

## Chapter 2

# Punjabiya

It was reported [1] Basharat Qadir son of the lawyer and Khushwant Singh's friend Manzoor Qadir relating how Khushwant Singh handed over the keys of his house in Lahore to his father at the time of Partition in 1947 with the hope that he would return after the 'dust had settled'.

[1] Dawn (21-2-2015)

Khalid Hasan reported Pran Nevile saying (Memories of pre-1947 Lahore) "In a way, you can say, I never left Lahore because it is always with me. I have carried it with me wherever I have gone, and when I look back and there is no place on earth I haven't been and all through those years, Lahore has stayed with me. I am an unreconstructed Lahoria, you can say, who never thought he would ever live elsewhere."

Having met Pran Nevile for the first time in a Washington suburb in the first week of December, Khalid Hasan reported him talking 'in his rich and pure Lahori Punjabi that fifty-five years of exile from the city have not altered or affected' in the above-mentioned piece on Friday, January 3, 2003: Pran's father, a government servant, opted for Pakistan. "He used to say, as did everybody, 'All this is going to pass, this Hindu-Muslim rioting.' We never could imagine that people would have to move across in such massive numbers, never to see their homes again, never to meet their friends again. My father was advised to take some leave, stay away from the city and in a few weeks, all would be well when he could return. That was never to be."

In this for me perhaps the most important information is Pran telling about his father saying "He used to say, as did everybody ...". This was universal. Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims were expelled from their homes. And they could not believe, this was final. And their believing that they would return back to their homes was so natural.

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I contemplate another thing, a deeper aspect. The experiences of humanity in history are passed on from one generation to another and get interwoven in what we call culture of a people. Something outside the culture is not acceptable or it takes time to become really a part of the experience of a people. For historical Punjab, 1947 was not within their historical experience. Therefore how of 1947 which were a series of absolutely unprecedented events could have been acceptable immediately or forgotten later?

I believe I have mentioned elsewhere in this manifesto that my father continued to believe for many years that we would return to our village (Mastiwal in Hoshiarpur

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District). Were they all wrong? I believe NOT. In the narrow sense criminals succeeded. The criminals tried to make crime the normal way of life – a normality in life. And they succeeded in making it look like that for so long that the belief of the original victims of returning back started looking their emotional outbursts away from reality. But if the whole project of the criminals is rightly understood, they have not succeeded. What I am doing after more than 70 years today (23-8-2017) as I am revising this manifesto is the proof right here. History takes time. Therefore, the belief of returning home will prove true in another but appropriate way as history will be able to work out.

Wishing to ‘promulgate’ Punjabiyat now and here, we must not forget the changes Punjab had witnessed before reaching 1947. The issue of Punjabi was one of them. The changes were profound and fundamental as religious conversions to Islam and the fragmentation of the earlier established order and society began. From those times to date Punjabi’s misfortune, adversity and tragedy have not ended. There was never a respite. The suffering of Punjabi is indeed spread over centuries and as yet we are not out of the bewildering situation. Many have to fathom this reality very deeply.

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The Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh organized a public lecture on the topic: "Punjab: Can It Be a Bridge to Peace Between India and Pakistan?" on 5th May 2012 at its headquarters at Chandigarh. The Lecture was delivered by Mr. Tridivesh Singh Maini of The Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, who has authored a number of books on Indo-Pak relations. He felt that there was a need to promote the common Punjabi identity without making it hostage to jingoistic nationalism. . . . He concluded by saying that there was a need to blend emotions with reality while devising a structure for further improving Indo-Pak relations. Dr Kirpal Singh, an eminent Historian, shed light on the role of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in promoting better relations between Sikhs and Muslims. He gave examples from his personal life to highlight the profound respect which Muslims have for Sikhs. In the ‘Resolution’ adopted it is aspired: “... To make this southern part of Asia a world power, it is essential that India and Pakistan develop peaceful relations so that proper conditions are created for Punjab to contribution its possible might.” [2]

[2] [http://sikhinstitute.org/ne\\_pun\\_rep\\_12.html](http://sikhinstitute.org/ne_pun_rep_12.html)

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Most of the conversation in the Court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was done in Punjabi language. But the proceedings of the Court and all other official drafts, however, were recorded in Persian. [3] Why Persian was used is understandable; it was after about eight hundred years (Mahmud Ghaznavi 1020, Ranjit Singh 1799) that a Punjabi came

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to power when neither Moghuls in Delhi nor Afghans in Kabul were in the position to hold Lahore and Punjab.

