that sufficient research has been conducted on the various areas related to the Nirmala sect just as the meaning of the Nirmala sect, its nomenclature and characteristics, the historical development of the Nirmala Deras, the strict rules of living, educational and literary contributions of the Nirmalas, reforming zeal and critical appraisal of the leading Nirmala saints like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam and Giani Gian Dev, etc. However, after overviewing the above-related literature, a gap had been felt in pondering over the history of the Nirmala sect in the Doaba region of Punjab. Thus investigator decided to work on this problem.

1.2 The statement of the problem is:

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NIRMALA SECT IN DOABA (1849-2015)

1.3 The objectives of the present study are as follows:

OBJECTIVES

1. To highlight the growth and development of the Nirmala Sect.
2. To investigate their socio-religious contribution to the Doaba region
3. To give an introduction of prominent deras of the Doaba region
4. To bring forth the literary and religious activities of Nirmala.

1.4 The scheme of chapterisation for the present study is:

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION /REVIEW OF LITERATURE
2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NIRMALA SECT
3. NIRMALA DERAS OF BIST-DOAB
4. LITERARY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES OF NIRMALAS



5. SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS OF NIRMALAS IN THE DOABA REGION
6. RECAPTULAION
7. APPENDICES



SANT BABA BHAG SINGH UNIVERSITY, DISTT. JALANDHAR

CHAPTER-II
HISTORICAL
BACKGROUND
OF
THE NIRMALA SECT



The history of Punjab is full of sects that have profusely contributed to the spread of Sikhism and *Gurmat*, i.e., *Udaasi*, *Nirmalas*, and *Sewa Panthi*. All of these sects have very rich literary as well as legendary backgrounds. The Nirmala saints have significantly contributed to the upliftment of humanity both through spiritual and physical activities. Keeping in view the pace of times, these saints have adapted to the most recent changes and played the role of a bridge connecting the modern world to the roots of love, peace, and strong faith in God. The Nirmalas consider Shri Guru Nanak Dev as their founding Guru.

Different faiths on the origin of the Nirmala Sect:

As explained in the introductory chapter, the origin of Nirmalas can be broadly categorized into four beliefs as far as my perception is concerned. The proponents of the first belief, such as Bhai Gurdas, Mahant Ganesha, Giani Gian Singh, and Mahant Dayal Singh, believed that Guru Nanak Dev was the founder of the Nirmala denomination. In contrast, the second group of faith, consisting of Pandit Gulab Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Teja Singh stood in sharp contrast to the first faith as it defended the opinion that the tenth Guru Govind Singh formally founded the Nirmala sect. The third faith consisting of Paramjit Singh Mansa, Sher Singh, and Teja Singh, advocated that the Nirmala sect develops as a separate offshoot of the Sikh religion. Finally, the fourth faith, comprising Shamsheer Singh, Prof Teja Singh, and Sohan Singh Josh, was of the opinion that the Nirmala sect had its emergence as the result of socio-religious movements.

According to the first belief, the Nirmala sect existed throughout the time of Guru Nanak Dev. The leading scholars and historians of the time, the Nirmala sect of this theory, made the word 'Nirmala' as their base, which found its repeated occurrence in the *Bani* of Guru Nanak. These Nirmala scholars were of the opinion that Guru Nanak Dev was the harbinger of 'the Nirmala sect'. As per their perception, Sikhism stood as a close synonym with Nirmal Panth since Guru Nanak Dev founded the Sikh religion. It is the reason Guru Nanak Dev was considered the founder of it. To substantiate this opinion, they cited examples from the *Gurbani*, *Gurdas Bani*, and various Nirmala scholars' scripts. Bhai Gurdas was a great Sikh scholar of Sanskrit, *Braj Bhasha*,



Persian, and Punjabi. He wrote the *Adi Granth* as dictated by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604. His works in Punjabi are anthologized as *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*.¹ Bhai Gurdas² writes,

“Maareya sikka jagat vich Nanak Nirmal Panth chalayiya

Thaapiya Lahana jeewnde guriyai chhatra firayia”.³

It is implied here that worldly possessions and ownerships are short-lived and ephemeral as dynasties, lineages, and empires have their ebb and flow. Still, the reign of Truth established by Guru Nanak never changed. In the old scriptures, the sect's name followed by the supporters of Guru Nanak Dev is 'Nirmala', Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha refers to 'Nirmala' in '*Mahan Kosh*'⁴ as without malign, pure, relatively chaste, illuminated, enlightened, unquestioned, and without stigma or disgrace. Further, the *Saakhi of Bhai Bala*, i.e. '*Makke di Goshat*' consolidates by mentioning as

Kaliyug Nanak Nirmala, gur chela parwan

Pari utaare sabhna, satinam de daan.

Kaliyug Nanak Nirmala, panth chalayio aayi,

*Ved kitebon bahira, japed aik khudayi*⁵

The above verse communicates that Guru Nanak established Nirmala Panth to eliminate the grumbles of humanity. The Nirmala Panth has the whip hand over Vedas and confides in the oneness of God. Bhai Bhagirath, the first follower of Guru Nanak Dev to receive Mool Mantra indites:

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhai_Gurdas.

² Bhai Gurdas (1551-1637) a writer, scholar and preacher of Sikhism, who is one of those who inscribed *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* in original form.

³ '*Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*' Vaar 1 pauri 45.in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya*, p.32.

⁴ Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha(2009), *Mahan Kosh* Third edition, p. 2133 quoted in *Nirmala Panth da Itihas*, Paramjit Singh Mansa, Bhai Chattar Singh Jeewan Singh Mai Sewan Bazar, Amritsar. p.11. Hereafter cited as Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas Part I*, p.11

⁵ *Makke di Goshat* Pauri 40 Sikh Reference library Amritsar no. 6535 in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardya*., p.32. <https://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/guru-nanak-goes-to-mecca.41942/>



Nirmal Panth chalaiyo, ik vivek bhagat drirhai

Sadhan kathin chhadayi ke, guru chele ki reet chalayi

Kaliyug Nanak kala dikhayi (Vaar Bhagirath Pourhi 33)⁶

The above verse indicates that the founder of Nirmala Panth, Nanak, had strengthened the devotion of devotees through master and disciple (*Guru-chela*) tradition. Mahant Ganesha Singh, an eminent scholar of the Nirmala sect, accomplished that Shri Guru Nanak Dev was the originator of Nirmala Panth. In his book '*Nirmal Bhushan*,' he referred to *Bhai Gurdas Vaar 1* and concluded, "In this way, Guru Nanak floated the coinage of Nirmala".⁷ Except for the *Gurbani*, Mahant Ganesha Singh has also offered the views of those historians who have determined Sikh Panth as 'Nirmala Panth' just as Bhai Sukha Singh in '*Gur Bilas Patshahi 10*'.⁸ and Bhai Santokh Singh in '*Shri Gur Partap Suraj Granth*'.⁹ Another famous scholar of Sikh History named Mahant Dayal Singh has written the history of the Nirmala sect, i.e., '*Nirmal Panth Darshan*' (four parts). In this exposition, Mahant Dayal has ratified the opinions of Mahant Ganesha Singh regarding Guru Nanak Dev as the originator of Nirmala Panth. He states that for crossing the worldly sea, a way of complete devotion & reminiscence (*sumiran*) in the form of Nirmala Panth was initiated.¹⁰ To consolidate his point of view, Mahant Dayal Singh endorsed *Makke Di Goshat*.¹¹ and *Gur Bilas*

⁶ www.aspirateur.co/janam-sakhi-guru-nanak-dev-ji-33

⁷ Mahant Ganesha Singh (1937), *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, Akhara Shri Thakur Antaryami, Mahant Hari Singh, Gali Bagh wali Amritsar, p.12. hereafter cited as Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.12.

⁸ Kanchan jaise koshti lag paaras loh manur, Bhayo Nirmala he Sikh tan eh darbar hazoor..., in *Gur Bilas Patshahi 10* Adhayaya 29, *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁹ Eh, bidh Pancho Sikh ko Khande pahaul deen, panch Kosh Orma en de Nirmala Panth sukeen in *Shri Gur Partap Suraj Granth* rut 1 Asu 19 *chhand* 74, *Ibid*, p.12.

¹⁰ Mahant Dayal Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, Jagdish Rai Gupta Republic Printing Press, Amritsar part 1, pp.105-6. Hereafter cited as Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, p.105.

¹¹ Kailug Nanak Nirmala Panth chalayo aaye, *Ibid*, p.109.



*Patshahi*¹². Giani Gian Singh, the most famous historian of the Nirmala sect, disapproves of the views of above said Mahantas. In his three books, i.e., *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, and *Panth Parkash*, he has exhibited his outlook on the history of the Nirmala Sect.

Giani Gian Singh differentiates¹³ with Mahant Dayal Singh and Mahant Ganesha Singh on the concept of Nirmala Panth. He did not accept the whole class of Sikhs as Nirmala Panth. He reflects that all the followers of Guru Nanak were Sikhs. Only a specific class of Sikhs was called Nirmalas. Giani Gian Singh had presented the antiquity of the Nirmala Sect in his book named *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. The common Sikhs were leading family life (Grihastha), whereas who led the life of renunciation were called Nirmalas.¹⁴ To confirm this opinion, he had given references to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, where the 'Nirmal' word had been used by Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjun Dev, and in the works of Bhattas.¹⁵ This is assumed that as this word hails from the Guru Nanak Bani, therefore, this sect owes its lineage to Guru Nanak Dev. Gian Singh had discussed the issue of Guru Nanak as the founder of the Nirmala sect in his *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*. He explores that Guru Nanak Dev got divine enlightenment by diving into the Bayin river of Sultanpur Lodhi. After this, he started proliferating this knowledge by making Bhagirath his first disciple. Then he initiated Nirmala Panth.¹⁶ This fact is confirmed by Nirmala scholar Bhai Gurdas in Vaaran 11, who had discussed Bhai Bhagirath (the first recipient of Mool Mantra from Guru Nanak Dev

¹² Guru Arjun Jahi Baith ker baandhi beerh su granth, jehi parsad sab jagat so chalahi Nirmal Panth, *Ibid*, p.110.

¹³ Kaahe te Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji son lekar daswen Patshah paryant jo lok grihasthai sewak updeshi hote rhe,so kewal Sikh guru ke mashhoor rhe or jo vihangam varagyawang hath jorh ker updeshe le ker Chele, guru ke hote rhe so 'Nirmale' sadwate rhe. Eh jo sanyam pahle din te Sikhian ki thei soi ab he, quoted in *Nirmal Path Pradeepika*, Giani Gian Singh (1962), Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, p.7.

¹⁴ Giani Gian Singh, *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, p.7.

¹⁵ Jasbir Rai Singh (1981), Sabadi ratte so Nirmale, M.3, *Guru Granth*, p27; Nanak Nirmal Ujjale jo rate Hanayi –M.1. *ibid*, p.57; Nanak Sant Nirmal bhaye-M5, *ibid*, p.297; Nirmal Bhekh Apaar-S.M. 5 ke, *ibid*, p.1409; Satguru ki sewa Nirmali Nirmal Janu hoi so sewa ghale-M. 5, *ibid*, p.304. cited in Pritam Singh (Ed.), *Nirmal Sampardaya*, p.31.

¹⁶ Giani Gian Singh, *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, pp. 16-17.



Ji) by giving the reference of the follower of Guru Nanak of Shelsiha village.¹⁷ Nevertheless, according to Rai Jasweer Singh, this argument is challenged on three grounds. Firstly, the 11th Vaar of Bhai Gurdas does not support the issue of Bhai Bhagairth as a Nirmal Panthi.¹⁸ Secondly, Nirmala scholars have confirmed the meaning of 'Nirmalas' written in *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas, Makke di Goshat*, which is the synonym of Sikh also. Thirdly, even when we study the family trees of this sect, they do not confirm Bhai Bhagirath as an initial Nirmala. The Guru lineage was initiated by Mahant Ganesha¹⁹ shows different originators of every family tree, just as the initiator of the Sect Sant Varan Singh was Bhai Jeewa, who was shown as the follower of Guru Angad Dev Ji mentioned by Bhai Gurdas in his 11th vaar. Similarly, Bhai Adli, the follower of Guru Arjun Dev, had been declared the founder of the Ayodhya Vaasi sect.²⁰ In this way, the tradition of declaring Bhai Bhagirath could not be settled. *Nirmal Bans Briksh*²¹ would have been helpful in the solution of the problem of the founder of Nirmala Panth. However, the creator of this has not given the details of the sources of these pedigrees. Moreover, there is no proof that the quoted Bhai Jeeva Singh and Bhai Bhagirath are the same persons who have been discussed in the Vaaran of Bhai Gurdas. Further, most of the names given in the list do not match with the Vaaran of Bhai Gurdas, especially the eleventh one. It is essential to mention here that the word 'Nirmala' has been repeatedly used in different Sikh scriptures, confirming the Nirmala sect's existence. Thus, the terminology 'Nirmalas' used for Guru Nanak can be perceived by the following arguments and observations: As in *Janam Sakhi Nanak Prakash, Nanak Chandrodaya, Panth Parkash, Itihaas Guru Khalsa, Twareekh-i-Guru Khalsa, and Sooraj Parkash*, etc.

¹⁷ Shelsiha vichi aakhiye, Bhagirathukali gun gave, *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas* part A quoted in *Nirmal Bhekh da Arambh* by Jasweer Rai cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampradaya*, p.32.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.32.

¹⁹ Hari Singh (1951), Mahant *Nirmal Bhekh Da Itihaas Ate Samradayik Bansawali*, Khud Gali Baag Wali Amritsar, 1951 p.22. part A cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampradaya*, p.33.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 33.

²¹ Jasweer Rai Singh (1981), *Nirmal Bhekh da Itihaas* cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya* p.33.



Further, in every discourse with various saints, he had been called Nanak Tapa, Nanak Darvesh, and Nanak Faqir. These orderings confirm him as a Nirmala saint because usually, these nomenclatures are used for Nirmalas only. It is important to remark here that when the time came to choose his successor, setting a precedent, he consecrated abler Angadji as disciple successor than his son, Baba Shri Deep Chand. The latter was, unlike Angadji, unmarried too. Guru Nanak Dev made the realm of Guru (gurudom) sustainable.

Kaliyug Nanak Nirmala, gur chela parwan

Paari uttare sabhana satinam de daan (Makke di Goshat Pauri 40)

Bin satinaam bhete naam na payiaya jayi (Sidh Goshat9)²²

This sect believes in the recitation of *Satinaam* (the actual name of God), which is delivered by the master to disciple (Guru to chela) only. Without the mind full of the accurate word of God, one could not please God.

It could be considered his significant lead. In a true sense, the Nirmala sect follows this tradition of master-disciple (*Guru-Chela*). The most eligible and devoted Nirmala disciple is elected by the head of the dera. This is the only prevalent tradition regarding appointing the next heir in the Nirmala sect. Guru Nanak did many *Udaasis* (spiritual advertising tours) in various countries and states of India. He had vast interactions with the leaders of different sects and religions. It implies that he was an acknowledged saint. Even in Makka city of Saudi Arabia country in 1474, Guru Nanak Dev argued with locals. Arabians called him *qafir* or infidel. Bhai Gurdas writes:

Baba fir Makke gya, neel vastra dhare ban wari

Jaa baba sutta raat nu val margaabe paon pasaari

Jeevan maari latt di hehra sutta kufar kufari

²² *Makke di Goshat Pauri 40* Sikh Reference library Amritsar no. 6535, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardya*, p.32.
<https://www.sikhphilosophy.net/threads/guru-nanak-goes-to-mecca.41942/>



Lattan val khudayi de ku kr payian hoi bajgari

Tangon pakar ghaseetiya, firiya Makka kala dikhayi (vaar 9 paorhi 32)

Guru Nanak argued against turning his feet where God does not exist. Qazi and Mullah were all stunned to learn that the actual meaning of Guru Nanak's exposition that God prevails at all places. Most of the Nirmala saints move worldwide to promote Sikhism and *Gurmat* in the masses disregarding their caste creed, region, and religion. Bhai Santokh Singh, the historian of Guru Nanak Dev, had confirmed his dressing as a saint.

Chari patmber dhun pashamber pahire shubhit vimaliye sunder

So bhagwen par cheer shareera ,baise is saj bhekh (adhya: 34 chhand;30pu)²³

Saffron colour clothes of Guru Nanak had made an all through difference. Sainly robes of him may be considered the garb of Nirmala *bhekh*. The Nirmala saints adorn themselves with saffron, off-white, and light orange color. The Bhat of Mathura, i.e., Guru Jas proudly states, '*Nirmala Bhekh adhaar taas bin awar na koi*' (Nirmala Panth or sect is the base of world and life none else.)²⁴

In '*Gur Partap Sooraj*' by Bhai Santokh Singh admits:

Jog bhog so done reet. Dayi Nirmala Panth ko cheet

Satinam ko simran karnei ehi jog ik liv ko varne²⁵

In '*Gur Partap Soraj*,' it is stated that ordinary people are called Guru Nirmala.

'Nirmala gur, gur darsahi sikhan, parameshwar ko rem sujan'²⁶(raas 7 asu 53 chhand 35)

It insists that Nirmalas concentrate on the principle of *Guru-chela* (master and his devotees). These disciples are full of divine affinity. No otherworldly aspirations

²³ Santosh Singh Adhya: 34 chhand;30pu, cited in Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Iithas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.14.

²⁴ *Adi Granth*, p.1409. cited in Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth Di Gaurav Gatha*, p.18.

²⁵ Bhai Santokh Singh, *Gurpartap Sooraj (rut 3, Asu 22)* cited in Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth Di Gaurav Gatha*, p.18.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.19.



distract them. By following the tradition of Guru- Chela (master and disciple) of Nanak, they demonstrate the art of living piously. By the above mentioned, all nomenclatures used for Guru Nanak and his Panth (as Nimalas, *Nanak Tapa*, *Nanak Darvesh*, or *Nanak Faqir*) it is proved that these are the spiritual identities only not as the evidence of Nirmala Sampardaya. It is established from the above discussion that the word 'Nirmala' was used for Nanak and his Panth in general, not in particular. However, teacher-taught (*Guru –Chela*) tradition and saintly robes were adorned as per Guru Nanak tradition. Giani Gian Singh and Mahant Dayal Singh²⁷ accept and consolidate the first theory of Guru Nanak as the leading Nirmala Saint who launched Nirmala Panth. The great historian Mahant Ganesha Singh also consolidates this opinion.²⁸ He also referred to Bhai *Gurdas Vaar*.²⁹ Nirmala scholars have dealt with the problem of historic origin seriously. They tried their best to prove their legitimacy and antiquity with the early Sikh Gurus. In this context, the works of Giani Gian Singh and Mahant Ganesha Singh on the Nirmala history deserve special attention. The first belief had been criticized because it required substantial proof, which could be easily understood by the following arguments:

The first ground to criticize and reject this faith is quite interesting. *Gurdas Vaar1*, *Makke di Goshat*, *Gur Bilas Patshahi*, *Shri Guru Pratap Sooraj Parkash*, and the references about Bhai Bhagirath are quoted by Mahant Dayal Singh and Mahant Ganesha Singh to represent the word "Nirmala" as an independent sect, not Sikh Panth. However, this argument could be rejected, as Bhai Gurdas was well known in Guru Nanak's philosophy. He had used the word 'Nirmala' as an adjective to support the universal, pious and virtuous value of his teachings to the masses. Similarly, other references could also be overruled as the word 'Nirmala' is a misapprehension.

Secondly, '*Nirmal Bans Brikh*' and other lineage trees don't match with the historical pieces of evidence. In addition, the terminology the *Gurbani* used for Nirmalas is not

²⁷ Mahant Dayal Singh(1981), *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmala Panth*, p.19.cited in Pritam Singh, '*Nirmala Samardaya*' p. 159.

²⁸ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.29. also cited in Paramjit Singh Manasa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas Part one*(edited by) p.11.

²⁹ *Thapiyo Lahina Jeewade sir chhattar firayia Maareya sikka jagat vich Nanak Nirmal panth chalayia (Bhai Gurdas vaar 1)*



very pertinent to be taken as historical verification. Although Harbhajan Singh is of the view whether the word Nirmala is used in general or in a specific way, it is complicated to say that to fix Nirmala nomenclature with Bhekh or 'Panth' is without a doubt. Until some concrete and independent evidence is produced to substantiate this opinion, it appears tough to believe it.³⁰

Thirdly Giani Gian Singh, in the '*Panth Parkash*'(1889), has very clearly stated that Guru Nanak himself founded Nirmala Panth.³¹ To reinforce his views, he wrote *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika* in 1891, in which he categorized the followers of Sikh Gurus into two categories. He asserts that these two categories of the Sikh have remained in existence since the days of the Sikh Gurus.³² Giani Gian Singh believes that after diving in the Bayin river of Sultanpur Lodhi, he started to promote this knowledge by making Bhagirath his first disciple and initiating Nirmala Panth. However, Rai Jasweer Singh has challenged this opinion because of the lack of historical proof. Giani Gian Singh states that these Nirmala saints became 'Singhs' after creating Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. He had ascribed several *bakhshishes* (bounties) of the Nirmalas by the tenth Guru.³³ It is self-contradictory, as Giani Gain Singh stated earlier that Nirmalas were blessed celibacy by Guru Nanak Dev.

On the fourth ground, Kulwinder Sachdeva had rejected the shreds of evidence cited by Giani Gian Singh and Mahant Ganesha Singh, which primarily included the *bani* of Sikh Gurus in the *Adi Granth*³⁴ and the *Varan Bhai Gurdas*.³⁵ He observes that it

³⁰ Dr. Harbhajan Singh (2011), *Kaviyon ki Hindi Sahitya Ko Den*, p. 2.cited in Paramjit Singh, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.18.

³¹ Giani Gian Singh(1970), *Shri Guru Panth Parkash*, IIIrd Chapter, Punjab Languages Department Patiala. *Nirmal Panth eh Guru Chalayo, Shri Guru Nanak Khud Pargatayo*.

³² Giani Gian Singh(1962), *Nirmla Panth Pradeeika* (edtd.Sant Inder Singh Chakarawatti) Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, (first published in 1891 A.D.), the litho copy of which is available in the rare book section of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar).p.7.

³³ *Ibid*, pp.7-9,21-25.

³⁴ *Adi Granth*:
Shabad ratte so Nirmale(*Mahalla*3,27)
Nanak Sang Nirmal bhaye, gin man vasiya soi 297
Nirmal Bhekh apaar taas bin awar na koi, 1409.

³⁵ *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas, Var IPauri 45*:
Thapiyo Lahina Jeewade sir chhattar fahraiya



might not be wrong to say that they have deliberately misinterpreted the words 'Nirmal' or 'Nirmale' used in Sikh Literature as a characteristic of the Panth of Guru Nanak or his Sikhs.³⁶

Fifthly, Paramjit Singh Mansa is of the opinion that the mission of Guru Nanak should be kept in mind. His mission was to evaporate short-sightedness and narrow domestic walls of any sect, as it is universal mission. He claims that nevertheless, the Nirmala sect limits itself with lots of restrictions.³⁷ Trilochan Singh describes the ideology of Guru Nanak as socio-religious and individual-friendly. This spiritual way is also known as *Gurmukh Marg* (the path of devotion), Nirmala Panth, and the way of Truth. It was unique and common to all.³⁸

Henceforth the first theory of accepting Guru Nanak Dev as the founder of the Nirmala sect could not be corroborated successfully. The lack of historical confirmations and more dependence on Sakhis (stories based on folklore) fail to make substantial evidence. One is in doubtful proposition to accept it unhesitatingly and unquestionably.

The second faith of Pandit Gulab Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Teja Singh defend the opinion that the tenth Guru Govind Singh formally founded the Nirmala sect. It is quite important to mention that historians like Giani Gian Singh and Mahant Dayal Singh also support this belief. Before criticizing or appreciating this faith, it is necessary to comprehend the personality of Shri Guru Gobind Singh in totality. He had a multidimensional character. Many of his traits were ignored. His link with the Nirmala sect needs to be meticulously observed. The two prominent qualities of Shri Guru Gobind Singh are bravery and fearlessness, and the other one is a brilliant

Mariya sikka jagat vich Nanak Nirmal Panth Chalayia

³⁶ Kulwinder Sachdeva (1992), Problem of Historical Origin of the Nirmalas, *Punjab History Conference twenty-fifth session Proceedings*, Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Press Patiala, ISBN 81-738—037-5, p.229. Hereafter cited as Kulwinder Sachdeva, *Punjab History Conference*, p.229.

³⁷ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihaas* (part one), p.19

³⁸ Trilochan Singh,(2009) *Guru Nanak da Sikh Dharam*, p.8. cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihaas* (part one), p. 19.



scholar inside. He inspired his followers not to tolerate injustice and inequality. I.B Banerjee says, "He seems to have been deeply impressed by the idea which runs throughout the Pauranic literature, viz the idea of the savior appearing from time to time uphold righteousness and destroy unrighteousness, to uproot evil and establish good to destroy the oppressor and rescue the weak and the innocent."³⁹ Guru Gobind Singh established Khalsa to fulfill this requisite to have a peaceful society. Besides, the intellectual space would have been left free by forming the well-equipped Khalsa. Moreover, he knew very well that the war-like situation was not perennial. Creative art and literature cherish in peaceful times only. Thus to elevate the talent of the Sikh community, Guru Ji selected literature as a tool. He was a mystic poet heartful of divine love as well as of patriotism.⁴⁰ Guru Ji's this predisposition led to the esteemed creation, translation & extrapolation of Sanskrit literature and other literary activities in his court of 52 scholars.⁴¹ Not only the composition of literary work but compilation and rendition works were also supported and patronized by the tenth Guru. It was his affinity with literature that he sent scholars for advanced study of Sanskrit to Banaras.⁴² Nevertheless, the purpose behind the selection of this group of five learners was to make them dexterous teachers in Sanskrit, not to create another sect or cult.⁴³ In this regard, Giani Gian Singh pointed out that Guru Gobind Singh once thought that the well-equipped and well-trained Sikhs needed to have the knowledge of Sanskrit to understand the gist of Vedas. They would be able to stay away from dogmatic rituals, idol worshipping, and superstitions if they had a spiritual awakening.⁴⁴ "One day, *Maharaj* (Tenth Guru Gobind Singh) decided that as my followers (Sikhs) are skillful in warfare similarly, they should be quite adept in

³⁹ I.B.Bennerjee (1979), *Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol II, Jayanti Chatterjee A.Mukherjee & Co. Pvt. Ltd. Calcutta, cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihaas*(part one), p.20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Prof.Harbhajan Singh, (n.d.) *Guru Gobind Singh*, Guru Gobind Singh Foundation Chandigarh, p.51.

⁴² Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.22.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.22.

⁴⁴ *Twareekh Guru Khalsa* cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihaas*(part one), p.23.



edification."⁴⁵ Pandit Gulab Singh has also underlined Shri Guru Gobind Singh's multidimensional personality and has emphasized this virtue's inculcation in the Khalsa.⁴⁶ Pandit Gulab Singh has mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh has divided the Sikhs into two categories: those who resorted to arms for self-defense or the armed Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh and those who undertook the missionary work of the Sikh Panth as Nirmalas. It also implies that the tenth Guru did not intend to create another faction. He only wanted to establish a balanced class of both warriors and scholars. The twelve years at Anandpur were also full of intellectual activity. Guru Gobind Singh selected five of the most scholarly disciples and sent them to Benaras to learn Sanskrit and the Hindu religious texts to interpret better the writings of the Guru, which were full of allusions to Hindu Mythology and philosophy. These five saints began the school of Sikh theologians as the Nirmalas (unsullied).⁴⁷ Guru Gobind Singh founded the Nirmala Sikh erudite tradition in the late 17th century when he sent five Sikhs to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit and Hindu religious texts.^{48, 49} According to Nirmalas, in 1686, Guru Gobind Singh sent five Sikhs (Bir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karam Singh, Ram Singh, and Saina Singh) to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit and classical Hindu literature. These scholars further expanded the Nirmala tradition.⁵⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru has keenly described the event of Guru Gobind Singh's decision to send five Sikh learners for Sanskrit education. The tenth Guru, by blessing his saints, preached and ordered them to go to Kashipuri for Vedantic

⁴⁵ Mahant Dayal Singh(1962), *Nirmal Panth Darshan*. Part 3. p.1. also Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihaas* (part one), p.23.

⁴⁶ *Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji pooran Hari Avtaar rachiyo Panth bhav son pargat do bidhi ko vistar eakan nei kar kharhag de bhuj bal bahu vistaar paalan bhumi ko kariyo dushtan mool udhaar aoran ki Sikh visal mat, keeno dharam bibek Nirmala rakhen jagat son horen Braham suaik*. Pandit Gulab Singh, *Mokh Panth*, cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas*(part one), p.23.

⁴⁷ Kushwant Singh (1963), *A History of the Sikhs* vol, 1, p.21. also cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas* part 1, p.15.

⁴⁸ Sulakhan Singh (2001), *Heterodoxy in Sikhism: An Exposition of Some Sectarian Developments*, cited in Parm Bakhshish Singh(ed.). *Punjab History Conference Thirty Second Edition Session*, 17th March 2000. Proceedings Punjabi University, ISBN978-81-7380-722-0. pp,77-78.

⁴⁹ Punima Dhavan (2011), *When Sparrows Became Hawks: The Making Of the Sikh Warrior Tradition, 1699-1799*, Oxford University Press New York, note 3. ISBN 978-0-19-975655-1, p.221.

⁵⁰ Kaur Madanjit (2007), *Guru Gobind Singh: Historical and Ideological Perspective*, Unistar Books Chandigarh. ISBN 978-81-89899-55-4. p.198.



learning. He blessed them to be fast and coherent learners. Initially, the Nirmala learners were reluctant, but Guru assured them and took a deliberated step. He called the next day in his court and elaborated on the value of Sanskrit and Vedantic study. All of these learners asked for Guru Ji's order. Then Guru blessed these Nirmala saints with the attires of a *sanyasi* (hermit) and *Gaatis*(a special way putting dhoti). The gifted Nirmala learners took leave from Guru with tears of love and affection and started a new learning journey, which afterward paved the way for the generation for Vedantic learning.

Guru Gobind Singh said :

Jaao mere laal,paal kar he akaal thaari,

Saari dhan sampada mai baari sir thaare pe,

Kaam krodh loabh tiyaag saag paat khaayi bah

Brahamchaari reeti joyi hoyi vipreet soyi

Soyi ab paragti yon is saaree pe.⁵¹ (O my beloved sons go, I bestow the whole wealth upon you; Sacrifice all sins like lust, anger, and greed, etc., and follow celibacy even in adverse conditions.)

Here Guru blessed these disciples to live the life of a hermit with tips of simple food, undemanding life, devoid of luxuries of daily life, entertainment, and strict following of celibacy. After getting these instructions from the Guru, the Nirmala disciples left for Kashipuri (modern Banares). After their departure, the Guru appreciated their renounce and inspired others to follow. When these students arrived Kaashipuri, they did not get a suitable place to live in. Hence they made huts of straw and clay under the banyan (Peepal) tree and lived a life of celibacy. Nowadays, this place is known as 'Chetan Math' in Bisheshar Ganj in Kaashipuri.⁵² Pandit Sadanand commenced teaching Vedas, Sanskrit, and Vyakaran diligently. Although there was no school, Gurukul or Paathshala available for these scholars yet, they consistently kept on learning and became nimble-fingered intellectuals. First, place the blessings of Guru

⁵¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.24.

⁵² Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthaat Itihaas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.18.



Ji; secondly, regular practice and hard work; thirdly, keenness to learn; fourthly, the wish to expand and develop the Nirmala Sect; and fifthly, the will to propagate Sikhism were the causes of their immediate success. They became eligible scholars to teach others. Guru Gobind Singh blessed them with ten blessings. The tenth Guru Gobind Singh frequently initiated baptism with the establishment of Khalsa. According to Ganesha⁵³ 'And Nirmalas were the main recipients of Amrit Sanchar (baptism).' He opined that the five *pyaares* (disciples) were Nirmalas. As they were world-weary, no record of their family background or locale was found. If the proofs are produced now, they will be ascertained as fabricated. The following lines quoted in '*Gur Partap Sooraj*' confirm this:

Eh bidhi paanche Singh ko khande Pahaol deen.

*Panchkosh urgiyan de 'Nirmal Panth' shukeen.*⁵⁴

(In this way, five disciples were endowed with baptism, and they had committed dedication towards Nirmala Panth with interest.)

It is rightly admitted that Nirmalas played an important role in Sikh history during the tenure of all gurus; that is why they were blessed with ten blessings and Nirmala *Padhati* (tradition) as noted in *Nirmal Panth Pradipika*, *Shri Guru Panth Parkash* and *Sarbloh Parkash*. Overviewing the opinions of Mahant Dayal Singh, Giani Gain Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Pandit Gulab Singh, it could be concluded that Guru Ji's intention to send Nirmala scholars to Banares was just to make them laureates and well versed in Sanskrit. Paramjit Singh Mansa rejects the belief that after coming from Banares, these scholars were deputed as the founders of a different sect.⁵⁵ The bestowing of ten blessings to Nirmala scholars and affirming them as 'Nirmalas' does not confirm the fact that Guru Gobind Singh launched Nirmala Panth. Further, the early works of Nirmala pandits, sanads, or the *pattas* (land endowments) given to Nirmala deras and Akharas do not help confirm the beginning of the Nirmala sect

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 19.

⁵⁴ *Gur Partap Sooraj*, rut 1 asu 19 chh.no.45. cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas Part I*, p.12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 23.



from the period of Guru Nanak Dev. Instead, this evidence yields the impression that Nirmalas have established themselves in the period of Sikh Misls.⁵⁶ Similarly, the details of the various *bakhshishes* (bounties) of the Nirmalas given by him in his *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika* go against Giani Gian Singh and help one to prove the links of the Nirmalas with the Guru Gobind Singh.⁵⁷ From the above discussions, it can be concluded that the scholars like Giani Gian Singh and Mahant Dayal Singh, Paramjit Singh Mansa, and Balwant Singh Kotha Guru had given various statements to settle the fact that Guru Gobind Singh was the proponent of Nirmala Panth. However, due to the lack of historical resources, it could not be proven that the tenth Guru founded the Nirmala sect. However, the fact of Guru Ji's affiliation with Nirmala scholars could not be overruled though the links between Nirmalas and Guru Gobind Singh do not confirm the second belief of their origin in Guru Gobind Singh's time.

The third faith of the genesis of Nirmalas opines that due to differences of opinions regarding *Gurmat- Darshan* (philosophy of Sikhism), a group became a separate offshoot of the Sikh religion. Lack of emphatic evidence to substantiate, this theory cannot be considered the final one. Even Nirmala scholars are not sure about its origin. Nevertheless, from their work, it is finally assumed that Nirmalas was a faction of Sikhs only which has separated because of some intellectual differences and resultant conditions.⁵⁸ The available history of the Nirmala sect is not based on historical confirmations.⁵⁹ Even Giani Gian Singh, taken as an eminent Nirmala historian, could offer only the pieces of evidence of folklore. Most of the literature was written in reverence and regard to the Sikh Gurus. Even Giani Gian Singh's historical texts are made base on Mahant Dayal Singh without having any historical exploration. Although Mahant Dayal Singh's opinion about the Nirmala sect is one-sided, it is not historically supported. He admits, "I am of the view even if Guru Ji has not given this name, but it has become famous as 'Nirmala Sampardaya' because of

⁵⁶ Kulwinder Sachdeva, *Punjab History Conference*, p.231.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.231.

⁵⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.23.



his Sikh followers, most of the renowned sects are not famous from their original name.”⁶⁰ It is inferred that the Nirmala sect was not born in its present form rather, it is the evolved form. Kulwinder Sachdeva about the lineage of Nirmalas opines that this might be because of the growing tensions among the various Sikh socio-religious groups during the second half of the 19th century. References to this conflict are quite clearly given by Giani Gian Singh in his *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*.⁶¹ He had plainly pointed out the changed attitude of the Udaasis towards the sixth Panth, as well as he has also noticed the Nirmalas.⁶² It is derived that after getting Sanskrit education from Banares, Nirmala scholars became experts in Sanskrit, and they gained exclusive imprints of Vedas. Although they had firm faith in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus yet they made Vedas the composite part of their culture. Sher Singh writes, "This sect has generated Sanskrit scholars. Like Shankaracharya, they were *Vedanti* though they adored neither idol worshipping nor casteism. However, they were completely engrossed in the old Indian philosophy. And this is projected in their works and theology."⁶³ Thus, the third concept emphasizes that the Nirmala sect was a branch of Sikhism with scholastic virtues of ancient Indian philosophy. These Nirmala scholars have reflected the philosophy of *Gurbani* and proliferated *Gurmat* through their literary write-ups of Vedas. The comparative study of various religious texts with Sikh literature is their modus operandi. Their teacher-taught (*Guru -Shishya*) tradition is a reflection of ancient Gurukul tradition. Literature formation is their primary function, but they have linked themselves with their Gurus, not with any sect. Two prominent scholars, i.e., Pandit Gulab Singh and Sant Sucha Singh (the author of *Gur Bilas Patshahi*), have written their nomenclature as Nirmalas, but they have nowhere shown themselves cut off from Sikhism.⁶⁴ Here it is essential to mention the account

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.24.

⁶¹ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, p.82.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.84.

⁶³ Sher Singh (1982), *Gurmat Darshan*, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, (Digitization of Gurmat Darshan Punjab Digital Library) <http://www.panjabdigilib.org> A.No. BK-001986, p .6.

⁶⁴ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.26.



of Teja Singh that Nirmalas are our religious propagators and preachers like the Catholic priests who never get married for the work of spiritual promotion.⁶⁵ Prof. Teja Singh asserts that no sect developed during the period of ten Gurus. The available information is about those factions who were the promoters of Sikhism. Fortunately, Udaasis and Nirmalas were those advertising wings that had been formed since the tenure of ten Gurus only. If Nirmalas were a separate sect, they would have produced Nirmalas, not the Sikhs.⁶⁶ The third faith consolidates that the Nirmala sect was a branch of Sikhism with scholastic virtues of ancient Indian philosophy. However, Teja Singh calls them religious preachers of Sikhism, not a distinct group. The Nirmalas' is considered the spiritual priests of Sikhism until now. There is no rejection of this theory, but its historical origin is still under scrutiny.

The need for fourth faith is direly felt for the complete investigation of the emergence of Nirmalas. While brooding over this context, the prevalent conditions after the demise of the tenth Guru gradually started to change. The degradation in Sikhism could be visibly seen. The Khalsa Panth fought for the benefit of religion and the nation's welfare. Punjab was divided into 12 Misls until the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After his death, the severe dilapidation of socio-religious values speeded up, leading to socio-religious reform movements. Shamsheer Singh, Prof Teja Singh, and Sohan Singh Josh are of the opinion that the Nirmala sect has emerged for the resurgence of society like other reform movements of Punjab, i.e., Udasis, Sewapanthies, Namdharis, and Nirankaris. The fourth theory strongly affirms the origin of the Nirmala sect as the result of socio-religious movements in mid of the eighteenth century. " The Misls, in the beginning, had developed the Sikh character to a high degree, and the noblest features of the Sikh organization appeared in those days, but about the time of Ranjit Singh, they had lost their efficiency and their selfishness and internecine quarrels had reduced the democratic form to a mere

⁶⁵ Teja Singh (2009), *Sikh Dharam*, Dharam Parchar Committee Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, p. 98.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 96-97.



face."⁶⁷ Maharaja Ranjit Singh focused on political affairs than religious ones. Consequently, after his demise, both spiritual and political deprivation started. In the place of ten Gurus, a few people began to call themselves Gurus; resultantly, Sikhs were divided into various sects.⁶⁸ Nirankari's drive brought revolutionary changes in 1850 in Sikhism under the able leadership of Braham Giani Baba Dayal Singh.⁶⁹ Baba Ram Singh initiated '*Namdhari Lahir*' to uplift the values of Sikhism, but after his death, gradually, this sect drifted from Sikhism. It was the first independent sect in itself. In 1873, Christian missionaries vehemently started the proliferation of Christian philosophy in Punjab. In 1873, Singh Sabha Lahar emerged as a saviour of Sikhism and *Gurbani*. To revive Sikhism and recuperate *Gurmat* values, scholars like Pandit Tara Singh, Giani Gain Singh, etc., are highly commendable. Nirmalas and Udasis started to promote Sikhism enthusiastically.⁷⁰ "The first association of rereer called the Singh Sabha was formed at Amritsar in 1873, only a year after the Namdhari trouble. It was attended by Pujaris, Gianis, Granthis, Udaasis and Nirmalas."⁷¹ Since the divine departure of the tenth Guru, the Nirmalas sect has been consistently playing its role conducive. Even after the beginning of Singh Sabha, it kept on performing its literary and social duties. This Singh Sabha movement paved the way for Gurudwara Reforms Movement and Akali Dal in 1920.⁷² In the preliminary years of these developments, Nirmalas scholars participated and contributed in all those drives which were commenced by Akali Dal and Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee to eradicate the weaknesses of conduct of the Sikh community. Nirmala Mahant Mool Singh⁷³(the head priest of Shri Darbar Sahib) participated with a few

⁶⁷ Teja Singh (1944), *Essays in Sikhism*, Sikh University Press Lahore India, reprint (1988), Language Department the University of Michigan, digitalised 2010, p.16. Hereafter cited as Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism*, p.16.

⁶⁸ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1984), *Punjab Diyan Lahiran*, Punjabi University Patiala, p. 22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.164.

⁷¹ Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism*, p.130.

⁷² Sohan Singh Josh (2002), *Akali Morchiyan da Itihas*, R. C. Publishers New Delhi, p. 51.

⁷³ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas*, (part one), p.28.



Sikhs in the protest (*morcha*) of Guru Ka Bag in 1922 and remained a member of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. Although Akali Dal was a class of the Shiromani Committee, this party gave more importance to political matters than a religious ones. Akali Dal could not abstain away from the contemporary political upheaval. During this period of upheaval, the religious differences were the hurdles in front of national integration. Taking the benefit of religious dissimilarities, the British used the strategy of 'divide and rule.' In addition, this plan succeeded too as the religious assemblages (*jathebandiyan*) started to cast aspersions against each other as the British desired. Consequently, they could not fight against the British unitedly. Instead of combating the grave ruler, i.e., the British, they opened a parallel war against other religious groups by abusing them.

Consequently, jealousy, hatred, and narrow-mindedness crept into religious groups. Akali Dal got involved in the false criticism of Hindu belief and ignored the promotion of '*Gurmat parchar*' (expansion of ideology of Gurus). The spiritual vacuum created by the leadership like Guru Gobind Singh was felt direly, which a political party like Akali Dal could not fill. Owing to this emptiness, the group of Nirmala scholars transformed into the Nirmala sect. "If after Guru Gobind Singh the Sikhs had instructed a central assembly to exercise the right of personal guidance in the name of the Guru, there would have been no differences in interpretations. But there being no central authority to check or control, unite or coordinate, there have arisen certain orders of preachers or missionaries who, in the course of time, have assumed the form of sects, such as the Udasis, Nirmalas, Sewapanthis, Namdharis, Nirankaris."⁷⁴ In fact, in this dark space of religious scarcity, the intellectual representatives of Guru Gobind Singh, i.e., the Nirmala sect, took the lead. This sect has never supported narrow-mindedness and sectarianism. Instead, it believes in the betterment of the whole of humanity. The literary figures of the Nirmala sect did not approve of the quarrelsome attitude of the Akali Dal towards Hindus. In this critical time, intellectual differences could not be fathomed between Nirmala scholars and Akali Dal. Akali Dal lost the goodwill of the Nirmala sect, as it assumed this pro-

⁷⁴ Teja Singh, *Essays in Sikhism*, p. 223.



Hindu sect. The Sanskrit lineage of the Nirmala sect further widened the rift between the two. Moreover, three basic differences of Nirmalas, i.e., renunciation of home, acceptance of Guru in body, and recognition of Vedanta as the source of Gurbani, were the major causes of contention.⁷⁵ Akali Dal was the ruling authority of Sikhism, and it denounced the Nirmalas sect on the above-said grounds. Further, the relationship kept spoiling between the Nirmala sect and Akali Dal. Conclusively, Akali Dal boycotted the Niramala sect in gurdwaras and discarded their participation in all religious activities of the Akali Dal⁷⁶. Around 1930, Nirmala sect got disconnected from the Sikhs. "The Nirmala Sadhus or pure saints are a Sikh order, which was bitterly opposed to that of the Akalis. They are said not to undergo any rite of purification but merely to receive the *Amrit* like other Sikhs when they become Singhs. They originated like the Akalis, in the time of Guru Gobind Singh, but then the history of their foundation is obscure."⁷⁷ Nirmalas did not get disappointed with the behavior and actions of the Akali Dal. These saints continued the religious promotion and literary activities. Although Akali Dal had boycotted them yet, they continued interacting with Sikhs. These scholars are the lighthouses of religious developments and great resources for the explanation of the *Gurbani*. Most people are still admirers of Nirmala's intellect and philosophy. This sect became an independent sect called Nirmala *Sampardaya* by integrating its scholars and announcing its own rules and regulations.⁷⁸

Overviewing the above discussions about the origin of Nirmalas under the fourth concept, it is resolved that the emergence of Nirmalas as a socio-religious movement could be corroborated convincingly. During the last part of the tenure of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, the disintegration had started in the Sikh community. In addition, after his death, the deterioration escalated. The socio-religious reform movements came

⁷⁵ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.30.

⁷⁶ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmala Panth Pardeepika*, p.81.

⁷⁷ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*(1917), (edited by) James Hastings, Morrison and Gibb Limited Edinburg. Also cited in [dc.identifier.uri:http:// www.new.dii.ernet.in/handle/2015/56060](http://www.new.dii.ernet.in/handle/2015/56060) Digital Library of India archive.org Vol.9 p.3.

⁷⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas* (part one), p.30.



forward for the revival of society. The historical shreds of evidence could quickly establish this too. However, the problem of historical origin has been a matter of controversy and severe discussion since the late 19th century. Kulwinder Suchdeva affirms that even a cursory survey of Punjab historiography would clearly show that the Nirmalas have rarely been mentioned in the major historical works on the Sikhs.⁷⁹ John Malcolm was the first among British historians to take notice of the Nirmalas in the 19th century "as a learned class of the Sikhs having very peaceful nature"⁸⁰ In 1830s. H.H Wilson found them as "able expounders of the Vedanta philosophy".⁸¹ In the works of English writers and in the Glossary of Tribes and Castes in Punjab N.W.F.P. (1883) and Punjab Castes (1883), the details about Nirmalas and their origin are found.⁸² In some of the writings of 20th-century Sikh historians, the Nirmalas has been mentioned as the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. Teja Singh, however, does not treat them as a separate sect of the Sikhs.⁸³ In other words, till 1753, we did not get any literary and historical evidence from the literature of Nirmala scholars, which could prove that it was written by them only. However, their incessant and dedicated efforts to fulfil the tenth Guru's dreams cannot be overruled and ignored. To establish the historical development of this sect, the literary write-ups, pieces, and books of Nirmala scholars are great resources as literature writing was the central aspect of this sect. It could be summarized that even in the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Misl's period, Nirmalas got a cordial and congenial environment to flourish. There are relevant proofs available before Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Pandit Sada Singh of Chetan Matha Kashi wrote '*Adwait Sidhi Ki Sugam Saar*

⁷⁹ Kulwinder Sachdeva, *Punjab History Conference*, p.228.

⁸⁰ John Malcolm(1810), *Sketch of the Sikhs: their origin, customs, and manners*, Vinay publications, Chandigarh (also published in 1812).p.107.

⁸¹ John Malcolm (1810), *Sketch of Sikhs*, Asiatic Researches Vol XI Calcutta, p.198. Asiatic Researches, Vol.XVII, Cosmo Publications New Delhi1980 (first published in1832).

⁸² A Glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and N.W.F.P.(1883), Languages Department Punjab, Patiala, 1970, Vol.3 P.172: Punjab Castes(1883), Language Department Punjab Patiala,1970, p.228. *Ibid*.p34.

⁸³ Teja Singh(1938), *Sikhism: Its Ideals and Institutions*, Daljit Singh Khalsa Brothers, Bazar Mai Sewan Amritsar(First Published in 1938) Reprint 1964 Orient Longmans, p.62.



Chanderika’ in 1763. Pandit Gulab Singh Nirmala wrote *‘Karam Vidhak’*(1753), *‘Parbodh Chandrpdy Natak’*(1760), *‘Mokh Parkash’*(1778).⁸⁴ These books are of the time of Misls. There is a scarcity of literary proofs in the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But before and after his regime, numerous books of the Nirmala sect were written, for example, *‘Bhagat Bani Teeka’* in *Samvat 1934* (1877 AD), *‘Shri Moksha Panth Parkash da Swayam Prabh Vivaran Teeka, Samvat 1922*(1865AD), *‘Shurtaru Kosh’* in *Samvat 1923*(1866AD); *Akal Moorati Prardarshan’ Samvat 1935*(1878), *‘Teeka Gurbhav Deepika’*1878, *‘Teeka Gur Bhav Deepika’ Samvat 1935*(1878)etc..⁸⁵⁸⁶ consolidate the literary contribution of Nirmalas. The fourth theory appears to be logical to some extent because of the available evidence. The evidences prove that this theory is near to Truth comparatively other theories. Although the theory of emergence of Nirmala sect as socio-religious movement is strong but Guru Nanak as the expounder of the Nirmala sect cannot be overridden. This is because of the resilient conviction of the Nirmala scholars; the investigator is disposed to accept the first theory of the emergence of the Nirmala Sect.

"The Provider Lord listened to the cries; Guru Nanak descended into this world.

Washing His feet and praising God, he got his Sikhs to drink the ambrosial nectar.

In this Dark Age, he showed all gods to be just one.

In the four feet of Dharma, the four castes converted into one.

Equality of the king and beggar spread the custom of being humble.

Reversed is the game of the beloved; the egotist high heads bowed to the feet.

Baba Nanak rescued this Dark age: read 'Satnam' and recited the mantra.

Guru Nanak came to redeem this Dark Age of kaljug.”

(Bhai Gurudas –Vaar 1 pauri 23)⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth da Bahumukhi Yogdan*, p.122.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 128.

⁸⁶ Harjit Kaur Madan, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam : Gurbani Mulayankan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.364.

⁸⁷ <https://www.searchgurbani.com/bhai-gurdas-vaaran/vaar/1/pauri/23/line/1>



As the above verse points out, Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the solace to the crying and most grieved masses. It was a very dark age full of superstitions, castism, discrimination, and false beliefs. In fact, to preach true human religion and discard dogmatic rituals, the manifestation of Guru Nanak Ji turned the whole Indian aura into *Bhakti*. His contributions to the spread of humanism, Gurumukhi script, and criticism of the hypocrisy of Hindu Pandits and fanatics make him the leading figure in the reformation era. His outstanding contribution to the world is Sikhism.

Shri Guru Nanak Dev was born in 1469 at Raye Bhoi Di Talwandi (Shri Nankana Shaib presently in Pakistan). He got divine enlightenment by doing actual business (Sachha Souda) with the saints at a young age. On 4 Maghar Samvat 1561 Bikrami (30th October 1504), he visited Sultanpur Lodhi. Here he stayed for a longer time and spread the divine message. On 13 Sambat 1564, Bikrami(1507) dived in the river Beyin and started to spread root verse (Mool Mantra).⁸⁸ And Nirmala Saint Bhai Bhagirath (born on Sambat 1525) met Guru Nanak in Sambat 1553 and received the Mool Mantra on 14 Sambat 1564 Bikrami.⁸⁹ In the period of Guru Arjun Dev, Nirmala Panth was world widely spread⁹⁰. It is submitted that Guru Arjun Dev commenced the writing of Guru Granth Sahib and Nirmala Panth is the outgrowth of the spirit of the world welfare state.

*“Gur Arjun jehi baith kar, baandhi beerh su Granth,
Jahi parsad sabh jagat son, chalai Nirmal Panth”⁹¹*

Hence it could be derived that Nirmala Panth got fortified during the period of Guru Arjun Dev.

In 1689 Paunta Sahib (Nahan State), in the court of Guru Gobind Singh, a Brahmin scholar named Raghunath used to disseminate the erudite lectures on Upanishads, Puranas, and Vedas. His sermons were quite entertaining and enchanting. One day

⁸⁸Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth Di Gaurav Gatha*, p.14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 18.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.18.



Guru asked him to teach Sanskrit to a few of his eligible students. Pandit Raghunath accepted to lead the Sikh learners. Guru ji told his disciples to regularly learn Sanskrit from the Pandit. He knew that a true Braham Giyani is the one who has complete knowledge of Vedas and Shastras. Thus his followers started to learn keenly from the Pandit. He started to teach the intricacies of the Sanskrit language in a very proficient way. After a few days, he asked the Sikh learners about their caste. They initially answered that they were Nirmalas which was their basic social order. But he pressurised for the original caste. Then the Sikhs told their castes like Jats, Chheembas, Terkhans (carpenters), etc. Pandit became silent and went to other famous scholars like Pandit Chandrebhaan, Pandit Balbhadra, Pandit Durgadatt, Pandit Ganesh Datt, etc. They also declared Sikh illegible for Vedic knowledge. Pandit told Guru Gobind Singh about his inability to teach Sikhs as they were Shudras. Guru ji did not accept his clue or argument for teaching Sanskrit to Sikhs. He opined to have equality in front of nature and divinity. He proclaimed that nature and its gifts are for all; thus, how could the Hindu scriptures be the right of Hindus only. Brahmins could not be asserted sole proprietary of Hindu scriptures. Moreover, the tenth Guru enlightened that the Nirmalas *Brahamchaaris* had already been made students. The students have only one caste, that is of the learner. Hence they cannot be discriminated against on the base of caste. But the Pandit did not get pleased with this clue given by Guru ji. Guru Gobind further said:

Mam Hari dwij var hargun, manigun chodahi johi

Mam Hari tai dwij pathan pathan kar, jin much shoodra ratoyi (Sab Loh Parkash)

(Oh great Brahmin my Nirmala saints are quite excelling in all vertues of learning. The so called Shoodras will be dexterous in fourteen types of knowledge, and on some day they will teach Vedantas to all Brahmins.) Guru Gobind Singh blessed these Nirmala saints with ten special bounties (*bakhshish*).⁹² He blessed Nirmala saints to put on specific garbs, adore themselves with the virtues of contentment, persistent in promotion of Sikhism through interpretation of Gurbani, involvement in the world like observers not absorbers, full of equanimity, beyond the bondages of observances,

⁹²Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp. 17-24.



rites, and superstitions, satisfaction with the food whatever is available, the sacrifice of worldly pursuits for the divine bliss and finally sponsoring Sikhism. Another essential source is '*Shri Moksh Panth Parkash*' written by Sadhu Gulab Singh in 1779. It informs that Guru Gobind Singh divided his disciples into two groups. The first group was of brave warriors, and the second group was of intellectuals of religion and philosophy which were called Nirmalas.⁹³

Shamsher Singh Ashok has aptly said, "It is not at all appropriate to disapprove saffron or white clothes of Nirmala saints, and their outfit should not be criticized in principle. Shri Guru Gobind Singh did not want to delimit Sikhism to Punjab only. Hence, Nirmala saints were given the freedom to advertise Sikhism after their return from Banares. They were sent to every part of the country. Except for Anandpur, they accompany Guru Gobind Singh to Malwa, Damdama, and Nanderh. Pandit Karam Singh and Dargaha Singh daily recited and narrated old scriptures at Nanderh (South)."⁹⁴ In 1704, after overcoming a lot of difficulties of wars and royal conflicts, Guru Gobind Singh arrived in Nanderh (South India) at the invitation of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. After the sad demise of Shri Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the two followers amongst the five most beloved disciples named Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh accompanied him to Nanderh. The sorry departure of Shri Guru Gobind Singh led all warriors to depart from warfare and get involved in the Nirmala ideology. Giani Gian Singh says, "Daya Singh, Saina Singh, Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Garja Singh, and Ram Singh left the weapons and accepted the code of conduct of Nirmalas."⁹⁵ Giani Gian Singh had revised his version in *Nirmala Panth Preepika* and admitted, "When Shri Guru Gobind Singh left this mortal world,

⁹³ *Shri Gobind Singh ji he pooran Avtar I*
Rachyo Panth bhav so pargat di vidh ko visthar II-86
Aekan ke kar Khadag de, dooj bal bahu vustaar I
Paalan bhumi ko karyo dushtan mool udhaar II-87
Oaran ki bhikh vimal matti, dini dharm vivek I
Nirmal Bhakhe Jagat tihan eho Braham so eik II- 88 (also quoted in '*Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*' p.6).
-Pandit Gulab Singh, (1779) '*Aadhayatam Ramayan*', G.N.D.U. Library Amritsar no S.S. ICI, p590
Also cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.36.

⁹⁴ Shamsher Singh Ashok, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.149.

⁹⁵ Giani Gian Singh (1973), *Shri Guru Granth Parkash*, (Giani Kirpal Singh Ed.). Pr.Manmohan Singh Barar Counsellor Amritsar, Part 3. pp.1726-27.



most of these disciples shifted to Punjab. Many of them joined the army of Banda Bahadur. The rest of the disciples wanted to live in peace and congregation just as Bhai Dargaha Singh, Saina Singh, Deep Singh, Chananna Singh, Punjab Singh, Muhar Singh, Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Ram Singh, Beet Singh, Sewa Singh, Sameer Singh, Chandan Singh, etc. stayed with Sahib Ram Kaur (Baba Gurbaksh Singh) at Ravidas Pura. Bhai Gurbaksh Singh kept these saints in 1719 at his dera and had intensive discussions on the life sketch of Shri Guru Gobind Singh."⁹⁶

As mentioned earlier the growth of the Nirmala sect could flagrantly be observed after the death of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. Especially the Misl period witness the significant growth of the Nirmalas. The Phulkiyan States made substantial social acquaintance the Nirmalas.⁹⁷ Sardar Dhyani Singh of Shahbaad will of his state to Karam Singh Nirmala,⁹⁸ In 1766, Sarda Singh Bahirwala offer of seven villages to Bhagat Singh Nirmala, offer of two villages to the Nirmal dera at Kankhal by Sardar Jai Singh's daughter-in-law,⁹⁹ present of 13 villages to Jai Singh Nirmala by Sardar Ganda Singh of Bhangi Misl, 1796 Maharaja Ranjit Singh's grant of a *sanad* for land to Nihal Singh Nirmala¹⁰⁰, etc. were important donations which further developed in the permanent settlements of the Nirmalas. Similarly, in Kurukhetra, Patiala, Sujampur etc., various Nirmala saints like Pandit Gulab Singh, Mahant Nikka Singh, Lakha Singh Nirmala, Bhai Dargaha Singh Nirmala (founder of first Nirmala dera in Kankhal), Santokh Singh and Pandit Nihal Singh etc. were presented land donations.

It is aptly clear that the Nirmala sect had been efficacious to generate a compacted position in the hearts of existing rulers and heads of numerous Misls. Gradually residential apartments were erected there. Land holdings presented to the Nirmala

⁹⁶ Giani Gian Singh, *Nirmal Panth Preedipika*, pp.10-11.

⁹⁷ Pashora Singh: Louis E. French (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, OUP. ISBN 978-0-19-100412-4 .pp.377-378

⁹⁸ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

⁹⁹ Surjit Singh Gandhi (2007), *History of Sikh Gurus Retold: 1606-1708 CE* Atlantic Publishers and Distributers, New Delhi. pp.971-974.

¹⁰⁰ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>



Sant Baba Dargaha Singh before the Misl period proved their strong lineage to Guru Gobind Singh. Hence, it could be speculated that Sant Dargaha Singh was the contemporary of the tenth Guru.

Although the Nirmalas received good account of endowments yet they were humble enough. Moreover, they were engrossed in spirituality and deliverance of education rather materialistic quests. Political turmoil in Punjab, could not terminate the Nirmalas' zeal for learning and teaching. The first Nirmala dera(Bunga)

in Punjab was of Sant Koyir Singh in 1750. Ganeshs Singh also indicated an Akharha bunga(1755) in Amritsar by an Udaasi saint alias Sant Santokh Singh.¹⁰¹ Mahant Diyal Singh has also inscribed a vast list of scholars of Maharajs Ranjit Singh and Misl period in his book named 'Baba Nanak ji da Nirmal Panth'¹⁰². The Nirmala saints have been leaders of the procession participants of Kumbh Mela.¹⁰³ They were early proselytizers who travelled and expanded Sikhism among the masses.¹⁰⁴ The transcendence of the Nirmal sect lies in the fact that most of its scholars were quite dedicated to Sikhism and Gurmat expansion. Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed is considered the principal and first contributor of the Nirmala sect. This was because he was taught and educated by the five disciples, who were educated and trained from Kaashi. Bhai

¹⁰¹ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, pp.185-93.

¹⁰² Diyal Singh mahant (1935), *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth*, Kirpa Sagar Press, Lahore pp.50-51. Nirmala saints like Shri Maan Sant Mastaan Singh Marajh, Pandit Maan Singh Kureriye, Pandit Nikka Singh Barnala, Pandit Gulab Singh Karta Mokh Panth, Sant Chet Singh Kabaliye, Mahant Tota Singh Theekariwala, Mahant Gurdiyal Singh Gandhiyan, Sant Khajan Singh Dugadhari Chakwal, Thakur Diwan Singh Mangwal, Thakur Mela Singh Nanagali Sahib Poonch, Sant Bela Singh Khadur Sahib, Sant Mall Singh Pandori, Sant Uttam Singh Lamme Jageer, Sant Baraj Singh Sekhwan, Sant Bhag Singh Gandharhiye, Sant Rann Singh Harike; were the great saints of Nirmala sect who spread baptism in their regions like Majha, Malwa, Doaba, Dhoni, Pothehar and Poonch etc. The places like Kaashi Pandit Sada Singh Karta Adwait Sidhi, Pandit Sant Singh, Pandit Hara Singh, etc., proliferated Gurmat principles in near and far areas.

¹⁰³ Nityananda Misra (2019), *Kumbha: The Traditionally Modern Mela*, Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN 978-93-88414-12-8. pp79-80.

¹⁰⁴ Nirmala encyclopaedia of Sikhism Volume III, Punjabi University, Patiala, pp.236-237.



Mani had been a regular attendee and contributor to Gurbani and Sikh philosophy at Anandpuri Darbar of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. Following contributions owe him:¹⁰⁵

- To make taxal of the meanings of Gurbani, which is famous as Mani Singh Taxal.
- After Sodhi Meharbaan, he wrote the commentary on Japu ji Sahib and initiated the new tradition of illustration of Gurbani by writing commentary.
- On the base of Vaaran, '*Giyan Ratnawali*' was written by Bhai Gurdas; he first time wrote the Saakhi on the birth of Shri Guru Nanak Dev which is famous as Bhai Mani Singh Saakhi.
- On the eleventh vaar of Bhai Gurdas, he wrote the commentary named '*Gursikhan di Bhagat Mal*', which is considered an important initiative in Sikh history.

These a few were the vital creative contributions of Bhai Mani Singh. In 1734 while heading as the chief priest (*Granthi*) of Shri Darbar Sahib Amritsar, he was brutally murdered by the orders of Nawab Zakariya Khan near the royal palace of Lahore.¹⁰⁶ After the sad demise of the tenth Guru at Nanderh, the Nirmala Sikhs adorned in saffron robes became ascetics and went all around India. Sant Dargaha Singh, with five Singhs, visited Kankhal Haridwar. He stayed at the bank of the river Ganga.¹⁰⁷ Finally, it was instrumental in establishing Nirmala Panchayati Akharha Kankhal Haridwar.

The role of the Nirmala saints is quite peculiar in the case of opposition to Sikh disparate forces, Christian missionaries and other fanatic agencies of early nineteenth century. They created a parallel indigenous education system to restore spirituality among the Sikh community. They had a good galaxy of scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam ,Giani Gian Singh, Pandit Gobind Singh, Pandit Sadhu Singh, Bhai

¹⁰⁵ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1981), *Nirmale Sadhayan di Sikh Dharam nu den*, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.149.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.150.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p.150.



Santokh and Bhai Sukha Singh and so on. Even un the struggle for freedom, these saints attained towering achievements. Shamsher Singh Ashok writes in 'Punjab Diyan Laharan as follows, "Niramals and Udaasis especially partook with great fervour."¹⁰⁸ In the Jaito Morcha, Nirmala Saints fought in saffron robes in the forefront. They were appreciated by *Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee* highly applauded their participatory services.¹⁰⁹ From the appreciation, some of the following are as follows, "In the present tough times, the scholars of the Panth, i.e., Nirmala saints had participated bravely, and their names will be engraved in golden words in history. In the martyring teams, these well-wishers of Panth (the Sikhism) bore brutality in the forefront and tolerated a lot of cruelties in the jail of Nabha. They have kept the grace of Panth like great Sikhs. Sikh Panth acknowledges their contributions nonetheless and has no words for their dedication. Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee fully appreciates their efforts...."¹¹⁰ The role of Nirmalas in Sikh rule & British regime is nonetheless essential. Nirmalas had a very significant contribution and relationships with the public around. They helped the masses and supported the Sikh regime in tough times. Even when the British created rift in society through the policy of Divide and Rule, Nirmalas vigorously tried to unite Indian society.

The role played by the Nirmala saints such as Bhai Bir Singh, Bhai Maharaj Singh and Baba Khuda Singh in awakening the masses against the atrocious British rule with the continuation of saintly Nirmala disposition is essential to refer here.

The prominent contribution is of *Bhai Veer Singh Naurangabad*, who influenced Sikh chiefs to create national integration. On 27 June 1839 Maharaja Ranjit Singh died. After his death, Khalsa got broken into pieces. The conspiracy of the British, the faithlessness of Dogras, betrayal by the Generals of Sikh forces like Lal Singh and

¹⁰⁸ Shamsher Singh Ashok (1974), *Punjab Diyan Laharan*, Ashok Pustak Mala, Patiala, p.88.

¹⁰⁹ Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, part 1, pp.403-405.

¹¹⁰ Tara Singh General Secretary Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar(20-8-1925) quoted in Announcement no. 2136, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.140.



Tej Singh, adultery of Brahamains, and ungratefulness of Sandhawaliyas, etc. proved the causes of the Sikh regime.¹¹¹ ...

In fact, Lahore had become the epicentre of conspiracies. The three Dogras brothers i.e., Gulab Singh and Dhyan Singh, etc., were the masterminds behind all unrest in Lahore. Earlier, Dhyan Singh created differences between Maharaja Kharhak Singh, Maharani Chand Kaur, and Kanwar Naunihal. He poisoned Maharaja Kharhak Singh and managed to murder Kanwar Naunihal after the cremation of Maharaja. Because of the conspiracy of Dogras, a severe war was fought between Maharaja Sher Singh and Maharani Chand Kaur. Maharaja was crowned, and Maharani Chand Kaur was given 18 Lakhs and the land holding (Jageer) of Jammu. Here again, Dhyan Singh Dogra conspired and killed Maharani Chand Kaur through his three female slaves. On 15th September 1843, Maharaja Sher Singh and his son Kanwar Pratap Singh were shot dead by Lahina Singh and Ajeet Singh Sandhawaliya.¹¹² Sandhawaliyas crowned Kanwar Partap Singh with the blood of Sher Singh. The son of Dhyan Singh, i.e., Heera Singh called Sikh forces and appealed that Sandhawaliyas had murdered Maharaja Sher Singh and Kanwar Pratap Singh for the occupation of British troops. He enticed the soldiers with the compensation of Rs 12 for the spy and Rs 30 for the horse rider. He inspired the army to murder Lahina Singh and Ajeet Singh Sandhawaliya. Hence forces killed both. Dogras even tried to poison Rani Jinda Kaur. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's other princes like Kanwar Kashmira Singh and Kanwar Tara Singh, were also killed. The well-wishers of the Sikh state the Nirmala saints like Baba Veer Singh, Baba Maharaj Singh and Baba Khuda Singh, Sardar Chattar Singh, Sardar Sham Singh Attari, and Sardar Jawahar Singh Nalua knew this situation, but they were helpless in front of these traitors. Baba Veer Singh and Baba Maharaj Singh sacrificed their lives to extinguish this fire of hatred and betrayal, and they bore countless intolerable tortures. Although Dogra Dhiyan was killed, he had been successful in launching an impressive place for Dogras in the Sikh court. His son Heera Singh became the prime minister of the Sikh state. The brother of Dhyan Singh,

¹¹¹ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.119.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.119.



i.e., Gulab Singh, had a good influence in the Sikh court. With the help of another Dogra Labh Singh, they killed all Sikh Sardars. Heera Singh even imprisoned the maternal uncle of Maharaja Dalip Singh (son of Rani Jinda). Sardar Attar Singh took shield in Dera of Baba Veer Singh. Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad played a vital role in Sikh politics and proved a great shield not only for Sardar Atar Singh and his group but also saved Sikhism from traitorship against their own kith and kins. He was born on Sammat 1825 in village Gangobooa district Amritsar in the home of Shri Sewa Singh and Mata Karam Kaur. At a youth age, he joined the army of S.Nihal Singh ji Attari. During his job, he met with Sant Baba Bhag Singh of Kuri and became his disciple. With the kind permission of his Guru, he went in the company of Sant Baba Sahib Bedi of Una.¹¹³ He learnt the gist of service, reminiscence, and meditation. His dedication spread over the world, and the people of Naurangabad brought him here. Even Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to seek blessings and proposed community food (Langar), but Baba Veer Singh rejected it and kept on doing service to humanity. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Nirmal dera of Baba Veer Singh gave shelter to Attar Singh, Kanwar Kashmira Singh, Kanwar Pishora Singh, the son of Hari Singh, i.e., Jawahar Singh, with the forces of four thousand. All these developments made Heera Singh take revenge against the Nirmala saint Baba Veer Singh. He called a meeting of his ministers, and Jalla Brahmin suggested sending an envoy to demand all political refugees back from Baba Veer Singh. He sent a letter to Baba Veer Singh and requested to release Attar Singh Sandhwaliya; otherwise, get ready for military action. But Baba Veer Singh refused by calling this demand unethical and unjust. He politely admitted that Guru's community food is open to all. He pointed out his incapability to breach the code of faith of refugees. Hence he was courageously ready for the consequences of denial. This answer annoyed haughty Heera Singh and Jalla Brahmin. Jalla Brahmin ordered Muslim forces to attack Baba Veer Singh. But Muslims politely but strongly refused to attack by calling this an unscrupulous and unreasonable one. Now Heera Singh and Jalla Brahmin got disappointed. The assorted forces of Sikhs and Dogras moved from Lahore towards

¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 120.



Naurangabad. Heera Singh spread rumors against Baba Veer Singh and his refugees. Baba Veer Singh also got this news. Sardar Attar Singh Sandhawaliya, Kanwar Kashmira` Singh, Kanwar Singh Pishora, and Jawahar Singh Nalua also made their forces ready. All forces and Sikh devotees got ready for retaliation. However, Baba Veer Singh ordered not to take reprisal against Sikh forces.¹¹⁴ And asked to withdraw from dera those who were scared of death. Bhai Mohar Singh described the event as an eyewitness.¹¹⁵ He mentioned that officials of Sikh State like Dhindsa Thanedar stopped people from seeing Baba ji. But Sham Singh sent his uncle Khushal Singh Tehsildar with a letter to order any kind of help if needed. Sardar Khushal sent a lot of food articles for the Langar sewa of Baba Veer Singh. Baba Veer Singh called S. Sham Singh at his present place after receiving another informative letter from him to depart for his heavenly abode. All the chiefs (*sardars*) of Baba Ji sought permission from him to fight at Luliyani. But Baba ji, without attending to their request, ordered *Raagis*(spiritual singers) to start *Kirtan* (chorus recitation of holy sermons) and moved towards Muthiyan Wala. Three sardars were S. Khushal Singh Bangeriya, Boota Singh and S.Karam Singh of Kainthal. He led towards Muthiwala with their forces of about 13000 horse riders and an army of hundreds. The list consists of the son of Sardar Kashmira Singh, i.e., Ameer Singh Siyal Kotiya, Lal Singh Gujuran waliya, Sardar Hari Singh Khayiwala, S.Attar Singh Sandhawaliya with 4000 army persons, Haqiqat Singh Bhakniya his son in law Visakha Singh, Jawala Singh Chechewal, Sher Singh Sandhawaliya with his four sons, Nidhan Singh Sandhawaliya; S. Sada Singh Karnail, Hari Singh Nalua with his son Jawahar Singh accompany Baba Veer Singh. Bhai Suhail Singh Mallowaliya with his dera; the dera of Naqyi with Bhai Lal Singh Naqyi, the Sangat and Dera of Pothohariyan, Sooba Singh Bati Dadra, Bhai Arhurh Varna wala, Bhai Nidhan Singh, Pothehariye and Mallakpuriye Bhai Lal Singh Munshi Kanjrorh Dattan Wale started towards the destination. Gursa Singh Bandesa, Baba Ganda Singh & Jhanda Singh of Sodhi Sangat Pur, and Beant Singh Bedi moved with 13000 soldiers towards Muthiyan

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.122.

¹¹⁵ Bhai Mohar Singh (2009), *Guru Bilas Baba Veer Singh*(an unpublished 98 pages book preserved in Dam Dama Sahib Tibba) *Ibid*, p.124.



Wala.¹¹⁶ On hearing the news of the arrival of Lahore forces at Luliyani, all Sikh Sardars requested Baba Veer Singh to order combat with Lahore and Dogra soldiers. But Baba Veer Singh asked these Sikh Sardars to get separated from his Nirmal dera as he didn't intend to fight with his brothers. Moreover, he aimed not to exterminate the Sikh unity in history.¹¹⁷ Pandit Sher Singh writes.¹¹⁸ that on 25 Baisakh Sammat 1909 Baba ji arrived at Harike Pattan. After listening to this, all devotees and saints came to see him large in number. There was great anguish against Lahore forces throughout the country. About 24000 equipped warriors have gathered there till this time. Baba Veer Singh predicted the forthcoming event of his sad demise. He did not want to trouble others and ordered all devotees to leave for their betterment. But there were no effects of all these warnings given by Baba Veer Singh on the followers. Anticipating this episode, Baba ji ordered to prepare *karha prasad*(sweet food after prayers) of Rs. 500. Guru Ka Langar(community kitchen) was prepared and served. All, including Baba ji accepted it. Baba ji spent this last night in meditation and inner peace. He was Nirmala in true spirit who recited the *Gurbani* and involved in meditation at crucial crisis of the life. Next early morning, baba ji was stable, calm, and deeply involved in god reminiscence. All gathered holy teams started doing mass prayers. A messenger reported the fast arrival of Lahore forces towards them. All Sardars requested Baba ji to get ready for retaliation. Contrarily he said not to shoot without order. Bhai Mohar Singh stated that Harike Pattan 80000 forces and 80000 canons arrived at Lahore, and the incessant supply from both Amritsar and Lahore was outstanding.¹¹⁹ Finally, Labh Singh Dogra and Gulab Singh Sahinayia sent their messenger to Baba ji to hand Maharaj Attar Singh Sandhawaliya and Kashmira Singh. But the great Nirmala saint i.e. Baba Veer Singh vehemently denied by quoting Ninth Guru Teg Bahadur Singh Ji Maharaj that fugitive cannot be left in between once taken care of. For an expatriate, one could surrender the life too. Sher Singh writes that the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.125.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.125.

¹¹⁸ Pandit Sher Singh (2009), Beermrigash Gurbilas Devtaru, in Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.126.

¹¹⁹ Bhai Mohar Singh, Guru Bilas Baba Veer Singh (an unpublished 98 pages' book preserved in Dam Dama Sahib Tibba) in Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.127.



attack was made from three sides 14 battalions, regiments, 120 canons, and 800 soldiers. But Baba ji stayed cool.¹²⁰ All holy singers raagis started to recite sacred sermons. But suddenly, bullets killed the sacred singers. All types of recitation (Jaap) were going on. But Lahore forces fiercely demolished the dera. Thousands of supporters were martyred on the spot. Numerous Sikh scholars, ascetics and sadhus died in this one-sided encounter. Baba Bir Singh also got a shot of canon. All the Sikhs were excited to take revenge. But having saintly disposition and scholarly Nirmal instinct, Baba Veer Singh refused by directing that brother should not kill the brother. Baba Ji's brother Bhai Gurmukh Singh died. Lahore forces attacked Baba Ji's dera with great arms and ammunition. Labh Singh Dogra thought it useless to attack those who were not at all retaliating. He sent Gulab Singh Sahnayie to the Nirmal Baba ji to hand him over to Attar Singh Sandhawaliya to Lahore forces. Attar Singh asked permission for self-defense. Baba ji granted permission by ordering not to torture the poor. Gulab Singh sent his servants to arrest Attar Singh. Attar Singh and two of his sons in law attacked Gulab Singh like lions. Gulab Singh tried to escape on his horse but was killed by Attar Singh. His death created chaos, and Baba Ji's forces had hit back. Lahore forces killed son in laws of Attar Singh and brutally beheaded Attar Singh. Baba Veer Singh was injured poorly. His body had been spoilt with bullets. This great Nirmal saint was slain with bullets. But he was victorious because of his strong wish for eternity and Truth. He kept on chanting the Mool Mantra (root verse). He told his followers the actuality about the soul and super soul. He boldly declared his death a victory over the material world. He lived bravely and died like a legendary hero. He was martyred at the age of 76. His dead body was disposed of in the Sutlej river as per his orders. Several Nirmala holy places had been erected in different places like Naurangabad, Hatoki, Gagobooa, and Damadama Sahib. The martyrdom of Baba Veer Singh was fully enjoyed by the British. Details had been sent by the agent Richmond of the governor of North-West on 8th April 1844 to his Head Quarter¹²¹.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.128.

¹²¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.136.



Bhai Maharaj Singh Nirmala's extraordinary sacrifice created another example of patriotism and devotion for his mother land. Another towering personality known for his sacrifice is Baba Maharaj. At the time of the episode of the martyrdom of Baba Veer Singh, Baba Maharaj Singh was on the duty of Langar's preparation. After his sad demise, Baba Maharaj was deputed as the head of the dera of Naurangabad by Baba Khuda Singh. Baba Maharaj was born in Rabbon Ludhiana in 1780. His nickname was Nihal Singh. In his childhood, he went to Sant Tota Singh at Nirmal

To

F. QERI SQUIRE

SECRETARY-BHARAT SARKAR

FORT WILLIAM

Sir,

I am sending you the report for the month till the 8th of this month. It is undoubtedly submitted that the challenge of Sardar Attar Singh Sandhawaliya to the post of Raja Heera Singh, which he had dearly wished is ended. The Raja Heera Singh had made his forces ready to combat the forces of the enemy who could overthrow him. The Raja promised to pay and regard for their services. Whereas in the case of Baba Veer Singh, Raja Heera Singh was stubborn to punish Baba Veer Singh as he had deviated from the path of Truth and devotion. He had breached his spiritual temperament by giving shelter to political fugitives & intruding in royal matters. By taking up arms, he had inspired the regime to take action against him, equal to other royal traitors. It looks like about 20000 people with 50 canons, under the command of Miyan Labh Singh, surrounded and marched towards Hari ke Ghat (Hari ke pattan), which is about 20 miles away from Ferozpur. It is assumed that Bhai Veer Singh had been requested to hand over the political but weapon-locked refugee S Attar Singh to Raja Heera Singh. All this had been proposed keeping in view the religious inclination and status of Baba Veer Singh. But Bhai Veer Singh refused to surrender.

Consequently, the canons and other weapons were directed toward them without discrimination. Bhai ji and S. Attar Singh were included in this brutal murder, and S. Attar Singh was beheaded, and his head was sent to Lahore. It was informed at the end of the report that the forces had been called back.

Myself

A.F. Richmond

Agent Governor General Governor General Agency

North West Border

Camp –Kassouli 11th May 1844.

(Foreign and Political Department, 15th June 1844, Gazette p. 3204)¹²¹ National Archives of India
New Delhi.



Dera Village Theekariwal in the District of Sangrur and then to Sant Samund Singh Mahlon. Here he learned the holy scripts of Dasham Granth, literature, poetry, Chhand Shastras and Vedas, etc. After evaluating the lighthouse-type personality of Baba Maharaj Singh, Sant Samund Singh took him to Baba Veer Singh and was baptized there with the new name i.e. Bhagwan Singh. He was entitled to the service of Langar in the dera of Naurangabad. He even prepared Langar for 20000 people at a stretch; while distributing Langar, he used to call everybody " Maharaj". Hence he had been named " Maharaj ."Baba Maharaj dedicatedly served after becoming chief Mahant of the Naurangabad dera. He took special care of Baba Veer Singh's ideals and strengthened the legacy of the dera. His stay in Naurangabad was very short. He handed over the administration of Naurangabad dera to Baba Khuda Singh and Baba Chhote Singh and moved towards Muthiyan Wala. He organised a great congregation (samagam) at Amritsar. A huge crowd gathered here, which included all sects of society, just as Hindus, Muslims, Sadhus, saints, and home living people. This multitude of masses scared the British. In this meeting, Baba Maharaj discussed the unnecessary interference of the British in local matters and also pointed out the elimination of the British from Punjab with the assistance of Punjabis. A large number of Indian gatherings were against British expansion policies. The fearless proclamation of Baba Maharaj forced the British administration to keep him under observation. Whenever Maharani Jinda came to Amritsar with Maharaja Dalip Singh, she specially took care to pay abeyance to Baba Maharaj. To curb the influence of Baba Maharaj British conspired against him by filing false cases. A false report by Prema was instigated by the British about the planned murder of Resident Lawrence and his companion with the secret help of Maharani Jindan.

About this, Lieutenant Colonel H. S. Lawrence wrote to Governor General Dulhouzi on 1st June 1847 about the four complaining visits of Prema to him. He further added that the suspicious behavior of Baba Maharaj Singh is a serious matter of concern. His behavior was prompted by Maha Rani Jinda....¹²² Without having proof against Baba Maharaj Singh British government issued arrest warrants and sent Jaisal Singh with 50 spies on 15th June 1847 at Amritsar. But Baba Maharaj Singh escaped. The

¹²² *Ibid*, p.138.



