

By the end of the 19th century, the *Rahit* Sikhs practiced, had deteriorated so much that the Sikh identity was pretty much lost. As with the Buddhists, the Sikhs had been engulfed into the larger Hindū fold. This was partly due to the Hindū or Aryan approach towards undermining and swallowing up any Indic creeds that sought to assert a separate identity and challenge the Hindu caste structure. The other reason was the Sikhs were complacent about their practices and identity. In the later half of the 19th century, Sikhs woke up and several reform movements started, that sought to revive the original intent of the ten Sikh Gurūs. One of these movements was the Singh Sabhā Lahar (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ ਲਹਰ). These movements also addressed the issue of the community not having a uniform *Rahit*.

In 1925, after much debate and discussion, a *Rahit* was drafted by scholars from several differing schools of Sikh thought. This draft *Rahit* was then sent to Sikhs all over the world. This was a serious attempt at building consensus among the community. Principal Tejā Singh was convener of this effort. Other people involved in this effort included notable Sikhs such as Bhāi Vīr Singh (ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ), Akālī Kaur Singh (ਅਕਾਲੀ ਕੌਰ ਸਿੰਘ) and Bhāi Kānh Singh Nābhā (ਭਾਈ ਕਾਨ੍ਹ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਭਾ). So serious were these Sikhs about hearing from Sikhs worldwide, they sent this draft to Canada, USA, Kenya, Malaysia and other Diaspora countries. Remember this was 1920s, when air travel did not exist. After eleven years of debate and discussion, during which some Sikhs chose to walk out of the process because they did not get their way, a final version was agreed to in 1936. This version is what most mainstream Sikhs accept as the Gurū Panth's *Rahit*. Some Sikhs revere this document because it reflects the closest Sikhs have come to a consensus in a long time. *Rahits* written by individuals, regardless of how great their practice of Sikhī, still remain the ideas of just individuals. Bhāi Raṇdhīr Singh (ਭਾਈ ਰਣਧੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ), Bābā Gurbacan Singh Bhiṇḍrānvāle (ਬਾਬਾ ਗੁਰਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਭਿੰਡਰਾਂਵਾਲੇ) and other such Sikhs were no doubt devoted Sikhs, but were not the *Gurū*, and cannot speak for the Gurū Panth. Their ideas are those of individuals, and their *Rahits* are not any more acceptable than those of Caupā Singh or Desā Singh.

The Gurū Panth's *Rahit*, therefore, is the 1936 version, accepted by the SGPC and other Sikh institutions in 1945. Note that this *Rahit* is not the SGPC's *Rahit*; it is the Panth's *Rahit*. The SGPC is one organization that accepts and prints this *Rahit*. Other smaller organizations such as the Sikh Missionary College also print this *Rahit*. This *Rahit* has seen three small changes in the 1940s (the addition of eventual hope of Sikhs to freely visit shrines in Pakistan), 1960s (the addition of a fifth Takht) and 1990s (the addition of reading the complete Anand Sāhib during *Ammrit Sañcār* – ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸੰਚਾਰ - instead of 6 *paūrīs* - ਪਉੜੀ). No one, including the *Jathedār* (ਜਥੇਦਾਰ) of Akāl Takht, has the authority to amend this document. If the Panth is to see any form of unity today, it is imperative that they rally around this Maryādā, until we can be free to come up with something better. We would encourage all Sikhs to read and live by *Rahit*'s letter and spirit.

Professor Tejā Singh (ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ), 1894-1958

Tejā Singh was a professor, scholar, and a translator of Sikh sacred texts. His original name was Tej Rām (ਤੇਜ ਰਾਮ) and he was born on 2 June 1894, at the village of Adialā (ਅਦਿਆਲਾ) in Rāvalpīṇḍī (ਰਾਵਲਪਿੰਡੀ) district, now in Pakistan. At the age of three, Tej Rām was sent to the village *Gurduārā* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ) to learn and write Gurmukhī (ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ) and later to the mosque to learn Urdū and Fārsī. Bābā Khem Singh Bedī (ਬਾਬਾ ਖੇਮ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੇਦੀ), one of the founders of the Singh Sabhā Movement was a big influence in his life. It was he who converted Tej Ram to Sikhī (ਸਿਖੀ) by taking Amrit (ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ) while he was a young boy. His new name became Tejā Singh.