[3] History of the Punjab 1500-1858: K.S. Narang: 1969

Ranjit Singh did not belong to a traditional ruling family. Through how much self-learning he must have gone, if appreciated, perhaps, can explain his success story. To run his State, the Maharaja must have well thought out priorities. There is no doubt that had he been very clear about the importance of language, he could have done much. If history's pushing back of Punjabi language was not on the minds of the Maharaja and his associates or it had never occurred to them, how anything we like to think today in favour of Punjabi could have happened to Punjabi due to the fact that the ruler was a Punjabi? And then, it was naturally easy to continue with the existing practice of Persian as the State language. Anyhow, it was not a small gain that in his Court, most of the conversation was done in Punjabi. Punjabi would have moved much more forward from this point as actually happened had the British not intervened.

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Although the use of the term Punjabiya is not widespread which probably means that its contours have not as yet been sharply defined. The universe of Punjabiya has been stated to mean "a shared way of life." The idea which encompasses all Punjabis and Punjabi language is undoubtedly and unquestionably bound to be futuristic and therefore an evolving idea. Paying attention to it with sympathy and wishing it well will be a sort of litmus test of whether one is enlightened or bigoted, whether one has learnt from history or is its ugly and tiring burden, in short whether one is civilized or uncivilized.

I feel as far as things stand today, the base of Punjabiya is Punjabi language. And Punjabiya itself is counterpoint to the partition of Punjabi language along with the partition of the Punjab, the 1947 massacre, forced expulsion of people from their homes, and other associated crimes. Suppose the Partition was peaceful, certainly the expulsion of people from their homes would not have happened. And those who would have migrated would have done it willingly. There would have been no split in the Society of Punjab and therefore of Punjabi language. Punjabiya of pre-1947 era would have remained intact after Partition. In spite of political partition, there would have been no social partition.

Whatever reasons somebody may put forth, we know crimes were committed against the Punjabis and one day there has to be accountability and criminals identified. If in about 70 years, no political leadership has raised this question, it means they never represented Punjab genuinely, whether east or west. It seems the issue was deliberately

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left un-attended, brushed aside, and ignored, giving the impression of some 'higher wisdom' at work.

The loss of life was the largest in Punjab. The forced expulsions from homes were the largest in Punjab. The fear factor was the greatest in Punjab. The crimes difficult to narrate committed in the Punjab were the maximum. It is my guess that the total casualties during all battles which invaders from the northwest fought on the soil of India were less than the 1947 killings of Punjab alone.

What had happened? Were Punjabis a specially programmed breed to do all this in the summer of 1947? Why it did not happen before or after? And why the political leaderships remained neat and clean and not a single spot of blood on their immaculate dresses. And they lie dignifiedly buried in their mausoleums. Who brought what is worst in human beings to the fore? Did Gandhi do this? Did Nehru and Patel do this? Did Jinnah do this? Did Master Tara Singh do this? Did Hindu Mahasabha do this? Did the British do this? No doubt the British and Jinnah are the front runners in this competition.

Without America would Taliban have ever existed? Without British had Partition ever happened? The problem of our 'modern age' existence is the unprecedented manipulative power in the hands of rulers and leaders who manage to live in the hearts of the people. It is their nature to which end they use their power. Can anybody believe that 1947 has ever disturbed them? Because had it been so, their political and financial power would have acted in more than one way in that direction. Therefore no doubt they wield power on behalf of Punjabis where Punjabis are counted like some countable things? Are leaders meant to build and maintain physical things such as roads and drains etc.? Who will diagnose their spiritual disease which has robbed their healthy and creative energies which could have built good society and civilization? Who will free them from the sins committed by masterminds and their organized groups in the name of the people and on their land? Who will open their cases which their successive leaders had considered unnecessary things and finally forgotten? But nothing in history is time-barred. And investigation never stops, as there is always something going on which continues to bring forth some truth.