British government announced the price of Rs.1000 first and afterward increased it to Rs. 10000. On 23rd June 1847, S.Lahina Singh Mazithiya was ordered to confiscate Baba Veer Singh's whole property. He completed the auction for Rs.6000. Maharani Jinda was imprisoned on 19th August 1847 at the fort of Shekhupura. Many propagators were arrested by the British government, just as Jeewan Singh, Budh Singh, Chet Singh, etc. The increased anti-British activities of Maharaj Singh, acted as a fervor of public opinion in favor of him. The public started to believe that the regime of British was of young age. Baba Maharaj Singh planned military mutiny in Punjab. He propagated in Gujranwala against the British. The government tried to arrest him, but he absconded. About four hundred English policemen were deputed to capture them, but he went to Jhang. They chased him there but could not succeed. Baba Maharaj went to Sherkot. There he was appreciated and honored by the people. In Lahore, a rumor was spread of his death in the river. British felt a sigh of relief at this news for a few moments. Baba ji kept moving from one place to another, but the English could not seize him. But Baba ji started rearranging the people for another uprising in Batala, Chambi(Kashmir), Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. He wanted to fight the war of the rebellion with the help of Maharani Jinda and Maharaja Dalip Singh and tried to get them free from the clutches of the cruel English government. Knowing the intentions of Baba Maharaj, British officers shifted Maharani Jinda to Allahabad from Shekhupura fort. On 8th March 1846, a treaty was signed between British and Sikhs that after becoming an adult of 18 years 1854, would become the king of Punjab. But internally British were very excited to overpower the Sikh state in British rule. Thus they played a foul game. On 28th March 1849, Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General, sent his secretary Sir Eliot who called a court(Darbar) of all the important Sardar chiefs like Raja Teja Singh, Diwan Deena Nath, Shekh Imamdeen, and Bhai Nidhan Singh on 29th March 1849. And they forcibly got the signatures of Maharaja Dalip Singh on this document. It declared that the Sikh state had become an integral part of British rule and the kingdom of Lahore ceased to exist. All the rights of the Maharaja Dalip Singh family were surrendered. Lahore Darbar was overpowered by the British regime. In addition, Maharaja Dalip Singh was directly under their control. The Nirmala saint Baba Maharaj was arrested near Adampur with



the help of an informer. When Baba ji was taken to Jalandhar jail, all Sikh guards paid regard to him. Further, Hindu devotees kept on visiting the jail throughout the day. The deputy commissioner was upset to see such a great dedication of all sects of people for Baba Maharaj ji. He installed some Muslim security guards for this purpose. He wrote to Commissioner and Superintendent Trans Sutlej.¹²³

¹²³ *Ibid*, pp. 142-144.

To
D.F. Macloud Square
Commissioner and Superintendent
Trans Satluj
Office Deputy Commissioner
Jalandhar

30th December 1849

Dear Sir,

1. When Baba Maharaj ji was sent to jail, Sikh guards bowed to Baba Maharaj. For the whole day, devotees keep on pouring for the holy look (darshan) of Baba ji. I was a favorite of the Hindu community, but because of this arrest, I had become the most hated one.
2. Another fact which I could add over here is that hundreds of devotees daily come to see him. I am deady confirmed that Jalandhar is not a safe place for the custody of Baba Maharaj. Thus it is expected that he should be kept in a European officer's custody.
3. Guru(Baba Maharaj) is not a commoner. He is as essential for the common masses as was Yeeshu for the people. His miracle is overviewed by thousands of people and is considered as miraculous as the other incarnations.
4. But this person is controlled now. The voice which could shake the whole world from Patiala to Peshawar is now slowed down. The individual who was God someday is in our hands now. All of his plans are shattered now.
5. If you ask me about the proof of his strategy, I have none. The arrested parties have also not told anything about the conspiracy. At this time, Baba Maharaj is in conflict to die of hunger strike. For the last 38 hours, he had been confined to his determination on hunger strike. Either he will die with unforgettable imprints on his followers, or he will spend the rest of his life in jail with a deep sense of shame. But still, I have no proof of his plots.
6. Hence I am anxious if the Deputy –Commander of Sikh forces, i.e., Turner, did not take responsibility for his care, I will hand over this culprit in the safe of Brigadier Wheeler B.C. Further, or will tighten his security by deputing Muslim guards with many irregular horse spies.



The East officials of India Company celebrated the arrest of Baba Maharaj. A letter dated On 18th January 1850 shows the rejoice of English officers. They felt Baba Maharaj's arrest was nonetheless essential. Therefore they showed full confirmation and support to Deputy Commissioner Wensitert to take special care of such political prisoners.¹²⁴ In the end, on 23rd March 1850. Governor General ordered to send Maharaj to the jail of Singapore and to keep him on the second floor to have distance from other prisoners. And on 8th May 1850, Baba Maharaj and one of his devotees, i.e., Kharhak Singh, were sent by ship to Singapore. Both of them were kept on the upper floor of the jail. The conditions of the room were made quite harsh and unsanitary for them. There was no sunlight and fresh air available. Not a single step for any movement was found there. But still, the Nirmala saint enjoyed his meditation and involvement in *Naam*(God reminiscence). The Superintendent and the whole staff of the jail were pleased with the behavior and conduct of Baba Maharaj but very teased with the conduct of Kharhak Singh. The lack of good living space, food, and minimum adversely affected on his health. Baba Maharaj lost his eyes, and his health started to deteriorate. He had cancer on the back of his tongue. The regular bleeding

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7. This is my dire wish that I should not highlight the towering personality of this person and should treat him as a typical captive. But at the same time, I am unable to oppose the great nation and its extraordinary heritage.
 8. Thus if Maharaj Singh escapes from police custody, his ideology will become the ideology of the whole Sikh state. So in this situation, it is submitted that it would have been better not to arrest him.
 9. In conclusion, no strictness is done with Maharaj Singh. Neither he was chained nor shackled. But if this ordinary-looking man dies of hunger, he will become an immortal martyr, and if he passes a slow death in prison, people will forget him gradually, which will be a bad thing.

My self

Signature/H. Wensitert

Deputy Commissioner

Jalandhar

Office Deputy Commissioner

30th December 1849

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.145.



had made his health extremely poor. As there was no arrangement for cleaning the room, the filth badly influenced the health of Baba Maharaj. He even got severe trouble in his knees, as there was no legroom. Indians forgot all tortures and torments experienced by Baba Maharaj. But British officers, from head constable to Deputy Commissioner, Governor, and Viceroy, all have stored up all information regarding Baba ji Maharaj in the form of letters, diaries, and files of court cases of top secret. Although he was called a scoundrel, thief, miscreant, or national traitor, they always appreciated his great sacrifice and love for freedom. The Royal Diaries of Lahore cover IV(1846-48), a reference by Major George St.P. Lawrence agent North Western Border to the revolt of Multan and escape of the Nirmal saint Maharaj Singh and transfer of Captain Nicholson; letter of H.Wensitert Deputy Commissioner dated 30th December 1849 in which he referred the arrest of Baba Maharaj and the deputation of more security guards and appointment of Captain Turner; the deportation of Baba Maharaj to Singapore as a royal prisoner by Lord Dalhousie Governor General vide letter dated 9th April 1850¹²⁵. Many letters written by authorities reporting the deterioration of health had been kept in British records. All of his letters were kept in the files of Singapore police only. From 1846 to 1856(till his last breath), Baba ji kept his words and fought against the imperialistic British rule both in words and in deeds.¹²⁶

Another Nirmala saint Baba Khuda Singh also followed the path of Baba Veer Singh and Baba Maharaj. After Baba Maharaj Singh, Baba Khuda Singh boldly and persistently led the legacy of Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad of social cohesion, love, and freedom. Born and brought at Siyamgarh District Kurukshetra Haryana. He was named Jaswant Singh by his parents. He joined the job of police as head constable. He got married at the age of 18 to Bibi Chand Kaur. Once Baba Veer Singh came to Kukarhi. Bhai Jaswant Singh used to recite the *Gurbani* in an inn here. Baba Veer Singh heard his recitation and asked him to join him. Baba Veer Singh returned to Naurangabad, and Bhai Jaswant followed him after resigning his job. He served Baba Veer Singh and Baba Una Sahib with great spirit and dedication. With great practice,

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 149-151.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.152.



he achieved a very high position. He spread near and far the message of Truth. He visited Pothehar, Attak, Nushaira, Peshawar, and Kabul. Kandhar, Gazni, Balakh and Bukhara etc. He also visited Afghanistan. Afghanistan was considered the most unwanted place for the *Gurbani* dissemination as it was citadel of Islamic culture. But Baba Khuda Singh visited this country and proliferated Sikhism. He was a very charismatic, well-wisher of humanity, and a miraculous person. His love for independence and humanity is unmatched. To achieve the lost status of Sikhs of Punjab, Baba Maharaj walked all through the way of self-sacrifice. He had participated in the wars of Ram Nagar, Cheliyan wali and Gujrat, etc. In Gujrat Baba Khuda Singh spread the message of Guru *Dasham Patshah* and inspired to study *Vairgyashatak*. He inspired the people to win the lost battles of Sikhs. He was arrested with his wife, Chand Kaur. Jailer Harrison tried to frighten him but in vain. Nevertheless, being a God-fearing and dedicated to God-only, he refused to accept the false English rule. He had been taken into custody multiple times in multiple places like Vazeerabad, Gujranwala, Naurangabad and Amritsar, etc. British rule was always suspicious of his activities as he was a disciple of the Nirmal saint Baba Veer Singh and co-associate of Baba Maharaj. Whenever he had been taken to jail by British officers, he got bail because a heavy penalty was paid by his devotees every time. He died on 10th Sammat 1918(1861) by doing his routine prayers. It is vital to mention here that such a great blending of religion and patriotism is rare to be found in the history of India. Another great Nirmala saint disappeared from chronology of Nrmala saints.

Akali Lahar and Nirmalas:

Nirmala saints not only lent a hand in the confrontation of Namdharis and Nirankari movements against the British but also assisted Akali Lahar from 1920 to 1925 in the fronts (Morchas) of Guru Ka Bag Ka Morcha, Chabiyon da Morcha, and Jaiton da Morcha (Nabha). They tolerated untold and incalculable miseries in the hand of British jails. Their immeasurable contribution gave them an unparalleled place in the Sikh community. In 1930-31 Pandit Maan Singh Shastri Haridwar, a member of the executive of Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, proposed and got passed a proposal of defamation against Udaasi saints who behaved indifferently



and unconcernedly during the Sikh struggle for peace and independence.¹²⁷ Similarly, another motion was passed with a majority in the executive of Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar in favor of Nirmala saints in an identical appreciating way. It said that keeping in view the immense love of Nirmlas for Shri Guru Granth Sahib and matchless sacrifice for Sikh movements; it was announced and the inner committee had been instructed to withdraw the cases under Gurudwara Act clause 7, against those Gurudwaras who were headed by Nirmala saints for a long time.¹²⁸ This was the first vital and magnanimous exemption given to Nirmala saints, which left unending effects of the century. This relaxation keeps historical value as it reinforced the position of Nirmala as the most accepted sect in Punjab as well as in India.

Nirmala Sect and its branches

After the establishment of Nirmal Ashram Haridwar, several offshoots of the Nirmala Sect sprang by the followers of Bhai Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, etc., and many others, which were further named after the name of the pioneer of *Sampraday*(sect). in Nirmal *Samardaya*, to promote Sikh religion, several sub-sects (Up-*Sampardayas*) were formed, and their number reached to 12. Further, 16 *Sampardayas* (including Katayi) were added by Mahant Ganesha and Mahant Dayal Singh. These various *Sampradayas* were:¹²⁹

1. Bhai Bhagiratha *Sampardaya*
2. Sant Varan Singh *Sampardaya*
3. Bhai Ballu *Sampardaya*
4. Sant Tapasvi *Sampardaya*
5. Bhai Adali *Sampardaya*
6. Bhai Garhiya *Sampardaya*

¹²⁷ Shamsher Singh Ashok (1981), *Nirmale Sadhuyan di Sikh Dharm nu den*, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.157.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.157.

¹²⁹ Shamsher Singh Ashok (1981), *Nirmale Sadhuyan di Sikh Dharm nu den*, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.152.



7. Bhai Gonda *Sampardaya*
8. Pandit Lal singh *Sampardaya*
9. Bhai Godrhiye *Sampardaya*
10. Bhai Daya (*piyaara*)*Sampardaya*
11. Bhai Dharam *Sampardaya*
12. Bhai Vinod Singh Trohan Sahibzada *Sampardaya*.

Later on from the *Sampardaya* of Bhai Daya Singh Piyaara, following different ten *sampradaya* sprouted:

1. Drolli
2. Girwarhi
3. Mangwal
4. Dubheran
5. Sekhwan
6. Mukatsari
7. Naurangabadi
8. Mahima Shahi
9. Khaduriya
10. Pindori Nijjaran

The *Sampardayas* of bhai Dharam Singh are:

1. Thakuan Wali
2. Bunga Nirmalayia
3. Gandhiya wali
4. Barnala
5. Maangatan

Mahant Dayal Singh has divided the whole Nirmals sect starting from Pakistan to the present times in 33 *sampradayas*.¹³⁰:

1. *Samparadya* Thakuran
2. *Samparadya* Naurangabad
3. *Sampara*
4. *dya* Hoty Mardan

¹³⁰ Jasbir Rai Singh(1981), Nirmal Dere: Itihas te Parbandh, in *Nirmala Sampardaya* (1981)(edited by)Pritam Singh Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar, pp. 66-67.



5. Samparadya Dubherani
6. *Samparadya* Bhagirathi
7. *Samparadya* Gandhiya
8. *Samparadya* Mangwal
9. *Samparadya* Pandori Nijjaran
10. *Samparadya* Khaduriyan
11. *Samparadya* Kuberian
12. *Samparadya* Billongi
13. *Samparadya* Thakur Bahal Singh
14. *Samparadya* Gurusariya
15. *Samparadya* Giravadi
16. *Samparadya* Barnala
17. *Samparadya* Drolli
18. *Samparadya* Mukatsariyan
19. *Samparadya* Mahimeshayian
20. *Samparadya* Zalal
21. *Samparadya* Theekariwala
22. *Samparadya* Daundar
23. *Samparadya* Sekhwan Daunda
24. *Samparadya* Guru Maangat
25. *Samparadya* Nangali Sahib
26. *Samparadya* Kaashi
27. *Samparadya* Ram Teerathian
28. *Samparadya* Antarashtri Niramle
29. *Samparadya* Baba Gurmukh Singh
30. *Samparadya* Damdamiya
31. *Samparadya* Baba Kooma Singh
32. *Samparadya* Ayudhaya Vaasi
33. *Samparadya* Brindabniye
34. *Samparadya* Qadiyan



These *Sampardayas* or sects had been denominated in three categories just as most of Smapardaya got famous, which were named after the places, villages, and towns of those great saints who belonged to those places. This category includes Naurangabad, Hoti Mardan, Dubherni, Barnala, Drolli, Mukatsariyan, Zalal, Sikhwan, Thekariwala, Daudahar, Nangali Sahib. Khaduriyan, Bilongi, Kaashi, Brindabniye, Damdamiye and Ayudhiya vaasi etc.

The second category is named after individual names just as Thakuran, Thakur Gurumukh Singh, Baba Kooma Singh, Thakur Bahal Singh, etc. Similarly, the third category includes the sampardaya of Western Pakistan. Thus categorization on the basis of regions is also noteworthy. For example:

- ***Dhoni Pothesar Sampardaya:*** Hoti Mardan, Dubheran, Mangwal, Gandhiya, and Addanshahi Nirmale
- ***Kendari Sampardayas:*** Thakuran, Naurangabad, Katayi, Thakur Gurmukh Singh, Thakur Bahal Singh, Baba Kooma Singh, Khaduriye, Nangali Sahib, Billongi, Guru Mangat, Qadiyan and Gurusariye
- ***Doaba Sampardayas:*** Pandori Nijjaran, Girvarhi
- ***Malwa Sampardayas:*** Barnala, Drolli, Mukatsariya, Zalal, Mahime Shaiye, Daudar, Theekariwala, Sekhwan and Damdamiya
- ***Misslaneous Sampardaya:*** Kuberiyani, Kaashi, Bridabniya, Ayudhiyawasi and Bhagirathi

Sampardaya Hoti Mardan: Baba Karam Singh was the founder of this Sampardaya in Dera Hoti Mardan in Pakistan.¹³¹ This sprouted from Naurangabad *Sampardaya*. It became famous by the name of its dera. This *sampardaya* had profusely contributed to the literary sphere. The great scholars of this *Sampardaya* wrote not only scriptures in Sanskrit but also proliferated Sikhism through Guru Granth Sahib's descriptions and narratives. Pandit Ram Singh, Pandit Prem Singh, and Pandit Jeewan Singh were the most reverend and brilliant scholars of this Sampardaya. Mahant Dayal Singh, who wrote the books like '*Nirmal Panth Darshan*' 'Giyan Bhumika',

¹³¹Mahant Dayal Singh (1981), Shajra Sampardaya Hoti Mardan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.71.



belonged to this *sampradaya*.¹³² The most illuminating stars of Nirmala Bhekh, who had plentifully earned respect in advertisement and promulgation of Sikhism, belonged to this sect. The saints like Sant Ishwar Singh of Rarha, Sant Jawala Singh Harkhwal, Sant Hari Singh, Sant Bhagwan Singh Reru, Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur and Sant Baba Bhag Singh, all belonged to Hoti Sampardaya. Sant Karam Singh had the disciple Sant Attar Singh and his follower Sant Ishwar Singh & Sant Bhagwan Singh. Baba Karam Singh Hoti Mardan had the follower, Baba Ayiya Singh, and Baba Aaya Singh had Sant Jawala Singh Harkhowal. Sant Baba Hari Singh Kaharpur was the disciple of Sant Harnam Singh, who was the disciple of Sant Karam Singh. Dera Maqsudpur is the huge dera at this time in Kapurthala(Doaba region). The related deras of this *Sampardaya* are Rarha Sahib, Harkhowal, Rerhu Sahib, Kaharpur, Maqsudpur, Haridwar, and Delhi.

Sampardaya Pandori Nijjaran: The pioneer of this Sampardaya was Maharaj Sewa Singh had been baptized by *Panj payaras*(five disciples Khalsa).¹³³ Sant Milap Singh had Sant Diwan Singh as his disciple. They had disciples like Baba Gurmukh Singh and Sant Mastaan Singh of Lahore Gumti Bazar. Sant Mastaan Singh had a disciple named Thakur Mall Singh, who had lived in Pandori Nijjaran. This is because of Saint Thakur Mall Singh that Pandori Nijjaran became world widely famous. This is a prominent and very influential *Sampardaya* which had further led to the creation of several deras in Punjab. The center of Sikhism and expansion remained in Doaba, Majha, Malwa, Pakistan, Gujranwala, etc. Pandit Ishwar Singh Kaliyug, Pandit Ram Singh Kaashi, Pandit Sadhu Singh, Pandit Kalyan Singh, etc., were the leading scholars of this *sampradaya*. Baba Jaswant Singh of Takhat Ramdas also belonged to this sect. The deras of this sect are expanded in Pandori Nijjaran, Barhiyan Kalan, Haripur, Johalan, Ghoharh wala, Bhagowal, Boobgarh, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar, Bathinda, etc. Dera Panadori Nijjaran, Dera Sant Thakur Singh Hoshiarpur, Dera Nirmal Takhat Amritsar, Dera Golewal Bathinda, Dera Kosar Amritsar, and Dera Kanpur all belong to this *sampradaya*.

¹³² *Ibid*, p.71.

¹³³ Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan* , part four, p.260. also cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.82.



Sampardaya Girwarhi: This sampradaya was founded by Maharaj Gulab Singh.¹³⁴¹³⁵ The chief dera of this *Sampardaya* is at village Kurali situated on the river Girwarhi in Hoshiarpur. That is why it is famous as Girwarhi. Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, who wrote *Gur Girarth Kosh* and many other books, and Pandit Sadhu Singh, the writer of *Satiyarth Bibek*, were related to this *sampradaya*. Dera Pandit Tara Singh Narottam Patiala and Dera Premsar district Kapurthala are the major deras of this *sampardaya*.¹³⁶

Katayi Sampardaya¹³⁷: This dera had been established by Baba Mohar Singh Katayi. He was the disciple of Sampooran Singh.

Akhara Shri Thakur Antaryami Amritsar, Dera Babeksar, Amritsar, Dera Nirmal Sangat Narayan Ghat Mirzapur, and Dera Khuda. Dera Khuda Kurala, Dera Santpura Jabbar, Dera Baba Jawala Singh Harkhowal, Dera Hari Singh Mahil pur and Nirmal Kutiya Banga are a few leading deras of Doaba. Their socio-religious and educational contributions will be discussed later in the present study. In a nutshell, the history of Nirmalas is full of dedication to all the ten Gurus. The present deras of Nirmalas are the epitome of the long journey travelled by this sect through all dark and grey stages. These erudite scholars of the Nirmala faith have fathomed the gap between Vedanta and the *Gurbani* with their extremely scholarly activities. Nirmala deras are the hub of *Vedantic* study with a great historical legacy.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p.83

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, pp.83-84.

¹³⁷ Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan*.Part IV p.49. also cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, pp. 73-74.

CHAPTER III

DERAS OF DOABA



Origins of deras in Doaba

The mission of Guru Gobind Singh was to create a balanced society of learned scholars and combatants. An organization with an assortment of religions and warfare can never be distorted. Such an amalgamation prepares the community well for extreme conditions of war and normalcy. Henceforth Guru Gobind Singh thrust two classes of Sikhs, i.e., Khalsa and Nirmala. The historical upbringing of Nirmalas, their Vedantic philosophy, and literary contributions had been comprehensively discussed in previous chapters. It is vital to mention here that the Nirmalas could do wonders only because of the philosophy of Guru Nanak as their mainstay. Moreover, the eternal desire of the tenth Guru to promote Sikh philosophy in alliance with *Vedanta* has established them as parsons of Sikh society. In addition, the Nirmala sect has an extreme social solid order in the shape of Deras. The social order created in the Nirmala deras engendered numerous marvels. The most disciplined and pious living in these deras led to creativity in literature and ingenuity in social and spiritual advancements. Dera is mainly a residential learning center because they consist of *Gurudwaras* (Sikh temples), training for *Rag-Kirtanas* (holy recitation of the *Gurbani*), free medication, and extension of various social services. In other words, deras have ostensibly brought the Nirmala saints closer to the masses. The influences of the Nirmala deras are irrevocable. This chapter makes outstanding efforts to high spot the luminous Nirmala deras of the Doaba region in Punjab.

Nirmala Saints were of sacrificing and renouncing nature. In the beginning, all saints belonging to different sects used to live in cohesion. Mahant Ganesha Singh writes about the cordial relations of Nirmalas and Udaasis kept on doing *Gurmat* propagation from various Takhats and *Gurudwaras* with solidity with other sects. They were so blended together that it was pretty tough to discriminate between Nirmalas, Nihangas, and Pujaaris for about two years.¹ Nirmala saints used to have huge congregations at specific intervals to firm their beliefs and philosophy. The first meeting of Nirmala Saints happened in Rishikesh in 1758 on the occasion of Kumbha of Haridwar and the second in 1764 on Ardha Kumbha. After this, it

¹ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthat Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, pp.98-99

occurred in 1770 in Rishikesh; in 1896, a great meet was held in Haridwar under the supervision of Baba Dargaha Singh. In this period, *Gurmat Parchar* was appreciated by *Maharaja* Ranjit Singh, too; although *Nirmal Panchayati Akhara* was launched in 1855, the deras of the *Nirmala* sect were functional even before 1806 in Punjab.²

The Doaba region is considered the heart of Punjab because of its beauty and virtues. On both sides are rivers like Sutlej and Beas, which enhance its splendor bountifully. The tenth Guru, also known as *Sarbansdaani*, sanctified the town Anandpur Sahib in Punjab. Numerous famous *Nirmala* saints and places are indebted to Doaba Region, just as Maqsdpur, Jian, Kaharpur, Mahilpur, Domeli, Santgarh Harkhowal, Santpura Jabbar Maanko, etc. It is pretty hard-hitting to provide detail of all deras here. Thus some of the essential deras are mentioned with some illustrations.

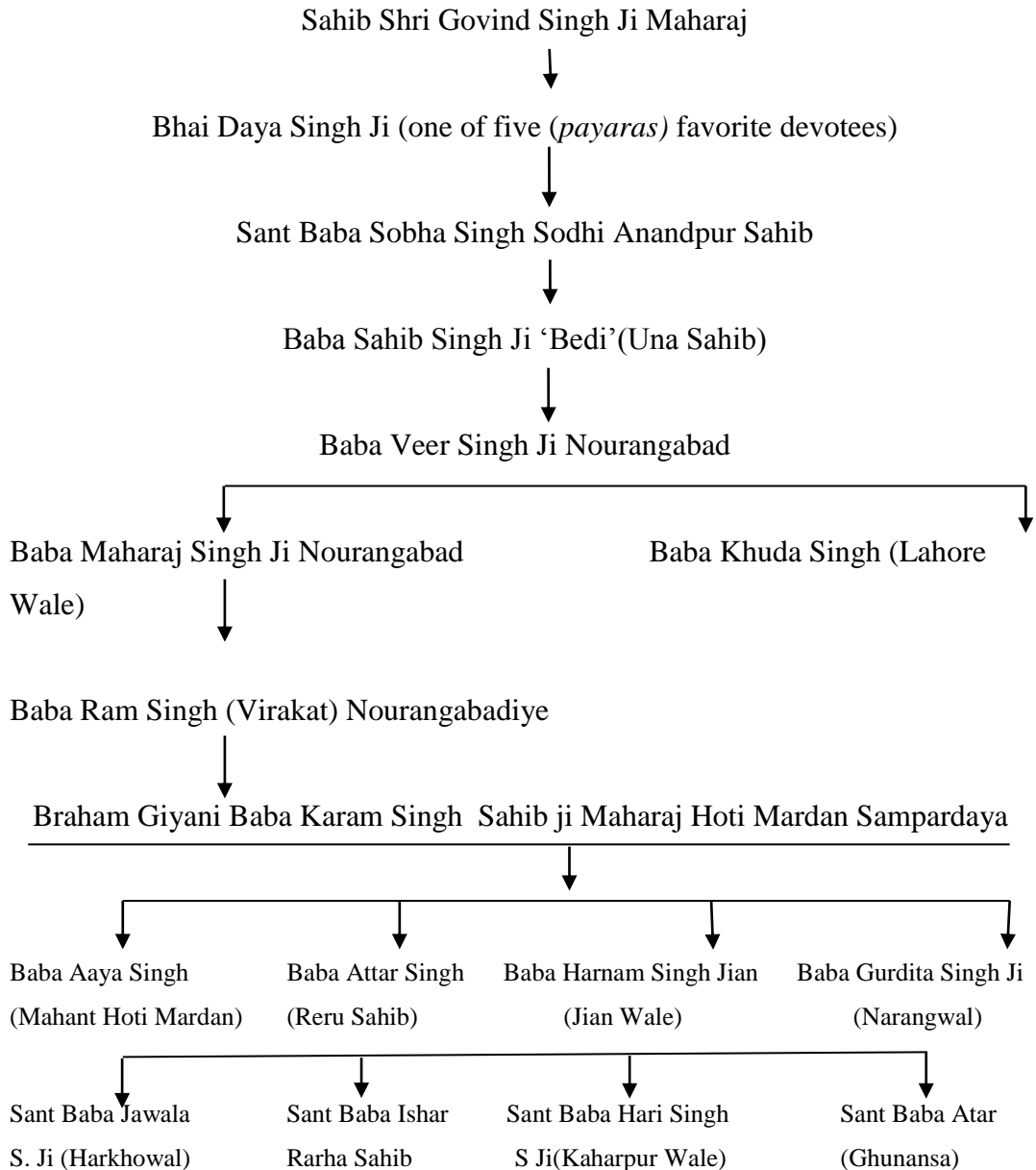
Nirmala Dera Santgarh Harkhowal:



Figure 3.1 Nirmala Dera Santgarh Harkhowal:

² Rajinder Singh Shastri, *Nirmal Dera Itihaas te Parbandh*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.60.

Nirmala dera Harkhowal had a great legacy in the Doaba region. This dera stands as one of the most popular deras in Punjab. It has been observed that most of the leading saints of this dera have been illuminating souls. They are true masters of love, peace, and universal brotherhood. The family tree is as follows:³



Baba Karam Singh Ji established dera Hoti Mardan in 1860 at Kala Pani near Hoti Mardan in Peshawar district (Pakistan). It became popular by the name of Hoti Mardan. It had 500 acres of land. The income was mainly from land and offers.

³ Sant Jodh Singh(2010), *Gian Diwakar, Sant Baba Jawala Singh Dera Sant Garh Harkhowal Waleyan diya Jiwan Kirna*, Dera Santgarh Harkhowal, p.36.



The establishment's management was directly under the control of a Sant who was the second-in-command. He assigned all the duties to different persons. The successions to the headship of the Dera were based on merit. Baba Karam Singh Ji was succeeded by Baba Aaya Singh Ji, Baba Ram Singh Ji, and Baba Majha Singh Ji in this order. Sant Jawala Singh Ji, Dera Santgarh, was a disciple of Sant Aaya Singh before serving in World War I.

Sant Jawala Singh (1889-1957), widely revered for his holiness, especially among Sikhs in the Doaba region of Punjab, was born on 1st May 1889 at Lageri, a village in the Hoshiarpur district.⁴ Jawala Singh and his twin brother were the sons of highly religious parents, S. Narain Singh and Smt. Raj Kaur. He received tutoring at the village primary school and the *gurdwara* (Sikh temple). Elevated and of athletic build, he joined the army on 5th January 1907 as a soldier in the 35th Sikh Battalion. During his service at Rawalpindi, he came in contact with Sant Aaya Singh, a spiritual successor to Sant Karam Singh of Dera Hoti Mardan, a village near Mardan cantonment in the Northwest Frontier Province. He formally became a disciple of Sant Aaya Singh on 5th March 1911.⁵ Jawala Singh participated in the operation in France during World War I but resigned from the army on 1st January 1917 and joined the Dera at Hoti Mardan to devote himself to leading a life of contemplation and service. At the persuasion of Sant Harnam Singh of his native Hoshiarpur district and with the permission of his religious mentor, Sant Aaya Singh, Jawala Singh returned home to the Doaba in December 1918 and settled in a lonely place between the villages of Harkhowal and Pandori Bibi, about 11 km southwest of Hoshiarpur. Dera Sant Ghar, whose name his Dera came to be known, attracted Sikhs in increasingly large numbers. They were attracted by Sant Jawala Singh's pious comportment and by the simplicity and lucidity of his religious discourses. Thousands received the rites of Khalsa initiation at his end; among them, Maharaja Sir Yadvinder Singh, the ruler of Patiala state, is the prominent one. Sant Jawala Singh supported the Akali and Babbar Akali Movement and set himself stalwartly against the heresy preached by the Panch Khalsa Diwan of

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 29.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 38.

Bhasaur.⁶ At his initiative, several *gurudwaras* were raised or rebuilt at Sikh holy places, such as Anandpur, Patna, and Talwandi Sabo. Sant Jawala Singh died at Domeli, a village in the Kapurthala district of Punjab, on 13th November 1957. He had many disciples like Sant Sahi Singh, Sant Jagga Singh Kothari, Sant Amar Singh Granthi, Sant Makhan Singh, Sant Janak Singh, Sant Karam Singh Ghorhiyan wale, Sant Bhal Singh, Sant Gian Singh, Sant Jagjit Singh, Sant Ashram Sultan Pur Lodhi, Sant Mahinder Singh, Sant Hari Singh, and Sant Jagdish Singh, etc. Sant Mahinder Singh descended Sant Jawala Singh. He created many deras in Langeri (birthplace of Sant Jawala Singh), Harike Pattan Amritsar, village Rani Pur, Jaiton Wali near Tibbi Sahib Jalandhar, and Anandpur Sahib, etc. He founded Guru Teg Bahadur Khalsa College in Anandpur Sahib. Later on, this college was taken over by Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. In 1973 he took the initiative to clean the spiritual pool of Shri Harmandir Sahib. Additionally, because of his inspiration, the Punjab Government built a bridge on the Sutlej River named Sant Mahinder Singh Harkhowal. His pious, devoted, and dedicated life to God and devotion ended in 1984. Sant Didar Singh followed him, and he further has been followed by Sant Manjit Singh, who died on 18th January 2022.

Killa Atal Garh (Mukeriyan):



Figure 3.2 Killa Atal Garh (Mukeriyan):

⁶ Babu Teja Singh Bhasauria Singh Sabha was called Panch Khalsa Diwan and originated in 1893 in the village of Bhasaur. He proposed more radical changes in Sikhism, which did not sit well with his counterparts of Tat Khalsa. https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/panch_Khalsa_Diwan

Kila Atalgarh is one of the prominent deras of Doaba. This Nirmala dera is associated with Harkhowal dera. Sant Hari Singh, Sant Pritam Singh. Sant Hansa Singh and Sant Gurmeet Singh are the chronological leaders of this Nirmala dera. Similarly, Dera Maqsud Pur (Bhulath) also has its roots in Harkhowal. Sant Roshan Singh and Sant Hazara Singh are the leading saints of this Nirmala dera. The connections with Nirmala's beliefs are pretty predictable in the lives of various legendary heroes of this dera.

Sant Jagjit Singh Ji Harkhowal founded *Sant Ashram* in Sultanpur Lodhi. He is a laureate in Vedas and Shastras. He is an outstanding author and has written a biography of Sant Suhail Singh. He has also summarised the book on the Vedic *Granth* (scripture) named '*Vichar Sagar*' to make the interpretation easier for the common masses. Sant Jagjit Singh is a protuberant personality in Nirmal Sampradya.

Dera Jian



Figure 3.3 Dera Jian (Hoshiarpur):

Dera Jian is the most noticeable dera of Doaba as it is considered the fountainhead of numerous Nirmala deras that envisaged Sikhism in the Hoshiarpur region. The exponent of this dera was Sant Harnam Singh. He was in British Army company

no.22 in 1899. He went to Hoti to see Sant Karam Singh. Sant Karam Singh sent him to Company no. 36 to deliver a secret message to Sant Wadhava Singh. He came to deliver a message to Hoti. Sant Karam Singh bestowed him with *Naam Daan* (divine knowledge) here.⁷ After bearing to their job, he continued the practice of *Naam* (reminiscence). He left the job in 1908 and came to Jian in Hoshiarpur. He renounced the world, but his parents wanted him to care for his home. He declined the advice and kept doing his practice of *Bhakti* (devotion). He had built and contributed to several *Gurudwaras* such as Haiyan Belan *Gurudwara Satwin Paatshahi*, Jand Sahib, *Gurudwara Tahli Sahib Gindpur*, and Mohna, etc. He also participated in the fourth *Jatha* (squad) from Anandpur Sahib to Jaiton and surrendered to British police.⁸ He endured a lot of pains and cruelties in the struggle for freedom. Sant Harnam Singh was very lively. He used to put on multi-colored clothes and move with the paraphernalia of about 20 saints. In every moment, he dedicated himself to the service of 's God and religious fervor. His principal disciples were as follows: Sant Hari Singh Ji Kaharpur, Sant Basant Singh Johlan, Sant Paul Singh, Sant Kaiser Singh ji Virakt, Sant Chanan Singh, Sant Hari Singh Kankhal, Sant Dalel Singh Virakt, Giani Rattan Singh Tutomzaara, Sant Pardumman Singh Paddi, and Sant Soora Singh, etc.

Dera Kaharpur Mahilpur



Figure 3.4 Dera Kaharpur Mahilpur

⁷ Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Rabb ji Dera Jian Hoshiarpur on 21/2/2022 at Jain Mahilpur. See Appendix 4.

⁸ Chanan Singh(2012), *Ruhani Parkash Shriman Param Pujaya 111 Sant Baba Harnam Singh Ji Maharaj Jian*, Mayi Gurdevi Charitable Trust Village Jian, Choubewal Hoshiarpur.



This dera is a leading dera of Nirmala sect. This dera has significantly contributed to the educational advancement of the area. The proponent of this dera was Sant Hari Singh. Sant Hari Singh ji was born on Sammat 1938 at Jian in Hoshiarpur.⁹ He joined the army in Sammat 1946. His meeting with his lord master, i.e., Sant Harnam Singh (Dera Jian), is considered the breakthrough. As per Guru's commandments, he left the military and started doing *Bhakti* (devotion). Then he shifted to Kaharpur and began his meditation. He made log huts and did strenuous exercises. In Sammat 1984, he went to Haridwar to participate in Kumbh. His visit was full of pomp and show. The Nirmal Akhara explicitly welcomed him. On this occasion, Sant Harnam Singh worshipped Shri Guru Granth Sahib, applauded Nirmal Panchyati Akhara, and appreciated the Mahant of Nirmala Akhara for his promotional activities.¹⁰ This Kumbh increased his prestige. After coming from Kumbh, he again started preaching in the areas of Western Punjab (modern Pakistan), Montgomery Sargopa, Loyalpur, Shekhpura, etc. After the demise of his Guru (Sant Harnam Singh), the saints and Nirmal Panchayati Akhara appointed him the head Mahant of Hoti. He erected a massive hearth in the memory of Sant Harnam Singh and organized the celebration of the death anniversary of Sant Harnam Singh. He did *Kaar sewa* (voluntary labour) of many *Gurudwaras* like Kothi Halluwahal, Ghukkar Wal Nagar, Akal Garh, Pubewal, Kukkra, Mataur Garh Shankar, Habeli, Laundhare and Anandpur Sahib, for the better administration of the *Guru Dwaras* he constructed the committees of his disciples. He organised an 8 days national congregation of Nirmal Bhekh. Almost all the Nirmal scholars and saints participated in this religious gathering. Shri Maan 108 Swami Suchha Singh specially visited from Kankhal (Haridwar) and headed the national assembly. In these eight days, national congregations, various lectures, and illustrations were completed successfully. In Anandpur Sahib, the renovation of Shri Takhat Kesh Garh Sahib was beautifully finished by him. Sant Hari Singh constructed a committee to look after the Deras of Jian, Anand Pur Sahib, Kaharpur, and Amritsar. He also passed the rule that no family member would be

⁹ Darshan Singh (2018) *Jiwan Sedhan Shri Man 108 Sant Hari Singh Ji Kaharpuri*, Magismatic Press Sahibjada Ajeet Singh Nagar Mohali, pp.10-25.

¹⁰ Interview with Sant Sadhu Singh, the Chief Priest Dera Kaharpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021, at Dera Kaharpur, Hoshiarpur.

elected as the Mahant of the Dera. His prominent followers are Pandit Bishan Singh, Mahant Jawala Singh Jian, Sant Kala Singh Ji Anandpur, Mahant Sher Singh Ji, Sant Bhag Singh, and Sant Rattan Singh Kaharpur. He left this mortal world on 21st October 1973.

After him, Sant Sher Singh headed the dera Kaharpur, and these days Sant Sadhu Singh is leading this dera. Similarly, Sant Bishan Singh helped to construct Shri Takhat Kesh Garh Sahib by getting financial assistance from foreign countries.

Dera Santpura Maanko:



Figure 3.5 Dera Santpura Maanko



Dera Santpura Jabbar Maanko is one of the chief deras of Nirmala Sampardaya. This dera owes its lineage to Sant Baba Hari Singh. His main disciple, Sant Bhag Singh, initiated this dera. Sant Baba Bhag Singh was born in 8th January 1897 at Kohdowal in Distt Hoshiarpur.¹¹ He was a great soulfully dedicated to *Simran* (chanting and meditating) and practicing spiritual rites in very particular ways.¹² He came to Manko (Jabbar) and sat in a lonely place for hard penance and meditation. In 1928 he established Dera Santpura (Jabbar).¹³ Many followers started to visit and illuminate with divinity. He went to Hoshiarpur and left this world for a heavenly abode in 1962.¹⁴ He has five disciples, Mahant Hardyal Singh Musafir, Mahant Gurbachan Singh Virakt, Sant Gurbachan Singh Rikhi, Pandit Tara Singh, and Mahant Sohan Singh Ji, etc. After him, Mahant Hardyal Singh Musafir has appointed the head Mahant of Dera Santpura Manko. He served this Dera from 1965 to 1980. Mahant Malkeet Singh had followed him.

Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Ji Musafir was another great Nirmala Saint of dera Jabbar. Sant Baba Hardyal Singh's parents settled in Chomo near Adampur after migrating from Pakistan during the partition in 1947. His interest in religious as well as temporal, conventional Education earned him a college degree, which was rare in the villages. In 1955 Sant Baba Hardyal Singh took spiritual supervision of Sant Baba Bhag Singh and surrendered his life to *Yog Sadhana* (Hard yoga practices), *Simran*(chanting), and selfless service to humanity.¹⁵ He served for twenty years as a head priest for Santpura after the demise of Sant Baba Bhag Singh. To obey *Guru's* orders and fulfill his dreams, he taught efficiently at the

¹¹ Pakhar Singh (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Parupkarata Da Kender Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji Dera Santpura Jabbar*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Cheritable Society, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.16.

¹² Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gourav Gatha*, pp.191-182

¹³ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.391.

¹⁴ Pakhar Singh (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Parupkarata Da Kender Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji Dera Santpura Jabbar*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Cheritable Society, Padhiana Jalandhar, pp.34-36

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.35.



Girls High School at Santpura and made significant contributions to improving girls' education. He left this mortal world on 3rd January 1982.¹⁶

Baba Malkeet Ji

He was born in 1957: his parents, S. Hazara Singh and Smt. Preetam Kaur Manko was a staunch follower of Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Ji. His father sent Sant Malkeet Singh for the regular service of Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Ji. Sant Malkeet started to live perpetually in Santpura at the tender age of five or six. Baba ji gave the responsibility of his education to Giani Attar Singh of Daroli.¹⁷

Consequently, he studied *Gurbani* and other religious scriptures diligently and faithfully, leading to a greater and deeper knowledge of God. He became head *granthi* (head priest) in 19th October 1982.¹⁸ For carrying out the vision and mission of Sant Baba Bhag Singh, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh engaged the community not only in divinity but also in humanitarian tasks. He was a pioneering and visionary person.¹⁹ He built a beautiful hall in Gurudwara Santpura Maanko of 120*75 feet with a capacity of 15000-20000 devotees. He started the celebrations of annual days as follows:

- Death anniversary of Sant Baba Bhag Singh and Amrit Sanchar(Baptism) on 16th March
- Death anniversary (*Barsi*) Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Ji Musafir on 20 Poh(December & January)
- Death anniversary (*Barsi*) Sant Dewa Singh 2nd February
- Death anniversary (*Barsi*) Sant Dalip Singh 11 Harh (mid-June and July)

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 36.

¹⁷ Surinder Kaur Puar (2009), *Light of Santpura Jabbar, A Spiritual Pilgrimage*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Charitable Memorial Society, Padhiana, Jalandhar, pp.57-58.

¹⁸ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.391.

¹⁹ Interview with S.Gurdev Singh of Daroli by Sarla Nirankari on 28th December 2021 at Daroli. For details see Appendix 3(a).



- Death anniversary (*Barsi*) Sant Harbhajan Singh Shaheed 5 Bhadon (mid-August and September) etc.

The most outstanding accomplishments of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh are as follows; the construction of roads and bridges (famous as Bridge Baba)²⁰, the construction of religious places (*Gurudwaras*), and the Educational institutes like the International Public School Khiala. Public School Binjho, Nursing College, and Sant Baba Bhag Singh University²¹. Baba Malkeet Singh generated sports culture by organising tournaments for various games like Kabaddi, Football and Gataka on both national and international level.²² Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society has achieved landmark accomplishments under the stewardship of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh.²³ After Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji headed the Sant Pura Dera from December 2015 to 22nd April 2021 and guided the educational enterprises of this Dera.

Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji (Braham Ji)

Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji (Braham) was a luminary of Dera Sant Pura Jabbar Manko. He was born on 30th July 1964 at Daroli Kalan. His father S. Jiwan Singh and mother Smt. Payar Kaur was of very spiritual inclination. The child Dilawar Singh was a beautiful sibling. He had three brothers and two sisters. He was the youngest one. He was the most loved and liked by the family and locality. This caused sibling jealousy also. He had his primary education from Daroli and passed the matriculation exam, his parents started to look for a suitable profession for him. His father asked him about his future plans but young Dilawar surprised his father by saying that he wanted to learn the recitation of holy Adi Granth. He regularly used to go to Dera Sant Pura Jabbar with his father. He loved the holy company of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh ji. His ascetic nature many times irritated his mother. Once she threatened and warned of starvation without any occupation. Adolescent

²⁰ Interview with S. Hardaman Singh Secretary Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society by Sarla Nirankari on 21st January 2022 at SBBSU Khiala Jalandhar. For details see Appendix 3(b).

²¹ <https://www.sbbsuniversity.ac.in/>

²² https://www.kabaddi365.com/videos_category/2373/sant-baba-bhag-singh-university-jalandhar-kabaddi-cup-31-dec-2019

²³ Interview with Sant Baba Sarvan Singh, the Chancellor of Sant Baba Bhag Singh University, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 6th February 2022 at Sant pura Manko. For details see Appendix 3(c).



Dilawar responded that he need not worry, Almighty will take care of it. There will not be a scarcity of any edible because of Him.²⁴ But she kept on insisting Dilawar to settle abroad. She asked Baba Malkeet Singh (Dilawar's Guru) to send him to his home. After inquiring about her plan of foreign perspectives for young Dilawar, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh sent him with his parents. But he at the same time declared that if he gets settled in the USA, then he will belong to them, if he returns to India, he will be of Dera Sant Pura Jabbar. Miraculously it became true. In 1983, through their own means, young Dilwar Singh was sent to the USA through Mexico by his parents as his brothers were already settled there. But he was stopped by the Embassy of the USA for further inquiry. He was sent back to India and he with the consent of his parents devoted himself fully to the dera Santpura. Here it is important to mention that after his release from the USA embassy, all the other visitors who were retained by the embassy had been released. Baba Malkeet Singh fully educated and indoctrinated him with the teachings of Sikhism and the *Gurbani*. The inborn virtues of Dilawar Singh were furnished by Sant Baba Malkeet Singh. He was such an empyrean figure that he even donated his clothes to the needy. He loved everyone so much that he could understand the grievances of others without any verbal communication. He was so benevolent of the needs of others that he even donated his own clothes. Henceforth, he got a new epithet i.e. '*Braham Ji*' (incarnation of God) from the masses. In the same time, he was utterly dedicated to his master and the teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Sant Baba Malkeet Singh bestowed a lot of responsibilities to Sant Dilawar Singh. Sant Dilawar Braham ji steadfastly accomplished all of the duties successfully and with full enthusiasm. Finally, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh conferred all powers and responsibilities to his praiseworthy disciple before his departure to heaven. After the sad demise of his *Guru*, Sant Dilawar Singh spent his whole time to cherish the dreams of his master. From December 2015 to 23 April 2021, he incessantly toiled hard to complete all pending projects of Sant baba Malkeet Singh's dreams to make reality. In six years he brought prodigious laurels to the Sant Baba Bhag Singh University. On his sudden demise, the newspapers of Punjab have given

²⁴ Interview with S Balwinder Singh, elder brother of Sant Baba Dilawar Singh and his daughter-in-Law by Sarla Nirankari on 14th June 2022 at Daroli.



away their grief of the loss of great educationist and visionary saint. Punjab Kesari admitted that his contributions are miraculous and highly commendable.²⁵ The fact is that he was great inspiration among the youth. He filled the zeal of service to the humanity in the young generation by involving them in *naam* (God Reminiscence) and selfless service. Moreover, he infilled the young hearts with true love for the *Gurbani* and teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. His special love to children inspired and interrelated them with the Gurudwaras and the teachings of the ten Gurus. A very devising trait of his personality was to solve the problems amicably as well as in immediate response. His resourcefulness always dwindled the huge glitches in a few seconds. In truth, he was a phenomenal personality. He will always remain in the hearts of people because of his virtues, dedication and philanthropic nature.

Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Padhiana Jalandhar is the only Nirmala University that is illuminating the area with the ignition of literary wisdom.

Nirmal Kutiya Sahri



Figure 3.6 Nirmal Kutiya Sahri

²⁵ <https://www.punjabkesari.in/punjab/news/sant-baba-dilawar-singh-brahm-ji-is-no-more-1371042>



This Nirmal is also known as Nirmal Kutiya Kahri Sahri. It had been launched by Swami Raja Nand who was a follower of Sant Baba Jawala Singh of Harkhowal.²⁶ The period of Sant Raja Nand ji is called magnificent because of his service to humanity through Ayurvedic medicines. His *haqeemi*(practice of medicines) was world wide famous. He was followed by Baba Chinta Singh. Sant Baba Chinta Singh committed to do arduous penance in the cave so called *bhora*(underground place for hard meditation) for three years. Once Sant Jawala Singh came and asked him to stand up while doing meditation. Thus he started to do the same. But after some time the *Bhora* was got filled with rainy water. He had to change his place of meditation. A small hut, a platform and a small washroom was constructed for his convenience in 1955 (approximately). Sant Baba Satpal Singh descended Sant Baba Chinta Singh. Sant Baba Satpal Singh was born to S. Karam Chand and Smt Maya Devi in the village Sahari. He joined army in 1957 and served and participated in Indo-Pak war of 1971. He told the investigator that he threw ammunition on Pakistani air-planes. After leaving job of army, he started to visit Sant Baba Chinta Singh. He was handed over the duty of head priest by his *Guru*. He also served an Udasi saint named Sant Ran Singh of Attowal for about two years and one month. This saint blessed him to distribute and dispense whatever he had to every one (*Vandi Jao Vandi jao*). Sant Baba Satpal Singh affirmed that since then he distributes whatever he had but Almighty replenish his store unsurprisingly. He is very pious. Daily he distributes clothes, food and money to the needy people.

The disciples of Sant Baba Satpal Singh in the Sahari dera told that Baba ji used to do wrestling in his young age. He is very fond of Kabaddi and other sports. Annually Kabaddi²⁷ and tournaments are organised by the dera. The players are provided nutritious diet of milk and almonds by Sant Baba Satpal ji personally. The live shows of matches are broadcasted at youtube. Unfolding the message to youth Sant Baba Satpal Singh urged become *Gurumukh*(true follower of teachings of

²⁶ Interview with Sant Baba Sat Pal Singh, Chief Preist of Dera Kahri Sahri, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 18th July 2022 at the village Sahri (Hoshiarpur).

²⁷ Kahri Sahri(Hoshiarpur) Kabaddi Tournament (August 2021) Video, kabaddi365.com
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYMI6M8SYFs>

Lord Master). He acknowledged that people are becoming *Manmukh*(ego guided) instead of Guru guided.he explained the causes of miseri is this ego-guidance. One should beware of it. He insisted to do *naam sumiran*(ruminantion of God) regularly so that mind could not deviate from the path of true devotion..

Dera village Tajewal Hoshiarpur:



Figure 3.7 Dera village Tajewal Hoshiarpur:

Dera village Tajewal Hoshiarpur was founded by Sant Ram Singh (a disciple of Sant Hari Singh of Kaharpur) at his birthplace.²⁸ He was elected the Sarpanch of the village in 1980 and has served as the secretary of Doaba Nirmal Mahamandal since 1976. To spread education to one and all, he had opened S.R.S. (Sant Ram Singh) Model School in Tahewal only. He dedicatedly served Nirmala Sect in the area. Presently Sant Mohinder Singh is leading the dera.

Dera Tibba Sahib:

²⁸ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.393



Figure 3.8 Dera Tibba Sahib:

Another renowned dera of the area is Dera Tibba Sahib.²⁹ This dera was founded by Sant Sahib Singh, who was the disciple of Sant Aaya Singh Ji. This Gurudwara was founded by Sant Jawala Singh. After Sant Sahib Sant, Sohan Singh became the Mahant (the chief), who died in 1946. Sant Lachhman Singh, the disciple of Sant Sohan Singh, had headed the dera successfully. Sant Lachhman Singh was a very disciplined and dedicated devotee of Sikhism. Sant Baba Balveer Singh is the present head of the dera.

²⁹ Ibid, p.393.

Dera Dhillawan:



Figure 3.9 Dera Dhillawan:

Mahant Prem Singh founds Dera Dhillawan.³⁰ He was the d Dera Dhillawanisciple of Sant Sadhu Singh. After Sant Shri Karam Singh (Hoti), the lineage of *Guru- Shishya* (teacher-disciple) was as follows: Sant Bhagat Singh, Sant Harjang Singh, Sant Saadhu Singh, and Sant Prem Singh. Sant Sadhu Singh was a dedicated follower of Gurbani and an erudite scholar of Vedanta. His contributions to socio-literary activities are altruistic.

Nirmala Dera Baba Mangal Singh Paaldi:

This influential Nirmala dera was founded by Sant Baba Mangal Singh who was born at Dhariwal Kaadiyan Distt. Jalandhar. At present sixth descendent Sant Baba Santokh Singh of Panjour is running the dera.³¹ In 1969 Sant Baba Sunder Singh asked for a *sewadaar* (personal servant) from Sant Baba Hari Singh Naiky wale, and he selected Santokh Singh. Finally, Sant Santokh Singh joined dera Paaldi in 1975. Mahant Sunder Singh died in 1986, and Sant Santokh Singh became the head of the dera. After introducing the Sikh Gurudwara Act, a case was filed

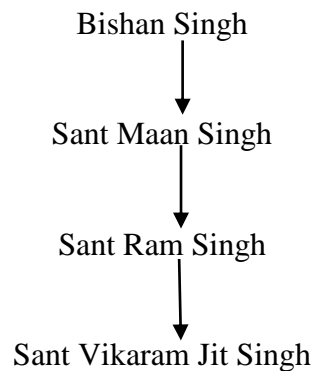
³⁰ *Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1004.

³¹ Interview with Sant Baba Santokh Singh Chirf Ptriest Dera Paaldi, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 21st January 2019 at Nirmala Dera Baba Mangal Singh Paaldi Hoshiarpur.

against Dera Paaldi. The case was taken to the court of Lahore. The case lasted for about seven years. After winning the case, Dera Mangal Singh got fully launched. A Bunga was erected near the village Paaldi for the immediate halt for pilgrims. Sant Sunder Singh started the tradition of organizing *Langar* (mass kitchen) on the occasion of *Holla Muhalla* in Anandpur Sahib. The major ventures in this dera area are Sant Attar Singh Khalsa Sr.Sec. School Paaldi and Hospital was named Mayo Singh Primary Health Centre Paaldi, which was opened by Mayo Singh (a devotee of dera). The lineage tree of dera is as quite fascinating.

Dera Bishan Puriyan Nanagal Khurd:

This dera has a great involvement of society through active social works. The family tree of the dera is as follows:



The dera had been instrumental in promoting the teachings of shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji successfully.³²

Dera Manan Hana :

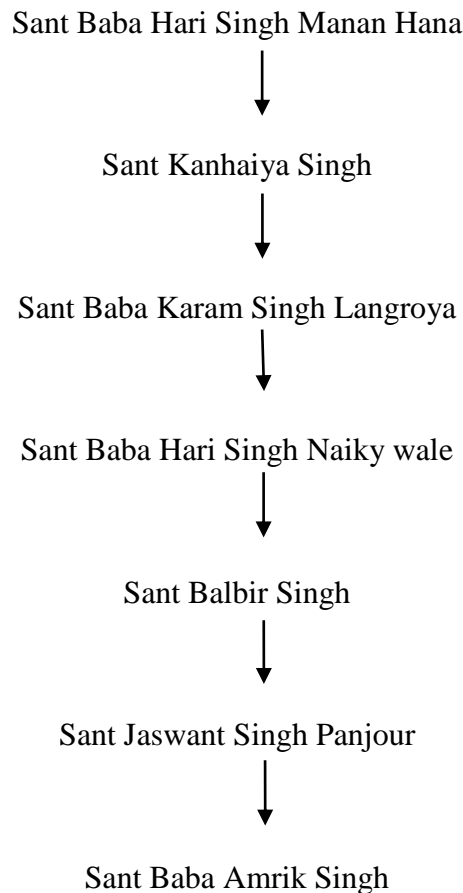


Figure 3.10 Dera Manan Hana

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBLJDKO4DSs>



In the area of Kot Futuhi ,Dera Manan Hana is a very famous dera of Nirmala sect.³³ It is renowned for its social contributions. It is a great learning center of Nirmala philosophy. The family tree of the dera is:



The dera is famous for 108 Sant baba Hari Singh Ji Dera Kabaddi Tournament, Annual Bharat Kesari Dnagal Mannahana. Ox Races and many other championships. Wrestling champoonships of the dera are world widely famous. The matches of Sikander Shaikh and Pritpal Phagwara etc.are historical matches of wrestling. The annual celebrations in the memory of great legends are the galring features of the dera. A school and college at Data Chella are opened at the *Kutiya* of Sant Hari Singh Naiky wale. He was a great Nirmala scholar whose great deeds are well known in the region. He used to live in different cottages(*kutiya*) built up in various areas so that he could contact the local people of many places.

³³ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth Di Gaurav Gatha*, p.102.



Various *Kutiya*s of Sant Hari Singh Nailky³⁴ wale are as following:

1. Bhora Sahib
2. Mandali Kutiya
3. Matwali Kutiya
4. Maman Hana Amrudan wali Kutiya
5. Data Chela Kutiya Jagiri wali
6. Kotla Jamun wali Kutiya
7. Binjhon
8. Bhon wali Kutiya

In dera Harisar Mannanhana Kot Futuhi, two beautiful buildings are erected named Angeetha Braham Giyani 108 Sant Hari Singh and Gurudwara Sahib. From 11th to 13th March, an international-level wrestling championship is organized here. Winners are honored with hefty prices. Annual Jorh Mela and Kabaddi Maha Kumbh are main fascinations of the dera.³⁵ On 14th March, the death anniversary of Sant Hari Singh is celebrated with great enthusiasm. Similarly, his birthday is celebrated with great pomp and shown on 14th -16th June every year. Familiar people miss him and celebrate any day related to him with boundless enthusiasm.

Dera Rupowal Ramdaspur Garhdiwala (Hoshiarpur):

Sant Baba Mohar Singh ji Haroke wale had a great follower named Harnam Singh,³⁶ who headed the dera of Muthiyan at first afterward Herike dera. He was a renowned saint and great leader. He was pursued by Sant Dayal Singh. Sant Sewa Singh followed him.³⁷

³⁴ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 489.

³⁵ Live Kabaddi Tournament All Open Kot Futuhi Mananhana Hoshiarpur, (June 2022) (video) YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QH2u1lpjfl>

³⁶ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 490.

³⁷ Paramjit Mansa(2009) 'Nirmal Panth da Itihas' Chatur Singh Jeewan Singh Bazar Mai Sewa Amritsar.p.406

Nirmal Kutiya Johlan:



Figure 3.11 Nirmal Kutiya Johlan:

This promising Nirmala was founded by Brahamgiani Sant Basant Singh ji Maharaj, a follower of Sant Baba Karam Singh Ji Hoti Mardan (now Pakistan).³⁸ He was born in the village Sarooliyan (two miles on the Western side of Jian). He was a follower of Sant Harnam Singh. He established a dera near Adampur in the village Johlan. He revered his Guru by following his teachings truly and dedicatedly. He was followed by Brahamgiani Sant Gian Singh ji Maharaj Nirmala Brahamgiani Harbhajan Singh(Virakat). Currently headed by Brahamgiani Sant Jeet Singh Ji Maharaj assisted by Braham Giani Jaspal Singh Ji and Sant Gurmeet Singh.³⁹

³⁸ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.998.

³⁹ Sant Jeet Singh and Sant Gurmeet Singh (2005), *Nirmal Basant Bahar*, Brahamgiani Sant Baba B,asant Singh Ji Maharaj Nirmale, Nirmal Kutiya Johalan Village Johalan Bolina Jalandhar, p.19.

Gurudwara Dera Sant Sagar (ChahWala) Johal Jalandhar:



Figure 3.12 **Gurudwara Dera Sant Sagar (ChahWala) Johal Jalandhar:**

Gurudwara Dera Sant Sagar (ChahWala) Johal Jalandhar is a renowned dera of the Nirmala sect. According to Johal Bhagwan Singh(2016)⁴⁰ Braham Giani Sant Baba Kapoor Singh Nirban was the founder of this Dera. He was born in a small village in Nabha state named Maangewal. He was the youngest of three brothers. According to the tradition of that time, he received his primary education from a Udassi scholar named Mahant Braham Krishan village Hauke (Ferozpur). He studied Hindu and Sikh scriptures here. He attained the higher stage of devotion here only. By abstaining from the world, he decided to spread the teachings of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji.⁴¹ Moreover, he accepted the challenge of degradation of Sikhism and set off to improve it. His mother does not want to leave him alone in his mission. She spent her whole life supporting his mission of reformation of Sikhism by preparing Guru Ka Langar and other duties. He inspired his teammates to translate and write *Gurbani Gutakhas, Pothies* (handy and simple booklets of

⁴⁰ Bhagwan Singh Johal (2016), *Sant Sagar de Suche Moti Sant baba Kapoor Singh Nirwan ji da Sanklep Jiwan*, Gurudwara Dera Sant Sagar (Chah Wala) Johal, Jalandhar.

⁴¹ Harbans Singh Bolina (2016), *Santan Sang*, Gurudwara Dera Sant Sagar (Chah Wala) Johal, Jalandhar.



Gurbani), and scripts manually. The Pathans of Akorha Khatak near Peshawar worshipped him as a saint. To protect *Guru Granth Sahib* within the borders was one of his essential duties. He executed the duty of looking after the cemetery of Akali Phula Singh dedicatedly. During the life span of Baba Nirwaan, two divine souls named Sant Baba Preetam Singh and Sant Baba Sunder Singh came to see him at Akorha Khatak (near Peshawar) from Nashehrau Cantt. (Pakistan). They were army personnel deputed at Nashehrau Cantt. (Pakistan) at that time. They were highly influenced by the vibrant personality of Sant Baba Nirwan Singh. They left the job and decided to serve him. Before his departure to heaven, he called them at Kainch Beli Bahiral (Paonta Sahib) and shared his mind about leaving this mortal world. Here he left this materialistic world in 1916. He spent his last time in Darhi Sahib Bhungarni (Paonta Sahib). Braham Giyani Sant Baba Pritam Singh served the dera mentioned above and other places from 1916 to 1952.⁴² From April 1952 to December 1970, Sant Baba Sunder Singh took care of the Dera and other responsibilities. After him, from 1970 to 1984, Sant Baba Bishan Singh completed his duties with the help of Sant Baba Thakur Singh; Sant Baba Thakur Singh headed Dera till 1993.⁴³ Sant Baba Karam Singh is presently leading the dera after 1993 diligently.

At the time of partition of India in 1947, Sant Baba Pritam Singh called the (congregation) *Sangat* at Gurudwara Sant Sagar (Chah Wala) Johal Jalandhar. Homeless people were given shelter and support here. The descendants of Baba Nirwaan have played a crucial role in the Gurudwara Reform movement and Babbar Akali Lahar. The present building of Dera Chah Wala was erected in 1934. Besides this, monuments are erected in his blessed memory Nangal Shama and Rayepur Rasoolpur. The Gurudwara Kainch Beli Bahiral (Paunta Sahib) Gurudwara Darhi Sahib Bhungarani and Khariyan Bhaiyiwala at Uttra khand were also built by him. This dera is known for its service to humanity with ongoing efforts to procure Sikhism and extend medical care with regular *Langar*(divine food) of Ayurvedic tea.

⁴² Prof. Harbans Singh Bolina(2016), *Santan Sang*, Gurdwara dera Sant Sagar Chah wala Johal Jalandhar, p.12.

⁴³ Prof. Harbans Singh Bolina(2019), *Jeewan Gatha Sant Baba Tahkar Singh ji Chah wale*, Gurdwara dera Sant Sagar Chah wala Johal Jalandhar, pp.21-35.

Kutiya Bhungarani:

This Kutiya was built in the land of Sant Nand Singh by Sant Ran Singh. At the same time, Sant Ran Singh continued the meditations and Kirtan here. The 24 years old Sant Nand Singh became his disciple. He was a purely dedicated saint to (name of truth) *Naam* and *Simran* (God reminiscence). Sant Veer Singh was born in Bhungrani. He kept on contributing to the lotus feet of Sant Nand Singh. He became a literary figure in *Gurbani* and *Shastras*. He had also taught in Kankhal Haridwar. He had numerous scholars, and Sant Jota Singh was also a disciple of Sant Ran Singh. He was an accomplished physician in Ayurveda.

Dera Rana Village Domely:



Figure 3.13 Dera Rana Village Domely

Sant Kapoor was the founder of this dera in Domely. He was a great follower of Sant Jawala Singh. Baba Manjit Singh is the present head of dera. The dera is profusely extending Sikhism.

Nirmal Kutiya Domely:



Figure 3.14 Nirmal Kutiya Domely

This dera is famous for its contributions to the arena of music. Sant Sharwan Singh Gandharva was the master of music.⁴⁴ He had narrated many volumes of classical music. Sant Harbans Singh Giani, another great saint, was a source of spiritual strength and devotion. Sant Baba Pritam Singh is the present head of it and runs the classes of both vocal & instrumental music. It is also famous for Ayurvedic

⁴⁴ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 485.

medicines. Even these days, snake bite medicine is the special blessing (*bakhshish*) of the dera.⁴⁵ The social involvements of this dera had been quite noteworthy.

Nirmal Ashram Kutiya Banga:



Figure 3.15 **Nirmal Ashram Kutiya Banga**

Sant Ran Singh was the founder of this prestigious dera. He was born in Pathlawa. Sant Khajan was his Guru. After gaining good command over Vedas and the Gurbani, he propagated Sikhism and connected thousands with Gurbani. He further extended the tradition of Kirtan and congregations. He baptized thousands of people and de-addicted thousands of people from tobacco.⁴⁶ He was a great saint and devoid himself of money. He had many disciples like Sant Sampooran Singh Bilaspur, Sant Jota Singh Bhungrani, Sant Gurditt Singh Multan, Sant Beant Singh Virakat, Sant Sewa Singh, and Sant Doola Singh, etc. but still, he appointed Sant Mela Singh the Mahant of Paddi Tholu as his descendent. Sant Mela Singh was

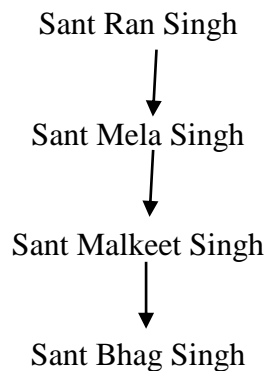
⁴⁵ Interview with the follower of Sant Baba Sarwan Singh on 10th January 2022, by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Kutiya Domely, Distt. Kapurthala.

⁴⁶Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.355.



born in Bhungarni. After becoming the disciple of Sant Ran Singh Ji, he learned Vedas and became a scholar of *Guru Granth Sahib*. He described the details of *Adi Granth* in simple language. It had remained a seminary for teaching and disphering *Guru Granth Sahib* in a literal sense by Sant Jeeta Singh. He also used to give medicine to the people. Sant Iqbal Singh and Sant Bakhshish have been connected to the dera for very longer period by disseminating spiritual knowledge among the visitors.

Further, he also constructed the *Gurudwara* in Banga in the memory of the Sixth Guru known as *Charan Kanwal*. He had numerous follower saints like Sant Gurmukh Singh, Sant Attar Singh, Sant Mehar Singh, Sant Lachhman Singh, Sant Sewa Singh, Sant Bhag Singh, Sant Sarup Singh, Sant Niranjn Singh, Sant Kartar Singh and Sant Jeeta Singh, etc. But he appointed Sant Malkit Singh as his descendent.



This dera is about 150 years old. Recently 100th anniversary of Sant Baba Mela Singh was celebrated. The dera was started by Sant Baba Ran Singh in the form of Kutiya also known as *Dhakki* which is a secluded place for hermits and harmonious for meditation. Sant Baba Ran Singh was well connected with Sant Baba Khazan Singh of Paddi Tholu. Present structure of Nirmal Ashram from Kutiya to Gurudwara complex was developed by Baba Mela Singh with the help of Sant Malkit Singh and Sant Baba Bhag Singh. Baba Malkit Singh used to sermon *Katha* of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* in the morning and historical narrative in the evening. Sant baba Mela Singh completed thirty nine *Kathas* on *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. Sant Baba Malkit Singh recited ten *Katha* on *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. He was acknowledged as master of performing Kirtan as well as. Sant Baba Bhag Singh is equally versed in *Katha*.

Presently Sant Baba Bhag Singh is rigorously contributing in the spread of Sikhism.⁴⁷ The dera is incessantly shedding scenic and spiritual beauty all around. Numerous socio-religious activities are initiated by this dera. This dera is a source of great inspiration and the epitome of spirituality in the region. The linkage between society and religion has made this dera quite distinctive in the *Nirmala Sampradaya*.

Kutiya Bilaspur (Hoshiarpur):

It was founded by Sant Sampooran Singh in Sammat in 1971. He connected many people with *Gurbani* and *Sikhism*.⁴⁸ His disciples were: Sant Gitan Singh, Sant Niranjan Singh, Sant Chanda Singh, Sant Amar Singh, Sant Sunder Singh, Sant Nihal Singh, Sant Amar Singh, etc. Sant Gurdas had headed the dera. Sant Batan Singh is looking after this dera presently.

Dera Bna Sahib (Bahawal): Mahilpur



Figure 3.16 Dera Bna Sahib (Bahawal): Mahilpur

⁴⁷ Interview with Sant Baba Bhag Singh chief priest of Nirmal Ashram Kutiya Banga by Sarla Nirnakari on 7th November 2021 at Banga. For details see Appendix VIII.

⁴⁸ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.399.



This dera was founded by Sant Harnam Singh in the village Bahawal.⁴⁹ It is a surprising point that both the disciple and Guru have the same name. After him, Sant Jagat Singh became the Mahant (head priest). He served dera for 20 years and was followed by Sant Preetam Singh. Sant Preetam Singh was a pronounced *Ayurvedic* doctor too. He attained this knowledge from Sant Haribhajan Singh of Babbeli. He constructed *Gurudwaras* named Bhai Sooba Singh in Mahilpur and village Heeran in district Una Himachal Pradesh. Sant Harmeet Singh is the present head.

Dera Bhita Vadd:

Sant Narayan Singh was the founder of this dera and he was born in Lahore. He was in the Battalion of Sant Karam Singh.⁵⁰ Influenced by the great saint, he came to Hoti and became his disciple. He built several Nirmal Kutiyas in different districts of Lahore as Rampur, Barki, Kharak, Chader, Bagho, etc. Then he started to live in Bhito Vad Kutiya near the canal. He completely heeded the discipline of Sant Karam Singh. He did great *Bhakti* and expanded Nirmal philosophy through his deeds; he went to his heavenly abode on 19 Magh Samat 1979. His disciple Giani Harbhajan Singh was a great philosopher and submissive scholar. The two very dedicated disciples of Sant Narayan Singh were Sant Vassan Singh and Sant Lachhman Singh, who ran the deras efficiently. These days Mahant Karnail Singh is heading the dera.

Dera Hari Pur:

Sant Jiwan Singh was born in Kashmir, he became a follower of Sant Karam Singh in Hoty.⁵¹ He did hard penance in the village of Tribela of Darband and established the dera. Sant Sahib Singh succeeded him. Sant Sahib Singh was the follower of Sant Sahib Singh of Haripur and Sant Prem Singh of Tribela. Both of these saints were the great saints and proved devotees of Sikhism. They delivered the knowledge of true austerity to young Sant Jiwan Singh. It is important to mention here that they had lineage with the Nirmal deras of Pakistan. Moreover, they were the scholars of Sanskrit.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.401.

⁵⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 402.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p.403.

Nirmal Dera Adampur:



Figure 3.17 Nirmal Dera Adampur:

This dera was established by Sant Watan Singh.⁵² He was a great scholar, orator and narrator of his time. He was the elder brother of Gurdayal Singh (Jathedar Akal Takhat Sahib) Ajnoha. He had spiritual inclination from the childhood and he went to Chakk 49 Pakistan for the participation in Indian freedom struggle and the promotion of Sikhism.⁵³ Choudhary Udham Singh Minhas, his son Ram Basant Singh Minhas and Sant Watan Singh directly and indirectly helped freedom fighters. It is interesting as well as important to state here that Bhagat Singh had took shelter in the room of Ram Basant Minhas (DAV college Lahore) at the occasion of firing at John Saunders on 17th Dec.1927 Chaudhary Ram Basant's early name was Kanwar Pooran Chand. His son Bhagwant Singh Minhas was the father of the J.S. Minhas the interviewee. After the prtion of 1947 this family migrated to Adampur and got settled near Adampur in the their paternal village

⁵² Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1014.

⁵³ Online interview with S.J.S. Minhas on 24th July 2022 by Sarla Nirankari at SBBSU.



Damunda (3 Kms from Adampur). Sant Baba Vatan singh also came with them here. The head of the family Chodhary Udham singh give a piece of land to him. Sant Watan singh made a building for his meditation and *Bhakty* here. He spent whole of his life here and achieved his divine goals here. This place is famous as Nirmal Kutiya Adampur till date. He strongly contributed in the promotion of devine knowledge and the *gurmat* (way of true following of teachings of the Lord master). He was born on 14th January 1906 at the home of Shri Hakam Singh and Smt. Niranjan Kaur. He was the disciple of Sant Ram Singh of Bandoja. There he received the knowledge of the history of Gurus as well as the Gurbani. After this he went to Kashi to learn Sanskrit scripatures. He visted many places in Himachal Pardesh and Punjab for the expention of Sikhism. On the demand of local people, he constructed the Nirmal Kutiya Adampur. This building had been constructed under the supervision of Sant Santokh Singh (his successor). The ancestor of the family named Kharak Singh Minhas, was in the service of Maharaja Ranjit singh. He had been assigned to collect tax(*Mamala*) from the villages surrounding of Damunda. His descendent Jitender J Minhas is running a social welfare society called “ Sant Vatan Singh ate Lambardar Bhagwant Singh Minhas Trust Damunda Adampur. Besides this Jitender J. Minhas is also playing a dynamic role of International Advisor and Donner to Sant Baba Bhag Singh University. J.J. Minhas is truly following the Nirmala Sant Watan Singh and Sant Baba Malkeet Singh. But it is really disturbing that after Sant Baba Santokh Singh, The Nirmal Kutiya Adampur could not perform well. Sant Tarsem Singh is the present head, but the succeeding of Sant Baba Watan Singh in thr same style is missing.

Dera Lakhn Ke Padde

This dera was founded by Sant Sarwag Singh, a follower of Sant Ram Singh(Moosawala).⁵⁴ He promoted Sikhism and the love for the Gurbani. His follower Sant Prem Singh created a history by following his master’s teaching. His follower Giani Harijanak Singh and Mahant Avinash Singh were great orater and narrator of the Gurbani. In short this dera has impressively contributed to the Nirmala Sect.

⁵⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1020.

Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal



Figure 3.18 Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal

Balbir Singh Seechewal was born on 2nd February 1962, in a Sikh, agricultural family in Seechewal in Jalandhar district in Punjab, India to Chanan Singh and Chanan Kaur.⁵⁵ He received his higher education from DAV college Nakodar. But he put on saffron robes in 1981 after dropping out of college. He started to serve his Guru Sant Baba Avtar Singh. He began his mission during the 1990s, a couple of years after he was appointed head of Nirmal Kuteya - a sect which propagates the oneness of Nirankar (formless) God - following the death of his guru Avtar Singh. He was twice selected as a *sarpanch* of Seechewal. Balbir Singh Seechewal is the Nirmala Sikh who commanded an anti-river pollution crusade in Punjab, India.⁵⁶ By combining his assiduously cultivated self-help philosophy with the environmental essence of the *Gurbani*, he has resurrected the 110-miles long Kali

⁵⁵ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/environmentalist-baba-seechewal-gets-padma-shri-4492006/>

⁵⁶ Interview of Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal with Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021 at Nirmal Kutiya Sultanpur Lodhi. For details refer to Appendix No.6.



Bein rivulet.⁵⁷ He received the Indian civilian award Padmashri in 2017.⁵⁸ He is also known as *Eco Baba*.^{59,60}

Kali Bein, a 99-mile-long (160 km) river, is considered sacred by the state's majority Sikh population. However, over the past couple of decades, it was reduced to a filthy drain into which six towns and more than 40 villages emptied their waste. As a result, parts of the river dried up, leaving neighboring farmlands parched. Its polluted waters also seeped underground, contaminating the groundwater and causing lethal diseases.

In 2000, Seechewal, a Sikh holy man, set out to clean up this mess. Drawing on the Sikh tradition of *kar sewa* (voluntary service) he and his followers educated the masses and trained for river purification and water treatment.⁶¹ Seechewal launched a public-awareness campaign to encourage villagers to dispose of their sewage elsewhere. Some villages revived traditional methods of waste disposal and treatment, and farmers lined up for a share of the treated water. A government order to divert water from a nearby canal was eventually obtained. As the riverbed was cleared, natural springs revived, and the river began to fill up. Since then, trees have been planted along its banks and fishing has been banned to preserve biodiversity.

Widely popular as "Eco-Baba" and "Welfare Baba" in India and abroad, Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal has multiple achievements to his credit in environmental conservation, social reform, and extension of education and economic development of backward areas of Punjab. His work in all these fields is of gigantic dimensions, generally beyond the capacity of individuals or even organizations.

One more important offshoot of this *kar sewa* has been the formation of the Holy Bein Project Committee, a joint venture of Punjab Govt. and Sant Seechewal to

⁵⁷ Madhur Singh (24th September 2008). "Balbir Singh Seechewal – Heroes of the Environment 2008 – TIME". Content.time.com. Retrieved 8th April 2017.

⁵⁸ Punjab's green crusader: Punjab's green crusader Balbir Singh Seechewal gets Padma Shri | Chandigarh News". The Times of India. 26th January 2017. Retrieved 8th April 2017

⁵⁹ Poulomi Das (11th April 2016). "Meet Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, the baba who single-handedly cleaned a 160-km long river in Punjab | Business Insider India". Businessinsider.in. Retrieved 8th April 2017.

⁶⁰ "Seechewal model for clean Ganga." Tribuneindia.com. 31st January 2016. Retrieved 8th April 2017.

⁶¹ Jasbir Singh (2020), *Bein da Saputtar*, Twenty First Century Publications Patiala, pp.32-49.



make the river totally pollution-free by making alternative arrangements for the sewage waters of villages and towns in Doaba on the pattern of Sant Seechewal's recommendations. It is a unique synergy mission in which the Punjab govt. provides funds, and manual labor is offered voluntarily by the public under the leadership of Sant Seechewal. Convinced by the originality of Sant Seechewal's eco-friendly model of development, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, came twice (in April 2006 and July 2008) to visit the historical city of Sultanpur Lodhi (in Kapurthala district), one of the main sites of kar sewa of Kali Bein river. In his about 37 national and international speeches, he praised Sant Seeecheal's kar sewa as a role model for the nation. He counted it as one of the nine most outstanding achievements of India. Applauding Sant Seechewal's work as a "Noble Mission," he extended an invitation to Sant Ji to lead a similar campaign for the renovation of the utterly polluted Jamuna river.

Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal has been able to do wonders with the cooperation of the masses, for whom he has become an immense source of inspiration. His religious appeal also leads people to the service of suffering humanity and conservation of the environment. For him, religion is nothing if it does not include service to humanity. He has given a new humanitarian interpretation to the *kar sewa* concept. People follow his clarion call to save the environment with religious faith and devotion.

To awaken the people for the protection of natural waters sources, Sant Seechewal led an Inter-State Awareness March (in Punjab and Rajasthan) in 2009, in which a large number of people marched along the rivers of Punjab and Rajasthan Canal to make the people aware of the causes of water pollution and solution to the problem. In 2008 and 2011, he organized a large mass movement to make pollution-free the utterly polluted Kala Sanghia drain of Jalandhar.

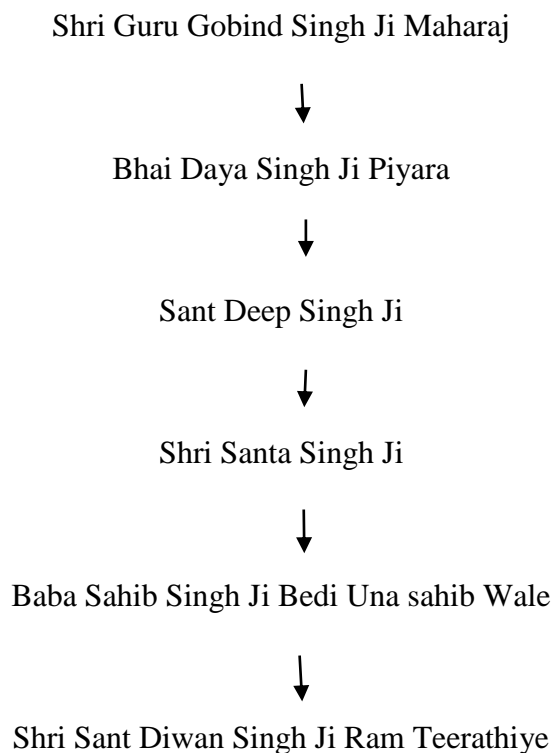
Intending to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance, superstition, poverty, and atrocities against women, he has established schools, technical centers, and degree colleges in different places (Seechewal, Talwandi Madho, Sultanpur Lodhi, etc.). In "Nawan Nankana Charitable School Sultanpur Lodhi," the students of the poor sections of society are provided books, uniforms, and stationery free of cost. Often



remembered as "Baba of Roads," Sant Seechewal has built thousands of km of roads in backward areas, which has set in a new era of faster economic and social development in this area. Thus Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal has brought massive ecological, religious, and educational changes to the Doaba region. Worldwide reputation of Sant Seechewal as a spiritual environmentalist has provided him a distinctive acknowledgment and salutation in the Nirmala sect.

Sampardaya Ram Teerath:

Both Sampardaya Ram Teerath and Sampardaya Naurangabad have shot up from one shoot that is Shri Man Baba Sahib Singh ji Bedi (Una Sahib Wale)⁶². Sant Bhag Singh Kuri wale and Sant Diwan Singh, these two saints, were the followers of Sant Baba Sahib Singh ji. Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad was the disciple of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Kuri Wale; he further established Nauarangabad Sect.



Sant Diwan Singh did great meditation and kept on moving from one place to another to spread the light of Sikhism in farfetched areas. Sant Diwan Singh was to take rest at Ram Teerath after his long pilgrimage with the team of various saints. Henceforth he had been called Ram Teerthiye. His main disciples were Sant

⁶² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.414.



