

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

*Books of enduring scholarly value*

### **Perspectives from the Royal Asiatic Society**

A long-standing European fascination with Asia, from the Middle East to China and Japan, came more sharply into focus during the early modern period, as voyages of exploration gave rise to commercial enterprises such as the East India companies, and their attendant colonial activities. This series is a collaborative venture between the Cambridge Library Collection and the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, founded in 1823. The series reissues works from the Royal Asiatic Society's extensive library of rare books and sponsored publications that shed light on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European responses to the cultures of the Middle East and Asia. The selection covers Asian languages, literature, religions, philosophy, historiography, law, mathematics and science, as studied and translated by Europeans and presented for Western readers.

### **The Sikh Religion**

Born and educated in Ireland, Max Arthur Macauliffe (1841–1913) joined the Indian Civil Service in 1862. In 1882 he was promoted to the post of deputy commissioner of the Punjab. But it was after he retired from the civil service in 1893 that he gained public attention. Macauliffe developed a close affinity with Sikhism while in the Punjab, eventually converting to the religion. His translation into English of the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhism, is recognised as the most accurate to date. Following this project, he set to work on this six-volume set, covering the history and philosophy of Sikhism, first published in 1909 and still regarded as the definitive work on the subject. Volume 1 narrates the life of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, with translations of his compositions in the Sikh holy book.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# The Sikh Religion

*Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*

VOLUME 1

MAX ARTHUR MACAULIFFE



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108055437](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108055437)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1909

This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-05543-7 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# THE SIKH RELIGION

MACAULIFFE

SIKH I

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

HENRY FROWDE, M.A.

PUBLISHER TO THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

LONDON, EDINBURGH, NEW YORK

TORONTO AND MELBOURNE

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

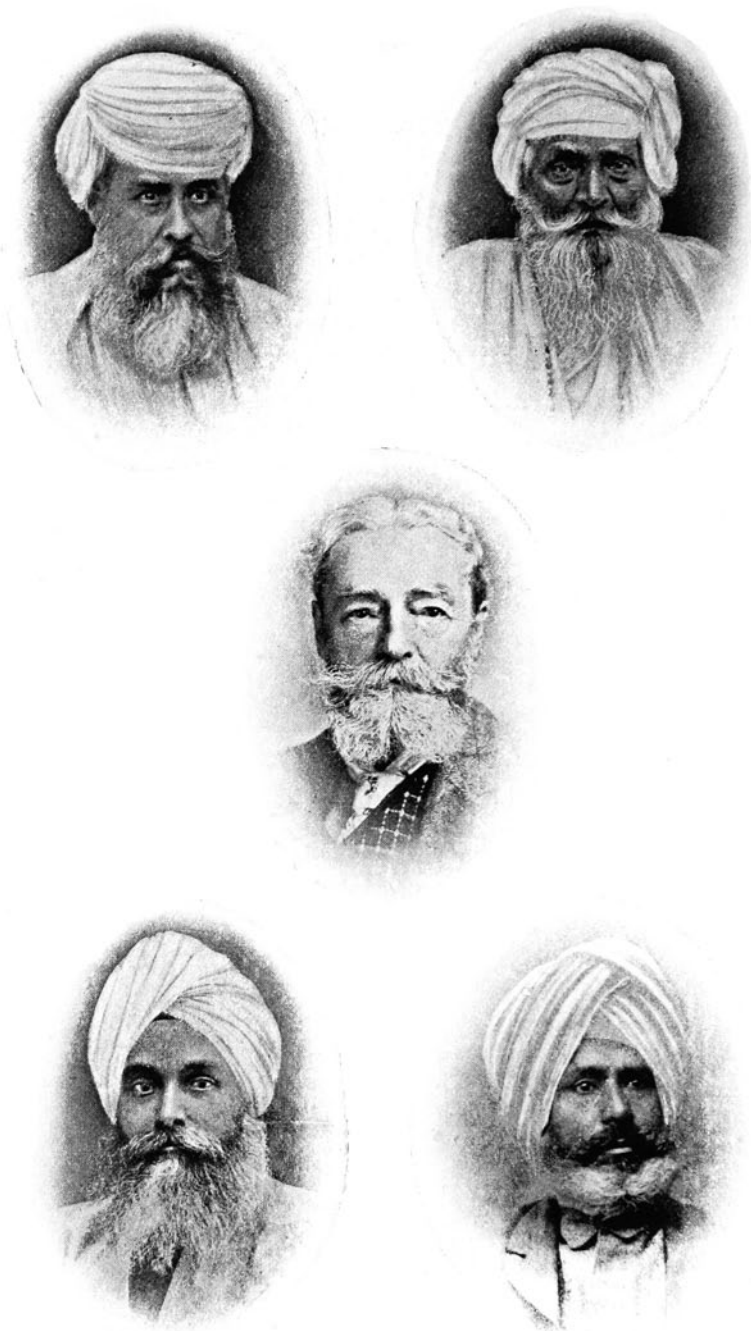
Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