As any decisive moment of victory of any people in history has always been the consequence of the struggle against a series of unjust actions of perpetrators, the criminality of huge proportions committed against Punjab has to have its moment of reckoning. And whenever the case is prepared and readied to be presented at the appropriate forum, one cannot imagine there would be any contribution of any chief minister so far of East or West Punjab. This unconcern at the political level seems to suggest the level of our humanity, our consciousness, our self-respect, our historical

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awareness and what not and in fact our total being. In a sense the state of affairs of our language stands explained.

Our present state of being has to be uplifted. And only leaders can do that. Therefore east or west, Punjab needs thinkers and practical leaders. This challenge must be accepted by more and more Punjabis living anywhere. If this can dawn on us, the sub-continent or South Asia will find a new engine of civilisation pulling it in the right direction. It cannot happen without a renaissance in Sarab Punjab. The energy of this engine lies in 1947. It will be a new experience for humanity. Let all or Sarab Punjab take up this enterprise of the civilisation. This will be the right answer from Sarab Punjab to the criminals of 1947 and their present inheritors.

Can anybody tell the Chief Minister of West Punjab that there are Punjabis beyond Wagah also? Can anybody tell the Chief Minister of East Punjab that there are Punjabis beyond Attari also? And all of them have a collective case. Who was responsible for the 1947 killings? If Punjabis do not take initiative, who else will? Only fools can be oblivious of the gravity of the crimes which have robbed our peace. Punjabis will not continue to dance on the tunes of others. Therefore Punjabiya which is the antithesis of the 1947 killings has to play its role. There is a job to be done and all Punjabis wherever they are must gird up their lions. We should resolve not to allow the matters deteriorate further before we are able to turn them around.

Obviously Punjabi language represents Punjabiya. But, so far we have not been able to straighten our history on these issues. How could it have been done when our understanding of history has been sectarian? But, history is not sectarian. As we are coming out of the sectarian mode, the problems left by history are likely to be within our grasp.

From my childhood, I am a witness of Punjabiya. In my own family my elder brother Mohammad Sharif and Bhai Qasim considered to be a wise man and like an elder to my brother went to our village in East Punjab, in the early 1950s. They brought back stories of their moving experiences of love and affection of their hosts. My brother brought back a *ghotna*, which is used to grind chilies etc., made from the wood of the *shrieen* tree which used to be in the courtyard of our house in Mastiwal. This was Punjabiya.

It was not unusual to see our elders, men and women, now and then during moments of reflection and nostalgia sitting together and talking about those events. Although they had been expelled from their homes and their lives had been in danger, they never said anything bad about those unknowns at whose hand they had suffered. I understood from this that our people had no enmity with their neighbours. And it was unexplainable for them as to what happened. This was Punjabiya.

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It is not possible for others to have a feel of the experiences of those who had gone through those terrible days when killings were rampant. A story which my mother narrated many times runs like this: When our village Mastiwal was attacked second and final time, the men went to fight and asked their families to vacate the village. My father Ali Bukhsh went to the front like other men. A cousin of my father Imam Bukhsh was leading the women and children of the immediate family. They were trying to escape. On the way they saw two men standing on a higher place along the path. They had *barchhis* alongside them as they stood. Seeing them the group stopped. My mother used to tell that she thought that the end had come and internally tried to prepare to face death and decided to request the would-be executors to kill the elders first which meant not to kill the children in front of them. The men came down from the high ground and near the group. They asked whether Mastiwal had been vacated. On getting the yes answer they told the group to go. According to my mother the group thought that they would be killed a little further on the path because there were trees and plants and the place looked hideous. And I was with my mother.