Hameer Singh, Sant Nihal Singh, Sant Heera Singh, Sant Jawahar Singh, Sant Dal Singh ji Barsane Wale and Sant Bodh Singh Ji Kaashi Wale. He appointed Sant Gulab Singh his successor and departed mortal world. Sant Gulab Singh made his dera at Daffarwal. He was a pious saint. His followers created history. His followers were Sant Gulab Singh, Mahant Ameer Singh Sarurh, Mahant Wariyam Singh, Mahant Tahal Singh and Sant Sewa Singh. The Nirmal Maha Vidayla of Sanskrit of Sangat Loahri Tola Kashi belongs to this dera.⁶³ The deras of Peer di Sain, Mabharh and Daffarwal (district Gurdaspur) are the offshoots of this dera.

Dera Harshi:

Mahant Jai Singh founded this dera in Chanaurha Distt. Hoshiarpur.⁶⁴ He was a disciple of Mahant Dewa Singh. He spent some time with his Guru in Dera Dhali and Mastgarh. He had two disciples named Sant Ram Singh and Sant Daya Singh. He appointed Sant Ram Singh his descendent and left the mortal world. Sant Amreek Singh has added the glory of this dera abundantly by conducting various social welfare activities. Sant Harmeet Singh is the current head of the dera.

Dera Nirmaliyan village Dhalli (Hoshiarpur):

This dera was founded by Mahant Ram Singh.⁶⁵ After him Sant Jawala Singh ji spread Gurmat in this area. Mahant Hawel Singh Ji presently running this dera. He has renovated the *Gurudwara* and made multiple purpose accommodations and all other necessary arrangements like tube well etc., for Dera. Mahant Hawel Singh was the disciple of Mahant Batan, who received spiritual knowledge from Dada Guru Mahant Daya Singh. He learned Ayurveda and spent some time in the company of Sant Ram Singh at Mani Chaunk Amritsar. He is very intelligent and policy efficient. Usually, he is called for public discourse in many religious assemblies at Allahabad and Patna Sahib, etc. Presently he is also observing the organization of Dera Nirmalkot. He is a renowned *Vaidya* (doctor) too.

⁶³ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samparadaya*, p. 82.

⁶⁴ *Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.547-548.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp.956-957.

Dharamshala Joriyan Dhavan Dera Gurusar Khudda:



Figure 3.19 Dharamshala Joriyan Dhavan Dera Gurusar Khudda:

Dera Khuda is a very splendid dera of the Doaba region in the village Khudda Distt Hoshiarpur. Sant Boota Singh had propelled it. He was of spiritual inclination from the beginning. He went to Mastgarh to see Thakur Mohar Singh and beseeched for *Guru Mantra* (root verse given by lord master). After giving *Guru Mantra*, Guru ordered the regular practice. So he practiced *Guru Mantra* as per the orders of his Guru. But after some time, he thought of getting *Braham Vidiya* (divine knowledge) and went to Pandit Tara Singh of TaranTaran. He did a thorough study of *Gurmat*, *Gurbani*, and *Vedanta* for years. Then he went on the pilgrimage to holy cities of all of India. After returning to his *Guru* back at Mastgarh, he again started practicing *Naam* (reminiscence of God) and *Gurbani*. His Guru got pleased with him and asked him to do strict penance at Khudda, where he once had carried out. Present head of dera Guru Sar Khudda is Sant Teja Singh.⁶⁶ Sant Teja Singh is a great scholar with a versatile personality. He had served Nirmal Mahamandal as secretary for about 24 years.⁶⁷ He has been serving

⁶⁶ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.962.

⁶⁷ Sant Teja Singh (2018), "Nirmal Gyan Kosh" Dera Gurusar Khudda.

Nirmala Mahamandal as President since 2013. He has promoted Nirmala philosophy in America, Canada, Norway, and UAE. He is a resourceful speaker of the Gurbani on D.D. Punjabi and in numerous seminars of various universities. He is running Mahant Lal Singh School in the vicinity of the dera. In the literary world, his contribution is quite laudable. He distributes free literature to interested learners. Presently, many of Mahant Ganesha's rare books are being edited by him.⁶⁸ He is determined to republish Encouragement to sports, contributing to the marriages of poor girls, and saving youth *from* drugs by inspiring youth for baptism are a few deeds owed to him. He is also running a gurukul in the dera and teaches *Vichar Mala, Adhiyatam Parkash, Viarag Shatak, Parbodh Chander Natak and Panch Dasi, etc.*, and various vital books of the Nirmala

Dera Premsar Barhiyan Kalan:



Figure 3.20 Dera Premsar Barhiyan Kalan

Dera Premsar Barhiyan Kalan is another vital dera of Nirmala sect. Pandit Sadhu Singh, who founded this dera, was the disciple of Sant Chet Singh (Sant Chet Singh was the follower of Sant Mall Singh Pandori Nijjaran).⁶⁹ He served the dera

⁶⁸ Interview with Sant Teja Singh, conducted by Sarla Niranakri on 31st December 2021, at Dharamshala Joriyan Dhavan Dera Gurusar Khudda, Hoshairpur. For details Appendix II.

⁶⁹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.994.

even in his critical sickness and died while performing all his duties sincerely. His main disciples were Sant Prem Singh, Pandit Ishar Singh, and Sant Mehar Singh. Sant Prem Singh was appointed as his disciple. Sant Prem Singh was born in Nadiala (Hoshiarpur). He served the dera quite dedicatedly. Sant Dalip Singh, Sant Hari Singh, and Pandit Narayan Singh Kaashi Wale were his leading followers. Mahant Dalip Singh was born in village Sarhala in Hoshiarpur. He was a well-known doctor. In summers, many saints lived in his dera. He used to serve with mangoes and medicines. His next descendant was Doctor Payara Singh. He remained member of Nirmala MahaMandal and secretary of Doaba Nirmal Mandal. Sant Bikar Singh, Mahant Amar Singh, and Sant Pritam Singh were the other shining stars of the dera. These days Sant Mohinder Singh is the head of this dera.

Nirmal Kutiya Sant Baba Jawala Singh (Jian Wale) Padhiana Jalandhar



Figure 3.21 Nirmal Kutiya Sant Baba Jawala Singh (Jian Wale) Padhiana Jalandhar



Sant Baba Amrik Singh⁷⁰ narrated his devotional journey in a very passionate way. Sant Baba Amreek Singh recounted the establishment of this dera. He told the investigator that his native village was Lutera. He was highly impressed by the personality of Sant Baba Bhag Singh of Santpura Manko. As this saint usually visited the family of Amreek Singh. Amreek Singh went to meet him at Manko. At a very tender age, he did not know the way to express himself. He called Sant Baba Bhag Singh a *sadhu* (saint). He directly went to his room and bade *Sat Shri Akal* (a way of greeting in Sikhism). His kiddish defiance pleased Sant Baba Bhag Singh and blessed him with true devotion. Sant Baba Amreek Singh said that he was born and brought up in Pakistan Miyan Channo 18 Chakk. His parents, S.Hansa Singh's mother, Mata Niranjana Kaur, were great and enlightened souls. His grandfather S. Chattar Singh had a close relationship with Nirmala deras and saints. Sant Amreek Singh migrated to Padhiana with his parents after the partition of 1947. Being a spiritual soul, he got in touch with Giani Bawa Singh. This saint was a good orator. He used to deliver the discourse at Borhe Khoo. Once after hearing the treatise of Krishna Avtaar of this saint, young Amreek decided to renounce this world and lead a life of a recluse. He went to Jian (dera of Sant Baba Harnam Singh) and found the able supervision of Sant Baba Jawala Singh, who was a staunch follower of Sant Baba Hari Singh of Kharagpur. He was impressed with the devotion of the saints. From 1959 to 1986, he stayed in this dera and learned a lot. In 1986, he was sent to dera Kaharpur, but he did not stay there for personal reasons. After this, he was sent to Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh model town Hoshiarpur, but he left this place and returned to Padhiana. He established the Nirmal Kutiya on the outskirts of the village Padhiana. In Padhiana, he had an adamant time in the beginning. He had an associate named Baba Gian Singh from Rampur Jhanjo near Jaijon. He was called Manji. He was a cook, but he fully supported Sant Amreek Singh. For about three and half years, they lived on the leaves only. However, progressively, their devotion proved accurate, and Ishar Singh, Harbans Singh, and Jeet Singh from Hoshiarpur visited him and paid obeisance. After observing the starving conditions, they informed Sant Amreek Singh's elder brother and also voluntarily donated a

⁷⁰Interview with Sant Baba Amreek Singh of Nirmal Kutiya Sant Baba Jawala Singh (Jian Wale) conducted on 28th December 2021 by Sarla Nirankari, at Padhiana Jalandhar.



few edible items to these two devotees. Nevertheless, now, this dera is fully developed and engaged in the betterment of society.

Sant Amreek Singh shared his vies about Sant Baba Bhag Singh enthusiastically. He narrated that Sant Baba Bhag Singh belonged to the village Kaindowal. Once, he went to Chamdeli village near Mahilpur to get minced flour. On the way, he saw Sant Baba Hari Singh riding on a horse. The personality of Sant Baba Bhag Singh was quite eye-catching and unforeseen. The young Bhag Singh got scared. He hid in the bushes. When Sant Baba Hari Singh came near to him, young Bhag Singh wished *Sat Shri Akal* (A way of greeting in Sikhism) after catching his eyes. Sant Baba Hari Singh loudly said, "May Lord Master(Guru) bless you," and asked, "what is your name, son?" Young Bhag Singh replied, "Bhulla." Sant baba Hari Singh asked, "Why had you forgotten(*bhulla*) the way. Tread on the right way." Bhag Singh recounted the whole story to his mother. His mother took him to Sant baba Hari Singh and dedicated her son to him. After baptism, he was named Bhag Singh. Young Bhag Singh was educated and rained by Sant Baba Hari Singh fully well. After receiving knowledge, he came to Ghurhiyal and started meditation in the graveyard. He also visited Padhiana and started doing spiritual musing there. But Sant Inder Singh took him and made him settle in his land at Maanko, where he finally got settled. He had ample examples of the generosity, love, and kindness of Sant Baba Bhag Singh. Like other saints of the Nirmala Sect, he is busy with the spread of Sikhism and the learning and teaching of the Gurbani, distribution of free medicines, and education to the masses.

Nirmal Kutiya Daroli Khurad:



Figure 3.22 **Nirmal Kutiya Daroli Khurad:**

Dera Daroli Khurad is a noticeable dera of the Nirmala Sect. Sant Giani Lal Singh the founder of this dera, was born in Pandorri Nijjaran⁷¹. He became the disciple of Sant Daya Singh at the age of 24 years. After having strict disciplinary education and service to his master, he became the Mandaleshwar of Nirmal Bhekh. He usually had about 40-50 students at a time. Once he came to Daroli Khurd with his team, local people compelled him to stay here. He initiated Gurudwara in 1882 and a taxal too. He disseminated spiritual education for many years and died in 1923 at the age of 70 years. Sant Lachhman Singh Yati became head Mahant of dera after him. He had joined the dera in 1892. He had a good influence over the congregations of the area. He left this mortal world in 1959, and Sant Dalip Singh followed crown of this dera. He took care of the dera till 1970.⁷² After his sad

⁷¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1000.

⁷²Telephonic Interview with Baba Kashmir Singh of Daroli on 21st June 2022 at Khiala by Sarla Nirankari. .



demise in 1970, the dera remained without any chief Mahant till 1978. In 1978 the nephew of Sant Baba Lal Singh named Sant Darshan Singh took over the headship of the dera. He controlled the religious and administrative affairs of the dera till 23rd September 2006. In fact, the dera had been reinstated by Mahant Darshan Singh. Sant Kashmir Singh descended him. Sant Baba Kashmir Singh was born on 1948. He is the master of naturopathy. He has also got traing from the International Naturopathy Organisation. He is agreat expert of reiki also.

Kutiya Damunda:

Sant Inder Singh founded this dera. He was the follower of Sant Giani Lal singh of Daroli Khurad. Masses appraise him a benevolent, virtuous and scholastic saint. After him, Sant Karam Singh became the head of the dera. His love for humanity, consistency for the following of Sikhism and empirical living were unbelievable. Sant Manmohan followed Sant Karam Singh. Presently Sant Har Bhajan is leading the dera proficiently. Singh Santokh Singh of Adampur is managing the responsibility of care of this dera.⁷³

Dera Seengari Wala:

Dera Seengari Wala is another important dera of Doaba. Sant Heera Singh was born and brought in Seengari Wala Distt Hoshiarpur; he remained involved in home affairs till a long age. Sant Daya Singh came to the village and preached a meaningful discourse that deeply impressed Sant Heera Singh⁷⁴. For many years together, he served his *Guru* seriously and did a depth study of Sikhism and *Gurbani*. He was a beautiful orator who could entice the audience for hours together. He had great series of learned disciples just as: Sant Baba Jaswant Singh Ramdass Wale, Sant Ram Singh Damunda, Sant Sunder Singh Masaniya, Sant Ganga Singh Hazara, Sant Narayan Singh Lahili (Chhoti), Sant Bhag Singh Pandori, Sant Ladha Singh, Sant Haqim Singh, Sant Tara Singh Lahor, Sant Variyam Singh, Sant Vishawa Singh, But Thakur Singh was selected as his heir to this dera. Presently Sant Harman Jeet Singh is heading the dera.

⁷³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1001.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.1002.

Nirmal Takhat Ramdaas:



Figure 3.23 Nirmal Takhat Ramdaas:

Nirmal Takhat Ramdaas is one of the famous deras of Doaba. It was founded by Sant Jaswant, who was the disciple of Sant Heera Singh(dera Seengari).⁷⁵ He met Braham Giani Sant Baba Heera Singh through Sant Ganga Singh. Sant Heera Singh was dexterous in palmistry, and he predicted that Sant Jaswant would become a great saint one day, and his glory would increase plenteously. And this prophecy became a word to word true. He kept on practicing the *Naam Mantra* (root verse) given by his *Guru*. Finally, he left his job as a police and came to 'Jhanda Ramdas'. He did hard meditation for nine months at the holy tomb (*smadh*) of Baba Budha. Inspired by the dream, he alone started the campaign for the cleanliness of its well (*Bouley*). Mahant Raghubir Singh and Sant Sunain Singh were renovating the main *Gurudwara sahib* at that time. They appreciated the efforts of Sant Jaswant Singh and finally handed over the place to him. He

⁷⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1003.



dedicatedly served the place and uplifted the dera. After making a lot of wonderful contributions to Bhakti (devotion), he left this mortal world on 24th June 1973. But before his heavenly expedition, he appointed Sant Bhajan Singh as his successor. Numerous branches are functional of dera Ramdaas⁷⁶ are just as:

- Atam Darsi Harimandir Dakoha
- Babe da Bagh Karhal Khera Dena Kapurthla
- Dukh Niwaran Bishanpuri Bilaspur Distt Rampur (UP)
- Nawab Ganjkhera UP, Hisaar, Neelokheri and Railo Majara Chandigarh etc.

Dera Susan:

Mahant Basant Singh was the founder of this dera. He was the follower of Giani Lal Singh of Daroli Khurad. He remained in the service of the service of Sant Gurditt Singh. He was a great saint of filial nature. He was a famous scholar of the Nirmala Sect. He had special predisposition towards the *sadhu-samaz* (faction of saints).⁷⁷

Dera Pathlawa (Nawanshahr):

Dera Pathlawa is a significant dera of Nawanshahr.⁷⁸ This was launched by Sant Khajan Singh, a disciple of Sant Sham Singh (Sampardaya Kuberiye). The next successor Sant Ghanayia Singh was born and brought to Pathlawa (Nawanshahr). He increased the prestige of dera by expanding and enriching it with traditional spiritual ideals. He had a good lineage of followers like Sant Genda Singh, Sant Jaimal Singh, Sant Rattan Singh Soni, Sant Mehar Singh 'Ramta', Sant Tara Singh, Giani Jaswant Singh, Giani Khem Singh, Sant Hari Singh Sujjon, Sant Karam Singh Langhroya, etc. But he was succeeded by Sant Kartar Singh. Sant Kartar Singh was followed by Mahant Gurbachan. Mahant Onkar Singh from Sattari was appointed Mahant after him. He is a renowned orator of the Nirmala Sect. He took

⁷⁶ *Ibid*,1006.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*. 1002.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.p.1008.

initiative to reinstate Shri Anandpur Sahib as an city of memoirs of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh with other saints.⁷⁹

Nirmal Kutiya Arjun Nagar Railway Station Road Jalandhar



Figure 3.24 Nirmal Kutiya Arjun Nagar Railway Station Road Jalandhar

The Nirmal Kutiya Arjun Nagar Railway Station Road is one of the most influential deras of the Nirmala sect in Jalandhar. It was launched in 1953 by Sant Baba Darshan.⁸⁰ His follower Sant baba Bakhshish Singh was left in Pakistan at the time of partition. At first, Sant baba Darshan Singh got settled in Kartarpur. But afterward he shifted to Jalandhar. A Nirmala saint Sant Uttam Singh at the time of

⁷⁹ Interview with Sant Gurbachan Singh and followers of Dera Pathlawa on 7th November 2022. For details, see Appendix VII.

⁸⁰ Interview with Sant Baba Gurvinder Singh was conducted on 5th November 2021 by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Kutiya Arjun Nagar Railway Station Road Jalandhar.



the partition of Punjab was murdered by the offenders. Thus the dera had also endured the pains of partition.

On the 25th of September, 2006 Baba Darshan Singh died. Sant Baba Bakhshish Singh also died on the 24th of March 2008. Sant Gurinder Pal Singh came to Nirmal Kutiyā Jalandhar. He attained Gurmat *Sangeet Vidya* from Shaheed Sikh Missionary College Amritsar and Music Pracheen Kala Mandir. He launched the music academy. He was formally declared the chief priest of Nirmal Kutiyā on the 12th of March 2004 by Sant Baba Darshan Singh. In this academy, the students are taught about 4-5 hours daily with special emphasis on 31 Ragas on Guru Granth Sahib. They get certificates from Punjabi University Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar. A building of the academy was inaugurated on the 12th of March 2018. The total dedication towards the Nirmala sect is the salient feature of this dera. This dera is incessantly contributing in the up-gradation of the masses through spiritual teachings as well as music education. This dera is worldly renowned for *Gurmat Sammelan* (Religious Congregations). The birthdays of *Gurus* (incarnations) are celebrated with great pomp and zeal. Worldwide Sikh followers are attached to this dera. It is imperative to mention here that this dera has successfully organized medical camps since 2004 every year.⁸¹ The social and religious contributions of the dera are quite praiseworthy. Sant Gurvinder Singh acknowledged that self-assertion is the absolute way to devotion (*bhakty*). He opined that one should first rule oneself. If self-ruling is governed and the self is conquered the whole world is subjugated. Henceforth, he mainly focusses on his academy and devotional projects at the dera only. Gurusar Khuda Kurala is interconnected with this dera. The intellectual exchange with other deras make this dera peculiar. The dera stalwartly is inclined to act upon the lessons of ten Gurus. To abolish superstitions, criticize idol worshipping, abstain from selfishness, and eradicate self-imposed religious intractability are the basic principles of the dera.

⁸¹ Interview with Sant Baba Gurvinder Singh was conducted on 5th November 2021 by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Kutiyā Arjun Nagar Railway Station Road Jalandhar.

Nirmal Kutiya Pandori Nijjaran:



Figure 3.25 Nirmal Kutiya Pandori Nijjaran

Pandori Nijjaran Samardaya is considered one of the most active and legendary shoots of the Nirmala sect.⁸² The legacy is that Sant Sewa Singh had been blessed with saffron clothes by Guru Gobind Singh. Sewa Singh was followed by his two disciples i.e. Sant Hameer Singh and Sant Milap Singh. Sant Diwan Singh was the disciple of Sant Milap Singh. Sant Diwan Singh had two disciples. Thakur Sant Gurmukh Singh started Smaprdaya Gurmukh Singh, and the other one was Sant Mastan Singh of Lahor (Gumti Bajar). Sant Mastaan Singh had two disciples, Sant Ram Singh and Sant Mall Singh, who launched Dera Pandori Nijjaran. Sant Mall Singh was born at Barhundi in Distt. Ludhiana to S. Mehtaab Singh. At the age of twenty, he joined the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was often honoured by the king, but he was deeply inclined towards religion and God's reminiscence. Once during his visit to Lahore (Gumti Bajar), he met Sant Mastaan Singh. He got inner peace and decided to stay in his company only. After a long time, Sant Mastaan Singh appointed him as his disciple by bestowing him *Guru Mantra*. He mainly performed three duties like service to humanity, reminiscence of God (*Naam*), and outspreading divine and worldly knowledge. After having pilgrimage

⁸² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.986.



to many places like Amritsar, Taran Taran, Khadoor Sahib, Goindwal, Sussan, and Dhillawan, he finally stayed on the outskirts of village Pandorri Nijjaran.⁸³ People of surrounding areas and Pandori Nijjaran were quite influenced by his devotion and dedication towards the *Gurbani* and Sikhism. They respect him from their core hearts. Following mentioned were his disciples: Mahant Gurditt Singh, Sant Veer Singh, Sant Ram Singh, Sant Bahadur Singh, Sant Amar Singh, Sant Bishan Singh, Sant Dewa Singh, Sant Charhat Singh, Pandit Chet Singh, Sant Khadag Singh, Baba Sant Mansoor Singh, Sant Sohan Singh, and Sant Karam Singh. He appointed his successor Sant Gurdit Singh. Mahant Gurditt proves a great inherent of Sant Mall Singh. He wrote many books which are contributing profusely to the literary world. He had numerous disciples like Pandit Ram Singh, Pandit Gulab Singh, Sant Attar Singh, Sant Ram Singh, Sant Visakha Singh, Sant Amar Singh, Sant Harnam Singh, Sant Kehar Singh Kaarbaari, Sant Mohar Singh and Sant Haqim Singh, etc. In 1930 he won the case against Akalis for Nirmala sect *Gurudwara* and erected a beautiful dera over there.⁸⁴ Similarly, he bought land in Anandpur Sahib and built attractive places there too. Mahant Amolak Singh, Giani Sunder Katha Wale, and Braham Giani Shri Sant Bibi Charan Kaur ji were the other shining stars connected to Dera Pandori Nijjaran.

Nirmal Kutिया Pandori Nijjaran is one of the primogenital Nirmal deras of doaba region. Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh, the present head of the dera is a prominent saint of Nirmal Sect. On personal visit to Pandori Nijjaran, the investigator found very interesting details from the chief Mahant. He told about the sanctity of the Nirmala sect in detail. The chief Mahant said that the dera has an incredible legacy as its founder, i.e., Sant Baba Sewa Singh was contemporary of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh.⁸⁵ Later the dera was headed by Sant Milap Singh, Sant Baba Diwan Singh, and Sant Baba Mastaan Singh. Maharaja Ranjeet Singh had a particular affinity with Baba Sahib Singh Una Wale and Baba Mastaan Singh. Under the influence of Sant Baba Mastaan Singh, a soldier named Baba Mall Singh resigned

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.987.

⁸⁴ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.82.

⁸⁵ Interview with Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh the Chief Priest Nirmal Kutिया Pandori Nijjaran, conducted on 6th November 2021, by Sarla Nirankari, at Nirmal Kutिया Pandori Nijjaran, Jalandhar.



and started doing Bhakti (devotion) and acting upon the teachings of his Guru. He selected the Lakhan ke Padde area and was determined to eradicate the darkness and narrowmindedness from the hearts and minds of the people of this marshy land. His dedication to Sikhism and the faithful following of the Guru's teaching also changed the Muslim community's mindset. It was because of him that numerous people got baptized. In 1833 Baba Mall Singh visited Pandori Nijjaran. Sant Baba Gurditt Singh, Baba Ran Singh, and Baba Sujan Singh were the subsequent heads of the dera. In 1919 when Gurudwara Act was passed, the Pandori Nijjaran dera faced litigation of ownership. Sant Baba Ram Singh won the case in 1933. He married his Chela disciple Sant Sujan Singh with a granddaughter of a devotee named Bibi Charan Kaur. Another disciple Bibi Charan Kaur went to Rajgir Nalanda. Sant Sujan Singh headed the dera from 1951 to 1970. Sant baba Sujan Singh was famous for Ajay Paath of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. From 5th September 1970 to 15th August 2020, Sant Amolak Singh served as the chief Mahant of the dera. Sant Amolak had two sons named Sant Narinderjit Singh and Sant Surenderjit Singh. Sant Narinderjit has no issue, but Sant Surenderjit has two sons and one daughter. Sant Narinderjit Singh is running a free dispensary. He is the president of Nirmala Doaba Mandal. Europathy has become a *Sidh pathy* (proved way of treatment) of this dera. Before 1965 Doaba, local practitioners used to give medicines but the certificate course in Ayurveda became compulsory. Henceforth the saints of the dera got the required qualifications and education in medicine and are successfully providing medical services to the masses. Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh told the following features of the Nirmala Sect. The specific knowledge of astrology is the glaring feature of this dera. *Santheya* i.e. teaching of the *Gurbani* is the blatant virtue of the dera. The correct way of teaching the *Guru Granth Sahib* with personal and actual pronunciation is the main emphasis of the dera. Sant Amolak Singh was a dexterous musician who had developed many ragas. He is a renowned composer of the Nirmala sect. Another asset of the dera is that it has expanded Sikhism through the handwritten script of the Adi Granth. In old times the scripture was quite rare, but the dera overwhelmed this deficiency by



providing a handwritten facsimile of the *Adi Granth*. This dera has flourished *Rahit Maryada* in the area.⁸⁶ It opines:

- Nirmala saints are learned and scholarly people.
- These saints wear peach (*Bhagwan*) robes.
- They are the true caretakers of the *Gurbani*.
- This sect believes that the soul is part of the super soul, but it has to become one with hard meditation under the supervision of the Guru.
- This sect includes both moderator and extremist types of saints in it.
- To impart religious instruction is the primary duty of the dera.
- Spirituality is the main course of all christened Nirmalas.
- This sect gives no place for the caste system.
- Sadhus of the sect are always concerned with finding ways to proliferate Sikhism.
- The sect is ever ready for social and local support to back royal patronage of Sikhism.

Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh emphasized the history and legacy of the Nirmala sect. He is enthusiastically serving the humanity by both medication and meditation. Rarest of the rare fact is that his brother and his family are accredited medical practitioner in this diffident region.

Dera Sant Narayan Singh Wala:

This was launched by the second disciple of Sant Onkar Singh, Patlawala i.e., Mahant Mohan Singh, in the village of Khera Hoshiarpur.⁸⁷ He also built a dera named Kartargarh in the blessed memory of his master at Mehatpur near Balachaur. Further, Sant Gurmail Singh led the dera.

Dera Santgarh Blachaur:

Dera Santgarh Blachaur is a great dera. Sant Tara Singh (disciple Sant Baba Ghaniya)⁸⁸ launched this dera at Blachaur. He had also built a dera in Anandpur Sahib. He died at the age of 98 in 1997. These days, his follower Sant Maan Singh

⁸⁶ Interview with Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh the Chief Priest Nirmal Kutiyia Pandori Nijjaran, conducted on 6th November 2021, by Sarla Nirankari, at Nirmal Kutiyia Pandori Nijjaran, Jalandhar.,

⁸⁷ *Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1010.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.1010.

is leading the dera efficiently. He had a keen inclination for music and particularly in playing Sitar.

Chitti Kutiya Langrhoya:

Chitti Kutiya langrhoya is another prestigious Nirmala centre. Sant Karam Singh lived in Langrhoya village⁸⁹, followed by Mahant Pratap Singh Vaidya famous doctor. He learned Ayurvedic knowledge from Mahant Gurdev Singh Singhri wala. He further learned Ayurveda from Sant Surjan Singh of Pandori Nijjaran. His specialization helped the masses to lead healthy and happy life. Additionally, the locality adored his spiritual guidance.

Nirmal Dera Santpura Loyalpuri Nakodar Road Jalandhar city.



Figure 3.26 Nirmal Dera Santpura Loyalpuri Nakodar Road Jalandhar city.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p.1014.



This dera was founded by Sant Baba Harnam Singh Loyal Puri. He was a follower and disciple of Sant Baba Badan Singh Loyalpuri.⁹⁰ Sant Baba Harnam Singh headed the dera from 1954 to 1964. After him, Sant Baba Heera Singh supervised Dera successfully. He had two followers named Sant Baba Raghubir Singh (who led a Nirmal dera in Haridwar) after him; Sant Mohinder Singh and Sant Baba Jagjit Singh headed this dera. The other follower was Sant Baba Amarjit Singh, who led the Nirmal dera Jalandhar from 1964 to 1992. He crowned Sant Baba Ranjit Singh as the head of the dera in 1992. But Sant Amarjit Singh died on the 11th of October 2011. His follower Sant Baba Ranjeet Singh is leading the dera very magnificently by following the teachings of Nirmala Sampardaya in the true sense.

Sant Baba Ranjit Singh continuously guides the youth by involving them in social and culturally conducive endeavors. The youth is incessantly engaged in the various activities of the dera. Every year on the 11th of October, the dera celebrates the death anniversary of Sant Baba Amarjit Singh with great zeal and enthusiasm. On every *Sangrad*, the dera celebrates congregation and mass cooking on a large scale. On *Guru Poornima*, the dera moves in a ceremonial succession with the band at 2 a.m. in every year. The different *raagi jathas* (troops of holy singers) come to contribute to the holy congregation. As per the dialogue with the head of the dera, the *Attam Ras* (the entertainment of the soul) is created in such congregations.⁹¹

The head of the dera wishes that everyone should follow the pearls of wisdom and lessons of the Gurus. He opined that let our hearts not be locked with the lockdown.⁹² He suggested the followers follow the way of Bhakti and true devotion even after fulfilling the core responsibilities. He further suggested attaining the superposition of *Sahaj Bhakti* (spontaneous, natural, and connate devotion) through

⁹⁰ Interview with Sant Baba Amarjit Singh of Nirmal Dera Santpura Loyalpuri Nakodar Road Jalandhar city, conducted on 25th December 2021, by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Dera Santpura Loyalpuri Nakodar Road, Jalandhar.

⁹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/people/Dera-Nirmal-Sant-Pura-Lyalpuri-Nakodar-Road-Jalandhar-City/100063704957852/>

⁹² <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2763422660632810&set=ecnf.100063704957852>

continuous spiritual efforts. It can be concluded that the dera Santpura Loyalpuri Nakodar road is committed to inflate the teachings of the ten Gurus.

Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan Jalandhar



Figure 3.27 **Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan Jalandhar**

On the western side of Jalandhar, there is a village named Nahlan. Dera Jhanda Sahib is located in the western periphery of Nahlan and on the border of Kutlupur village. This dera is 350 years old.⁹³ This place is the epitome of the devotion and sacrifice of Sant Baba Jhanda Singh. This dera was established in the memory of Sant Baba Jhanda Sahib.⁹⁴ After the demise of Guru Gobind Singh, the tyrannies of the Mughals increased against the Sikh community, particularly Hindus in general. The role of Sant Baba Jhanda Singh was very significant. He could not tolerate the atrocities of the Mughal army. He strongly resisted their extortion against girls and women. While fighting for the sake of humanity, he was beheaded by the Mughal army. His head was carried by his pet dog named Kalu to his mother in the village

⁹³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.963.

⁹⁴ Interview with Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh, Chief Priest of Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan Jalandhar, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 26th December 2021 at Village Nahlan Jalandhar.

Nahlan. He was cremated at his holy place of devotion. This place became a pilgrimage by the special efforts of Sant Baba Garib Singh. He served the holy place from 1824 to 1859 AD. Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh described the pedigree of the Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan Jalandhar as follows: Sant Baba Natha Singh from 1859 to 1904, Sant Baba Narayan Singh from 1904 to 1929, Shriman Sant Sadhu Singh from 1929 to 1945, Shriman Sant Kartar Singh from 1945 to 1974, Sant Nahar Singh from 1974 to 1998 and from 17 October 1998 till date Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh has been heading the Nirmal dera Baba Jhanda Sahib. Numerous religious and social projects are routed by Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh which make this dera distinctive from other deras.⁹⁵

Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara



Figure 3.28 Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara

Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara is a renowned center of Sanskrit learning. Mahant Gurvinder Singh the present priest⁹⁶ of this dera the described the history and other datils of Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara Jalandhar. This dera was established in 1929 by Sant Giani Ganga Singh, an eminent scholar, and great yoga practitioner. He inspired many of his followers to self-realization. He died in 1946. This dera had

⁹⁵ For details see Appendix IX.

⁹⁶ Interview with Mahant Gurvinder Singh the Chief priest of Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021 at village Hazara Jalandhar. For detais see Appendix V.



been further headed by Swami Jaswant Singh at village Hazara.⁹⁷ Mahant Mahanga Singh took the lead of dera in 1981 as the third leader. He was a great Ayurvedic doctor and cured sick people. In 2019 he left the immortal world, and Mahant Gurvinder Singh succeeded him.⁹⁸ He benevolently serves the masses by spreading *Gurmat* and the *Gurbani* (Holy verses of *Shri Adi Granth Sahib*). He translated *Sant Gyaneshwari* to Punjabi. He has also translated *Shri Mad Bhagwad Geeta* into Marathi and Punjabi. He is a renowned scholar of Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi Braj, and Punjabi. His cooperating nature, the command over Vedantic philosophy and dedication toward the Nirmala sect has made him a renowned saint. Recently he has been granted with the headship the Nirmala Ashram Nasik in addition to his duties in Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara, Jalandhar.

Some other prominent deras of Pandori Nijjaran are:

Dera village Nawana: It was founded by Sant Hari Singh, who was a follower of Sant Prem Singh. Dera Haripur was founded by Sant Khadag Singh. Dara Johlan was founded by Sant Heera Singh, who was the disciple of Sant Bhagwan Singh. Dera Kala Bakra, Dera Bhagowal, Dera Thakur singh Hoshiarpur Dera Boobgarh, Dera Naryala, Dera Khariyana, Dera Paliwal, Dera Damunda, Dera Sussan, Dera Garhouni, Dera Sant Narayan Singh, Dera Nirmal Santpura village Bohan etc. are other famous deras of Doaba region.

Nirmala Deras are well interconnected and thoroughly linked to the masses. The participation of local people in the religious and social activities of these deras has created miracles in society. Such as Santpura dera Jabbar Manko has become the harbinger of the great university named Sant Baba Bhag Singh University. This university is the only Nirmala university in India. Similarly, Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal has brought life back to the rivers like Kai Bien and Kala Sangha drain of Jalandhar. The most polluted rivulets of the Doaba region. In other words, Nirmala deras have been instrumental in socio-cultural reforms in society. The sturdy structure of deras and local participation of masses in mass movements have saved not only Sikhism but also enthused revolutionary hue in society. It is vital

⁹⁷ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.1014.

⁹⁸ For details see Appendix V.



to mention here that these deras are distinguished for their internal administration. Numerous distinctive features make these deras reasonably different from other sects. The religious sanctity of these deras is thoroughly maintained by the strict discipline. The way of living, the bachelorhood (*Sanyaas*), believe in *Dehdhari Guru* (master living in the body), erecting their *Smadhiya* (mausoleums). Baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), to establish religious places (*Gurudwaras*), foremost importance to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* but equal prominence to *Vedas* and *Puranas* and *Guru- Chela* (teacher-pupil) tradition, etc. are the salient traits of Nirmala deras. The service of humanity, the care of the poor & downtrodden, and the active engagement of youth in various activities are the main initiatives taken by these holy chairs. It is vivaciously admitted here that the Nirmal deras could offer such magnanimous services due to their comprehensive administrative structure. In 1862 Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala, Maharaja Bharpoor Singh Nabha and Maharaja Saroop Singh of Jeend met in Bhavani Garh District Sangrur and they conceded to honor Brahmngiani Baba Mahitab Singh especially for his extraordinary personality, spiritual aura, astonishing self less service and unpredictable service to Sikhism. The proposal of *chaturmasa* (four months' stay) of Brahmngiani Baba Mahitab Singh in Patiala was also passed. The recommendation of Bhavanigarh meeting was principally followed and Sant Baba Mahitab Singh was invited through S. Veer Singh Ahluwalya (duty officer). Sant Baba Mahitab Singh accepted the proposal and visited Patiala with a team of saints and Sant Heera Singh Theekriwala. Maharja Narinder Singh with other two kings of Nabha and Jeend, made Sant Baba Mahitab Singh agreed to formally launch Nirmal Panchayati Akhara. In an all-inclusive meeting of two days the norms of selection of Mahant, section of executive members, rules and regulations of administration of deras and organisation of spiritual fairs like *Kumbha*; were prepared by the committee and approved by Shri Mahant. Maharaja Narender formally announced the foundation day of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara on Dwadshi Veerwar Sammat 1919(1862 CE) and invited all saints and kings of surrounding areas like Nabha, Jeend, Bhadour, Malodh, Fridkot, Chachrolli and Khamano.⁹⁹ Maharaja Narinder Singh with his son prince Mahinder Singh Prayed in front of

⁹⁹ Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2009), *Nirmal panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.182



Shri Guru Granth Sahib eighty two thousand (Rs 82,000) and Rs Forty one hundred (Rs 4100) for annual tax deduction of Bhaini and Jhandi vilages.¹⁰⁰ On the above said date the proposal was passed by Shri Mahant Sant Baba Mahitab Singh, three Phulkian chiefs (Maharaja Narinder Singh of Patiala, Maharaja Bharpoor Singh Nabha and Maharaja Saroop Singh of Jeend) and endorsed by Mahant Heera Singh Theekari wala, Mahant Gandha Singh Barnala, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam and many more. This manuscript of rules and regulations of it was formally called *Dastur-ul-amal*.¹⁰¹

For the better governance of Nirmala deras, the governing bodies like *Dastur-ul-amal*, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal, Nirmal Mahamandal, Doaba Nirmal Mandal, etc., are established. These regional, as well as *central* governing bodies, play an essential role in managing core as well as crucial functions of deras. Various societies are formed to look after the interests of deras and the community attached to them. For example, in the Doaba region, the society is registered as Doaba Nirmal Mandal under the Registration of Societies Act of 1860 no. 45 (Amritsar).¹⁰² Its head office initially was in Dhillhal Taajewel. A provision was made that it could be shifted to anywhere in Doaba (Distt. Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, and Kapurthala) afterward. Its objectives, rules and regulations, the procedure of elections, quorum, bye-election, and functions of officeholders, tenure, Election of Shri Mahant Sahib, convening the general meeting and special meetings/functions, Oath-taking letters, membership maintenance, and cancellation norms, monitoring that any mahant should not misuse or confiscate the property of dera considering it as his personal and inherited property. The Mandal is bound to guard the interests of Nirmal deras by not allowing the responsibility to transfer to non-Nirmala saints. Rather than cohesion, it should preserve the independence of Nirmal Bhekh if a mahant breaks the code of conduct, behaves unethically, or any mahant harms, destroys, or mismanages the dera property, the local members should report to the Maha Mandal. The rules and regulations of Nirmala Panchayati Akhara and other constituent state bodies are as follows:

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.183.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.185.

¹⁰² Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, p. 2



(A) *Dastur-Ul-Amal*

*Dastur-ul-Amal*¹⁰³ is the legal declaration letter issued collectively by the three states i.e. Patiala, Nabha and Jeend in 1862 about the acceptance of formal establishment and nomenclature of '*Panchayati Akhara Nirmala*' and its corresponding name i.e. '*Shri Nirmala Panchayati Akhara*'. It is vital to mention here that eight years before this declaration, the saints of the Nirmala sect had formally launched the Akhara on the occasion of *Maha Kumbha* at Haridwar and elected Shri Mahant. At this time all have acquiesced on Akarha's name as '*Shri Nirmala Panchayati Akhara*'. Mahant Ganesha has denoted the name of Akhara '*Panchayati Akhara Nirmala*' in *Nirmal Bhushan*^{104, 105} as *Dharam Dhavja*. It may be due to the regular unfurling of *Kesari Nishan Sahib* (emblem of Sikhism in Hindu shade) on the occasions of *Kumbha*.

The script of *Dastur-Ul-Amal* has nine clauses in all. The clauses are as follows:

Clause I, declares that Bhai Mahitab Singh is the chief of the *Akhara* and that after his death his successor will take over.

Clause II, refers to the sum of Rs. 82,000/- donated by the Patiala state and to the manner of its use.

Clause III, declares that treasury of the *Akhara* will be under the charge of Mahitab Singh. He could also make over this responsibility to someone of his choice.

Clause IV, authorises Bhai Mehitab Singh to make or change any other Mahants as he thought fit.

Clause V, puts the condition on all residing in the *Akhara* not to keep any money on their person. All such money be deposited in the treasury.

Clause VI, authorises Bhai Mahitab Singh to appoint any one on a responsible position and punish those found violating this code.

Clause VII, says that if Bhai Mehitab Singh wants to appoint, during his lifetime, his successor, he must consult the three Phulkian states.

¹⁰³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.176-177.

¹⁰⁴ Mahant Ganesha, *Nirmal Bhushan*, pp. 109,112,113,114,115.

¹⁰⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.177.



Clause VII, authorises the Phulian states to replace any of the successors of Bhai Mahitab Singh, if he is found wanting in his personal piety and character.

Clause IX, says the functioning of the Panchayati Akharabe carried as per the clauses of this document.¹⁰⁶

The *Dastur-ul-amal* that is signed by the three Phulkian chiefs can be only called genuine. There are also some other versions of it given in various Nirmala works, besides the one given by Bhai Kahn Singh in *Mahan Kosh*¹⁰⁷. But at any rate, the *Dastur-ul-amal* prepared with the concurrence of the Phulkian chiefs is considered authentic among the Nirmalas.¹⁰⁸

(B) NIRMAL PANCHAITI AKHARA KANKHAL, HARIDWAR
COPY OF THE MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION OF
REGULATIONS OF PANCHAITI AKHARA NIRMALA
REGISTERED UNDER THE SOCIETIES REGISTRATION
ACT XXI OF 1860 ON

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

OF

PANCHAITI AKHARA NIRMALA

Preliminary Points.

- A. 1. The name of this association it and shall be called "Panchaiti Aklata Nirmala."¹⁰⁹
2. The headquarter of this Association Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala is at present at Kankhal (Hardwar). In future it may be at any other place which may be selected by this Association "Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala. Its branches are at the following

¹⁰⁶ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.46-47.

¹⁰⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.186.

¹⁰⁸ Kirpal Singh and Kharak Singh(2012) *History of the Sikhs and their religion vol Ithe Gur Period 1469-1708 CE*, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, pp.392-393.

¹⁰⁹ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala, Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.



places: Patiala State, Sangrur (Jind State) Kashi (Banaras). Allahabad (Prayag), Trimbak (Godawri) District Nasik. Chhachhruali, District Ambala, Ujjain (Gwalior State). Rishi Kesh, District Dehradun. Kurukshetra Tirath (Thaneshwar) Farid Kot State. Village Maur Sangrur. Ramat Akhara Villages etc.

B. AIMS AND OBJECTS¹¹⁰

1. The aims and objects of the Panchaiti Akahara Nirmala which has been in existence for a long time for the management of charitable purposes connected with this Akhara are as follows:
2. This Akhara has been established with the funds which have been and are given as charity by the Makandhari (occupant of the house) Mahants and Sadhus Nirmala of this sect Rajas, sewaks, Jagirdaran, & Bankers in the form of offerings. Its objects are to make management in respect of the funds to increase in a proper manner the afore-said funds that may be acquired and may accumulate from time to time, to protect the same and spend it in charitable purposes of the Akhara to maintain and improve its (Akhara) position.
3. To make arrangements of food and sojourn of and religious preaching to the Mahants, Sadhus, Nirmala and Sewaks who might happen to come at any of the quarters (As than) of the Akhara of Nirmala or at the fairs which are held at certain sacred places of pilgrimage for the meeting of saints.
4. To make arrangements for the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of Nirmala Sadhus.
5. To try and collect the old books pertaining to this sect and to make proper arrangement for their publication and teaching etc.
6. To supervise and make arrangements for the protection of the Gurdwaras Dharamshalas, Sangat house, and Deras which appertain to this charitable association and which are separate from the Akhara in case there remains no mahant or Manager of the Gurdwaras or Dharamshalas, Sangat house or Deras afore-said or in case any Mahant or Manager is found guilty of dishonesty or immorality and to try to maintain the status there of should a stranger make any interference in making arrangement to check and improve its status.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.1.



7. The name and address of the president, secretary, mukhia, mahant, mokami, mahant, kothari & karbaries are entered in list B. which is given below and they are the persons who form the working committee of the Akhara.

The persons whose names signatures, addresses are given below desire that our association bearing the name given in the Memorandum may be found under Act XXI of the 1860.¹¹¹

LIST B

- 1) Shri Mahant Ram Singh ji Chela Mahant Mastan Singh, Hariki, Ferozepur, President.
- 2) Mahant Ganesha Singh Chela Mahani Hira Singh, Mandir Anand Bhawan Amritsar, Secretary.
- 3) Mahaat Sunder Singh Chela Mahant Prem Singh.
- 4) Mahant Basawa Singh Do, Do. P. Hardial Singh.
- 5) Mahant Surjan Singh Do. Do, P. Dewa Singh.
- 6) Mahant Mohan Singh Do. Do Nihal Singh.
- 7) Kishan Singh Chela Mahant Lal Singh Verpal, Distt; Amritsar.

Kothari Partap Singh Chela Mahant Ganga Singh Sodawn

Karbari Kaher Singh Do. Do. Gurdut Singh Kankhal (Hardwar).

(8) Mahant Mihan Singh Do. Do. Hari Singh

Kothari Uttam Singh Do. Do. Sapuran Singh, District Ludhiana.

MUQAMIAN ALLAHABAD

Mahant Amar Singh Chela Isher Singh mauza Uggo Patiala State.

Kothari Jawala Singh do Ram Singh

Karbari Kan Singh do Mahant Dhian Singh.

MUQAMIAN PATIALA

Mahant Bhagat Singh Chela Mir Singh Khudda District Hoshiarpur.

Kothari Bishan Singh do Dosondha Singh Patiala State.

Karbari Budh Singh do Isher Singh.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*,p.2.



MUQAMIAN SINGRUR

Gur Charan Singh Chela Pandit Narotam Singh Nabha.

Muqami Kashi (Benaras).

Mahant Autar Singh Chela Mahant Saudagar Singh.¹¹²

COPY OF THE RULES & REGULATIONS OF THE PANCHATTI AKIJARA

NIRMALA REGISTERED UNDER THE SOCIETIES REGISTRATION ACT

XXI OF 1860 ON

Rules of the Association regarding the President and Secretary, Sadhus.Mahants and Mukamians constituting the working committee of the Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala.¹¹³

C PROPERTY AND FUNDS

The property and funds are and will be improved by receiving presents, gifts and offerings from Sadhus, Rajas, Jagirdars, Sewaks, all house holders and by means of money dealings, Zemindari, Gardens and houses and by other lawful means and methods calculated to yield income and profit.¹¹⁴

D MANAGEMENT

1. To the association of this Akhara the Sadhus Nirmala who put on clothes dyed In Geru i. e. the celebrates Sadhus Nirmala Amriti are and will be admitted and according to the rule of this Association the Sadhus aforesaid who join or may join the Akhara should give any moveable or immoveable property belonging to them either as offering or in trust to Akhara or otherwise they can simply make over to the Akhara a list of such property and they should take their feed from the Akhara.
2. That they before becoming members of the Akhara should take the oath prescribed by the Akhara to the effect that so long as in future they will be connected with the Akhara and have connection with the Association, the

¹¹² *Ibid*,p.2.

¹¹³ *Ibid*,p.3.

¹¹⁴ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 36



moveable and immoveable property, goods, chattels, cash and articles of every description, and, the property which they may acquire by their personal exertions or through the medium of the Akhara shall belong to the Akhara that as regards these things they neither have nor shall have any right or claim while they remain connected with the Akhara or cease to have connection with it, nor will any of their representatives have any claim or right.

3. If any of the Mahant, Mukhias and Muqamis¹¹⁵ or any other officer of the working committee of the Akhara be found to have done any improper act inconsistent with the rules fixed and prejudicial to the aims and objects of the Akhara et if he is found guilty of misappropriation or dishonesty then his dismissal or retention in service is and will be decided by the majority of votes of other members viz President, Secretary, Mahant, Mukhia, Muqamis etc. etc., who may be present.
4. The afore-said Mahants and muqamis are and will be responsible for the head quarter and the branches and they have and will have full administrative control.
5. One or more than one of the Sadhus who may be member of the Association are and can be appointed Mukami at the Head quarter and the Branches with reference to the nature of the business according to the decision and opinion of the Mahants out of the Akhara. In the same way they can also be dismissed. If it is impossible they can be selected from other Sadhus belonging to the sect.
6. Mukhias Mahants¹¹⁶ are and shall be head of this association and the business at the branch and the head quarter of the Akhara is and shall be carried on also by the mukamis and secretary under the directions of the President.

¹¹⁵ Mukami means the existing and responsible Mahant or official who lives in the akhara only.

¹¹⁶ Telephonic interview with Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh Chief Priest Nahalan Jalandhar, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 29th July 2022, at SBBSU Jalandhar.



7. Document or property of every kind shall be in the name of the Akhara, if however, they are in the name of any mahant or Shri Mahant, secretary or Mukami, Kothari or Korari or Sadhu of this Akhara, they shall be considered as the property of the Akhara. All judicial proceeding and all official and non-official, proceedings relating to documents and property aforesaid shall be taken in the name and in favour of the Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala by the Secretary for the time being.
8. The entry of the name or names of any mahants or Mukamis or kotharis or karbaris in respect of any property or instrument shall not enable them or their disciple or heir to claim the ownership of the said property or document aforesaid nor shall by reason thereof the propriety tight of the Akhara be over jeopardized or affected in any way.
9. The documents of every description either on behalf of or in favour of the Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala shall be executed and completed in the name or names of the President of Secretary any Mahants or Muqamis or Kotharis or Karbaris. The whole of the property pertaining to the Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala shall be entered in the name of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala the Lamberdaris shall be entered in the name of the president.

E PROHIBITIONS

Any of the Mahants or Muhamis, Kotharis, Karbaris, or Sadhus who is a member of this Abhara shall have no power in respect of the following matters:¹¹⁷

1. To waste ruin or misappropriate any property, goods, chattels, grain, cash articles of every description and proprietary right and title of the Akhara and to employ it for any purpose other than the benefits aim and objects of the Akhara. But if any property should be considered a source of loss instead of gain then the secretary for the time being or any other person shall in accordance with the majority of votes of the working committee have power to sell or exchange such property at a proper price.
2. To incur expenditure in excess of the amount of profits.

¹¹⁷ Telephonic interview with Sant Baba Teja Singh Chief Priest Dera Gur Sar Khuda Hoshiarpur, conducted on 27th July 2022, at SBBSU Jalandhar.



3. To become a family man.
4. To follow any other faith.
5. To carry on any other business or private trade apart from the Akhara
6. President, secretary and none of the Mahants, Mukhias, Mukamis shall
 - a. have power to initiate any one as his disciple and to keep such disciple with him or to enlist any management of the Akhara to him.

F APPOINTMENTS AND POWERS

President, Shri Mahant.¹¹⁸

Powers of President are as follows: -

1. To look after the welfare of the Akhara and to see that the work connected there with is done according to the rules laid down for the same.
2. To make and cause to make proper management of the property of the Akhara.
3. To keep one of the keys of the treasury boxes kept at the Head quarter and the branches.
4. To instruct and supervise the money dealing of every description done by the Mukamies.
5. To have supervision of the powers given to each and every individual pertaining to the Akhara.
6. To realize and receive rents etc. of the land belonging to the Akhara and to decide and cause to decide disputes relating to the boundry of the fields and the gardens
7. To supervise thoroughly every matter pertaining to Rammat Akhara.
8. To institute and defend suits of the value of its 500/-and to appoint General or special power of Attorney with the consultation of Mahant Mukhias for defending and prosecuting cases,

¹¹⁸ Interview with Sant Baba Teja Singh Chief Priest Dera Gur Sar Khuda Hoshiarpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 31st August 2022, at Dera Gur Sar Khuda Hoshiarpur.



9. The president has authority as owner (malik) in all administrative works.¹¹⁹

G SECRETARY IS AUTHORISED

To institute suits of every description and make applications. To take all judicial proceedings official and non-official. To realize amounts (debt etc.) due to the Akhara. The Secretary shall have power to engage for defending and prosecuting cases, Mokhtars, Vakil or Barrister and certify affidavits for fees. To execute decrees. To realize decretal amounts and instalments etc., To take and give receipts in courts etc., To supervise moveable and immoveable properties belonging to the Akhara and to look after the houses. To enter regularly and monthly accounts in the Register and keep them correct. To consult the president in every matter.¹²⁰

H POWERS OF MAHANTS MUKHIAS¹²¹

1. To go round on tour from Province to Province and Town to Town (especially) where there is gain.
2. To consult and help the President in appointing mukhtar-i- am and in the matter of money lending.
3. To appoint a man to receive pilgrims on the occasion of fairs and to treat the Sadhus under him gently and politely
4. To enter Sadhus in the Association according to the rules mentioned under letter D clause (1) and (2)
5. To appoint Lakheias when necessary under directions of working Committee
6. To treat Dera Dar, Mahants, and Sewaks in a proper manner.
7. To keep supervision of the Houses
8. To send at the end of each month a copy of accounts to the Head quarter.

I POWERS OR MAHANTS

¹¹⁹ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 38.

¹²⁰ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.p.4.

¹²¹ *Ibid*,p.4.



1. To look after the houses and the Deras and try to improve their conditions
2. To keep accounts of the income and expenditure of the Dera and to send a copy of the same to the head quarter at the end of each month.
3. To keep account of animals, grain and utensils etc, and to look after them.
4. To counter sign every month the account kept by a kothari,
5. To keep a watch over the Treasury.
6. To give and take proper receipts.
7. To look after the conduct of himself and others.¹²²

J POWERS OF KOTHARI

1. To keep correct daily accounts and to send duly filled in the accounts to the Head quarter at the end of every month.
2. To consult the Mahant in cases of money dealing.
3. To keep proper expenses of the house.
4. To look after all the houses etc.

K POWERS OF KARBARI

According to the directions of Muqami Mahant and other Karbari is to deal and cause to deal in the matter of the Akhara.

- (1) To purchase at a proper rate grain and other things under the direction of the above committee. the four Mahants of the Working Committee and to erect sheds of the kind directed by
- (2) To keep accounts correctly.

M EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE¹²³

- (1) This committee shall consist of the members entered in list 'B'
- (2) No business shall or done unless five members at least are present.
- (3) Quorum will consist of five members.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.4.

¹²³ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 40.



- (4) If a vacancy occurs among the members, Executive Committee shall have power to appoint another.
- (5) If a member does not do his duty or causes discussion among the member or is found guilty of dishonesty etc. the above Committee shall have power to dismiss him.
- (6) If a member goes to a fair or to transact some private business of his own without the permission of the President the cost of the same shall be borne by him.
- (7) Every member shall be bound to do the work assigned to him by the Committee
- (8) No member shall without the leave of the committee can separate himself from the work,
- (9) The above committee shall hold its meetings annually but special meetings may be held when necessary.
- (10) Every member must have a fair knowledge of Gurmukhi.
- (11) Every matter shall be decided by the majority of votes. The President shall have casting vote [in case the members are equally divided).
- (12) Every member shall have to sign the present form.¹²⁴

N GENERAL COMMITTEE¹²⁵

- (1) General Committee shall consist of the following members whose number shall not exceed 33 persons.
- (2) A Nirmala Saint not less than 20 years of age, provided he is celebrate, *Amriti*.
- (3) A Dera Dar.
- (4) A Jagirdar.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.41.

¹²⁵ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.p.4.



- (5) A Gurdwara Mahant.
- (6) A Learned inan.
- (7) Virakat¹²⁶
- (8) One recommended by the working committee
- (9) Every member shall have to sign a form and should know Gurmukhi.
- (10) Knowledge of the principles of Nirmala sect is necessary for a member.
- (11) Absentees from three successive meetings of the above committee shall cease to be a member.
- (12) Members shall hold their office for 6 years and meeting of the general committee take place after every three years if necessary special meetings can take shall place at any time.
- (13) The General Committee shall select the sewaks and advisors the sewaks shall preach, teach, lecture and updes. The advisers shall advise for the welfare of the sect.
- (14) General Committee shall help and supervise the Executive Committee and shall decide all matters.
- (15) If any vacancy occurs among the members it shall be filled up by the committee.

O. MISCELLANEOUS NOTES¹²⁷.

- (1) President shall be elected at the time of general fair, a learned man from the Nirmala Bhekh.
- (2) Every Moqami Mahant and Kothari has power to give loans up to Its 200 more than R200/- with the written permission of the president who can give sanction for the Rs.1000/- himself and up to Rs. 2000/- with the consultation of the Secretary and up to Rs. 5000/- with the consultation of

¹²⁶ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 36.

¹²⁷ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.p.6.



the Mukhia Mahants and up to Rs. 10000/- with the sanction of the working Committee over and above the last mentioned amount the General Committee has the power to give.

- (3) But in the matter of any property at the time of emergency the president alone has power to spend Rs. 10000/- which will be put before the next committee.
- (4) Mukhia Mahants are responsible for the expenses incurred by the Ramat Akhara Association
- (5) No Moqami can have power to spend in the buildings without the permission of the president.
- (6) Any person violating the above rules shall be liable to punishment
- (7) The following circumstances shall be deemed sufficient to cause a vacancy of every kind in the Akhara:¹²⁸
 - (a) Death.
 - (b) Insanity.
 - (c) Resignation.
 - (d) Ceasing to be Nirmala.
 - (c) Committing of an offence which in the opinion of the Akhara renders him unfit to serve the Akhara.
- (8) A register shall be kept at the Head quarter at Kankhal (Hardwar) in which shall be entered the name and address of the President, Secretary, Mahants, Maqamis, Kotharis, and Karbaris attached to this Akhara, the time of their death and services of their connection with the Akhara¹²⁹.
- (9) The working Committee shall have power to make any other necessary rules or to change the above-mentioned rules if required. The work shall be carried on according to the old rules until the new rules are framed.

¹²⁸ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.p.7.

¹²⁹ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 36.



Resolution passed in working committee held at Kankhal (Hardwar), dated 2nd November 1914 of Akhara Panchaiti Nirmala Nanak Shahi Padhat Shri Guru Govind Singh jee regarding the change of name and place of Head quarter and the rules regarding said Akhara.¹³⁰

Mahant Mahan Singh moved the above resolution which was seconded by Mahant Ganesha Singh, Secretary. All the members unanimously proposed and passed the resolution the present name of the Akhara should be "Akhara Panchaiti Nirmala" instead of the previous name of the Akhara" Panchaiti Nirmala Nanak Shahi Padhat Sri Guru Govind Singh jee" and also unanimously resolved that the Head quarter should be removed from Allahabad to Kankhal, (Hardwar) as also the rules should be made complete which are yet incomplete.

(C) Nirmal Mahamandal (registration) rules and regulations(reformed) Sant Avenue G.T. Road, Amritsar

A general meeting¹³¹ of the Nirmala sect was organised in Nirmal Kutiya Jalandhar on 3/11/1991 under the chairmanship of Shriman 108 Mahant Balbir Singh Viyogi in which the rules and sub-rules of Nirmal Mahamandal were reformed. These were further approved and passed by general consensus in the meeting of Nirmal Mahamandal at dera Panj Grayiyan Kalaan Fridkot. Mahant Teja Singh (general secretary) got this registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860 (no.343) at Chandigarh. The Memorandum of Nirmal Mahamandal is as follows:

1. Name of Society: NIRMAL MAHA MANDAL (Amritsar)

Name of the registered office: Nirmal Akharha Mahant Mool Singh Sant Avenue G.T. Road Amritsar.

2. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SOCIETY:

- a) To spread education
- b) To perform religious duties judiciously and expand Nirmal Bhekh

¹³⁰ The Memorandum Of Association Of Regulations Of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Registered Under The Societies Registration Act XXI Of 1860 On Memorandum Of Association of Panchaiti Akhara Nirmala Kankhal Registered on 18th January 1905.p.9.

¹³¹ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p.18.



- c) To administer all relevant arrangements legitimately regarding properties of the various Nirmala Deras
- d) To spread education in all Nirmala places as per the rules and regulations of Nirmala Bhekh.

THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF SOCIETY ABOUT ELIGIBILITY OF MEMBERS¹³²

- 1) Any saint or Mahant could become a member of the Mandal who believes in the principles of Nirmal Mahamandal and should have the following qualities:
- 2) The age should be more than 18 years
- 3) Regular reciter/devotee of *Gurbani*, baptized and turban bearers *keshdhari* (who keeps hair as per trends of Sikhism)
- 4) He should acknowledge himself as a Nirmala Saint, a staunch believer in *Guru Granth Sahib*, and having faith in the incarnation of God.
- 5) According to rights and rituals, he should be honoured as a disciple of a Nirmala saint or Mahant.
- 6) He must be paying an annual subscription i.e., Rs. 15/of society.

4. ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF MANDAL:¹³³

The members will be elected district wise for five years.

5. NUMBER OF MEMBERS:

The total number of members will be 61; 5 will be nominated.

6. QUORUM:

The quorum will have 45 members.

7. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ADMINISTRATION)

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 20.

¹³³ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p.20.



The executive committee (administration) will consist of 15 members, out of which seven will be office bearers, and eight will be other members. The President and Secretary will be elected from this panel.

8.ELECTION OF POSITION HOLDERS:

In the first meeting of Mandal, office bearers are elected after the nomination of members. President, Senior Sub-President, Junior Sub-President, General Secretary, Senior Sub-secretary, Sub-Secretary, and cashier are chosen.

Election of the working committee:

- In the first meeting, the active committee is elected.
- The working committee meeting could be called for any urgent issue after the notice of 7 days.

9. FUNCTIONS OF OFFICEHOLDERS:

President: To take care of all functions of Mandal and perform all duties as per the rules and regulations of Mandal and put the check for the same on others.

Sub-President: To help and assist in the workings of the President by all means and perform all duties in the absence of the President.¹³⁴

General Secretary: with the permission of the President to maintain records and answer all queries; to collect the money from all resources and deposit it in a fixed account with the help of a cashier; to take care of all records and correspondence of Mandal and regulate the total functioning of the office of Mandal.

Sub-Secretary: to help the general secretary and execute all duties in his absence.

Cashier: To maintain the record of income and expenditure of all finance of Mandal; to deposit money on account of Nirmal Maha Mandal, which will be countersigned by the President, secretary, and cashier; for the withdrawal from the bank the signature of two persons will be mandatory out of which, the sign of secretary is obligatory.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.



10. GENERAL MEETING:¹³⁵

With the permission of the President, the secretary could call a general meeting of Mandal at the notice of 15 days. An emergency meeting could be called at the notice of 4 days. Accept this ten or more than ten members can give information of meeting to the President. If President doesn't call a meeting as per these members' wish, they can call the meeting on their own at the notice of 15 days, but the venue of discussion will be the main office only. All the proposals will be accepted only on the consensus of meeting members. If both groups agree, then the President has the right to give a casting opinion.

Note: Any vital work could be done in the hope of approval of the working committee.

11. NECESSARY WORK

Any necessary work can be done by the office bearers with the approval of the working committee.

12. PANCHAYATI AKHARA NIRMALA

The election of the chief mahants of the Panchayati Akhara Nirmale will be done in the unity of the board with the presence and consent of Sri Mahant Sahib and as per the need, the successful can resign from them with the consent of Sri Mahant Sahib. It will be necessary for the chief Mahants to verify the accounts of each house in the arena and send its annual report to the Nirmal Maha Mandal. Panchayati Akhara Nirmala Haridwara (No. 12) Head Mahant Akhara and related houses will give annual report of accounting (Principal) to Mr. Mahant Nirmal Panchayati Akhara.

13. AFFIDAVIT FOR CHIEF MAHANT

The President of the Nirmal Maha Mandal will get the following declarations signed by the chief mahants in front of all the members.

Affidavit

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 21.



I take a vow in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji that I will serve the Ramat Akhara with body, mind and wealth and will take full care of the property of the Akhara. I will calculate the houses of the arena and send its annual report to the President Nirmal Maha Mandal, I will maintain harmony with the Saints and Mahants through my good behavior, the Mandal can take my resignation whenever it wants.

14. ELECTION OF SRI MAHANT SAHIB JI

Election of Shri. Mahant of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara General meeting of Nirmal Bhekh

will be in The authority to call Nirmal Bhekh in connection with the election of Mr. Mahant will be the right of the Chief Mahant and Secretary Nirmal Panchayati Akhara.

Affidavit

In the presence of Nirmal Bhekh and Sadh Sang, I swear in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji that the wealth of Nirmal Akhara is his body, mind and wealth.

I will take care of him and will not do any work that will cause any inferiority of Bhak, with his good behavior he will have a hearty reconciliation with the workers of the arena and all the Saints Mahant.

According to the resolution passed by the board, Mr. Mahantji will keep the rules of the arena and follow them.

15. INVESTIGATION

The chiefs will give the annual report of the accounts brought by the Mahant to the president of Nirmal Bhekh. Nirmal Maha Mandal will be responsible for any kind of negligence.

RESPONSIBILITY

(a) The Nirmal Maha Mandal should take care that no loan should be given to a martyred Mahant, Saint without keeping any property with the permission of the Akhara Mandal.



(b) The Nirmal Panchayati Akhara shall not lend or assist any Mahant in a mutual suit.

16. SUB-COMMITTEES

The Nirmal Maha Mandal may form such sub-committees to maintain the dignity, purity and dignity of the Nirmal Bhekh, which will investigate the accounts and other complaints of the Nirmal Dera shrines, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal and related properties, houses and other grievances and decide disputes between them.

17. MONITORING

Nirmal Mahamandal will also have the main purpose that the mahant who is seen destroying the Shera or using the property of the camp as ancestral property in his family should take proper care of the shrine and prevent it from falling into unclean hands and use the maximum available force. Maintain freedom of expression by If any Mahant Sant destroys or damages the property of the Dera, then report to the members of the area or to the Mahant Sant Nirmal Maha Mandal.

18.

- a) Member of the Mandal should go to Divine rest.
- b) Resignations.
- c) Fall from the standard of Nirmal Bhekh.
- d) If he is absent from three consecutive events, his name should be removed from the assembly of the congregation and another member should be elected from the same area.

19.

A member who does not pay the annual subscription will not have the right to vote in the meeting.

20.

Expenditure of the Nirmal Maha Mandal will be met from the income of the Mandal.



21.

If a saint, mahant, makes a will against the principles of Nirmal Bhekh, then the council will be able to declare the same will null and void and that will will not have any effect in any court.

22. SUBSTITUTION OF RULES

The exchange and amendment in the rules and regulations of Nirmal Mahamandal will be done with the approval of 2/3 of the members.

23.

If a Mahant is married, he can give a Mahant to one of his eligible sons by making him a disciple according to the rules of Nirmal Bhekh, he should not squander the property of the camp, he should not divide the property of the camp among his family, the ancient name of that camp should be kept in vogue. If he does not follow these things, his sect, Nirmal Bhekh and Mandal will have the right to change him and make him another Mahant.

24.

The Mahant of the camp who is doing the work of the governor, can be changed by his sect, if there is no sect, then the Bhekh will have the right to change it or to make another Mahant in his place.

25.

a) At the time of the turban of the mahant of any Dera, the turban will be accepted by Sri Panchayati Akhara Nirmala on which the mahant himself or his representative will go. The presence of Sri Panchayati Akhara Nirmala is essential at the time of the turban of the Mahanti of the Dera. If Mr. Mahant Sahib is not present at the headquarters at any time, then the secretary can personally go to the said arena and give the turban.

(b) The turban of importance of the camp will be given by the Nirmal Maha Mandal.

The turban can be given by the President or the Secretary of the Mandal.



General Secretary - Mahant Teja Singh MA (Honor Dera Guru Sir Munda District Hoshiarpur).¹³⁶

(D)

DOABA NIRMAL MANDAL NORMS/RIGHTS

OFFICE VILLAGE TAAJEWAL

PO. BACHHERI(HAAL)

DISTT HOSHIARPUR

On 9/7/1967, at Mitmal Ashram Banga in the congregation of Nirmal Mandal Doaba, the working committee modified the following rules after clearing the plan by the Mandal¹³⁷. After conceding these norms and rights with consensus in the general committee meeting of the Doaba Nirmal meeting held at Barhiya Kalan on 22/3/68, the rules are implemented.

REGISTRATION OF SOCIETIES ACT OF 1860 NO. 45¹³⁸:

1. The name of this organization will be **DOABA NIRMAL MANDAL**
2. Initially, the office will be in Dhillal Taajewal. Afterward, it could be shifted to anywhere in Doaba (Distt. Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, and Kapurthala).
3. **OBJECTIVES:**
 1. To make efforts for the social, economic, and religious well-being of Nirmal Bhekh in Doaba.
 2. To protect Nirmala deras from the hands of non-Nirmala people and keep on trying to save their independence from harm.
 3. For the welfare of Nirmal Bhekh and nationwide advertisement for religious and social reforms and fix the groups(*Jathe*) for the same.
 4. To open new institutes *Raag*, Ayurvedic, political and religious educational development and make arrangements for continuous and incessant education. Further to publish daily, weekly, fortnightly, and monthly newspapers.

¹³⁶ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 25.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p.26.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p.27



5. In all Nirmala places, establish and initiate religious modesty(*Rahu-riety*).
6. To ascertain *dastarbandi* (turban-wearing) in all Nirmala places and appoint Chief Mahant etc¹³⁹.
7. Doaba Nirmal Mandal will have the main prerogative to monitor that any mahant should not misuse the property of dera or confiscate the property of dera, considering it as his personal and inherited property. The Mandal is bound to guard the interests of Nirmal deras by not allowing the responsibility to transfer to non-Nirmala saints. Rather than cohesion, it should preserve the independence of Nirmal Bhekh. If a mahant breaks the code of conduct, behaves unethically, or any mahant harms, destroys, or mismanages the dera property, the local members should report to the Maha Mandal. After getting the fault proven, the Mandal has the right to replace the Mahant with any saint or administrator for better administration or will look after the dera itself.
8. In the case of any conflict within the Nirmala sect or out of it with society, the decision of Doaba Nirmala Mandal will be final.
9. If necessary, Doaba Mandal will fight the cases against such defaulters and take care of succeeded property abiding by the rules and norms of Doaba Mandal.
10. If some Mahant dies unclaimed (means who has neither any appointed disciple nor any legal heir of dera), all of his property, fixed account, land, cash, etc., will be confiscated by Doaba Mandal or will depute some eligible administrator for the same. The money will be used for the purpose of upliftment of society and Panth.
4. **Members:** Every Doaba resident, Mahant, or saint can become a member of the Mandal:¹⁴⁰
 1. The age should not be less than 18 years.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 28.



2. One should be a regular reciter and believer of *Gurbani* and *keshdhari* (one who keeps hair).
3. One who claims himself as Nirmala and keeps strong faith in ten gurus and Shri Guru Granth Sahib.¹⁴¹
4. The one who has legitimately become a disciple of a Nirmala Saint and believes in the human form of Guru.
5. The one who regularly pays annual charges of Mandal, i.e., Rs. 10/
6. One should be a bachelor.
7. The employee or tenant of Mandal cannot become a member of it.

5. THE STRUCTURE OF SABHA:¹⁴²

It will have two parts:

1. General committee
2. Working Committee
6. **It will consist of 61 members. The quorum will be 21.**
7. **THE FUNCTIONS OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE:**
 1. According to norms, to elect the members of the working committee.
 2. As per rules, make arrangements for every type of function.
 3. To approve the annual budget with deficit or surplus.
8. **MEETINGS OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE:** the meeting of the general committee will be held once a year, but with the kind permission of the President, the secretary could call more than one meeting.
9. **NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE** will be 21. The quorum will be of 7 members consisting of the following members: President, Vice president, general secretary, vice secretary, cashier, prime minister, etc.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 28.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* pp.28-29.



10. **THE TENURE** of all members of the working committee will be of five years,
11. **ELECTION:** the members of the working committee will be elected at the general congregation of the general committee at the quorum of 2/3. If, in some meetings, the quorum is incomplete, the date of another meeting will be fixed on the same day, and the postponed meeting will not have a quorum.
12. **NOTICE OF MEETING:**For the meeting of the working committee, a one-week notice is necessary, but a special meeting could be called at any time by the secretary.¹⁴³
13. **VACANT SEAT:** if any seat is left blank due to the following reasons, then it will be filled accordingly:
 - a) If any member dies
 - b) In the case of resignation
 - c) If any member fails to abide by the modesty of Nirmal Bhekh
 - d) If one consecutively miscues three meetings of Nirmala Bhekh
 - e) Relations with opposite party or sect
14. **ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS:**The working committee will elect new members in the place of vacant seats, but it could also meet the emergency with temporary(ad-hoc) appointments.
15. **THE FUNCTIONS OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE:**
 - i. To administer every process as per norms
 - ii. To frame norms and rules as per requirements and get them approved by the general committee.
 - iii. To appoint and fire the employees as per requirements.
 - iv. To keep a record of every activity of the committee.

II. The rights of office bearers:¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p.29.



- III. President: to look after the task of Mandal and delineate the duties as per norms
- IV. To perform all responsibilities of the President in the meetings.
16. **VICE PRESIDENT:** he will be able and entirely responsible in the absence of the President to perform all duties.
17. **THE GENERAL SECRETARY:**
- i. To observe all functions and functionaries
 - ii. To approve expenditure bills¹⁴⁵
 - iii. With the permission of the President to give and seek explanations as per the requirement
 - iv. To get the balance sheet approved by the working committee
 - v. To distribute duties and responsibilities as per need
 - vi. Could spend the amount of Rs.50 as per need
18. **THE SECRETARY:**
- i. To manage and distribute all the agendas of meeting as per the kind approval of the President
 - ii. To be responsible for the all functions of the office
 - iii. To receive the money by post or cash by hand but to keep a record of the amount and deposit surplus amount in the bank.
 - iv. To do the documentation of whole activities of meeting and get approved from the house by mentioning it in the next meeting
19. **THE ADVERTISING SECRETARY** will be entitled to:
- i. to publish the proceedings of the meeting as per need;
 - ii. to promote the functions of meeting adequately and assist the secretary.
20. **THE CASHIER:**¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 30.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.30.



- i. To record income and expenditure in the register
 - ii. To prepare an annual budget and seek the permission of Mandal.
 - iii. To deposit the amount of more than Rs 50 in the bank and maintain the record.
21. **THE ASSEMBLY** :The assembly of the working committee could be called trimesterly or as per need with the permission of the secretary and President.
 22. **The date of election** will be decided by the working committee.
 23. The decisions will be taken with the consensus of the majority.
 24. If any four members of the working committee or ten general committee members give in writing, then the President could call a session. If President did not permit it within fifteen days, then those members could proceed with their signatures but take 2/3 majority of members in confidence.¹⁴⁷
 25. All expenditure will be met with the income of the Mandal. The surplus amount will be deposited in the account of the decided bank, which could be withdrawn only after the joint signatures of the President and secretary.
 26. Any member could check the bank account with the written permission of the President.
 27. Secretary will maintain a stock register in which bills will be enlisted. The breakage will be discarded with due permission.
 28. The meeting of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar in Doaba deras will be called only after the permission of Doaba Nirmal Mandal.
 29. In the appointment of Mahant, Kothari, Secretary, Cashier, or any other member of Nirmala Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar, related branch, Nirmal Sanskrit Colleges at Banaras or anywhere in India and all Nirmal Panchayati Akharas; Doaba Nirmal Mandal will send its representative which will be accepted without any challenge.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 30.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 31.



30. As mentioned in clause no. 30, the selected representative of Mandal could be called at any time and replaced with another one.

31. RULES REGARDING THE ARRANGEMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS OF DERAS:

- i. The property accumulated or cash deposited in the bank by the Mahant in the tenure of Mahanti will be considered the property of the dera even if it is purchased in the name of the father of Mahant.
- ii. Every Mahant of dera will keep a record of his income and expenditure. The office-bearers of Doaba Mandal will be free to inspect it at any time.
- iii. In the case of any dejected or left-alone dera, it will be managed by Doaba Nirmal Mandal, not by the local Panchayat.¹⁴⁸

The Ist President was Sant Maan Singh along with

General Secretary: Sant Ram Singh Taajewal and

Office Secretary: Mahant Ranjit Singh Hoshiarpur.

Presently Nirmal Doaba Mandal is being headed by Sant Baba Bhag Singh Nirmal Ashram Kutiya Banga, after the sad demise of Sant Baba Malkit Singh, along with General Secretary Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh of Pathlawa.¹⁴⁹ Sant Baba Bhag Singh is well versed with Sikh theology and master of *Katha* and the *Gurbani*. Sant Baba Santokh Singh Paldi is the president of Sarv Hind Nirmal Maha Mandal. Pandit Gian Dev Singh is the president of Nirmala Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar. Sant Baba Narinderjit Singh Pandori Nijjaran, is president of Doaba Nirmal Mandal. Sant Baba Teja Singh Khuda is the the president of Pracheen Nirmal Mahamandal.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 31.

¹⁴⁹ Telephonic interview with Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh Chief Priest Dera Pathlawa, (Nawanshahar) conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 9th September 2022 at SBBSU Khiala Jalandhar.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Sant Baba Teja Singh Chief Priest Dera Gur Sar Khuda Hoshiarpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 31st August 2022, at Dera Gur Sar Khuda Hoshiarpur.



(E) RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE SADHUS OF RAMMAT AKHARA

In Sammat 1922 (1865 A.D.) Maharaja Narinder Singh¹⁵¹ had handed over the whole administrative arrangements to Shri Mahant Sant Baba Mehtab Singh with the consent of various saints of the Nirmala sect. Shri Mahant Mehitab Singh stayed in Patiala for many days and he contrived following rules for the sadhus of the sect who use to promote Sikhism while travelling from one place to other. These rules are known as the rules and regulations of Rammat¹⁵² Akhara¹⁵³. Following are the rules and regulations of the Nirmala Rammat Akhara¹⁵⁴:

a) RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE NIRMALA RAMMAT AKHARA

1. In Rammat the number of sadhus will be maximum 50 and minimum 20 .
2. To describe pilgrimage, donation, praise of saints and the prestige of Kumbha Mela, beyond Guru Nanak Dev's maxims.
3. Before going to any village or city for promotion of Sikhism , they should inform the Mahant Sant two days before.
4. Whether it is summer or winter they have to stay outside the village and put their residential camp (Chhavani).
5. Two times in a day regularly there should be prayers *Shri Guru Ganth Sahib*.
6. To accept *Langar* and any kind of spiritual donation according to their financial condition

¹⁵¹ Paramjit Singh Mansa, (2009), *Nirmal Panth Da Itihas, part I*, p.194.

¹⁵² Rammat means to move from place to place for spreading the message of Guru Nanak Dev.

¹⁵³ Akhara is a place of practice with facilities for boarding, lodging and training both in the context of Indian martial artists or a *sampardaya* monastery for religious renunciates in Guru-shishya tradition.

¹⁵⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.187.



7. It is prohibited to stay in the village more than one day without the permission of the villagers.
8. After the farewell from any village they should not visit there before twelve years. But if any *deradar* (Head of the dera) or any devotee call on special occasions they can visit without any hitch.
9. To spend two or three months out of *choumasa* (holy period of four months of rainy season) in a *riyasat*(state) or in a major city.
10. To write the record of every prayer and departure in a register.
11. The remaining amount after conducting spiritual prayers, should be sent to the head office of Kankhal Haridwar within six months.
12. It will be compulsory for every Nirmala saint to put on saffron dress otherwise must put on saffron turban.
13. Whatever may be the distance of Rammat, they have to reach at the holy places like Haridwar, and Paryagraj etc. on the occasion of Kumbha.
14. All the designated saints will be given Kashmiri embroidered shawls which is compulsory to wear.
15. Every saint will be given cloth of Rs 2 and 8 annas for stitching and a pair of shoes. It can also be given to the persons who do special deeds after every three months.¹⁵⁵

**b) RULES FOR THE CHIEF MAHANT OF THE RAMAT
AKHARA¹⁵⁶:**

- (1) Whoever wants to serve the Sadhu or Mahant Ramat Akhara, should first agree to stay for at least three years.
- (2) If an office bearer or sadhu behaves even a little inappropriately in the Akhara, try to get rid of it as soon as possible.
- (3) All the mahants, Panch Prameshar, should carefully monitor each and every work of the *jamat*, considering it as the service of the Panch Prameshar.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.* p. 188.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.* pp.188-189.



- (4) After one month, the report of Ramat's balance and accounting should be sent to Sri Mahant Sahib. be understood
- (5) If any Chief Mahant is seen behaving inappropriately in the arena, Mr. Mahant sahib

They can remove him and send someone else in his place.

- (6) No *jamati mukhiya* should go to his own work before six months, if he goes, he should pay his own expenses.
- (7) The chief Mahant can appoint kothari, granthis and karbaris with their advice.
- (8) It will be their main duty to supervise the local Mahants and houses.
- (9) Every office bearer has to work with cooperation and cohesion.
- (10) If any Mahant get any offering in Ramat, that will be the property of Panchaity.

c) RULES FOR SADHUS OF RAMAT AKHARA¹⁵⁷

- (1) Every sadhu will live in the agaya of Mukhiya Mahatta.
- (2) At the time of *puja aarti*, tea distribution, lighting of moonshine, lifting it up and taking it down, the sadhus will participate in it.
- (3) No sadhu will be able to sit bare-headed in the presence of Guruji.
- (4) Efforts will be made to remain patient and content while keeping the image of pure piety.
- (5) If a sadhu or office bearer leaves the Akhara by disobeying someone or behaving badly, then he will not be considered to be entitled to sit in any row of Sadhus without the permission of the head monk.

(F) GENERAL RULES & REGULATIONS OF NIRMALA SECT

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.189.



Singh Teja Singh had compiled the Rules and regulations of the Nirmala Sect. as following¹⁵⁸:

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR NIRMALA SAINTS:

- Both types of Nirmalas are found these days with and without *kesh* (hair). Some of the Nirmala Saints have cut their beard and hair these days and had fixed their names as 'Nirmal Hari Ji and 'Jagdish Hari Ji etc.
- To put on a long cloak, simple small turban, rosary, sacred scripture, a pot of water, and saffron clothes are the symbols of Nirmal saints. From Hoshiarpur to Garshankar, Nirmalas wear white robes with five compulsories (*panj Kakar*) objects. The Nirmala saints from Garhe, Kaleran, Nanaksar, and Mastuana, dress in chocolate (Kathayai) cloak and loincloth(*langot*). The Nirmala saints of Jalandhar and surrounding areas dress in dark and light orange cloaks.
- Nirmala Saints believe in *Dehdhari* Guru (living in the body), as he is the channel and patron of true wisdom. They look upon this embodiment as Guru. They consider Guru Granth as their '*Ishat*'. Singh Teja opines 'By *Ishat* (superior diety), we mean "the one even greater than our Guru..... When they die, we erect their *Smadhiya* (mausoleums). With full devotion, we respect them. In many places are to be found *Guru Samadhiya*. We celebrate their days of death and birth. There is no change in this practice (from past Nirmala practices)'.
- The Nirmala saint gets an education and imparts education in asceticism only. Then, they go for holy pilgrimage and keep incessant practice to follow their Guru.
- Complete love and devotion to God, Belief only in the teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus and *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*.¹⁵⁹
- The belief that the '*MOOL MANTRA*' or the '*ORIGINAL HYMN*' was heard by Guru Nanak Dev ji from the *AKAL PURKH* and therefore

¹⁵⁸ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p.9.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.10.



considered it their privilege to be blessed with the '*MOOL MANTRA*' and other teachings from their mentor, a live Guru.