THE AUTHOR AND SOME OF HIS SIKH ASSISTANTS

SIKH I FRONT



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

# THE SIKH RELIGION

ITS GURUS, SACRED WRITINGS

AND AUTHORS

BY

MAX ARTHUR MACAULIFFE

ਫੂਟੇ ਆਂਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਕਾ, ਮਨਹਿ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਮ;  
ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇੜੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ, ਗੁਰੁ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦ ਖਲਾਸ.

The egg of superstition hath burst; the  
mind is illumined:

The Guru hath cut the fetters off the feet  
and freed the captive.

GURU ARJAN

IN SIX VOLUMES

VOL. I

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1909

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

OXFORD

PRINTED AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

BY HORACE HART, M.A.

PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

## PREFACE

I BRING from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion. I have often been asked by educated persons in countries which I have visited, and even in India itself, what the Sikh religion was, and whether the Sikhs were Hindus, idolaters or Muhammadans. This ignorance is the result of the difficulty of the Indian dialects in which their sacred writings are contained.

Judaism has its Old Testament ; Islam its Quran ; Hinduism its Veds, Purans, and Shastars ; Buddhism its Tripitaka ; the Parsi religion its Zend-avesta ; and Confucianism its Analects, its Spring and Autumn, its Ancient Poems and its Book of Changes. The languages in which the holy writings of these religions are enshrined, though all difficult, are for the most part homogeneous, and after preliminary study with tutors can generally be mastered by the aid of grammars and dictionaries ; but not so the mediaeval Indian dialects in which the sacred writings of the Sikh Gurus and Saints were composed. Hymns are found in Persian, mediaeval Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, old Panjabi, Multani, and several local dialects. In several hymns the Sanskrit and Arabic vocabularies are freely drawn upon.

There were no dictionaries of the Granth Sahib,<sup>1</sup> or sacred book of the Sikhs, when the author commenced his labours. Some have been since published, but each lexicographer has adopted a system of his own which makes it difficult to find the word required, and even when found the interpretation is not always satisfactory. For these reasons it is necessary for the translator of the Sikh sacred writings to reside for long years in India, and work with the assistance of the few gyanis, or professional interpreters of the Sikh canonical writings, who now survive. It would probably be an exaggeration to say that there are ten such men in the world. Of these few or none is capable of giving an English interpretation. They generally construe in tedious paraphrases in their own local dialects. But more than this, there is hardly any one Sikh who is capable of making a correct translation of his sacred writings. A man who is a good Sanskrit scholar will not know Persian and Arabic, and he who knows Persian and Arabic will not know words of Sanskrit derivation. A man who knows Hindi will not know Marathi; a man who knows Marathi will not know Panjabi and Multani, and so on. Moreover, there are words in the Sikh sacred writings which are peculiar to them, and cannot be traced to any known language. As to these one must accept the traditional interpretations. The Granth Sahib thus becomes probably the most difficult work, sacred or profane,

<sup>1</sup> Sāhib is an Arabic word meaning lord or master. It is applied by Indians to Europeans and natives of position, but it is particularly used by the Sikhs to denote a thing revered or holy, as 'Darbār Sāhib', the holy Sikh Darbār or temple at Amritsar, the Granth Sāhib, the sacred book of the Sikhs, &c.

## PREFACE

vii

that exists, and hence the general ignorance of its contents.