As mentioned earlier, for so many years after Partition my father continued to believe of their return to Mastiwal. And I know on both sides, as already felt and noted, this was generally the situation. His reaction to all this, during bad moments of his life, used to be outrageous and he would hurl his forceful outbursts against nobody but Jinnah. When I concentrated on these things, I found there was a lesson in this, a lesson in the reading and understanding of history.

My father was a peasant, a very simple person. He was illiterate. Except working on his fields, he was not exposed to any experiences such as of travel and company of wise men etc. What it means for me is what I concluded after long study, reasoning and correcting myself again and again so many times was the same what was a simple peasant's gut feeling and reaction who along with his family and community had to pass through the tragedy of the partition of the Punjab.

If there was effects on me of what I had heard from my parents and others in my childhood, the reverse of that triumphed when I grew up. There is a proof of that. During the 1965 India-Pakistan war, I was in Dhaka as engineering student as mentioned earlier. There was a students' procession implying patriotism which marched up to the Governor's House. The Governor Monem Khan addressed us. One year after Pakistan was to celebrate the first Defense of Pakistan Day on 6 September, 1966. At that time I was also a student of Arabic in Islamic Academy near the Baitul Mukarram Masjid and the first Defence of Pakistan Day function was also to be held there. Abul Hashim Sahib wanted that some of us should speak on the occasion. I accepted the 'challenge'. Prior to that I had no such experience. I put a lot of effort for studying and writing my speech in the Public Library near the Race Course Ground. I

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delivered my speech which Dhaka Television covered and my friends and class-mates saw me on the screen. Now the point for which I narrated all this is that in my speech there was anti-Hindu rhetoric which was and is a normal thing in Pakistan. Therefore, contrary to be able to appreciate my father's sentiments, I had absorbed the prevailing prejudices of the time.

Does Punjabiyat exist or is it in the imagination of the few? The counter question is, was there ever any event anywhere involving any Punjabis since Partition where the expression of Punjabiyat had not been experienced or observed? And then does not the imagination of an individual or of the few has been turning into reality in history? When I recollect the Pakistan made film 'Kartar Singh' which I saw in the Crown Cinema of Lahore sometime during the 1950s, I see today the impressions of Punjabiyat running throughout the film. Punjabiyat existed all along in all Punjabis. Potentially, hydel energy existed all along in flowing rivers, but man could harness it only at certain point in time in history. Punjabiyat is like sunshine, scattered everywhere but has not been collectable so far to make it an engine of change for the region.

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Ajay Bhardwaj wrote "The partition of Punjab in 1947 created a paradoxical situation that Punjabis had never experienced before: they were one people, but with two mainlands now — India and Pakistan. In that sense, Punjab ceased to exist; by and large, Punjabis took to perceiving their world through the prism of nation states and national boundaries, shaped by whichever side of the divide they found themselves in. In the process, the self became the other. The universe of Punjabiyat — a shared way of life — was marginalised. It was replaced by perceptions of contending identities, which have found an echo in the dominant power politics of east Punjab these past 65 years. However, the idea of Punjabiyat has not been totally erased. In ways seen and unseen, it continues to inhabit the universe of the average Punjabi's everyday life, language, culture, memories and consciousness." [4]

[4] The Hindu, 15 August 2012

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**Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed**

Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmed of the ‘Trust for History, Arts and Architecture of Pakistan’ **writes:** “With regard to identities deriving from religion, sect and caste, it was religion that became the identity around which the three main communities of pre-partition Punjab, the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, were mobilised. However, in 1947, the Hindus and Sikhs became one group called the non-Muslims while Muslims of all sects and persuasions became the other group. Demonisation and dehumanisation by these two groupings followed and it culminated in horrendous killings during the partition of Punjab.”

He **continues** about developments, when being Punjabis was not of much use to build solidarity. “Afterwards, the Sikhs and Hindus fell out over the future shape of East Punjab and it was split into two major parts in 1966, when Hindi-speaking areas were separated from it and given to Haryana while some Punjabi-speaking areas were given to Himachal Pradesh. In the 1980s, the Khalistan movement emerged and communal violence and terrorism ravaged East Punjab. In the Pakistani West Punjab, sectarianism raised its ugly head in 1953 and again from the 1990s onwards Shia-Sunni conflict wrecked hundreds of lives. In all these developments, being Punjabis was not of much use to build solidarity.”