Tejā Singh had a difficult childhood since he belonged to a very poor family, but he was determined to get an education. He managed to attend school in Rāvalpīṇḍī and finally enter *Khālsā* College at Amritsar (ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ). After passing his exams from *Khālsā* (ਖਾਲਸਾ) College, he returned to Rāvalpīṇḍī to join Gordon College, which had offered him a grant to help with his tuition fees. He received his master's degree in English literature in 1916, and in 1918 was offered a position at the *Khālsā* College at Amritsar where he taught English literature for a quarter of a century. At this time there was a lot of political activity taking place in Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ), especially at Amritsar. Tejā Singh was among the 13 Sikh professors of *Khālsā* College who resigned as a protest against the government's control in the management of the college. Tejā Singh was also connected with the long Sikh struggle for the release of the *Gurduārās* from the control of the corrupt priestly order. In 1923 he was arrested during the campaign and served more than a year in jail. On his release in 1925, because of his health, he returned to *Khālsā* College and continued teaching. However, he continued to keep contact with public causes through his writings and lectures. In 1939, he undertook a lecture tour of Malaysia and delivered nearly 300 speeches in two months' time.

Tejā Singh is known for his immense contribution to the cultural and literary activity in Pañjāb. Pañjābī letters and Sikh history and philosophy were his special fields of study. He exercised great influence on Pañjābī literature and even helped find the form and structure of Pañjābī idiom. He encouraged and introduced to readers many young writers and it was accepted custom for new writers to first show their work to him.

Some of his works are the following: *Growth and Responsibility in Sikhism* (1919), *Highroads of Sikh History* in three volumes (1935): *Its Ideals and Institutions* (1938), and *Essay in Sikhism* (1944). He also wrote with Dr. Gaṇḍā Singh (ਗੰਡਾ ਸਿੰਘ), *A Short History of the Sikhs* (1950). Tejā Singh was involved with almost every important book in some way, including Bhāī Kānh (ਕਾਨ੍ਹ) Singh's *Mahān Kosh* (ਮਹਾਨ ਕੋਸ਼), by writing introductions, editing the books and interacting with the authors. Some of his interpretations of baṇīs like the Japu jī Sāhib (ਜਪੁ ਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ), *Asā kī Vār* (ਆਸਾ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ) and *Sukhmanī Sāhib* (ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ) have established themselves as classics. He spent five years (1936-41) working on an annotated edition of the *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, sponsored by Gur Sevak Singh (ਗੁਰ ਸੇਵਕ ਸਿੰਘ). Tejā Singh also compiled an English Pañjābī dictionary. Another huge project that he wanted to complete during his lifetime was to translate the entire *Gurū Granth Sāhib* into English. The portion that he completed during his lifetime was published by the Pañjābī University in 1985 under the title *The Holy Granth*.

As for Pañjābī literature Tejā Singh is remembered primarily as an essayist. The first collection of his essays in Pañjābī was published in 1941 under the title *Navīān Socān* (ਨਵੀਆਂ ਸੋਚਾਂ), followed by *Sahij Subhā* (ਸਹਿਜ ਸੁਭਾ) in 1942, and *Sāhit Darshan* (ਸਾਹਿਤ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ) in 1951. His autobiography, *Arsī* (ਅਰਸੀ)

(Finger Glass of Memory) was published in 1952. One of his scholarly works in Pañjābī was the subtle distinctions of word-ending vowel symbols in the Gurū Granth Sāhib.

In 1945, Tejā Singh took over as Principal at the Khālsā College at Bombay. He was there for about three years and then returned to Pañjāb as Secretary of the Publications Bureau of the Pañjāb University. In January 1949 he was appointed Principal of Mohindra College, Paṭiālā. At Paṭiālā, he also held additional charge, for a time, as Secretary and Director of the newly established Pañjābī Department. He retired in 1951 and died several years later from a stroke on 10 January 1958.