A portion of the Granth Sahib was translated some years since by a German missionary at the expense and under the auspices of the India Office, but his work was highly inaccurate and unidiomatic, and furthermore gave mortal offence to the Sikhs by the *odium theologicum* introduced into it. Whenever he saw an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs, he eagerly availed himself of it.

One of the main objects of the present work is to endeavour to make some reparation to the Sikhs for the insults which he offered to their Gurus and their religion. There are, however, many other advantages which I am hoping for, and which will probably be understood by the reader.

All persons of discrimination acquainted with the Sikhs set a high value on them, but it appears that a knowledge throughout the world of the excellence of their religion would enhance even the present regard with which they are entertained, and that thus my work would be at least of political advantage to them. In the second place, there is now a large number of Sikhs who understand the English language, but who have no time for the study of the compositions of the Gurus, and I thought it would be useful to them, if only from a linguistic point of view, to read a translation in the very simple English in which I have endeavoured to write it. In the third place, the old gyanis or professional interpreters of the Granth Sahib are dying out, and probably in another generation or two their sacred books will, owing to their enormous

†

difficulty, be practically unintelligible even to otherwise educated Sikhs. In the fourth place, the vernacular itself is rapidly altering and diverging more and more from the general language of the Granth Sahib. Words which men still in the prime of life were accustomed to use in their boyhood have now become obsolete, and new vocables have taken their place. It appears, therefore, that it would on every account be well to fix the translation of the many exceedingly difficult passages scattered broadcast through the Sikh sacred writings. In the fifth place there are local legends now rife which we have been able to gather, but which would otherwise pass into oblivion in a comparatively short period of time.

Time was when it was not allowed to print the sacred book of the Sikhs. As ancient prejudice gave way, it was printed in parts which it was forbidden to unite in one volume lest it, as the embodiment, not only of the wisdom of the Gurus, but of the Gurus themselves, might be treated with disrespect. This prejudice has also vanished, and now the book is openly exposed for sale. There was also a prejudice on the part of Sikhs of the old school against translating the sacred volume, but those who held it forgot the injunction of Guru Arjan to translate it into Indian and foreign languages so that it might spread over the whole world as oil spreads over water.

ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤ ਅਰ ਤੁਰਕਨ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ  
ਇਸ ਮੇਂ ਲਿਖ ਲੇਖਿ ਬੁਝਿਰਾਸਾ;  
ਸਭ ਉਪਰ ਪਸਰੈ ਇਹ ਧਾਈ  
ਜਿਮ ਜਲ ਪਰ ਸੁ ਚਿਕਨਤਾ ਪਾਈ.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Sūraj Parkāsh*, Rās III.

## PREFACE

ix

There can be no doubt that, were the Gurus and Bhagats now alive, they would be pleased to see their compositions translated into a language like the English spoken by many peoples throughout the continents and islands which extend far and wide over the earth.

Until the year 1893 I was engaged in judicial duties in India. In that year representative Sikh societies, knowing that I appreciated their literature, requested me to resign my appointment and undertake a translation of their sacred works. I acceded to their requests. My first intention was to make only a translation. This occupied my time for several years. It was prepared on what, I believe, is entirely a novel plan. Most translators, when they have completed their renderings, proceed to publish without subjecting their work to native criticism. On this account there are few, if any, translations of Oriental works made in Europe, even by the most eminent scholars, which are accepted by the learned natives of the East. I resolved that mine should be an exception, and accordingly submitted every line of my work to the most searching criticism of learned Sikhs. This was done either by rough printed proofs or typed copies. I also published invitations in Sikh newspapers to all whom it might concern to visit me, inspect, and if necessary correct my translation. This entailed a voluminous correspondence which occupied a great amount of time, and inconveniently protracted my residence in India.

On the conclusion of the examination of my translation, Bhai Sardul Singh, the Gyani<sup>1</sup> of the

<sup>1</sup> The word *gyāni* in Panjābi means a professional interpreter of the Granth Sāhib.