Hoping against all odds, Dr. Ishtiaq does not let the thin thread break. “Yet, an emotive undercurrent of Punjabiyat permeates ordinary encounters between Punjabis of all sorts. I have experienced this all over the world where Indian and Pakistani Punjabis meet — cricket matches, conferences, mushairas (poetry recitations) and just random interactions at bus stops and underground stations. Can it ever be the basis of solidarity between Punjabis, which transcends the incidences of caste, creed and sect? This does not seem very likely at present but one can never be absolutely sure it will not ever happen.” [5]

[5] <http://apnaorg.com/articles/ishtiaq> 27/ 7-3-2014, *Daily Times, Sunday*, December 15, 2013

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**Talking with Tariq Ali in Punjabi**

By Swaraj Bir, 8-4-2012, New Delhi

This is what Swaraj Bir writes about his interview with Tariq Ali. “I requested Dr. Tirpathi and Dharam Bir that if possible I want to interview Tariq Ali in Punjabi. Tariq Ali was scheduled to release the book of Ali Madeeh Hashmi on Faiz Ahmed



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Faiz ‘The way it was once’ and make a speech. They told me that after the function there will be lunch and that I could talk at that time. I told them, ‘No, get some time for me. I have to talk to him about Punjab.’ The time was fixed April 8 2010 at 2.30 p.m. I am happy, very happy. My wife says, ‘Jhallay ho gaey oah’, that I am behaving like a simpleton. In my heart, I prepare myself. I had never interviewed anybody. This is my first interview. I am scared. I phone Dr. Mahinder Singh. He is a historian ... I think that if I will make a mistake, he will correct it. Dr. Sahib agrees and we both reach in time and talk to Tariq Ali.

Swaraj Bir: What do you think what was the vision of your maternal grandfather Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan’s Unionist Party about Sanjha (joint, shared, undivided) Punjab and that it should not be divided?”

This quote which I have translated from Punjabi is full of passion and affection for Punjab and Punjabi, the real flavor of which is in the original Punjabi text.

In the interview when they talk about Punjabi and its scripts:

Tariq Ali: If all Punjab had learnt Gurmukhi script, what a good situation would have been there!

Swaraj Bir: Anyhow, the other script was also known to all. We also knew this script; we also taught to our children.

Tariq Ali: Gurmukhi or Urdu?

Swaraj Bir: Urdu.

Tariq Ali: Yes (Han)! What is the reason of this? Tell me one thing, why Urdu? Why not Gurmukhi? I feel that in our Punjabis there has always been some complex about our language that our language is not so good. Yes, Punjabi language has not been promoted in quite a good way, not even before Partition.” [5]

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[5] From the interview of Tariq Ali by Swaraj Bir on 8-4-2012 in New Delhi. Taken from the website apnaorg.com in Punjabi, in Gurmukhi and Persian scripts and translated by the author.

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With a right spirit the ‘Academy of the Punjab in North America’ introduces itself as ‘A non-religious and non-political organization of all Punjabis for the promotion of Punjabi language, literature and culture’. And the Academy introduces its quarterly magazine in Punjabi language ‘Sanjh’ [6] which means ‘sharing’. Every word of this introduction emanates the spirit behind it which is Punjabiyat. Its English rendering has been done by me, which is: “In both Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi scripts with same content, this is the quarterly magazine ‘Sanjh’ which is being printed from Lahore in Shahmukhi script and from Ludhiana in Gurmukhi script. This is an effort to move forward the sharing (Sanjh) of all Punjabis so that due to Punjabi’s two separate scripts the increasing gap in the vocabulary may be prevented, the sharing (Sanjh) of healthy ideas between the writers, intellectuals, and readers of Punjabi of the two scripts should increase, and the sharing (Sanjh) of Punjabi culture and care and growth of the language should become strong. This magazine is representative of the thinking of the writers of all the three - East, West and Foreign - Punjabs and is distributed in every that country where Punjabis live.”