Adapted from: <http://www.thesikhencyclopedia.com>

Bhāi Kānh Singh Nābhā (ਭਾਈ ਕਾਨ੍ਹ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਭਾ), 1861-1938

Bhāi Kānh Singh was born on 30 August 1861 to Narain Singh (ਨਰੈਣ ਸਿੰਘ) and Har Kaur (ਹਰ ਕੌਰ). His father was a saintly man who spent many hours reciting the Gurbānī. In fact, he regularly recited the whole Gurū Granth Sāhib four times a month. Three times, in his life he recited the entire Gurū Granth Sāhib in one sitting. Bhāi Kānh Singh could read the Gurū Granth Sāhib very well by the age of seven. In 1861 Bhāi Kānh Singh's father took over the duties and service of a *Gurduārā* in Nābhā when the priest there, a close friend, died.

Bhāi Kānh Singh did not attend any school or university. He was nevertheless a dedicated seeker of knowledge. From the *Gurduārā* he learnt religious texts, from the *Nihāngs* (ਨਿਹੰਗ), he learned the handling of arms; from *Paṇḍits* (ਪੰਡਿਤ), Sanskrit (ਸੰਸਕ੍ਰਿਤ) and Hindī (ਹਿੰਦੀ); Urdū (ਉਰਦੂ) and Fārsī (ਫਾਰਸੀ) from *Maulvīs* (ਮੌਲਵੀ) in Dillī (ਦਿੱਲੀ), Lakhnau (ਲਖਨਊ) and Lāhaur (ਲਾਹੌਰ). While in Lāhaur he became interested in Sī Gurū Singh Sabhā (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) and assisted Professor Gurmukh (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) Singh of the Oriental College (a leading figure in the Singh Sabhā) in the monthly and weekly magazines and newspapers. After two years in Lāhaur, he returned to Nābhā (ਨਾਭਾ).

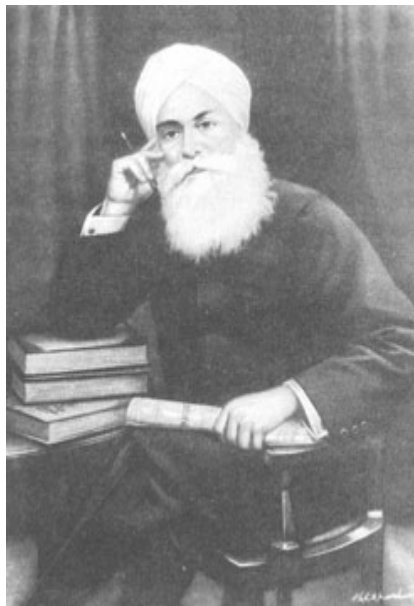
Bhāi Kānh Singh had now become renowned for his knowledge, statesmanship, sound judgment and clarity of thought. He now entered the Nābhā State Service under Mahārājā Hīrā Singh (ਮਹਾਰਾਜਾ ਹੀਰਾ ਸਿੰਘ); first as a tutor for the *Mahārājā's* son and then as a judge, administrator and foreign minister. Since the *Mahārājā* was well aware of Bhāi Kānh Singh's knowledge he sent him to England three times to represent the legal aspects of the Nābhā State case in 1907, 1908, and 1909. However, since he could not devote any time to his studies and Panthic service, he resigned.

In 1885, he had the chance to meet with Max Arthur McAuliffe which led to a life-long friendship. Bhāi Kānh Singh explained the Gurū Granth Sāhib to him and also helped him with the research for his work, *The Sikh Religion*, which was published in six volumes by the prestigious Clarendon Press, in the U.K. in 1907. Bhāi Kānh Singh helped the book in many ways, and even accompanied McAuliffe to England. McAuliffe later transferred the copyright of his book to Bhāi Kānh Singh.

Another extremely important piece of work Bhāi Kānh Singh is well-known for is the Gurushabad Ratanākar Mahān Kosh (ਗੁਰੁਸ਼ਬਦ ਰਤਨਾਕਰ ਮਹਾਨ ਕੋਸ਼) (1930), an encyclopedia of Sikh literature. Bhāi Kānh Singh also reacted to the moral decay that was taking place in Pañjāb by writing a short booklet titled Ham Hindū Nahīm (ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਹੀਂ) (We are not Hindus), in 1898. The title brought a lot of reaction and eventually, to help out, Bhāi Kānh Singh submitted a translation of English to the British officials. There were many other works of literature that Bhāi Kānh Singh wrote, for example: Gurmat Sudhākar (ਗੁਰਮਤ ਸੁਧਾਕਰ), an anthology of important Sikh texts, both scriptural and historical, in 1899 and Gurmat Martand.