Golden Temple, the late Bhai Sant Singh, a very learned Sikh of Kapurthala, and Bhai Prem Singh of Amritsar favoured me with the following :—

We, through the agency of learned Sikhs acquainted with English, have carefully perused the translation of the hymns of the Granth Sahib by Mr. Macauliffe. The perusal cost us a month and a half of continuous labour. Wherever any of us found what seemed to be an error, we all met, discussed the passages, and either corrected it or allowed Mr. Macauliffe's translation to stand. Wherefore we now state that Mr. Macauliffe's translation has been fully revised by us, and is thoroughly correct. The greatest care has been taken in making the translation conformable to the religious tenets of the Sikhs. The translation is quite literal, and done according to all grammatical and rhetorical rules.

We now request the Rajas, Maharajas, Sardars, and the learned and accomplished of the Sikh faith to specially read or listen to this translation, if only for once. They will thus become acquainted with Mr. Macauliffe's labours, and reap the advantage of the true instruction of their Gurus. They should also render all necessary aid to the translator, because he has resigned a high post under Government and spent untold wealth on this undertaking.

I have received piles of somewhat similar documents from learned and intelligent Sikhs, and seen numerous critical articles in Sikh, English, and foreign newspapers, which give expression to the strong desire felt for the production of a work such as that now offered. Among them I may be allowed to give the following from *The Khalsa*, a Sikh publication :—

There can be no denying the fact that the publication of Mr. Macauliffe's work will be the introduction of a new era in our history. Our Scriptures, though written in our



## PREFACE

xi

own language, have been so much neglected by our people, that it will be no exaggeration if we say that ninety per cent. of our co-religionists do not understand them. The Community receiving English education are without any idea of the sublime truths contained in the Granth Sahib. From infancy upwards their minds are moulded in such a way, that it becomes almost impossible for them to talk and write in any other language than English; and we shall not be exaggerating if we say that a great many of them find it difficult even to think in their own mother tongue. This being the case, an English translation of our Scriptures will at once appeal to the ever increasing community of educated men who will be the leaders of thought from the very nature of things. Already prepared by western culture to think and act independently, they will be constitutionally fitted to understand the catholicity of Sikh principles, and will feel a pleasure in spreading Sikh ideas far and wide. Apart from this, a great deal of the misunderstanding that now obtains about the work of our Gurus and Martyrs will be removed, and the thinking public will see with their own eyes the drift of Sikh teachings. The trade of traitors among us who to please our wealthier and more influential neighbours, compromise our beliefs by ascribing to our great men thoughts that they never conceived and deeds that they never did, will languish, the promiscuousness in Sikh ideas will vanish, and Tat (pure) Khalsa will begin to start on a new career.

Not less important will be the result of Sikh teachings on the minds of religious Europe and America. Already the Khalsa has achieved a world-wide renown in the matter of bravery. In the matter of religion, too, the name of the Khalsa will shine resplendently when the glorious deeds of our illustrious ancestors in the moral and religious world are made known far and wide. The translations of Hindu Scriptures by Professors Max Müller, Wilson, Monier Williams, and a host of other eminent writers on Oriental religions have drawn the attention of the whole civilized world to the Hindus and their literature. These transla-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

## THE SIKH RELIGION

tions have secured for the Hindus the sympathy of hundreds of savants and inquirers after religious truth. What will not the translations of our Scriptures achieve? Unlike the Scriptures of other creeds, they do not contain love stories or accounts of wars waged for selfish considerations. They contain sublimest truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally, and socially. There is not the least tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and purest principles that serve to bind man to man and inspire the believer with an ambition to serve his fellow men, to sacrifice all and die for their sake.

The late Sir Baba Khem Singh, K.C.I.E., Member of the Legislative Council, who held a most prominent position among the Sikhs, wrote to me :—

It is fortunate for the Sikh nation to have such a kind of friend as you, whose ideas are naturally inclined to their benefit, and they should ever bear you thankfulness and gratitude. I am glad to express my appreciation of your work, and the labour and trouble you have taken upon yourself to accomplish such a voluminous task.

The late Baba Sumer Singh, the Mahant or Sikh Bishop of Patna, where Guru Gobind Singh was born, wrote to me as follows :—

I fully appreciate your attempt to keep especial eye on the sense rather than on word-for-word rendering, and wherever the sense has been in danger of being absorbed in the language, suitable foot-notes have been interspersed throughout.