[6] The magazine seems to have ceased publication.

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### **A school’s identity: Punjabi everywhere**

The historical edifice of the Government High School No. 1 Chakwal, with its embellished turrets and arches, is today perhaps, the only sign of the school’s rich history and lost identity. Few remember that this school was once called the S.S. Khalsa High School Chakwal and fewer still remember the great men who laid the foundations of this school. One of the school staffroom walls, like any other government building in Pakistan, bears the portraits of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Iqbal. However, on the opposite wall there is a portrait of a Sikh man, with the inscription: S. Harbans Singh Sistani, founding chairman of the S.S. Khalsa High School Chakwal. Similarly, the portrait of Sardar Chet Singh hangs in the principal’s office. These men were among the five students of Munshi Sant Singh who founded this school in 1910 and named it Sant Singh or S.S. Khalsa School in his honour. A marble plaque has survived from the time and with Punjabi words etched in it in Gurmukhi script. “It says that five students of Munshi Sant Singh built this school in

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the honour of their teacher,” explained Qazi Baqir Waseem, a Punjabi poet who has also taught at this school. ... Sardar Chet Singh and Sardar Harbans were also forced out of their homes and settled in Delhi. Soon after settling down, the first thing they did was opening another school. They acquired three acres of land in Amar colony, in Lajput Nagar Delhi and laid the foundation of a school which they named ‘S.S. Khalsa Senior School Secondary School (Chakwal) Delhi’. Although now in Delhi, the name of this new school included the word Chakwal in brackets, paying homage to the beloved homeland they had left behind. “This new school operates to this day, educating 1,300 students free of charge,” Mr Kohli (Sardar Rattan Deep Singh Kohli, the grandson of Sardar Chet Singh) said. He said that the school educates underprivileged students and does not discriminate on the basis of religion. ... The grandsons of Chet Sing and Harbans Singh were “invited by the Old Students Association of Government High School No. 1 Chakwal for the school’s centenary celebrations (on 17 October 2010). When the two men arrived from across the border and saw the marble plaque with the names of their grandfathers, they were overwhelmed by emotions. Today, an international border and hundreds of miles separate them from their ancestral land and legacy of their grandfathers. They kissed the plaque, unable to hold back their tears. Meanwhile, the old Students Association members were somewhat embarrassed. ‘We had nothing to show our distinguished guests from India, the original name of the school had been removed, and a market and a bus stand had encroached upon school property,’ said one member of the association. ‘Sardar Chet Singh and Sardar Harbans Singh were great benefactors. Chakwal owes huge debt to them which can only be paid by restoring the school to its original name,’ said Yunus Awan, Old Students Association president.” [7]

In a way, both Sardars took Chakwal along with them but at the same time leaving it in Pakistan! After the extreme adversity of 1947, not losing faith in humanity, what more civilized behaviour there can be? It was Punjabiyyat everywhere, it is Punjabiyyat everywhere.

[7] Dawn (<https://www.dawn.com/news/1159317>) January 25, 2015 by Nabeel Anwar Dhakku (100 years on, a school searches for its identity)

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But then bad things are always looking for their opportunities. It was reported [8] that “the 105-year-old historic building of the Government High School No. 1 Chakwal was demolished on Thursday. The building was built by five members of the Sikh community in 1910 but due to the constant neglect and apathy by the officials concerned, the building kept on crumbling. The building was declared dangerous.”

[8] Dawn, May 08, 2015

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That “the structure crumbled to such an extent that it could not be preserved,” as told by the District Coordination Officer (DCO) was simply not believable. Therefore, it is dismissed summarily. Preservation of heritage is almost always possible. But there has to be a mind for that. The state officials, by and large, in Pakistan are history-illiterate and anti-heritage. Normally prejudiced, culturally and technically poor, their actions by default disfigure and damage heritage. I remember, years ago they used electric grinder to clean the famous Zamzama, the 18th century heavy artillery gun that stood mounted on a platform in the midst of the Mall Road, near Punjab University’s Old Campus, in Lahore.