- After the baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they, in reverence, touch the feet of the chief saint since it is with his blessings that they have attained this state. Touching the feet and bowing on the feet of their live Preceptor is a regular practice. Without baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*) Nirmala saint could not become Nirmala.¹⁶⁰
- They consider it auspicious to establish religious places (*Gurudwaras*), where any ten Gurus had to visit and had some historical significance. Therefore, they also launch *Gurudwaras* at sites visited by their Preceptor and considered holy places. They call them *dere, akharha, dharmashala, kutiya, gufa, ashram, etc.*
- They don saffron or white clothes on their body. The robe is called GATTI.
- Teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, Vedas and Puranas, and the scriptures of other religions are also given due reverence.
- Non-veg, wine, or any intoxicants are not permissible in this sect.
- Unlike *Jogis, Udasis, Naathas, and Jains*, they are attached to the masses.
- Nirmalas promote *Gurmat* and *the Gurbani* in the different Kumbha fairs held on different occasions at Ganga, Paryagraj Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain, Triumbak, etc. They also perform holy pilgrimages to near and far places to proliferate Sikhism extensively.¹⁶¹
- At the holy places of Nirmala Saints on *Poornima* (full moon days), *Amavasya* (darkness of new moon), and on *Sangrand* (the first day of the month) and the days related to *Guru Sahiban* (ten Gurus) are especially celebrated.
- Nirmala Saints pay special regard to the guests and serve food and special *madhukareeda parsada* with proper care of rest and other facilities.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 10.

¹⁶¹ Balwant singh Kotha Guru, Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha, p.36.



- This sect believes in soul purification through chanting God (Naam Japna) and service to humanity. It believes that salvation can be achieved if inner insight is purged through these two. The journey of the soul could be over and done with such efforts.
- Nirmala Saints are ascetic dera holders as well as *maafi daar*(cottager) and *jagirdaar* (feudalists). These dera holders have their *chelas* (disciples), and one of them is the main (chief) *chela*, which is usually the head priest (legal heir) of the dera. This head organises the teaching and learning of Vedanta, Sikhism, and the *Gurbani* in the dera.¹⁶²
- Nirmalas don't believe in superstitions and darkness.

By observing the above details of the pedigree, promising leaders and numerous involvements of the deras of the Nirmala sect; it could be established the Nirmala sect has good standing in Doaba region of Punjab. Moreover, the deras of the sect have respectable repute among the masses. Their selfless services in their residential arenas have made them distinctive from the deras of other sects. Further, the governance of the deras based on various rules and regulations like *Dastur-Ul-Amal*, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal. Nirmal Maha Mandal, Doaba Nirmal Mandal etc. have improved the functioning of their deras as well as have augmented their reputation as democraticinstitutes with sanctified vision.

¹⁶² Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Dera Gurusar Khuda Hoshiarpur, p. 10.

CHAPTER IV
LITERARY AND
RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES
OF
THE NIRMALAS



An attempt is made in this chapter to deal elaborately and analytically to signal contributions made by the Nirmalas in the literary field and religious arena. The academic and religious activities left a deep imprint on people's minds and popularised this sect abundantly. Their scriptures were not against the fundamentals of Sikhism and instead they augmented and added glory to the shining Sikhism.

In 1716 Sikh community faced a very crucial time after the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur. Sikhs had to move towards the hills, jungles, or deserts to get rid of the clutches of the cruel Mughal rulers. People got so scared that they hardly dared to look at Sikh *Gurudwaras*(temples). There was a fear against Sikhism and the Sikh scriptures at this time. It was a dark phase of spiritual as well as intellectual vacuum. But in these challenging times, the only ray of hope became the Nirmala sect which kept this torch of Sikhism burning. Their way of doing the advertisement of Sikhism was such a secret one that could not be noted by the contemporary rulers. Moreover, their impetus of movement was in the Malwa region, which was the most ignored area in the opinion of Muslim fanatics.¹ In these critical days to live with the pains of the common masses, these were the saints who lived with their sorrows and glee. Religious conflict between all the religious communities worsens the socio-structure. The Nirmala sect became the savior of Sikhism at this time. They spread Sikhism in a very systematic way; thus, the Nirmalas were considered pioneers.² These saints outstretched voices against suppression and communal politics. The connotations of both spiritual and political turbulence were well assumed and explained through their writings. They attacked traditional rituals and threw on the true path of devotion and upheld candid human values. They remonstrated the exploitation of the masses in their work and opened the way for revolution. Their indigenous educational enterprise and the challenge erected in front of Christian missionaries' educational revival are the most owing lead taken by them. The native educational paw marks followed by Nirmalas proved milestones. They silently strengthened the vernacular languages and local educational ventures too. But their contributions and literary accomplishments' are yet to be explored and charted. In the present study, an attempt is made to draw attention to their grand historical work.

¹ Dr. Niharanjan Ray (1975), *The Sikh Gurus and Sikh Society*, Munshi Manohar Lal, New Delhi, p.117.

² Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Prdeepika*, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, Kankhal p.84.



In the eighteenth century, the Nirmala saints were also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*) they played their role well.³ Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion. Masses were influenced by the selfless services of Nirmalas, and this further led to the inclination towards Sikhism. In British governance, schools spread only religious education, although every type of education was available.⁴ Muslim communities used to teach their kids in *Madrasas* (*Mosques of learning*), but there was scanty arrangement for the Hindu community except for a few Hindi *Pathshalas*.⁵ The Hindu and Sikh youth came in direct contact with Nirmalas. These saints were highly inclined towards the spread of education, and they accepted the challenge of redeeming the Sikh and Hindu communities. Nirmala Sikhs have been called theologians of *Gurmat*. From the first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji till the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs who lived in *Grihastha* (home) had been called Sikhs, but those who left home and became ascetic and austere; had been named the Nirmalas. This tradition is ongoing.⁶ By abstaining from worldly allures, they had consistently donated to literature and socio-cultural reform engagements.

Nirmalas' contributions to the field of education are manifold. The chief duty of Nirmala saints was education expansion. In that period, Sanskrit Gurukul's educational model was prevalent. Henceforth they have to first learn Vedanta from Sanskrit scholars at Banaras and Prayag, etc. This tradition has begun in the times of Guru Gobind Singh. The second motive was to provide chances for Sanskrit learning to interested Sikhs. In those times, Brahmins did not consider commoners as the true recipient of Sanskrit education; hence Nirmalas took it as their moral duty to teach their brothers Sanskrit. For this purpose, they toiled hard and opened Sanskrit schools(pathshala) at Banares, Prayag, Ujjain, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Lahore, Amritsar, Damadama Sahib, Patiala, etc. Mahant Ganesha Singh mentioned 17 such sects in his book named '*Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*', and Mahant Dayal Singh had said 33 such sects in his books named *Nirmal Panth Darshan* which had abundantly served

³ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan arthaat Itihaas Nirmal Bhekh*, p 3.

⁴ Dr. A.L. Shrivastav (1964), *Medival Indian Culture*, Shiva Lal Agarwala and Company, Agra, p. 97.

⁵ Darshan Singh (1975), *The Ninth Nanak, A Historical Biography*, K. Lal and Company Jalandhar, p. 13.

⁶ Giani Gian Singh (1962), *Nirmal Panth Prdeepika*, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, Kankhal, p.7.



educationally.⁷ It is worth pointing out here that there was some substantial education arrangement in all these places. From commoners to the higher dignitaries, Nirmala scholars have served this duty quite well. Nirmalas were the scholars of Sanskrit. They initiated the learning of ancient Indian *Shastraparnali* (specific way of learning), especially Sanskrit *Vyakaran*, *NayayShastra*, and *Vedanta*. The teaching of Sanskrit, *Gurmat*, and language were their major areas of concern. In the Sanskrit language, they focussed on the painstaking study of Hindu mythology. They composed high-quality books in Hindi like *Vichar Sagar*, *Panchdashi*, *Vichar Mala*, *Saaru Katawali*, *Vairag Shatak*, *Bhavrasamrit*, *Prabhochandrodaya* and *Hanuman Natak*. In Sanskrit: *Laghu Sidhant Koumudi*, *Madh Komudi*, *Tarak sanagraha*, *Nayaya Sidjanta*, *Muktawali*, and *Vedant Sidhant Muktawali* etc. They dedicatedly worked on *Gurmat* literature such as *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dasham Granth*. Even scholars from abroad were enthralled by Nirmala's scholastic virtues. In 1812 John Malcolm wrote a small book named *Sketch of the Sikhs*. It is discussed in it that many Europeans learned *Gurmat* knowledge from the Nirmala sect.⁸

Nirmala saints exalted with divine knowledge and education; had explored high levels of literature, science, axiology, logistics, and philosophy of *the Gurbani*. The classical exegesis and translations of *Gurbani*, dictionaries, literature, *Chhanda Shastra*, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. Story narratives, *Raag Kirtanas*, literary discussions and arguments, the advocacy of principles of *Gurmat*, free-lance writing through newspapers, to launch of Damdami Taxal in Gurumukhy, and many more activities are attributed to them. It had been desired by the tenth Guru that the Nirmla sect should be instrumental in spreading education to the Sikh masses. The Nirmalas true to the teachings of the Great Guru, took this responsibility and contributed hugely to the spread of education. From the very beginning, the Nirmala saints have a keen interest in education and *Vedantas*. They were seriously devoted to the reading, teaching, and critical analysis of four Vedas, nine *vyakarans*, *Khat Shastras*, 18 Puranas, and 27 Smirities. Based on the interpretation of Hindu scriptures, they used to visit holy places and discuss the philosophy of Vedanta. Besides this, they delivered lectures on *Gurmat* knowledge.

⁷ Payara Singh Padam, Vidyapati Nirmale cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p. 215.

⁸ John Malcolm (1810), *Sketch of Sikhs*, Asiatic Researches Vol XI Calcutta, p.198.



Disseminate *Gurmat* was the main focus of Nirmala saints. This was the reason behind the following of the Sikh religion as *sahajdhari* Sikhs by Pathans of Karachi and Sindh. Their literature could be divided into four categories i.e.1.Sanskrit Literature, 2. Brij and Hindi Language 3. Sindhi and 4. Punjabi Literature. Awfully less proof is found in Sindhi literature. The Nirmala Saints composed the *Gurmat* literature as well as inscribed Indian philosophical literature.⁹ It is unanimously accepted that Nirmalas have profusely contributed to creating the unique place of Guru Nanak in the literary world. Their contributions in *Shastra parnali*(traditional Sanskrit teaching), Sanskrit language acquisition and delineation, preaching, Scripture writing, commentaries on Indian philosophy, contribution to journalism, the opening of colleges and universities with both new and old curriculum, Damdami *Gurumukhy Taksal* (printing press) are wordless even in the age of modern multifaceted literature.

Beyond teaching, the Nirmalas saints were stalwartly involved in preaching. They were very dexterous in storytelling, narratives, descriptions, and logical arguments. Although Nirmalas were exceptional in evangelization, few of them were outstanding and superseding in explanation, illustration, and vocabulary. Their miraculous elucidations were matchless. But, on the other hand, they were pretty excellent in debate and oratory. The scholars like Pandit Diwan Singh(*Theekariwaale*) and Pandit Hari Singh(*Kathawale*) had impressed many and won the royal favor.¹⁰ Pandit Hari Singh gained the royal patronage of the king of Kathmandu by narrating Gurbani in reference to *Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, and Smritis*¹¹. The king wanted to offer rupees ten thousand to him, but the great saint declined. But he established a Gurudwara in Kathmandu (Nepal). Similarly, Shri Mahant Pandit Ram Singh (Hareeke waale) was a magnificent elaborator and interpreter of Vedas. In the Kumbha fair of 1920, after hearing his elocution on Vedas and Guru Granth Sahib; the king of Gwalior called him at his palace. Pandit Ram Singh narrated the episode of imprisonment of Shri Guru Hari Gobind Singh ji Maharaj in Gwalior fort. The king got so happy with this chronicle that he built a *Guru Dwara*(Sikh temple) in the

⁹ Payara Singh Padam, Vidyapati Nirmale, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.211.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 216.

¹¹ Gurmeet Singh (2009), *Nirmal Samapadaya Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Ate Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh*, Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, p.49. Hereafter cited as Gurmeet Singh, *Nirmal Samapadaya Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Ate Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh*, p.49.



garden(Phull Ka Baag).¹² Many Nirmalas were fond of traveling and doing *Gurmat* expansion in the rural areas. Usually, they preach moral values, but they teach Guru Granth Sahib side by side. Pandit Narayan Singh Virakat Rishikesh, Pandit Fouja Singh Mandali wale, Pandit Kala Singh Ji Mandeshwar, Pandit Teja Singh, Sant Samund Singh, Sant Jawala Das(Dadan wale), Sant Anand Singh Mandali Waale, Giani Sarovar Singh, Pandit Hakim Singh Dera Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar, Pandit Kalyan Singh, Pandit Hardev Singh Virakat Kutiya Kankhal and Pandit Bhan Singh Kokary; were the few of the best speakers of Nirmala sect. Similarly, the great orators like Pandit Tara Singh, Pandit Narottam Singh, Pandit Ishar Singh Kaashi, and Pandit Saadhu Singh, etc., were the great intellectuals who successfully spread the *Gurmat* among the masses. These scholars used to keep a versatile team of scholars with them. Notably, they had covered the area of the Malwa region as the British governance did little interference in this region.¹³

These Nirmalas saints are agile in holy recitation (*Raag- Kirtan*), reciting and narrating or genre of religious performance arts, connoting a musical form of narration or shared recitation, particularly of religious ideas. In music and in *Raag Kirtan*, these saints are unparalleled. Sant Baba Mishra Singh¹⁴ Amritsar was a popular performer in the recitation of Kirtan and a great practitioner of the *Gurbani*. His dera was the epicenter of learning of *Raag Kirtan*(as the specific type of holy recitation of Adi Granth) in the area. Sant Kapoor Singh, a saint of this dera was a great *Raagi* (singer of holy *Gurbani*). After retiring from here, he served the king of Patiala, i.e. Maharaja Bhupinder Singh as court Raagi. Bhai Makhan, Bhai Jawahar Singh, and Bhai Labh Singh were the disciples of Shri Sant Kapoor Singh.¹⁵ Sant Thakur Shudh Singh opened a dera at village Doppar (District Faridkot) where he initiated a holy congregation and religious education for the physically challenged. This dera had been headed by Mahant Veer Singh and Mahant Mangal Singh. Any blind *raagi* (singer of the holy *Gurbani*) would like to visit Doppar.¹⁶ In the twentieth

¹² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.40.

¹³ Gurmeet Singh, *Nirmal Samapadaya Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Ate Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh*, p.50.

¹⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.34.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.35.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 35.



century, Shriman Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana was a renowned singer of Gurbani. Sant Ishar Singh Rarha Sahib and Mahant Gajja Singh Guru Dwara Gursar were great teachers of music.¹⁷ Maharaja Bhupinder Singh and Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha were his followers. Pandit Nihal Singh Boha Khalsa and Sant Baba Balwant Singh Sidhsar Sihorha were the great composers and performers of *Raag kirtan*.¹⁸

Nirmla Sect has constituted the teams of scholars for Gurbani proliferation (*Mandaliyan*) and intellectual personnel who spread the religion by touring far-fetched areas¹⁹. For the upliftment of the masses, they endured chilled and hot weather but keep on the torch of enlightening the masses. They are highly seasoned in all types of difficulties and weather. These teams travel to almost every part of the country and are well acquainted with the culture and civilization of the various parts of the country. The head of the team is called Mandaleshwar or Mahamandaleshwar. Mandaleshwar like Swami Jawaladas (Dadan wale), Pandit Fauja Singh, Pandit Kala Singh, Pandit Hari Singh(Kathawale), Pandit Narayan Singh Virakat Kutiya Kankhal, Pandit Baba Prem Singh Jharhi Rishikesh, Pandit Ishar Singh Doppar, Pandit Shameer Singh Balongi wale, Pandit Gurbakhash Singh Naroki and in Punjab Sant Sunder Singh Bhindranwale, Sant Gurbachan Singh Khalsa prominently worked for Sikhism through these teams.²⁰ Numerous other scholars like Pandit Anand Singh Dera Mishra Wala, Pandit Mehar Singh Virakt Jagraon, etc. Many other team leaders like Pandit Preetam Singh Bhajan Garh, Pandit Jawahar Singh, Pandit Shyam Singh, and so many others are listed here.²¹ But it is crystal clear that Nirmlas was the main force behind the present picture of Sikhism. It is because of their team-coherence that they cleave together for the cause spiritual awakening.

Damadami Taxal in village Bhinderan., District Ferozpur is another endeavor by the Nirmala sect. Located in Guru Kashi is the greatest venture of the Nirmala sect, which

¹⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.42.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.43.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.44.

²⁰ Gurdeep Singh Kesari, *Guru Nanak Darshan Te Sikh Dharam Nu Bahu Pakhi Den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.121-122.

²¹ Gurmeet Singh, *Nirmal Samapadaya Ate Nirmal Panchayati Akhara, Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh*, p.49.



is also called Damdami Gurumukhi Taksal (printing press).²² Guru Gobind Singh established this center. Although there were abundant manuscripts of Gurumukhi scriptures, Damadami Gurumukhi was most sophisticated, precise, and magnificent. In the present era, too, there is an excellent reverberation of Damdami Taksal on the masses. The writers and the would be writers have been properly trained in Gurukashi about the syllables, script, phonetics, etc., for a long back. Each word with its niceties, fineness, and nuances were worked upon. The tenth Guru Gobind Singh wanted to promulgate Gurbani with a proper, clear, and fine quality replica of Guru Granth Sahib. Everything related to the printing of *Guru Granth Sahib* was available here. This center of learning and printing was no less than any world-class university like Nalanda, Takshila, and Varanasi. Nirmala saints contributed in both teaching and writing of scripts of Guru Granth Sahib. Swami Bhagat Singh of Pindibhekh wrote five scripts (*Beerhan*) of Guru Granth Sahib. Sant Vidhawa Singh of Laharkhana Bhatinda also wrote five scripts of Guru Granth Sahib. In Guru Ki Kaashi, Talwandi Sabo was the main printing press. The *Gurumukhi* of Damadama Sahib was called as Damadama Gurumukhi. Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha has recorded the specimens of Damadami *Gurumukhi*, Kashmiri *Gurumukhi*, and *Amritsari Gurumukhi* in his work.²³

Scripture writing was the most illuminating exertion of Nirmalas. Tirath Singh(2011)²⁴ states that spiritual (*adhyatamic*) literature falls under one of the two categories ; (a)the dialectical, presenting arguments to disprove the established conclusions of competing schools of thought, and (b) the instructional, guiding the ardent seeker of Truth (jigaysu). The more significant majority of Nirmala literature belongs to the second category to avoid pointless debate(jalap) and mere wrangling critique(Vedanta). Besides the numerous commentaries on Gurbani, some of the essential texts dedicated entirely to the exploration of Gurmat Sidhant include *Sri Gurmat Sidhantasar* by Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, *Sri Gurmat Digvijay* and *Granth Budhi Byaadh* by Pandit Isher Singh Kashi Vale Bhayankaracharya; *Sri Gur Sikhya Prabhakar* and *Sri Guru Sidhant Jyoti* by Pandit Sadhu Singh Ji Patiala. Thus the most enlightening role of Nirmalas in writing is of two types, just as Indian

²² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.48.

²³ *Ibid*, pp. 48,52.

²⁴ Teerath Singh, cited in Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.61.



Philosophic technique and *Gurmat* Knowledge. Sanskrit Scriptures writing is taken as the most challenging literary activity, and Nirmalas directly seized the challenge. Pandit Kaur Singh wrote *Guru Komudi*; Pandit Hara Singh *Shri Guru Sidhant Parijaat*; Pandit Ishar Singh Kaashi *Vaheguru Mahagranth*; Pandit Nihal Singh Boha *Guru Nibandh Sahinta Gudarth Deepika*; Pandit Gurditt Singh *Guru Nanak Stotra, Naishkaramya Sidhi Ki Teeka and Vedant Sidhant Muktaawai*; Pandit Udhava Singh *Abhav Rahasya and Ashram Dhram Rahasya*; Pandit Sada Singh: *Adait Sidhi ki Sukhsagar Chandrika*; Pandit Atam Dev Singh Lahor *Abhedakhand Chanderma*; Baba Prem Singh Rishikesh *Guru Satotra, etc.*²⁵

Contribution of Nirmala saints to Punjabi literature is gargantuan. This venture has brought them closer to the grassroots. All the related socio-religious issues are covered in their literary attempts. Their work is in large volume and in disciplined form. Nirmalas' Punjabi literature could be divided into four parts:

1. The commentaries on the Bani of Guru Granth Sahib
2. Description of Gurmat and Rahitnamas
3. Explanation of Vedanta
4. Sikh history

Pandit Gulab Singh depicted a vibrant vocabulary in his works. Pandit Tara Singh Narottam's works also contained a good range of Punjabi vocabulary. Sant Nihal Singh, Sant Sadhu Singh, and Pandit Sher Singh; are all these scholars who have contributed voluptuously to the Punjabi grammar and language.²⁶

Sudharam Marag Granth a Rahitnama was edited by Sant Samporan Singh in 1858. The lifestyle (*right*) of Nirmalas is discussed here regarding the food manners. This book can be considered the first book of Nirmala literature.

Saakhi Parman was written by Sant Atma Singh in 1893. He lived in Dera Thakaran Amritsar for a long time. *Saakhi Parman* focuses on the lively utilisation of Gurbani in the day to day life. *Gurbani* had proved as a road map at every stage of life. Selected verses were illustrated from Guru Granth Sahib, with narratives and

²⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 53.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 60.



elucidation of deep thoughts. The language of Sant Aatma Singh is straightforward and comprehensible.²⁷

Gurmat Sikhiya Prabhakar and Guru Sidhant Jyoti, scriptures are documented in the Braj language by Sant Sadhu Singh. From the point of view of the Punjabi language, *Uthanika Shri Guru Granth Sahib* was written in 1898²⁸.

Similarly, Gian Gian Singh (1822 -1921) gave a very deliberate direction to Punjabi literature. Giani Gian Dev was the disciple of Pandit Tara Singh and was baptized by Bhai Veer Singh Naurangabad. He was the first to inscribe the history of the Nirmala sect, i.e., *Nirmala Panth Pradeepika. Panth Parkash* is a simple and comprehensive work of Giani Gian Dev.²⁹

The second half of the nineteenth century could be called the golden age of the Nirmala sect. During this period, great scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam Singh, Mahant Sadhu Singh, and Sant Nihal Singh (composer of *Nirmal Prabhakar and Sikhi Prabhakar*), Pandit Ishar Singh, etc., wrote many books in *Brij*, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Literary scholars like Sant Roop Singh, Mahant Aatma Singh, Sant Gurditt Singh, and Giani Gian Singh profusely in the Nirmala literature. At the beginning of the 20th century, except commentaries, *Sakhiyan* (narratives of Gurus), gurmat descriptions, autobiographies, history, etc., were the areas of literary development.³⁰

Pandit Gurditt Singh carved a book named *Gurmat Sidhant Saar* in 1929.³¹ This was the first attempt to sanctify the position of the Guru in the human body, which was the issue of conflict with the followers of other sects. Gurditt Singh gave an elaborated explanation and successfully launched the point of view of the Nirmala Sect in this regard. Beyond this, he had represented similarities and comparisons of Vedas and Gurbani. This book is the perfect illustration of the Nirmala sect philosophy. He had very effectively used his art in describing the value of Guru in the body. He clarified that the tenth Guru had given Guru Granth Sahib utmost priority. Although in *Gurmat* there is only one Guru, i.e., *Akaal Purakh* (God) yet ten Gurus had righteously given

²⁷ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.215.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 62.

²⁹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.80.

³⁰ Surender Singh (1981), *Nirmala Santan di Punjabi Sahitya nu Den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.252.

³¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.149.



the highest place to Guru Granth Sahib. An older person in a family is ordered to worship an idol or a pond in his memory, and people of that family worship him and idols as per his orders. But they have their father too. Likewise, in honoring *Adi Pita* (omniscient God), one should not have any objection to it either.

Pandit Hardev Singh, in 1947, wrote a biography of his Guru named *Narayan Hari Updesh* in two parts. Sant Gurditt Singh was a great scholar of the first decade of the twentieth century who had magnificently contributed to translating many works of medicine and Vedanta into the Braj language. In addition, he was the exponent of Quran interpretation and translator in Punjabi.³²

Mahant Ganesha Singh was an eminent scholar and laureate of the Nirmala sect. He was born in 1860 at Haloona Village of Hoshiarpur. He had written books on religion, medicine, and Vedanta. In Punjabi, he had leading books such as *Bharat Mat, Darpan, Granth Saakhi Parmaan, Nirmal Bhushan, etc. Granth Saakhi Parman* was published in 1908 and *Granth Mat Parman* is a book of self-progress. The following quote from his book could quickly evaluate the language and style. 'One of the devotees was interested to know the fruit of the meeting of the sant.....but his conflict was not exterminated until he met Guru Nanak Dev Ji.'³³

Sant Sampuran Singh was another scholar to author more than a dozen books and commentaries. *Jeevan Gaatha* is an auto-biography by Sant Sampuran Singh. He had clearly shown his philosophy in it. A reference is necessary to be mentioned here:

'I again dived into *Har ki Pouri* and adorned the robes of an ascetic blessed by my lord master (*sadguru*) instead of a householder.'³⁴

Pandit Narayan Singh was a great scholar of commentary literature. *Saakhi Parmaan and Bhagat Mal Steek* are his famous books. He had written anecdotes (*saakhiyan*) as narratives (*kathakara*).

Sant Tahil Singh had written only one book, but that book is of significant importance in Punjabi literature. The book is *Guru Gira Rag Mala Mandan Parboth*. It was written in 1908.³⁵

³² Surender Singh (1981), *Nirmala Santan di Punjabi Sahitya nu Den*, cited in .Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.252.

³³ Ganesha Singh (1908), *Granth Saakhi Parmaan*, Chatar Singh Jeewan Singh, Amritsar, p.18.

³⁴ Sant Samporan Singh (1954), *Jeewan Gatha*, Manager Estri Satsang, Amritsar, p. 25.



Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth, written by Mahant Dayal Singh, is an in-depth elaboration of the lifestyle, philosophy, and ideology of Nirmalas. This book has proven a great resource about the sustenance pattern of the Nirmala sect.³⁶

Their contribution to Punjabi literature is redundant. A few more scriptures and books are listed here.³⁷:

Pandit Gulab Singh: *Mokh Panth, Parbodh Chandrodya Natak, Bhavrasamrit, Adhyatma Ramayan*; Pandit Tara Singh: *Gurmat Nirnaya Sagar, Guru Teerath Sangrahi, Guru Girarth Kosh*; Pandit Sadhu Singh Patiala: *Guru Sidhant Ravi, Shri Mukhwak Sidhant Jyoti, Shri Dwie Panth Pardeepika*; Pandit Gurdit Singh: *Gurmat Sidhant Saar*; Pandit Nihal Singh Lahori : *Nirmal Prabhakar, Sikhi Parbhakar Akaal Natak*; Pandit Nihal Singh Boha: *Chakradhar Charitra Charu Chandrika*; Sant Nihal Singh: *Kavindra Parkash*; Pandit Govind Singh (Ganda Singh) *Itihas Guru Khalsa, Udyog Tatha Prarabd, Nyaya Muktawali ki Hindi Teeka*; Pandit Isshar Singh Kaashi: *Shri Gurmati Dig Vijay*; Pandit Nanu Singh *Guru Granth Steek, Adhyatam Ramayana, Hanuman Natak. Ikadashi Mahatam*; Pandit Sadhu Singh Pelibheet ; *Guru Granth Pradeep(Japu Sateek) Satiyarth Bibek*; Pandit Hari Singh: *Adaitanubhav Parkash*; Sant Tahil Singh: *Alankar Sagar Sudha*; Sant Haribhajan Singh *Tattva Darpan, Guru Charitra Chandrika*; Sant Sangat Singh *Pingal Prastaar Sangarah*; Pandit Budh Singh: *Pingal Prastaar Prabhakar, Tarak Sangrahi Da Padarath Teeka*; Sant Tara Singh Lahor: *Malechha Mata Khandan*; Pandit Mangal Singh *Mahoorat Chintamani*; Pandit Haridev Narayan *Hari Updesh*; Baba Mohar Singh Katayi: *Yog Sikhiya Parbhakar*; Sant Tara Singh Taran Taran *Mumukshu Bodhan Parkash*; Sant Dewa Singh Multaan: *Atamaanubhav Bibek, SupanVichar, Mrityu Chanha Pardeepika*; Giani Gian Singh *Shri Guru Grantha Parkash, Tareekh Guru Khalsa Nirmal Panth Preedipika etc.*; Mahant Ganesha Singh *Itihass Nirmal Bhekh, Bharat Mat Darpan, Niramal Vaidya*; Mahant Dayal Singh *Nirmal Panth*

³⁵ Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, 258.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 258.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 218



*Darshan (4 parts) Baba Nanak Da Nirmal Panth Giyan Bhumika; Pandit Arjun Singh Muni Shri Guru Granth Sateek Hindi, Itihas Nirmal Panchayati Akhara.*³⁸

In nut shell the literary achievements of the Nirmalas are galore. The various forms of writing Punjabi literature are indeed magnificent. It has been significantly noted that the literay pieces and critiques are the treasurable assets of Punjabi literature, but there is great scope for more exploration.³⁹

Shastrarth (Strife or debate) was another enterprise by the Nirmala saints. Nirmala saints were adroit in spiritual arguments. As they were dexterous in religion, politics, literature, poetry, Vedanta and *Nyaya Shastra*, etc. They had a good command of both Sanskrit and the English language. They always gained victory if they were challenged for any debate. Pandit Sada Singh accepted the challenge of a scholar for debate in Kashi (modern Varanasi) and defeated him. The people of Kashi honored him with the title of 'Dandi'. In 1965 he wrote a commentary named '*Surasagar Chandrika*' on the famous book of Vedant, i.e., "*Adwaitsidhi*."⁴⁰ Similarly, Swami Dayanand challenged Sikhs in Amritsar about the meaninglessness of the word 'Khalsa'. Pandit Thakur Nihal Singh decided to riposte this arrogant behavior. In one night, he wrote the '*Khalsa Shatak*', which consisted of hundred *shlokas* (hymns).⁴¹ Pandit Nihal Singh not only whitewashed Swami Dayanand but also generated a great manuscript in one night. Another great orator was Pandit Ishwar Singh Kaliyug. Due to his peculiar confidence, elocution, and fearless diction, he was known as '*Bhayankaracharya*'. He won many deliberations, such as in 1879 won a debate with the *Khat Darshan Sadhu Samaj*, and in 1886 in Mandi Riyasat outwitted the local scholars.⁴² Even illustrious historian Giani Gain Singh had a long debate with King Sainpal in Mor Dhuj city for many days. The topic of the discussion was the difference between *Taqdeer* (Destiny) and *Tadbeer*(feat). He won the debate with flying colors. Pandit Maheshwar Singh and Pandit Deewan Singh Theekari *wale* were inimitable and unrivaled raconteurs of the time.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p.219.

³⁹ Surinder Singh Kohli, Punjabi Sahitya da itihas, cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa(2012), *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, p.99.

⁴⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.47

⁴¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.41.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.47



The other vital venture of the Nirmala sect is *Teekakari* (commentary writing). These learned scholars were quite agile in writing critical appraisals of various scriptures. They wrote critical reviews on *Vedanta* and *Gurbani* and translated numerous Sanskrit and Sikh scriptures. This type of literature was easily comprehensible to the masses. The most typical concepts of philosophy were narrated in the most exciting and conversant way. Further, the hegemony of Brahmins was challenged and subsided by this most exclusive literature. The types of Teeka writing are considered *Pinjaka* (the root word is elaborated with synonyms) and *Apinjaka* (only tough words are illustrated with examples).⁴³ Taran Singh pointed out that these scholars accumulated all impacts and colors of the times.⁴⁴ The Nirmala scholars are renowned for their contributions to commentary writing. There are leading types of commentary writing exposed by them, for example.⁴⁵:

Sahaj--- Shri Guru Arjun Dev Ji; *Bhai*--- Bhai Gurdas ji; *Parmarth*--- Shri Manohar Das Meharban Ji; *Giani*--- Giani Bhai Mani Singh; *Udaasi*--- Sadhu Annadghan; *Nirmala*--- Pandit Tara Singh Narottam; *Sikh Sabhai*--- Bhai Veer Singh; Miscellaneous—Prof. Teja Singh Prof. Sahib Singh

Jeewan Parkash & Asali Guru Parkash by Sant Tahil Singh are famous commentaries.⁴⁶ Similarly, *Panth Parkash of Giani Gian Singh* is another glaring write-up.⁴⁷ *Pingal Prastaar Sangarahi* by Sant Sangat Singh Soojhwan and *Mat Sangrahi* are the poetic compositions.⁴⁸ The poet had shared lots of his opinions on the various aspects of *Vedant Sankhya Shastra*, *Gurmat*, and society. The poet explained that contemporary society is full of covetousness and lust under the impression of sexual attractions of women like animals.⁴⁹ Mahant Hakim Singh shared the seven stages of the development soul in his book *Giyan Bhumika*.⁵⁰ In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Nirmala poet Sant Bishan Singh Kreet had

⁴³ Sant Bahg Singh Bange, *Gurbani de vibhin teekeyan duara Nirmale Santan da Yogdan*, cited in Kulwinder singh, *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, p.17.

⁴⁴ Taran Singh (1981), *Nirmal Samparadya di Teeka Padhati*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya*, p.275.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p.276.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.260.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.260.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.261.

⁴⁹ Sant Sangat Singh Soojhwan (1924), *Granth Mat Sangarahi* Wazeer Hind Press, Amritsar, p.109. Cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.261.

⁵⁰ Mahant Hakim Singh (1950), *Giyan Bhumika*, Dera Baba Mishra Singh, Amritsar p.50.



written famous *Jeewan Phuhar*, *Noory Jhalakan* & *Noori Rishma*, which had explicitly highlighted *Vedanta*.

Contribution to Sanskrit and Hindi Literature by the Nirmalas is quite a significant initiative. These saints and poets had contributed to the nourishing and development of Hindi Literature in Punjab. In Punjab for Hindi, *the Devnagri* script had been used in the twentieth century only. Guru Gobind Singh was a great scholar of languages. He had excellent command over Persian, *Braj*, *Dingal*, *Rekhata*, and *Punjabi*. After a long gap of centuries, Guru Gobind Singh was the first person to feel the need & value of the extincting Sanskrit language. He knew that the vanishing of the Sanskrit language would lead to the annihilation of Indian heritage.⁵¹ Henceforth the Nirmala saints were inspired to contribute to Sanskrit and Hindi literature just as follows: the translations, commentaries, and transformation of ancient scriptures in Hindi; the writings of the *Guru Bani* and dictionaries; the Sikh historical, and poetic compositions; poetic literature of *Puranas etc.*

These saints mainly contributed to the translations and conversions of the Sanskrit Scriptures. For example, Pandit Gulab Singh wrote *Adhyatama Ramayana*, *Parbodh Chandrodaya*, *Mokh Panth*; Bhai Santokh Sikh wrote *Balmiki Ramayana*; Pandit Gurditt Singh's *Naishya Krama Sidhi*, *Vedant Sidhant Mukta wali*; Pandit Ganda Singh's *Nyaya Mukta wali*, *Vedant Paribhasha*; Sant Nirankar Singh's commentary of *Vichar Sagar* and Mahant Ganesha Singh's *Adhayatam Parkash*, etc. are a few scholastic creations of the Nirmla sect in Hindi literature.⁵²

The translations of Sanskrit literature in Hindi is the old convention, but the practice of description of Gurbani through commentaries was initiated by Nirmalas only. They did renditions both in Sanskrit and Hindi. *Guru Komudi* by Pandit Kaur Singh; *Guru Sidhant Parijat* by Pandit Hara Singh; *Guru Nanak Stotra* by Pandit Gurditt Singh; *Guru Stotra* by Baba Prem Singh, *Jap Guudarth Deepika in Sanskrit* by Nihal Singh is the famous compositions of Nirmalas.⁵³ The commentaries list provided by these

⁵¹ Mahip Singh (1981), *Nirmala Santa di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.270.

⁵² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, pp.102-103.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 99.



Nirmala saints is quite big. Bhai Santokh Singh wrote *Jap ji Garab Ganjaniteeka*; Pandit Tara Singh Narottam wrote *Bhagat Bani, Jap Ji, Rahiras*, the commentary of *Keertan Sohilla* and the scholars like Pandit Narain Singh, Sant Dayal Singh, Sant Nirankar Singh, Sant Tara Singh, Sant Dewa Singh, Sadhu Gurditt Singh⁵⁴ introduced Nirmala Literature to the world.

There were three types of heroes prevalent in Hindi literature,⁵⁵ i.e., a godly figure like Shri Ram of *Ram Charit Manas* (Tulsi Das); the second type is of semi imaginative Sufi figures like Mallik Muhammad Jayasi, Qutban Majhan and the third type of characters are the patterns (kings and *nawabs*) who supported the poets for literary activities. The hero of Chand Bardayi i.e. *Prithvi Raj Raso* and Jagnik were Aala and Udanik etc., but the Nirmala saints had considered ten Gurus as their heroes, which are all different from other heroes. The Nirmala saints have portrayed them as Godly characters, whereas they are historical heroes, not the *Pauranik*. In Bhai Sukha Singh's *Guru Bilas Patshahi*⁵⁶; Bhai Santokh Singh in *Gur Pratap Sooraj Granth* and Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Parkash*; the heroes are Gurus. Here it is necessary to mention that although the description of Guru as divine figures had started in the Guru period, only the epical importance of Gurus had been presented by the Nirmalas only.⁵⁷ Similarly, the Nirmala poet Sant Gulab Singh illustrated Guru Nanak's character as a divine figure in his commendable book named *Bhavrasamrit*⁵⁸. This book had a great illustration of the nature of Shri Ram. Hence countless works of commentary writing have increased the repute of the Nirmala sect. Some of the most outstanding results are deliberated here:

*Faridkoti Teeka*⁵⁹: it is named after the name of the ruler of Faridkot, i.e., Maharaja Bikarma Singh. Giani Badan Singh was an erudite scholar of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. He took the help of different scholars of various languages and completed this work

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp.105-106.

⁵⁵ Mahip Singh (1981), *Nirmala Santa di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.271.

⁵⁶ Bhai Sukha Singh (1970), *Guru Bilas Paatshahi Daswin*, Dr. Jay Bhagwan Goyal, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab Patiala, p.30.

⁵⁷ Mahip Singh (1981), *Nirmala Santa di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Sampardaya*, p.272.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 272-273.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 186.



which was published by the existing ruler Maharaja Vijender Singh in 1906. The second edition was published in 1925 by Maharaja Varinder Singh.

*Guru Bhav Deepika*⁶⁰ was scribed by Pandit Tara Singh. He had written *Jap Ji Teeka* and *Shabad Hazara Teeka*. It was published in 1881. This year of publishing proves the authenticity of Pandit Tara Singh as the most senior and cerebral scholar of the Nirmala sect. He could be called the pioneer of commentary writing. *Gur Girarath Kosh*, written by Pandit Tara Singh, helps all inquisitive learners to understand *Gurbani* from other philosophical perspectives. Another very famous book of Pandit Tara Singh is *Shri Guru Teerath Sangarahi*,⁶¹ the first time published in 1884, and the second edition appeared in 1975 (published by Nirmala Panchayati Akhara Kankhal).

Pandit Gurdit had written commentaries on *Jap Ji Sahib* and *Shabad*⁶² Pandit Gurditt had written the following books: *Vedant Sidhant Mukta wali*: is a beautiful book on Vedanta published in 1914 by Lahore Printing Press. *Nishkramaya Sidhi*: it is a commendable commentary on the disciple of Shankracharya, i.e., Saravingacharya, written 1925 by Babe Shameen Press Lahore; *Jeevan Charittr Pandit Hari Singh*:⁶³ it is a summarised form of a biography of his Guru Hari Singh published third time by Nirmal Akhara in 1963; *Gurmat Sidhant Saar*: it was published by Changarh Mahalla Anarkali Lahore in 1934. *Guru Nanak Ashatak* was a great book that was written for the admiration of Shri Guru Nanak Dev.⁶⁴

Sant Hari Bhajan Singh⁶⁵ was a scholar of Sanskrit, Punjabi, and Hindi. He wrote many scholarly books such as *Shri Gur Partap Suraj* in 1927, *Jap Ji ki Sakal Bodh Teeka*, *Tatava Darpan*, *Adaitamrit*, *Ashtanga Yoga*, etc. Pandit Dewa Singh had written *Jap Pardeep*.

In a nutshell, these scholars profusely helped in the simplification of typical Sanskrit language and richness of Gurumukhi literature. This type of literature further

⁶⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.66.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.68.

⁶² Mahant Haqiqat Singh Arwind (1932), *Nirmal Santan Di Darshan te Dharma nu Lorh*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.188.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 188.

⁶⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gaatha*, p.88.



expanded the interest and knowledge of Sikhism. More complex issues of mysticism and spirituality were made easier in regional languages for the masses.

The chief Nirmalas saints and their contributions in commentary writing are as follows:

Bhai Santokh Singh (1787-1843) *Jap Ji Teeka Garabaganjni*

Pandit Tara Singh Narottam: 1. *Japji Rahras*, *Mohila Shabad Hazare* 2. *Bhagatan di bani* 3. *Teeka Shri Raag*. 4. *Teeka Guru Granth Sahib etc.*

Sant Sampooran Singh: *Bhagat Bani Maram*

Sant Dewa Singh: *Jap Pardeep Teeka*

Bhai Gian Singh Giani: *Jap ji Sateek* (type of commentary)

Sadhu Gurditt Singh: *Jap Ji Sateek*

Sant Nirankar Singh: *Gaurhi Bawan Akhari Mahalla* 5. *Sate Balwandi Di War* etc.

Bhai Dal Singh: *Bawan Akhari Bhawa Gaurhi Raag*

Sant Tahal Singh Nirmala –completed many of his works with particular emphasis on commentaries on some verses and shlokas.

Pandit Nihal Singh composed *Chakaradhar Charitra Charu Chandrika (Teeka Jap ji Sahib)*

Pandit Bhagwan Singh: *Teeka Var Aasa*

Pandit Nihal Singh: *Teeka Aasa di Var*^{66,67}

Pandit Tara Singh Narottam was jewel crest poet of Nirmala sect. He first of all scientifically understood the *Guru Granth Sahib* and then composed *Guru Girarth Kosh and Gurmat Nirnaya Sagar; Guru Vansh Taru Darpam & Guru Teerath Sangarah*. There are numerous trends prevalent in Teekakaari (commentary

⁶⁶ Taran Singh, *Nirmal Samapardaya Di Teeka Padhati*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.282.

⁶⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.145-146.



writing).⁶⁸ Trends of principles or doctrines and trends of genre and form are as follows:

Trends of principles or doctrines:

1. Consider Vedas as the testimony and equal to the *Gurbani*
2. The unswerving belief in God's divine decree is evident in Vedas and does not alter with the time and place. Only the dialect and language change with age.
3. *The Gurbani* strengthens precisely the message of Vedas and the belief that Sanskrit is God's language.
4. *The Gurbani* does not defy the concept of *Vedas*; it does not reject fasting and holy pilgrimage but strongly opposes idol worshipping.
5. *Gurmat* considers God's reminiscence as the primary font of reverence to God who is beyond any virtues(Nirgun)
6. *The Gurbani* is quite convinced on the issues of *Braham*, *Atma*(soul), *prakrity* (nature), *karma*(action), *awagaman* (journey of the soul), and the principle of *moksha* (salvation) with the Vedas. In other words, these concepts are the base of Vedanta, which is the fundamental distinction of Nirmalas.
7. *Adwait* is the summary of Vedas. All Nirmalas were steadfast believers of *Adwaitism*. They accepted recitation of God as the primary mode of salvation, but at the same time, they were confirmed about the need for divine knowledge for salvation. Their principle is that divine knowledge is the way to salvation.

Trends of Genre and form:⁶⁹

1. Nirmala scholars had made the commentaries of the *Gurbani* illustrative and elaborative.
2. The language of spiritual renditions (*teekas*) has become an ascetics lingua in which Sanskrit, *Vedantic*, and doctrine vocabulary has increased.

⁶⁸Taran Singh, *Nirmal Samapardaya Di Teeka Padhati*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.286.

⁶⁹*Ibid*, pp. 286-287.



3. The main content of the *Gurbani* is explained in many ways, and verses are described with numerous illustrations.
4. The eternal and tertiary connotations have become part of the genre of *Teekas*.
5. Every word is exemplified with the help of a Sanskrit dictionary.
6. *Puranik* (mythical) folk lore, stories, and references are included as evidence in commentary writing.
7. To explain the *Gurbani*, *Mantras*, Verses, and quotes from *Vedas* and old scriptures are used to explicate it adequately.⁷⁰

Thus it could be concluded that Nirmalas had done exclusive work on commentary writing. Their work has been given less importance and molested for the vicious interests of few modern Punjabi scholars. Even their pro- Vedantic approach to the *Gurbani* interpretation is misapprehended. It is a sorry state of affairs that most of the literature written by Nirmalas is unprinted and hidden under the cover of acknowledgment. Certainly, it is a matter of alarm that such a group of Sikh intellectuals is out of sight. Instead of accepting and conceding these scholars to the builders of the Sikh community in the eighteenth century, they are reckoned as its blockades. Their attempt as an interpretation of the *Gurbani* in Vedantic background is considered an attack on Sikhism, which is not at all true. As true sanctity of the *Gurbani* has been made possible to the masses by these scholars only.

Contribution to journalism by the Nirmala sect is copious. The Nirmala saints had excelled in journalism equally good. In Punjabi journalism, the Nirmala sect had played a very significant role. *Nirmala Patra* was a weekly magazine published in 1914.⁷¹ Sant Gurditt Singh edited it. Most of the articles published in it were in the *Braj* language. But after some time, it ceased to print. On 30th December 1960, Mahant Hari Singh published '*Nirmal Udesh*' magazine, which was a magnanimous success of his initiatives⁷². Punjabi articles are published in it. Except for this magazine, another one is *Sikh Sandesh* which was published by dera Digiana Jammu Tawi. After overviewing the works of Nimalas for about one and half centuries, the

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.287.

⁷¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.165.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.165.



contribution of Nirmalas has enriched the dialect and literature of Punjabi. Indeed, their literature is a precious gift to the Punjabi language. In the twentieth century, the newspaper became the chief source of promulgation of Sikhism and Nirmal Bhekh. Both religious and social articles of various scholars were published in these newspapers. Following are the few leading newspapers published by the Nirmala sect:

Nirmal Pattar: Editor Vaid Sant Gurditt Singh Amritsar; *Haridwar Samachar*: Pandit Maan Singh Shastri Gurudwara Gian Godri Haridwar; *Nirmal Gazat*: Editor Swami Sant Singh; *Nirmal Samachar*: Editor Mahant Kishan Singh Dera Warpal Amritsar; *Nirmal Pattar*: Chief Editor Mahant Dayal Singh Amritsar; *Nirmal Sandesh*: Chief Editor Mahant Pratap Singh Kaok Kalan Distt Ludhiana; *Nirmal Parkash*: Editor Mahant Kaok Kalan Distt Ludhiana; *Nirmal Marag*: Patron Baba Bhagwant Singh Dakoha Jalandhar; *Nirmal Darshan*: Mahant Sukhwant Singh Jalandhar etc.⁷³ The above list of a few newspapers portrays the versatility of the Nirmala sect.

Leading Nirmala Scholars and their legendary contributions:

Pandit Gulab Singh was a great scholar of Sanskrit. Sanskrit and Brij languages were his instrument for translating scriptures for the commoners. He was a great intellectual of *Chhanda Shastra*, *Alankar*, and the surprising brilliance of multiple literary talents. He wrote: *Bhavrasamrit* (1777) *Moksh Panth Parkash*⁷⁴ (1778) *Adhiyatam Ramayan*⁷⁵ (1779) *Prabodh Chandrodaya* (1789).⁷⁶ *Shri Mokasha Panth Parkash* is the source of *Gurbani*'s wisdom. It has an awesome and uppermost place in Indian philosophy. All the great attributes of *Patanjali*, *Yoga Shastra*, and *Nayay Darshan* are present. No evidentiary reflection is found in any other Punjabi text. Its elegance is maintained because of the quotes of Upnishadas mentioned in it.⁷⁷ The immensity of this book can be understood by the numerous commentaries & annotations written on this beautiful piece of literature, just as the great scholar but blind scholar of *Udasi* sect i.e. Swami Arvinnanand (well known as Kamaldas) from Haridwar wrote '*Martand*' named commentary on it. Great philosopher Pandit Nar

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.165.

⁷⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.54.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p.57.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.58.

⁷⁷ Mahant Haqiqat Singh Arwind (1981), *Nirmal Santan Di Darshan te Dharma nu Lorh*, cited in Pritam Singh *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.188.



Singh wrote '*Shobhagavati*', which was published in 1936.⁷⁸ Pandit Tara Singh Narottam wrote a commentary on it, which was published by Shriman Swami Sucha Singh of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal. It was written in *Devnagari* by Pandit Govind Singh and translated into the commoner's language. *Adhiyatam Ramayan*, another artistic creativity by Pandit Gulab Singh, is full of creative and classic knacks like *Kavitt*, *Sawaya*, *Chopayai*, *Malti*, *Tomar*, *Shankar*, *Naraz*, *Anangsekhar*, *Chappe*, etc.⁷⁹

Pandit Sher Singh Naurangabad had written '*Shri Beermrighesh Gurbilas taru*'. It contains the details of deeds of great saints like Baba Sahib Singh Una, Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad, Baba Maharaj Singh, and Baba Khuda Singh. This text has been published in two parts by Pandit Sant Jagjit Singh Harkhowal (Sultanpur Lodhi).⁸⁰

Pandit Tara Singh Narottam was a luminous scholar of Gurmat Sidhant(principles), Gurmat Philosophy, literature, history, and Gurbani.⁸¹ His works can be divided into four categories exegetical, lexicographical, theological and doctrinal. In his exegetical and doctrinal writings, he conforms to the Nirmala school of interpretation, presenting Sikh thought from within his Vedantic orientation. He believed that the gurmat, doctrinally, is an amalgam of the doctrines of Sankara and Ramanuja, with the exception that in gurmat, *bhakti* preponderates overjnana and action. He added that *bhakti* too is based on gyana only. He asserted that Guru Nanak was an incarnation of Vishnu and that Guru Nanak conformed to the path of the Vedas and did not deviate from that path anywhere except in idol worship which he rejected firmly. He held that the Waheguru is another name of Vishnu only and it could not refer to the nirguna concept of God. *Mukti*(salvation) his view was a bodiless state. According to him, *bani* included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* was a revelation like the Veda.⁸² His expression was highly Sanskritized in the manner of the Nirmala school. He was deeply learned in the Vedic, Shastric and Puranic lore and quoted from it profusely. He was the first scholar to compose the first philosophical text, i.e., "*Shri Gurmat*

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p.63.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.64.

⁸⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 65.

⁸¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.80-87.

⁸² https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Tara_Singh_Narotam



Niranaya Sagar.⁸³ This book is full of the intensity of knowledge, thought processes, and in-depth knowledge. This book is the ocean of the *Gurbani's* explanation which contains four crucial parts. These parts include the description of devotion (*bhakti*), the evidentiary existence of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, and the decision about the Guru of Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj, idol-worshipping, a form of salvation and question-answer, etc. Similarly, *Shri Gurteerath Sangrahi*⁸⁴ is significant to the record of different Gurudwaras related to ten Gurus, *Sahibjadas* (Guru's descendants), most reverend Sikhs, and martyrs and the history related to these Gurudwaras (home of Guru). This book has preserved the rare history of *Guru Vansh*, the origin of castism, the importance of pilgrimage, and the details of the administrative history of Gurudwaras. About 508 Gurudwaras are mentioned in this book. Even the historical & most famous gurudwara of Hemkunt Sahib was also discovered and brought into the map of Sikh history by Pandit Tara Singh Narottam only. *Guru Girarth Sangarha*⁸⁵ is another most glaring gem of his literary feats. It was written about one hundred years before. Few words like soul, nature, Hindu, world, etc., are illustrated with examples. Pandit Tara Singh also believes that the entire Dasam Granth was written by Guru Gobind Singh.⁸⁶ Pandit Tara Narottam is considered the best allocator, interpreter, and narrator.

Giani Gian Singh⁸⁷ was an expert scholar, great poet, and renowned historian. He is the one scholar who collected the history of five hundred years of Sikh Panth from Guru Nanak Dev to Akali Lahar. He had written the history of Sikh Panth as a service to the Panth. Modern historians consider him the lighthouse of history. Giani had written 34 books, out of which 26 books are written in Punjabi and nine are in Urdu. The list is as below:

1. *Shri Gur Panth Parkash* 2. *Twarikh GuruKhalsa (part3)* 3. *Shamsher Khalsa* 4. *Raj Khalsa*. 5. *Sardar Khalsa* 6. *Panth Kahlsa* 7. *Nirmal PanthPradeepika* 8. *Khalsa*

⁸³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.72.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.73.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 74.

⁸⁶ Sukhbhir Kapoor(2009), *Dasam Granth An Introductory Study*, Hemkunt Press, New Delhi, ISBN 9788170103257, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.78-90.



Patit Pawan 9. *Sooraj Parkash*. 10. *Gurudham Sangrahi* 11. *Katha Pooranmaasi* 12. *Ripudaman Parkash* 13. *Bhupindera Nand* 14. *Tawarikh Amritsar* 15. *Gurpoorab Parkash* 16. *Itihas Riyasat Bagrhiyan* 17. *Amrit Parkash* 18. *Niti Parkash* 19. *Anik Parkash* 20. *Dohawali* 21. *Parshnottari* 22. *Bhekh Parbhakar* 23. *Punjabi Seehraphi* 24. *Ik Ayurvedik Granth* 25. *Svejiwan Katha*.⁸⁸

The books written in Urdu are:

1. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* 2. *Shamsher Khalsa*. 3. *Raj Khalsa* 4. *Twarikh Shri Amritsar Amritsar* 5. *Twarikh Lahore*. 6. *Sawanir Umari Giyani Gian Singh*.⁸⁹

Shri Guru Granth Parkash, except *Gur Partap Sooraj*, there is no equivalent book like it. This is a source and cause of envy for many scholars. This is the only magnificent book in *the Braj* language. *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa* is a miraculous poetic composition in the Punjabi language. The first part of *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*⁹⁰ is a magnificent *Nirmal Panth Pardeepika* is the first authentic proof regarding Nirmala Panth, *Nirmal Panth Gurpranalika Vriksha* is another work regarding the detailed and systematic information about the Nirmala saints, deras, and history.⁹¹

*Gurudham Sangrahi*⁹² is another feather in Giani Gian Singh's cap. He was dexterous in the all *chhandas* of *Chhand Shastras* (type of poetic composition). His fabulous poetic *Chhanda*, *Alankar*, *rut*, and *ras varna* are hard to be described. In *Rasatmak Vakaya Kavyam*, the art pieces of various poetic styles like bravery, humor, mercy, pity, pain, horror, anger, fear, and peace are an integral part of his composition. There is an excellent big list of Giani's great works. Here a few could be discussed. One book named *Shri Bhupinderanand*, published in 1917, is a compilation of rituals, customs, and rites of the wedding (Anand Karaj) of the king of Patiala, i.e., Maharaja Bhupinder Singh. He presented all details of the ceremony of the marriage and rites of *Gurmat* with proof. *Itihas Riyasat Bagarhayian*, *Twarikh Shri Amritsar*, and *Khalsa Patit Pawan* are rare books of great historical value.⁹³

⁸⁸ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.73.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 74.

⁹⁰ Giani Gian Singh (1891), *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa*, Matba Shri Guru Gobind Singh Press, Sialkot (Pakistan). p.74.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 75.

⁹² Giani Gian Singh (1921), *Gurudham Sangrahi*, under Bhupindera State Press, Patiala, pp.51-56.

⁹³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 75.



Sant Nihal Singh Kaveender⁹⁴ was the scholar of history, well versed with *Vedanta*, *gurbani* and *Chhanda Shastra*. He was intellectual and cerebral in Hindi, Punjabi, Braj, and Sanskrit. he wrote about 12 books, and *Kaveender Parkash* is the collection of all. His other famous books are *Shri Vedanti Barahmah*, *Khorham Tikhan Vedanti*, *Shri Maha Vak Parkash Granth*, *Shri Bhavsagar Setu*, *Shri Dohra Bhedawali*, *Sattwar Vedanti*, *Sudhasari Shattak Pacheesa*, *Shri Maharani Ki Bhedawali*, *Shri Varni Swayei Bhedawali*, *Shri Kaveender Kavitali*, and *Nripakh Wak*. *Shri Bhavsagar Setu* contains the descriptions of *Vedanta*.⁹⁵ It was published by Wazeer Hind Press Amritsar in 1907. It is a massive effort to verify and study the *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* in relation to Vedanta. The unity of *Jeeva* and *Brahama* is also discussed deliberately here. *Nripakhwak* is another poetic text of Pandit Nihal Singh Kaveender.⁹⁶

Pandit Sadhu Singh Patiala was another super star of the Nirmala sect. Pandit Sadhu Singh Patiala carved the following books: *Guru Sidhant Jayoti*, *Gurumat Sikhiya Prabhakar*, *Shri Mukh Vak Jayoti*, *Granth Briti Deepika*, *Panch Kosh Vivek*, *Sri Raag Teeka*, *Dev Panth Pradeepika*, *Dev Guru Granth Sidhant Ravi*, *Ganga Jyoti Nidan (for medicine)* and *Uthanika Shri Guru Granth Sahib*.⁹⁷

Pandit Basant Singh Theekariwala was a royal teacher of the princes of Patiala state. He was an eminent scholar of Sanskrit and Gurmat. His two books, i.e., *Teeka Shri Guru Granth Sahib & Teeka Dasham Granth*.⁹⁸

Giani Badan Singh from Sekhwan had engraved the commentary (Teeka) of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* in 1940. Maharaj Bikram Singh state (riyasat) Faridkot was his patron. This *Teeka* had been rectified by numerous contemporary scholars.⁹⁹

Pandit Dewa Singh Devpura wrote the following books:

Adhyatama Anubhav Vivek, *Japu Pardeep*, *Sidh Goshat*, *Supan Vichar*, *Fanah Da Makaan*, *Mrityu Chainha Pradeepika*, *Pantees Akhari*, *Gurbani de Kathin Padan de*

⁹⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.91-97.

⁹⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 78.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 75.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 80.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.83.

⁹⁹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.99.



Paryayaetc. He also composed two teekas of Japu Sahib, i.e., *Japu Pradeep & Sugam Japu Pardeep*. *Sugam Japu Pardeep* is an excellent help to less educated people to understand *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* as it is considered the best supplementary book.

Shri Maan Mahant Ganesha Singh¹⁰⁰ was an untiring author, editor, and interpreter. He was multiple talented scholars who had good command over history, literature, Vedanta, and Ayurveda. He is immortal because of his legendary contributions to literature. *Bharat Mat Darpan* is a remarkable and admirable book of Punjabi. Here is the list of his important works:

Bharat Mat Darpan, Itihas Nirmal Bhekh, Saakhiparman, Nirmal Parbodh, Nirmal Vaid, Vedic Bhandar, Darbar Guide, Nankana Sahib Guide, Istri Chiktisa, Khalsa Vivah Padhat, Sankhya Vidhi, Zebived, Adhayatam Parkash Steek, Steek Panj Granthi, Shalok Sahaskriti Samet Gatha, Steek, Sukhmani Sahib Teeka, Japu ji Steek, Megh binod Parkash Steek, Gangyati Nidan Steek, Rahliraas Steek, Viyadhivinashak Teeka, Baal Chikitsa and Soor Darpan. He had been the editor of *Nirmal Pattar*, published from Amritsar. He successfully led the nation through his scholarly articles and magnificent coverage.¹⁰¹

Sant Sampooran Singh was the brother of the famous Vaid (physician) Bhai Mohan Singh. He was a great scholar of Gurbani and Guru history. His list of books is quite exhaustive just as:

Gurmat Sidhant Bayog(1913), Gurmat Sidhant Yoga(1913), Qismat da Dhani (1917), Unatti Da Marag (1919), Sikh Kis Nu Akhade han (1919), Sakal jeevan Bhai Jaimal Vaid(1919), Akali dha(1922), Giyan Maarag(1922), Sudharam Maarag Granth (1923), Lecture Viyakhyan Sagar (1923), Sikhi Jeewan (1926), Sadhant Bodhani Teeka (1927), Jeewn Bhai Gurdas(1930). Gurpad Prabandh (1932, Rahitnama(1946) etc. Shdharam Maarag is a detailed illustration of the Gurbani, Rahit Maryada(disciplined lifestyle of Sikhs), and Gurmat.¹⁰²

Kaviraj Sant Haribhajan Singh was a great scholar of Sanskrit, Hindi Braj, and Punjabi. His scholarly texts are *Ashtang Yoga, Tatva Prabodh, Adwaitamrit Granth*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 117

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 117.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 97.



*Bhakha, All Steek of Shri Gurpartap Sooraj, Sakal Bodh Teeaka of Japu Ji, and Shri Gur Charitra Chandrika(unpublished).*¹⁰³

Shri Gurditt Singh Aallomahal was a famous writer and journalist of *Nirmal Bhekh*. He was the first to initiate the Nirmala newspaper in 1914, named ' *Nirmal Patra*' from Amritsar. He published the following books: *Chikitsa Kosh four parts (Amar Press Amritsar 1888); Lailam Bhavchandrodya Teeka(Chashme Noor Press Amritsar 1888); Kuran Da Punjabi Anivad(Gurmati Press Amritsar 1911)*¹⁰⁴

Mahant Bishan Singh Kreet Giani was a great scholar of simplicity. He composed the most critical works in the unpretentious form. Certainly this quality is distinctive as it is very challenging to be modest in complexed concepts.

Following is the list of his fabulous literary creations:

*Desh Jgawa, Noori Jhalakan(1932),Jeevan Fuhar(1949),Zindagi De Morh (1970), Dulda Joban (1972, Bikhre Moti (1970), Mitha Nanak(1972),Amrit Bachan te Sant Darsha, Noori Jeevan and Langhade Jaande Kafile.*¹⁰⁵

Mahant Tahal Singh was a great scholar of Gurbani and Guru History.He wrote magnificent books like *Insaan Haivan Sambad*. The arguments given by birds for being pro environmentalist and man's role as the cruel destroyer of nature; are fascinating. His works are: *Asli Gur Parkash 1939, Swe Gurbani Asli Gur Parkash 1939, the Gurbani Amrit Parkash 1931, Swe Gurbani Sukhmani Sahib, Swe Gurbani Sampooran Sukhmani Sahib1964, Swe Gurbani Jeewan Parkash,Vidiya Mahima Parkash, Vidiya Vayajoti Mala, Swe Gurbani Parkash, Karam Binash te Giyan Parkash, Gurdwars Teerarh Swe desh Yatra 1924, Insaan Haivan Sambad 1941*¹⁰⁶.

Shri Maan Mahant Dayal Singh Lahore blessed Nirmal Bhekh by giving a book like *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, which has four parts. *Babe Nanak Da Nirmal Panth (1934)* is another research work on Nirmal Sect. *Giyan Bhumika (1949)* and *Rishikesh Bhushan 1924 etc* are his ideal makings.. The literary contribution of Mahant Dayal Singh is highly commendable in *Nirmal Bhekh*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, p.116.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 89.

¹⁰⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.117.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.90.



Pandit Ishwar Singh Kaanshi had written five notable books: *Gurmat Digvijay*, *Budhi Bardhi*, *Vaheguru Mantrarth* (Punjabi), *Guru Mantrarth* (Sanskrit), *Swe Supan Natak*, etc. Shri Mahant Pandit Udhav Singh Ji wrote two books, i.e., *Ashram Dharam Rahasya* and *Abhav Rahasya*.¹⁰⁷

Pandit Govind Singh had composed numerous books of *Gurmat*, the *Gurbani*, history, and mythology in Sanskrit and Hindi. In *DevNagari*, he had inscribed the following literature:

Nyaya Muktawali: in this book, he had rendered Sanskrit translation into the Hindi language to enable the less learnt people to get the grass-root level essence of literature. He condemned Swami Shankracharya for making fun of the writers of Shastras. He criticised Shankaracharya to disapprove five Shaastras, i.e., *Nyaya*, *Vaishashik*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Poorav Mimansa*, etc. Pandit Govind Singh considered *Jiva* (soul) of multiple states, whereas Shankaracharya had approved them as one. After having an in-depth study of *Shastras*, he condemned monotheism (Aikantwad). He wrote the annotation of *Nyaya Muktawali* in 1831.¹⁰⁸

*Vedant Paribhasha*¹⁰⁹: this book provides basic information about Vedanta to beginners. As he had condemned the Shankaracharya similarly, he had denounced the Rishis and Bhaskaracharya for their philosophy fearlessly. He sermonized that delineating the different ways is not fair when the Truth is one. He gave the example of a lost boy in the woods who had been directed ten directions at a time for his home. How could it work out? The same is with various writers of Shastras and Acharyas. He writes, " *Shat Subodh ki eik Mat, or Moorakh Aapo Aapni*" (Wise people always agree and foolish always dispute.)¹¹⁰ Thus he had represented his thoughts in the *teeka Vedan Di Paribhasha* and had appreciated Shankaracharya and his team at the end of this text.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, p. 117.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 104.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 104.



Itihas Guru Khalsa: this book indicates that he had done an intensive study of old Muslim Historians' *Persian* and *Urdu* works in chronological order. One very striking feature to be mentioned here is that in the preface of both commentaries, i.e., *Nayaya Mukta wali and Vedant Paribhasa*, he had adored Guru Nanak Dev in Sanskrit hymns.¹¹¹

Pandit Gurditt Singh's works in Hindi and Sanskrit are as follows:

Japu Ji Steek, Shri GurGirarth Rupantar, Gurmati Sidhantsar published 1934 in *Devnagri and Gurumukhi*, *Vedant Sidhant Mukta wali* published in 1914 from *Lahore*, *Guru Nanak Ashatak, Jeevan Charitra Pandit Hari Singh* was third time published from *Panchayati Akhara Kanbal Haridwar* in 1962.¹¹²

Swami Hazara Singh Atamdarshi composed two texts named *Panch Rattanwali and Ath Braham Darshi Pushapmala*. Pandit Balbir Singh Shastri had translated *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* in Hindi, which was published by Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in 1966 through Guru Dwara Printing Press Amritsar.¹¹³

Pandit Haqiqat Singh Arwind had written *Atam Sarita* (1978), the biography of Shri Maan Mahant Atma Singh Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh. This work is an exciting and scholarly book engraved with Urdu vocabulary.¹¹⁴

Pandit Arjan Singh Muni was a famous Vyakaran Acharaya (Grammarians) initiated the commentary (*teeka*) on Shri Guru Granth Sahib. He explained the secrets of Adi Garanth quite minutely. He illustrated the definition of *Ik Omkar* with the derivations of Vedas. He supported his point of view through Yagvalkya Samrity, Mandukya-Upnishad and Shri Mad Bhagwad Geeta etc.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 104

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.105.

¹¹³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 151.

¹¹⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 104.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 107.



Panchayati Akhara Kankhal is famous for following glorious publications:¹¹⁶

Table 4.1 Panchayati Akhara Kankhal publications

Book	Authored by (edited)
<i>Nirmal Panth Pradeepika</i>	Giyani Giyan Singh (ed.) Sant Inder Singh
<i>Guru Teerath Sangrahi</i>	Pandit Tara Singh Narottam(ed.) Pandit Kartar Singh
<i>Moksh Panth Parkash</i>	Pandit Gulab Singh Teekakar (ed.) Pandit Tara Singh Nrottam
<i>Gurmat Nirnaya Sagar</i>	Pandit Tara Singh Narottam(ed.) Pandit Balbir singh
<i>Jeevani Pandit Hari Singh</i>	Viyogi
<i>Shri Nirmal Panchayati</i>	Pandit Gurditt Singh
<i>Akhara da Itihas</i>	Pandit Arjan Singh ji Muni

Educational imprints of Nirmala are pretty adorable. The educational enterprise was vehemently carried forward as a fundamental responsibility by Nirmalas through their keen interest in education, social services, and social reform. They dared to break the centuries' darkness multiplied by imperialistic designs without royal patronage and funding. Their insight into reviving the Indian educational system, literature, and culture proved a harbinger of nationalism in the folk of Punjab.

The lack of schools created a void for inactivity. To erect a system of indigenous education was a Herculean task. But these combatants fought well. The education was one of the initiatives taken by these saints in the beginning. Earlier opening schools in *deras* only was a magnificent job executed by them. Gradually a need was felt to open schools for the masses. Further, the establishment of schools by different *deras* continued the incessant dispersal of education. Their efforts of education dissemination were as dedicated as they were to *Gurmat* proliferation in the

¹¹⁶ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 112.



pilgrimage like Prayag, Haridwar, Triyamabak, Rishikesh and Kurukshetra, etc. They needed permanent settlements.

The *deras* were the centers of education and social interaction. In the Misal period, education took another leap. The Nirmala *deras* and Udaasi *deras* got donations of land so that the charitable teaching-learning process should go on uninterrupted. For example, Pandit Maan Singh opened a school in Kurukshetra in 1743, and Sant Nikka Singh opened a school in Barnala in 1752, which was supported by the princess Bibi Pardhan Kaur of Patiala kingdom (daughter of Baba Ala Singh) by donating 30 villages in endowment.¹¹⁷ In 1764 Pandit Lakha Singh was given the *pargana* (Tahsil) of Sujampur for this purpose only.¹¹⁸ In 1766, S. Sada Singh Bahirh Waliya, honoured Sant Bhagat Singh for narrating the story of Mahabharat with legacy of seven villages.¹¹⁹ In 1789 S. Jai Singh Ghaniya gifted a land deed of four villages to Sant Dargaha Singh.¹²⁰ In 1796 Maharaja Ranjeet Singh honored Pandit Nihal Singh for translating *Jap ji Sahib*, but he did not accept it.¹²¹ Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal is a theological institute of the Nirmala sect was formally established in 1862. But prior to this it was launched in 1855 at the Kumbha of Haridwar.¹²² It is mentionable here that Kumbha and Ardha Kumbhi faires were organised by Nirmala Panchayati Akharas in 1783, 1787, 1794, 1801, 1807, 1819, 1831, 1843, 1849, 1851 and 1855.¹²³ This Akhara could be considered the focal point of the Nirmala sect. Akhara denotes a hermitage with facilities for the board, lodging, and education of sadhus of a particular sect or cult. In the eighteenth century almost every sect has its own Akhara. This Akahra has been active in helping the masses in all natural and peculiar problems. The Akhara has helped to retain the educational status of learners in all languages by providing them the best platform. This has successfully served the masses even in the colonial age and have taken special care of wellbeing in any local or global chellange. For the purpose of establishing Nirmal Panchayati Akhara was to provide a residential base for the aspirants of Vedantic and Sikh philosophy. Nirmal

¹¹⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.38.

¹¹⁸ Roshan lal Ahhuja, Sikhiya Vich Punar Jagriti de Aagu, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p. 241.

¹¹⁹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.38.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.38.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.38.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.176.

¹²³ *Ibid*, pp.171-175.



Panchayati Akhara is considered one of the best educational institutes. The scholastic manifestation of this Akhara have fascinated countless learners. Even students from Nepal also visit here to learn about Vedanta and Gurbani. This central place helps the keen learners to learn free of cost for lodging and books. *Shri Nirmal Sanskrit Maha Vidyalaya* Kankhal is successfully divulging Sanskrit education to aspirators since 1930. To keep the torch of education kindled and elevated, Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh has also bankrolled significantly. Mahant Buddha Singh founded Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh in 1900 near the river Ganga.¹²⁴ He also constructed small buildings in Haridwar named as 'Nirmal Bag' and a place was also purchased in Kashi for the stay arrangements of learners.

Formally Nirmala saints have been instrumental in opening two types of institutes. The first type is to include spiritual education in the deras only. The other type is modern schools and colleges affiliated with universities. They have opened universities too. The reasonably famous spiritual institute, *Bunga Mastuana Talwandi Sabo*, was opened by reverend saint Attar Singh in 1923. In this educational institute, the accurate and precise recitation of Gurbani, proper meaning, history of Gurus, Bhai Gurdas Bani, and *Dasham Granth* is taught accurately. Here the training for *Raag Kirtan* (holy singing in congregation) is also given. Sant Sewak Jatha Bunga Mastuana sponsors this learning center.

Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh was set up by Mahant Buddha Singh. He was born at village Hallowal, district Gurdaspur (Punjab). He was soft spoken, a great administrator, a scholar of shastras and a great orator. Endowed with all the virtues and qualities he ¹²⁵was appointed as the secretary of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal (Haridwar). He laid the foundation of Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh in the year 1903 to provide boarding & lodging facilities to the saints meditating in the 'Jhaari on the bank of Ganges'.¹²⁶ Arrangement for community meals (Guru ka Langar) were also made. He was also the founder of Nirmal Bagh at Kankhal (Haridwar). The entire life of revered Mahant Buddha Singh Ji was dedicated to preaching & spreading the message of the Guru. According to the divine decree, he took abode in heaven in 1937

¹²⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 266.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p.266.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.266.



at Nirmal Bagh Kankhal.¹²⁷ Thereafter Sant Atma Singh ji Maharaj was bestowed as the Mahant & took over the services of the Ashram. Sant Nikka Singh ji, Mahant Baba Ram singh and Sant baba Jodh Singh are the chronological leaders of the dera.¹²⁸ This dera is constantly engaged in the educational upliftment of the society. For the religious, logical and ethical revolution; the dera has initiated Nirmal Ashram Deep Mala Public School Rishikesh and Nirmal Ashram Gian Daan Acedemy.^{129,130} The first is offering qualitative education on very low cost and the later gives free of cost education to the needy students. Sant Jodh Singh had been the continuous spirit for the better management and regulation for these school since 1977. Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh has following branches:

- Nirmal Bagh Kankhal Haridwar
- Nirmal Kutiya Karnal Haryana
- Nirmal Bagh Karnal
- Sant Nikka Singh Cheritable Hospital- Shiv Colony Karnal
- Nirmal Dham Karnal: this Ashram is engaged in various social welfare activities since last eleven years in Karnal such as:
 - i. Sant Nikka Singh Pubic School Model Town
 - ii. Sant Nikka Singh Public School Sadar Bazar
 - iii. Sant Nikka Singh Public School Zrifa Form
 - iv. Bhagat Labhamal Vridh Ashram Nirmal Dham
 - v. Sant Nikka Singh I.T.C. Model Town
 - vi. Bal Kalyan Niketan Model Town¹³¹

¹²⁷ Madan Gulati, Nirmal Sampardaya- Udbhav Vikas Or Den Nirmal ashram Rishikesh Ke Sandarbhme, cited in Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari*, (seminar 11-12 Feb.2010) by Punjabi University Dr Balbir Singh Sahitya Kender, Dehradon, p. 164. Hereafter cited as Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari*, p.164.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.165.

¹²⁹ NDS Nirmal Ashram Deep Mala Pagarani, Public School Rishikesh, (2007), Brochure column Nos.1-6.

¹³⁰ NGA Niramal Ashram Gyan Daan Academy Khairi Kalan, Rishikesh, Brochure (year not mentioned). column Nos.1-6.

¹³¹ Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Viyakhayakari*, p.164.



Several senior citizens, Orphans and students have been served free of cost by these institutes. Their services to the different weaker and deprived sections are innumerable. Nirmal Sant Niwas- Versowa Mumbai has been serving the masses since 1994 by offering spiritual knowledge of the Gurbani and Sikhism.¹³² Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh has other following undertakings in the expansion of education:

Hari Kirpa Silai Kendra, Rishikesh:

Hari Kirpa Silai Kendra, as the name suggests, is a boon & a blessing for the women of economically weaker sections of the society. The main motive behind this initiative of the Ashram is to uplift the poor and downtrodden women & help them to become self-employed. For admission into this center, 26 candidates are selected every year based on poverty & need. Their training period is of one year in which they learn & practice the skill of stitching & sewing. At the end of the session, they are given a passing certificate, a sewing machine & other accessories associated with stitching, all free of cost.¹³³

Sant Nikka Singh Industrial Training Institute:

Sant Nikka Singh Pvt. ITI Model Town, Karnal, has been running vocational courses under the Department of Industrial Training, Haryana, since 2010.¹³⁴ The courses being run are Computer Operator Programming Assistant(COPA) under the National Council of Vocational Training (NCVT) and 'Cutting and Sewing', 'Embroidery and Needle Work' under the State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT). In addition to this, it is also running the MES program in Medical Lab Technology. The total number of seats in all the trades is 160. As per the norms of DGT, the institute has a well-equipped infrastructure and highly qualified and experienced staff.¹³⁵ It is a matter of great pride and honor for the team, students, and parents that this distinguished institution, with its sole mission to impart free training to the children falling under the EWS category, regardless of caste, color, or religion, is flourishing

¹³² *Ibid*, p.169.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p.169.

¹³⁴ <https://iti.directory/karnal/sant-nikka-singh-pvt-industrial-training-institute-nirmal-dham-model-town-karnal>

¹³⁵ <https://nirmalashram.com/sant-nikka-singh-public-school-model-town/>



under the divine patronage of His Holiness Mahant Baba Ram Singh Ji Maharaj. Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh has profusely engorged the educational interests of society by all means. It is a great asset to the Nirmala sect.

Similarly, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Mahilpur, Distt. Hoshiarpur (Punjab), India is another Nirmala institute of Punjab.¹³⁶ Sri Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Mahilpur, Distt. Hoshiarpur (Punjab), India, a Post Graduate, Multi Faculty, Co-Educational college is a premier Institution of the Rural Area in District Hoshiarpur (Punjab), which was established in 1946 before the partition of India by the Nirmal saint `Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji Kaharpuri', the Founder President of Sikh Educational Council, with a missionary zeal of providing higher education to the boys and girls in general and particularly belonging to the rural, backward and Kandi areas, who were not able to go to other cities for higher education. It is the oldest educational institute of higher learning in rural & pre-partitioned India and one of the oldest amongst premier Institutions of Higher Education in the north of India.¹³⁷ The college is situated on Hoshiarpur Chandigarh Road at a distance of 22 kilometers from Hoshiarpur, 37 Kilometers from Phagwara, 35 Kilometers from Nangal Dam, and 45 Kilometers from Una (Himachal Pradesh) in the foothills of Shivalik Range of Hills. The college is spread over 200 Kanals of land with imposing buildings in a lush green, pollution-free environment, away from the hustle and bustle of city life. At the time of its establishment, it introduced only two faculties (Science and Arts), but after that, Commerce and Computer Sciences started to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Excellence in academics, sports, and cultural activities has been a way of life for students for years. This institution has turned out innumerable doctors, engineers, educationists, defence generals, etc. This college has a well-stocked library to serve as a backbone to all academic activities up to Post-Graduate level classes with a volume of more than 50 thousand books and two well-furnished and well-equipped Computer Labs. The tree planted by Nirmal saint Sant Baba Hari Singh Kaharpur is now blossomed and has become an established college. The college is running various programs just as Post Graduate level degrees in the subject of Punjabi B.A./B.Sc. Post

¹³⁶ <https://sggskcm.org/>

¹³⁷ [https://www.punjabcolleges.com/769-indiacolleges-SGGS-Khalsa-College-Mahilpur-\(Hoshiarpur\)/](https://www.punjabcolleges.com/769-indiacolleges-SGGS-Khalsa-College-Mahilpur-(Hoshiarpur)/)



Graduate Degree in the subject of History M.Sc. (Chemistry), M.Com. and M.A. (Economics), M.Sc. (Physics), M.A. (Political Science), B.Ed., B.P.Ed. M.P. Ed. etc. In the year 2012-13, the college has made another leap by introducing two new courses, namely, B.Sc. Agriculture and M.Sc. Information Technology and add on courses too.¹³⁸

The college has run Gandhian Studies Centre and Dr. Ambedkar Studies Centre, sponsored by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, under the scheme of Epoch-Making Social Thinkers of India during the XI Plan. Furthermore, keeping in view the amelioration of women's conditions in India, particularly in rural-backward regions, and enhancing the accessibility of basic needs like education, employment, health, and law to them, the college is successfully executing the Centre for Women's Studies sponsored by the University Grants Commission.¹³⁹

The role of the Nirmala saints is quite peculiar as they have interconnected the traditional Vedantic learning with the modern technological advancements. Their both spiritual and worldly knowledge has made them irreplaceable and exclusive. The selfless and charitable delivery of education with the fume of religious fervor had made the Nirmala saints beacons of society. The correct and precise oration of the *Gurbani*, proper meaning, history of Gurus, Bhai Gurdas *Bani*, and *Dasham Granth* and thoroughgoing Vedantic exegesis are taught precisely. They are renowned for the training for *Raag Kirtan* (holy singing in congregation).

Another significant centre of the Nirmala sect is Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal. Panchayati Akhara is a seminary of the Nirmala sect established in 1862 at Patiala. Akhara signifies a monastery or seminary with facilities for the board, lodging, and education of sadhus of a particular sect or cult. Sannyasi and Bairagi sadhus had their respective Akhara and also known as deras, at prominent pilgrimage centers. Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar is running two institutes of Sanskrit. One institute is in Haridwar another one is in Sangat Lahori Tola Varanasi. Both of these colleges are affiliated with Sampuranand University Varanasi.¹⁴⁰ Learners from all

¹³⁸ <https://sggskcm.org/add-on-courses/>

¹³⁹ [https://www.punjabcolleges.com/769-indiacolleges-SGGS-Khalsa-College-Mahilpur-\(Hoshiarpur\)/](https://www.punjabcolleges.com/769-indiacolleges-SGGS-Khalsa-College-Mahilpur-(Hoshiarpur)/)

¹⁴⁰ Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Vyakhyakari*, p.39.



over India receive education here. Even students from Nepal also visit here to learn about Vedanta and Gurbani. The Nirmal Sanskrit Vidyalaya in Chetan Matha and Sangat Lahore Tola have been among the pioneer Nirmala Institutions. At Kankhal too they raised the Sanskrit Mahavidalaya.