The late Bhai Hazara Singh Gyani, who has published a Dictionary of the Granth Sahib, wrote to me as follows, after seeing specimens of this work :—

I have read through the English translation of Japji prepared by Mr. Macauliffe. The translator seems to have

## PREFACE

xiii

taken great care in keeping the rendering in accordance with the *Sampardai arths* (traditional interpretations). I wish the undertaking a thorough success, and nothing will give me more pleasure than to see the work brought out of press.

The following is a translation of an address presented to me by the Singh Sabha of Amritsar :—

We are informed by very trustworthy gyanis, that you have been studying our sacred books for over twenty years, and that, resigning a good appointment, you have now laboured continually for some years at making an accurate translation of them ; that you have revised it seven times ; and have now made it as complete as can be done by human effort ; and in doing this you have not only spent your valuable time, but also a very large amount of money. Dr. Trumpp's translation is not only generally incorrect, but injurious to our religion ; and there was a great want felt for an accurate version when Akal Purukh (the Immortal God) induced you to undertake it and fulfil our desires. It would have been well, had we executed the translation ourselves ; but Akal Purukh granted you the credit of the performance. As the holy Guru Teg Bahadur foretold that men would come from beyond the seas to assist the Sikhs, so you have been rendering us mental and bodily assistance ; and we now earnestly recommend the members of our faith, who can afford it, to render you all possible aid in publishing your work, and we trust our wishes will be fulfilled. We desire, now that you have become thoroughly acquainted with our customs, our sacred books, and the tenets of our religion, that you fulfil the promise made in your Circular letter to the Sikhs, in which you stated that you would write nothing prejudicial to their religion. In the lives of the Gurus which you are going to write, we desire you to consult the Gur Bilas, the Suraj Parkash, and such other works as have been compiled from ancient writings not corrupted by the Handalis, the followers of Kabir, and the poets who infused foreign

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05543-7 - The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors: Volume 1

Max Arthur Macauliffe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

## THE SIKH RELIGION

elements into our religion. The Khalsa and the whole Sikh race will be thankful to you for attending to this request. In conclusion we pray Akal Purukh to protect you in every way on your ocean journey, and fulfil your wishes and desires; and that you may be ever a well-wisher and supporter of our sect and our faith. We earnestly hope that your translation of our sacred books will soon be in the library of every true Sikh.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding these tributes to the accuracy of my work, to its utility and to my desire to do justice to the sacred writings of the Sikhs, some may possibly be found among them who will differ from the versions I have given. I have met so-called gyanis who could perform *tours de force* with their sacred work, and give different interpretations of almost every line of it. My Sikh readers may rest assured that in this work all rational interpretations have been considered, and only those selected which seemed most suitable to the context and most in harmony with Sikh doctrines. When second and third interpretations seemed possible, they have been appended in the notes.

When my translation was thus completed and approved of by the most learned Sikh priests and scholars, I found that an account of the Sikh Gurus, saints, and authors was absolutely necessary, and indeed of equal, if not greater importance than even a correct interpretation of their writings. The late illustrious scholar, Professor Max Müller, who had Indian literature so greatly at heart, expressed in his latest work, *Auld Lang Syne*, his

<sup>1</sup> I did not intend, at first, to publish these extracts, and I regret having to do so now, but some Sikh friends have put pressure on me to adopt this course.

## PREFACE

xv

regret that the world knew so little of the Sikh reformers. He wrote :—

It is a pity that we possess so little information about the original Sikh reformers. Their sacred book the Granth Sahib exists, nay it has even been translated into English by the late Dr. Trumpp. But it turns out now that Dr. Trumpp was by no means a trustworthy translator. The language of the Granth is generally called old Panjabi; and it was supposed that a scholar who knew modern Panjabi, might easily learn to understand the language as it was four hundred years ago. But this is not the case. The language of the Granth Sahib is full of local dialectic varieties and forgotten idioms, so much so that it has been said to be without any grammar at all. Mr. Macauliffe, who has spent many years among the Sikhs, and has with the help of their priests paid much attention to their Granth Sahib, has given us some most interesting and beautiful specimens of their poetry which form part of their sacred book.