Bhāī Kānh Singh practiced what he preached. He advocated inter-caste marriages and his son's marriage was one example. His niece, a widow, was re-married, in accordance with his wishes. Overall, he lived a life of seclusion, usually totally immersed in his scholarly pursuit. Through his writings, he delicately shaped the course of Sikh awakening at the turn of the century. Before he left, he contributed financially to the Khālsā College, Ammritsar and presided over the Sikh Educational Conference in 1931. In 1932, the British government gave him the title of Sardār Bahādūr (ਸਰਦਾਰ ਬਹਾਦੁਰ). In 1933, he was presented a sword by King Nādir Shāh (ਨਾਦਿਰ ਸ਼ਾਹ) of Afghanistan, where he had gone for research. Bhāī Kānh Singh passed away on November 23, 1938, leaving behind a rich legacy for generations to come.

Adapted from: The Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Harbans Singh; www.sikh-heritage.co.uk



Bhāī Kānh Singh “Nābhā”

Answers to the questions:

1. Professor Tejā Singh would have been an appropriate person to lead the sub-committee because of his leadership skills and his immense knowledge in Sikhī. His strong understanding of Sikh history and the Gurū Granth Sāhib made him the ideal person to lead such a project.
2. Answer to question number two is very similar to that of question number one because Bhāī Kānh Singh also had a very strong background in Sikhī and his immense knowledge about the subject made him also an ideal person to be on the committee.

Quote from: ‘We Are Not Hindūs’

“Dear Member of Khālsā you may be surprised when you read what I have written. You will ask why there should be any need of such a work as ‘We are not Hindūs’ when it is perfectly obvious that the Khālsā is indeed distinct from Hindū society. Or you may want to know why, if such a work is to be written, there should not be books, which show that we are not Muslims or Christians or Buddhists. This book has been written for the benefit of those brethren to whom the following historical parable applies. The tale, briefly, is as follows. Gurū Gobind Singh (Sāhib) once covered a donkey with a lion skin and set it loose in the wasteland. Men as well as cattle thought it was a lion and were so

frightened that none dared approach it. Released from the misery of carrying burdens and free to graze fields to its heart's content, the donkey grew plump and strong. It spent its days happily roaming the area around Anandpur. One day, however it was attracted by the braying of a mare from its old stable and brayed in response. There it was recognized by the potter who removed the lion skin, replaced its pannier-bags, and once again began whipping it to make it work.

“The Guru used this parable to teach his Sikhs an important lesson. ‘My dear sons,’ he said, ‘I have not involved you in a mere pantomime as in the case of this donkey, I have freed you, wholly and completely, from the bondage of caste. You have become my sons and Sahib Kaur has become your mother: Do not follow the foolish example of the donkey and return to your old caste allegiance. If forgetting my words and abandoning the sacred faith of the Khalsa you return to your various castes your fate will be that of the donkey. Your courage will desert you and you will have lived your lives in vain’.”

Many of our brethren are in fact neglecting this aspect of the Guru's teaching. Although they regard themselves as Sikhs of the Khālṣā they accept the Hindu tradition. They imagine that it is actually harmful to observe the teachings of Gurbāṇī, by acknowledging the other. Sikh religion is distinct from the Hindū religion. The reason for this lack of conviction is that these people have neither read their own Scriptures with care nor studied the historical past. Instead they have spent their time browsing through erroneous material and listening to the deceitful words of the self-seeking. The tragedy is that these brethren are falling away from the Khālṣā. They forget the benefits which the Almighty Father has bestowed on them—how he has exalted the lowly, raised paupers to be kings, turned jackals into lions and sparrows into hawks. Seduced by those who oppose the Gurus' teachings; they are ensnared by deceit and thereby forfeit the chance of deliverance, which this human existence confers.

“Our country will flourish when people of all religions are loyal to their own traditions, yet willing to accept other Indians as members of the same family when they recognize that harming one means harming the nation, and when religious differences are no longer an occasion for discord. Let us practice our religion in the harmonious spirit of Guru Nanak, for thus we shall ensure that mutual envy and hatred do not spread. At the same time, you will grow in affection for all your fellow countrymen, recognizing all who inhabit this country of India as one with yourself”.