The first well known institute of Sanskrit established by the Nirmala sect was Shri Chetan Matha at Varanasi.¹⁴¹ It is renowned for its academic standing. Guru Nanak Sanskrit Vidyalaya, a residential college affiliated with Sampurnand Sanskrit University is launched here. This institute has been a great basis for the countless scholars of Sanskrit who have been instrumental in the preferment of Sanskrit language in all through the country. The Nirmalas Saints inspired scholars from all through the world to visit here and to learn Sanskrit. This increased inclination to learn Sanskrit, not only saved the extincting language but also directed innumerable learners to learn the oldest language of the world. Thus a need was felt to create more Sanskrit and Gurbani learning institutes. Henceforth, Nirmal Sangat Lahori Tola Math was established as the University of Sanskrit in the interior parts of the city near the famous Visheshwarnath temple, which is maintained by the Nirmala sect. Hundereds of scholars got tutelage and sponsorship from here such as Pandit Ishawar Singh of Kaashi, Pandit Gobind Singh ji Sadhu, Pandit Udhav Singh Naiyayik, Pandit Bhan Singh Nayaya Gautam from Kokri, Swami Sant Singh patna, Swami Arjun Singh ji Muni, Shri Man Mahant Gurdeep Singh Kesari, and five gold medal winner, Ph.D., D.Lit. Pandit Swami Rampal Singh Delhi etc.¹⁴² These scholars transcribed numerous treasured books and which are benefiting thousand of scholars even today. Presently Mahant Gurdip Singh Kesari, a prominent scholar, is heading it. It is a matter of pride that most distinguished saint and scholar of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal i.e. Mahant Swami Gian Dev has received the education of Sanskrit from here and had successfully served and administered Shri Nirmal Sanskrit Mahavidayala under the aegis Nirmal Panchayati Akhara. With his benedictions about 25-30 Nirmala Sadhu obtain Sanskrit education annually with free boarding and lodging facilities. Here not

¹⁴¹ Paramveer Singh, Nirmal Santan vallon gurukul parnali ton adhunik vidiya parnali tak, cited in Kulwinder Singh (2011) (Ed.), *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, 2011 Nirmala Aashram Rishikesh, p.32. Hereafter cited as Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, p. 32.

¹⁴² Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di Gurbani Vyakhyakari*, p.39.



only Nirmala scholars but any other researcher disregarding caste and creed can acquire education. Further than these Sanskrit institutes, several schools, colleges and academies are opened to provide free and compulsory education to the poor candidates. Shri Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar is running a school named after its founder Mahant i.e. Sant Mehitab Singh Public School village Nirmal Kot, Samana Mandi Patiala.¹⁴³

Dera Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar is a renowned institute of learning in Sanskrit. It has rich heritage of customary learning of Indian music. Sant Sarovar Singh (the proponent of the dera) was a great scholar of this institute. Pandit Nand Singh Mandaleshwar was an eminent Sanskrit scholar here. Another scholar, i.e., Pandit Mishra Singh, was a great teacher of Raag Vidya.¹⁴⁴ His assistances in music education had been identical with the contemporary needs of the society. This dera is discernible for its musical contributions.

Dera Sant Baba Rocha Singh Nangali Sahib Poonchh Kashmir is an important hub of learning. The Dera Nangali Sahib has a long historical background. As per Tariq-e-Aqwam-e-Poonch of Mohammad Din Foaq, 10th Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj after laying the foundation of Khalsa Panth had deputed Bhai Pheru Singh Ji, Bhai Punjab Singh Ji and Bhai Rocha Singh Ji for spreading Sikhism in Kashmir and Pothohar areas. Sant Bhai Pheru Singh Ji (1640-1697 AD) remained busy in missionary work in Hazara district on the Western side of Poonch, Bhai Punjab Singh Ji (1672-1729 AD) established his Dera at Chattar Khalas in Muzaffarabad and Bhai Rocha Singh Ji, the discipline of Sant Bhai Pheru Singh Ji was asked to establish his Gaddi (seat) in Poonch Illaqa. Therefore, Sant Bhai Rocha Singh Ji (1688-1803 AD) came to Poonch Illaqa and established the Dera (seat at Rawalakote now in POK). He constructed a Gurudwara, started Guru Ka Langar and preaching of Sikhism. With the sincere efforts of these saints, the new religion got popularity among Hindu masses and they started embracing Sikhism.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.39.

¹⁴⁴ Gurdeep Singh Kesari(1981), *Guru Nanak Darshan te Sikh Dharam nu Bahu Pakhi Den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.119.

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/dera-nangali-sahib/>



Sant Bhai Rocha Singh Ji died in 1803 AD. Before his death he had nominated his disciple Thakur Bhai Mela Singh Ji of village Koteray Tehsil Bagh as his successor. Sant Baba Mela Singh of this dera was a great Nirmala sage of higher learning. He had a good say in Kashmir. Kashmir government even regarded his opinion as a guideline. Numerous institutes are being run by a saint of these organisations named Sant Bichitra Singh. Currently, Mukhi- Sewadar (Chief Priest), i.e., Bhai Manjit Singh, who is 13th in the row, is doing sewa at this vital shrine. Presently the Dera is running several Sikh schools, colleges, and professional institutions. He purchased about 50 kanal cultivable lands in Jhullas and Chandak area for continuation of Langar. With his serious efforts, an Engineering College i.e. MBS College of Engineering and Technology Jammua and a B.Ed. College at Digiana Jammu have been established for deserving students. This is the main contribution of Mahant Ji for the community. He has also taken a number of social reforms. He is also planning to open a Medical College for the higher education of children of remote and border areas. His contribution in the field of education are remarkable. In addition, Guru Harkrishen Public School Jammu stands prominent among those. This Gurudwara is revered as 'Shiromani Dera(Protuberant dera).'¹⁴⁶ Shri Maan Sant Baba Sohan Singh is running a college in Kanpur.

Nirmala Sant Balweer Singh Seechewal has established schools, technical centres and degree colleges in different places (Seechewal, Talwandi Madho Sultanpur Lodhi etc.) were not only advanced and technical education is provided at a very low cost to the girls and poor slum dwellers, but moral and religious values are also inculcated among them. In 1999 a school was started in the building of Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal. This school was formally inaugurated and named Shri Maan Avtar Singh ji Yadgari Mahavidyalaya Seechewal in 1999. Sant Avtar Singh ji Yadgari College Seechewal was started in the year 2005. In "Nawan Nankana Charitable School Sultanpur Lodhi," the students of the poor sections of society are provided books and other educational material free of cost.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ [https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurdwara_Nangali_Sahib_\(Poonch\)](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurdwara_Nangali_Sahib_(Poonch))

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.nirmalkuteya.com/portal/sant-balbir-singh-ji-seechewal>



Sant Baba Dalip Singh Memorial (SBDSM) Khalsa College, (Domely) Punjab is a recognized institute. Sant Baba Dalip Singh Memorial (SBDSM) Khalsa College, Domely (Dumelli) Punjab, was established in 1972. This college was established in the memory of Sant Baba Dalip Singh in 1972. The historical importance of the village Domely is quite significant. The sixth Sikh Guru, Shri Har Govind Sahib, visited this place. Sant Baba Dalip Singh and Sant Jawala Singh Harkhowal had spent their whole life in the betterment of the village. The institute successfully runs 10+1, 10+2 Arts and Commerce, B.A., B.Sc.(Economics). BCA; DCA and PGDCA etc. Presently this institute has been taken over by SGPC.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, in Banares, Vedant Shastri Pandit Gurdeep Singh opened a school. Sant Balbir Singh Viyogi opened an extensive library in Santpura, Delhi.

Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, under the dynamic leadership of Sant Baba Malkit Singh ji, started providing basic infrastructure facilities to the people living in the areas in the vicinity of Dera Sant Pura Jabbar near Adampur Doaba, Distt. Jalandhar, by constructing bridges and roads, providing street lights to villages, etc. Sant Baba Bhag Singh opened a girl school in 1954 seeing the girl education an important component of socio-religious set up pf the society. The society started providing formal education under the aegis of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex¹⁴⁹ by setting up SBBS Institute of Engineering & Technology in 2003, followed by the setting up of SBBS International School in 2004,¹⁵⁰ SBBS Institute of Education (2005),¹⁵¹ SBBS Institute of Nursing (2005)¹⁵², SBBS Research & Development Centre (2010), SBBS Post Graduate College (2011) in the flood ravaged areas of Jabbar, SBBS Public School, Binjon (2011). Rural Healthcare has been given through Guru Nanak Sadh Sangat Charitable Hospital, Kalra, since 2003.

¹⁴⁸ [https://www.punjabcolleges.com/471-indiacolleges-Sant-Baba-Dalip-Singh-Memorial-\(SBDSM\)-Khalsa-College-Domeli-\(Dumelli\)/](https://www.punjabcolleges.com/471-indiacolleges-Sant-Baba-Dalip-Singh-Memorial-(SBDSM)-Khalsa-College-Domeli-(Dumelli)/)

¹⁴⁹ Surinder Kaur Poar (2009), *Light of Santpura (Jabbar)*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Khiala, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.66.

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/santbababhagsinghinternationschool/>

¹⁵¹ Pakhar Singh Drolli (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Propakriyat Da Kender: Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji*, Dera Sant Pura Jabbar, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society Khiala, PO Padhiana, Distt.Jalandhar, pp.44-45.

¹⁵² <http://www.sbbsin.com/>



A significant number of students had been getting their education from the Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex till 2015.¹⁵³

Sant Baba Bahg Singh University was established in 2015 by Sant Baba Malkeet Singh. In pursuance of the vision: "To encourage each and every child to get educated, acquire knowledge and wisdom so to learn the art of leading a happy, successful and meaningful life," all these institutions established their presence in the field of education, leading to their flowering into Sant Baba Bhag Singh University. The University offers opportunities for students to get education & knowledge leading to B.A., B.Com, B.Com (Hons.), B. Ed, B. Lib., B.P. Ed, B.Sc (Non-Medical), B.Sc. (Agriculture), B.Sc. (I.T.), B.Sc. (Medical), B.Sc. (MLS), B.Tech Civil Engineering, B.Tech Computer Science & Engineering, B.Tech Electrical Engineering, B.Tech Electronics & Communication Engineering, B.Tech Mechanical Engineering, BBA, BCA, Vocational Courses, M.Com, M.Ed. M.P.Ed, M.Sc.(Chemistry), M.Sc.(I.T.), M.Sc.(Mathematics), M.Tech. Civil Engineering, M.Tech. Computer Science & Engineering, M.Tech Electronics & Communication Engineering, M.Tech. Mechanical Engineering, MBA, MCA, PGDCA, Ph.D. Mechanical Engineering, Ph.D. (Applied Science- Chemistry), Ph.D. (Applied Science- Mathematics), Ph.D. (Applied Science- Physics), Ph.D. (Commerce), Ph.D. (Education), Ph.D (English), Ph.D. (Hindi), Ph.D. (Music), Ph.D. (Physical Education), Ph.D. (Punjabi), Ph.D.(Economics), Ph.D.(History), Ph.D. Civil Engineering, Ph.D. Computer Science¹⁵⁴ & Engineering, Ph.D. Electrical Engineering, Ph.D. Electronics & Communication Engineering, Ph.D. Library Sciences, Ph.D. Management Studies, along with vocational and certificate courses.¹⁵⁵

In a nutshell, presently, SBBSU is running institutes like UIE. UIL UICM UICAS and UIET under its aegis. But SBBS Educational complex is heading Sant Baba Bhag Singh Insitute of Nursing and Sant Baba Bhag Singh International Public school. The institutions have made significant contributions in the field of education and growth of the area, which is visible in excellent results and placement records. With state of

¹⁵³ <https://www.indcareer.com/sant-baba-bhag-singh-educational-complex-jalandhar>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.sbbsuniversity.ac.in/>

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.sbbsuniversity.ac.in/>



the art infrastructure catering to the needs of students, pollution and drug-free campus, focus on excellence in teaching, active involvement of students & faculty in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, including NCC¹⁵⁶ & NSS, industrial visits, and a remarkable presence in the field of sports amongst educational institutions, along with a culture of imbibing ethical values, Sant Baba Bhag Singh University is an ideal place to be in to choose for quality education with all modern facilities of education in a purely rural environment. The educational enterprize of the Nirmala saints of Jabbar has changed the socio-economic lives of the people. There are about 800 employees in these institutes whose lives were changed only because of the existence of this huge educational complex. There is a fleet of buses catering the needs of the students who avail to and fro facility from far flung areas. This is the only Nirmala Educational complex where the student from Nursery to Ph.D. can get education.

The sports culture of this university is superb.¹⁵⁷ The fabulous achievements of the Sant Baba Bhag Singh University are listed in the annexure.

Sant Baba Bhag Singh University is a budding university in Punjab but its sports culture has won astounding glories in the sports world. It has very good representation in All India University competitions. University Institute of Education (Department of Physical Education) has good legacy of organising various sports competitions in the games like Volley- ball, Tug of war, Football, Gataka, Weightlifting, Athletics, Cross country, Boxing, Kabaddi, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Cricket, Football, Handball, Kick Boxing, Power Lifting, Wushu, Yoga, Archery, Gymnastics, Shooting and Taekwondo. SBBSU has won silver medal in All India University Competition in Patiala in 2021; gold, silver and bronze medal in Weightlifting; in All India Wrestling Championship, the University bagged gold, silver and bronze. Ms Mandeep won the gold. Similarly, in Athletics it has earned fourth position in 2021 AIU championship. SBBSU has earned gold and silver medal (both men and women) in Tug of war in 2018 and silver in 2019(men and women mix). In 2021, Anil Sharma won gold medal in All India Power Lifting Championship. Except this SBBSU has been successfully

¹⁵⁶ <https://sbbsuniversity.ac.in/ncc-aim.php>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/sbbsietsoccerlover.jeetmankia>



organising Inter Mural competitions (competition within institutes) in minor games. This has helped to find talent in the university.¹⁵⁸

Henceforth it could be derived that this Nirmala University is doing wonders in inculcating sports culture in the youth. The society owe to this university for its grand contributions in engaging youth in sports culture and making drugs- free Punjab.

Mahant Lal Singh model school Khudda Kurala is serving the area rigorously. The institute is named after the great Nirmala saint Mahant Lal Singh. Sant Teja Singh, the present chief priest Dera Khudda Kurala is looking after this school diligently.¹⁵⁹

Conclusively, Nirmala saints have taken the challenge of opening institutes of modern education like Sant Baba Bhag Singh University in Jalandhar and many institutes at Mahilpur, Domely, Nirmal Kutiya Rishikesh and Seechewal, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Girls College Sukhanand Bathinda, Sant Baba Gandha Singh Ji College Barnala, Sant Baba Bhoori Wale Ji Public School Amritsar, Mahant Hari Singh Ji Nirmal Public School Lakheempur Kheeri U.P., Panj Grayian Kalan, Gurusar Khudda, Mananhara, Mahita, Khadur Sahib, Damdama Sahib, Janor Moga, Bhindar kalan, Dudi Kalan, Daupar, Boparai, Rarha Sahib Samardaya and Nanaksar Sampardaya etc. These institutes are bequeathing social and religious education to the girls and boys. This is the premier contribution of these saints.

METHODOLOGY OF TEACHING IN NIRMALA INSTITUTES

CURRICULUM:

The curriculum of Nirmala had specific place for Guru Granth Sahib, six Shastras, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Shri Mad Bhagwad Geeta, Hanuman Natak, Vayakaran and Sarkutawali etc.¹⁶⁰ *Adi Granth Guru Granth Sahib* is the sacred, universal scripture some even considered it the abridged form of Vedas and Upanishads and is composed in easier musical notes which could be recited easily by devotees. After *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, due respect and place was given to *Shri Mad Bhagwad Geeta*. In the place of *Ramayan*, *Hanuman Natak* of Shri Hirdey Ram was taught and for *Vedanta Sarkutawali* or *Vichar Sagar* of Nirmal Das was taught. However, few scholars took a

¹⁵⁸ For details refer to Annexures 1-4.

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/MahantLalSinghModelSchoolKhudda/photos/>

¹⁶⁰ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.242-245.



keen interest in the six *Shastras*. *Puranas* were given the least weightage in Nitmala 'Gurteerath Sangarhi' 1883, Institutes.¹⁶¹

EDUCATIONAL PROCEDURE OF NIRMALA INSTITUTES:

The educational procedure of Nirmlas was the same and uniform as of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Punjabi alphabets named '*paintee*'³⁵ were taught on the wooden slate. But Nirmlas improved this strategy by adding an oral way of teaching to the curriculum. From the very beginning, the Mool Mantra of Japu Ji sahib was recited by the teacher and followed by the students but by intermittent gaps.¹⁶²

Elementary education: After this auspicious beginning, the students were given a wooden slate. Even students used to write on the sand with their fingers or a wooden pen. This practice used to continue for about two months. The teaching consonants and vowels were done for about two months. After that, the *Japji Sahib* was made learned to students through recitation. *Japji Sahib* and '*sandhya*' were orally taught to the students. In the first two years of oral teaching of *the Gurbani*, knowledge of alphabets, knowledge of words and sentence construction, and basic numerology were given in this elementary education. A lot of students used to stay at this stage only. Very few selected students used to go in the second stage, i.e., the primary step.¹⁶³

Pre-Primary education: The *Gurbani* was kept in main focus in this stage. The key areas of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* include *Rahiras*, *Kirtan*, *Sohilla*, *Sukhmani Sahib*, *Anand*, *Shalok Nawan Mohalla*, etc. The ablest students used to pronounce and recite *Gurbani* correctly. Such students used to become *Granthi* after the primary education of three years.

Primary stage: this was the stage of *Vedanta*. At this stage, *Sanskrit* was taught. *Vedanta Sutra* and *Bhagwad* were the significant areas. *Ramayan*. *Hanuman Natak* and *Mahabharat* were given due importance. The students who seriously completed the study of *Shri Bhagwad Geeta* in *Sanskrit* were called the *Acharyas*. *Hanuman Natak* was translated into *Gurumukhi*, but still, special efforts were needed to teach as

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.246.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.242.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p.243.



it had basically a difficult language and content. Except for this education, Nirmlas also attained scientific language.¹⁶⁴

The teaching methodology was particularly of the group. The teacher-taught (*guru-chela*) tradition is followed in true spirits. The students learnt in the residential arenas where the formal and informal both type of learning is available. The education in the dera is mainly imparted through customary techniques. The old ways of learning while earning is also followed. But utterly important is the sincerity in the relationship between the teacher and taught. Even in the residential insitutes the austerity is strictly followed. Self discipline, core functions and duties of deras and participation in any additional activity of the dera are compulsory code of conduct for pupils. In early education, all students were taught together on the wooden slate. But their doubts and corrections were conducted individually.¹⁶⁵ A new chapter was initiated with model reading and followed by the teachers. Meanings were also told while teaching. But the blackboard was not at all used. Lesser teaching and more revision were the focus. Every student used to recite their lesson loudly, and corrections were also done on the spot so that the other student could better understand mistakes. In this way, individualised instruction was delivered. In the case of an increase in the number of students, monitors were deputed to teach the students. This monitor is used to take care of students in the absence of the teacher.

But in the second and third stages, the teaching was individual only. The students of higher education were very few as they were selected above average. Moreover, they have a special interest in higher education. The fascinating fact about the beginning of these classes was that they were commenced at festivals like Baisakhi, Diwali, Holi, Basant, or days of Gurupurva. In higher education, neither classroom nor examination was mandatory. After reading one book or one subject and being approved by the teacher after evaluating his knowledge, the teacher considered him as passed one. The evaluation was purely done by the teacher at students' present knowledge.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*. pp.28-29.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.30.

¹⁶⁶ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.244.



It could be concluded that Nirmala educational procedure was quite traditional. Recitation and practice were given utmost importance. Individual attention by the teacher in writing, listening, and rectification was the glaring feature of Nirmala's teaching methodology. Higher-level issues used to have discussions, arguments, debates, and mind storming sessions to make learners more clear about concepts. The role of the monitor was another characteristic of the educational system. Monitor used to play the role of bridge between most learned senior teachers and students of little knowledge. In fact, monitoring as a mentor was the most obtrusive strategy of Nirmalas, which was further followed by the British.¹⁶⁷

But with the pace of time, new shape and face of the Nirmala educational institute is found. While traditional learning in Sanskrit language is continued in some of the Nirmala deras. In such deras the degrees of Shastry and Acharya is provided with the affiliation of Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishawavidyalaya Haridwar. Shri Nirmal Sanskrit Mahavidyala, Kankhal Hardidwar is a reputed institute of Sanskrit with very good enrolment ratio. Similarly, several deras impart Vedantic education to the pupils in the deras but with affiliation to the Sanskrit Vishawavidyalaya. It is quite important to state here that University like Sant Baba Bhag Singh University and Institutes like Sant Baba Hari Singh Memorial Khalsa College(degree) Mahilpur, Sant Baba Hari Singh Khalsa College of Education Mahilpur, Sant Baba Hari Singh Model School Mahilpur, Sant Baba Dalip Singh Memorial (SBDSM) Khalsa College Domely, Mahant Lal Singh Model School Khuda Kurala, and Sant Avtar Singh Yaadgari College Seechewal are prominent innovative institutes of Nirmalas in Doaba region. All of these institutes are blended with modern technology, expertise, and philosophical inspirations of Nirmalas. Conclusively, it could be inferred that the endeavors of the Nirmala saints in the literary realm are matchless in both philosophy and in deeds. Their literary feats and dynamic teaching methods and pioneering institutes are wonderful.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.245.

CHAPTER V
Socio-Religious
and
Other Contributions
of the
Nirmalas



Nirmalas have a great legacy of socio-religious influences in the Doaba region. Their philosophy is based on Shri Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy, which brought about great social reforms and changes. Philosophy, in general, is the quest for understanding deals with diverse problems of human belief, continuity, analysis of facts and values to evolve a world outlook for righteous conduct along with cohesive living in the society.

No doubt, philosophy can cause a change in a person, a group, and even a community, if it has some sort of workability that becomes quite perceptible in the social and intellectual life of the people. "The effects that constitute philosophy then are those that make a difference in the world's civilization."¹ It is essential to mention here that the philosophy of Nirmala's has peculiarly procured very sweeping socio-religious bearings in the society. Their continuous immersion in literary and socio-religious activities makes them positively distinctive from other reform movements and religious sects. The ideology of the Nirmala sect has surfaced in their humanitarian efforts for better social order. Their leadership and guidance for the solution of social problems have turned the call for change in a mass movement for example, Sant Seechewal's (a great Nirmala and preservationist saint of Seechewal Sultan Pur Lodhi) efforts for the environment and Sant Malkit Singh's(a great Nirmala saint and educationist of Sant Pura Jabbar Manko Jalandhar) endeavors for rural education. Furthermore, Nirmala saints were exalted with divine knowledge and education; they had explored high levels of literature, science, axiology, logistics, and the philosophy of *Gurbani*. The classical exegesis and translations of the *Gurbani*, dictionaries, literature, *Chhanda Shastra*, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. In the light of the above discussion, it would be in the fitness of the things to say that the contribution of the Nirmalas in the form of preserving Hindu and Sikh philosophy as regarding them the same has brought about sea changes in the Hindu-Sikh relationships and thus creating solidarity within Sikh society. Moreover, functioning as an intra sect within Sikhism, the Nirmala sect has strengthened and

¹ A.J. Bahm (1964), *Philosophy: An Introduction*, Asia Publishing House, United Kingdom, p.27.



contributed to a large extent, as far as faith in the *Gurbani*, teachings of the ten Gurus, and Vedanta with an outlook of socio-religious reform is concerned.

Nirmala sect is considered as old as Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala sect is one of the famous sub-sects of Sikhism in Punjab. Its commendable services and approach to the masses are highly appreciable. The incessant literary, as well as religious engagements of the Nirmala sect reflect the deep philosophy of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. The philosophy of the Nirmala sect is the philosophy of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala (in Punjabi: *Nirmala* "those without blemish") is a Sikh tradition of ascetics.² Nirmala Sikhs wear ochre-colored robes (or at least one item) and keep *kesh* (unshorn hair).³ Mahant Dayal Singh writes,⁴ "Guru Nanak Dev established Nirmala Sect (a path) to overflow the materialistic world. Through this, the worldly people could easily achieve their way to salvation." As the Nirmala sect considers him the *Aadi Acharya* (Founder Guru), his philosophy is followed by the sect thoroughly. Sarita Rana⁵ Has discussed the historical significance of the Nirmala sect, deep-rooted faith in the teachings of all ten Gurus and *Vedas* as well as. World widely, Nirmalas are acknowledged for their quiet and peaceable habits.⁶ Their duty and onus to read and expound the *Adi Granth* make them distinctive from other prevalent sects. Nirmala tradition has significantly contributed to the analysis of the Sikh ontology. Indeed, to this day, the rigor with which central concepts of Sikh metaphysics are analysed, and the sophistication of the exegesis on issues of ontology, theology, epistemology, and eschatology are unparalleled within the Sikh tradition as it exists in the post-Singh

² Bhai Kahan Singh (2002), *Mahan Kosh*, Third edition p. 2133. cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa , *Nirmala Panth da Itihas* , p.11.

³ Cole W.Owen & Piara Singh Sambhi (2005), *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism: Sikh Religion and Philosophy* Taylor & Francis, ISBN-13:9780700710485, p.62.

⁴ Mahant Dayal Singh (1981), *Baba Nanak Ji da Nirmala Panth* p.19. cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmala Samardaya*, p.159.

⁵ Sarita Rana (2017), *Giani Gian Singh and Nirmala Panth*, Unistar Books Pvt. Ltd. , Chandigarh.p.6.

⁶ Karamjit K. Malhotra (2016), *The Eighteenth Century in Sikh History Political Resurgence, Religious and Social Life, and Cultural Articulation*, Oxford University Press ,New. Delhi. pp.72,86,197-198, 285.



Sabha reform era. Unfortunately, this is rarely acknowledged within the broader Sikh Panth.⁷

Guru Nanak Dev's ideology is the base of the Nirmala sect:

Importance of Guru for imparting true knowledge and salvation, shunning of five evils, i.e., ego, anger, greed, attachment, and lust; three pillars of Sikhism just as *Vand Chaakko* (sharing with others), *Kirat kro* (work diligently) and *Naam japo* (meditating on God's name), shedding all inequalities, compassionate and pious living are the fundamental values exalted by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Nirmala sect acts and follows these teachings in true terms. This sect staunchly believes in the principles and of ideology all ten Gurus. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the foundation of Sikhism and is considered the actual and last *Guru* (lord master). Nirmalas have complete faith in and devotion to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. But in the meantime, the Nirmala sect believes teacher-taught (guru-chela) tradition. *Mool Mantra*, the root verse of *Guru Granth Sahib*, can be implicit as the summary of Sikh Philosophy. This *Mantra*, the 'magic chant' or 'magic portion', is the first verse uttered by Guru Nanak Dev upon the enlightenment at an early age. It is a brief composition encompassing the entire universally complex theology of the Sikh faith. It consists of religious, social, political, logical, martial, and eternal implications for human existence; truly humanitarian and global concepts of supreme power for all to understand and appreciate. This *Mantra* embraces concepts of universality and flawlessness and is beyond ambiguity.

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Ik oangkār sat̄ nām kartā purakh̄ nirbh̄ao nirvair akāl mūrāt̄ ajūnī saibh̄a'n gur parsād̄.

One Universal Creator God. The Name Is Truth. Creative Being Personified. No Fear. No Hatred. Image Of the Undying, Beyond Birth, Self-Existent. By Guru's Grace ~

⁷ Sant Tirath Singh (2011), The contribution of the Nirmala Scholars to the understanding of the Sikh Ontology, cited in Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmala Panth Da Samaz Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, pp.198-204.



॥ਜਪੁ ॥

Jap.

Chant And Meditate:

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥

Ād sacḥ jugāḍ sacḥ.

True in The Primal Beginning. True Throughout the Ages.

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੇਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥੧॥

Hai bhī sacḥ Nānak hosī bhī sacḥ. ||1||

True Here and Now. O Nanak, Forever and Ever True. ||1||⁸

It is said that the rest of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is an elaboration of the ***Mool Mantar*** and that this *Mantar* itself is an explanation and amplification of the single phrase – *Ek Onkaar*, which is the first entry in the holy scripture *Granth*. Nirmala scholars believe that *Mool Mantra* was basically derived from Vedantic philosophy. Even the verses of Guru Nanak Dev in his *bani* (script) are mainly based on *Onkar*. It means one and only one who cannot be compared and contrasted with any other and is a primal manifestation of Absolute God and is in itself the Supreme reality. It denotes the three forms of God, i.e., Generator, operator, and destroyer. But beyond three identities, God is one. Another definition of *Onkaar* is based on its attributes, just as *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattas* (activity, stability, and consciousness) are virtues. Understanding, following, and practicing *Gurbani* with all Vedic references; is the fundamental perspective of Nirmalas. The philosophy of Nirmalas revolves around it only. Even the principles and maxims of Nirmala's philosophy⁹ are based upon it just as following:

- Firstly, as the *Gurbani* confirms the summary of Vedas in the local language, so does the Nirmala sect. Sanskrit was considered the language of gods. Thus

⁸Nesbitt Eleanor(2005), *Sikhism a very short introduction* Mool Mantar (root verse) are the opening words of the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth Sahib* .ISBN 0-19-280601-7, Oxford University Press, New York, pp.22-24

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/mul_mantra

⁹Taran Singh (1981), *Nirmala Sampardya ki Teeka Padhatti*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p. 286.



few had the privilege to study scriptures. But Gurumukhi script made the messages of Gurus' messages of Vedas more comprehensive and more accessible to the masses. And Nirmalas were instrumental in this change. They translated many Sanskrit books into Brij, Punjabi and Hindi. Even they transcribed *Vedantic* interpretation of *Gurbani*. So the immanence of God is the conclusion of both *Vedantas* and *Mool Mantra*.

- Secondly, similar like the *Gurbani*, the Nirmalas neither disobey Vedas nor criticize holy pilgrimage and acts but denounce idol worship. *Gurbani* believes in Brahma, soul, nature, *karmic account*, (action) birth and death cycle and stoutly confirms them, as do Vedas¹⁰. Nirmalas consider Vedas as proof and take *Gurbani* as equivalent to it. And believe that God's wish prevails in Vedas, which never changes. The only way of communication changes.
- Thirdly, the Nirmalas deem chanting of holy mantras (*sumiran*) the source of salvation. But at the same time, they corroborate that there cannot be salvation without Divine knowledge. Their doctrine is that knowledge is the door to salvation. And as per Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy, Guru is important for everyone. The role of the Guru is vivacious. He is the only bond between the soul and God. Further, the Nirmala sect adheres to *Adaitwad* and its deep acumens. Its exponent Adi Shankaracharya propounded the *Mahavakya* (great saying) '*Ekas Braham Dwitiya Naasti*,' which is the central essence of the *Advaita* philosophy. *Advaita* means non-dualism. It says the creator and his creations are not two(dual) things but are one. 'I am indeed none other than Braham.' *Advaita Vedant (disambiguation or non-duality)* is the summary of Vedas.¹¹ This branch of philosophy believes in the Union of *Jeeva and Braham*. The *Jeeva* and *Braham* are not the two separate identities. The *subaerial* (*Jeeva*), only because of ignorance, does not understand the oneness and

¹⁰ Satya Pal Arya (2008), *Vedic Philosophy*, Shri Goodmal Parhlad Kumar Arya Dharmartha Trust Bynia Para, Rajasthan, p.18.

¹¹ Sant Jodh Singh, cited in Manjit Kaur (2015)(Ed.), *Bharam Torh Ate hor Rachnawan*, Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh, preface.p.1.



existence of God.¹² Yet the God is in his inside. It is a branch of Vedanta. 'Aham Brahamasmi' is the principle behind it. He opines that in the world, Braham is the only truth. The world is materialistic. The soul gradually becomes the part of super soul with the divine knowledge delivered by the Guru. By following the lord master, the disciple override ego and become one with the super soul.¹³

- Fourthly and lastly, the Nirmalas are the link among Vedas, *Gurbani*, *Nirmala Darshan Shastra*, and *Sanatan ideology*. Vedanta and the Nirmala philosophy affirm each other. Nirmalas are mainly behind the literary acknowledgment of Guru Nanak's philosophy in the Indian literary world. The Nirmala scholars made the world believe that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the fifth Veda. They could do so only because of their logistic arguments. Their literary contributions are really magnificent. Hari Parsad (1963), who had translated *Jap Ji Sahib* in Sanskrit, writes in the preface of *Japu Sanhita*. Pandit Hardev Singh Rishikesh wrote *Narayan Hari Updesh*, consisting of *Gurbani*, *Ved*, *Shastras*, *Upanishads*, *Gur Pratap Sooraj*, *Panth Parkash*, *Bhai Gurdas*, etc. Pandit Sada Singh from Chetan Matha 1797 wrote a commentary on 'Adaitwad Sidhi' called *Sura Sagar Chandrika*, which is an outstanding book of *Vedanta*. Pandit Nihal Singh wrote a commentary of *Japu Ji Sahib* named *Japu Gudartha Deepika*. To clarify the principles of *Gurmat*, he correlated them with Vedanta. Like the *Udasis*, the Nirmalas interpret the teachings of Sikh gurus in the context of Vedanta.¹⁴ They view the first Sikh Guru, Nanak, as an *Advaita Vedantist*, a follower of Shankara, and a defender of the *Sanatana Dharam*.¹⁵ *Adwaitwad* is a branch of Vedanta.

A very derogatory custom, i.e., the caste system, was highly prevalent in the 14 and 15th centuries. But Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh challenged the old system by criticizing the dogmatic rituals and by establishing a class of

¹² Sant Teja Singh(2018), *Atam Tatav Chintan*, Dera Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, pp.64-65.

¹³ Mahant Buddha Singh(2012), *Nirmal Updesh*, Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh, pp.50-51.

¹⁴ Pashora Singh: Louis E.French (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies*, Oxford University Press Incorporated, USA, pp.377-378.

¹⁵ Tesky Denton Lynn (2004), *Female Ascetics in Hinduism*, Sunny Press, New York, p.179.



scholars like the Nirmala sect, which broke the hegemony of *Brahmins*. This group of scholars initiated the renaissance by breaching the dominion of fanatics and disseminating the real *Bhakti* (devotion). The Nirmalas profusely contributed to literature and other socio-cultural arenas. They wrote *Guru Gobind Singh Ashatak* after his sacrifice at Dama Dama Sahib. Pandit Gulab Singh inscribed *Bhavarasamrit*, *Adhayatma Ramayan*, *Parbodh Chandra Natak*, and *Panth Parkash* and brought forth the *Advait* Philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev after having a compressive interpretation of Vedas and Shastras. P Nirmal scholar Pandit Hari Singh has explained the *Gurmat* philosophy in his book i.e. *Advaitanubhav Parkash*.¹⁶ Pandit Gobind Singh Nirmala Sadhu wrote *Vedant Pribhasha and Bairag Shatak(Bhasha Teeka)*. Pandit Sadhu Singh composed *Guru Sidhant Jayoti* and *Guru Shiksha Prabhakar*; Pandit Prem Singh Rishikesh composed *Guru Stotra* (Sanskrit) etc.¹⁷

Only two concepts are prevalent regarding Sikh waves. The first belief speaks about the origin of Sikhism due to the collision of Hindu and Muslim ideologies. The second concept indicates Sikhism sprouts as the offshoot of Hinduism to contest Muslim challenges like Sufism, the other outgrowth of it in medieval times.^{18, 19} Thus Nirmala scholars consider Sikh philosophy as the *Advait* experience of *Vedanta*. In the first phase, the Nirmala scholars focused on the illustration of truth with the help of *Vedantic* definitions. But gradually, feudalism influenced Nirmalas by changing their materialistic ambitions of accepting the land endowment offered by different landlords. Just Giyani Badan Singh, a Nirmala scholar, published the *teeka* (commentary) of Guru Granth Sahib on the patronage of Faridkot Court, which is fully colored with Hinduism.²⁰ The celebrated scholar Pandit Hari Singh

¹⁷ Haqiqat Singh Arwind, Nirmal Santan di darshan nu den, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.194.

¹⁸ Jaswir Singh Ahluwalia, Sikh Darshan Da Vedantikiran te Nirmal Sampardaya, cited, in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.161.

¹⁹ Ramesh Chander (1970), Guru Nanak's Teachings and the Upnishads, *Punjab Past and Present*, Punjabi University, Patiala. p.216.

²⁰ Jaswir Singh Ahluwalia (1981), Sikh Darshan Da Vedantikiran te, Nirmal Sampardaya, cited in, Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.161.



named his book *Advaitanubhav Parkash*.²¹ That indicates the fundamental principles of Nirmala philosophy by describing *Gurmat* in detail. The Nirmalas have promoted *Gurbani*. The color of Vedanta on *Gurmat* is because of the influence of Indian culture. *Vedanta* acclaim the mantra “*Aham Brahamasmi*” (I am the God). But Sikhism preaches to denouncing ego. *Vedanti* believes in the renunciation of the world, but *Gurmat* inspires us to live happy and household life.²² Their description matches with *Vedanta*, but it should not be derived that they have become *Vedanti*. They have their own originality; which other impacts of Vedas cannot diminish. The Nirmala sect believes in God's oneness and salvation by imbibing *Guru-Chela* (master and learner) tradition in devotion. They follow the principles of promotion of *Gurmat* given by Guru Nanak *Advaitwad* to date.

The above opinions are criticized by different scholars. K.K. Mittal²³ Admits that the philosophy of the Nirmal sect is '*Advaitwad*', which was manifested by the great philosopher and religious leader, i.e., *Shankracharya*, ages ago. The significant difference between both lies in the fact that the outlook of Shankaracharya is based on the *Upanishads*(Vedas), *Bhagwad Geeta*, and *Braham Sutra*. Thus it is called *Advait-Vedanta*, but the belief of the Nirmala Sect is based on *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Jap ji*, and *Sukhmani Sahib*. So *Advait* of the Nirmalas sect could not be correlated with Vedanta. Both Vedanta and Advaitwad are two important philosophies of Nirmlas. Uniformly, the Nirmla sect supports not only *Gurbani* but Vedas, Shastras and Puranas, etc. too, as all expand the thought of the 'truth.' This view is primarily initiated by Shri Guru Nanak Dev who says, “*Aad Sach Jugad Sach Nanak hai vi sach Nanak Hosi vi Sach*”²⁴(Mul Mantra is the Opening verse of the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.It consists of thirteen words in the Punjabi language, written in gurumukhy script and are most widely known in the Sikhs).²⁵ It means God is eternal

²¹ *Ibid*, p.162.

²² Piara Singh Padam(1981), *Vidiyapati Nirmale*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.223.

²³ Kewal Krishan Mittal (1981), *Nirmal Sampardaya da Darshnik Yogdan*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya* , p.204.

²⁴ *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, p.1.

²⁵ Pashora Singh(2000), *The Guru Granth Sahib: Canon, Meaning and Authority*, Oxford University Press, pp. 88-89. ISBN 978-0-19-564894-2. Mul Mantra is the Opening verse of the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.It consists of thirteen words in the Punjabi language, written in *Gurmukhy* script and are most widely known in the Sikhs.



truth and will remain so till infinity. Nirmala sect has reiterated to understand the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent truth and had always felt the need for *Gurus*, incarnation, prophet, and lord masters.²⁶

Further, the philosophy of the Nirmala sect and usable form or strategy should be seen in one alignment to understand it properly. Through philosophy, the Nirmala sect not only communicates the teachings and principles of ten Gurus but also delineates information about the various saints and scholars with their rich literary heritage surrendered to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. By its reflective method, Nirmala Sect has accepted the truth of the specialty of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and confirmed the uniqueness of the teachings of ten Gurus in the reality of life. By pleading the uniqueness of *Adi Granth* and ten Gurus, Nirmala sect has revealed the reality of life.²⁷ It could be said that the philosophic contribution of the Nirmala sect lies in the fact that they not only maintained the sanctity of holy scripture but also maintained the uniqueness of the Sikh wave. They correlated the teachings of all Gurus with great universalized descriptions of Vedas in a very apt and connecting way to Nirmala philosophy. K. K. Mittal is of the opinion that the description of Nirmala scholars is in tune with the philosophy of Shankaracharya. Anthromorphic (*Sagun Braham*) forms of God and infinite beyond all qualities and states of so-called transcendent(nirgun) form of God do not contradict each other rather; they are complementary.²⁸ Like Shankaracharya, *Adi Granth* also enthuses to train instincts for eternal divinity. Henceforth both of them consolidate each other. In other words, Nirmalas are the priests of Sikhism.

The main motive of Nirmalas is not to seek *Veadantinization (illustration and interpretation as per Vedas)* but to understand the *Gurbani* in entire colors with the help of Vedas. While analyzing the role of Nirmalas, it is concluded that they have supported and proliferated *Gurbani*, not the Vedanta. If their amplification matches

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.204.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 204.

²⁸ Kewal Krishan Mittal, *Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.208.



Vedanta, it is to confirm and consolidate *Gurbani*, not *Vedanta*.²⁹ It is essential to mention here that Niramlas could not be called *pro-vedanti*. They reflect Vedanta in their philosophy by adopting truth, modesty, asceticism, meditation, and abstinence from five sins lust, wrath, covetousness, greed, and vainglory (*Kaam Karodha, Lobha, Moha and Ahankar*) in their life. The virtues like nonviolence, forgiveness, less sleep, more concentration on self-control practices, and seeking self-realization and divine knowledge through the Guru in the body are the foundational principles of the Nirmalas. After seeking divine wisdom, they practice it for salvation like *Vedanti*. Like *Vedanti*, they consider knowledge (action) and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the tools of self-realization, but Nirmalas are *Gursikhs*, not *vedantis*.³⁰ As they accept and prove all of the above factors in the light and teachings of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* hence, it could be concluded quickly that they accept the super dominance of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* with its true following. The eclectic position of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is accumulated by the Nirmalas sect through various inputs, which is certainly noteworthy.³¹

In fact, the *Adwaitwad* (monistic school of thoughts) of Nirmalas should be called the *Adwaitwad of Gurbani* as they have explained "*Gurbani*," not the *stotras*(verses) of Shankaracharya.³² Some of the critics opine that the *Vedantization* has not only destroyed the exclusiveness but has also led to the lifelessness and severance of the inner dialectic of Sikhism.³³ But it is not justified as the Nirmala sect has brought vivacity to Sikhism. In a critical phase of Sikh expansionism, the *Vedantic* role of

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 204.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 205.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.206.

³² Kulbir Kang Singh (1962), Prashnottar of Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.207.

³³ Kulbir Singh (1972), *Nirukat Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, Punjabi University, Patiala, p.8.

" In numerous commentaries (*teekas of Japu Ji*), the conceptions of the science of Shastras are strongly emphasized. The hidden assumption was that the Hindu scholars should believe about the authenticity of Gurumukhi scriptures in respect to *Shastras* and *Smritis*."



the Nirmlas can't be unobserved.³⁴ The landmark achievements of the Nirmalas need great acknowledgment. Heera Singh Bhagat writes, "This sect has generated Sanskrit scholars. Like Shankaracharyathe they were *Vedanti* though they adored neither idol-worshipping nor the caste system. However, they were completely engrossed in the old Indian philosophy. And this is projected in their works and theology."³⁵ These theologians contributed profusely to the spread of *Gurmat* (devotion) and the creation of religious literature in the conglomeration of Vedanta. Their tireless efforts to preserve the values of the ten Gurus are highly appreciable. But it is a sorry state of affairs that their works and unparalleled achievements in both Sanskrit and Punjabi literature are ignored and unobserved. It further acquiesces that valid in-depth studies are earnestly required to treasure trove the Nirmala sect. But it is more apt to state here that the philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev is perfectly executed in Nirmala deras by the devout saints and their socio-religious activities.

Social Contributions of the Nirmalas

The benefactions of the Nirmala sect on society are compound. Indeed, the religious philosophy of Sikhism expounded by Guru Nanak Dev has emblazoned the Nirmala sect's social contributions. Nirmala saints are also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they played their role well.³⁶ Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion. Masses were influenced by the selfless services of Nirmalas, and this further led to the inclination towards Sikhism. Numerous accomplishments of Nirmalas are reasonably mentionable here as their idiosyncratic approach to social and religious plethora is matchless.

Ventures of Nirmalas for social wellbeing:

³⁴ Heera Singh Bhagat (1969), *Gurmat Vichardhara*, National Book Shop ,Delhi, p.58.

"Many scholars and theologians have advertised till date that Gurmat and Vedant are one in principle. Especially Nirmal scholars are the most expansionist of this thought.

³⁵ Sher Singh (1965), *Philosophy of Sikhism*, S. Jiwan Singh, Proprietor, Sikh University Press, Lahore, p.91.

³⁶ Mahant Ganesha Singh(1937), *Nirmal Bhushan arthat Itihaas Nirmal Bhekh*, Mahant Hari Singh, Amritsar, p. 3.



Free medication to sufferers: In the days of yore when hospitals were non-existent, if anything in the name of hospitals was available, it was in the form of the deras, ashrams, temples, *gurukuls*, etc. Ayurvedic medical science was kept alive by these saints only. Even in the darker times of the Islamic and British periods, Ayurvedic medicine was protected by Nirmalas. They also trained novices of *Ayur Vidya*. The eminent *Vaids* (Ayurvedic doctors) are given below:

Mahant Sampooran Singh of Anandpur; Mahant Chandan Singh of Brahm Kuti Kaashi; Pandit Chandan Singh's disciple Vaid Vattan Singh; Mahant Heera Singh of Gurusar Khudda. Mahant Ganesha Singh was a great medicine practitioner of this dera. He was an investigator and writer of the exegesis of *Ayurveda*, just as *Megh Vinod Parkash* Commentary, *Gang Yatinidan*, *Niyasi Vinashak* Commentary, etc. The founder of dera Gurusar Khuda Mahant Lal Singh Ji, was also a famous physician. Similarly, Sewa Singh was a specialist in eye cures. He made medicines with foreign formulas and also sought the latest machines related to ophthalmology. Similarly, Pandit Hari Kishan of Malwa; Pandit Tara Singh ji Gali bag Wali Amritsar; Sant Gurditt Singh editor (*Nirmal Pattara*), and Mahant Jai Singh Jhandan, etc. were the famous physicians of the Nirmala sect.³⁷ Kothaguru had also given a long list of saints who had proficiently helped the masses to get rid of severe and chronic diseases.³⁸ : Shri Maan Sant Gulab Singh Gholiye, Mahant Ram Singh ji Sares Wale, Sant baba Jawand Singh Khawaspur, Mahant Niranjan Amritsar, Pandit Balbir Singh Viyogi Santpura Delhi, Mahant Bhoop Singh Village Shakoor, Pandit Chetan Singh Rasoolpur Ludhiana, Sant Ram Singh Malooka, Mahant Kirpal Singh Dhunda, Mahant Sadhu Singh Kore wala, Sant Shamshsher Singh Nanak Sar Jagorha, dr Mahant Piyara Singh ji Barhiyan, Sant Kartar Singh Virakat Kamb Sabu and Mahant Sham Singh Bhagatan Bhai etc.

The famous Nirmala scholar of Ayurvedic medicines, Sant Baba Tara Singh from Khadoor Sahib, and his disciple, prominent physician Mahant Sadhu Singh Shastri, have helped the grieved masses in the emancipation of their sorrows. A free

³⁷ Mahant Amreek Singh, Nirmale Santan duara vibhinn chikitsa parnaliyan rahi samaj sewa, cited in. Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, pp.174-176.

³⁸ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (1997), *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp. 47-50.



homeopathic dispensary is opened at Khadoor Sahib. for the incessant help to the needy people. All necessary arrangements are made by the descendants of Mahant Sadhu Singh.³⁹

Nirmal Ashram Kutiya Banga is continuously organizing free eye care camps every first Wednesday of the month. Half yearly eye camps are organised ad operations at Govt. approved hospitals are conducted by New Ruby Nelson Hospital Jalandhar at the expanses of Nirmal Ashram Kutiya.⁴⁰ Even heart care camps are periodically organised in the Kutiya. If anyone is having any ailment in regard to heart, eye, then can be sent to Jalandhar hospital for cure and expenditure full or partially borne by the dera. Special care is provided for the patients at the dera. Sant Baba Malkit Singh and Sant Baba Bhag Singh of Kutiya endeavoured to work for the social welfare of the needy people. Expenditure in regard to the educational and other needs of downtrodden people is also borne out by the dera. A countless number of eye operations are conducted by the dera in the Eye specialised Hospital at Jalandhar. It organizes two camps in a year of eye operations with free medicines and other required materials for patients with eye problems.⁴¹ The heart caring camps are quite diligently organised periodically. It is important to mention here that Sant Baba Malkit Singh and Sant Baba Bhag Singh have been the Presidents of Nirmal Doaba Mandal at different times. Sant Baba Malkit Singh also got constructed a *puli* (narrow bridge) at Singhpur for the welfare of that area.⁴²

Nirmala Ashram Pathlawa is unremittingly providing health services. ShriMaan Sant Baba Ghanayia Singh was great scholar of Nirmal sect. His follower Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh (Mukhiya Mahant Panchayaty Akhara Kankhal Haridwar, General Secretary Nirmal Doaba Mandal) is successfully running Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh Free Charitable Dispensary.⁴³ Every year on 18 November a free eye care camp is

³⁹ Mahant Amreek Singh, Nirmale Santan duara vibhinn chikitsa parmalayan rahi samaj sewa. Cited in. Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmal Panth Da Samaj Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, p.175.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sant Baba Bhag Singh chief priest of Nirmal Kutiya Banga by Sarla Nirnakari on 7th November 2021 at Banga.

⁴¹ Kulwinder Singh (2011), *Nirmal Panth di Samaz nu Bahupakhi Den*, Nirmal Ashram Rishikesh, p.179.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.179.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.179.



being organised. Additionally, twice a year, blood donation camps are organised by this dispensary. For the welfare of the public, two ambulances are kept ready for 24 hours. Sant Baba Ghanayia Singh Charitable Hospital is also working under the aegis of Sant Ghaniya Charitable Trust. A hospital of 25 beds is serving the area in a very peculiar way.⁴⁴

Shri Nirmal Takhat Talab Baba Buddha Sahib Ramdas and Atam Darshi Harimandir Dakoha Jalandhar were established by Sant Baba Bhagwant Bhajan, a disciple of Sant Jaswant Singh. Sant Jaswant Hospital was opened in 2009 for childless parents as a novel way to serve society⁴⁵. The experienced and able doctors serve the Hospital with philanthropic zeal. It is having latest facilities like IVF(Intra Vitro Fertilisation) and IUI(Intra Uterine Insemination); Fallopian Tube Recanalization; Recurrent Pregnancy Loss Clinic; One stop Fertility Diagnostics; Diagnostics and Operative Laparoscopy& Hysteroscopy; ICSI (Micro Manipulation); Semen & Embryo Freezing and Donor Engg. Program(surrogacy).⁴⁶ Every year Atamdarshi Dakoha hospital organizes two free medical camps in the months of January and June. Free medication and medicines are distributed to the patients. At the related places of Sant Baba Bhagwant Bhajan Singh, i.e., in Karnal and Uttar Pradesh also, free medical camps are organised annually.

The indispensability of these deras lies in the provision of free medical camps, free medicines, and easy accessibility to the needy. These days, modern medical facilities with the latest technology in hospitals and dispensaries have made them more significant.

Nirmal Ashram Hospital (NAH) Rishikesh is another Nirmala hub of medical care. With the grace and the blessings of extremely holy saint Mahant Baba Ram Singh Ji Maharaj, Nirmal Ashram Hospital (NAH) Rishikesh was inaugurated on the sacred day of *Vaisakhi* on 13 April 1990. Since its inception, the Hospital has been making a significant contribution to the health care facilities in Rishikesh and the surrounding region in Uttarakhand, in particular New Tehri, Pauri, Srinagar,

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.179.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 181.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp.181-182.



Chamba & Uttarkashi. NAH, a multi-specialty secondary care Hospital, provides free health care facilities to the needy, including saints and the poor. This Hospital contains the following latest medical streams:⁴⁷

Medicines, Gen. Surgery, Obst. & Gynaecology, Orthopaedics Surgery, ENT Surgery, Paediatrics, Dental, Anaesthesia, Dermatology, Psychiatry, Radiology, and Pathology. It is a hundred & twenty bedded Hospital with 24 Hrs. Emergency Services, ICU, NICU, Male, Female, Obstetrics, Gynae, Isolation, Nursery, Recovery, Plastic surgery, Laparoscopic & TURP Surgery, CU & NICU, Modern O.T., Deluxe & Private wards. The Hospital can boast of a singular objective of giving the best performance at all levels. NAH is contributing to the realization of organizational objectives and is making an impact in Rishikesh and its adjoining areas.⁴⁸

Sant Baba Bhag Singh Charitable society is running Guru Nanak Sadh- Sangat Charitable Hospital at village Kalra district Jalandhar.⁴⁹ This is 100 bed hospital with all modern facility. Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Nursing⁵⁰ and SBBS University fully support it. Numerous health care camps, blood donation camps, extension activities and outreach programs for the benefit of locality are forwarded by it. The Nirmala Sant Baba Bhag Singh University is a great boon to the rural area.

Nirmal Kutiya Adampur had been initiated by Sant Baba Vatan Singh and Choudhary Udham Singh Minhas. The descendants of Udham Singh Minhas just as Chodhary Ram Basant and his son Bhagwant Singh Minhas, dedicatedly served Sant Baba Vatan Singh and Nirmal Kutiya Adampur.⁵¹ The descendent of this Minhas family i.e. Jitender J. Minhas is running a social welfare society called " Sant

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 184-185.

⁴⁸ www.nirmalashram.org

⁴⁹ Poar Surinder Kaur(2009), *Light of Santpura (Jabbar)*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Khiala, Padhiana, Jalandhar, p.66.

⁵⁰ <http://www.sbbsin.com/aboutus.html>

⁵¹ Wasdev Singh Parhar(2009), *Sikh Rajputaan de Pindaan da Ithas*, Lokgeet Parkashan, Chandigarh, p.45.



Watan Singh ate Lambardar Bhagwant Singh Minhas Trust Damunda Adampur. This society has opened Lions Eye Hospital Adampur. This hospital had conducted six thousand free cataract surgeries and with the help of Zies Microscope (advance technology Children Eye Scanner of eyes problem imported from abroad) donated by J.J. Minhas, 150 Surgeries were conducted. Late Lambardar Bhagwant Singh Minhas Skill Development Training Centre Damunda Jalandhar. This centre is run and managed by Sant Baba Bhag Singh memorial Charitable society. The above centre is opened in the old house of Jitender J. Minhas at Damunda.⁵² A post office, a computer centre and a stitching centre are also being run in their old residential areas. In nut shell, the teachings of the Nirmala Sant have become light houses for the people.

Astronomy and Nirmalas:

Nirmala scholars enjoy the reputation of being great astrologers and soothsayers. Thakur Nihal Singh (Thohe Khalsa) was a renowned scholar of astronomy and palmistry. He had foretold about Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana's being a divine personality in the times to come. Pandit Basant Singh Braham Kuti Kaashi was known as the 'Monarch of astrology' among the masses for his clairvoyance.⁵³ He had correctly prophesied about bright future of the professor of Sampoorana Nand Sanskrit Vishwa Vidyalaya Varanasi. As stated by Basant Singh Braham Kuti Kaashi, the obvious happened.⁵⁴ Famous physician Sampuran Singh Anand Pur was a great scholar of palmistry too. Pandit Mangal Singh Patiala had written the famous astronomical script named '*Mahoorat Chandrika*.' Further, Nirmla saints like Pandit Sant Singh, Sant Bhagwan Daas, and Sai Lok Shri Sukha Singh Gali Baag Amritsar have contributed mainly to the field of astronomy.⁵⁵ In fact, the versatility of Nirmalas has given them a strong link with the masses, which further made them instrumental in expanding Sikhism.

Yoga practices of Nirmalas:

⁵² Online interview with S.Jay.S. Minhas (NRI Vancouver) on 24th July 2022 by Sarla Nirankari at SBBSU.

⁵³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.57.

⁵⁴ Balwant Kotha Guru, Singh (1997) *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.51-52.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.57.



Yoga practices are pretty hard for religious practitioners (*Sadhak*). The aspirants of spiritual goals need a strong mind in a strong body which is only possible through the disciplines of Yoga. The most noted Yoga expert of the Nirmala sect was Sant Mohar Singh, who trained hundreds of beginners. He was called Yogiraj by his admirers and devotees. He wrote *Yoga Sikhiya Prabhakar* in the old Gurumukhi script.⁵⁶ It is stated that he died at the age of 145 years. Another scholar of Sanskrit, Pandit Isher Singh Kaliyug, was wonderfully well-versed in Yoga. His expertise in mesmerization was unique and matchless. Some of the most illustrious practitioners of Yoga of the Nirmala sect are as follows:

Sant Harnam Singh dera Uche Kalan Distt. Bhatinda; Sant Ram Singh ji Ram Tilla, Village Malooka Distt. Bhatinda; Pandit Bhan Singh Kokari; Sant Dharam Singh Virakat Amritsar, Mahant Mahan Singh Fatehabad; Mahant Hari Bhajan Singh ji Naasik ‘ Mahant Tara Singh Dera Danna (Jammu) and Sant Amar Singh etc.⁵⁷

Nirmala saints have succeeded in sparking the spirit of Yoga among the people. This way of making commoners happy and healthy has proved their ancient legacy.

Environmental concerns of the Nirmalas:

Nirmala deras have achieved ground-breaking accomplishment in environmental awareness. The most noteworthy and momentous contribution is of Sant Baba Balbir Singh, chief priest of Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal. He incessantly works with his everlasting zeal to save the environment from degradation and further dilapidation.

Balbir Singh Seechewal (born 2 February 1962 at Seechewal) is a Nirmala Sikh who spearheaded an anti-river pollution campaign in Punjab, India. He is an internationally acknowledged river conservationist. By combining his diligently cultivated self-help philosophy with the environmental essence of the *Gurbani*, he has resurrected the 110-miles long Kali Bein rivulet. He is also known as Eco Baba.^{58,59} In his latest project in early 2009, taking up the bludgeons to save Buddha

⁵⁶ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.59.

⁵⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.52.

⁵⁸ Poulomi Das (11 April 2016), *Meet Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, the Baba who single-handedly cleaned a 160-km long river in Punjab* | *Business Insider India*. Businessinsider. in. Retrieved 8 April 2017.



Nullah, Seechewal has initiated a campaign to generate awareness amongst different sections of the society. He is determined to solve the problem of desilting the water body following the failure of the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) and industries to comply with the High Court's orders in this regard. He single-handedly cleaned and restored the Kali Bein river, a 160 km long tributary of the Beas river in the Doaba region of Punjab.⁶⁰ Seechewal says that when he started the water-cleaning project of Kali Bein (rivulet of Punjab that flows into the confluence of the rivers Beas and Satluj at Hrike) in 2007, it was a challenging task.⁶¹ But, as people became aware of its importance, they joined in cleaning the rivulet, which had become a dried-up drain and had been reduced to a garbage dump with its historical and religious significance long forgotten. He has been honoured with various national prizes and flagships, such as he got Padma Shri award from the President of India Pranab Mukherjee on 30 March 2017⁶² and Hero of Environment by TIME magazine. Hence he is well known for his community-based conservation.

Sant Seechewal has devised an underground sewerage system that is low-cost and indigenously modeled but very effective, durable, and easy to install. The efficacy of this system has been attested by its practical installation in more than 50 villages and towns. In this system, sewage waters are stored in a pond, treated in a natural way, and then supplied for agricultural use. This process promotes organic farming and saves farmers' money on fertilizers and irrigation. The farmers of the area who, being crop-less and poor, were compelled to commit suicides are glad to have a taste of prosperity as a result of Sant Seechewal's *kar sewa* of the river. In order to awaken the people for the protection of natural waters sources, Sant Seechewal led an Inter-State Awareness March (in Punjab and Rajasthan) in 2009, in which a large number of people marched along the rivers of Punjab and Rajasthan Canal to make the people

⁵⁹ *Seechewal model for clean Ganga*. Tribuneindia.com.31 January 2016. Retrieved 8 April 2017.

⁶⁰ <http://www.nirmalkuteya.com/portal/node/570>

⁶¹ Interview of Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal with Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021 at Nirmal Kutiya Sultanpur Lodhi.

⁶² [https://www.hindustantimes.com/videos/india-news/eco-baba-seechewal-wins-padma-shri/video-](https://www.hindustantimes.com/videos/india-news/eco-baba-seechewal-wins-padma-shri/video-AuTWeytDTPj2yLr0hjEPEN.html)

[AuTWeytDTPj2yLr0hjEPEN.html](https://www.hindustantimes.com/videos/india-news/eco-baba-seechewal-wins-padma-shri/video-AuTWeytDTPj2yLr0hjEPEN.html) 'Eco Baba' Seechewal wins Padma Shri *Hindustan Times*. 28 January 2017.

Retrieved 8 April 2017.



aware of the causes of water pollution and solution to the problem. In 2008 and 2011, he organized a large mass movement to make pollution-free the utterly polluted Kala Sangha drain of Jalandhar.⁶³ The self-help programs introduced by Seechewal has mesmerised the world.⁶⁴ In a nutshell, Nirmal Saint Seechewal has taken aback the whole world with his practical and indigenous measures to save the level of groundwater and rivers. He and his followers have led the masses in a revolutionary way proving the religion and humanity strength of.

Cow protection:

Whenever honor, image, and integrity were put at stake, the Nirmalas laid down their lives unconditionally at the altar of religious responsibility. In 1919 A.D. (Samvat 1975) Katahrpur near Haridwar, Sant Harnam Singh of Dera Baba Dargaha decided to confront the announcement made by the Muslim community for mass cow slaughter.⁶⁵ He tried to convince peacefully about the futility of cow killing. But all went in vain. Consequently, Mahant had to fight to make the cow free from slaughter. At last, all the cows were released. But Mahant was arrested in the case of murder. Finally, he was penalised with life imprisonment. After serving sentence in Lakhnow and Allahabad jails, he was released on 1926. In this way, these saints surrendered their lives for truth, religion, cow, and the poor. Maha Mandaleshwar Swami Yugeshwar Videhi Hari was the President of Akhil Bhartiya Gon (Cow) Rakshan Parishad.⁶⁶ He has actively conducted a movement to ban the cow killing, prompt cow care, and welfare. He and his followers have to bear lots' of untold cruelties from various forces for this pious act. Nirmala sect has pride in such gems who lead the masses for smooth and healthier socio-cultural relations. The whole of the nation pays regards and homage to such saints who were dedicated to the cause of protected interests. Similarly, several saints surrendered their lives for this

⁶³ <http://www.nirmalkuteya.com/portal/sant-balbir-singh-ji-seechewal>

⁶⁴ Interview of Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal with Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021, at Nirmal Kutiya Sultanpur Lodhi. For details refer to Appendix No.VI.

⁶⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.165.

⁶⁶ Sant Darshan Singh Shastri, Sant Harnam Singh Shastri and Sant Jaswinder Singh Shastri(2010) Nirmal Bhekh tatha Nirmale Santan da Samaj nu savpakhi yogdan, cited in Harbhajan Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya di gurbani viyakhayakari* Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kender, Dehradun, p.47.



sensitive issue such as Sant Udam Singh in 1947 at Shahdara Lahore, Sant Kishan Singh in 1947 at Muzaffarabad Poonchh ,Sant Gopal Singh Dera Baba Khuda Singh Lahore in 1947 and Sant Kapur Singh.⁶⁷ It is also important to mention here that Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal has long legacy of creating worldwide awareness about cow-protection, religious freedom and patriotism through Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti. Several national holy processions named as Japyog Mahanushthan Yatra with the association of Khat Darshan Samaz (Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti) have been organised by Nirmal Panchayati Akhara which are as follows:

- Japyog Mahanushthan Yatra started from Kashi Vishwanath Banares on 22nd March 1995 and visited Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Western Bengal and Nepal.
- In 1998, this holy journey of National cognizance began from Dehradun and ended in the holy place Manikaran of Himachal Pradesh.
- In 2000 the sacred procession started from Vaishno Devi Kashmir and while covering several places, it ended in Kamakhya Devi Assam.⁶⁸

In nut shell the Nirmal sect, has been instrumental in creating national consciousness about national religious and social issues by various campaigns and spiritual expeditions.

Mahant Bibiyan(women participation) in Nirmala Sect:

Mostly Nirmal Panthi saints (dera holders) are bachelors but few of them are married too. For the administration of dera, commonly Bhekh elects Mahant but in a few deras the administration has been handed over to females also. The Mahant Bibis have proved equally efficient in the administration. They have profusely contributed in the enlargement of education and complying with other socio-cultural responsibilities. Mahant Lahana Singh of Dera Koni (Sekhwan Sampardaya) expired in 1932. After his death his wife Mahant Bibi Tulsan became the head of the dera.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.48.



She controlled the dera till 1932 with great accountability.⁶⁹ Mata Parmeshwari was the daughter of Mahant Darbara Singh of Khaduriya Sampardaya. She erected a huge inn in Amritsar in the memory of her father. On every fifth day of the month Mahant Bibi used to arrange mass kitchen (*Guru Ka Langar*) for everyone. Mata Ram Kaur, the servant of the Mahant Sharam Singh, also belonged to this Sampardaya. She acquired the tradition education of the Nirmala sect while living with her Guru for about 50 years and afterwards she proliferated the Sikhism in the Khanni Pothehar area. She completely stood for the traditions of the dera by serving the masses and guest with her full capacity. Her disciple Bibi Sant Kaur led the life of ascetic in Rishikesh.⁷⁰ She was born in Village Dadan Khan District Jhehlam. Since last 34 years, she continuously serving Mata Ram Kaur. The wife of Pandit Gopal Singh Bibi Inderwati is a great orator and storyteller.⁷¹ Another saint of this Samardaya made his will of dera on the name of his wife Sant Basant Kaur in 1935.⁷² Sant Sewak Singh of Samardaya Thakar Malla Singh Mangwal went to Peshawar area for Gurmat expansion. His follower Mata Vazeer devi conitued the routine duties of the Mahant after him positively. Bibi Charanjit Kaur a saint from Pandori Nijjaran is also having a significant place in the Nirmala sect. She had a very bad experience in marital relations. She got fed up from the worldly affairs and with the inspiration of her aunt she learnt Vedant and read Yoga Vishisht. Finally, with the motivation of her aunt she became the devotee of Sant Dewa Singh of Pandori Nijjaran. She went to the hills of Rajgiri in Patna and did hard deliberation on the teachings of her Guru for eighteen years. After her death, her adherent Mata Virakat Kaur is following her truly. The follower of this Sampardaya only, Bibi Ishawar Kaur(Dera Kamalpur) is running a school for girls at the building of her home.⁷³ Bibi Dhandevi, the follower of Sant Vazeer Singh was a highly literate lady. She continued Satsang for many years and died in 1937. After her death her will of

⁶⁹Sawinder Kaur (2010), *Nirmal Panth ate Mahant Bibiyan*, cited in Harbans Singh, *Nirmal Panth di Gurbani Viyakhakari*, p.134.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.134.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p.134.

⁷² *Ibid*, p.135.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 135.



house went to her disciple Bibi Lachmi (follower Sant Bibi Dhandevi) of Gujrat. She stayed for a long time and promoted Sikhism in true spirit. Accordingly, it could be summarised that the role Mahant Bibiyan is not less than others. They strongly followed the path of Sikhism and preached about it incessantly. Their inspirations to live as per the wishes of Lord master(Guru) has brought social changes in the society. In short this sect has good number of female dera representatives or heads. Their number is although less in comparison to male Mahants but it is very significant as it proves that the sect has no gender biases. Moreover, this representation depicts that the sect has helped female saints to break the psychological barriers of equity among the society.

Role in Independence movement:

The role of Nirmalas in Sikh rule & British regime is nonetheless vital. Nirmalas had a very significant contribution and relationships with the public around. They not only helped the masses but also helped the Sikh regime in tough times. Even when the British created rift in society through the policy of Divide and Rule, Nirmalas vigorously tried to unite the Indian community. The prominent contribution is of Bhai Veer Singh Naurangabad, who influenced Sikh sardars to create national integration.⁷⁴ Baba Veer Singh and Baba Maharaj Singh sacrificed their lives to extinguish this fire of hatred and betrayal, and they bore countless intolerable tortures. Even the British government was scared of Sant Maharaj Singh. He was the pioneering warrior of independence. British admitted that they would have lost Punjab and India if Baba Maharaj had not been arrested in time.⁷⁵ Nirmala sect feels honoured for the beginning of revolt by Nirmala saints against the British in the period of suppression and slavery. British tried to subdue freedom combatants like Sant Maharaj Singh, but failed desperately. Similarly, Sant Khuda Singh endured lots of atrocities by the British.^{76, 77} No less outstanding was their contribution when the Akali wave was at its highest, in rendering selfless services, be it political

⁷⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp.117-135.

⁷⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p. 324.

⁷⁶ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp.157-162.

⁷⁷ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth Da Itihas*, pp. 420-423.



matters, religious, or concerning the country's development.⁷⁸ Not only this, sacrifices were made instantly by them in serving their motherland. Akali Lahar commenced from 1920 to 1924, carrying forward the Gurudwara Reforms. The massive contributions of the Sikh community are indescribable. Mahant Mul Singh had to stay in jail for six months for his anti-British activities. Afterwards, he was imprisoned for two years in the jail of Multan and had to pay the penalty of Rs. 500, for becoming a member of Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee as this body was considered against British government.⁷⁹ The list of such Nirmala freedom fighters is quite long but a few are listed as below:

Sant Gurbaksh Singh ji Giani *Likhari*(writer), Bunga Talwandi Sabo, Sant Balbir Singh Viyogi Santpura Model town Delhi, Sant Pritam Singh Kot Futuhi, Sant Partap Singh ji Rana Haridwar, Sant Gurdiyal Singh Boparai, Sant Ajaib Singh Lamma Jatt Pura, Pandit Basant Singh Vaid Braham Kuti, Varanasi, Mahant Tahil Singh Daffar Wal, Mahant Kunda Singh Kot Bhai, Mahant Sucha Singh Kot Bhai, Mahant Narayan Singh Jammu Kashmir, Sant Giani Ram Singh Pindi Gheb, Sant Giani Jagat Singh Ambala; Mahant Manjit Singh, Sant Hakam Singh, Sant Ram Singh Soorma, Sant Bhai Raj Singh Barhi Dharamshal and Jathedar Teja Singh (all belong to Dera Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar); Sant Mitha Singh Bunga Mastuana, Sant Jog Singh Bunga Mastuana, Sant Jagat Singh Panola, Sant Narayan Singh Bunga Mastuana, Sant Hakam Singh Keeratpur Nawan Pind, Sant Giani Mahinder Singh Dam Dama Sahib Bhatinda, Sant Arjun Singh Jhota Sar, Sant Gurdiyal Singh Bunga Mastuana, Sant Nihal Singh Pind Gajiana Faridakot, Jathedar Sant Dayal Singh Parwana, Giani Karnail Singh Amar Surewala and Sant Harikewal Singh Khiyo Wali etc.⁸⁰

The list of the saints of the Nirmala sect who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of country are as follows:

Sant Basant Singh of Nirmal Braham Kuty Kashi (a famous Nirmala dera of Kashi), was a great patriot. Braham Kuty was the center of revolutionary activities of the

⁷⁸ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.177-178.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.177.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.178.



national struggle for independence. Famous freedom fighter Shri Jai Parkash Narayan spent most of the time of his anonymity in this Nirmal Kutya. The maximum literature of revolution used in the area of Kashi was published in Brahm Kutya. Bhai Mani Singh's execution in Lahore and Baba Deep Singh's martyrdom for the defence of Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) are unforgettable events in Nirmala history. The list of martyrs of Nirmala is quite extensive, but a few are mentioned here.⁸¹: In an incident, the Nirmala saint named Sant Narender Singh sacrificed his life in a protest march against the British in (Dadhoriya Chowk)Kaashi; Sant Uttam Singh Shahdara shot by police at Lahore in 1947; Sant Joga Singh in 1947; Sant Kishan Singh; Sant Gopal Singh Dera Baba Khuda Singh at Lahore; Sant Ratnakar Singh and Mahant Karam Singh Karamveer in the riots of 1974 in Allahabad etc.⁸²

Religious and political ranks occupied by Nirmalas

Different saints of the Nirmala sect have represented it in various religious, political, and social institutions by occupying the following designations:

Mahant Mool Singh, the head Priest Harmandir Sahib; Sant Prem Singh Marala, a member of Punjab Assembly; Sant Harnam Singh M.L.A. and Minister of Punjab Assembly; Sant Harchand Singh *Jathedar* (ordained leader of the clergy and leads a *Takhat*, a sacred seat) *Takhat* Damadama Sahib; Sant Heera Singh *Jathedar* and Head Priest Sachkhand Hazoor Sahib; Sant Bahadur Singh *Jathedar* and Head Priest Sachkhand Hazoor Sahib; Sant Lakha Singh *Jathedar Takhat* Damadama Sahib and member of Assembly; Mahant Hakim Singh Dera Baba Mishra Singh member of Religious Committee; Giani Nahar Singh from Ropar designated as head priest Keshgarh Sahib Anandpur and Maha Mandaleswar Swami Sachidanand Hari Saakshi Member Parliament.⁸³

Such political and religious descriptions have undoubtedly given an edge to the Nirmalas. They could better contribute to society by getting in touch with the masses and extending political and spiritual support.

Educational Ventures of the Nirmalas:

⁸¹ *Ibid*, pp. 176-178.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.179.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 180.



Nirmalas' contributions to education are mammoth. Educational imprints of Nirmala are quite discernible. The academic enterprise was vehemently carried forward as a fundamental responsibility by Nirmalas. These saints took a keen interest in education, social services, and social reforms. They dared to break the centuries of darkness multiplied by imperialistic designs without royal patronage. The relentless efforts for the education of rural areas and backward classes are beyond description. Their unremitting efforts to spread education in farfetched areas have made them idiosyncratic from other sects. Similarly, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh opened a splendid and charitable university in the rural area and has elevated its educational status. Sant Baba Bhag Singh University is the first Nirmala university backing the rural masses in their pursuits in higher education. Detailed endeavours of Nirmalas are as discussed in chapter IV.

The Nirmala deras have successfully brought social changes by disseminating secular and spiritual knowledge and education among the students. These saints defy the traditional methods of teaching, providing alternative up-to-the-minute approaches. Not only the Sikh community but other sections of the society also participate and learn the interpretation and elucidation from them.⁸⁴ The central point of the pedagogy of Nirmala saints is their acceptance of declining interest in *Gurukul* tradition and bringing forth the institutes with the latest technology. But simultaneously, this sect has toiled to save the spiritual aspect of the civilization too. Identifying places related to ten Gurus, construction of *Gurudwararas*, renovation of historically significant Sikh shrines, and maintenance of sanctity in the deras and Vedantic elucidation; are a few glaring facets of Nirmalas bequest. Further, freelance writing, preservation of scriptures, and translation of works of Nirmalas have done wonders.

Construction and repair of Gurudwaras:

It is noteworthy to mention here that the Nirmala saints have been instrumental in repairing Gurudwaras, finding out lost Guru Dham (the places related to ten Gurus) and restoring the religious activities of daily prayers. Their role of saving Sikhism during

⁸⁴ Paramvir Singh, *Nirmale Santan vallon Gurulul parnali ton Adhunik Parnali Tak*, cited in Kulwinder (2011), *Singh, Nirmal Panth da Samaz nu Bahu Pakhi Yogdan* Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh, pp. 28-34.



tough times is reasonably significant. Services to humanity during atrocities by free medication, community food and shelter at Gurudwaras and providing education are their specific preferences.

Sant Ghanaiya Singh of Pathalawa started the *Kaar sewa*(manual service by volunteers) of the gurudwara of Anandpur Sahib.⁸⁵ Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur constructed the marvellous building of Takhat Keshgarh Sahib and also renovated various places related to the *gurus*.⁸⁶ Sant Mela Singh of Banga erected beautiful buildings. Sant Singh of Bhuriwala(Tapowan Amritsar) contributed in the maintenance service of numerous Gurudwaras of Amritsar. Mahant Gurdyal Singh established Nanakpura Ashram in Haridwar. Gurudwara Teesri Patshahi- Dera Baba Dargaha Singh Kankhal was linked to holy river Ganga with fortified stairs. The Golden layer in the roof of Shri Harmandir Sahib Amritsar was engraved by Nirmala Sant Kartar Singh of Thatha. Pandit Dewa Singh of Nirmal Bag Haridwar carved the golden layer on the ceiling of Harmandir Sahib⁸⁷. Mahant Dewa Singh had also incised golden work in the outer courtyard of Shri Harmandir Sahib(old building which was demolished in the 1948 war).⁸⁸

In addition, he also contributed with voluntary physical labour (*Kar Sewa*) of Gurudwaras of Goindwal. Mahant Balwant Singh Secretary constructed a beautiful building of Gurudwara of Villi village in Jalandhar. Mahant Balbir Singh Shastri built the Gurudwara of Bal Leela Saini of Patna.⁸⁹ Similarly, Mahant Didar Singh erected the fine-looking Gurudwara of seventh Patshahi(seventh Guru) at Allahabad.⁹⁰

Sant Sewa Singh of Anandpur Sahib contributed in the various Gurudwaras of Takhat Damdama Sahib. Numerous Gurudwaras were constructed and renovated by Sant Sadhu Singh 'Moni' at Agra and Mathura. Sant Sewak Jatha Bunga Mastuana, Talwandi Sabo set up Gurudwara Manji Sahib at the bank of Gurasar lake.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.166.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 167.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 167.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.167.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 167.

⁹⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.114

⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.114.



Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal could not be ignored for his service of cleaning Bain river and constructing several buildings of Sultan Pur Lodhi.⁹² Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal has done miracles with the help of the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) for creating mass awareness for protection of environment. His crusades for environment have brought ostentatious achievements like water treatment plan, innovative sewage system and plantation in the area of Seechewal.⁹³

In nut shell the services of the Nirmala saints are irrevocable. Silently but unswervingly, this sect has been part and parcel of socio-religious pangs as well as glees of society. The sect has always stood by the transformational zeal of the era. The sagacity, the foresight, love for humanity, freedom and essential participation in reforms, have made this sect quite distinctive. It is very strange to admit here that this sect has specific attribute of detached attachment to the society which is certainly rarest of rare virtue.

⁹² Poulomi Das (11th April 2016). "Meet Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal, the Baba who single-handedly cleaned a 160-km long river in Punjab | Business Insider India". Businessinsider. in. Retrieved 8th April 2017.

⁹³ Jasbir Singh Wattan Wali(n.d.), *Bein Nama*, Panj Aab Parkashan, Jalandhar, pp.22-57.

CHAPTER VI

RECAPITULATION



The history of Punjab has deep roots in religion. It is crystal clear that socio-cultural facades are directly influenced by religious fervor. It is said that only a true devotee of God could be a real patriot. In the context of the Nirmalas, this could be rightly documented that they have proved faithful to the above proclamation. Not only in the religious reforming emission but also socio-cultural planes, the Nirmalas have proved their worth. The nationalism by Guru Nanak initiated in the fifteenth century is carried forward by the Nirmala sect in this era too. The flag-wavers like Baba Veer Singh Naurangabadi,¹ Baba Maharaj Singh,² and Baba Khuda Singh³ have created history in Indian nationalism.

On the other hand, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam,⁴ Giani Gian Singh,⁵ Pandit Gulab Singh,⁶ Pandit Hari Singh, Pandit Sadhu Singh, Mahant Ganesha Singh,⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, etc., and many more have created ground-breaking literary creations.⁸ At the same time, the love for humanity of this sect is predictable from their social activities like creating awareness of environmental concerns, spreading education, providing health facilities, and having a zeal for accepting and solving other challenges to society. Their dwelling areas are the renowned deras of various parts of Punjab and Northern India. Almost all of the Nirmala deras are engaged in socio-cultural undertakings. Righteously, this sect has played the bridge between Sikhism and Vedanta; between the haves and have-nots and learned and illiterate. The present study is an ardent endeavour to highlight the history, literary activities,

¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.313-324.

² *Ibid*, pp.320-324.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 345-349.

⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.70

⁵ Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Nirmale Sadhayan di Sikh Dharam nu Den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.155.

⁶ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p 53.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 117.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 101-165.



socio-cultural influences, expansion of Nirmala deras in Doaba region and their reflections etc.

The first chapter of the present study deals with the introduction of the Nirmala sect in detail. The historical roots of the Nirmala sect are discussed with existing conditions. The hatred and jealousy had spoilt the odour of life. People have forgotten God, the actual path of religion, and the message of true wisdom. Instead, they got involved in hypocrisy, imposture, betrayal, immorality, and unrighteousness. Guru Nanak emancipated humanity by initiating a clean and undefiled form of worship in these times of unrest, deterioration, and disharmony. Devotion towards God through service to humanity, reminiscence of God, and devout congregations were the significant initiatives in the path of *bhakti* (devotion) taken by Guru Nanak. He increased the eternal principles of musing of God by continuous chanting, equal sharing of gifts of nature, and sturdy belief in a life full of actions (*Naam japo, vand chhakko, and Kirat kro*). His way of teaching was based on divine enlightenment and devout faith in God. These principles reinstated the crumbling social structure of society. The Sikhism expounded by him and the other nine Gurus formed a cohesive Sikh community, but gradually, a need had been felt for the conglomeration of temporal power and spiritual authority (*Miri- Piri*) together. The tenth Guru Gobind Singh initiated armament and edification (*Shastra* and *shaastras*). There was a dreadful need for alterations in the ways of promotion of Sikhism due to the suppressive policies of the Mughal regime. The most peace-loving Sikh community has to take the shape of brutal combatants to procure the interests of the Hindu community. Both literary and weaponry means the existing challenges were dealt with resourcefully by Sikh gurus. The special proclivity shown towards the Nirmala sect by Guru Nanak Dev in *Adi Granth* is quite peculiar.⁹ The keen interest of tenth Guru Gobind Singh could be better construed by creating Khalsa (a class of warriors) and Nirmlas (a class of scholars) in the late seventeenth century.¹⁰ Drastic changes in Sikhism done by Guru Gobind Singh to save the nation

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 12-15.



by establishing Khalsa and taking the lead to train educationally fit all Sikhs; is quite important. The birth of Nirmalas can be traced back to Guru Nanak.