On perusing the current lives and accounts of the Gurus I found them overladen with puerile, heterodox, or repulsive details; and it required further years of study and consultation with learned Sikhs to complete biographies of the founders of their religion, which were not inconsistent with their sacred writings. The orthodox Sikhs who have read the lives of their Gurus in the voluminous Hindi work entitled *Suraj Parkash*, and in the current Panjabi works called *Janamsakhis*, will understand, and, perhaps, be grateful to me for the manner in which I have presented their religion according to the desires and teachings of their Gurus.

To prevent misconception it ought, perhaps, to be here stated that this work is intended to be an exact presentation of the teaching of the Sikh

Gurus and orthodox writers as contained in their sacred books, and is by no means put forth as a portrayal of the debased superstitions and heterodox social customs of Sikhs who have been led astray from their faith by external influences.

It must also be stated that the intention of the author has been, in fulfilment of his promise to the Sikhs, to write this work from an orthodox Sikh point of view, without any criticism or expression of opinion of his own. Accordingly, miracles which are accepted by many Sikhs will be found reverently described in this work.

A very important question has arisen among the Sikhs as to how my translation of their sacred writings should be presented. The Granth Sahib, as already stated, is to them the embodiment of their Gurus, who are regarded as only one person, the light of the first Guru's soul having been transmitted to each of his successors in turn.

*Οἱ δ' ἀντέλαμψαν καὶ παρήγγειλαν πρόσω.*

The line of the Gurus closed with the tenth, Guru Gobind Singh. He ordered that the Granth should be to his Sikhs as the living Gurus. Accordingly the Granth Sahib is kept in silken coverlets, and when it is removed from place to place is taken on a small couch by Sikhs of good repute. Many of my old orthodox Sikh friends feared that if my translation were printed in the order of the original, it would not receive the same respect and attention in foreign countries as in India, and they accordingly desired that it should be published in some other form. This desire of the most holy and respected Sikhs is a great relief to me, for it

## PREFACE

xvii

makes it competent to intersperse many of the sacred hymns in the lives of the Gurus, and thus present my work as much as possible in narrative form, which it is hoped will be more acceptable not only to European, but even to Sikh readers themselves.

Competent Sikhs have also advised me that when the Guru's instruction on various occasions is on the same subject and of the same tenor, it needs be given only once. For instance, in the Granth Sahib there are four hymns beginning with the words, 'In the first watch of night, my merchant friend.' Two of these hymns are by Guru Nanak, the third by Guru Ram Das, and the fourth by Guru Arjan. The hymns begin in the same manner, are of the same purport, and are only very slightly varied in diction, so the publication of the whole four appears unnecessary.

It is intelligible that repetitions should be found in the sacred books of several religions, for the teachings of their prophets were orally addressed to crowds who clustered round them, and repetitions served to impress on the listeners the instruction accorded; but in a printed work, which the reader may peruse and re-peruse at pleasure, repetition does not appear so necessary. Moreover, this work is intended for the European as well as for the Sikh student. It is apprehended that repetition would prove tedious, and deter several even conscientious readers from its perusal.

I find, however, that it is impossible for me to meet the wishes of all parties. Europeans will probably think my work too long, and Sikhs may possibly think it too short. As to the latter objec-

tion, I may state that I have followed the advice of the most learned Sikh scholars. They have decided that there is no omission of anything necessary to faith or morals, but that the whole substance of the Sikh sacred writings is here presented, and that if any Sikh shapes his conduct accordingly, he will be in no danger of failing to secure absorption in the Creator or a dwelling in the Creator's heaven.

A few of the advantages of the Sikh religion to the State may be here enumerated. One day as Guru Teg Bahadur was in the top story of his prison, the Emperor Aurangzeb thought he saw him looking towards the south in the direction of the Imperial zenana. He was sent for the next day, and charged with this grave breach of Oriental etiquette and propriety. The Guru replied, 'Emperor Aurangzeb, I was on the top story of my prison but I was not looking at thy private apartments or at thy queens. I was looking in the direction of the Europeans who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy pardas and destroy thine empire.' Sikh writers state that these words became the battle-cry of the Sikhs in the assault on the mutineers in Dihli (Delhi) in 1857, under General John Nicholson, and that thus the prophecy of the ninth Guru was gloriously fulfilled.

When it was represented to Guru Gobind Singh that a Muhammadan army would eventually come to overpower his Sikhs, he replied, 'What God willeth shall take place. When the army of the Muhammadans cometh, my Sikhs shall strike steel on steel. The Khalsa shall then awake, and know the play of battle. Amid the clash of arms the Khalsa



## PREFACE

xix

shall be partners in present and future bliss, tranquillity, meditation, and divine knowledge. Then shall the English come, and, joined by the Khalsa, rule as well in the East as in the West. The holy Baba Nanak will bestow all wealth on them. The English shall possess great power and by force of arms take possession of many principalities. The combined armies of the English and the Sikhs shall be very powerful, as long as they rule with united councils. The empire of the British shall vastly increase, and they shall in every way obtain prosperity. Wherever they take their armies they shall conquer and bestow thrones on their vassals. Then in every house shall be wealth, in every house religion, in every house learning, and in every house happiness.'

It is such prophecies as these, combined with the monotheism, the absence of superstition and restraint in the matter of food, which have made the Sikhs among the bravest, the most loyal and devoted subjects of the British Crown. As to their bravery and loyalty, the following, written by one of them, is by no means an exaggeration: 'As for the bravery and warlike spirit of the Sikhs, no Cossack, no Turk, no Russian, can measure swords with them. There is one trait very peculiar in them such as must make the enemies of the British fear them. The true blood of loyalty and devotion to their master surges in their veins. A true Sikh will let his body be cut to pieces when fighting for his master. The Sikh considers dying in battle a means of salvation. No superiority of the enemies in number, no shot, no shell can make his heart quail, since his Amrit (baptism) binds him to

b 2

fight single-handed against millions. Some people may say that a soldier sells his head for the small wage paid him every month. But the Sikh does not do so : he devotes his head, body, and everything dear to him to preserving the influence of him whom he once makes his master. A Sikh who shows the least sign of reluctance to go, or goes with an expectation of remuneration, when called upon by his benefactor the King-Emperor to fight His Majesty's enemies, no matter how strong they may be, will be condemned by the Gurus.'

If there is one superstition more strongly reprobated than another in the Sikh sacred writings, it is pilgrimages to the places deemed sacred by the Hindus. Some of the Sikh States, in ignorance of the teachings of the Gurus, have maintained temples and spiritual arenas at Hardwar and Rikhikesh for the reception of pilgrims. At Hardwar there are held great religious fairs every twelve years at the time when the sun enters the lunar mansion of Aquarius (Kumbh). It is calculated that at least one hundred thousand Sikhs were present at the last great fair at Hardwar. All these pilgrims bathe in the Ganges; while bathing many recklessly yield to the necessities of nature; others drink their excreta with the Ganges water as sacred nourishment, and die of cholera either at the fair or on their homeward journey. The corpses of Sikhs, as well as Hindus, were pulled out of railway carriages after the last twelfth-year fair and poisoned the country. The pest then extended east and west in all directions. Kabul, of course, on the western boundary of India, was soon affected, and the further progress of the disease towards Europe was thus

## PREFACE

xxi

described by the Paris correspondent of the *Morning Post* :—

‘Professor Chantemesse, Director-General of the Public Health Department, made a somewhat disquieting statement at to-day’s meeting of the Academy of Medicine. He pointed out that the cholera epidemic, which originated in India and spread east and west, had established itself last autumn in four European centres, namely Transcaspia, Transcaucasia, Anatolia, and the banks of the Volga between Astrakhan, Saratoff, and Samara. As the winter cold had merely checked the disease, instead of stamping it out, there was every reason to fear it would continue its progress westward, by way of the Baltic ports, the Black Sea, the Danube, or Constantinople.’ According to another account, ‘seven thousand deaths from cholera occurred in the Punjab since the second week of April. The disease was originally disseminated by the returning pilgrims from Hardwar.’