Various theories given by different scholars appear to be illogical to the investigator's conviction as one feels its birth was given at the time of the founder of the Sikh faith, i.e., Guru Nanak Dev. The origin of Nirmalas can be broadly categorized into four beliefs as far as the investigator's perception is concerned. All of these different theories present different opinions of various faiths. However, its development as a socio-religious reform ideology is the most acceptable theory by modern historians, yet the faith of the distinguished scholars about Guru Nanak as the proponent compels one to be confident in the first theory.

The first chapter contains a significant review of the Nirmala sect and the leading saints and legends of literature. The substantial supposition about the review of literature is that the British historian like John Malcolm, H.H. Wilson, and J.D. Cunningham have strappingly accepted the Nirmalas as the learned class of Sikhs and able expounders of Vedantic philosophy. These historians have given verdicts about the intellectual strength and higher position of the Nirmala scholars in society. Rose, Denzil Ibbetson, A.H. Bingley, and Major A.E. Barstow have strongly accepted Guru Gobind Singh as the expounder of this sect. Mcleod W.H. has given an account of Rahits (intensive way of living) in the Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit'. Here the living traditions of the Nirmalas are discussed in detail. A review of literature of numerous other studies highlights that sufficient research has been conducted on the various areas related to the Nirmala sect, just as the meaning of the Nirmala sect, its nomenclature and characteristics, the historical development of the Nirmala Deras, the strict rules of living,¹¹ educational and literary contributions of Nirmalas, reforming zeal and critical appraisal of the leading Nirmala saints like Pandit Gulab Singh,¹² Pandit Tara Singh Narottam and Giani Gian Dev, etc.¹³ In short, in this chapter, the place of the Nirmalas in modern history has been identified.

¹¹ Teja Singh Mahant (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Giani Nahar Singh Shri Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, pp.9,19,26,32.

¹² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp. 60,64,66.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.73 115.



Various great authors and writers agree about the literary and other contributions of this sect in several fields.

The second chapter gives profound historical information on the commencement and development of the Nirmala sect in detail. Four theories are elaborated in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. It is cohesively resolved from various approaches that the Nirmala sect has a pronounced legacy. Innumerable scholars have dedicatedly explored its history and lineage. The first theory lays claim to the credence of Bhai Gurdas, Mahant Ganesha, Giani Gian Singh, and Mahant Dayal Singh and settled the concept of Guru Nanak as the founder of this sect. The references to the *Gurbani* and other scriptures like *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*, *Makke di Goshat*, *Gur Bilas Patshahi*, and *Shri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*, etc.,¹⁴ could not be conceived as solid evidence to consider Guru Nanak as the forerunner of Nirmala sect. It is widely assumed that as the word *Nirmala* hails from the *Guru Nanak Bani*, therefore, this sect feels obligated for its lineage to Guru Nanak Dev.¹⁵ Further, this word had been used by Bhai Gurdas as an adjective to upkeep the devout and supreme teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. Likewise, other references could also be overridden as the misapprehension of the word 'Nirmala'. The reference to 'Nirmala' in *Adi Granth* could not be considered true by many historians as the word '*Nirmal*' or '*Nirmale*' has been used as a distinguishing feature of the *Panth* of Guru Nanak or his followers (Sikhs) purposely. Moreover, Guru Nanak's mission was cosmic, forbearing, and universal. At the same time, the Nirmalas confine themselves to lots of constraints. The first theory of accepting Guru Nanak Dev as the founder of the Nirmala sect could not be corroborated successfully. The lack of historical confirmations and more dependence on Sakhis (stories based on folklore) fail to make substantial evidence. The second theory believes in its relationship with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. This theory was devised by Pandit Gulab Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Teja Singh. It is quite vital to mention here that Guru Gobind Singh has a special inclination toward *Puranas* and Vedas. He grasped the gist of Hindu philosophy and ideology and intended to make a society well trained for both peace and war situations. Thus, to elevate the talent of the Sikh community,

¹⁴ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.32.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.33.



Guru Ji selected literature as a tool. He was both poet and a courageous warrior. The creation of Khalsa and Nirmala Panth denotes his undying wish for a balanced society.¹⁶ It is because of his adoration of learning that he sent a selected group of five learners to Kashi to learn the Sanskrit language so that the Vedas could be comprehended accurately. He wanted that the nonaligned, nonpartisan, and supreme knowledge of Vedas would help the Sikh society to get rid of dogmatic rituals. He knew that broadmindedness, logical thinking, and divine knowledge would better equip the Sikhs for social harmony. Guru Gobind Singh's multitalented personality inspired the Sikh community to imbibe the literary virtues inherently. Therefore, in 1863 he sent five Sikhs, i.e., Bir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karan Singh, Ram Singh, and Saina Singh to Kashi. These scholars learned the ultimate knowledge of Hindu scriptures and Sanskrit in detail at Chetan Matha at Kaashi.¹⁷ After thirteen years, they returned in 1896, and the tenth Guru blessed them with ten blessings and extolled to spread this knowledge to the masses.¹⁸ Further, these scholars were called Nirmalas. But the bestowing of ten blessings to Nirmala scholars and affirming them as 'Nirmalas' does not confirm the fact that Guru Gobind Singh launched Nirmala Panth. However, due to the lack of historical resources, it could not be proven that the tenth Guru founded the Nirmala sect. However, the fact of Guru Ji's affiliation with Nirmala scholars could not be overruled though the links between Nirmalas and Guru Gobind Singh do not confirm the second belief of their origin in Guru Gobind Singh's time.

The third faith of the dawn of the Nirmala sect, discourses that due to differences of opinions regarding *Gurmat- Darshan* (philosophy of Sikhism) a group became a separate offshoot of Sikh religion. Lack of strong evidence to substantiate, this theory cannot be considered the final one. Even Nirmala scholars are not sure about its origin. Nevertheless, from their work, it is finally assumed that the Nirmala sect was a faction of Sikhs only that has separated because of some intellectual differences and resultant conditions. The third faith supported by Paramjit Singh Mansa, Sher Singh, and Teja Singh reinforced the opinion of the emergence of the Nirmala sect as a

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 33.

¹⁷ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthaat Itihaas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.18.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.19.



discrete sprout of the Sikh religion. Even Giani Gian Singh, taken as an eminent Nirmala historian but could offer only the evidence of folklore. Most of the literature was written in reverence and regard to the Sikh Gurus.¹⁹

Mahant Dayal Singh makes even Giani Gian Singh's historical texts without having any historical exploration.²⁰ Although Mahant Dayal Singh's opinion about the Nirmala sect is one-sided, it is not historically supported.²¹ He acknowledges that this sect became famous as 'Nirmala Sampardaya' because of Sikh followers' faith in Guru Nanak. It is inferred that the Nirmala sect was not born in its present form; instead, it is the evolved form. About the lineage of Nirmalas, Kulwinder Sachdeva opines that this might be because of the growing tensions among the various Sikh socio-religious groups during the second half of the 19th century.²² Teja Singh has rightly admitted that Nirmalas are our religious propagators and preachers like the Catholic priests who never get married for the work of spiritual elevation. Fortunately, Udaasis and Nirmalas were those advertising wings that had been formed since the tenure of ten Gurus only. If Nirmalas were a separate sect, they would have produced Nirmalas, not the Sikhs. The third faith consolidates that the Nirmala sect was a branch of Sikhism with scholastic virtues of ancient Indian philosophy. However, Teja Singh calls them religious preachers of Sikhism, not a distinct group.²³ The Nirmalas' is considered the spiritual priests of Sikhism until now. There is no rejection of this theory, but its historical origin is still under scrutiny.

Overviewing the perspective of the emergence of the Nirmala sect historically, one has to go back to the prevalent conditions of Punjab after the demise of the tenth Guru. The degradation in Sikhism could be visibly seen. The Khalsa Panth fought for the welfare of religion and the nation. Punjab was divided into 12 Misals until the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Shamsheer Singh,²⁴ Prof. Teja Singh, and Sohan

¹⁹ Pritam Singh *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.34.

²⁰ Giani Gian Singh, *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, p.7.

²¹ Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, p.105.

²² Kulwinder Sachdeva, *Punjab History Conference*, p.229.

²³ Teja Singh (2009), *Sikh Dharam*, Dharam Parchar Committee, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, p. 98.

²⁴ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1984), *Punjab Diyan Lahiran*, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 22.



Singh Josh²⁵ are of the opinion that the Nirmala sect has emerged for the resurgence of society like other reform movements of Punjab, i.e., Udasis, Sewapanthies, Namdharis, and Nirankaris. The fourth theory strongly asserts the beginning of the Nirmala sect was the result of socio-religious movements in mid of the eighteenth century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh focused on political affairs than religious ones. Consequently, after his demise, both religious and political withdrawal started. In the place of ten Gurus, a few people started to call themselves Gurus; resultantly, Sikhs separated into various sects. Nirankari drive-by Baba Dayal Singh in 1851 and Namdhari wave by Baba Ram Singh in 1857; initiated transformation in socio-cultural arenas in Punjab. Christian missionaries vehemently started the proliferation of Christian philosophy in Punjab. In 1873, Singh Sabha Lahar emerged as a savior of Sikhism and *Gurbani*. To revive Sikhism and recuperate *Gurmat* values, scholars like Pandit Tara Singh, Giani Gain Singh, etc., are highly commendable. Nirmalas and Udasis started to promote Sikhism enthusiastically.²⁶ Singh Sabha wave was attended by *Pujaris*, *Gianis*, *Granthis*, *Udaasis*, and the Nirmalas very instantly and meticulously. Since the divine departure of the tenth Guru, the Nirmalas sect has been consistently playing its role positively. Even after the beginning of Singh Sabha, it kept on performing its literary and social duties flawlessly. This Singh Sabha movement converted to Gurudwara Reforms Movement and Akali Dal in 1920. Initially, Nirmala scholars participated and contributed profusely to the activities of the Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. But afterward, watching the political inclination of Akali Dal a shoot of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the Nirmalas drifted away from it.²⁷ The spiritual vacuum created by the leadership like Guru Gobind Singh was felt direly, which a political party like Akali Dal could not fill. Akali Dal lost the goodwill of the Nirmala sect, as it assumed this pro-Hindu sect.²⁸ The Sanskrit lineage of the Nirmala sect further widened the rift between the two. Moreover, three basic differences of Nirmalas, i.e., renunciation of home, acceptance of Guru in body, and recognition of Vedanta as the source of *Gurbani*,

²⁵ Sohan Singh Josh (2002), *Akali Morchiyan da Itihas*, R. C. Publishers, New Delhi, p. 51.

²⁶ Ganesha Singh Mahant(1937), *Nirmal Bhushan*, Hari Singh, Amritsar, pp.98-99.

²⁷ Sohan Singh Josh (2002), *Akali Morchiyan da Itihas*, R. C. Publishers, New Delhi, p. 51.

²⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas*(part one), p.30.



were the major causes of contention.²⁹ Akali Dal was the ruling authority of Sikhism, and it denounced the Nirmalas sect on the above-said grounds. Further, the relationship kept on spoiling between the Nirmala sect and Akali Dal. Conclusively Akali Dal boycotted the Nirmala sect in gurudwaras and discarded their participation in all religious activities of Akali Dal. Around 1930 Nirmala sect got disconnected from the Sikhs. These saints continued the religious promotion and literary activities. Although Akali Dal had boycotted them, they kept on interacting with Sikhs. These scholars are the lighthouses of religious developments and great resources for the explanation of the *Gurbani*. Most people are still admirers of Nirmala's intellect and philosophy. This sect became an independent sect called Nirmala *Sampardaya* by integrating its scholars and announcing its own rules and regulations. Overviewing the above discussions about the origin of Nirmalas under the fourth concept, it is resolved that the emergence of Nirmalas as a socio-religious movement could be corroborated convincingly. However, the problem of historical origin has been a matter of controversy and serious discussion since the late 19th century. It could be summarized that even during the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Misl's period, the Nirmalas got a cordial and congenial environment to flourish. There are relevant proofs available that prove the existence of the Nirmalas before Maharaja Ranjit Singh; for example, Pandit Sada Singh of Chetan Matha Kashi wrote '*Adwait Sidhi Ki Sugam Saar Chanderika*' in 1763. Pandit Gulab Singh Nirmala wrote '*Karam Vidhak*' (1753), '*Parbodh Chandrpdyia Natak*' (1760), '*Mokh Parkash*' (1778). These books are of the time of Misals.³⁰ There is a scarcity of literary proofs in the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But before and after his regime, numerous books of the Nirmala sect were written, for instance, '*Bhagat Bani Steek*' in 1850, '*Shri Moksha Panth Parkash da Swayam Prabh Vivaran*' in 1864, '*Shurtaru Kosh*' 1877, '*Akal Moorati Prardarshan*' 1878, '*Teeka Gurbhav Deepika*' 1878, '*Teeka Gur Bhav Deepika*'. Further, the books like '*Japu Hariras Aadik*' 1880, '*Bhagat Bani Da Teeka*' 1882, '*Gurteerath Sangarhi*' 1883, '*Shri Raag Teeka*' 1884 and '*Gur Girartha Kosh*

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 31.

³⁰ Pritam Singh *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.34.



Part 2' 1889, etc.^{31,32} are the testimonies which not only consolidate the literary contributions of the Nirmalas but also are above board proofs of their existence. The fourth theory seems acceptable because of the available evidence. The confirmations prove that this theory is near to the truth comparatively to other theories. Thus, the investigator supports the theory of the emergence of the Nirmala sect as a socio-religious movement to the extent of the modern historians' persuasion of some signs only. Otherwise meticulously overviewing the literature, oral history and heritage; the investigator assents the first theory for their lineage.

As mentioned above, the Nirmala sect's emergence as a social, religious popular drive; proved a great social event of the eighteenth century. It connected not only Hindu and Sikh society but also synchronized Vedic and Sikh literature efficaciously. The premier credit goes to Shri Guru Gobind Singh and his sagacious philosophy. The Guru did not want to delimit Sikhism to Punjab only. Hence, Nirmala saints were given the freedom to advertise Sikhism after their return from Banares. They were sent to every part of the country. Except for Anandpur, they accompany Guru Gobind Singh to Malwa, Damdama, and Nanderh. Pandit Karam Singh and Dargaha Singh daily recited and narrated old scriptures at Nanderh (South). In 1704, after overcoming a lot of difficulties of wars and royal conflicts, Guru Gobind Singh arrived in Nanderh (South India) at the invitation of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. After the sad demise of Shri Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the two followers amongst the five most beloved disciples named Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh accompanied him to Nanderh. The sorry departure of Shri Guru Gobind Singh led all warriors to depart from warfare and get involved in the Nirmala ideology. Giani Gian Singh's works endorse the fact that after Shri Guru Gobind Singh's departure to heaven, most of these disciples shifted to Punjab.³³ These scholars also received royal patronage, land donations as well as support for literary assistances. Many of them joined the army of Banda Bahadur. The rest of the disciples wanted to live in peace and congregation, just as Bhai Dargaha Singh Saina Singh, Deep Singh, etc., stayed with Sahib Ram Kaur (Baba Gurbaksh Singh) at Ravidas Pura. Bhai

³¹ Kulwinder Singh *Nirmal Panth da Samaz nu Bahu Pakhi Yogdan* Nirmal Ashram, Riskikesh, p.128.

³²

³³ Dayal Singh Mahant(1935), *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth*, Kirpa Sagar Press, Lahore, pp.50-51.



Gurbaksh Singh kept these saints in 1719 at his dera and had intensive discussions on the life sketch of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. In the Misal period, Nirmalas blossom significantly. The Phulkiyan States patronized Nirmalas to become a prominent religious order.³⁴ The Nirmalas received several land donations from different property owners, heads, and royal families.

From the receiving of various land deeds, it is clear that in the period of Sikh Misals' landholdings had been offered to Nirmala saints. A few of them had started to build their deras there. Land holdings offered to Baba Dargaha Singh before the Misal period shows his proximity to Guru Gobind Singh.³⁵ The land possessions received by Nirmala Sadhus make it clear that they were keener on attaining and delivering education than on worldly pursuits. It is also assumed here that Sant Dargaha Singh was the contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh. Nirmalas probably did not participate in the post-Guru Gobind Singh struggle by Banda Singh Bahadur. As the oppression of Sikhs was very high in Punjab, they established their deras out of Punjab like Sant Dargaha Singh at Kankhal in 1710,³⁶ and in Punjab, Sant Koyir Singh founded the first Nirmala named Bunga Nirmala dera in 1750.³⁷

They were early missionaries who travelled and spread Sikhism among the masses. The greatness of the Nirmal sect lies in the fact that most of its scholars were quite dedicated to Sikhism and Gurmat expansion. Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed is considered the principal and first contributor of the Nirmala sect. This was because he was taught and educated by the five disciples, who were educated and trained from Kaashi. Bhai Mani had been a regular attendee and contributor to Gurbani and Sikh philosophy at Anandpuri Darbar of the tenth Guru. Baba Veer Singh Naurangabadi, Baba Maharaj Singh, and Khuda Singh are renowned freedom fighters of the Nirmala sect. This sect established its branches gradually after the establishment of the Nirmal Ashram Haridwar. Several offshoots of the Nirmala sect sprang by the followers of Bhai Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, etc., and many others, which were further named after the name of the pioneers of

³⁴ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.44

³⁵ Teja Singh(1995), *Nirmal Darpan*, Reprint 2002, Dera Gurusar Khuda, ,Hoshiarpur, p.8.

³⁶ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.35.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 36.



Sampradayas (sect). For the promotion of the Sikh religion, several *Sampardayas* were formed, and their number reached 12. Further, 16 *Sampardayas* (including *Katayi*) were added by Mahant Ganesha and Mahant Dayal Singh.³⁸ These side-shoots of the *Nirmala* sect reached the masses in the different areas by the various *Nirmala* scholars.

The *Nirmalas* successfully expanded both devotion and nationalism among the masses. The long traveling with their strong faith in Sikhism from Guru Nanak, other Gurus, the *Misal* period, tormenting British era, the upcoming *Akali* movement, and the establishment of *Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee* till present times; in all stretches, this sect has proved its worth. The unconditional support of the masses was the reciprocation of the selfless devotion and services of the *Nirmalas*. Royal patronage received by the sect was enough to compliment the *Nirmala* sect's altruistic proposal. The care and love given to the *Nirmala* sect resulted in the residential permanence near the community. Further land donations given to the *Nirmala* sect paved the way for well-organized *deras* of the *Nirmala* sect.

The next chapter, i.e., the third, edifies the setting up of *Nirmala* *deras* connected with various *Sampradayas*, their development, organization, administration, etc. The expedition of the *Nirmala* sect has become a great accomplishment because of its inherent traits. The philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev, patronage of Guru Gobind Singh, love for the masses, and the nature of adjusting to the varying needs of society; have made the *Nirmala* sect distinctive from other sects.³⁹ The most credential fact of the *Nirmala* sect is its valuable literary as well as societal sharing with the masses. This sect has successfully played the role of bridge between *Vedas* and Sikhism, *Gurmat*, and practical aspects of spirituality. Even in the dark ages of British suppression and exploitation, these saints kept on spreading the message of Guru Nanak, i.e., love, peace, and humanity. These saints have addressed the immediate social, medical, intellectual, educational, and spiritual needs reasonably well. They unceasingly stayed with the masses in all good and bad times. This could only happen because of their ground-rooted approach. For incessant and direct interaction with society, the *Nirmalas* made *deras*. Mostly these *deras* received land donations from local kings

³⁸ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.66-67.

³⁹ Maan Singh Nirankari, Udghatan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.21-27.



and chiefs of territories.⁴⁰ In addition, native followers also granted lands and all types of support to the Nirmala saints because of their peace-loving, scholastic and humanitarian tendencies. Moreover, the Nirmala sect has an extreme social order in their deras. The social order created in the Nirmala deras engendered numerous marvels. The most disciplined and pious living in these deras led to creativity in literature and ingenuity in social and spiritual advancements. These deras are importunately carrying forward the teachings of ten Gurus and are winning the people's hearts the most for sacrificing and renouncing nature.

While observing the historical development of Nirmala deras, it was noted that at the beginning, all saints belonging to different sects used to live in cohesion. The cordial relations of Nirmlas, Nihangas, Pujaaris, Udaasis, etc., were indisputable.⁴¹ Nirmalas firmly continued doing *Gurmat* propagation from various Takhats and *Gurudwaras* in union with other sects. They were so blended together that it was tough to discriminate. Nirmala saints used to have huge congregations at certain intervals for the steadfastness of their beliefs and philosophy. The first meeting of Nirmala Saints happened in Rishikesh in 1758 on the occasion of Kumbha of Haridwar, the second in 1764 on the occasion of Ardha Kumbha, and after this, it happened in 1770 in Rishikesh, in 1806, a great meet was held in Haridwar under the supervision of Baba Dargaha Singh⁴². In this period, *Gurmat Parchar*(propagation of Sikhism) was appreciated by *Maharaja* Ranjit Singh too. Although Nirmal Panchayati Akhara was launched in 1855, the deras of the Nirmala sect were functional even before 1806 in Punjab.⁴³ Henceforth it could be derived that with the pace of time, the Nirmalas gradually advanced in the shape of well-planned residential learning centres. These hubs proved principal benefactors and sponsors of Sikhism. The spread of the Nirmala deras expanded to almost the whole of North India. But present study emphasizes the Doaba region only.

This region is considered the heart of Punjab. Its historical and religious legacy is superb. The tenth Guru consecrated the town Shri Anand Pur Sahib. He was a

⁴⁰ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas*, pp.32-33.

⁴¹ Ganesh Singh Mahant(1937), *Nirmal Bhushan*, Hari Singh, Amritsar,pp.98-99.

⁴² Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.60.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 60.



philosopher, saint, warrior and a great insightful leader of masses. His zeal of literature and creating a learned class further led to the generation of scholars and so on. Especially in the Doaba region, a pronounced series of the Nirmala saints efficaciously launched their deras. In fact, these deras became the epicentre of literary as well as religious activities in this province. There are numerous famous Nirmala saints, and places indebted to Doaba Region, just as Maqsdpur, Jian, Kaharpur, Mahilpur, Domeli, Santgarh Harkhowal, Santpura Jabbar Maanko, etc. It is pretty hard-hitting to provide detail of all dera here. Some of the significant deras are mentioned with some illustrations. Even being the list of deras is exhaustive, only legendary and publicly influential deras are selected and presented here. For example, the Nirmala dera Harkhowal⁴⁴ had a great legacy in the Doaba region. Braham Giani Baba Karam Singh Sahib ji Maharaj Hoti Mardan Sampardaya, Sant Baba Aaya Singh and Sant Baba Jawala S. Ji (Harkhowal) made this dera world wide famous.

Dera Jian (Hoshiarpur)⁴⁵ is very significant dera of Doaba which earned acclaim in the Hoshiarpur region because of its exponent Sant Baba Harnam Singh. He had built and contributed several *Gurudwaras* such as Hariyan Belan *Gurudwara Satwin Paatshahi*, Jand Sahib, *Gurudwara Tahli Sahib Gindpur*, and Mohna, etc. He also participated in the fourth *Jatha* (squad) from Anandpur Sahib to Jaiton and surrendered to British police. He had a great galaxy of saint followers. His principal disciples were as follows: Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur, Sant Basant Singh Johlan, Sant Paul Singh, Sant Kaiser Singh Virakt, Sant Chanan Singh, Sant Hari Singh Kanbal, Sant Dalel Singh Virakt, Giani Rattan Singh Tutomzaara, Sant Pardumman Singh Paddi, and Sant Soora Singh, etc.⁴⁶

Dera Kaharpur a leading dera of Nirmala sect was commenced Sant Baba Hari Singh.⁴⁷ Sant Baba Hari Singh had constructed a committee to look after the Deras of

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/deraSantGarhHarkhowalJalandhar/posts/sant-baba-bhagwan-singh-ji-harkhowal-samprda-de-mukhi/702410687072997/>

⁴⁵ Chanan Singh(2012), *Ruhani Parkash Shriman Param Pujaya 111 Sant Baba Harnam Singh Ji Maharaj Jian*, Mayi Gurdevi Charitable Trust Village Jian, Choubewal Hoshiarpur.

⁴⁶ Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Rabb ji Dera Jian Hoshiarpur on 21/2/2022 at Jain Mahilpur. For details see Appendix 4.

⁴⁷ Interview with Sant Sadhu Singh, the Chief Priest Dera Kaharpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021, at Dera Kaharpur, Hoshiarpur.



Jian, Anand Pur Sahib, Kaharpur, and Amritsar. He also passed the rule that no family member would be elected as the Mahant of the Dera. His prominent followers are Pandit Bishan Singh, Mahant Jawala Singh Jian, Sant Kala Singh Ji Anandpur, Mahant Sher Singh ji, Sant Bhag Singh, and Sant Rattan Singh Kaharpur.⁴⁸

Dera Santpura Maanko is one of the chief deras of Nirmala Sampardaya. This dera owes its lineage to Sant Baba Hari Singh. His prominent disciple, Sant Baba Bhag Singh, initiated this dera.⁴⁹ Sant Baba Bhag Singh was born in Kohdowal in Distt Hoshiarpur. He came to Manko (Jabbar) and sat in a lonely place for hard penance and meditation. In 1928 he established Dera Santpura (Jabbar). Many followers started to visit and illuminate with divinity. He went to Hoshiarpur again and left this world for a heavenly abode in 1962. He has five disciples, namely Mahant Hardayal Singh Musafir, Mahant Gurbachan Singh Virakt, Sant Gurbachan Singh Rikhi, Pandit Tara Singh, Mahant Sohan Singh, etc. After him, Mahant Hardyal Singh Musafir has appointed the head Mahant of Dera Santpura Manko. He served this Dera from 1965 to 1980. He had been followed by Mahant Malkeet Singh.⁵⁰ Baba Malkeet Singh is also known as bridge Baba. He was a visionary saint. He is famous for his land mark achievements. The most outstanding accomplishments of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh is Sant Baba Bhag Singh University that is enlightening the area with the detonation of legendary knowledge. After Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji headed the Sant Pura Dera from December 2015 to 22nd April 2021 and guided numerous educational enterprises. Sant Baba Janak Singh is the present Mahant of the dera.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Darshan Singh(2018) *Jiwan Sedhan Shri Man 108 Sant Hari Singh Ji Kaharpuri*, Magismatic Press Sahibjada Ajeet Singh Nagar Mohali, pp.10-25.

⁴⁹ Pakhar Singh (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Parupkar Da Kender Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji Dera Santpura Jabbar*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.16.

⁵⁰ Poar Surinder Kaur(2009), *Light of Santpura (Jabbar)*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Khiala, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.57.

⁵¹ <https://hi-in.facebook.com/Dera-Sant-Baba-Bhag-Singh-Ji-Santpura-Jabbar-189585717745922/videos/347866112704466/>



Nirmal Kutिया Seechewal: Nirmal Kutिया Seechewal has become worldwide famous because of its community-based conservation.⁵² The champion saint of the dera, Balbir Singh Seechewal, is a Nirmala Sikh who commanded an anti-river pollution campaign in Punjab, India. By combining his assiduously cultivated self-help philosophy with the environmental essence of the Gurbani, he has done miracles. For his countless services to humanity he is honoured *Padam Shree* in 2017⁵³ and is given title of *Eco Baba*. His EK Onkar Charitable Trust is consistently doing wonders.

Abundant deras of the Doaba region are discussed in the present study. It is important to mention here that these deras have become an integral part of society. The norms prevailing in the Nirmala sect have made the functioning of the deras social friendly. It is the serendipity of the area to have the welfare, literary and socio-cultural reforming services of the Nirmala sect. But it is more apt to state here that the philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev is perfectly executed in Nirmala deras by devout saints. It could be added that these deras have become hubs of spiritual learning. Undoubtedly, the contributions of Nirmala saints are consummate. Certainly, this study is limited to the account of achievements of the Nirmalas because of certain precincts of research.

In the IV chapter, an attempt is made to deal sumptuously and rationally investigate the gargantuan literary contributions made by Nirmalas. The literary and religious activities left a deep influence on people's minds and popularized this sect amply. Their scriptures supported the fundamentals of Sikhism and augmented its glory to the universal intelligentsia. The global appeal of the Nirmala literature, especially commentaries (*Teeka*) has astounded the scholars. The sporadic writings on Vedas have made the literary critics flabbergasted. In fact, the revelations made by these scholars have brought forth the hidden talent and lost scriptures of Sikh history and literature. There is further scope for literary offerings as much of the work of Nirmala scholars is not published yet.

⁵² Interview of Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal with Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021 at Nirmal Kutिया Sultanpur Lodhi. For details refer to Appendix No.6.

⁵³ Madhur Singh (24th September 2008). "Balbir Singh Seechewal – Heroes of the Environment 2008 – TIME". Content.time.com. Retrieved 8th April 2017.



Historically, the literary emergence of the Nirmalas could be considered in the early seventeenth century.

Punjab and particularly Sikh community has witnessed a very crucial time after the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur. Mughal cruelly suppressed this community as they were scared from the fearlessness and bravery of the worthy tenth Guru and his followers. They considered Gurudwaras as the power bases of Sikhs. Henceforth their atrocities increased and Sikhs had to live precariously. Even Sikh scriptures were banned and distorted badly.

In this dark phase of spiritual as well as intellectual vacuum the Nirmlas emerged as great saviors.⁵⁴ This sect brought revolution in Sikhism and kept the passion for the Gurbani live. They secretly moved towards the Malwa region which was not taken as serious threat by the Mughals. These saints lived with the harmony in the society and created peaceful environment. Moreover, their approach was poor friendly. Religious conflict created by the suppressor ruler has eliminated love and synchronization among the masses. The Nirmala saints became the redeemers of Sikhism at this time. They spread Sikhism in a very systematic way; thus, the Nirmalas were considered pioneers.

They raised voice against the communal violence and political unrest through their writings and literary undertakings. Their work is true reflection and replica of social and political upheavals. Their impersonal approach to the pains and strife is well explained in their workings. They became leaders of masses by leading on the road to religious observance and devotion.⁵⁵ They remonstrated the exploitation of the masses in their work and opened the way for revolution. The most owing lead taken by them is their indigenous educational enterprise and the challenge erected in front of Christian missionary's educational revival. They were the first to open schools in the deras for girls as well as weaker sections of society. The native educational trajectory followed by Nirmalas proved sign post.⁵⁶ They silently strengthened the vernacular

⁵⁴ Kartar Singh Soori, Sikh Mat Nu Nirmal Yogdan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.135-144.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 140.

⁵⁶ Roshan Lal Ahuja, Sikhiya Vich Punarjagriti De Aagu, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.240.



languages and Sanskrit educational ventures too. But as mentioned earlier, their literary endeavours are still to be chronicled and monitored more.

In the eighteenth century, the Nirmala saints were also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they played their role well.⁵⁷ Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion. Masses were influenced by the selfless services of Nirmalas, and this further led to the inclination towards Sikhism. In the time of British governance, schools spread only religious education, although every type of education was available. Muslim education was prevailing in *Madrasas* (*Mosques of learning*), but there was a meager arrangement for the Hindu community except for a few Hindi *Pathshalas*. The Hindu and Sikh youth came in direct contact with Nirmalas. These saints were highly inclined toward the spread of education, and they accepted the challenge of redeeming the Sikh and Hindu communities. Nirmala Sikhs have been called theologians of *Gurmat*.⁵⁸ From the first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev till the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs who lived in *Grihastha* (home) were called Sikhs, but those who left home became ascetic austere; had been named the Nirmalas. This tradition is continuing. By abstaining from worldly allures, they had consistently donated to literature as well as socio-cultural reform engagements.

As mentioned earlier the Nirmalas have vigorously backed the field of education by supporting indigenous education. The chief duty of Nirmala saints was education expansion. In that period Sanskrit Gurukul educational model was prevalent. Henceforth they have to first learn Vedanta from Sanskrit scholars at Banaras, Prayag, etc. This tradition has begun in the times of Guru Gobind Singh. The second motive was to provide chances for Sanskrit learning to interested Sikhs. In those times, Brahmins did not consider commoners as the proper recipient of Sanskrit education; hence Nirmalas took it as their moral duty to teach their brothers Sanskrit. For this purpose, they toiled hard and opened Sanskrit schools(*pathshala*) at Banares, Prayag, Ujjain, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Lahore, Amritsar, Damadama Sahib, Patiala, etc. Mahant Ganesha Singh mentioned 17 such sects in his book named '*Itihas Nirmal*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.241.

⁵⁸ Sher Singh (1965), *Philosophy of Sikhism*, S. Jiwan Singh, Proprietor, Sikh University Press, Lahore, p.91.



Bhekh', and Mahant Dayal Singh had mentioned 33 such sects in his books named *Nirmal Panth Darshan* which had abundantly served education.⁵⁹ It is worth averring here that all of these places were the canters of learning with substantial education arrangements. From commoners to the higher dignitaries, Nirmala scholars have served this duty quite well. Nirmalas were the scholars of Sanskrit. They initiated the learning of ancient Indian *Shastraparnali*, especially Sanskrit *Vyakaran*, *Nayayashastra*, and *Vedanta*. The teaching of Sanskrit, *Gurmat*, and language were their major areas of concern. In the Sanskrit language, they focussed on the painstaking study of Hindu mythology. They composed high-quality books in Hindi like *Vichar Sagar*, *Panchdashi*, *Vichar Mala*, *Saaru Katawali*, *Vairag Shatak*, *Bhavrasamrit*, *Prabhochandrodaya* and *Hanuman Natak*. In Sanskrit: *Laghu Sidhant Koumudi*, *Madh Komudi*, *Tarak sanagraha*, *Nayaya Sidjanta*, *Muktawali*, and *Vedant Sidhant Muktawali* etc.⁶⁰ They worked on *Gurmat* literature such as *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dasham Granth*. Even scholars from abroad were enthralled by Nirmala's scholastic virtues. John Malcolm wrote *Sketch of the Sikhs*, which contains the information on Europeans' inclination towards *Gurmat* and the successful receiving of this knowledge from the Nirmala sect.

Nirmala saints exalted with divine knowledge and education; they had explored high levels of religious literature, science, axiology, logistics, and philosophy of *Gurbani*. The classical exegesis and translations of *Gurbani*, dictionaries, literature, *Chhanda Shastra*, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. Story narratives, *Raag Kirtanas*, literary discussions and arguments, the advocacy of principles of *Gurmat*, free-lance writing through newspapers, launching Damdami Taxol in *Gurumukhy*, and many more activities are attributed to them. It had been desired by the tenth Guru that the Nirmla sect should be instrumental in spreading education to the Sikh masses. The Nirmalas true to the teachings of the Great Guru, took this responsibility and contributed hugely to the spread of education. From the

⁵⁹ Rajwinder Ringh Shastri, *Nirmal Dere Ate Parbandh*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.

60.

⁶⁰ Mahip Singh, *Nirmal Santan Di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp. 270-271.



very beginning, the Nirmala saints have a keen interest in education and *Vedantas*.⁶¹ They were seriously devoted to the reading, teaching, and critical analysis of four Vedas, nine *vyakarans*, *Khat Shastras*, 18 *Puranas*, and 27 *Smirities*. Based on an interpretation of Hindu scriptures, they used to visit holy places and discuss the philosophy of Vedanta. Besides this, they delivered lectures on Gurmat knowledge. Disseminate *Gurmat* was the main focus of Nirmala saints. This was the reason behind the following of the Sikh religion as sahajdhari (who gradually converted from Hindu to Sikh) Sikhs by Pathans of Karachi and Sindh. Their literature could be divided into four categories, i.e., 1. Sanskrit Literature, 2. Braj and Hindi Language 3. Sindhi and 4. Punjabi Literature. Awfully fewer proofs are found in Sindhi literature. The influences of the Nirmala sect in Punjabi, Hindi and Sanskrit languages is marvellous. *Shashtra parnali* (traditional Sanskrit teaching),⁶² Sanskrit language acquisition and delineation, preaching, scripture writing, commentaries on Indian philosophy, contribution to journalism, the opening of colleges and universities with both new and old curricula, Damdami *Gurumukhy Taksal* (printing press) are wordless bequests of the Nirmalas even in the age of modern multifaceted literature.⁶³ Pandit Gulab Singh⁶⁴ depicted a vibrant vocabulary in his works. Pandit Tara Singh Narottam's works also contained a good range of Punjabi vocabulary. Sant Nihal Singh, Sant Sadhu Singh, and Pandit Sher Singh; are all of these scholars who have contributed voluptuously to the Punjabi grammar and language. The second half of the nineteenth century could be called the Golden age of the Nirmala sect. During this period, great scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam Singh,⁶⁵ Mahant Sadhu Singh, and Sant Nihal Singh (composer of Nirmal Prabhakar and Sikhi Prabhakar), Pandit Ishar Singh, etc.,⁶⁶ wrote many books in Brij, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Literary scholars like Sant Roop Singh, Mahant Aatma Singh, Sant Gurditt Singh, and Giani Gian Singh profusely to the Nirmala literature. At the beginning of the 20th century, except

⁶¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 103.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 115.

⁶³ *Ibid*, pp. 49-53.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 71,77.



commentaries, Sakhiyan (Narratives of Gurus), Gurmat descriptions, autobiographies, history, etc., were the areas of academic development.⁶⁷

The contribution of Nirmala scholars in Punjabi literature is redundant. The achievements of the Nirmala saints are unparalleled.⁶⁸ Beyond teaching, the Nirmalas were dedicatedly and involved in preaching. They were very dexterous in discourses. Their ideal Shri Guru Nanak is considered the most popular leader among the masses as Guru Nanak Dev spread the message of truth to the masses. There is an excellent legacy of debaters of this sect. Nirmala saints were adroit in spiritual arguments. They were dexterous in religion, politics, literature, poetry, Vedanta and *Nyaya Shastra*, etc. They had a good command of both Sanskrit as well as the English language. They always gained victory if they were challenged for any debate. Similarly, Commentaries on Indian Philosophy are another strength of the Nirmalas.

The other vital venture of the Nirmala sect is *Teekakari*⁶⁹ (commentary writing). The most typical concepts of philosophy were narrated in the most interesting and conversant way. *Jeewan Parkash & Asali Guru Parkash* by Sant Tahil Singh are quite famous commentaries. Similarly, *Shri Guru Panth Parkash* of Giani Gian Singh is another glaring write-up of the times.⁷⁰

Contribution to Sanskrit and Hindi Literature by Nirmalas is quite a significant⁷¹ enterprise. All Saints and poets of Punjab had contributed to the nourishing and development of Hindi Literature in Punjab. The translations and conversions of Sanskrit Scriptures had been mainly contributed by these saints. The translations of Sanskrit literature in Hindi is the old convention, but the practice of description of the *Gurbani* through commentaries was initiated by Nirmalas only. They did renditions both in Sanskrit and Hindi. The literary world owes to the Nirmala sect for magnanimous offerings. The Nirmala scholars have astounded the world with their versatility. These scholars have relentlessly raised the level of standard of religious

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 44-47.

⁶⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa(2012), *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh Amritsar, p.100. Hereafter cited as Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.100.

⁶⁹ Taran Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya Di Teeka Padhati*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.210-277.

⁷⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.71.

⁷¹ Mahip Singh, *Nirmal Santan Di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp. 269.



literature. The galaxy of scholars of the Nirmala sect is Vedanta Shastri Gurdeep Singh, Balbir Singh Viyogi, Sant Nihal Singh Kaveender, Pandit Sadhu Singh Theekariwala, Pandit Dewa Singh Devpur, Shri Maan Mahant Ganesha Singh, Sant Sampooran Singh, Kavi Raj Sant Harbhajan Singh, Shri Gurditt Singh, Mahant Tahal Singh, Mahant Dayal Singh, Mahant Bishan Singh Kreet Giani, and Pandit Ishwar Singh Kaanshi,⁷² etc. In a nutshell, the literary donations of the Nirmala sect are abundant. It is incredible to admit that the intellectual figures of the sect have bestowed immortal favors to society.

In the last chapter (V), socio-religious undertakings of the Nirmala sect are described in detail. It is generally believed that actions are the results of thoughts. Likewise, it is extrapolative that the philosophy of Guru Nanak has qualitatively influenced the ideology and accomplishments of the Nirmala sect. Three dictums, i.e., *Naam japo*, *Kirat kro*, and *Vand Chhako* (reminiscence of God, living by hard earning, and sharing of resources with others), have been genuinely followed by the Nirmala. These maxims of the Nirmala sect strengthened the relationship between the Hindu and Sikh communities. The amendments bequeathed by the Nirmala sect in the understanding of Sikhism within the margins of the teachings of ten gurus have distinctively separated it from other denominations. The firm ensuing of Guru Nanak's philosophy in the Nirmala deras has upheld the torch of Guru Nanak's considerations for keeping humanity high.

It is important to mention here that the implementation of Guru Nanak's philosophy is effusively exhibited in the living behaviors of the Nirmalas. The philosophy of the Nirmala sect and usable form could be seen in one alignment. Through philosophy, the Nirmala sect not only communicates the teachings and principles of ten Gurus but also delineates information about the various saints and scholars with their rich literary heritage surrendered to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. By its reflective method, Nirmala Sect has accepted the truth of the specialty of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and confirmed the uniqueness of the teachings of ten Gurus in the reality of life. By pleading the uniqueness of *Adi Granth* and ten Expounders, the Nirmala sect has

⁷² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.132-158.



revealed the existence of life. It could be established that the philosophic contribution of the Nirmala sect lies in the fact that they not only maintained the sanctity of holy scriptures but also maintained the uniqueness of the Sikh wave. They correlated the teachings of all Gurus with great universalized descriptions of Vedas in a very apt and connecting way to Nirmala philosophy. It is believed that the definition of Nirmala scholars is in tune with the philosophy of Shankaracharya. Anthropomorphic (*Sagun Braham*) forms of God and infinite beyond all qualities and forms, so-called transcendent (*nigun*) state of God does not contradict each other somewhat, and they are complementary.⁷³ Like Shankaracharya, *Adi Granth* also enthruses to train instincts for eternal divinity. Henceforth both of them consolidate each other. In other words, Nirmalas are the priests of Sikhism. This ecclesiastic class has proved great support to the common masses to understand the intricacies of *bhakti* (devotion), *Gurmat* (counsel of the Lord Master), the *Gurbani*, and *moksha* (salvation). Society is obliged to the esteemed services of Nirmalas. The gist of the Nirmala sect moves around knowledge of *Vedas and Adi Granth*. The accumulation of Guru Nanak's faith through practical enactment of Vedic construal has always given the upper hand to the Nirmala sect. The core motive of Nirmalas is not to seek *Vedantization* (illustration and interpretation as per Vedas) but to understand the *Gurbani* in entire colors with the help of Vedas. While analyzing the role of Nirmalas, it is concluded that they have supported and proliferated the *Gurbani*, not the Vedanta. If their amplification matches Vedanta, it is to confirm and consolidate *Gurbani*, not *Vedanta*.⁷⁴ It is vital to mention here that the Nirmalas could not be called *pro-vedanti*. Although they reflect Vedanta in their philosophy by adopting truth, modesty, asceticism, meditation, and abstinence from five sins lust, wrath, covetousness, greed, and vainglory (*Kaam Karodha, Lobha, Moha, and Ahankar*) in their life; nonviolence, forgiveness, less sleep more concentration on self-control practices and seeking self-realization and divine knowledge through the Guru in the body. After seeking divine wisdom, they practice it for salvation like *Vedanti*. Like *Vedanti*, they consider knowledge (action)

⁷³ Kewal Krishan Mittal, *Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.208.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.



and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the tools of self-realization, but Nirmalas are *Gursikhs*, not *vedantis*.⁷⁵

As they accept and prove all of the above factors in the light and teachings of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* hence, it could be concluded quickly that they obtain the super dominance of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* with its true following. The eclectic position of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is accumulated by the Nirmala sect through various inputs, which are certainly noteworthy. True following of the teachings of *Adi Granth* in real terms has been characteristically displayed by the Nirmala sect.

Nirmala sect is discerned as the promoter of *Adwaitwad* (monotheism). This doctrine believes in the existence of one God as creator, operator, and destroyer of the universe. It sturdily believes that only *Brahma* (God) is truth rest is falsity. In fact, the *Adwaitwad* (monistic school of thoughts) of Nirmalas should be called the *Adwaitwad* of *Gurbani* as they have explained "*Gurbani*," not the *stotras* (verses) of Shankaracharya⁷⁶. Some of the critics opine that the *Vedantization* has not only destroyed the exclusiveness but has also led to the lifelessness and severance of the inner dialectic of Sikhism. But it is not justified as the Nirmala sect has brought vivacity to Sikhism. In an essential phase of Sikh expansionism, the Vedantic role of the Nirmalas can't be unobserved.⁷⁷ Their landmark achievements need great acknowledgment.

It is strongly believed that this sect has generated Sanskrit scholars. Like Shankaracharya, they were Vedanti though they adored neither idol-worshipping nor the caste system. However, they were completely engrossed in the old Indian philosophy. This is clearly projected in their works and theology. These theologians⁷⁸ contributed profusely to the spread of *Gurmat* (tenets of Guru) by enriching the versatility of Punjabi literature and the creation of religious literature in the conglomeration of Vedanta. Their tireless efforts to preserve the values of the ten

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 205.

⁷⁶ Kulbir Kang Singh, Prashnottar of Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.207.

⁷⁷ Heera Singh Bhagat (1969), *Gurmat Vichardhara*, National Book Shop, Delhi, p.58.

⁷⁸ Dr Mohan Singh Diwana, A History of Punjabi of Literature, pp.60-61, cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.98.



Gurus are highly appreciable. But it is a sorry state of affairs that their works and unparalleled achievements in both Sanskrit and Punjabi literature are ignored and unobserved. It further acquiesces that in-depth and true studies are earnestly required to treasure trove the Nirmala sect. In reality, Nirmala scholars are acknowledged for their quiet and peaceable habits world widely. The stratagem of the Nirmala sect is very subterranean and intellectual. The outlook provided by it is embedded in Indian philosophy and actuated in real socio-cultural glitches.

Moreover, the Nirmala tradition has contributed greatly to the analysis of the Sikh ontology.⁷⁹ Indeed, to this day, the rigor with which central concepts of Sikh metaphysics are analyzed and the sophistication of the exegesis on issues of ontology, theology, epistemology, and eschatology are unparalleled within the Sikh tradition as it exists in the post-Singh Sabha reform era. Unfortunately, this is rarely acknowledged in the broader arena of Sikh *Panth*. Moreover, the egalitarian and cerebral status of the Nirmalas is challenging to be comprehended by liberal multitudes of fanatics.

The consistent struggle of the Nirmalas with outdated dogmas finished them as the deliverers of society. The patronages of the Nirmala sect in the community are multiple. Indeed, the religious philosophy of Sikhism expounded by Guru Nanak Dev has embellished the Nirmala sect's social contributions.⁸⁰ Nirmala saints are also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they played their role well. Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion.

The selfless services of Nirmalas influenced the masses, which further led to the inclination toward Sikhism. Numerous accomplishments of the Nirmalas are reasonably mentionable here in V chapter, as their distinctive approach to social and religious surfeit is inimitable. While deliberating the literary and religious goings-on in detail, it was felt that their socio-religious undertakings are no less. Although there

⁷⁹ Tirath Singh, The Contribution of the Nirmala Scholars to understanding of the Sikh Ontology, cited in Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmala Panth Da Samaz Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, pp.198-204.

⁸⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.30-52.



is a constraint of space, an effort is set to elaborate their simple mechanism of socio-religious welfare in this chapter.

Projects of Nirmalas for societal welfare could be listed below:

Free medication to sufferers was a distinctive quality of the Nirmalas. In the old time in the absence of hospitals, the deras, ashrams, temples, *gurukuls*, etc., were the Ayurvedic medical centers. Even in the darker times of the Islamic and British periods, Ayurvedic medicine was protected by Nirmalas. Astronomy and Nirmalas could be taken as another characteristic of the Nirmala sect. The yoga practices of Nirmalas have benefitted society indeed. The most illustrious Yoga expert of the Nirmala sect was Sant Mohar Singh, who trained hundreds of apprentices. He was called Yogiraj by his admirers and devotees. He wrote *Yoga Sikhiya Prabhakar* in the old Gurumukhi script. It is stated that he died at the age of 145 years.⁸¹

Environmental concerns of Nirmala have made worldwide famous. Nirmala deras have achieved trailblazing accomplishment in environmental awareness. The most noteworthy and momentous contribution is of Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal.⁸² Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal's incessant efforts have purified the local rivulets and drains. Moreover, the casting of awareness about saving rainwater and reducing land erosion has made him an international environmentalist. Cow protection, active role in the Independence movement, and enormous educational Ventures have brought great laurels to the Nirmala sect.⁸³ Sant Balbir Singh Viyogi opened a big library in Santpura, Delhi. Sant Baba Bhag Singh University⁸⁴, Khalsa College Mahilpur⁸⁵ and

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁸² Jasbir Singh(2020), *Bein da Saputtar*, Twenty First Century Publications Patiala, pp.32-49.

⁸³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.165.

⁸⁴ <https://www.sbbsuniversity.ac.in/>.

⁸⁵ <https://sggskcm.org/>



Sant Baba Hari Singh Memorial Khalsa College Mahilpur, Sant Baba Dalip Singh Khalsa College Domeli⁸⁶ and Sant Avtar Singh Yaadgari College Seechewal⁸⁷, etc.

FINDINGS

In a nutshell, it could be submitted that the long literary and revolutionary expedition of the Nirmalas from ages have brought very exquisite yields to the society. The silent and unswerving toils of the Nirmala sect have brought laurels. The pro-social activities of these saints have always made them a favorite of the masses. Their legendary achievements have made them indispensable. The self-less educational, environmental, and health concerns have time-honored them as a specific sect. Another figure-hugging finding of this study is quite interesting, i.e., the Nirmala saints have spread *Gurmat* and strengthened Sikhism without getting involved in petty politics. The other upshot of this study is that great literary work is unpublished yet, and most of the scholars are hidden under the dust of negligence and disregard. It had also been felt that the creations of this cognoscente are twisted or misused for self-seeking and self-styled scholars. While working on the objectives of the study, it has been observed that this sect has followed Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy and Guru Gobind Singh's mandate of dissemination of Sikh philosophy with the consideration of *Vedanta*. This particular stride has given them a significant identity in the spiritual realm. Although all of the deras of the Nirmala sect could not be explored in this study yet, it is generalized that a common code of functioning, integrity, cohesion, affection and amenity for the masses is found everywhere. It is also vital to admit here that the internal administration of the deras and regulation of Nirmala Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar as well Doaba Nirmal Mandal is exceptional.⁸⁸ These deras have better governance than other sects. It is quite worth mentioning here that this sect has become epitome of selfless services to humanity. The mindboggling literary achievements of the sect, have brought laurels to the legendary Sikh literature and

⁸⁶ <https://m.facebook.com/people/Sant-Baba-Dalip-Singh-Memorial-Khalsa-College-Domeli/100067152638345/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.nirmalkuteya.com/portal/gallery/pictures/sant-avtar-singh-yadgari-college-seechewal>

⁸⁸ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Shri Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, pp.26-34.



vernacular languages in general. The command over Sanskrit language has successfully launched them as celebrants of both Hindu and Sikh religion.

Present status and future of Nirmal Sampardaya:

This sect focuses on *Gurmat* philosophy and has become an integral part of the Sikh community; as discussed earlier, *Sangat* and *Pangat* are the specific features of the Nirmala sect. In the hard-hitting times of the 18th century, Sikhism had to pay a heavy cost. But Nirmala scholars unremittingly procured the tradition of knowledge and extended the cultivation of knowledge while sitting silently in various deras and contributing through scriptwriting of *Guru Granth Sahib* and other eloquent words (*Vani*) of ten Gurus; easier comprehension through commentary writing; encyclopedias and dictionaries of Sikhism. Their conceptions and formations are unparalleled and are the cultural heritage. It is keenly observed in the present study that these scholars have not only profusely contributed to literary activities but also strengthened the roots of Sikhism. It is also widely accepted that the path of Guru Nanak is the mixture of both *Pravritti dharma* (entails one to follow the worldly path and seek salvation) and *Niviratti dharma* (it is rooted in the renunciation of the worldly aims). But the Nirmala saints have the track of disenchantment, and they silently did teaching and learning of *Gurmat* principles. They were properly launched in the period of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. They also received special education in Sanskrit from Banares.⁸⁹ They could successfully make their place in the hearts of Hindu people because of their in-depth knowledge of Hindu scriptures. It is also very accurate that these scholars explained the *Gurbani* with the support of *Vedanta* and other Hindu scriptures. Certainly, this practice was not acceptable to some unyielding fanatics of Singh Sabha. But Nirmala saints were engrossed in their vision. Their increasing popularity enraged many and caused opposition. To get rid of this hostility, Nirmala saints went to the kings of Patiala, Nabha, and Jeend under the headship of Bhai Mehtab Singh.⁹⁰ Consequently, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal was propelled. For administrative purposes, *Dastooral Amal* was designed. It aimed to control the administration of Akharha, supremacy of Adi Granth, not to keep the income of Akharaha personally, obedience to Rahit- Namas by all, the appointment of

⁸⁹ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.31.

⁹⁰ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.44.



Shri Mahant by the governments of Patiala, Nabha, and Jeend, and unquestioned authority of Shri Mahant. In other words, the rules and regulations were framed and improved from time to time. Mahant Ganesha Singh, in his book *Bharat Mat Darpan*, suggested certain principles for Nirmala Sect.⁹¹ To enchant Waheguru, to understand the secret of salvation and abstaining from drugs and complete prohibition of dances and recreation; advertising Sikhism by celebrating all days with the congregation and writing books, etc. were the glaring features of the Nirmala sect.⁹² Since the establishment of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal in 1862 till date, it has become a resourceful and gumptious sect. In every big city, a dera of the Nirmala sect is established. But with the change in time, the Nirmala sect needs certain changes.⁹³

- Modernity has not influenced the ideals of *Gurmat*, as the truth never changes. Therefore, more impetus should be on the ensuing of *Gurmat*.
- Nirmala Saints have been regular providers of Vedantic education and the tradition should prevail further.
- For the ailments of worldly diseases, the Nirmala Saints were the real advisors and mentors. In modern hospitals, every disease can be cured, but there is no treatment for mental problems.
- Although the Deras are involved in religious activities, they have to protect their deras from encroachment and litigation.
- Nirmal deras confirm the following of Guru Granth Sahib in their practices and help the masses to get rid of superstitions and narrowmindedness. Henceforth their sanctity in this sense should also be maintained.
- But with the changes in time in some deras, the Nirmala sect is losing its inviolability of extending *Gurmat* ethics and is turning into independent centres. If this tendency persists, then the Nirmala sect will turn into a racial faction.

⁹¹ Gurcharan Singh Anand, Samapradaya di Ajoki dasa, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.494-495.

⁹² Ganesha Singh Mahant(1926) *Bharat Mat Darpan*, Giani Madan Mohan Singh Amritsar, p.187.

⁹³ Gurcharan Singh Anand, Samapradaya di Ajoki dasa, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.498-499.



- Nirmala sect could only save itself by contemplating the social needs of modern times; Nirmala scholars should deliberate to solve the psychological constraints of the young generation through the expansion of *Gurmat*.
- The Nirmala sect has endured the pulls and pressures of time. The conspiracies and outbreak on the advertisement and promotion activities of Nirmalas by Singh Sabha, continuity of this denigration of Nirmalas by Akali Dal in the tone of Singh Sabha only; commencement of new ideologies of Sikhism like Radha Swami and Nirankari, etc. which propagate spirituality based on the Gurbani and criticise exploitation of innocent devotees by self-commissioned Gurus, etc. are the latest challenges to Nirmala Sect. But interestingly, this sect has defied these challenges and has carried forward its mission of reinforcement of Sikhism.
- Another challenge in front of this sect is about those heads of deras who are after their motives of procuring the property. But Mahant is determined to stop it or check it in any case. For the said purpose, a committee had been formed by Mahant Ganeasha named 'Nirmala Maha Mandal' based on Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar. The objective of this committee was to advise the Mahant Sahib about any challenges of the Nirmala sect. But deplorably, this committee has not achieved its motive yet. It is hoped that positively this agency will attain its aim shortly.
- Nirmala saints feel that the intention of some of the officials of Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee to intrude and capture Nirmala deras is quite disturbing. Mahant Sucha Singh believed that the truth should not vanish even if the belongingness (property) goes. But such invasions have certainly hampered the *Gurmat*- promoting activities of the Nirmala Sect.⁹⁴
- In this material race, the life of devotion, renunciation, humility, and service is thrown down the gauntlet. The Nirmala saints have silently and diligently worked for the consistency of Sikh ideals disregarding regular derogatory

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 501.



remarks by some of the fanatic workers of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee.

- Another challenge to the Nirmala Sect is the incursion of some fake *sadhus*(saints) into the sect. These phony saints critically damage the ethics and standards of the Nirmala sect.
- The financial management of the deras is a great asset. This is because the deras are entirely involved in selfless service to humanity. Only spiritual activities are the focus; hence the financial running is supposed to be up-to-date and transparent. But still, more efforts in this regard are needed.
- Shri Guru Nanak Dev had vigorously participated in religious congregations (called Kumbha or Ardh Kumbha) at Haridwar and emphatically exchanged his spiritual thoughts with scholars of various religious cliques. The same tradition has been followed in recent times too. Shri Mahant of the Nirmala Sect follows the same tradition in the current times too. A procession with the honored leadership of Shri Adi Guru Granth Sahib and Nishan Sahib is led by Shri Mahant Sahib. This demonstrates the commitment of the Nirmala Sect to the principles and ideals of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. The sect is committed to retaining the depleting values of Sikhism in the true sense. But sect needs most committed personnel for the said purpose.⁹⁵

Future of the Nirmala Sect

The sect seriously needs the scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, Giani Gian Singh, and Pandit Nihal Singh. The sufficiency of dedicated scholars will certainly provide the same aura and grace of old times. But another hitch is increasing litigation against the Nirmala deras. In fact, the situation has become critical in the case of numerous deras. Both unlawful seizing and resistance to overpower these deras have dragged most dera holders to the court. Henceforth most of the deras are in litigation which has tarnished the image of the Nirmala sect. The scholastic qualities of the Nirmala saints have been their specific characteristics. They were leaders in

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.501-502.



linguistics, philosophy, religion, economy, physical education, and psychological education as well as. With the changing world, the definitions of knowledge and education are altered. The desired changes in the learning and scholastic outcomes could change the existing reputation of the Nirmala sect. The matching with the latest tunes of the era is missing. The literary vacuum created by the Nirmala sect could be filled by it only, as a small dwindling candle has the power to remove the darkness of ages. Singh Pritam⁹⁶ has given the following assertions for the re-emergence of the Nirmala sect:

- The founders of the Nirmala sect have voluntarily opted to denounce the world. If they stuck to this philosophy in principle, many problems of deras could be checked.
- Second-line leadership is a concurrent problem in the deras. But if true leaders or heads take over the deras, then the problem of true descendants will be broken up. If selflessness again turns up in the heads of saints of deras, then the fainted spirit could be assimilated again.
- Another challenge to the Nirmala sect is from those heads of various deras who had deliberately left or handed over the rights of deras to the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. For example, Mahant Grubachan Singh had surrendered the huge dera of Barnala named Baba Gandha Singh to the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. It is done to avoid unnecessary legal pursuance or other pressures of up keeping the deras. Similarly, in Amritsar, only many Nirmala deras have converted themselves into domestic, householders type Sikhs.
- Wish to improve, legacy and devotion need to be integrated to rectify the shattering status of the sect.

Henceforth the sect needs the following changes to include the youth in its ideals:

- Nirmala sect should fulfill the need of providing true and devoted saints.

⁹⁶ Pritam Singh, Nirmal Samardaya da Bhavikh, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.509-513.



- Shri Guru Granth has been the model of living standards of the Nirmala Sect; it should be so in the future too.
- Nirmala scholars should learn about The recent socio-religious extensions to check the latest problems.
- First of all, the saints should be well equipped with the knowledge of religion, science, and innovations in all famous languages of the world. The specialists in such fields will definitely contribute to having good leaders in the sect. This step will attract scholars of the world to study the Nirmala philosophy.
- Another benefit of this quality enhancement will be large gains in both monetary and educational returns. Masses will pour in like in earlier times.⁹⁷

In a nutshell, the defies to the Nirmala sect are not unknown to the most dedicated saints and Mahants. The only concern is that a drive of introspection is needed to check the future of the Nirmala sect. The inclusion of young, dedicated, and promising youth in these deras is highly desired. The paid office bearers cannot plug the place of passionate well-wishers of deras. Henceforth it is highly expected to inspire dedicated young people to be an integral part of the sect. But this particular tendency is missing in them. Conclusively it could be submitted that the present study has efficaciously tried to achieve the objectives. Almost all the purposes of the study have been accomplished.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 512.



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Annexures



Annexure-I
Sant Baba Bhag Singh University
Department of Physical Education
Sports Achievements 2017-18
Javelin throw

Table 4.2 SBBSU Sports Achievements 2017-18

1.	Mr. Karandeep Singh won bronze medal in 97 kg. Wrestling AIU championship held at MDU Rohtak
2.	Mr. Harmanpreet Singh got fifth place in 79 kg. Wrestling AIU championship held at MDU Rohtak out of 59 wrestlers.
3.	Mr. Amandeep Singh won silver medal in hammer throw in AIU Athletics championship held at ANU Guntur (AP) with the distance of 59.80m
4.	Mr. Arshdeep Singh got fourth place in Javelin throw in AIU Athletics championship held at ANU Guntur(AP) with the distance of 69.76m
5.	University cross country team secured first position in Indian private universities.
6.	University Men Athletic team secured first position in Indian private Universities.
7.	Mr.Parmodh Kumar and Mr.Vimal won silver medal in boxing AIU championship held at PU Chandigarh
8.	Mr.Parveen Singh won bronze medal in boxing AIU championship held at PU Chandigarh
9.	University Boxing team (Men) got over all fourth position in AIU championship
10.	Gatka team men got first place in state level tournament held at Dasuya.
11.	Gatka team women got first place in state level tournament held at Dasuya
12.	University six volleyball players selected for youth state Volleyball championship held at Kotakpura & one player selected for national volleyball championship.
13.	University four football players selected for Santosh Trophy Representing

	Punjab Football Team.
14.	University Tug of War men team secured 2 nd position in open Punjab tournament held at Adampur (Jal)
15.	University Tug of War men team secured 2 nd position in open Punjab tournament held at Jhingarkalan (HSP)
16.	University Tug of War men team secured 1 st position in Under 20 State tournament held at Ferozepur (Punjab)
17.	Miss Sonia won bronze medal in Federation Judo Cup held at Uttarakhand
18.	Miss Gurpreet won cash prize of Rs. 51.000/- in BSF Half Marathon
19.	Miss Chahat won Bronze Medal in 10 km race walk held at Sangrur in Panjab open state Tournament.
20.	Miss Gurleen won Bronze Medal in Hammer throw held at Sangrur in Panjab Open state Tournament.

Annexures-II

Sant Baba Bhag Singh University
Department of Physical Education
Sports Achievements 2018-19

Table 4.3 SBBSU Sports Achievements 2018-19

1.	University Football Team got II position in North Zone Intervarsity Football Tournament and qualified for All India Intervarsity Tournament first time.
2.	University Tug of War Team got Gold Medal in All India Intervarsity Tournament held at KIIT University, Bhubneshwar, Orissa. (The Team got Gold medal in women's team, The team got Gold medal in Mix 4X4 and Men's Team got Bronze medal in All India Intervarsity Tournament.)
3.	Balwinder Singh of University Football Team participated in Santosh Trophy for NFC for Punjab Senior Team and the team bagged second position
4.	Chander Pratap of University Football Team participated in Santosh Trophy for NFC for Himachal Senior Team
5.	Six Football team players are going to participate in Khelo India National Youth Games at Maharashtra from 9 th January 2019
6.	Suraj Kumar got Gold Medal in 400 M Hurdles in Punjab open state Championship Baljeet Singh got Bronze medal in 800M in Punjab opens state. Arshdeep Singh got Gold Medal in SAF Games held at Colombo Sri Lanka and participated in Junior world Championship.
7.	Gurpreet Ralh Second Position in Punjab Junior State Championship
8.	Nikhil Sharma got Bronze medal in open state Himachal Pradesh
9.	Navneet Singh got Gold Medal in Sahib-E Kamaal Guru Gobind Singh ji Gatka Tournament and got Bronze medal in National Open Tournament
10.	University Gatka Men Team Secured Silver Medal in All India Intervarsity Gatka Tournament
11.	University Gatka Women Team Secured Gold Medal in All India Intervarsity Gatka Tournament.

12.	Mr. Charanjit Singh Bagged Bronze Medal In senior State Best Physique.
13.	Mr. Gurpreet Rahl and Mr. Nikhil Sharma Bagged Silver and Bronze medal respectively in weight lifting State Championship
14.	Mr. Arshdeep Singh Bagged Gold Medal in Javelin Throw in open National Championship

Annexures-III
Sant Baba Bhag Singh University
Department of Physical Education
Sports Achievements 2019-20

Table 4.4 SBBSU Sports Achievements 2019-20

1.	University Football Team Secured Silver Medal in North Zone Intervarsity Football Tournament and Qualified for all India Intervarsity football Tournament first time.
2.	University Football Team bagged IV position in All India Intervarsity Football Tournament.
3.	University Football team Selected for Khelo India Youth Games and secured IV position in Khelo India.
4.	Jasmanjot Singh of BPES Secured Gold Medal in All India Intervarsity Wrestling Tournaments.
5.	Karandeep Singh Bagged Silver medal in All India Intervarsity Wrestling Tournament held at Jambheshwar University
6.	Honey pal Singh bagged Gold Medal In All India Intervarsity Wrestling Tournament held at Jambheshwar University
7.	Manpreet Kaur Bagged Silver Medal In All India Intervarsity Wrestling Tournament held at Jambheshwar University.
8.	Balwinder Singh of University Football Team participated in Santosh Trophy for NFC for Punjab Senior Team and the team bagged second position
9.	Chander Pratap of University Football Team participated in Santosh Trophy for NFC for Himachal Senior Team
10.	University Tug of war team bagged Silver Medal in Mix Category in All India Inter University Tug of War Tournament
11.	Mr. Charanjit Singh Bagged Silver Medal In senior State Best Physique
12.	Mr. Gurpreet Rahl Bagged Bronze medal in All India Intervarsity weight lifting Tournament.

13.	Following University teams participated in All India Intersports Tournaments- Cross-Country, Athletics, Weight Lifting, Judo, Boxing, Wrestling, Tug of war, Softball, Football, Gatka, Taekwondo.
14.	Following University teams participated in North Zone Inter university Tournaments- Kabaddi, Table Tennis, Volleyball, Cricket, Football, Handball.
15.	Cross Country Team bagged 4 th position in all India Intersports Championship held at Mangalore University
16.	Navjot Sharma bagged Bronze Medalist in 2020 Junior National Wrestling and Greco Roman Championship held at Himachal.
17.	Hasan Khan won Bronze Medal in Khelo India University Games Championship held at KIIT University (Weight lifting Team) 2020
18.	Gurmanvir Shera won Bronze medal in (Khelo India University Games Championship held at KIIT University Wrestling Free style) 2020
19.	Karanpreet Singh bagged Gold medal in Khelo India University Games Championship held at KIIT University (Weight lifting Team) 2020

Annexures-IV

Sant Baba Bhag Singh University
Department of Physical Education
Sports Achievements 2021-22

Table 4.5 SBBSU Sports Achievements 2021-22

1.	University Football Team Secured Silver Medal in North Zone Intervarsity Football Tournament
2.	University Football Team Secured Silver Medal in All India Intervarsity Football Tournament and Qualified for Khelo India games
3.	Sujata Jassi won Bronze medal in All India Kick Boxing
4.	Anil Sharma bagged Gold Medal in All India Intervarsity Power Lifting Championship
5.	Manpreet Kaur bagged Bronze Medal in all India Wrestling Championship and bagged Bronze Medal in Khelo India Games
6.	Honeypal Singh won Bronze medal in All India Intervarsity wrestling (Greeko-Roman) Championship and Gold medal in khelo India Games
7.	Gurpreet Ralh won Bronze Medal in All India Intervarsity Weight Lifting Championship
8.	Gatka Men team won overall Championship by winning gold medal in all India Intervarsity Championship
09.	Following University teams participated in All India Intervarsity Tournaments- Cross-Country, Athletics, Weight Lifting, Boxing, Wrestling, Football, Gatka, Kick Boxing, Power Lifting, Wushu, Yoga, Archery, Gymnastics, Shooting.
10.	Following University teams participated in North Zone Intervarsity Tournaments Judo, Football, Badminton, Kabaddi(Men & Women),

APPENDICES



Appendix 1

Interview with Sant Baba Sadhu Singh¹

Sant Baba Sadhu Singh was sitting in his *Tapa-sathan* when the researcher went for interview. Recollecting on his first meeting with Sant baba Hari Singh, he recalled that he was very young when he first visited this dera with his mother. He liked to stay here only, although his mother insisted he return home. He started to do the core duties of dera. While doing some hard work in the fields, he got a strain in his abdomen. Sant Baba Hari Singh called him. After observing his poor condition, he gave him Ayurvedic treatment and deputed dera persons to take special care of him. After a few days, he was assigned the duty of special care for Sant Baba Hari Singh. He became emotional while sharing his experiences with Sant Baba Hari Singh.

S.Attar Singh & Smt. Attar Kaur were the parents of Sant Baba Hari Singh. He got recruited into the army as his elder brother was a Captain in the army. His spiritual inclinations influenced him from the very beginning. During his duty in the army, he used to get fully involved in meditation in his spare time, in the divine company of Sant Baba Harnam Singh. In his childhood, he was very fond of solitude. In seclusion, he used to do *path* (*holy chanting*). He used to narrate an incident in which he was in the jungle for grazing cows. He got so involved in his meditation that his pets entered the fields of others. He ran after them and suddenly fell into a dry pit. After a long time, villagers pulled him out of this ditch. On that very day, he decided to denunciate the world. To get the blessings of Sant Baba Harnam Singh, he joined the army. Sant Harnam Singh blessed Sant Hari Singh in the same way as he himself was blessed by Sant Baba Karam Singh.

Sant Baba Harnam Singh had three disciples, mainly named Shriman 108 Sant Hari Singh, Sant Baba Basant Singh Johlan, and Sant Baba Dalel Singh Tuto Mazare Wale. All of these saints were his true followers. Sant Baba Harnam Singh asked Sant Baba Hari Singh to make another hermitage for meditation. Sant Baba Hari Singh shifted to Kaharpur from Jian in 1913 and started doing regular prayers there. Local people

¹ Interview with Sant Baba Sadhu Singh, Chief Priest of Dera Hari Singh Kaharpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021 at Dera Hari Singh Kaharpur, District Hoshiarpur.



were illuminated to see him in this lonely place. One of them built a grass hut for him. In the beginning, he had to survive on the leaves. His religious fervor brought numerous admirers and followers to him. One of his most famous disciples, Sant Jawala Singh, proved a great saint. He was so dedicated that Sant Baba Hari Singh appointed him as the chief priest of Dera Jian. He even went to England to proliferate Sikhism and his Master's teachings. He died in 1976. Another follower of him was Granthi Chanan Singh. He came to seek the blessings of Sant Harnam Singh Ji of Jian and Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji from the village of Jamsher Jalandhar district. Nevertheless, he was so influenced by their devotion and personality that he could not go back. Chanan Singh had written a book named 'Ruhani Jeewan Parkash.' This book is an excellent source of information about Sant Baba Harnam Singh and Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji. He had written here that he had come in 1927 in Jian, and in 1928, Sant Baba Harnam Singh Ji left this mortal world. Nevertheless, before his divine departure, he allocated the maintenance service of Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib) and the headship of Dera Jian to Sant Baba Hari Singh. Chanan Singh served the dera Jian for about sixty years. He was a very humble and soft-spoken person. With his devotion and hard work, he pleased Sant Baba Hari Singh so much that he received special blessings from him. Chanan Singh died in 1986. Another promising disciple of Sant Baba Hari Singh was Sant Baba Bhag Singh Jabbar. Baba Bhag Singh was so impressed with the personality of Sant Baba Hari Singh that he fulfilled each of his intentions before his order. He did hard sacrifice and renunciation. His palinode was incomparable. Sant Baba Hari Singh was so pleased with his devotion that he gave him the title of 'Sant.' He ordered Bhag Singh to move to Jabbar and proliferate Sikhism there. Baba Bhag Singh did want to separate from Sant Hari Singh but could not deny him. Bhag Singh was born at Kaindowal near Hoshiarpur. Jabbar was a deserted, bushy, and thorny jungle. He spent precious time in this village. Sant Baba Bhag Singh died in Jabbar in 1962. He was cremated in the dera only. He promoted Sikhism in the true sense. His memories are exceptional and unforgettable. Sant Teja Singh was another follower of Sant Baba Hari Singh. In a very tender age in 1930 he came to Kaharpur from Qadiyan (Gurdaspur) to meet Sant Baba Hari Singh. He dedicatedly contributed to the service of Keshgarh Sahib.



Sant Baba Hari Singh was a prodigious educationist. He not only emancipated the Kandi area but also contributed to the field of education profusely. He opened Khalsa High School Anandpur Sahib, Khalsa High School Village Pakhowal, National High School in village Nasrala and Khalsa High School in village Gurusar District Sargopa western Punjab Pakistan. In his birthplace, i.e., Jian, he opened a school and Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College Mahilpur District Hoshiarpur. He went to farfetched areas like Asam, Kashmir, Sindh, etc., to endorse Sikhism. He donated four canal land and Rs.5000 to build a dispensary in Jian. After the death of Sant Baba Harnam Singh, Sant Baba Hari Singh initiated the construction and renovation of Keshgarh Sahib. Sant Baba Hari Singh judiciously used the money sent by the saints from foreign lands.

Sant Baba Hari Singh started the *Langar Sewa* required for the volunteers of Keshgarh Sahib. He constructed the restrooms for the volunteers to stay in Hola Muhalla and on other occasions. First of all, the old well was cleaned like all the wells available were salty. His service to Keshgarh Sahib is matchless and superb. Gradually this tireless saint got old. His eyesight got poor, but he denied operation as he believed that the body is the formation of God and that He is the Master. Therefore, whatever He does will be the best. He died in 1973 in the early morning at 3:04 am. On his death anniversary, devotees gather in a vast crowd and pay homage to this great soul.

Sant Baba Sadhu Singh opined that such saints are the special blessings of the almighty to the commoners. Moreover, such saints are the steadfast carriers of his messages to the masses.



Appendix II

Interview with Sant Baba Teja Singh²

Sant Baba Teja Singh is a renowned saint of the Nirmala sect. On the interview day, Sant Baba Teja Singh was found interacting with some young girls and boys. This group of youngsters wanted to explore foreign lands. Sant Baba Teja Singh mentioned that the people in foreign lands, especially in Canada, have to work exclusively hard. The persons who migrated to Canada 30-40 years back may be satiated, but for beginners, it is complicated. He gave a practical example of his talk with a tea stall hawker on his way to Paonta Sahib at Nahan. He ordered tea. Suddenly two dogs attacked a dog. Being asked the cause, the vendor replied that the victim dog was an expatriate. It implied that the emigrants could never get the owner and actual status. Henceforth why become a bonds slave deliberately in a foreign land. He also added that Canada has less population with lesser developed countries.

Henceforth higher scope for the settlement and permanent residence is certainly found there. However, Sant Teja Singh is fond of nationalism and love for the motherland at the same time. His love for indigenous industry and products has compelled him to train youth to love and serve the motherland. He shared a discussion with his Guru about the reference to "Bhavishya Puran." In Bhavishya Puran, it is cited that someday this earth will become tasteless. He admitted that reckless usage of pesticides has really spoiled the taste of edibles even in advanced nations too. He shared his experiences of foreign countries. He added that foreigners are more concerned about the quality and purity of edibles. However, they are also worried about the increasing usage of pesticides. Their awareness of these evils and concern for better human life; have compelled them to make genuine efforts for sustainable growth.

Sant Baba Teja Singh specified that Dera Khudda Kurala Ayurveda hospital successfully deals with about 10-20 patients daily. The free dispersion of medicines to

² Interview with Sant Baba Teja Singh Chief Priest of Dharamshala Joriyan Dhavan Dera Gurusar, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 31st December 2021 at Dharamshala Joriyan Dhavan Dera Gurusar Khudda Hoshiarpur.



the patients is continuous. However, he said that there is no extension and research in Ayurveda. Moreover, most the doctors of Ayurveda did not pass over their secrets to others. Thus less development is found in Ayurveda. The school run by Khudda Kurala dera is on no loss and profit. The dera fulfills all the necessities of the school on preference-based. The school has meager fees. On the significant days of dera, like death days (barasi) and Guruparvas (birthdays), i.e. 12th December (Sant Baba Lal Singh's death day) and the 29th of January (his mother's death day); Sant Teja Singh distributes free uniforms, books, and shoes, etc. This school is going on a noncommercial basis.

Sant Teja Singh is determined to procure the heritage of the Nirmala sect. He told me that once, he visited a bookseller in Jalandhar. He collected about 15 books from him. All of which were scarce books. He made up his mind to rewrite these books. So he started a search for making these uncommon books available to commoners.

For the booklet "*Kheese ka Haqem*" Sant Teja Singh even contacted the famous worldwide library in London. However, could not retrieve this booklet. He further admitted that collecting the lost book is not an easy job. One has to strive for the book. But it is essential to state here that Sant Baba Teja Singh is already translating, editing, and rewriting numerous books of Mahant Ganesha Singh. He is rewriting books on history, ideology, and other vital areas of learning. Indeed, these efforts will enrich the Nirmala spiritual library a lot. The heritage could be procured by such incessant efforts only. He is regularly making efforts to recollect the incidences and every sort of detail regarding any previous saint of Khuda Kurala or any other.

He submitted that the main priority of Nirmala saints is to spread spiritual and worldly education. For the said purpose, he and his team are continuously dedicated to heightening the standards of primary and higher education. M. Lal S. M. School Khuda Kurala Tanda Hoshiarpur in Punjab, is run by Sant Teja Singh. The school carries a good representation of society. The required help is given to the school as and when required. The development and progression of educational premises have benefitted the masses. This charitable institute is helping the less privileged to have better and latest education. Adequate help to the needy is given in time. The institute



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is gradually becoming self-reliant. No loss, no profit type of institute has made it distinguishing. Nirmal Ashram Anandpur Sahib Navin Abadi has been opened by Sant Lal Singh Khudda Kurala Sant Baba Nahar Singh. At the holy ceremony of Hola Muhalla and other auspicious occasions of birthdays of ten Gurus, particular congregations and fairs are celebrated with divine food (*Guru ka langar*).



Appendix III (a)

Interviews of S. Gurudev Singh³

Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Jabbar Manko Jalandhar is a prominent dera. It has good legacy of numerous leaders and followers. S. Gurudev Singh is an old devotee of the dera Sant Pura Jabbar. Recalling his connection with this dera, he narrated his experiences as follows:

S.Gurudev Singh started to visit Dera Sant Pura Jabbar at the very young age of 10 years. In 1960 he became military personnel. Once he was on holiday, he met Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir. He was a very spiritual personality. He always shared views about God and his dignity. He belonged to the village Chomo Adampur. During his visits to dera SantPura, he was mostly engaged in *Sahaj Path*. On the 3rd of January 1982, Sant Baba Musafir Ji died. It was an incredible coincidence that Sant Baba Bhag Singh had also left on the same day, i.e., the 3rd of January 1962. Sant Baba Malkeet Singh's coronation was done by Sant Baba Amreek Singh of Sant Baba Jawala Singh Dera Padhiana Jalandhar. In 1986 S GuruDev Singh came on pansion. Sant Baba Malkeet Singh wanted to make a hall for the congregation. He asked Subedar Harbhajan Singh to initiate the work of construction. He referred S.Gurudev Singh of Drolli as he had done a diploma in Civil Engineering during his job in the army. The big hall of Jabbar was completed in 6 months. After this successful venture, Baba Malkeet Singh planned to construct the bridge of Maanko. The Sant Samaz of Nirmala Bhekh first laid the foundation stone. Afterward Hon. S. Parkash Singh Badal (existing Chief Minister Punjab) officially founded it.

While sharing his experiences and cherishing old memories, S Gurudev Singh said that Sant Baba Malkeet Singh was a ground-breaking and visionary person. He suggested Sant Baba Malkeet Singh employ an engineer for the construction work, but Baba Ji refused. He preferred to give this service (*sewa*) to S. Gurudev and S. Mahinder Singh (Steel mechanic from Adampur). Sant Baba Malkeet Singh visited N.I.T. Jalandhar to consult the bridge designers like Dr. Bhupinder Singh and Dr. A.P.

³ Interview with S. Gurudev Singh Ex. secretary Sant Baba Bhag Singh Cheritable Society Khiala Jalandhar, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 28th December 2021 at village Drolli Distt. Jalandhar, Punjab.



Singh. The first bridge of Maanko was completed in July 2000 with an approximate cost of Rs. 5 crores. The second bridge of Khiala was built in December 1999. Similarly, by the high inspiration of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, the bridges of Lutera and Khiala Ghurhial, and Allawalpur were built. The campaign of constructing different buildings of Gurudwaras and the schools, initiated by Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, brought miraculous changes to the area. A Science laboratory was constructed in Govt. Sr. Sec. School Adampur.

About 23 Gurudaras were constructed by Baba Malkeet Singh such as two gurudwaras in Maanko, one in Massania, Shiv Dayala, Taragarh, Drolli, Bhai Sunder Singh Dera, Anant Ram Dharamshala, and Bhai Sukha Singh Dharamshala Drolli; Jangniwala, Kukkarh village, Damunda and numerous Gurudwaras in the area of Kathar.

In 2002 the boundary wall of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex was constructed. The first batch of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Engineering was commenced with a well-planned and finely erected building. In 2005 Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Education and Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Nursing were launched.

But it is important to mention here that Sant Baba Malkeet Singh visited numerous educational institutes like Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Engineering College Fateh Garh Sahib, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology; National Institute of Engineering and Technology Patiala and Bangalore. S.Gurudev has a long affiliation with Baba Malkeet Singh i.e.1989 to 2015. In 2003 he was the Joint Secretary of S.B.B.S.M.C.S. and Secretary in 2009. He pointed out that the way of working of Sant baba Malkeet Singh was very democratic and farsighted soul. He knew the value of both people and their virtues. S. Gurudev got emotional while sharing the farewell party of Dr. H.S. Sagar, Director of S.B.B.B.E. Complex, in 2014. Suddenly, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh decided to gift a car to Dr. H S. Sagar. He had been gifted the same vehicle which he had been officially given for this party. S Gurudev Singh repeatedly mentioned the visionary nature of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh. He told that all educationists considered Sant Baba Malkeet Singh most modern saint entrenched



with Vedantic conventions. He recalled the days of Baba Malkeet Singh's wish of making the surrounding region of Dera Sant Pura the most advanced one. He connected this alienated and backward zone of Jalandhar district with numerous roads and bridges. His positivity even broke the shackles of financial constraint. He told that Sant Malkeet Singh had such strong faith in God that impossible tasks and projects finished before the time. He preached to have terror of God only. Simplicity was another trait of his personality. He had mystic powers of expressing tough and challenging thoughts in very simple terms. His smile half solved the problems. More over he had the endowment of identifying the people in first sight only. His selection of right person at right place was marvellous. His team spirit was another asset to the dera. He had resilient bond between the planning and executing team. The humility of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh made him illustrious. He usually sought apology for the mistakes which he had not committed. He wanted to make Sant Baba Bhag Singh University pollution free in both internal and external environment. In nut shell Sant Baba Malkeet Singh was an exceptional persona. He will always be an inspiration and role model to all.



Appendix III (b)

Interview of S. Hardaman Singh⁴

In his interview S. Hardaman Singh mentioned that from his childhood, he has been connected with dera Sant Pura Jabbar Manko with his parents. But he started to participate in the affairs of dera actively after his retirement from the army in 1991. He explained that the dera has a vast legacy of educational impact. In 1954 Sant Baba had initiated a middle school for girls on the premises of Gurudwara of Santpura. S. Hardaman told that Sant Baba Malkeet Singh is well-known as 'Brige Baba'. While discussing the achievements of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Charitable Memorial Society, he gave a colossal list which is as follows:

1. Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh is spreading a message of spirituality, brotherhood, and peace since the mid-1920s, which has been continued since Braham Giani Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji, Sant Baba Hardial Singh Ji, Sant Baba Malkit Singh Ji, and Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji Braham.
2. Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji (Jabbar), under the dynamic leadership of Sant Baba Malkit Singh Ji and Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Brahm ji guided the public toward the "Self Help Movement." Instead of looking toward Government and other agencies for financial assistance. Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh (Jabbar) completed the following important projects in record time by motivating the public and mobilizing its resources: -
 - a. Construction of 1008 feet long and 24 feet wide bridge on Nasarala Choe(Rivulet) at village Manko and approach road (the year 2000).
 - b. Construction of 69 feet long bridge on Tanulli Choe (Rivulet) at village Khiala (the year 2000).
 - c. Construction of 181 feet long bridge on Nasarala Choe(Rivulet) at village Lutera (the year 2002).

⁴ Interview with S. Hardaman Singh Secy. Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 21st January 2022, at Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Khiala, Jalandhar.



- d. Construction of 266 feet long bridge on Nasarala Choe at village Khiala (the year 2012).
- e. Construction of 2 Kms long Khiala Padhiana road.
- f. Construction of 5.5 Kms. Long Padhiana Ahrana Kalan Road.
- g. Widening of 6 Kms. The road from dera Santpura to Kathar.
- h. Construction of Guru Nanak Sadh- Sangat Charitable Hospital at village Kalra upgrading it from 50-bed hospital to 100-bed hospital.
- i. Construction & maintenance of Veterinary Hospital at village Manko.
- j. Construction & maintenance of Veterinary dispensary at Village Ghurial
- k. Development and repair of other roads in the region.
- l. Provisions of road lights and street lights from Dera Santpura Jabbar to the neighboring villages.
- m. Addition of classrooms, Laboratories, Auditorium, etc., in the many Government and Private Schools.

Approximately Rs.20 Crores were spent on the above-said development projects.

3. To manage the works/projects undertaken by the Dera Santpura Jabbar, " Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society" was formed in the year 2000.
4. S.B.B.S.M.C.S. established "Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex" in the year 2003.

At present, with the motive to uplift the Rural Education Level, it is running the following institutes:

Sr.No.	Name of Institute	Year Estd.
a)	S.B.B.S. Institute of Engineering & Technology	2003*
b)	S.B.B.S. International School (Affiliated to C.B.S.E.)	2004
c)	S.B.B.S. Institute of Education	2005*
d)	S.B.B.S. institute of Nursing	2005



- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| e) | Sant baba Bhag Singh Post Graduate College | 2011* |
| f) | Sant Baba Bhag Singh Public School Binjon | 2011 |
| g) | Shaheed Bhagat Singh Creativity Centre | 2013 |
| h) | Skill Development Centres at Village Damunda
& Manko(distt Jalandhar) | 2015 |

(* merged into Sant Baba Bhag Singh University)

Note: the establishment of these institutes resulted in a continuous process of Placement and Employment of thousands of students from Engineering, M.B.A., Nursing, Teaching & other streams for rural & economically weaker sections of society. Also employment for local people in teaching, staff & other jobs.

5. Establishment of Sant Baba Bhag Singh University: Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex has been given the status of Sant Baba Bhag Singh University (established vide The Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Act 2014(Punjab Act No.6 of 2015) & recognized by the U.G.C. under Section 2(f) of the U.G.C. Act, 1956).

Recollecting the establishment of Skill Development Centre Damunda, S. Hardaman Singh added that this center has been fully launched, nourished, and developed by S. Bhagwant Singh Minhas and his son named S. J. S. Minhas (Non-Resident Indian and a social worker). This family donated their home for the above-said purpose and provided other facilities too. S. J.S. Minhas donated 20 stitching machines and 6 latest computers to the centre. S.B.B.M.C.S. has employed faculty for the centre. All remuneration issues are resolved by S.J.S Minhas.

The other institutes other than Skill Development Centres at Village Damunda and Manko are run under the aegis of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society are Sant Baba Bhag Singh Institute of Nursing, Sant Baba Bhag Singh International Public School Khiala Padhiana, and Sant Baba Bhag Singh Public School Binjon. Both S.B.B.S.E.C. (Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex) as well as S.B.B.S.U. (Sant Baba Bhag Singh University); are the true epithets of higher



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education and advanced research. They are the pure reflections of Sant Baba Malkit's dreams of innovative rural and women's education. Moreover, its lush green lawns, stunning infrastructure well equipped with the latest facilities like solar panels, water treatment plants, and incessant electric and water supply; make it distinctive from other adjoining higher education institutes.

Any reform sought by any village is undertaken with a lot of zeal and passion by S.B.B.S.M.C.S. The organization is committed to helping the construction of all religious places, including mosques. In the future, too, it is devoted to pursuing the vision and mission of Shri Guru Nanak Dev in real terms. Society is committed to providing a clean and green campus. The society aims to achieve self-reliant agro-tech indigenous academia. The most promising venture of it is 'Sant Baba Bhag Singh University'. It is the first Nirmala flourished university.



Appendix III (c)

Interview with Sant Baba Sarvan Singh⁵

Sant Baba Sarvan Singh, the Chancellor of Sant Baba Bhag Singh University was interviewed on. Sant Baba Sarvan Singh was born to S Santokh Singh and Smt. Gurmeet Kaur at Manko on 30/5/1970. He received his primary and higher education in the village of Manko only. Sant Baba Malkeet Singh called Sarvan Singh in the Sant Pura dera. He joined the dera on the 16th of January 1988. In the beginning, Baba Ji wanted him to learn *Katha* (preaching) but later on asked him to get the training of *Kirtan* (spiritual singing of the *Gurbani*). Henceforth, he was sent to the musical academy of Principal Chanan Singh Mazboor. He got the education of *Raag Kirtan* in this school for about one and half years. He also learnt music from Bhai Deedar Singh Nangal for six months. He said he still gets the latest knowledge from Giani Jagat Singh Thakkarwal. Sant Baba Sarvan Singh is heading the University as chancellor after the sad demise of Sant Baba Dilwar Singh. A committee of five persons is jointly leading the Sant Pura dera. These five people are Sant Baba Sarvan Singh, Sant Baba Manmohan Singh, S. Gurdeep Singh, S. Amrit Pal Singh, and Sant Baba Janak Singh. He told that the *sewa* (headship i.e. Mahanti) of dera was designated to Bal Sant Baba Janak Singh by Sant Dilwar Singh ji Braham before his death. Baba Janak Singh was born on 21 July 2013 at the home S. Harjinder Singh and Mata Rajwinder Kaur of village Damunda. He came to the dera Santpura Jabbar at the age of about two and half years, but after that he remained here only. Sant Baba Braham ji found stark signs of spirituality and wisdom in this young saint. He took special care of the education, training and ordination to the Nirmala sect for this young boy. He wished to give all rites of passage of Nirmala sect to him. This pious duty is fulfilled by the four members of the committee fully well. Baba Manmohan Singh another member of the committee is totally committed saint of the dera. He was born on 5th February 1970 at Drolli Kalan. This saint is also devoted to the vision and

⁵ Interview with Sant Baba Sarvan Singh, Chancellor, Sant Baba Bhag Singh University Khiala Jalandhar, conducted by Sarla Nirankari, on 6th February 2022 at Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Santpura, Jabbar Manko, Jalandhar.



mission of the predecessors of the dera. This consecrated team is determined to fulfil all dreams of Sant Baba Braham ji.

The reveries of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh and Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Braham Ji are the pathway of dedication toward the Nirmala sect, devotion, humility and submission to the teachings of ten Gurus with solemn reverence to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Telling about Sant Baba Bhag Singh, he added that he was born at Kendowal in the Hoshiarpur district. Sant Baba Bhag Singh joined the army. However, finding it dreary, he moved towards the holy boulevard of devotion. He met Sant Baba Hari Singh and finally left for Kaharpur. Here he learnt the path of faithful religious observance and asceticism. After training mature enough in the path of renunciation, Sant Baba Hari Singh inspired Sant Baba Bhag Singh to expand devotional horizons beyond Kaharpur. So he came to Adampur(airport) near village Manko and made his hermitage here as it was an upcoming area. Therefore, Sant Baba Bhag Singh left the place and shifted to Bhovana Math in Gurhiyal. He stayed here for some time as the nearer floor mill made him challenging to deliberate on spiritual issues. Finally, he selected his meditation seat (the present gurudwara of Sant Pura Jabbar Manko) in 1928. The present place was a piece of one Kanal of the land of S. Inder Singh of Manko. He donated this land to him and constructed a log hut for Sant Baba Bhag Singh here. In 1930 a cemented room with a veranda was constructed here. Baba Inder Singh asked Sant Bhag Singh to live in the newly built room, but Sant Baba Bhag Singh asked to convert it into Gurudwara Sahib. Sant Baba Bhag Singh conducted 101 *Akhand Path* (series of reciting holy Shri Guru Granth Sahib) in this Gurudwara with the newly built well of fresh water and purified the holy place. From 1928 to 1961, Sant Baba Bhag Singh lived in Sant Pura Jabbar. On the 3rd of January 1961, he left this mortal world.

Sant Baba Sohan Singh led the dera for one year, i.e., 1961-62, after his death. From 1962 Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir headed the dera. He was born at Chomo near Adampur. He came to Baba Bhag Singh in 1940. Sant Baba Sarvan Singh recollected the martyrdom of Sant Harbhajan Singh of Manko on the 20th of August 1947. He



narrated that due to communal bigotry, the Muslim community of Khanaura had planned a Hindu massacre. This planned conspiracy seeped beforehand. Sant Baba Bhag Singh allowed his follower Sant Harbhajan Singh to fight for the sake of humanity and save the innocent masses. Sant Harbhajan Singh went to Khanaura, a village (district Hoshiarpur) at a distance of 6 Kms. (about) from dera Santpura Jabbar with about 40 young Sikhs. This troop included Sant Narang Singh, the *Granthi*(priest) of Shaheed Baba Mati Gurudwara Drolli. This group attacked the Muslims in advance at village Khanaura and failed in their conspiracy. However, being unknown to the concealed dangerous areas in the village, he and his fellow revolutionaries accidentally died after killing all the chief rebels. Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji cremated these martyrs with full formal respect and regard. S. Ajeet Singh Perdesi has written a poem on Sant Harbhajan Singh's bravery and valor:

Do man ke batta chakke, karam to kde na akke, naz da maidan si,

Pardesiya Ajeet Singh pind Maanko da sant Harbhajan dere de shaan si. (Ajit Pardesai Says, "Mighty physique, a dedicated action-loving soul, valour of the war field; Harbhajan was the pride of village of Manko.")

Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir joined the dera in 1962 and served this dera till the 3rd of January 1982. Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir used to teach Punjabi in the girl school opened by Sant Baba Bhag Singh in the Gurudwara of Sant Pura Jabbar Manko premises only in 1954. This school was shifted to Drolli at the request of the community. He served humanity with full zeal and ardour. He told Mata Satwant Kaur(Satya) that he was ready for the final call. He would depart in a sudden way on the call of the almighty. He had predicted his departure. He foretold that he would die in the crowd, but people will not know this. He even refused to celebrate any day regarding his commemoration separately. After completing his routine prayers(*path*), he went for a small break and, in a deep sleep, breathed his last. Indeed, he disappeared from the earth as a hair is removed from the butter. His simplicity and strong faith are the prominent features of his life. His memories are everlasting in the hearts of people.



After the death of Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir, Sant Baba Malkit Singh became the chief priest of dera Sant Pura Jabbar Manko. He had joined the dera at the age of 25 years in 1982. Sant Baba Malkit Singh conducted 15 *Katha* (descriptive narratives of Adi Granth Guru Granth Sahib). The last one, i.e., 16th discourse was completed by Sant Baba Braham Ji.

Sant Baba Malkeet Singh was a great realistic and provident saint. He was totally committed to the up-gradation of both spiritual buildings as well as public commonage and holdings. In 1991 he founded the *diwan* hall of the Gurudwara. In 1994, Baba Malkeet Singh got sick. He went for a check-up at Prithy Hospital Jalandhar. The doctors found severe heart trouble and suggested bypass surgery. Sant Baba Braham ji asked the doctor to make him all right at any cost. During the operation, Sant Baba Malkeet had a celestial journey. His soul met with the super souls of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Sant Baba Bhag Singh. He was returned to this world with the ultimatum of finishing his pending works. After the successful operation, it was found that the blood group of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh converted from +O to -A. After recovery, he started to materialize his dreams of establishing various educational institutes and initiated the purchase of land for educational premises. His zeal for social up-gradation cajoled local farmers and landholders to offer him land to construct Gurudwara and educational institutes. S. Baldev Singh gave one Killa(Acre) of land for Nirmal Kutiya Bhagat Pura. Similarly, Lambardar Jagir Singh of Rehana Kalan gave one acre of land and one lakh rupees to initiate educational infrastructure. The S.B.B.S.E.C. Sant Baba Bhag Singh Educational Complex was founded in 2002 by S. Ajeet Singh Koharh, a minister of Shiromani Akali Dal.

Baba Malkeet Singh softly felt the need of the locality. Henceforth he decided to link the isolated villages of the vicinity by constructing bridges. In 1999 he invited the Nirmal Sant Samaz and founded the bridge of Manko after the prayers of *Shri Adi Granth*. He was successful in completing the construction of the bridge within 11 months. The total cost of this bridge was four and a half crores approximately. The government officials were awes tuckled to see the miraculous erection of the bridge.



He continued his campaign of constructing bridges and roads to connect this backward area.

Sant Baba Malkeet Singh contacted famous N.I.T. Jalandhar and Chandigarh engineers to build plans for various institutes of S.B.B.S.E. Complex. He was fifty years advanced of the times. The infrastructure erected by him is unrivalled and unique. He engaged the youth with sports by organizing national and international competitions like Kabaddi and football. The personality of Baba Malkeet Singh was quite vigorous and energetic. He was dedicated to his vision of spreading education to the most deprived sections of society, such as girls and poor people.

Sweetly recollecting the memories of Sant Baba Dilawar Singh (Braham Ji), Baba Sarwan Singh declared that he was the august source of service to humanity. Baba Braham preferred to serve on his own. He not only fulfilled Baba Malkit's prompted projects but also maintained them. He completed the construction of Sant Baba Bhag Singh road. He kept on inspiring youth for sports and devotion. After the sad demise of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, he put all of his strength into making Sant Baba Bhag Singh University a significant venture. He enthused everyone to carry on the vision and mission of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh. The towering personality of Braham Ji has mesmerized the world. His unrelenting deeds to emancipate humanity have moved the world.

Baba Sarwan Singh is trying his best to follow the path shown by the great saints like Sant Baba Bhag Singh, Sant Baba Hardyal Singh Musafir, Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, and Sant Baba Braham Ji. He wished that their teachings should be incorporated to make this world happy and the other world exultant. Baba Braham Ji left no stone unturned to serve society. He wished to follow his ideals in the true sense. While giving the message to youngsters, Baba Sarwan Singh forwarded the message of 'drugs free Punjab' of Sant Baba Braham Ji. He coveted complete involvement in the *Gurbani* and baptism. Baba Sarwan Singh said that everyone should follow the footprints of saints in the real sense. He is dedicated to endeavoring to cherish all the dreams and visions of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh and Sant Baba Dilawar Singh (Braham Ji). His unremitting efforts to upkeep the morale of youth by engaging them



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in social and religious activities have kept the zeal of the saints of Santpura dera alive. Regular interface with values and scientific temperament has made S.B.B.S.U. distinctive from others. The intensive care for rural education has improved the status of education in the surrounding area. The educational and vocational needs of localities are well taken care of here. Moreover, outstretched women's education has changed the recessive scenario of education.



Appendix IV

Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Rab ji⁶

The current head of the Nirmal Dera Jian, Sant Balbir Singh Rab Ji is leading the dera quite efficiently. He was born in 1952 in Sanwa Village Phagwara. S. Niranjn Singh and Smt. Karam Kaur, his parents were very humble and devoted persons. Many heads took over the dera, but only a few stayed for a more extended period. The village committee went to Sant Jagdev Singh Moni at Tuto Mazara in 2000 to take responsibility for the Dera Jian. He came with Sant Balbir Singh Rab Ji in this dera. Sant Balbir Singh Rab Ji took care of about 40 fields and also controlled the livestock of about 20 cows. He followed the path of Sant Baba Harnam Singh under the guidance of Sant Baba Jagdev Singh Moni till 2009. In 2010, the mentor Sant baba Jagdev Singh Moni died, and the village administrative committee and Nirmal Bhekh gave the headship of the dera formally to Sant Balbir Singh. In his interview, he stated that after Sant Harnam Singh, various saints led the dera: Sant Baba Hari Singh Kaharpur, Sant Baba Pal Singh (Singh Pur wale), Sant Basant Singh Johalan, Sant Baba Dalel Singh, Sant Chanan Singh Ji, Sant Baba Jwala Singh, Sant Baba Ujagar Singh and Sant Baba Batan Singh, etc.

Since 2010 Sant Baba Balbir Singh has been leading the dera meritoriously. Sant Baba Balbir Singh informed that about 28 programs are conducted by the dera. Eye care and bone care camps are regularly organized by the dera. He recalled the life, ideology and contributions of Sant Baba Harnam Singh Ji in a very nostalgic manner in the following way:

Sant Baba Harnam Singh was born in 1877 at the home of Shri Sai Das and Smt. Ram Deyi in Nangal Khurd District Hoshiarpur. This promising boy became enthusiastic about being part of the army. He knew that true patriotism was another way of doing devotion. Henceforth he joined Sikh Platoon No.22 British Army in 1893. He was always filled with a love of divinity. After six years' job in the army, his platoon transferred to Noushehra (Pakistan) near Hoti Mardan. This area was filled with the

⁶ Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Rab, Chief Priest Dera Jian, conducted on 21st February 2022, by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Dera Jian, Hoshiarpur.



fame of Sant Baba Karam Singh's devotion. He sent Sant Vasawa Singh to meet and call Harnam Singh Granthi of Hoshiarpur Sikh platoon no. 22. Young Harnam Singh jumped with excitement, and the next day he started for Noushehra. Sant Baba Karam Singh embraced him lovingly and bestowed all worldly and mystical powers. In 1900 A.D. Sant Harnam Singh was of 23 years. Nevertheless, for the 22nd year, Pandit Heera Singh (a scholar of his native village) had predicted outstanding achievement. Harnam Singh's mother asked about the extraordinary accomplishment. Then Harnam Singh told about the heavenly meeting with Sant Baba Karam Singh. He described that this attainment was instrumental in self-realization and salvation.

He started practicing austerity and regularly rehearsed meditation in lonely places after his duty time. Once he was deeply engaged in his meditation, he continued it for three consecutive days. Finally, he came to his office on the fourth day to explain his absence from duty. But to his surprise, he was present in the records as his attendance was marked there. He decided to leave the army job, and he returned home. On the 31st of March 1908, after serving for nine years, seven months, and twenty-nine days, he came to village Jian to his paternal aunt and settled in the village's periphery.

Sant Baba Harnam Singh performed higher level consecration here. All the surrounding area was mesmerized by his religious zeal and *Naam Simran* (god reminiscence). He erected Gurudwaras in village Barri Laheli, village Hariyan Vela Bajroar, where seventh Sikh Guru Har Rai Sahib had visited. Tahli Sahib Gurudwara was constructed in the village of Gondpur, where Guru Shri Hargobind Sahib had rested for a while. A Gurudwara has been constructed in village Jian also. He liberated the historical Gurudwaras of Takhat Shri Keshgarh Sahib, Gurudwara Shish Ganj Sahib, Gurudwara Anandpur Sahib, Shri Kirat Pur Sahib, and renovated many Gurudwaras.

Sant Harnam Singh was a fearless saint soldier. The British Government was scared of his straightforwardness. British police used to chase the revolutionary Babbars, and many times they used to intercede his hermitage in Jian. Once, he rebuked the police officer incredibly and warned and foretold the short tenure of the British Government



in India. In February 1920, S. Partap Singh Moyile wale came to him and invited him to Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of Hola Muhalla. Sant Harnam Singh ji arrived there. He was cordially invited by the Sodhi's of Anandpur Sahib. An elephant was beautifully decorated. Jathedar Sahib Sodhi Pritam Singh and S. Jagtar Singh sat on it and started the pilgrimage of all *Gurudhams* (abodes of Gurus).

On Holla Muhalla's visit, certain malpractices and abuses were noticed by Sant baba Harnam Singh. In those days, women used to see fairs from the roofs, and males used to dominate the fair. During his fair round, he saw that some criminal and wicked persons were abusing and using unlawful language. Sant Harnam Singh was severely disturbed by mischief played by these ill-behaved persons. They dragged a black nude person on a ladder and pretended him dead. They savored this joke on humanity. Tikka Jagtar Singh Sodhi assured Sant Harnam Singh about a severe check on such misdeeds next time at the dinner party. On his return to Jian, Sant Harnam Singh met with Jathedar Partap Singh Canadian Moyila Wahidpur and told him about the illicit rituals of Holla Muhala Anandpur Sahib. He suggested that bringing all these Gurudwaras under the control of Sikh Panth was the only solution to this problem. He assured complete assistance in this regard. On his advice on that very day, Jathedar Partap Singh Moyila Wahidpur called forty influential persons of Tehsil Garhshakar for an emergency meeting at Gurudwara Tahali Sahib. An Akali Jatha was founded in that meeting. Bhai Piara Singh Langeri was appointed new Jathedar, and Master Puran Singh a secretary of this new Jatha(troop). A committee was constituted to observe the irregularities of Anandpur Sahib. Jathedar Moola Singh Diwan submitted the report on the misdemeanors of Anandpur Sahib within seven days. It was decided to take the permission of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee to bring administrative control of all Gurudhama of Kiratpur Sahib and Anadour Sahib under the Panth. This proposal was declined. Rather S.G.P.C. decided to take over the control of these Gurudwaras. Henceforth a massive meeting was held in Jian. In any case, it was decided to take charge of Gurudwaras of Anandpur Sahib and Kiratpur Sahib. Secret planning of dethroning the priests from these gurudwaras was prepared. It was also decided to gather the force of 60,000 baptized Sikh young men. Further, it was made sure that a troop of 200 would daily report in Anandpur Sahib. The priests



of Gurudwaras were tension free as the verdict of S.G.P.C. was in their favor. It was decided to send the volunteers in single traveller form rather than a troop on the eve of Lohri. All were instructed to gather at 11.00 pm at the bank of Sutlej river in Anandpur Sahib. The first troop was guided by Jathedar Partap Singh Moyila and Sant Harnam Singh. They appointed the office bearers beforehand. Jathedar Moola Singh Bahowal as head Jathedar Takhat Keshgarh Sahib, Jathedar Jarnail Singh Mohan Wali and Jathedar Labh Singh Jasowal Jathedar; Giani Mehar Singh Langeri as Granthi and master Puran Singh as secretary of the Anandpur Sahib Panth administration. Three major wings of the campaign were formed, such as; Jathedar Partap Singh Moyila Wahidpur for Takhat Keshgarh Sahib, Jathedar Moola Singh Bahowal, and Jathedar Jarnail Singh Mohanwali of Gurudwara Shish Ganj and Jathedar Labh Singh Jasowal for Anandgarh Sahib. As per schedule, all the three peacefully, without any violence, took over these Gurudwaras one by one. The predesignated office bearers took over the charge and, within days, started smooth functioning of Gurudwaras, including Langar practices. Similarly, the Gurudwaras of Kiratpur were also taken under the control of *Panth* in a peaceful manner in 1922. Finally, S.G.P.C. accepted this control of Panth and congratulated them, and allowed them to reform the administration of Anandpur Sahib. Jathedar Moola Singh Bahowal was honored with the title of 'Jarnail.' In the next Holla Muhalla, enormous arrangements were made to make it mismanagement free. Sant Harnam Singh succeeded in his resolution. He led the peaceful struggle of Jaito and was successful in the fortification. His contribution to devotion and social reforms, particularly Gurudwara reforms, are archetypes.

Sant Harnam Singh was a lover of sports, especially football. So in 1924, the Nanakana Sahib Football tournament was organized. In it, a young follower player named Sangat Singh played in the team of Mahilpur Khalasa Team. He did seven goals in the final match against Loyalpuri Khalsa School. He admitted that the blessings of Sant Baba Harnam Singh made him the winner.

In 1924 he handed over the sewa (maintenance of service) of Keshgarh to Sant Hari Singh Kaharpuri as he had complete faith in him. He continuously gave sermons



about a drug-free and alcohol-free life. He preached the pure and wholesome life efficiently. This practicality attracted an abundance of inquisitive cohorts. He had the following cluster of adherents who indeed followed his footprints:

Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur

Sant Bishan Singh ji Chhota Nanagal

Sant Pal Singh Jian

Sant Basant Singh Johalan

Sant Hari Singh Sukhayi Anandpur Sahib

Sant Parduman Singh Virakat

Sant Dalel Singh Granthi Jian

Sant Chanan Singh Bolina wale

Sant Kesara Singh Boline wale

Sant Rattan Singh Jaiton wale (akal Takahat)

Sant Rattan Singh Virakat Tuto Mazara

Sant Rattan Singh Vadijala Laehani Khurd

Sant Hari Narang Chhota Nangal

Sant Nageena Singh Mast Jaito wali

Sant Karam Singh Jigasupur

Sant Vatan Singh Dhilwan

Sant Kapur Singh Virakt Dhilwan

Sant Uttam Singh Dhilawan

Sant Akal Singh Sarhala

Sant Akal Singh Maina

Pandit Pooran Singh Maina

Sant Sujan Singh Drolli



Sant Jawala Singh Jian Barsoye Sant Hari Singh Kaharpuri

Ujagar Singh Barsoye Sant Hari Singh Kaharpuri etc.

The list of about 40 saint disciples makes Sant Baba Harnam Singh quite idiosyncratic. Sant Harnam Singh was a lighthouse. His perceptiveness, bravery, love for humanity, dedication, and the quest for truth and truthful living inspired numerous followers. Interestingly these followers further created another galaxy of Nirmala Saints. For example, Sant Baba Bhag Singh was the disciple of Sant Baba Hari Singh Kaharpur, and he had many devotees.

Sant Baba Balbir Singh conveyed the message to young generations of love for Sikhism, Baptism (Acceptance of *Khande Bate ka Amrit*), abstaining from drugs, care of older adults, and strong faith in God. He finally wished that youth should come forward and shoulder the duties by getting baptism and complete surrender to Sikh *Panth*.



Appendix V

Interview of Mahant Gurvinder Singh⁷

Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara is a famous institution of Sanskrit learning. This Nirmal dera provides all the facilities of free boarding and lodging to young learners of Sanskrit and the *Gurbani*. Mahant Gurvinder Singh is a young and dynamic scholar as well as a noted priest of the Nirmala sect. On the visit to this dera, he described the history and other details of Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara, Jalandhar to the investigator in a very involved manner. He gave the following details:

Maharaj Ganga Singh ji Maharaj founded this Nirmal Kutuya. He left home in around 1925 and the paternal land of 7 acres. His maternal grandparent nourished him as he became an orphan at a very young age. He also joined the British army but left it afterward. He was a great Ayurvedacharya. He became a disciple of Sant Hira Singh Singhriwal of Nirmal Bhekh at Hoshiarpur and finally returned to his native village Hazara. He established Nirmal Kutuya on land measuring 4 Kannals 7 Marlas out of the said 7 acres of land and started living therein and gifted the remaining land to his cousins (sons of his father's brothers). Sant Ganga Singh Maharaj used to spread preachings of Nirmal Sampardaya at Kutuya besides his social work. He wrote *Satya Chandrodya*. Additionally, he was a great scholar of music and an expert on *Asa ki vaar*. Sant Ganga Singh Maharaj had two disciples, Sant Jaswant Singh Ji Avdhoot and Sant Bhagat Singh. Sant Jaswant Singh Avdhoot had become a favorite of Sant Ganga Singh, who had a special affection for him and sent him to Banaras to get an education in Vedant. Sant Ganga Singh ji established the present Ashram by transferring the land in the name of Shri Guru Granth Sahib and nominated and appointed Sant Jaswant Singh as his *Chela* (Successor Mahant). Sant Ganga Singh left for his heavenly abode in 1946, while Sant Jaswant Singh learned Vedant in Banares. Sant Bhagat Singh took charge of the dera as officiating Mahant in the absence of Sant Jaswant Singh, and upon his return, Sant Jaswant Singh was appointed 2nd Mahant of the Ashram (Nirmal Kutuya), who continued to manage the

⁷ Interview with Mahant Gurvinder Singh Chief Priest Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara, conducted on 4th November 2021 by Sarla Nirankari at Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara, Jalandhar.



affairs of Nirmal Kutiya for a longer time. Sant Jaswant Singh constructed a Samadhi *mandir* in the memory of Sant Ganga Singh Maharaj, known as Gang Bhavan, and is situated in the center of Nirmal Kutiya. Mahant Jaswant Singh purchased some land adjoining Nirmal Kutiya, and presently, the dera has 2 acres of land under its ownership and control.

Sant Jaswant Singh (1946-1981) was born at Bhai ki Majha Drolli and received primary education from Moga. He learnt the *Gurbani* at Damdami Taxal and Sanskrit at Banares. He translated *Sukhmani Sahib Teeka*. S.G.P.C. (Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee) had changed *Mangal* of the *Ardas* (prayers) of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. Sant Samaj represented this issue and backed a historical change by bringing it back in its old shape.. Sant Jaswant Singh had one disciple named Mahant Mehnga Ram, who had got *Deeksha*(ordination ceremony) as per the traditions of Nirmala Sampardaya. He had appointed Mahant Mehanga Ram as his successor (*Chela mahant*). He left for his heavenly abode in 1981, and after his death, Mahant Mahenga Ram took over the management and control of Nirmal Kutiya Gang Bhavan Hazara as 3rd Mahant.

Mahant Mahanga Ram (1981-2019)ji served fully well. He became the successor because of his selfless service, social work, and selfless devotion. He used to make Chavan Prash. Mahant Mehnga Ram made many developments in Nirmal Kutiya and participated in social and religious activities during his lifetime. Mahant Mehnga Ram nominated and appointed Mahant Gurwinder Singh as his *Chela* (chief disciple) on the 25th of November 2017 in the presence of Sant Samaj as per the traditions of *Nirmala Sampardaya*. Mahant Mehnga Ram died on 8th of January 2019, and Mahant Sant Gurwinder has been appointed 4th Mahant of Nirmal Kutiya Gang Bhavan Hazara Jalandhar.

2017-2019 Sant Gurinder Singh is a great scholar. He translated *Sant Gyaneshwari* to Punjabi. He has also translated Shri Mad Bhagwad Geeta into Marathi and Punjabi. He is a renowned scholar of Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi Braj, and Punjabi. His cooperating nature, the command over Vedantic philosophy and dedication toward the Nirmala sect has made him a renowned saint. Recently he has been granted with the



headship the Nirmala Ashram Nasik in addition to his duties in Nirmal Gang Bhavan Hazara. It is worthwhile to mention here that Sant Baba Brahm ji had directed the investigator to meet him for the research work. One feels privileged to admit that Sant Gurinder Singh has effusively helped and enthused this research work. In the interpretation of the Nirmala philosophy, he has proved a great support. His help in introducing surrounding deras, his resourcefulness and proactive nature has really facilitated the present study.



Appendix VI

Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal⁸

Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal is a celebrated name in world of environmentalists and acknowledged saints of the Nirmala sect. He is Sant Baba Lal Singh was the exponent of this dera. He established Virakt Nirmal Kuteya Seechewal. He also went to many places for meditation. But finally, he got settled in Seechewal.

Nirmal Kuteya Seechewal is a miraculous dera constructed on the bank of Kali Bein and it fills the fusion of spirituality and pure environment. Sant Seechewal started his conversation with the description of the Sechewal Model of procuring environment. This model is followed by various states. Water treatment plant structure has earned laurels to the Seechewal. Seechewal contributions to education, environment, and agriculture are superb. The projects on the environment are acknowledgeable. Lots of magazines are published by this dera. Numerous books are written on his work. Different school boards have introduced the books written on his ecological achievements to various classes. About three theses for Doctorate of Philosophy are conducted on Seechewal's work and life.

Sant Seechewal has undertaken following significant projects:

- The teaching of the *Gurbani*
- Sant Avtaar Singh Yadgari College
- Computer education for the children of migrant laborers
- Innovative schools for advanced education
- Ik Omkar Cheritable Gataka Akhara
- Hockey Stadium in Seechewal
- Sant Seechewal Water Sports Stadium
- National level *Kushti Akhara*

⁸ Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal Chief Priest Nirmal Kuteya Seechewal, conducted on the 4th November 2021 by Sarla Nirankari, at the dera Nirmal Kuteya Secchewal, Sultanpur Lodhi.



- Sant Avtar Singh Echo service
- Sant Avtar Singh Memorial Technological Research Centre
- Nanak Hut for cheaper and better goods
- Avtaar Radio Seechewal FM 90.4 *Kudarat di Avaaz*

Purification of dirty water: in 1999, the sewerage system was developed and implemented in 200 villages through aerobic. The purified water is supplied to the various villages. Further following the traditional procedure but with the latest technology, Balbir Singh Seechewal had developed an underground sewerage system model with the help of the Punjab government. It is a low-cost model that collects sewage water from ponds and treats it in a natural way so it can be used for agriculture and irrigation purposes.

His indigenous research work has been applauded throughout the decades in the country and abroad. He is very innovative and resourceful in solving common environmental hazards and glitches faced by the local community. In a few years he had come up with a solution to treat solid waste with a machine developed in the Sant Avtar Singh Yadgari Technical Research Centre under his guidance. The machine can help separate heavy particles like polythene, glass, and iron from the garbage. It can be cheaply manufactured and is being tested for further improvements.

Besides working towards conserving the environment, Balbir Singh has also established schools and colleges in different places. Balbir Singh Seechewal has become a role model to numerous educationists, ecologists, natural scientists, and leading socio-cultural leaders. Impressed by the efforts of environmentalist Balbir Singh Seechewal for reviving the sanctity of holy Kali Bein (a rivulet of the Beas river), Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev supported Seechewal accomplishments and insisted for following the drives of cleaning the other rivers of the country, including the Ganges and the Yamuna. Yoga Guru appreciated the Seechewal model in his visit on 1st January 2014 at Nirmal Kutiya Sultanpur Lodhi. He acknowledged that the Seecewal model is the most suitable model in the Indian context. Ramdev also visited Gopaldham, a cowshed in the city; the gallery exhibiting the phase-wise pictures of



the Bein-cleaning project undertaken by Seechewal. He also visited the Sikh museum and previewed the information on computers on Sikhism and Sikh history.

It may be noted that Kali Bein, a 64-km long rivulet of fresh water, had got converted into slush, and there was no flow of water due to dense wild vegetation in it. However, this was cleaned at the initiative and efforts of Seechewal, who is also a member of the Punjab Pollution Control Board (P.P.C.B.), without any government support setting an example not only before the countrymen but the whole world.

On 17-08-2006, Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited Sultanpur Lodhi and esteemed Balbir Singh Seechewal's noble efforts. He had also praised the efforts of Seechewal in his great speeches. Seechewal had also found a place on the cover page of Times, a US-based magazine.

Seechewal said for the past many days, he, along with the village residents, had been working to remove water hyacinth from the water. He also added that it was also one of the prime reasons for floods after heavy rains as it obstructs the natural flow of water, choking the Bein. He said machines had been pressed into service to take out hyacinth, for which Rs 20,000 to 25,000 diesel is being used every day. He narrated that the residents are making a contribution. During the kar sewa, bridges on Kanjli, Subhanpur, Bhawanipur, Gurdwara Sant Ghat, and Bosewal were inspected by the environmentalist where there was a probability of water hyacinth being stuck. He also appealed to the village residents and administration not to flow the hyacinth upstream but to pluck it out so that it doesn't choke the Bein. Seechewal said, "Earlier, there were three bridges on the Bein at Sultanpur Lodhi. It was easy to take out the water hyacinth, but the three pontoon bridges and four other new bridges have taken the total number of bridges to 10. Due to this, it has become more difficult to take out the water hyacinth."

He added if the Bein get 250 to 300 cusecs of water all year round, it won't choke up like this. In the past few days, water hyacinth has been removed from three spots on the Bein banks, Gurdwara Sant Ghat, Gaziour Haranamur village, and Khaira village. The kar sewa will also continue so that the hyacinth isn't stuck in more bridges.



When TIME magazine came out with their "Heroes of the Environment" section back in 2008, Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal was the only Indian to make it to the list. Seechewal, also known as the "Eco Baba," is credited with cleaning the Kali Bein, a tributary of the River Beas in Punjab. Seechewal began the project and a few volunteers in 2008, finally giving Punjab back a pristine tributary eight years later. The work had a spiritual purpose for his volunteers and him, who are ingrained in the practice of "sewa" (voluntary service). People from more than 24 villages joined the movement, cleared the riverbed of hyacinth and silt, and built a lovely riverbank.

The Government didn't even help with an awareness campaign, so Seechewal launched his own, encouraging villagers to throw and treat their waste differently. The outcome was excellent — a government order to divert the water from a nearby canal was received, and the natural springs were revived again. In 2008, the river was thriving, enjoying its second lease of life. It had even turned into a picnic spot. In conclusion, he is still actively involved in significant accomplishments like:

- True service of purifying Kali Bayin and other such rivulets
- Updating sewerage system in villages
- Providing every sort of support to farmers
- Doing regular practices for making green Punjab by the distribution of plants, making nurseries and
- Incessant Road Kaar Sewa in surrounding villages and made him "Road Baba."
- Avatar Gowshala Shelter home for cows at Fateh Garh Mandi
- Construction and fortification of walls of dams during floods and creating awareness about floods and soil erosion and many other environmental issues etc.

While throwing light on the role of the teacher he expressed that the teacher should be an assistant and facilitator. It is evident from recent studies that the student could learn more from the internet just as the child can learn more from online matches than



the coach. He also indicated towards 'Speaking book' concept. Sant Baba Seechewal indicated the value of this book. Speaking is a problem because it is not taught in schools. He indicated the deficiency of speaking abilities among the learners and insisted to make improvements in this regard. He felt the need of value education. He submitted that teaching in general starts from alphabets like 'a', but in reality it starts from *Ik Om Kar*, the beginning term of root verse (*Mool Mantra*) of *Adi Granth Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. He insisted the regular prayers of Jap ji Sahib and to have daily class of the *Gurbani* for every student. He clearly stated that God knowledge and reminiscence is the only medicine for all ailments. *Prabh ke simran ridh sidh no nidh, prabh ke simran gyan dhayan tat budh*. He explained that *tatva budhi* (divine knowledge) is gained through *Simran* (reminiscence). If the child is attached to *Simran* (god devotion), then other knowledge will not be difficult for him. The chapters on the philosophy and practicum of Seechewal are included in the C.B.S.C. Syllabus with his kind permission.

Another opinion shared by Sant Seechewal about brain drain (immigration to foreign countries) by the youth is quite encouraging. Actually, learning the English language can break the barriers in countries and make a living more convenient. Positive thinking and strong faith in the *Gurbani* can make wonders disregarding the culture and nations. By acting upon Guru's advice, one can excel in any field. He even supports the idea of teaching English for qualifying I.E.L.T.S. (International English Language Tests) at the school level. The students at the school level are advised to learn the English language, and they are given proper coaching too in all the schools affiliated with the trust of Seechewal. In fact, the revolutionary saint is of the opinion that the educational system should be improved. Vocational education is the true answer to the current problems. The investigator was thrilled to listen most inspiring and up-to-date views about various contemporary issues. His views about immigration were very enticing. He admitted that the foreign lands are no constraint for true devotion. If a child is deep-rooted with his tradition, teachings of the ten Gurus and *Gurmat* (true devotion), he/she is in a safer zone. He asserted that numerous youngmen in foreign nations are inexorably contributing the dera by multiple ways.



Appendix VII

Interview with Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh⁹

On the visit to dera Pathalawa the investigator was overwhelmed to see the dera, love and cooperation of the followers of Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh and devotion aura of great legendary ancestor i.e. Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh. A comprehensive life-sketch of the said fabulous saint is as follows:

In 1859 a very promising child was born to Sardar Daya Singh and Smt. Raji. People came to greet the newborn baby. A great astrologer named Pandit Prem Nath (resident of Paddi) was also on a regular visit to his hosts at that time. He enthusiastically came to the home of S. Daya Singh and welcomed the baby. S. Daya Singh asked about the future of the child. Pandit Prem Nath wanted to have a look at the baby. After having first sight of the baby, the farsighted vision of Pandit Prem Nath foretold that the child would be an illuminating devotee of the Sikh religion. Another prediction was that having the heritage of the last birth of service to the Guru, the child would be a lighthouse to the society. After seeking the name of the child, Pandit Prem Nath named the child Ghaniya.

The baby Ghaniya was well groomed and nourished by the family. In 1874 Ghaniya and his family served the whole village with sugarcane juice and jaggery. That was the beginning of the service of humanity. The zeal and passion of Ghaniya were unforeseen. All saints, *pandits*, and *faqirs* blessed the child. Even one of the *faqir* (holy Muslim saints) put young Ghaniya's hand on his head and asked him to lead his life too. In a nutshell, this was the pious beginning of the holy journey of saint Ghaniya.

In this young journey of the welfare of all and blessings of all, an Udasi Sant, i.e. Narain Das came into his village. He had lineage from the sect of Baba Shri Chand and had permanent residence in Ludhiana. He started doing *Bhakti* in the village. He specially came to see young Ghaniya. The saint deeply influenced Ghaniya. Ghaniya delved into the insights of actual devotion. He even saved the life of the saint from the

⁹ Interview with Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh, Chief Priest Nirmal Bunga Pathlawa, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021 at dera Nirmal Bunga Pathalawa, District Shaheed Bhagat Singh.



extremists of the village. Sant Narain Das used to live in the alienated hut located on the outskirts of the village. Ghaniya used to pay homage to the saint regularly. The saint directed the young Sant to Halluwal in District Hoshiarpur in the dera of Sant Baba Variyam Singh Virakat. He even presaged about the challenging and stubborn nature of the saint. After leading Ghaniya, Sant Narain Singh left to his abode. Young Ghaniya went to Virakat Sant at Halluwal. Sant Variyam Singh strictly treated Ghaniya and abused him. Nevertheless, Ghaniya kept on visiting the Virakat saint. He succeeded in making him pleased one day. After testing Ghaniya, the Virakat saint happily started to teach and guide him with all the ins and outs of Sikhism. For two years, he did regular services to the Virakat saint. The saint got exultant and blessed him. He blessed him with the full treasure of bliss and permitted him to go to his home.

After returning home, he started to share house chores responsibilities. Suddenly he went to Jalandhar Cantonment and got recruited into the Indian army in Kamalpur Cantt. He got baptized in the army with other Sikh soldiers and gradually got inclined to rumination and meditation. After one year, he was shifted to Poona Sitara Cantt. But he started to ignore his duties in the army. Once, he got involved in meditation so much that he forgot to participate in the sports events of the army. He felt despondent and worried about his absence. After completing the event, one army person named Attar Singh came to him and appreciated his performance on a horse crossing the wall. Bhai Ghaniya was startled to listen to this but was assured that Guru Gobind Singh had helped him in disguise and got inspired to leave the army. He went to Nanderh Sahib and left for Haridwar finally. In one of the caves of Rishikesh, he started to do deliberation. For about one year, he did arduous observance and left for his hometown, i.e., Pathalawa. He started to live in a lonely place in the bushes. But people kept on chasing him. He extended the teachings of Guru Nanak in real footing. He distributed *langar* as per the remits of the Guru without any discrimination. His love for humanity attracted devotees from all sections of the community.

The Anandpur Sahib and the fort of Anandgarh needed to have renovation. For the said purpose, three kings of Punjab, i.e., Maharaja of Nabha, Maharaja Patiala, and



Maharaja of Jeend, joined their hands together. Baba Ghaniya Singh went to Anandpur Sahib with Joga Singh and met with a chief priest (*Jathedar*) Sodhi sahib. He told his wish to clean the old well (*beoli sahib*) of Anandpur Sahib. He led a procession of people of various villages to Anandpur Sahib with full support of food and shelter. It is essential to state here that he had the most dedicated and devoted disciples, i.e., Sant Sewa Singh Naura, Sant Baba Hari Singh Kaharpur Wale, Sant Baba Jawala Singh Harkhowal, Sant Harnam Singh Jian, Sant Sampuran Singh Bilaspur, and Sant Baba Mela Singh Banga, etc. The traditional water tank (*beoli sahib*) was cleaned and repaired in the first place. Sant Baba Hari Singh and Sant Baba Jawala Singh Harkhowal maintained the vital birthplace of Khalsa in Anandpur Sahib. After this, the repair work of the fort of Anandgarh Sahib and Darshini Diorhi Anandpur Sahib was initiated by Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh Pathlawa. Suddenly he got sick. Gradually he lost his consistency of health. Before his divine departure, he called Sant Sewa Singh Naura and appointed him the chief of all services of Anandpur fort and other Gurudwaras and inspired him to be entirely devoted to the already continued work. He selected Sant Kartar Singh Bairagi as the chief priest of Nirmal Bunga Pathlawa. On the 16th of November 1938 in 79, this most celebrant and ecclesiastic soul merged with super-soul. Sant Baba Kartar Singh descended the chair and carried the work of repairing the holy places at Anandpur Sahib. He took sound care of the dera of Pathalawa. He was a great devotee as well as a retainer of Sikhism. He renovated the old building of Gurudwara, founded by Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh, with the help of mason S.Narain Singh Mehatpur. Sant Baba Kartar Singh left this immortal world on the 18th of December 1974.

Sant Baba Omkar Singh ascended the headship of Pathalawa dera after Sant baba Kartar Singh. Baba Kartar Singh gave him primary education. Afterward, he was sent to the renowned dera of Sant Baba Ameer Singh Sattowali Gali Amritsar. Sant Ameer Singh was a famous scholar of the *Gurbani*. After the request of S.Narain Singh, he was sent to Mehatpur, where he constructed a beautiful dera under the name Sant Baba Kartar Singh as dera 'Kartargarh'. At the time of death of Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh, Sant Omkar Singh was at Nirmal Bunga Pathlawa. Nirmal *Sant mandli* (team of saints) appointed him as the chief priest of the dera. Sant Omkar Singh made Sant



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Baba Gurmail his successor of the dera Kartargarh and acquired the responsibility of the dera of Nirmal Bunga Pathlawa. He died on the 9th of March 1982 at Kartargarh dera. His services are an asset to both Kartargarh and Pathlawa dera.

The Chief Priest of Nirmal Bunga Pathlawa, Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh belongs to the village Pathlawa. He is very efficiently managing the dera Pathalawa. Every year on the death day of Sant Baba Ghaniya Singh, free eye care camp is organized in this dera. The masses cherish the divine presence of Sant Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and always miss Sant Ghaniya's dedication to reform Keshgarh Sahib.



Appendix VIII

Interview with Sant Baba Bhag Singh¹⁰

A beautiful dera located in the lush green fields, prelights the illuminated aura of Sant Baba Bhag Singh and his legendary forerunners. The cordial welcome by the followers of this dera made this effort easier. Sant Baba Bhag Singh shared his opinion and thoughts about the dera with its historical lineage. He told that Dera Nirmal Kutiyā Banga has a pronounced legacy. It is a renowned dera having a prodigious list of mentors on its account such as:

Bequest of Dera Khandani Banga

Sant Baba Khuda Singh belonged to Hoti Mardan Sampardaya of Sant Baba Karam Singh. The pedigree of the dera is as follows:

Baba Ajeet Singh

Sant Baba Sahib Singh

Sant Baba Bhag Singh Uri Distt. Rawal Pindi

Baba Veer Singh Naurangabad

Baba Khuda Singh

Baba Maharaj Singh

Baba Rabel Singh

Baba Jai Singh

Baba Khazan Singh Paddi Tholu Paddi Sura Singh

Baba Ran Singh (1922)

Baba Mela Singh

Baba Malkeet Singh

Baba Bhag Singh

¹⁰ Interview with Sant Baba Bhag Singh, the Chief Priest Nirmal Ashram Kutiyā Banga, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021 at Nirmal Ashram Kutiyā Banga, District Shaheed Bhagat Singh.



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Sant Baba Mela Singh had a great number of students in his *gurukul* (traditional school) in 1960. This dera has continuously contributed to the spread of Sikhism through teaching *Katha* and *Keertan*. Baba Malkeet Singh was famous for the deliverance of his discourse of the *Gurbani*. Organization of various camps like eye camps is a continuous practice. On every 1st Wednesday of the month, an eye camp is organized. The patients are further referred to Ruby Nelson Hospital Jalandhar. Nirmal Kutiya Banga recommends patients for further treatment, and the bills are paid by the Chief Priest, i.e., Sant Baba Bhag Singh. Similarly, the girls are also sponsored for higher education. The dera has its centers in Uttarakhand, Dhoyi Wal and Zallowal (Hoshiarpur), Amar Kuteya Saharanpur Anand Pur Sahib, Tibba Dera Gurudwara Adampur, and Damunda. The dera is connected to the betterment of society by providing free medicines, free education, and literary awareness to the masses.

This Dera is inclined to spread the teachings of the ten Gurus, linkage with the holy *Gurbani*, and betterment of society by good deeds. The present head Sant Baba Bhag Singh wishes every young person to be connected to his religious ancestries. Everyone should abide by the norms of religion and Sikhism.



Appendix IX

Interview with Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh¹¹

The village Nahlan is located on the western side of Jalandhar. Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh welcomed the investigator convivially at the dera Nahalan. Dera Jhanda Sahib is located in the western periphery of Nahlan and on the border of Kutlupur village. This dera is 350 years old. This place is the epitome of the devotion and sacrifice of Sant Baba Jhanda Singh. This dera was established in the memory of Sant Baba Jhanda Sahib. After the demise of Guru Gobind Singh, the tyrannies of the Mughals increased against the Sikh community, particularly Hindus in general. The role of Sant Baba Jhanda Singh was very significant. He could not tolerate the atrocities of the Mughal army. He strongly resisted their extortion against girls and women. While fighting for the sake of humanity, he was beheaded by the Mughal army. His head was carried by his pet dog named Kalu to his mother in the village Nahlan. He was cremated at his holy place of devotion. This place became a pilgrimage by the special efforts of Sant Baba Garib Singh. He served the holy place from 1824 to 1859 AD.

This dera is related to Bhai Bhagirath, a beloved disciple of Sri Guru Nanak Dev. The other name of this *Samardaya* is *Samaprdaya* Thakuran. Sant Baba Bahal Singh Thakur was a follower of Sant Baba Kirpa Singh Thakur. After him, Sant Baba Bhoop Singh, his disciple Sant Baba Albel Singh, and Sant Baba Natha Singh ran this dera meticulously.

Sant Baba Natha Singh ran the dera from 1859 to 1904. He had come from the village Mutharran Kalan Gorayan. At first, he lived in a hut of grass near the village. Later on, he was compelled to visit dera Jhanda Sahib by his insight. The local assembly of devotees handed over him the responsibility of the dera. This was a divine decision of God. He stayed there for a long time of 45 years. His dedication, love, empathy, and philanthropic nature made him indeed extraordinary.

¹¹ Interview with Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh, Chief Priest of Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 26th December 2021, at Dera Baba Jhanda Sahib Nahlan Jalandhar.



After him, Sant Baba Narayan Singh of Bhanderh village succeeded the dera (1904-1929). He had received divine education from Sant Baba Natha Singh. He always remained connected to god reminiscence and true devotion. At that time, it was quite tough to walk on foot because of sandy and thorny patches. But he kept on moving to the places and families of believers. He constructed a room for the good maintenance of Shri Guru Granth Sahib. He trained numerous *Paathis* (the persons who recited the Adi Granth correctly). He started the *larhiband path* (serial holy recitations) of it. It was quite difficult to do *Paths without Santhiya* (specific training for the recitation of the *Gurbani*). He remained a lighthouse to the seekers of devotion in that area. He initiated traditional wrestling named as *Chhinjh* in the dera. The youth was directed towards sports by Sant Baba Narayan Singh.

Shriman Sadhu Singh thrived *in* the dera Jhanda Sahib after Sant Baba Natha Singh in 1929. He was a carpenter and had come to for wooden work of the dera. He was deeply influenced by the behavior of Sant Baba Narayan Singh and decided to stay here. As per his name, Shriman Sadhu Singh was a deadly renounced person. His preaches were profoundly liked even by the strangers. He taught the Santhiya to many followers and also educated numerous *Kavishwers* and *Dhadi Jathas* (specially trained singers of The *Gurbani*). Wherever the need for reciters of the *Gurbani* was felt in the area, it was fulfilled by the dera Jhanda Sahib. After thriving at the tender age of 18, he runs the dera till 48 years with great zeal.

From 1945 to 1974, A.D. Shrimaan Sant Kartar Singh managed the Jhanda Sahib Dera efficaciously. He continued the spread of the heavenly message. He was the reflection of divinity. Through his enlightened discourses, he fertilized even the barren lands. He sparked a new enthusiasm in scared hearts. He served the dera for 35-36 years and initiated the tradition of *Jorh Melas*(Folk faires).

From 1974 to 1998, Sant Nahar Singh took the care of Dera Jhanda Sahib. He belonged to the village Jahangir District Ludhiana. He attained spiritual education from Sant Baba Nahar Singh. With the kind permission of Sant Baba Kartar Singh, he also got Vedic, musical, and the *Gurbani* knowledge from Sant Baba Lal Singh of



Gurusar Khudda Hoshiarpur. He had very subterranean knowledge of Ayurveda. He was a famous physician of Ayurveda. He preserved the building of the dera by overhauling it. He also sponsored the education of numerous young girls and boys in various colleges. He incessantly kept on preaching and enlivening the devotion stream of the locality.

On the 17th of October 1998, he died, and the headship of the dera Jhanda Sahib passed on to Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh. He was born at Dolon Khurd District Ludhiana on the 12th of August 1976. His maternal grandfather met Sant Baba Nahar Singh in Rarha Sahib Gurudwara Ludhiana. Sant Baba Nahar Singh wanted to sponsor a child for higher studies. Thus Sukhwant Singh was sent to Dera Jhanda Sahib for higher studies. The moment he entered the dera Jhanda Sahib, he left any interest for home. He was given a broom to clean the dera. He started doing the service (*sewa*) of washing dishes. Many times his mother called him home, but he denied it. She enticed him by different means, but he denied it. Once when he was in 10+2, his mother came to see him. Sant Baba Nahar Singh asked her to inquire future plans of her son. He gave three options to her (1) to get married, (2) to establish a business, and (3) to explore foreign lands for better perspectives. His mother asked him, but he refused for all three. She cried but in vain. His mother told in detail about Sukhwant's inclination at 5:30 am. Sant Baba Nahar Singh asked the mother to leave her son's attachment. He asked young Sukhwant Singh about his desires and future plan. He admitted that he wanted to pursue higher studies. His Guru Nahar Singh went abroad for one and a half months after shouldering Dera Jhanda Sahib's responsibility. After returning, he felt pretty happy about the positive feedback of Dera by the Sadh Sangat Nahlan. He pursued his dream of higher studies earnestly. But in 1995, Sant Baba Nahar Singh asked him to continue his efforts of managing the dera Jhanda Sahib commendably. In 1998 Sant Baba Nahar Singh got admitted to Appolo hospital Delhi by Sant Teja Singh Khudda Kurala. On the 17th of October 1998, Sant Baba Nahar Singh left for the heavenly abode.

Nevertheless, even after taking the full responsibility of the dera Jhanda Sahib, Sant Sukhwant kept on chasing his higher education dreams. He got religious and spiritual



education from Sant Baba Nahar Singh. The Vedanta was taught to him by Sant baba Teja Singh.

Dr. Sarbjinder Singh, Head of the Department of Guru Granth Sahib Bhavan Punjabi University Patiala, inspired him to tail his dream of higher education by doing an M.A. in Religion. Dr. Sarbjinder had recognized the spark of brilliance in young Sukhwant. He challenged Sant Baba Sukhwant to compete Sant Baba Sukhwinder Singh of Gurudwara Ratwara Sahib. This challenge compelled Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh to complete his Doctorate of Philosophy in Sikh Religion. Sant Sukhwinder Singh was triple MA. Dr. Sarbjinder Singh encouraged Sant Sukhwant Singh to do two other post-graduations in History and Sikh Studies from Punjabi University Patiala only. Nevertheless, he is least influenced by his achievements.

Sant Baba Sukhwant Singh is a man of literary virtues. He had successfully propelled '*Nirmal Darshan*' magazine in 2003. However, due to his engagements in *Nirmal Sampradaya*, the publication of this magazine had not been moving.

After being asked about contributions to *Nirmal Sampardaya*, Sant Baba Sukhwant graciously shared his impending ideas and visions in the following ways:

- To save and procure *Nirmal Samapardaya*'s literature just as Giani Gian Singh's unpublished books.
- To check the tempering with *Nirmala Sampardaya*'s literature
- To rectify the damage done to the image of *Nirmal Sampardaya* by some fanatics.
- To publish old scriptures of *Samapardaya* and publish some handy literature in the form of booklets and leaflets to acquaint the world with the pronounced legacy of the *Nirmala Sampardaya*.
- To check and eradicate the caste system prevailing in society by making different Gurudwaras, funeral places, and community halls to facilitate communal harmony.



- To open a library in the dera Jhanda Sahib, which will have books of all religions just as Buddhism, Jainism, and Christianity. The exposure to this library will give immense exposure to youngsters and direction to their reading habits.
- To revive '*Nirmal Darshan*' (a historical and religious publication by the Nirmala sect) magazine innovatively.
- To inspire the youth to get higher education and pursue an advanced level of spiritual knowledge to make the world worthwhile for better living.
- The rash and inappropriate criticism should be checked by special efforts initiated by different scholars and saints.

A question was asked to Sant Sukhwant Singh, "Is the Nirmala sect a different sect from Sikhism?"

He replied that this is a wing of Sikhism initiated by Guru Nanak Dev, who had been assigned the duty of learning and teaching *Vedanta* and all scriptures by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. He further added that as there are separate divisions of forces like air, navy, and army similarly, the Nirmala sect is a faction of Sikhism. They have distinct ways of functioning, rules, and regulations. The Nirmalas aim to spread education selflessly. Even in their way of propagation and circulation of Sikhism, they always keep the teachings of the ten Guru at utmost priority. The people of all religions like Hindu, Sikh, Christian, and Muslim interact with this Sampradaya. Their main concern is to teach the basic tenets and principles of Sikhism through their expertise in Vedas. He further added that he intends to renew the Nirmal Adhayatam Trust as most trustees are no more. He also wished to continue the services at Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of *Hola Muhalla*.



Philosophical Perspectives of Nirmala Sect

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Abstract

In Punjab, numerous sects are prevalent like Udaasi, Naamdhari, Radha Swami, Nirankari and Nirmalas. Nirmala sect is considered as old as Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala sect is one of the famous sub-sects of Sikhism in Punjab. This sect was founded by Shri Guru Nanak Dev, nourished by the tenth Guru Shri Guru Gobind Singh and flourished as a socio-religious movement in contemporary India. It is derived that after getting Sanskrit education from Banares, Nirmala scholars became experts in Sanskrit and they gained exclusive imprints of Vedas. Although they had firm faith in the teachings of the Sikh Gurus yet they made Vedas the composite part of their culture. Hence their philosophy is the conglomeration of Gurbani as well as of Vedanta. Their incessant immersion in literary as well as socio-religious activities, make them positively distinctive from other existing reform movements and religious sects. Further, functioning as an intra sect within Sikhism; Nirmala has strengthened and extended faith in the Gurbani, teachings of ten Gurus and Vedanta with an outlook of socio-religious transformation. The Nirmala philosophy has deep imprints in the present functioning of Nirmala deras (residential centres of spiritual learning and prayers). In addition, these deras have become a hub of religious learning. Thus this paper is an insightful endeavour to deliberate on the Nirmala philosophy.

Key Words: Nirmalas, Sikhism, Gurbani, Guru, Vedanta and deras

Introduction

Nirmala sect is considered as old as Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala sect is one of the famous sub-sects of Sikhism in Punjab. Its commendable services and approach to the masses are highly appreciable. The incessant literary, as well

as religious engagements of the Nirmala sect, reflect the deep philosophy of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. In fact, the philosophy of the Nirmala sect is essentially the philosophy of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala (in Punjabi: *Nirmale* “those without blemish”) is a Sikh tradition of ascetics,¹ Nirmala Sikhs wear ochre-coloured robes (or at least one

item) and keep *kesh* (unshorn hair).² Mahant Dayal Singh writes “Guru Nanak Dev established Nirmala Sect (a path) to over float the materialistic world. Through this, the worldly people could easily achieve their way to salvation.”³ As Nirmala sect considers him the *Aadi Acharya* (Founder Guru). His philosophy is followed by the sect thoroughly. The historical significance of the Nirmala sect is that it is deep-rooted faith in the teachings of all ten Gurus and *Vedas* as well (Rana 2017,10). World widely Nirmalas are acknowledged for their quiet and peaceable habits (Malhotra 2016, 72). Their duty and onus to read and expound the *Adi Granth* make them distinctive from other prevalent sects. Nirmala tradition has contributed greatly to the analysis of the Sikh ontology. Indeed, to this day the rigor with which central concepts of Sikh metaphysics are analysed, and the sophistication of the exegesis on issues of ontology, theology, epistemology and eschatology are unparalleled within the Sikh tradition as it exists in the post-Singh Sabha reform era. Unfortunately, this is rarely acknowledged within the broader Sikh *Panth* (Singh 2011, 198).

Guru Nanak Dev’s ideology is the base of the Nirmala sect:

Importance of Guru for imparting true knowledge and salvation, shunning of five evils i.e. ego, anger, greed, attachment and lust; three pillars of Sikhism just as *Vand Chakko* (sharing with others), *Kirat kro* (work diligently) and *Naam japo* (meditation), shedding all inequalities, compassionate and pious living are the fundamental values exalted by Guru Nanak Dev. Nirmala sect act and follow these teachings in true terms. This sect staunchly believes in the principles of all ten Gurus. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the foundation of Sikhism and is considered the actual and last *Guru* (lord master). Nirmalas have full faith in and devotion to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. But in the meantime, the Nirmala sect believes teacher-taught (guru-chela) tradition. *Mool Mantra* the root verse of *Guru Granth Sahib* can be implicit as the summary of Sikh Philosophy. This *Mantra* is considered the ‘magic chant’ or ‘magic verse’. The *Mool Mantra* is said to be the first composition uttered by Guru Nanak Dev upon the enlightenment at ‘an early age. It is the briefest composition

encompassing the entire universally complex theology of the Sikh faith. It consists of religious, social, political, logical, martial and eternal implications for human existence; a truly humanitarian and global concept of supreme power for all to understand and appreciate. This *Mantra* embraces concepts of universality and flawlessness and is beyond ambiguity. It follows as:

*Ik oangkār saḥ nām kartā purakh̄ nirbhāo nirvair
akāl mūrāḥ ajūni saibha’n gur parsād.*

One universal creator God/ The name is truth/ Creative being personified/ No fear/ No hatred/ Image of the undying, beyond birth, self-existent/ By guru’s grace jap.

Chant and Meditate:

Āḍ sach̄ jugāḍ sach̄.

Hai bhī sach̄ Nānak hosī bhī sach̄. ||1||

True in the primal beginning/ True throughout the ages.

True here and now. O Nanak, forever and ever true.⁴

It is said stated that the whole script of *Adi Granth* i.e. *Guru Granth Sahib* is an embellishment of the *Mool Mantar* (root verse) itself is an explanation and augmentation of the single phrase *Ek Onkar* which is the first entry in the sanctified and holy writ. Nirmala scholars believe that *Mool Mantra* (root hymn) was basically derived from *Vedantic* philosophy. Even the verses of *Guru Nanak Dev* in his *bani* are mainly based on *Omkaar*. It means one and only one who cannot be compared and contrasted with any other and is a primal manifestation of Absolute God and in itself is the Supreme reality. It denotes the three forms of God i.e. Generator, operator and destroyer. But beyond three identities God is one. Another definition of *Onkaar* is based on its attributes just as *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva* (passion, ignorance and goodness) virtues. understanding, following and practise *Gurbani* with all Vedic orientations, is the fundamental perspective of Nirmalas. The philosophy of Nirmalas revolves around this point only. Even the principles and maxims of Nirmala philosophy (Singh Taran 1981 286) are based upon it only just as follows:

- As *Gurbani* confirms the summary of *Vedas* in the local language so does the Nirmala sect.

Sanskrit was considered the language of gods. So few had the privilege to study scriptures. But *Gurumukhi* script made the messages of Gurus as well as Vedas more comprehensive and easier to the masses. Nirmalas were instrumental in this change. They translated many Sanskrit books in Brij, Punjabi and Hindi. Even they transcribed *Vedantic* interpretation of *Gurbani*. The firm faith in the immanence of God is the conclusion of both *Vedantas* as well as of *Mool Mantra*.

- Similarly, like *Gurbani* Nirmalas neither disobeys Vedas nor criticise holy pilgrimage and acts but certainly denounces idol worshipping. *Gurbani* believes in Brahma, soul, nature, *karamic account*, (action version) birth and death cycle and stoutly confirm them as do Vedas. Nirmalas consider Vedas as proof and take *Gurbani* as equivalent to it. And believe that Gods' wish prevails in Vedas which never changes the only way of communication changes.
- Nirmalas basically deem chanting of holy mantras (*sumiran*) as the source of salvation. But at the same time, they corroborate that there cannot be salvation without Divine knowledge. Their doctrine is that knowledge is the door to salvation. And as per Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy, Guru is important for everyone. The role of the Guru is vivacious. He is the only bond between soul and the God. Further, the Nirmala sect adheres to Advaita and its deep acumens. Its exponent *Adi Shankaracharya* propounded the *Mahavakya* (great saying) "*Ekas Braham Dwitiya Naasti*" which is the central essence of the *Advaita* philosophy. *Advaita* means non-dualism. It says the creator and his creations are not two(dual) things but are one. 'I am indeed none other than *Braham*'. *Advaita Vedant (disambiguation or non-duality)* is the summary of Vedas. This branch of philosophy believes in the Union of *Jeeva* (a living sentient akin to an individual soul) and *Braham* (the creator God). The *Jeeva* and *Braham* are not two separate identities. The *subaerial* (*Jeeva*) only because of ignorance does not understand the oneness and existence of God. Yet the God is in his inside. In fact, it is a branch of Vedanta. '*Aham Brahm Asmi* is the principle behind it. He opines that

in the world *Braham* is the only truth. The world is materialistic.

- Nirmalas are the linkage among Vedas, *Gurbani*, *Nirmala Darshan Shastra* (*Nirmala philosophy*) as well as *Sanatan ideology*. Vedanta and Nirmala Philosophy affirm each other. Nirmalas are mainly behind the literary acknowledgment of Guru Nanak's philosophy in the Indian literary world. The Nirmala scholars made the world believe that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the fifth Veda. They could do so only because of their logistic arguments. Their literary contributions are really magnificent. Hari Parsad (1963) who had translated *Japu Ji Sahib* in Sanskrit writes in the preface of *Japu Sanhita*. Pandit Hardev Singh Rishikesh wrote '*Narayan Hari Upadesh*' which consists of *Gurbani*, *Veda*, *Shastras*, *Upanishads*, *Gur Pratap Sooraj*, *Panth Parkash* and *Bhai Gurdas*, etc. Pandit Sada Singh from Chetan Matha in 1797 wrote a commentary on '*Adaitwad Sidhi*' called '*Sura Sagar Chandrika*' which is an outstanding book of *Vedanta*. Pandit Nihal Singh wrote a commentary of *Japu Ji Sahib* named '*Japu Gudartha Deepika*'. To clarify the principles of *Gurmat* he correlated them with Vedanta. Like the *Udasis*, the Nirmalas interpret the teachings of Sikh gurus in the context of Vedanta.⁵ They view the first Sikh Guru, Nanak as an *Advaita Vedantist* a follower of Shankara, and a defender of the *Sanatana Dharam*.⁶ *Advaita Vada* is a branch of Vedanta.

A very derogatory custom i.e. caste system was highly prevalent in the 15 and 17th century. But Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh challenged the old system by criticizing the dogmatic rituals and by establishing a class of scholars like the Nirmala sect, which broke the hegemony of that was in vogue. This group of scholars initiated the renaissance by breaching the dominion of fanatics and disseminating the real *Bhakti* (devotion). The Nirmalas profusely contributed to literature and other socio-cultural arenas. They wrote *Guru Gobind Singh Ashatak* after his sacrifice at Dama Dama Sahib. Pandit Gulab Singh inscribed *Bhavarasamrit*, *Adhayatma Ramayan*, *Parbodh Chandra Natak* and *Panth Parkash* and bring forth the *Advait* Philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev after having a compressive interpretation of Vedas and Shastras. Pandit Gobind Singh Nirmala

Sadhu wrote *Vedant Pribhasha and Bairag Shatak (Bhasha Teeka)*. Pandit Sadhu Singh composed *Guru Sidhant Jayoti* and *Guru Shiksha Prabhakar*; Pandit Prem Singh Rishikesh composed *Guru Stotra* (Sanskrit) etc.

Basically, only two concepts are prevalent regarding Sikh waves. The first belief speaks out the origin of Sikhism as the consequence of the collision of Hindu and Muslim ideology. The second concept indicates Sikhism sprouts as the offshoot of Hinduism to contest Muslim challenges like Sufism the other outgrowth of it in medieval times.⁷ Henceforth the roots of the *Gurbani* are taken embedded in the *Vedant* influenced *Sanatani* ideology. Both of these aspects have been ignored in the social dynamics of Sikhism. Nirmala Scholars initiated *Vedantic* description and a comparative way to comprehend the *Vedanisation* of *Gurbani*. But the basic physiognomies of Sikhism as commenced by Guru Nanak should not be discounted. In fact, the *vedantisation* of Sikh philosophy started in post Misal period of the feudalism of the Sikh wave. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Nirmalas played an imperative role in the spread of Sikhism. Chander incises, "Both in the Upanishads and the teachings of Guru Nanak we find attempts to give a purified version of religion which is the very essence of Hinduism."⁸ Thus Nirmala scholars consider Sikh philosophy as the *Advaita* experience of *Vedanta*. In the first phase, Nirmala scholars were focused on the illustration of truth with the help of *Vedantic* definitions. But gradually feudalism influenced Nirmalas by changing their materialistic ambitions of accepting the land endowment offered by different landlords. Just as Giyani Badan Singh a Nirmala scholar published the *teeka* (commentary) of *Guru Granth Sahib* on the patronage of Faridkot Court which is fully colored with Hinduism.⁹ Even the famous scholar Pandit Hari Singh named his book "*Advaitanubhav Parkash*" (*Ahluwaliya 1981,162*) which indicates the fundamental principle of Nirmala philosophy by describing *Gurmat* in detail. Nirmalas have promoted *Gurbani*. The colour of *Vedanta* on *Gurmat* is because of the influence of Indian culture. *Vedanta* acclaim the mantra "*Aham Brahamasmi*" (I am the God). But Sikhism preaches to denounce ego. *Vedanti* believes in the renunciation of the world but *Gurmat* inspires us to live happy and household life.¹⁰ Their description matches with *Vedanta* but it should not be derived that they have become *Vedanti*. They have their own originality

which cannot be diminished by other impacts of Vedas. Through imbibing *Guru-Chela* (master and learner) tradition in devotion, the Nirmala sect believes in the oneness of God and salvation. They follow the principles of promotion of *Gurmat* given by Guru Nanak *Advait-vad* till date.

The above opinions are criticised by different scholars. The philosophy of the Nirmala sect is '*advaita vad*' which was manifested by the great philosophers and religious leaders i.e., *Shankracharya* ages ago (Mittal 1962, 204). The significant difference between both lies in the fact that the outlook of Shankaracharya is based on the *Upanishads* (Vedas), *Bhagwada Gita* and *Brahama Sutra*. Thus it is called *Advait-Vedanta* but the belief of the Nirmala Sect is based on *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Jap Ji* and *Sukhmani Sahib* (*Sikh scriptures*). So the *Advaita* of the Nirmalas sect could not be correlated with *Vedanta*. Both, *Vedanta* and *Advaita-Vada* are two important philosophies of Nirmalas. Uniformly Nirmala sect supports that not only the *Gurbani* but Vedas, *Shastras* and *Puranas*, etc., all expand the thought of the 'truth' which is also confirmed by *Shri Guru Nanak Dev* who says "*Aad Sach Jugad Sach Nanak hai vi Sach Nanak Hosi vi Sach*" (God is eternal truth and will remain so till infinity). Nirmala sect has reiterated the fact that to have an understanding of the omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent truth, the need of *Gurus*, incarnation, prophet and lord masters had always been felt.' (Mittal 1962,205)

Further, the philosophy of the Nirmala sect and practical form or strategy should be seen in one alignment to understand it properly. Through Philosophy, the Nirmala sect not only communicates the teachings and principles of ten Gurus but also delineates information about the various saints, scholars with their rich literary heritage surrendered to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. By its reflective method, Nirmala Sect has accepted the truth of the specialty of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and confirmed the uniqueness of the teachings of ten Gurus in the reality of life. By pleading the uniqueness of *Adi Granth* and ten Gurus, the Nirmala sect has revealed the reality of life (Mittal 1962,207) It could be said that the philosophic contribution of the Nirmala sect lies in the fact that they not only maintained the sanctity of holy scripture but also maintained the uniqueness of Sikh wave. They correlated the teachings of all Gurus with great universalized descriptions of

Vedas in a very apt and connecting way to Nirmala philosophy. It is found that the philosophy of Nirmala scholars is in tune with the philosophy of Shankaracharya. Anthropomorphic (Sagun) forms of God and infinite beyond all qualities and forms so-called transcendent (*nirgun*) form of God does not contradict each other rather they are complementary. Like Shankaracharya, *Adi Granth* also enthruses to train instincts for eternal divinity. Henceforth both of them consolidate each other. In other words, Nirmalas are the priests of Sikhism.

The main motive of Nirmalas is not to seek *Vedantinisation (illustration and interpretation as per Vedas)* but to understand *Gurbani* in full colours with the help of Vedas. While analysing the role of Nirmalas, it is concluded that they have supported and proliferated *Gurbani* not the Vedanta. If their amplification matches with Vedanta, it is to confirm and consolidate *Gurbani*, not *Vedanta* (“Mittal 1962: 204”). It is important to mention here that the Nirmalas could not be called *pro-Vedanta*. Although they reflect Vedanta in their philosophy by adopting truth, modesty, asceticism, meditation, abstinence from five sins lust, wrath, covetousness, greed and vainglory (*Kaam Karodha, Lobha, Moha and Ahankar*) in their life; nonviolence, forgiveness, less sleep more concentration on self-control practices and seeking self-realization and divine knowledge through the Guru in the body. After seeking divine knowledge, they practice it for salvation like *Vedantic* and like *Vedanti* they consider action and *bhakti* (devotion) as the tools of self-realization but Nirmalas are *Gursikhs* (followers of Sikh Gurus), not *Vedantic*. As they accept and prove all of the above factors in the light and teachings of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* hence it could be concluded easily that they accept the super dominance of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* with its true following. The eclectic position of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is accumulated by the Nirmalas sect through various inputs which are certainly noteworthy.

In fact, the *Adwaitwad* (monistic school of thoughts) of Nirmalas should be called the *Advaita-Vad* of *Gurbani* as they have explained “*Gurbani*” not the *stotras* (verses) of Shankaracharya. Some of the critics opine that the *Vedantinisation* has not only destroyed the exclusiveness but has also led to the lifelessness and severance of the inner dialectic of Sikhism.¹¹ But it is not justified as the Nirmala sect has brought vivacity to Sikhism. In an important

phase of Sikh expansionism, the *Vedantic* role of Nirmalas¹² can't be unobserved. Their landmark achievements need great acknowledgment.

Sher Singh writes, “This sect has generated Sanskrit scholars. Like Shankaracharya, they were *Vedanti* though they neither adore idol-worshipping nor the caste system. However, they were completely engrossed in the old Indian philosophy. And this is clearly projected in their works and theology.”¹³ These theologians contributed profusely to the spread of *Gurmat* (devotion) and the creation of religious literature in the conglomeration of Vedanta. Their tireless efforts to preserve the values of the ten Gurus are highly appreciable. But it is a sorry state of affairs that their works and unparalleled achievements in both Sanskrit and Punjabi literature are ignored and unobserved. It further acquiesces that in-depth true studies are earnestly required to treasure trove the Nirmala sect.

Foot Notes:

- 1 *Nirmala Sikhism Encyclopaedia Britannica* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_\(sect\)#cite_note-britnirmala-1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nirmala_(sect)#cite_note-britnirmala-1) <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nirmala>
- 2 Owen Cole W. and Singh Sambhi Piara, (2005) *A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism: Sikh Religion and Philosophy* (Routledge), p.62.
- 3 Singh, Mahant Dayal, (1981) *Baba Nanak Ji da Nirmala Panth* ed. Pritam Singh *Nirmala Sampardaya* (Guru Nanak Dev University press Amritsar Punjab), p.159.
- 4 Nesbitt Eleanor, (2005) *Sikhism a very short introduction*. (USA Oxford University Press) p. 22-24, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/mul_mantra
- 5 Pashora & Louis E. French, *The Oxford Handbook of Sikh Studies* (Oxford University Press 2014), p. 377-378.
- 6 Tesky Denton Lynn, (2004) *Female Ascetics in Hinduism* (SUNY Press), p. 179.
- 7 Ahluwalia Jasweer Singh, (1981) 'Sikh Darshan Da Vedantikaran te Nirmal Sampardaya' ed. Pritam Singh *Nirmal Sampradaya* (Guru Nanak studies Department GNDU Amritsar Press), p. 161.
- 8 Chander Ramesh, (1970) *Guru Nanak's Teachings and the Upanishadas*, in *Punjab Past and Present* (Punjabi University Patiala Press), p. 216.
- 9 Ahluwalia Jaswir Singh, (1981) *Sikh Darshan Da Vedantikaran te Nirmal Sampardaya* ed. Pritam Singh *Nirmal Sampradaya* (Guru Nanak studies Department GNDU Press Amritsar), p. 161.

- 10 Singh Piyara Padam, (1981) Vidiyapati Nirmale ed. Pritam Singh *'Nirmal Sampradaya* (Guru Nanak studies Department GNDU Press), p.223.
- 11 Singh Kulbir, (1972) *Nirukat Shri Guru Granth Sahib* (Punjabi University Patiala press), p.8.
"In numerous commentaries (teekas of Japu ji) the conceptions of the science of *Shastras* are strongly emphasised. The hidden assumption was that the Hindu scholars should believe about the authenticity of Gurumukhi scriptures in respect to *Shastras* and *Smirtis*."
- 12 Heera, Bhagat Singh, (1981) Gurmat Vichardhara ed. Pritam Singh (*Nirmal Sampradaya* Guru Nanak Studies Department GNDU Press), p.171.
"Many scholars and theologians have advertised till date that *Gurmat* and *Vedant* are one in principle. Especially Nirmal scholars are the most expansionist of this thought".
- 13 Singh Singh Sher, (1965) *Philosophy of Sikhism* S. Jiwan Singh, Proprietor, Sikh University Press Lahore, p.91.

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09

NIRMALA SAINT BABA BHAG SINGH OF DERA SANTPURA (JABBAR)

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ABSTRACT

In the Sikh History the Nirmalas holds an important position for their educational, socio-religious reforms and humanitarian enterprises. Tenth Guru Shri Guru Gobind Singh sent five Sikhs to Kaashi to learn Sanskrit. After learning, they came back to Guru Gobind Singh and he designated them as 'Nirmalas' who were supposed to deliver their knowledge and wisdom to the Sikh masses. These five saints further made teams and scattered to different places. In the Nirmala lineage of the Saint of Santpura Jabbar is the focus in the present paper. His philanthropic efforts, promotion of religious thoughts, eradication of social evils, true guidance to the youth at the times of partition, painstaking efforts for women education; made him the lighthouse of the Dera Santpura(Jabbar).

The Niramala saints have greatly contributed in the upliftment of humanity by both spiritual as well as physical activities. Keeping in view the pace of times these saints adapted to most recent changes and have played the role of a bridge connecting the modern world to the roots of love ,peace and strong faith in God.