Of course there were also many Hindu pilgrims at the Hardwar fair, but let any one consider what a gain it would be to the world if the one hundred thousand Sikhs<sup>1</sup> who attended it possessed such a very elementary knowledge of their religion as to know that their action was reprobated by all their holy Gurus.

It is known to every Sikh that tobacco is forbidden by his religion, but it is not generally known that wine is equally forbidden. After I had quoted the Sikh tenets on this subject in public lectures at Simla, it was taken up by the enlightened Singh Sabha of Patiala; and a resolution in favour of total abstinence was signed by several of the best educated and most influential Sardars of the State.

<sup>1</sup> At my request the Panjāb Government ascertained from the Government of the United Provinces the approximate population of the Sikh pilgrims.

The freedom of women and their emancipation from the tyranny of the parda may be inferred from the manner in which Bhai Budha received Mata<sup>1</sup> Ganga the wife of Guru Arjan, from Guru Amar Das's refusal to receive a rani who had visited him when she was closely veiled, and from Kabir's address to his daughter-in-law.

The high moral and enlightened teachings of the Gurus, their prohibition of the heinous crime of infanticide, and other injunctions for the public advantage will be found or understood from the composition of the Gurus and the Bhagats which we give in these volumes.

The Hindu practice of the concremation of widows was forbidden by the Gurus; though this was not generally known at the time of Lord William Bentinck, who had sufficient courage to issue an ordinance against it.

The Gurus most powerfully and successfully attacked the caste system and the Hindu belief in impurity and defilement in many necessary and harmless acts of domestic life.

It is admitted that a knowledge of the religions of the people of India is a desideratum for the British Officials who administer its affairs and indirectly for the people who are governed by them so that mutual sympathy may be produced. It seems, at any rate, politic to place before the Sikh soldiery their Guru's prophecies in favour of the English and the texts of their sacred writings which foster their loyalty.

An advantage of a literary or historical nature is

<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs give the title *Māta* or mother to the wives of the Gurus, in the same way as they give the title *Bāba* or father to Guru Nānak.

## PREFACE

xxiii

also anticipated from this work. It is hoped that it will throw some light on the state of society in the Middle Ages and that it will also be useful for the student of comparative theology. Professor Geheimer Hofrath Merx, of the Heidelberg University, a very distinguished German savant, has recently written to me : ' The publication of your work is certainly very desirable. You save in this way materials for the history of religions which, without your help, would probably disappear.'

To sum up some of the moral and political merits of the Sikh religion : It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country.

A movement to declare the Sikhs Hindus, in direct opposition to the teaching of the Gurus, is widespread and of long duration. I have only quite recently met in Lahore young men claiming to be descendants of the Gurus, who told me that they were Hindus, and that they could not read the characters in which the sacred books of the Sikhs were written. Whether the object of their tutors and advisers was or was not to make them disloyal, such youths are ignorant of the Sikh religion, and of its prophecies in favour of the English, and contract exclusive social customs and prejudices to the extent of calling us Malechhas, or persons of impure

desires, and inspiring disgust for the customs and habits of Christians.

And here let me remark that the recognition of Panjabi as an official or optional official language in the Panjab, instead of the alien Urdu, would be a most powerful means of preserving the Sikh religion. Panjabi is the mother tongue of all natives of the Panjab, be they Sikhs, Hindus, or Muhammadans. If it were recognized as an official or optional official language, Sikhs would not have to resort to books written in foreign languages for religious instruction and consolation, and the exalted ethical instruction of the Granth Sahib would be open to all classes of His Majesty's subjects in the Panjab.

After the English occupation of the Panjab the officers sent to administer it were transferred from what were then known as the North-Western Provinces. They took with them Urdu, or what was much the same—a bastard Persian with Urdu inflections—the only Asiatic language they knew, and they found it more convenient to continue to use it than to learn a foreign language which had at the time no status and no literature. The vernacular writers and the officers who brought them were equally ignorant of Panjabi, and so Urdu became the official language of that province. That the officials did not understand the natives, nor the natives the officials, made no difference. The court officials gradually picked up a smattering of Panjabi, and were able to interpret for the Europeans. This state of things was allowed to continue. If the Panjabis remonstrated against neglect of their language their remonstrances were unheeded. Now the Panjab has become more enlightened, the remonstrances