John Malcom was the first British historian of the Sikh History has made a brief reference to the Nirmalas in his 'Sketch of the Sikhs: Their Origin, Customs and Manners'1981, written during the first half of 19th century. According to him, the Nirmalas constituted ,a learned class of the Sikhs having very peaceful habits".¹

In A.D. 1830, H.H Wilson found them as "able expounders of the Vedanic Philosophy" by giving some references to their beliefs and practices.² Nirmala saints have been instrumental in the translations of Sanskrit scriptures in to Punjabi. In the early 19th centaury, Giani Gian Singh claims that in order to show it to the Sikhs and to the ignorant ones that the Nirmala Panth belonged to all the ten Sikh Gurus, he wrote his Nirmal Panth Pardipika.³ According to Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2009) from Guru Nanak Dev Ji's period till the tenth Guru Shri Gobind Singh ji, the Gurusikhi was known as 'Nirmal Panth'.⁴ Hence it is clear that Nirmala panth is prevalent since the very first Guru.

Sulakhan Singh (2005) has given a popular account of the sect's origin in 'Nirmal Panth Pardipika' (1891) by the Nirmala scholar Giani Gian Singh.⁵ Tenth Guru shri Gobind singh asked a Pandit Ragunath to teach Sanskrit to Sikhs so that they could be well versed in Vedantas. But the later denied to teach the Sikhs as he considered them of low origin . Consequently in 1686 Guru Gobind Singh sent five saints named Sant Karam Singh, Sant Ram singh, Sant Ganda Singh, Sant Veer Singh and Sant Saina Singh for Vedantic learning.⁶ These five saints returned to Ananadpur Sahib after the completion of their education in Kashi . According to Bhagat Lakshman Singh (1995) these saints were called Nirmalas (Sanskrit for "pure" or "unsullied") by the Guru.⁷ Guru Gobind Singh delightedly announced that Nirmal panth will be famous in two characters. One was to adopt the sword of knowledge i.e.Nirmalas and eradicate all the vices of rotten society and

the other was to be called Khalsa panth. Khalsa panth will exterminate atrocities of tormentors or oppressors with physical strength. Guruji blessed the Nirmalas to be dexterous in Sanskrit to understand Shastras and Vedas deeply.⁸ Guruji had planned to give the duty of religion expansion to Nirmalas. Giani Balwant(2009) mentions that about 24 teams of Nirmala Saints went to the different parts of Punjab as well as in other states and started teaching Sikhs about Sikhism, Amrita Sanchar(baptism) and Vedas etc.⁹ For example Sant Karam Singh went to Kashi. Sant Dargaha Singh went to Kanbal (Haridwar). Sant Maan Singh ji got settled in Kurukshetra. Sant Punjab Singh made his way to Khadur Sahib. Sant `Kehar Singh Ji selected Amritsar as his target area. Madanjit Kaur (2007) opines, "these Niramala composed great scriptures of the maxims of Gurmat".¹⁰ Seetal, Sohan tells in her work i.e. 'Prophet of Man, Guru Gobind Singh' that they translated the work in Punjabi".¹¹ The classical exegesis and translations of Gurbani, dictionaries, literature, Chhanda Shastra, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. Story narratives, Raag Kirtanas, literary discussions and arguments, the advocacy of principles of Gurmat, free lance writing through news papers, to launch Damdami Taxal in Gurumukhy and many more activities are accomplished by the Nirmala Saints.¹²

The philosophy of Nirmalas according to Nirmal Kutiya¹³ can be summarised as under:

1. Complete love and devotion of God, Belief only in the teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib.

2. Belief that the 'MOOL MANTRA' or the 'ORIGINAL HYMN' was heard by Guru Nanak Dev ji from the AKAL PURKH and therefore considered it their privilege to be blessed with the 'MOOL MANTRA' and other teachings from their mentor, a live Guru.

3. After the baptism (Amrit Sanchar), they, in reverence touch the feet of the chief

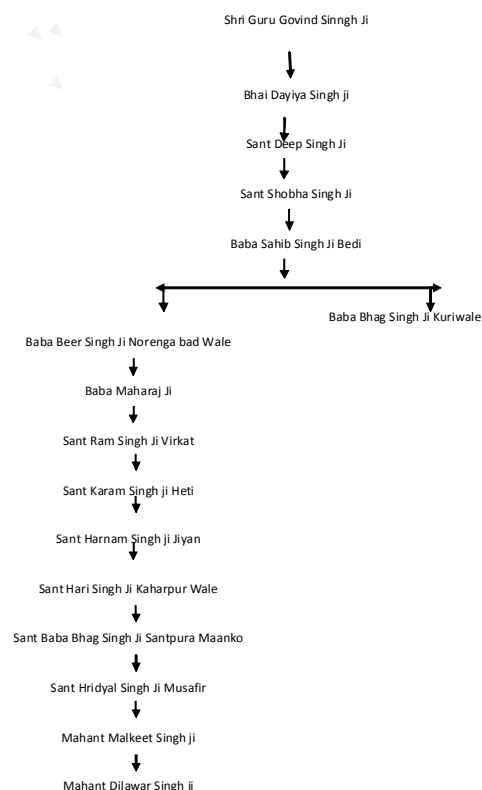
saint, since it is with his blessings that they have attained this state. Touching the feet and bowing on the feet of their live Preceptor is a daily tradition.

4. Consider it auspicious to establish religious places (Gurudwaras), where any of the ten Gurus had the occasion to visit and had some historical significance. They also establish Gurudwaras at places visited by their Preceptor and considered by them as pious places.

5. They don saffron or white clothes on their body. The robe is called GATTI.

6. Teachings of Guru Granth Sahib are foremost, but Vedas and Puranas are also considered.

There are numerous deras in Northern India as well as in Punjab. But one of the most illuminating and informative dera that is quite prominent in Doaba region of Punjab; is Dera Santpura (Jabbar). The tree of chronology of Nirmalas especially in the case of Dera Santpura (Jabbar) by Giani Balwant Singh Kotha Guru (2009)¹⁴ is as under:



Sant Baba Hari Singh ji Kaharpuri

Nirmal Dera Santpura (Jabbar) Manko is one of the most dedicated and renowned dera in the Doaba region. Sant Baba Hari Singh ji Kaharpuri had played an imperative role in the establishment of this dera. His exact date of birth is not available. According to Pakhar Singh(2011)he joined British Military service in 1905.¹⁵ From this date it could be deduced that he was probably born in 1885-1886. In 1906 he was transferred to Sialkot(now in Pakistan).In Sialkot he was fortunate enough to meet Sant Baba Harnam Singh who became instrumental to arouse bhakti in Hari Singh. Consequent to Sant Harnam Singh's influence, he resigned from military in1909 and marched forward the destination of spiritualism. He promoted Sikhism and inspired thousands of souls to be one with the Lord master(Guru). He initiated Amrit Sanchar(baptism) diligently. As per Surrender Kaur Puar(2009) he did not get a chance to receive formal education but had command over Gurumukhi and Roman Urdu.¹⁶He was a sporty personality with special interest in wrestling and horse riding. The most congruent and note worthy achievement of Sant Baba Hari Singh is the fortification of Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur which is one of the five famous Takhats of Sikhs.¹⁷ This takhat is famous for Amrit Sanchar (baptism) at Baisakhi commenced by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699. In those days there were very scanty arrangement for the stay of the Sangats(religious congregation) on special occasions. Sant Baba Hari Singh built numerous inns for the stay of travellers in Anandpur Sahib. He made his mind to spread education in rural areas of Mahilpur and Hoshiarpur. He opened several Khalsa schools and colleges. He set off Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College in Mahilpur.¹⁸ This college produced more than a few IPS and IAS officers. He patronised the game of football in this area. Another landmark achievement was the opening of a girl school in Chabewal . Sant Baba Hari Singh became one with super soul on

21st October 1973¹⁹. But the spark he left is still burning bright in the area.

Braham Giyani Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji

Sant Baba Bhag Singh was born on 8th January1897 at Kandowal two kilometres away from Mahilpur(Hoshiarpur).²⁰ His father S Heera Singh and mother Smt.Uttam Devi had two daughters named Bibi Jass Kaur and Rao Kaur. They had been blessed with a son after fourteen years' great worshipping and prayers at Gurudwara. Thus he had been named as Bhulla. His early schooling started from Mahilpur and his name was changed as Bhag Singh.But his early childhood was not easier one. After losing his parents at the age of ten; his sister took the responsibility of his nourishing and carried him to her village Nurpur. Thus he could not continue his studies.²¹

At suitable age he joined British army in the times of World war I(1914-19). He was enrolled in Sikh Regiment No.34 and was sent to Rawlpindi(Pakistan).²² He enthusiastically participated in sports in the army. His dedication and discipline impressed British officers very much. In the first world war, the policies and diplomacy became clear. The cruel episode of 13 April 1919 i.e. Jaliyanwala Bagh made British exposed .

Sant Baba Bhag Singh Lost his faith in British Army and extended his resignation which was rejected by British Army. But he and few of his friends bravely left army. Police kept searching for them. Eventually the uprising of Akali and Babbar movement diverted the attention of British army. Sant Baba Bhag Singh came to Dera Kaharpur near Mahilpur and met with Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji.²³ His life got totally changed under the impression of Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji. By his hard service and dedication Sant Baba Hari Singh Ji blessed him with Naam Daan and allowed him to leave the Kaharpur Dera.²⁴ and inspired him to spread the illumination of education in the world .

A new journey of the saint started. After

visiting Hoshiarpur and Kandola for a short span of time, he eventually settled at Ghurial near crematory.²⁵ In March 1922 Babbar Akalis had a large gathering and Kirtan Diwan at Ghurial. British suspected Sant Baba Bhag Singh being closely related to Babbars and one day arrested and beat Baba ji. He was tortured and made to stand all night and was released the next day as he was found innocent. Sant Baba Bhag Singh ji started to organise congregations, kirtans and large Sant Samagams. According to Surender K Puar (2009) in May 1928 he arranged the largest Sant Sammelan (Gathering of saints, raagi Jathas and Sangat) of doaba region. Almost all surrounding heads of Gurudwaras kirtanias, dhadis (religious singers) participated in this Sant sammelan.²⁶ On the day of the Bhog Baba Bhag Singh presented a beautiful horse to his Guru Sant Baba Hari Singh ji²⁷. Sant Baba Bhag Singh's inclination towards eternity increased gradually. Establishment of Dera Santpura (Jabbar) In about the end of the July 1929 Baba Ji left Ghurial and shifted to Jabbar (Santpura). He started to live the life of austerity and rigorous meditation. He made a small room of straws and started to pray and led a life of recluse. He spent most of his time in searching eternal questions of soul and super soul and survived by eating leaves and roots of trees. Some motherly figures of the surrounding villages enquired about his basic needs of food and cloth. Surender Kaur Puar (2009) quotes Sant Baba Bhag Singh's answer which he gave to one of the motherly figure of village "with great difficulty I have been able to rid of my own mother, and I, most definitely, do not want to get attached to another one".²⁸

Sant Baba Bhag Singh's simple and austere life attracted the masses. Gradually sadhus (hermit) from near and far, devotees from adjoining villages started to gather at Santpura (Jabbar) for devotion and sharing of god knowledge. They started to donate buffalos,

cows, horses, and other necessary items to the Dera. Youth from the neighbouring villages gave full services to the Dera. Consequently this deserted and desolated land got converted into a big dera of Bhakty and love for Gurbani. In 1930 a room for Guru Granth was erected, attic for Sant Baba Bhag Singh, kitchen for langar and several straw huts were erected for the convenience of hermits.²⁹ On every Sangrad, the Rabbabi jathas (group of religious instrument players) started to perform religious Kirtanas (spiritual singing).

Sant Baba Bhag Singh: the Post independence period:

His existence and role in the struggle of independence and aftermath of partition of 1947 is quite commendable. He kept on showing the way of love, peace and coexistence to the people of the region. Subsequent to the partition the wave of hatred and violence made people enemies of each other. They forgot humanity, brotherhood, harmony and love and damaged not only humanity but blocked every way of maintaining these virtues. The Episode of attack on village Padhiana- Khanaura (Jalandhar) is unforgettable. The village Padhiana is situated about two kilometres away from Dera Santpura and village Khanaura. On August 22, 1947, the Muslims (Neeru Musalman Rajputs) from Khanaura village (District Hoshiarpur) attacked the Sikh Rajput populated village Padhiana (Jalandhar). The invader Muslims were in the disguise of Singhs.³⁰ People of Padhiana village defended themselves daringly. One of the Singh made fire on his roof, signalling neighbouring villages of emergency. People from near by villages like Drolli and Damunda rushed quickly to save Padhiana village. But people from Kalra village made a different line of attack. They attacked village Khanaura and fired its dry fodder. On the other hand invaders of Padhiana got shocked to see the smoke from their village. They ran back to Khanaura but people from Kalra resisted them

on their way and demolished the village Khanaura completely. Consequently Muslims had to leave the village. But the loss of property and human causality was more than enough. Thousands of Muslims were killed and twelve Sikhs and Hindus lost their lives. The martyrs of this event were mainly the volunteers of Sant Baba Bhag Singh Dera Santpura.³¹ One of them was Sant Harbhajan Singh, a follower of Dera Santpura. He was a handsome sewadar but expert in Gatka (Sikh Marshal Arts). The list of the martyrs of this event mainly included the volunteers of Dera Santpura:

Bhai Kartar Singh (village Drolli Kalan), Bhai Nihang Singh (village Drolli Kalan), Bhai Preetam Singh, Bhai Watan Singh, Bhai Chhajja Singh, Bhai Khushhal Singh, Bhai Chanda Singh, Bhai Udham Singh, Bhai Dumman Singh, Bhai Bilawal Singh (Padhiana) and Bhai Naurang Singh Head Granthi Baba Mati Ji (Village Drolli Kalan). Sant Baba Bhag Singh enthused his beloved sewadars and Sangat to do selfless service of humanity. He motivated his followers to conquer the five vices i.e. lust, rage, greed, attachment and conceit by practising upon Gurbani.

Sant Baba Bhag Singh ji as a great visionary:

To impart Guru's gyan (divine understanding), he started a series of one hundred and one Akhand Path to pray to Almighty-Akal Purakh. Kirtan darbaars and Gurbani discourses began to take place. A number of saints made their residence in the dera and started to have continuous discussions on God. Similarly Amrit Sanchar (baptism) has become the ultimate goal of Dera to promote the philosophy of Tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Abiding by the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev ji, Sant Baba Bhag Singh decided to make the first move towards girl education. In 1954 he opened a girl school in Santpura.³²

Tough and hard journeys of Sant Baba Bhag Singh for endorsement of Guru's knowledge proved successful as he succeeded to make the region intoxicant free, he travelled far and near to

uphold the voice of truth, Sant Baba Bhag Singh ji left to heavenly abode on 3rd January 1962. The five followers of Sant Bab Bhag Singh ji i.e. Mahant Hardyal Singh Ji Musafir, Mahant Gurbachan Singh Ji Wirqat, Sant Gurbachan Singh Ji Rikhi, Pandit Tara Singh Ji and Mahant Sihan Singh ji, led his legacy ahead.³³ Sant Hardyal Singh Ji Musafir took the responsibility of the head of Dera Santpura after Sant Baba Bhag Singh.

Sant Baba Bhag Singh laid the foundation of Dera Santpura (Jabbar) which became instrumental in spreading the light of Truth, harmonious living and gave new direction to selfless service to society. It had inculcated the sportsmanship in the youth of the area and eradicated problem of drug addiction. His contribution in the promotion of girl education is unparalleled.

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Make a Submission

Guru Nanak Dev Ji as the Pioneer Nirmala Reformer

Dr. Sarla Nirankari, Dr. Cr Sangha

PDF

Abstract

Guru Nanak Dev philosophy is entirely exhibited by Nirmala sect. In fact to preach true human religion and to discard dogmatic rituals; the

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Dr. Dhrota Sharma
Coordinator, E-C 1676


Dr. Dharmjit Singh Parmar
Vice-Chancellor, E-C 1676

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NIRMALA SECT IN DOABA (1849-2015)

PRE-THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
HISTORY**

SUBMITTED BY
SARLA NIRANKARI
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SANT BABA BHAG SINGH UNIVERSITY,
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September- 2022

CHAPTER VI

RECAPITULATION



The history of Punjab has deep roots in religion. It is crystal clear that socio-cultural facades are directly influenced by religious fervor. It is said that only a true devotee of God could be a real patriot. In the context of the Nirmalas, this could be rightly documented that they have proved faithful to the above proclamation. Not only in the religious reforming emission but also socio-cultural planes, the Nirmalas have proved their worth. The nationalism by Guru Nanak initiated in the fifteenth century is carried forward by the Nirmala sect in this era too. The flag-wavers like Baba Veer Singh Naurangabadi,¹ Baba Maharaj Singh,² and Baba Khuda Singh³ have created history in Indian nationalism.

On the other hand, Pandit Tara Singh Narottam,⁴ Giani Gian Singh,⁵ Pandit Gulab Singh,⁶ Pandit Hari Singh, Pandit Sadhu Singh, Mahant Ganesha Singh,⁷ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, etc., and many more have created ground-breaking literary creations.⁸ At the same time, the love for humanity of this sect is predictable from their social activities like creating awareness of environmental concerns, spreading education, providing health facilities, and having a zeal for accepting and solving other challenges to society. Their dwelling areas are the renowned deras of various parts of Punjab and Northern India. Almost all of the Nirmala deras are engaged in socio-cultural undertakings. Righteously, this sect has played the bridge between Sikhism and Vedanta; between the haves and have-nots and learned and illiterate. The present study is an ardent endeavour to highlight the history, literary activities,

¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.313-324.

² *Ibid*, pp.320-324.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 345-349.

⁴ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.70

⁵ Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Nirmale Sadhayan di Sikh Dharam nu Den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.155.

⁶ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p 53.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 117.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 101-165.



socio-cultural influences, expansion of Nirmala deras in Doaba region and their reflections etc.

The first chapter of the present study deals with the introduction of the Nirmala sect in detail. The historical roots of the Nirmala sect are discussed with existing conditions. The hatred and jealousy had spoilt the odour of life. People have forgotten God, the actual path of religion, and the message of true wisdom. Instead, they got involved in hypocrisy, imposture, betrayal, immorality, and unrighteousness. Guru Nanak emancipated humanity by initiating a clean and undefiled form of worship in these times of unrest, deterioration, and disharmony. Devotion towards God through service to humanity, reminiscence of God, and devout congregations were the significant initiatives in the path of *bhakti* (devotion) taken by Guru Nanak. He increased the eternal principles of musing of God by continuous chanting, equal sharing of gifts of nature, and sturdy belief in a life full of actions (*Naam japo, vand chhakko, and Kirat kro*). His way of teaching was based on divine enlightenment and devout faith in God. These principles reinstated the crumbling social structure of society. The Sikhism expounded by him and the other nine Gurus formed a cohesive Sikh community, but gradually, a need had been felt for the conglomeration of temporal power and spiritual authority (*Miri- Piri*) together. The tenth Guru Gobind Singh initiated armament and edification (*Shastra* and *shaastras*). There was a dreadful need for alterations in the ways of promotion of Sikhism due to the suppressive policies of the Mughal regime. The most peace-loving Sikh community has to take the shape of brutal combatants to procure the interests of the Hindu community. Both literary and weaponry means the existing challenges were dealt with resourcefully by Sikh gurus. The special proclivity shown towards the Nirmala sect by Guru Nanak Dev in *Adi Granth* is quite peculiar.⁹ The keen interest of tenth Guru Gobind Singh could be better construed by creating Khalsa (a class of warriors) and Nirmlas (a class of scholars) in the late seventeenth century.¹⁰ Drastic changes in Sikhism done by Guru Gobind Singh to save the nation

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 5-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 12-15.



by establishing Khalsa and taking the lead to train educationally fit all Sikhs; is quite important. The birth of Nirmalas can be traced back to Guru Nanak.

Various theories given by different scholars appear to be illogical to the investigator's conviction as one feels its birth was given at the time of the founder of the Sikh faith, i.e., Guru Nanak Dev. The origin of Nirmalas can be broadly categorized into four beliefs as far as the investigator's perception is concerned. All of these different theories present different opinions of various faiths. However, its development as a socio-religious reform ideology is the most acceptable theory by modern historians, yet the faith of the distinguished scholars about Guru Nanak as the proponent compels one to be confident in the first theory.

The first chapter contains a significant review of the Nirmala sect and the leading saints and legends of literature. The substantial supposition about the review of literature is that the British historian like John Malcolm, H.H. Wilson, and J.D. Cunningham have strappingly accepted the Nirmalas as the learned class of Sikhs and able expounders of Vedantic philosophy. These historians have given verdicts about the intellectual strength and higher position of the Nirmala scholars in society. Rose, Denzil Ibbetson, A.H. Bingley, and Major A.E. Barstow have strongly accepted Guru Gobind Singh as the expounder of this sect. Mcleod W.H. has given an account of Rahits (intensive way of living) in the Sikhs of the Khalsa: A History of the Khalsa Rahit'. Here the living traditions of the Nirmalas are discussed in detail. A review of literature of numerous other studies highlights that sufficient research has been conducted on the various areas related to the Nirmala sect, just as the meaning of the Nirmala sect, its nomenclature and characteristics, the historical development of the Nirmala Deras, the strict rules of living,¹¹ educational and literary contributions of Nirmalas, reforming zeal and critical appraisal of the leading Nirmala saints like Pandit Gulab Singh,¹² Pandit Tara Singh Narottam and Giani Gian Dev, etc.¹³ In short, in this chapter, the place of the Nirmalas in modern history has been identified.

¹¹ Teja Singh Mahant (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Giani Nahar Singh Shri Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, pp.9,19,26,32.

¹² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, pp. 60,64,66.

¹³ *Ibid*, pp.73 115.



Various great authors and writers agree about the literary and other contributions of this sect in several fields.

The second chapter gives profound historical information on the commencement and development of the Nirmala sect in detail. Four theories are elaborated in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. It is cohesively resolved from various approaches that the Nirmala sect has a pronounced legacy. Innumerable scholars have dedicatedly explored its history and lineage. The first theory lays claim to the credence of Bhai Gurdas, Mahant Ganesha, Giani Gian Singh, and Mahant Dayal Singh and settled the concept of Guru Nanak as the founder of this sect. The references to the *Gurbani* and other scriptures like *Vaaran Bhai Gurdas*, *Makke di Goshat*, *Gur Bilas Patshahi*, and *Shri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*, etc.,¹⁴ could not be conceived as solid evidence to consider Guru Nanak as the forerunner of Nirmala sect. It is widely assumed that as the word *Nirmala* hails from the *Guru Nanak Bani*, therefore, this sect feels obligated for its lineage to Guru Nanak Dev.¹⁵ Further, this word had been used by Bhai Gurdas as an adjective to upkeep the devout and supreme teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. Likewise, other references could also be overridden as the misapprehension of the word 'Nirmala'. The reference to 'Nirmala' in *Adi Granth* could not be considered true by many historians as the word '*Nirmal*' or '*Nirmale*' has been used as a distinguishing feature of the *Panth* of Guru Nanak or his followers (Sikhs) purposely. Moreover, Guru Nanak's mission was cosmic, forbearing, and universal. At the same time, the Nirmalas confine themselves to lots of constraints. The first theory of accepting Guru Nanak Dev as the founder of the Nirmala sect could not be corroborated successfully. The lack of historical confirmations and more dependence on Sakhis (stories based on folklore) fail to make substantial evidence. The second theory believes in its relationship with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. This theory was devised by Pandit Gulab Singh, Harbhajan Singh, and Teja Singh. It is quite vital to mention here that Guru Gobind Singh has a special inclination toward *Puranas* and Vedas. He grasped the gist of Hindu philosophy and ideology and intended to make a society well trained for both peace and war situations. Thus, to elevate the talent of the Sikh community,

¹⁴ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.32.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.33.



Guru Ji selected literature as a tool. He was both poet and a courageous warrior. The creation of Khalsa and Nirmala Panth denotes his undying wish for a balanced society.¹⁶ It is because of his adoration of learning that he sent a selected group of five learners to Kashi to learn the Sanskrit language so that the Vedas could be comprehended accurately. He wanted that the nonaligned, nonpartisan, and supreme knowledge of Vedas would help the Sikh society to get rid of dogmatic rituals. He knew that broadmindedness, logical thinking, and divine knowledge would better equip the Sikhs for social harmony. Guru Gobind Singh's multitalented personality inspired the Sikh community to imbibe the literary virtues inherently. Therefore, in 1863 he sent five Sikhs, i.e., Bir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karan Singh, Ram Singh, and Saina Singh to Kashi. These scholars learned the ultimate knowledge of Hindu scriptures and Sanskrit in detail at Chetan Matha at Kaashi.¹⁷ After thirteen years, they returned in 1896, and the tenth Guru blessed them with ten blessings and extolled to spread this knowledge to the masses.¹⁸ Further, these scholars were called Nirmalas. But the bestowing of ten blessings to Nirmala scholars and affirming them as 'Nirmalas' does not confirm the fact that Guru Gobind Singh launched Nirmala Panth. However, due to the lack of historical resources, it could not be proven that the tenth Guru founded the Nirmala sect. However, the fact of Guru Ji's affiliation with Nirmala scholars could not be overruled though the links between Nirmalas and Guru Gobind Singh do not confirm the second belief of their origin in Guru Gobind Singh's time.

The third faith of the dawn of the Nirmala sect, discourses that due to differences of opinions regarding *Gurmat- Darshan* (philosophy of Sikhism) a group became a separate offshoot of Sikh religion. Lack of strong evidence to substantiate, this theory cannot be considered the final one. Even Nirmala scholars are not sure about its origin. Nevertheless, from their work, it is finally assumed that the Nirmala sect was a faction of Sikhs only that has separated because of some intellectual differences and resultant conditions. The third faith supported by Paramjit Singh Mansa, Sher Singh, and Teja Singh reinforced the opinion of the emergence of the Nirmala sect as a

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 33.

¹⁷ Mahant Ganesha Singh, *Nirmal Bhushan Arthaat Itihaas Nirmal Bhekh*, p.18.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.19.



discrete sprout of the Sikh religion. Even Giani Gian Singh, taken as an eminent Nirmala historian but could offer only the evidence of folklore. Most of the literature was written in reverence and regard to the Sikh Gurus.¹⁹

Mahant Dayal Singh makes even Giani Gian Singh's historical texts without having any historical exploration.²⁰ Although Mahant Dayal Singh's opinion about the Nirmala sect is one-sided, it is not historically supported.²¹ He acknowledges that this sect became famous as 'Nirmala Sampardaya' because of Sikh followers' faith in Guru Nanak. It is inferred that the Nirmala sect was not born in its present form; instead, it is the evolved form. About the lineage of Nirmalas, Kulwinder Sachdeva opines that this might be because of the growing tensions among the various Sikh socio-religious groups during the second half of the 19th century.²² Teja Singh has rightly admitted that Nirmalas are our religious propagators and preachers like the Catholic priests who never get married for the work of spiritual elevation. Fortunately, Udaasis and Nirmalas were those advertising wings that had been formed since the tenure of ten Gurus only. If Nirmalas were a separate sect, they would have produced Nirmalas, not the Sikhs. The third faith consolidates that the Nirmala sect was a branch of Sikhism with scholastic virtues of ancient Indian philosophy. However, Teja Singh calls them religious preachers of Sikhism, not a distinct group.²³ The Nirmalas' is considered the spiritual priests of Sikhism until now. There is no rejection of this theory, but its historical origin is still under scrutiny.

Overviewing the perspective of the emergence of the Nirmala sect historically, one has to go back to the prevalent conditions of Punjab after the demise of the tenth Guru. The degradation in Sikhism could be visibly seen. The Khalsa Panth fought for the welfare of religion and the nation. Punjab was divided into 12 Misals until the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Shamsheer Singh,²⁴ Prof. Teja Singh, and Sohan

¹⁹ Pritam Singh *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.34.

²⁰ Giani Gian Singh, *Nirmal Panth Pradeepika*, p.7.

²¹ Mahant Dayal Singh, *Nirmal Panth Darshan*, p.105.

²² Kulwinder Sachdeva, *Punjab History Conference*, p.229.

²³ Teja Singh (2009), *Sikh Dharam*, Dharam Parchar Committee, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, p. 98.

²⁴ Shamsheer Singh Ashok (1984), *Punjab Diyan Lahiran*, Punjabi University, Patiala, p. 22.



Singh Josh²⁵ are of the opinion that the Nirmala sect has emerged for the resurgence of society like other reform movements of Punjab, i.e., Udasis, Sewapanthies, Namdharis, and Nirankaris. The fourth theory strongly asserts the beginning of the Nirmala sect was the result of socio-religious movements in mid of the eighteenth century. Maharaja Ranjit Singh focused on political affairs than religious ones. Consequently, after his demise, both religious and political withdrawal started. In the place of ten Gurus, a few people started to call themselves Gurus; resultantly, Sikhs separated into various sects. Nirankari drive-by Baba Dayal Singh in 1851 and Namdhari wave by Baba Ram Singh in 1857; initiated transformation in socio-cultural arenas in Punjab. Christian missionaries vehemently started the proliferation of Christian philosophy in Punjab. In 1873, Singh Sabha Lahar emerged as a savior of Sikhism and *Gurbani*. To revive Sikhism and recuperate *Gurmat* values, scholars like Pandit Tara Singh, Giani Gain Singh, etc., are highly commendable. Nirmalas and Udasis started to promote Sikhism enthusiastically.²⁶ Singh Sabha wave was attended by *Pujaris*, *Gianis*, *Granthis*, *Udaasis*, and the Nirmalas very instantly and meticulously. Since the divine departure of the tenth Guru, the Nirmalas sect has been consistently playing its role positively. Even after the beginning of Singh Sabha, it kept on performing its literary and social duties flawlessly. This Singh Sabha movement converted to Gurudwara Reforms Movement and Akali Dal in 1920. Initially, Nirmala scholars participated and contributed profusely to the activities of the Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. But afterward, watching the political inclination of Akali Dal a shoot of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, the Nirmalas drifted away from it.²⁷ The spiritual vacuum created by the leadership like Guru Gobind Singh was felt direly, which a political party like Akali Dal could not fill. Akali Dal lost the goodwill of the Nirmala sect, as it assumed this pro-Hindu sect.²⁸ The Sanskrit lineage of the Nirmala sect further widened the rift between the two. Moreover, three basic differences of Nirmalas, i.e., renunciation of home, acceptance of Guru in body, and recognition of Vedanta as the source of *Gurbani*,

²⁵ Sohan Singh Josh (2002), *Akali Morchiyan da Itihas*, R. C. Publishers, New Delhi, p. 51.

²⁶ Ganesha Singh Mahant(1937), *Nirmal Bhushan*, Hari Singh, Amritsar, pp.98-99.

²⁷ Sohan Singh Josh (2002), *Akali Morchiyan da Itihas*, R. C. Publishers, New Delhi, p. 51.

²⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihaas*(part one), p.30.



were the major causes of contention.²⁹ Akali Dal was the ruling authority of Sikhism, and it denounced the Nirmalas sect on the above-said grounds. Further, the relationship kept on spoiling between the Nirmala sect and Akali Dal. Conclusively Akali Dal boycotted the Nirmala sect in gurudwaras and discarded their participation in all religious activities of Akali Dal. Around 1930 Nirmala sect got disconnected from the Sikhs. These saints continued the religious promotion and literary activities. Although Akali Dal had boycotted them, they kept on interacting with Sikhs. These scholars are the lighthouses of religious developments and great resources for the explanation of the *Gurbani*. Most people are still admirers of Nirmala's intellect and philosophy. This sect became an independent sect called Nirmala *Sampardaya* by integrating its scholars and announcing its own rules and regulations. Overviewing the above discussions about the origin of Nirmalas under the fourth concept, it is resolved that the emergence of Nirmalas as a socio-religious movement could be corroborated convincingly. However, the problem of historical origin has been a matter of controversy and serious discussion since the late 19th century. It could be summarized that even during the tenure of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Misl's period, the Nirmalas got a cordial and congenial environment to flourish. There are relevant proofs available that prove the existence of the Nirmalas before Maharaja Ranjit Singh; for example, Pandit Sada Singh of Chetan Matha Kashi wrote '*Adwait Sidhi Ki Sugam Saar Chanderika*' in 1763. Pandit Gulab Singh Nirmala wrote '*Karam Vidhak*' (1753), '*Parbodh Chandrpdyia Natak*' (1760), '*Mokh Parkash*' (1778). These books are of the time of Misals.³⁰ There is a scarcity of literary proofs in the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. But before and after his regime, numerous books of the Nirmala sect were written, for instance, '*Bhagat Bani Steek*' in 1850, '*Shri Moksha Panth Parkash da Swayam Prabh Vivaran*' in 1864, '*Shurtaru Kosh*' 1877, '*Akal Moorati Prardarshan*' 1878, '*Teeka Gurbhav Deepika*' 1878, '*Teeka Gur Bhav Deepika*'. Further, the books like '*Japu Hariras Aadik*' 1880, '*Bhagat Bani Da Teeka*' 1882, '*Gurteerath Sangarhi*' 1883, '*Shri Raag Teeka*' 1884 and '*Gur Girartha Kosh*

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 31.

³⁰ Pritam Singh *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.34.



Part 2' 1889, etc.^{31,32} are the testimonies which not only consolidate the literary contributions of the Nirmalas but also are above board proofs of their existence. The fourth theory seems acceptable because of the available evidence. The confirmations prove that this theory is near to the truth comparatively to other theories. Thus, the investigator supports the theory of the emergence of the Nirmala sect as a socio-religious movement to the extent of the modern historians' persuasion of some signs only. Otherwise meticulously overviewing the literature, oral history and heritage; the investigator assents the first theory for their lineage.

As mentioned above, the Nirmala sect's emergence as a social, religious popular drive; proved a great social event of the eighteenth century. It connected not only Hindu and Sikh society but also synchronized Vedic and Sikh literature efficaciously. The premier credit goes to Shri Guru Gobind Singh and his sagacious philosophy. The Guru did not want to delimit Sikhism to Punjab only. Hence, Nirmala saints were given the freedom to advertise Sikhism after their return from Banares. They were sent to every part of the country. Except for Anandpur, they accompany Guru Gobind Singh to Malwa, Damdama, and Nanderh. Pandit Karam Singh and Dargaha Singh daily recited and narrated old scriptures at Nanderh (South). In 1704, after overcoming a lot of difficulties of wars and royal conflicts, Guru Gobind Singh arrived in Nanderh (South India) at the invitation of Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. After the sad demise of Shri Guru Gobind Singh in 1708, the two followers amongst the five most beloved disciples named Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh accompanied him to Nanderh. The sorry departure of Shri Guru Gobind Singh led all warriors to depart from warfare and get involved in the Nirmala ideology. Giani Gian Singh's works endorse the fact that after Shri Guru Gobind Singh's departure to heaven, most of these disciples shifted to Punjab.³³ These scholars also received royal patronage, land donations as well as support for literary assistances. Many of them joined the army of Banda Bahadur. The rest of the disciples wanted to live in peace and congregation, just as Bhai Dargaha Singh Saina Singh, Deep Singh, etc., stayed with Sahib Ram Kaur (Baba Gurbaksh Singh) at Ravidas Pura. Bhai

³¹ Kulwinder Singh *Nirmal Panth da Samaz nu Bahu Pakhi Yogdan* Nirmal Ashram, Riskikesh, p.128.

³²

³³ Dayal Singh Mahant(1935), *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth*, Kirpa Sagar Press, Lahore, pp.50-51.



Gurbaksh Singh kept these saints in 1719 at his dera and had intensive discussions on the life sketch of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. In the Misal period, Nirmalas blossom significantly. The Phulkiyan States patronized Nirmalas to become a prominent religious order.³⁴ The Nirmalas received several land donations from different property owners, heads, and royal families.

From the receiving of various land deeds, it is clear that in the period of Sikh Misals' landholdings had been offered to Nirmala saints. A few of them had started to build their deras there. Land holdings offered to Baba Dargaha Singh before the Misal period shows his proximity to Guru Gobind Singh.³⁵ The land possessions received by Nirmala Sadhus make it clear that they were keener on attaining and delivering education than on worldly pursuits. It is also assumed here that Sant Dargaha Singh was the contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh. Nirmalas probably did not participate in the post-Guru Gobind Singh struggle by Banda Singh Bahadur. As the oppression of Sikhs was very high in Punjab, they established their deras out of Punjab like Sant Dargaha Singh at Kankhal in 1710,³⁶ and in Punjab, Sant Koyir Singh founded the first Nirmala named Bunga Nirmala dera in 1750.³⁷

They were early missionaries who travelled and spread Sikhism among the masses. The greatness of the Nirmal sect lies in the fact that most of its scholars were quite dedicated to Sikhism and Gurmat expansion. Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed is considered the principal and first contributor of the Nirmala sect. This was because he was taught and educated by the five disciples, who were educated and trained from Kaashi. Bhai Mani had been a regular attendee and contributor to Gurbani and Sikh philosophy at Anandpuri Darbar of the tenth Guru. Baba Veer Singh Naurangabadi, Baba Maharaj Singh, and Khuda Singh are renowned freedom fighters of the Nirmala sect. This sect established its branches gradually after the establishment of the Nirmal Ashram Haridwar. Several offshoots of the Nirmala sect sprang by the followers of Bhai Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, etc., and many others, which were further named after the name of the pioneers of

³⁴ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.44

³⁵ Teja Singh(1995), *Nirmal Darpan*, Reprint 2002, Dera Gurusar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, p.8.

³⁶ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.35.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 36.



Sampradayas (sect). For the promotion of the Sikh religion, several *Sampardayas* were formed, and their number reached 12. Further, 16 *Sampardayas* (including *Katayi*) were added by Mahant Ganesha and Mahant Dayal Singh.³⁸ These side-shoots of the *Nirmala* sect reached the masses in the different areas by the various *Nirmala* scholars.

The *Nirmalas* successfully expanded both devotion and nationalism among the masses. The long traveling with their strong faith in Sikhism from Guru Nanak, other Gurus, the *Misal* period, tormenting British era, the upcoming *Akali* movement, and the establishment of *Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee* till present times; in all stretches, this sect has proved its worth. The unconditional support of the masses was the reciprocation of the selfless devotion and services of the *Nirmalas*. Royal patronage received by the sect was enough to compliment the *Nirmala* sect's altruistic proposal. The care and love given to the *Nirmala* sect resulted in the residential permanence near the community. Further land donations given to the *Nirmala* sect paved the way for well-organized *deras* of the *Nirmala* sect.

The next chapter, i.e., the third, edifies the setting up of *Nirmala* *deras* connected with various *Sampradayas*, their development, organization, administration, etc. The expedition of the *Nirmala* sect has become a great accomplishment because of its inherent traits. The philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev, patronage of Guru Gobind Singh, love for the masses, and the nature of adjusting to the varying needs of society; have made the *Nirmala* sect distinctive from other sects.³⁹ The most credential fact of the *Nirmala* sect is its valuable literary as well as societal sharing with the masses. This sect has successfully played the role of bridge between *Vedas* and Sikhism, *Gurmat*, and practical aspects of spirituality. Even in the dark ages of British suppression and exploitation, these saints kept on spreading the message of Guru Nanak, i.e., love, peace, and humanity. These saints have addressed the immediate social, medical, intellectual, educational, and spiritual needs reasonably well. They unceasingly stayed with the masses in all good and bad times. This could only happen because of their ground-rooted approach. For incessant and direct interaction with society, the *Nirmalas* made *deras*. Mostly these *deras* received land donations from local kings

³⁸ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.66-67.

³⁹ Maan Singh Nirankari, Udghatan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.21-27.



and chiefs of territories.⁴⁰ In addition, native followers also granted lands and all types of support to the Nirmala saints because of their peace-loving, scholastic and humanitarian tendencies. Moreover, the Nirmala sect has an extreme social order in their deras. The social order created in the Nirmala deras engendered numerous marvels. The most disciplined and pious living in these deras led to creativity in literature and ingenuity in social and spiritual advancements. These deras are importunately carrying forward the teachings of ten Gurus and are winning the people's hearts the most for sacrificing and renouncing nature.

While observing the historical development of Nirmala deras, it was noted that at the beginning, all saints belonging to different sects used to live in cohesion. The cordial relations of Nirmlas, Nihangas, Pujaaris, Udaasis, etc., were indisputable.⁴¹ Nirmalas firmly continued doing *Gurmat* propagation from various Takhats and *Gurudwaras* in union with other sects. They were so blended together that it was tough to discriminate. Nirmala saints used to have huge congregations at certain intervals for the steadfastness of their beliefs and philosophy. The first meeting of Nirmala Saints happened in Rishikesh in 1758 on the occasion of Kumbha of Haridwar, the second in 1764 on the occasion of Ardha Kumbha, and after this, it happened in 1770 in Rishikesh, in 1806, a great meet was held in Haridwar under the supervision of Baba Dargaha Singh⁴². In this period, *Gurmat Parchar*(propagation of Sikhism) was appreciated by *Maharaja* Ranjit Singh too. Although Nirmal Panchayati Akhara was launched in 1855, the deras of the Nirmala sect were functional even before 1806 in Punjab.⁴³ Henceforth it could be derived that with the pace of time, the Nirmalas gradually advanced in the shape of well-planned residential learning centres. These hubs proved principal benefactors and sponsors of Sikhism. The spread of the Nirmala deras expanded to almost the whole of North India. But present study emphasizes the Doaba region only.

This region is considered the heart of Punjab. Its historical and religious legacy is superb. The tenth Guru consecrated the town Shri Anand Pur Sahib. He was a

⁴⁰ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmal Panth da Itihas*, pp.32-33.

⁴¹ Ganesh Singh Mahant(1937), *Nirmal Bhushan*, Hari Singh, Amritsar,pp.98-99.

⁴² Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.60.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 60.



philosopher, saint, warrior and a great insightful leader of masses. His zeal of literature and creating a learned class further led to the generation of scholars and so on. Especially in the Doaba region, a pronounced series of the Nirmala saints efficaciously launched their deras. In fact, these deras became the epicentre of literary as well as religious activities in this province. There are numerous famous Nirmala saints, and places indebted to Doaba Region, just as Maqsdpur, Jian, Kaharpur, Mahilpur, Domeli, Santgarh Harkhowal, Santpura Jabbar Maanko, etc. It is pretty hard-hitting to provide detail of all dera here. Some of the significant deras are mentioned with some illustrations. Even being the list of deras is exhaustive, only legendary and publicly influential deras are selected and presented here. For example, the Nirmala dera Harkhowal⁴⁴ had a great legacy in the Doaba region. Braham Giani Baba Karam Singh Sahib ji Maharaj Hoti Mardan Sampardaya, Sant Baba Aaya Singh and Sant Baba Jawala S. Ji (Harkhowal) made this dera world wide famous.

Dera Jian (Hoshiarpur)⁴⁵ is very significant dera of Doaba which earned acclaim in the Hoshiarpur region because of its exponent Sant Baba Harnam Singh. He had built and contributed several *Gurudwaras* such as Hariyan Belan *Gurudwara Satwin Paatshahi*, Jand Sahib, *Gurudwara Tahli Sahib Gindpur*, and Mohna, etc. He also participated in the fourth *Jatha* (squad) from Anandpur Sahib to Jaiton and surrendered to British police. He had a great galaxy of saint followers. His principal disciples were as follows: Sant Hari Singh Kaharpur, Sant Basant Singh Johlan, Sant Paul Singh, Sant Kaiser Singh Virakt, Sant Chanan Singh, Sant Hari Singh Kanbal, Sant Dalel Singh Virakt, Giani Rattan Singh Tutomzaara, Sant Pardumman Singh Paddi, and Sant Soora Singh, etc.⁴⁶

Dera Kaharpur a leading dera of Nirmala sect was commenced Sant Baba Hari Singh.⁴⁷ Sant Baba Hari Singh had constructed a committee to look after the Deras of

⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/deraSantGarhHarkhowalJalandhar/posts/sant-baba-bhagwan-singh-ji-harkhowal-samprda-de-mukhi/702410687072997/>

⁴⁵ Chanan Singh(2012), *Ruhani Parkash Shriman Param Pujaya 111 Sant Baba Harnam Singh Ji Maharaj Jian*, Mayi Gurdevi Charitable Trust Village Jian, Choubewal Hoshiarpur.

⁴⁶ Interview with Sant Baba Balbir Singh Rabb ji Dera Jian Hoshiarpur on 21/2/2022 at Jain Mahilpur. For details see Appendix 4.

⁴⁷ Interview with Sant Sadhu Singh, the Chief Priest Dera Kaharpur, conducted by Sarla Nirankari on 7th November 2021, at Dera Kaharpur, Hoshiarpur.



Jian, Anand Pur Sahib, Kaharpur, and Amritsar. He also passed the rule that no family member would be elected as the Mahant of the Dera. His prominent followers are Pandit Bishan Singh, Mahant Jawala Singh Jian, Sant Kala Singh Ji Anandpur, Mahant Sher Singh ji, Sant Bhag Singh, and Sant Rattan Singh Kaharpur.⁴⁸

Dera Santpura Maanko is one of the chief deras of Nirmala Sampardaya. This dera owes its lineage to Sant Baba Hari Singh. His prominent disciple, Sant Baba Bhag Singh, initiated this dera.⁴⁹ Sant Baba Bhag Singh was born in Kohdowal in Distt Hoshiarpur. He came to Manko (Jabbar) and sat in a lonely place for hard penance and meditation. In 1928 he established Dera Santpura (Jabbar). Many followers started to visit and illuminate with divinity. He went to Hoshiarpur again and left this world for a heavenly abode in 1962. He has five disciples, namely Mahant Hardayal Singh Musafir, Mahant Gurbachan Singh Virakt, Sant Gurbachan Singh Rikhi, Pandit Tara Singh, Mahant Sohan Singh, etc. After him, Mahant Hardyal Singh Musafir has appointed the head Mahant of Dera Santpura Manko. He served this Dera from 1965 to 1980. He had been followed by Mahant Malkeet Singh.⁵⁰ Baba Malkeet Singh is also known as bridge Baba. He was a visionary saint. He is famous for his land mark achievements. The most outstanding accomplishments of Sant Baba Malkeet Singh is Sant Baba Bhag Singh University that is enlightening the area with the detonation of legendary knowledge. After Sant Baba Malkeet Singh, Sant Baba Dilawar Singh Ji headed the Sant Pura Dera from December 2015 to 22nd April 2021 and guided numerous educational enterprises. Sant Baba Janak Singh is the present Mahant of the dera.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Darshan Singh(2018) *Jiwan Sedhan Shri Man 108 Sant Hari Singh Ji Kaharpuri*, Magismatic Press Sahibjada Ajeet Singh Nagar Mohali, pp.10-25.

⁴⁹ Pakhar Singh (2011), *Ruhaniyat Ate Parupkar Da Kender Dera Sant Baba Bhag Singh Ji Dera Santpura Jabbar*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Cheritable Society, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.16.

⁵⁰ Poar Surinder Kaur(2009), *Light of Santpura (Jabbar)*, Sant Baba Bhag Singh Memorial Charitable Society, Khiala, Padhiana Jalandhar, p.57.

⁵¹ <https://hi-in.facebook.com/Dera-Sant-Baba-Bhag-Singh-Ji-Santpura-Jabbar-189585717745922/videos/347866112704466/>



Nirmal Kutिया Seechewal: Nirmal Kutिया Seechewal has become worldwide famous because of its community-based conservation.⁵² The champion saint of the dera, Balbir Singh Seechewal, is a Nirmala Sikh who commanded an anti-river pollution campaign in Punjab, India. By combining his assiduously cultivated self-help philosophy with the environmental essence of the Gurbani, he has done miracles. For his countless services to humanity he is honoured *Padam Shree* in 2017⁵³ and is given title of *Eco Baba*. His EK Onkar Charitable Trust is consistently doing wonders.

Abundant deras of the Doaba region are discussed in the present study. It is important to mention here that these deras have become an integral part of society. The norms prevailing in the Nirmala sect have made the functioning of the deras social friendly. It is the serendipity of the area to have the welfare, literary and socio-cultural reforming services of the Nirmala sect. But it is more apt to state here that the philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev is perfectly executed in Nirmala deras by devout saints. It could be added that these deras have become hubs of spiritual learning. Undoubtedly, the contributions of Nirmala saints are consummate. Certainly, this study is limited to the account of achievements of the Nirmalas because of certain precincts of research.

In the IV chapter, an attempt is made to deal sumptuously and rationally investigate the gargantuan literary contributions made by Nirmalas. The literary and religious activities left a deep influence on people's minds and popularized this sect amply. Their scriptures supported the fundamentals of Sikhism and augmented its glory to the universal intelligentsia. The global appeal of the Nirmala literature, especially commentaries (*Teeka*) has astounded the scholars. The sporadic writings on Vedas have made the literary critics flabbergasted. In fact, the revelations made by these scholars have brought forth the hidden talent and lost scriptures of Sikh history and literature. There is further scope for literary offerings as much of the work of Nirmala scholars is not published yet.

⁵² Interview of Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal with Sarla Nirankari on 4th November 2021 at Nirmal Kutिया Sultanpur Lodhi. For details refer to Appendix No.6.

⁵³ Madhur Singh (24th September 2008). "Balbir Singh Seechewal – Heroes of the Environment 2008 – TIME". Content.time.com. Retrieved 8th April 2017.



Historically, the literary emergence of the Nirmalas could be considered in the early seventeenth century.

Punjab and particularly Sikh community has witnessed a very crucial time after the martyrdom of Banda Bahadur. Mughal cruelly suppressed this community as they were scared from the fearlessness and bravery of the worthy tenth Guru and his followers. They considered Gurudwaras as the power bases of Sikhs. Henceforth their atrocities increased and Sikhs had to live precariously. Even Sikh scriptures were banned and distorted badly.

In this dark phase of spiritual as well as intellectual vacuum the Nirmlas emerged as great saviors.⁵⁴ This sect brought revolution in Sikhism and kept the passion for the Gurbani live. They secretly moved towards the Malwa region which was not taken as serious threat by the Mughals. These saints lived with the harmony in the society and created peaceful environment. Moreover, their approach was poor friendly. Religious conflict created by the suppressor ruler has eliminated love and synchronization among the masses. The Nirmala saints became the redeemers of Sikhism at this time. They spread Sikhism in a very systematic way; thus, the Nirmalas were considered pioneers.

They raised voice against the communal violence and political unrest through their writings and literary undertakings. Their work is true reflection and replica of social and political upheavals. Their impersonal approach to the pains and strife is well explained in their workings. They became leaders of masses by leading on the road to religious observance and devotion.⁵⁵ They remonstrated the exploitation of the masses in their work and opened the way for revolution. The most owing lead taken by them is their indigenous educational enterprise and the challenge erected in front of Christian missionary's educational revival. They were the first to open schools in the deras for girls as well as weaker sections of society. The native educational trajectory followed by Nirmalas proved sign post.⁵⁶ They silently strengthened the vernacular

⁵⁴ Kartar Singh Soori, Sikh Mat Nu Nirmal Yogdan, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.135-144.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 140.

⁵⁶ Roshan Lal Ahuja, Sikhiya Vich Punarjagriti De Aagu, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.240.



languages and Sanskrit educational ventures too. But as mentioned earlier, their literary endeavours are still to be chronicled and monitored more.

In the eighteenth century, the Nirmala saints were also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they played their role well.⁵⁷ Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion. Masses were influenced by the selfless services of Nirmalas, and this further led to the inclination towards Sikhism. In the time of British governance, schools spread only religious education, although every type of education was available. Muslim education was prevailing in *Madrasas* (*Mosques of learning*), but there was a meager arrangement for the Hindu community except for a few Hindi *Pathshalas*. The Hindu and Sikh youth came in direct contact with Nirmalas. These saints were highly inclined toward the spread of education, and they accepted the challenge of redeeming the Sikh and Hindu communities. Nirmala Sikhs have been called theologians of *Gurmat*.⁵⁸ From the first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev till the tenth Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs who lived in *Grihastha* (home) were called Sikhs, but those who left home became ascetic austere; had been named the Nirmalas. This tradition is continuing. By abstaining from worldly allures, they had consistently donated to literature as well as socio-cultural reform engagements.

As mentioned earlier the Nirmalas have vigorously backed the field of education by supporting indigenous education. The chief duty of Nirmala saints was education expansion. In that period Sanskrit Gurukul educational model was prevalent. Henceforth they have to first learn Vedanta from Sanskrit scholars at Banaras, Prayag, etc. This tradition has begun in the times of Guru Gobind Singh. The second motive was to provide chances for Sanskrit learning to interested Sikhs. In those times, Brahmins did not consider commoners as the proper recipient of Sanskrit education; hence Nirmalas took it as their moral duty to teach their brothers Sanskrit. For this purpose, they toiled hard and opened Sanskrit schools(*pathshala*) at Banares, Prayag, Ujjain, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Lahore, Amritsar, Damadama Sahib, Patiala, etc. Mahant Ganesha Singh mentioned 17 such sects in his book named '*Itihas Nirmal*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.241.

⁵⁸ Sher Singh (1965), *Philosophy of Sikhism*, S. Jiwan Singh, Proprietor, Sikh University Press, Lahore, p.91.



Bhekh', and Mahant Dayal Singh had mentioned 33 such sects in his books named *Nirmal Panth Darshan* which had abundantly served education.⁵⁹ It is worth averring here that all of these places were the canters of learning with substantial education arrangements. From commoners to the higher dignitaries, Nirmala scholars have served this duty quite well. Nirmalas were the scholars of Sanskrit. They initiated the learning of ancient Indian *Shastraparnali*, especially Sanskrit *Vyakaran*, *Nayayashastra*, and *Vedanta*. The teaching of Sanskrit, *Gurmat*, and language were their major areas of concern. In the Sanskrit language, they focussed on the painstaking study of Hindu mythology. They composed high-quality books in Hindi like *Vichar Sagar*, *Panchdashi*, *Vichar Mala*, *Saaru Katawali*, *Vairag Shatak*, *Bhavrasamrit*, *Prabhochandrodaya* and *Hanuman Natak*. In Sanskrit: *Laghu Sidhant Koumudi*, *Madh Komudi*, *Tarak sanagraha*, *Nayaya Sidjanta*, *Muktawali*, and *Vedant Sidhant Muktawali* etc.⁶⁰ They worked on *Gurmat* literature such as *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dasham Granth*. Even scholars from abroad were enthralled by Nirmala's scholastic virtues. John Malcolm wrote *Sketch of the Sikhs*, which contains the information on Europeans' inclination towards *Gurmat* and the successful receiving of this knowledge from the Nirmala sect.

Nirmala saints exalted with divine knowledge and education; they had explored high levels of religious literature, science, axiology, logistics, and philosophy of *Gurbani*. The classical exegesis and translations of *Gurbani*, dictionaries, literature, *Chhanda Shastra*, and hundreds of historical books were compiled and written by Nirmalas. Story narratives, *Raag Kirtanas*, literary discussions and arguments, the advocacy of principles of *Gurmat*, free-lance writing through newspapers, launching Damdami Taxol in *Gurumukhy*, and many more activities are attributed to them. It had been desired by the tenth Guru that the Nirmla sect should be instrumental in spreading education to the Sikh masses. The Nirmalas true to the teachings of the Great Guru, took this responsibility and contributed hugely to the spread of education. From the

⁵⁹ Rajwinder Ringh Shastri, *Nirmal Dere Ate Parbandh*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.

60.

⁶⁰ Mahip Singh, *Nirmal Santan Di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp. 270-271.



very beginning, the Nirmala saints have a keen interest in education and *Vedantas*.⁶¹ They were seriously devoted to the reading, teaching, and critical analysis of four Vedas, nine *vyakarans*, *Khat Shastras*, 18 *Puranas*, and 27 *Smirities*. Based on an interpretation of Hindu scriptures, they used to visit holy places and discuss the philosophy of Vedanta. Besides this, they delivered lectures on Gurmat knowledge. Disseminate *Gurmat* was the main focus of Nirmala saints. This was the reason behind the following of the Sikh religion as sahajdhari (who gradually converted from Hindu to Sikh) Sikhs by Pathans of Karachi and Sindh. Their literature could be divided into four categories, i.e., 1. Sanskrit Literature, 2. Braj and Hindi Language 3. Sindhi and 4. Punjabi Literature. Awfully fewer proofs are found in Sindhi literature. The influences of the Nirmala sect in Punjabi, Hindi and Sanskrit languages is marvellous. *Shashtra parnali* (traditional Sanskrit teaching),⁶² Sanskrit language acquisition and delineation, preaching, scripture writing, commentaries on Indian philosophy, contribution to journalism, the opening of colleges and universities with both new and old curricula, Damdami *Gurumukhy Taksal* (printing press) are wordless bequests of the Nirmalas even in the age of modern multifaceted literature.⁶³ Pandit Gulab Singh⁶⁴ depicted a vibrant vocabulary in his works. Pandit Tara Singh Narottam's works also contained a good range of Punjabi vocabulary. Sant Nihal Singh, Sant Sadhu Singh, and Pandit Sher Singh; are all of these scholars who have contributed voluptuously to the Punjabi grammar and language. The second half of the nineteenth century could be called the Golden age of the Nirmala sect. During this period, great scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam Singh,⁶⁵ Mahant Sadhu Singh, and Sant Nihal Singh (composer of Nirmal Prabhakar and Sikhi Prabhakar), Pandit Ishar Singh, etc.,⁶⁶ wrote many books in Brij, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Literary scholars like Sant Roop Singh, Mahant Aatma Singh, Sant Gurditt Singh, and Giani Gian Singh profusely to the Nirmala literature. At the beginning of the 20th century, except

⁶¹ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p. 103.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 115.

⁶³ *Ibid*, pp. 49-53.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 60.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 66.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 71,77.



commentaries, Sakhiyan (Narratives of Gurus), Gurmat descriptions, autobiographies, history, etc., were the areas of academic development.⁶⁷

The contribution of Nirmala scholars in Punjabi literature is redundant. The achievements of the Nirmala saints are unparalleled.⁶⁸ Beyond teaching, the Nirmalas were dedicatedly and involved in preaching. They were very dexterous in discourses. Their ideal Shri Guru Nanak is considered the most popular leader among the masses as Guru Nanak Dev spread the message of truth to the masses. There is an excellent legacy of debaters of this sect. Nirmala saints were adroit in spiritual arguments. They were dexterous in religion, politics, literature, poetry, Vedanta and *Nyaya Shastra*, etc. They had a good command of both Sanskrit as well as the English language. They always gained victory if they were challenged for any debate. Similarly, Commentaries on Indian Philosophy are another strength of the Nirmalas.

The other vital venture of the Nirmala sect is *Teekakari*⁶⁹ (commentary writing). The most typical concepts of philosophy were narrated in the most interesting and conversant way. *Jeewan Parkash & Asali Guru Parkash* by Sant Tahil Singh are quite famous commentaries. Similarly, *Shri Guru Panth Parkash* of Giani Gian Singh is another glaring write-up of the times.⁷⁰

Contribution to Sanskrit and Hindi Literature by Nirmalas is quite a significant⁷¹ enterprise. All Saints and poets of Punjab had contributed to the nourishing and development of Hindi Literature in Punjab. The translations and conversions of Sanskrit Scriptures had been mainly contributed by these saints. The translations of Sanskrit literature in Hindi is the old convention, but the practice of description of the *Gurbani* through commentaries was initiated by Nirmalas only. They did renditions both in Sanskrit and Hindi. The literary world owes to the Nirmala sect for magnanimous offerings. The Nirmala scholars have astounded the world with their versatility. These scholars have relentlessly raised the level of standard of religious

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 44-47.

⁶⁸ Paramjit Singh Mansa (2012), *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh Amritsar, p.100. Hereafter cited as Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.100.

⁶⁹ Taran Singh, *Nirmal Sampardaya Di Teeka Padhati*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.210-277.

⁷⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Nirmal Panth di Gaurav Gatha*, p.71.

⁷¹ Mahip Singh, *Nirmal Santan Di Hindi Sahitya nu den*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp. 269.



literature. The galaxy of scholars of the Nirmala sect is Vedanta Shastri Gurdeep Singh, Balbir Singh Viyogi, Sant Nihal Singh Kaveender, Pandit Sadhu Singh Theekariwala, Pandit Dewa Singh Devpur, Shri Maan Mahant Ganesha Singh, Sant Sampooran Singh, Kavi Raj Sant Harbhajan Singh, Shri Gurditt Singh, Mahant Tahal Singh, Mahant Dayal Singh, Mahant Bishan Singh Kreet Giani, and Pandit Ishwar Singh Kaanshi,⁷² etc. In a nutshell, the literary donations of the Nirmala sect are abundant. It is incredible to admit that the intellectual figures of the sect have bestowed immortal favors to society.

In the last chapter (V), socio-religious undertakings of the Nirmala sect are described in detail. It is generally believed that actions are the results of thoughts. Likewise, it is extrapolative that the philosophy of Guru Nanak has qualitatively influenced the ideology and accomplishments of the Nirmala sect. Three dictums, i.e., *Naam japo*, *Kirat kro*, and *Vand Chhako* (reminiscence of God, living by hard earning, and sharing of resources with others), have been genuinely followed by the Nirmala. These maxims of the Nirmala sect strengthened the relationship between the Hindu and Sikh communities. The amendments bequeathed by the Nirmala sect in the understanding of Sikhism within the margins of the teachings of ten gurus have distinctively separated it from other denominations. The firm ensuing of Guru Nanak's philosophy in the Nirmala deras has upheld the torch of Guru Nanak's considerations for keeping humanity high.

It is important to mention here that the implementation of Guru Nanak's philosophy is effusively exhibited in the living behaviors of the Nirmalas. The philosophy of the Nirmala sect and usable form could be seen in one alignment. Through philosophy, the Nirmala sect not only communicates the teachings and principles of ten Gurus but also delineates information about the various saints and scholars with their rich literary heritage surrendered to *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*. By its reflective method, Nirmala Sect has accepted the truth of the specialty of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* and confirmed the uniqueness of the teachings of ten Gurus in the reality of life. By pleading the uniqueness of *Adi Granth* and ten Expounders, the Nirmala sect has

⁷² Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.132-158.



revealed the existence of life. It could be established that the philosophic contribution of the Nirmala sect lies in the fact that they not only maintained the sanctity of holy scriptures but also maintained the uniqueness of the Sikh wave. They correlated the teachings of all Gurus with great universalized descriptions of Vedas in a very apt and connecting way to Nirmala philosophy. It is believed that the definition of Nirmala scholars is in tune with the philosophy of Shankaracharya. Anthropomorphic (*Sagun Braham*) forms of God and infinite beyond all qualities and forms, so-called transcendent (*nigun*) state of God does not contradict each other somewhat, and they are complementary.⁷³ Like Shankaracharya, *Adi Granth* also enthruses to train instincts for eternal divinity. Henceforth both of them consolidate each other. In other words, Nirmalas are the priests of Sikhism. This ecclesiastic class has proved great support to the common masses to understand the intricacies of *bhakti* (devotion), *Gurmat* (counsel of the Lord Master), the *Gurbani*, and *moksha* (salvation). Society is obliged to the esteemed services of Nirmalas. The gist of the Nirmala sect moves around knowledge of *Vedas and Adi Granth*. The accumulation of Guru Nanak's faith through practical enactment of Vedic construal has always given the upper hand to the Nirmala sect. The core motive of Nirmalas is not to seek *Vedantization* (illustration and interpretation as per Vedas) but to understand the *Gurbani* in entire colors with the help of Vedas. While analyzing the role of Nirmalas, it is concluded that they have supported and proliferated the *Gurbani*, not the Vedanta. If their amplification matches Vedanta, it is to confirm and consolidate *Gurbani*, not *Vedanta*.⁷⁴ It is vital to mention here that the Nirmalas could not be called *pro-vedanti*. Although they reflect Vedanta in their philosophy by adopting truth, modesty, asceticism, meditation, and abstinence from five sins lust, wrath, covetousness, greed, and vainglory (*Kaam Karodha, Lobha, Moha, and Ahankar*) in their life; nonviolence, forgiveness, less sleep more concentration on self-control practices and seeking self-realization and divine knowledge through the Guru in the body. After seeking divine wisdom, they practice it for salvation like *Vedanti*. Like *Vedanti*, they consider knowledge (action)

⁷³ Kewal Krishan Mittal, *Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan*, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.208.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.



and *Bhakti* (devotion) as the tools of self-realization, but Nirmalas are *Gursikhs*, not *vedantis*.⁷⁵

As they accept and prove all of the above factors in the light and teachings of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* hence, it could be concluded quickly that they obtain the super dominance of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* with its true following. The eclectic position of *Shri Guru Granth Sahib* is accumulated by the Nirmala sect through various inputs, which are certainly noteworthy. True following of the teachings of *Adi Granth* in real terms has been characteristically displayed by the Nirmala sect.

Nirmala sect is discerned as the promoter of *Adwaitwad* (monotheism). This doctrine believes in the existence of one God as creator, operator, and destroyer of the universe. It sturdily believes that only *Brahma* (God) is truth rest is falsity. In fact, the *Adwaitwad* (monistic school of thoughts) of Nirmalas should be called the *Adwaitwad* of *Gurbani* as they have explained "*Gurbani*," not the *stotras* (verses) of Shankaracharya⁷⁶. Some of the critics opine that the *Vedantization* has not only destroyed the exclusiveness but has also led to the lifelessness and severance of the inner dialectic of Sikhism. But it is not justified as the Nirmala sect has brought vivacity to Sikhism. In an essential phase of Sikh expansionism, the Vedantic role of the Nirmalas can't be unobserved.⁷⁷ Their landmark achievements need great acknowledgment.

It is strongly believed that this sect has generated Sanskrit scholars. Like Shankaracharya, they were Vedanti though they adored neither idol-worshipping nor the caste system. However, they were completely engrossed in the old Indian philosophy. This is clearly projected in their works and theology. These theologians⁷⁸ contributed profusely to the spread of *Gurmat* (tenets of Guru) by enriching the versatility of Punjabi literature and the creation of religious literature in the conglomeration of Vedanta. Their tireless efforts to preserve the values of the ten

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 205.

⁷⁶ Kulbir Kang Singh, Prashnottar of Nirmal Samparday da Darshnik Yogdan cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Sampradaya*, p.207.

⁷⁷ Heera Singh Bhagat (1969), *Gurmat Vichardhara*, National Book Shop, Delhi, p.58.

⁷⁸ Dr Mohan Singh Diwana, A History of Punjabi of Literature, pp.60-61, cited in Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.98.



Gurus are highly appreciable. But it is a sorry state of affairs that their works and unparalleled achievements in both Sanskrit and Punjabi literature are ignored and unobserved. It further acquiesces that in-depth and true studies are earnestly required to treasure trove the Nirmala sect. In reality, Nirmala scholars are acknowledged for their quiet and peaceable habits world widely. The stratagem of the Nirmala sect is very subterranean and intellectual. The outlook provided by it is embedded in Indian philosophy and actuated in real socio-cultural glitches.

Moreover, the Nirmala tradition has contributed greatly to the analysis of the Sikh ontology.⁷⁹ Indeed, to this day, the rigor with which central concepts of Sikh metaphysics are analyzed and the sophistication of the exegesis on issues of ontology, theology, epistemology, and eschatology are unparalleled within the Sikh tradition as it exists in the post-Singh Sabha reform era. Unfortunately, this is rarely acknowledged in the broader arena of Sikh *Panth*. Moreover, the egalitarian and cerebral status of the Nirmalas is challenging to be comprehended by liberal multitudes of fanatics.

The consistent struggle of the Nirmalas with outdated dogmas finished them as the deliverers of society. The patronages of the Nirmala sect in the community are multiple. Indeed, the religious philosophy of Sikhism expounded by Guru Nanak Dev has embellished the Nirmala sect's social contributions.⁸⁰ Nirmala saints are also acknowledged for teaching free of cost, free medication, and through baptism (*Amrit Sanchar*), they played their role well. Many of the Nirmala saints created public relations through medication and used these relations for the *Gurmat* expansion.

The selfless services of Nirmalas influenced the masses, which further led to the inclination toward Sikhism. Numerous accomplishments of the Nirmalas are reasonably mentionable here in V chapter, as their distinctive approach to social and religious surfeit is inimitable. While deliberating the literary and religious goings-on in detail, it was felt that their socio-religious undertakings are no less. Although there

⁷⁹ Tirath Singh, The Contribution of the Nirmala Scholars to understanding of the Sikh Ontology, cited in Kulwinder Singh, *Nirmala Panth Da Samaz Nu Bahupakhi Yogdaan*, pp.198-204.

⁸⁰ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, pp.30-52.



is a constraint of space, an effort is set to elaborate their simple mechanism of socio-religious welfare in this chapter.

Projects of Nirmalas for societal welfare could be listed below:

Free medication to sufferers was a distinctive quality of the Nirmalas. In the old time in the absence of hospitals, the deras, ashrams, temples, *gurukuls*, etc., were the Ayurvedic medical centers. Even in the darker times of the Islamic and British periods, Ayurvedic medicine was protected by Nirmalas. Astronomy and Nirmalas could be taken as another characteristic of the Nirmala sect. The yoga practices of Nirmalas have benefitted society indeed. The most illustrious Yoga expert of the Nirmala sect was Sant Mohar Singh, who trained hundreds of apprentices. He was called Yogiraj by his admirers and devotees. He wrote *Yoga Sikhiya Prabhakar* in the old Gurumukhi script. It is stated that he died at the age of 145 years.⁸¹

Environmental concerns of Nirmala have made worldwide famous. Nirmala deras have achieved trailblazing accomplishment in environmental awareness. The most noteworthy and momentous contribution is of Nirmal Kutiya Seechewal.⁸² Sant Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal's incessant efforts have purified the local rivulets and drains. Moreover, the casting of awareness about saving rainwater and reducing land erosion has made him an international environmentalist. Cow protection, active role in the Independence movement, and enormous educational Ventures have brought great laurels to the Nirmala sect.⁸³ Sant Balbir Singh Viyogi opened a big library in Santpura, Delhi. Sant Baba Bhag Singh University⁸⁴, Khalsa College Mahilpur⁸⁵ and

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.47.

⁸² Jasbir Singh(2020), *Bein da Saputtar*, Twenty First Century Publications Patiala, pp.32-49.

⁸³ Balwant Singh Kotha Guru, *Shri Nirmal Panth Bodh*, p.165.

⁸⁴ <https://www.sbbsuniversity.ac.in/>.

⁸⁵ <https://sggskcm.org/>



Sant Baba Hari Singh Memorial Khalsa College Mahilpur, Sant Baba Dalip Singh Khalsa College Domeli⁸⁶ and Sant Avtar Singh Yaadgari College Seechewal⁸⁷, etc.

FINDINGS

In a nutshell, it could be submitted that the long literary and revolutionary expedition of the Nirmalas from ages have brought very exquisite yields to the society. The silent and unswerving toils of the Nirmala sect have brought laurels. The pro-social activities of these saints have always made them a favorite of the masses. Their legendary achievements have made them indispensable. The self-less educational, environmental, and health concerns have time-honored them as a specific sect. Another figure-hugging finding of this study is quite interesting, i.e., the Nirmala saints have spread *Gurmat* and strengthened Sikhism without getting involved in petty politics. The other upshot of this study is that great literary work is unpublished yet, and most of the scholars are hidden under the dust of negligence and disregard. It had also been felt that the creations of this cognoscente are twisted or misused for self-seeking and self-styled scholars. While working on the objectives of the study, it has been observed that this sect has followed Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy and Guru Gobind Singh's mandate of dissemination of Sikh philosophy with the consideration of *Vedanta*. This particular stride has given them a significant identity in the spiritual realm. Although all of the deras of the Nirmala sect could not be explored in this study yet, it is generalized that a common code of functioning, integrity, cohesion, affection and amenity for the masses is found everywhere. It is also vital to admit here that the internal administration of the deras and regulation of Nirmala Panchayati Akhara Kankhal Haridwar as well Doaba Nirmal Mandal is exceptional.⁸⁸ These deras have better governance than other sects. It is quite worth mentioning here that this sect has become epitome of selfless services to humanity. The mindboggling literary achievements of the sect, have brought laurels to the legendary Sikh literature and

⁸⁶ <https://m.facebook.com/people/Sant-Baba-Dalip-Singh-Memorial-Khalsa-College-Domeli/100067152638345/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.nirmalkuteya.com/portal/gallery/pictures/sant-avtar-singh-yadgari-college-seechewal>

⁸⁸ Teja Singh (2002), *Nirmal Darpan*, Shri Guru Sar Khuda, Hoshiarpur, pp.26-34.



vernacular languages in general. The command over Sanskrit language has successfully launched them as celebrants of both Hindu and Sikh religion.

Present status and future of Nirmal Sampardaya:

This sect focuses on *Gurmat* philosophy and has become an integral part of the Sikh community; as discussed earlier, *Sangat* and *Pangat* are the specific features of the Nirmala sect. In the hard-hitting times of the 18th century, Sikhism had to pay a heavy cost. But Nirmala scholars unremittingly procured the tradition of knowledge and extended the cultivation of knowledge while sitting silently in various deras and contributing through scriptwriting of *Guru Granth Sahib* and other eloquent words (*Vani*) of ten Gurus; easier comprehension through commentary writing; encyclopedias and dictionaries of Sikhism. Their conceptions and formations are unparalleled and are the cultural heritage. It is keenly observed in the present study that these scholars have not only profusely contributed to literary activities but also strengthened the roots of Sikhism. It is also widely accepted that the path of Guru Nanak is the mixture of both *Pravritti dharma* (entails one to follow the worldly path and seek salvation) and *Niviratti dharma* (it is rooted in the renunciation of the worldly aims). But the Nirmala saints have the track of disenchantment, and they silently did teaching and learning of *Gurmat* principles. They were properly launched in the period of Shri Guru Gobind Singh. They also received special education in Sanskrit from Banares.⁸⁹ They could successfully make their place in the hearts of Hindu people because of their in-depth knowledge of Hindu scriptures. It is also very accurate that these scholars explained the *Gurbani* with the support of *Vedanta* and other Hindu scriptures. Certainly, this practice was not acceptable to some unyielding fanatics of Singh Sabha. But Nirmala saints were engrossed in their vision. Their increasing popularity enraged many and caused opposition. To get rid of this hostility, Nirmala saints went to the kings of Patiala, Nabha, and Jeend under the headship of Bhai Mehtab Singh.⁹⁰ Consequently, Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal was propelled. For administrative purposes, *Dastooral Amal* was designed. It aimed to control the administration of Akharha, supremacy of Adi Granth, not to keep the income of Akharaha personally, obedience to Rahit- Namas by all, the appointment of

⁸⁹ Paramjit Singh Mansa, *Nirmale Santan Di Punjabi Sahitya Nu Den*, p.31.

⁹⁰ Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, p.44.



Shri Mahant by the governments of Patiala, Nabha, and Jeend, and unquestioned authority of Shri Mahant. In other words, the rules and regulations were framed and improved from time to time. Mahant Ganesha Singh, in his book *Bharat Mat Darpan*, suggested certain principles for Nirmala Sect.⁹¹ To enchant Waheguru, to understand the secret of salvation and abstaining from drugs and complete prohibition of dances and recreation; advertising Sikhism by celebrating all days with the congregation and writing books, etc. were the glaring features of the Nirmala sect.⁹² Since the establishment of Nirmal Panchayati Akhara Kankhal in 1862 till date, it has become a resourceful and gumptious sect. In every big city, a dera of the Nirmala sect is established. But with the change in time, the Nirmala sect needs certain changes.⁹³

- Modernity has not influenced the ideals of *Gurmat*, as the truth never changes. Therefore, more impetus should be on the ensuing of *Gurmat*.
- Nirmala Saints have been regular providers of Vedantic education and the tradition should prevail further.
- For the ailments of worldly diseases, the Nirmala Saints were the real advisors and mentors. In modern hospitals, every disease can be cured, but there is no treatment for mental problems.
- Although the Deras are involved in religious activities, they have to protect their deras from encroachment and litigation.
- Nirmal deras confirm the following of Guru Granth Sahib in their practices and help the masses to get rid of superstitions and narrowmindedness. Henceforth their sanctity in this sense should also be maintained.
- But with the changes in time in some deras, the Nirmala sect is losing its inviolability of extending *Gurmat* ethics and is turning into independent centres. If this tendency persists, then the Nirmala sect will turn into a racial faction.

⁹¹ Gurcharan Singh Anand, Samapradaya di Ajoki dasa, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.494-495.

⁹² Ganesha Singh Mahant(1926) *Bharat Mat Darpan*, Giani Madan Mohan Singh Amritsar, p.187.

⁹³ Gurcharan Singh Anand, Samapradaya di Ajoki dasa, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.498-499.



- Nirmala sect could only save itself by contemplating the social needs of modern times; Nirmala scholars should deliberate to solve the psychological constraints of the young generation through the expansion of *Gurmat*.
- The Nirmala sect has endured the pulls and pressures of time. The conspiracies and outbreak on the advertisement and promotion activities of Nirmalas by Singh Sabha, continuity of this denigration of Nirmalas by Akali Dal in the tone of Singh Sabha only; commencement of new ideologies of Sikhism like Radha Swami and Nirankari, etc. which propagate spirituality based on the Gurbani and criticise exploitation of innocent devotees by self-commissioned Gurus, etc. are the latest challenges to Nirmala Sect. But interestingly, this sect has defied these challenges and has carried forward its mission of reinforcement of Sikhism.
- Another challenge in front of this sect is about those heads of deras who are after their motives of procuring the property. But Mahant is determined to stop it or check it in any case. For the said purpose, a committee had been formed by Mahant Ganeasha named 'Nirmala Maha Mandal' based on Baba Mishra Singh Amritsar. The objective of this committee was to advise the Mahant Sahib about any challenges of the Nirmala sect. But deplorably, this committee has not achieved its motive yet. It is hoped that positively this agency will attain its aim shortly.
- Nirmala saints feel that the intention of some of the officials of Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee to intrude and capture Nirmala deras is quite disturbing. Mahant Sucha Singh believed that the truth should not vanish even if the belongingness (property) goes. But such invasions have certainly hampered the *Gurmat*- promoting activities of the Nirmala Sect.⁹⁴
- In this material race, the life of devotion, renunciation, humility, and service is thrown down the gauntlet. The Nirmala saints have silently and diligently worked for the consistency of Sikh ideals disregarding regular derogatory

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 501.



remarks by some of the fanatic workers of the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee.

- Another challenge to the Nirmala Sect is the incursion of some fake *sadhus*(saints) into the sect. These phony saints critically damage the ethics and standards of the Nirmala sect.
- The financial management of the deras is a great asset. This is because the deras are entirely involved in selfless service to humanity. Only spiritual activities are the focus; hence the financial running is supposed to be up-to-date and transparent. But still, more efforts in this regard are needed.
- Shri Guru Nanak Dev had vigorously participated in religious congregations (called Kumbha or Ardh Kumbha) at Haridwar and emphatically exchanged his spiritual thoughts with scholars of various religious cliques. The same tradition has been followed in recent times too. Shri Mahant of the Nirmala Sect follows the same tradition in the current times too. A procession with the honored leadership of Shri Adi Guru Granth Sahib and Nishan Sahib is led by Shri Mahant Sahib. This demonstrates the commitment of the Nirmala Sect to the principles and ideals of Shri Guru Nanak Dev. The sect is committed to retaining the depleting values of Sikhism in the true sense. But sect needs most committed personnel for the said purpose.⁹⁵

Future of the Nirmala Sect

The sect seriously needs the scholars like Pandit Tara Singh Narottam, Giani Gian Singh, and Pandit Nihal Singh. The sufficiency of dedicated scholars will certainly provide the same aura and grace of old times. But another hitch is increasing litigation against the Nirmala deras. In fact, the situation has become critical in the case of numerous deras. Both unlawful seizing and resistance to overpower these deras have dragged most dera holders to the court. Henceforth most of the deras are in litigation which has tarnished the image of the Nirmala sect. The scholastic qualities of the Nirmala saints have been their specific characteristics. They were leaders in

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.501-502.



linguistics, philosophy, religion, economy, physical education, and psychological education as well as. With the changing world, the definitions of knowledge and education are altered. The desired changes in the learning and scholastic outcomes could change the existing reputation of the Nirmala sect. The matching with the latest tunes of the era is missing. The literary vacuum created by the Nirmala sect could be filled by it only, as a small dwindling candle has the power to remove the darkness of ages. Singh Pritam⁹⁶ has given the following assertions for the re-emergence of the Nirmala sect:

- The founders of the Nirmala sect have voluntarily opted to denounce the world. If they stuck to this philosophy in principle, many problems of deras could be checked.
- Second-line leadership is a concurrent problem in the deras. But if true leaders or heads take over the deras, then the problem of true descendants will be broken up. If selflessness again turns up in the heads of saints of deras, then the fainted spirit could be assimilated again.
- Another challenge to the Nirmala sect is from those heads of various deras who had deliberately left or handed over the rights of deras to the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. For example, Mahant Grubachan Singh had surrendered the huge dera of Barnala named Baba Gandha Singh to the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee. It is done to avoid unnecessary legal pursuance or other pressures of up keeping the deras. Similarly, in Amritsar, only many Nirmala deras have converted themselves into domestic, householders type Sikhs.
- Wish to improve, legacy and devotion need to be integrated to rectify the shattering status of the sect.

Henceforth the sect needs the following changes to include the youth in its ideals:

- Nirmala sect should fulfill the need of providing true and devoted saints.

⁹⁶ Pritam Singh, Nirmal Samardaya da Bhavikh, cited in Pritam Singh, *Nirmal Samardaya*, pp.509-513.



- Shri Guru Granth has been the model of living standards of the Nirmala Sect; it should be so in the future too.
- Nirmala scholars should learn about The recent socio-religious extensions to check the latest problems.
- First of all, the saints should be well equipped with the knowledge of religion, science, and innovations in all famous languages of the world. The specialists in such fields will definitely contribute to having good leaders in the sect. This step will attract scholars of the world to study the Nirmala philosophy.
- Another benefit of this quality enhancement will be large gains in both monetary and educational returns. Masses will pour in like in earlier times.⁹⁷

In a nutshell, the defies to the Nirmala sect are not unknown to the most dedicated saints and Mahants. The only concern is that a drive of introspection is needed to check the future of the Nirmala sect. The inclusion of young, dedicated, and promising youth in these deras is highly desired. The paid office bearers cannot plug the place of passionate well-wishers of deras. Henceforth it is highly expected to inspire dedicated young people to be an integral part of the sect. But this particular tendency is missing in them. Conclusively it could be submitted that the present study has efficaciously tried to achieve the objectives. Almost all the purposes of the study have been accomplished.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 512.