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### Khushwant Singh

In his Hindu-Sikh relations – II: Punjabiati can show the way to brotherhood Khushwant Singh wrote: “Khalistan is dead as dodo. But separatist elements still find takers among the Sikhs. The latest example was the acceptance of the Nanak Shahi Calendar prepared by Piara Singh of Canada by the SGPC. Hitherto the Sikhs had followed the Bikrami Calendar to celebrate their religious festivals. Some anomalies were certainly there — some years ago Guru Gobind Singh’s birth anniversary was celebrated twice but no one bothered. But the logic behind the rejection of the calendar is insidious: all communities have calendars of their own, why not the Sikhs? In addition, while it mentions Bhindranwale as a martyr, it ignores the martyrdom of Sant Longowal.

“Law and order has been restored in Punjab. Its peasants grow bumper crops of wheat and rice year after year. Its industrial city, Ludhiana, is booming with its hosiery, bicycles, sewing machines and ancillary motor parts. Its products find markets in India and abroad. Punjab could even do better provided its two principal communities worked hand in hand. At the moment they live together but separately. This is not good enough. For the spirit of Panjabiyat it is necessary to restore the old relationship of *naunh tay maas da rishta*. It can be done provided leaders of the two communities stop criticising each other and show the way to a united brotherhood of Hindus and Sikhs.” [9]

[9] Khushwant Singh, The Tribune, 4 November 2003

Working for achieving what Khushwant Singh sahib said, “united brotherhood of Hindus and Sikhs” while aspiring and struggling for friendship with Punjabis of Pakistan, picture of Punjabiyat becomes complete. Whatever the adversities, our

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civilised future lies only in the reality of and faith in Hindu-Muslim-Sikh joint heritage of Punjab.

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And such narratives are endless. If you do not stop searching and digging, you will continue to find more and more. There is pain and regret in every narrative and it is on both sides. And more often you will be aggrieved even more than before. Which one you have gone through depends what chance or your efforts made it possible. Such has been the year of 1947 for Punjab!

The website of the above referred 'Academy of the Punjab in North America' [10] begins with great eight names of Punjabi literature: Baba Farid (1173-1265), Guru Nanak (1469-1539), Shah Hussain (1539-1599), Sultan Bahoo (1629-1690), Bulleh Shah (1680-1758), Waris Shah (1722-1798), Mian Muhammad Bukhsh (1830-1907) and Khawaja Farid (1841-1901). The entire effort of this academy, I believe, is an inspiring embodiment of Punjabiyyat.

[10] [www.apnaorg.com](http://www.apnaorg.com)

Can anyone say that there existed any semblance of inclination or attitude in the writings of any of our 'Great' what later characterized the inclination, attitude and therefore the practical politics of Urdu Party and Jinnah? This is Punjab's 'fixed deposit' of civilization accumulated by our worthy ancestors. With pride, faith and confidence we should look forward to build new in the future.

Why Punjabiyyat survived in spite of the so widespread and heinous crimes committed by the perpetrators from the 'other' side as it looked to the ordinary folks? Punjabiyyat survived because Punjabis survived and it was a part of their body and soul. Therefore the question seems to be not right but useful for our elaborative purpose. Punjabiyyat survived because it is a civilizational phenomenon, a part of the totality of our existence. When Civilization is weak which is a natural phenomenon, crime raises its head to which Civilization has to respond in its own and appropriate way. As Crime is not an alternative to our existence, it can create difficulties, damage here and there, deform some modes of existence etc., but cannot obliterate our existence itself because it itself is also part of our existence. Whatever remains and in whatever form it remains after the crimes have been committed, Civilization starts its work again with the available capital. Therefore 1947 was not final, is not final and will not be final. The final has to be right, otherwise it cannot be final. Therefore, ultimately, Punjabiyyat will prevail and will be final.

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### **Panjab Digital Library**

A statement of Panjab Digital Library Chandigarh on its website states: “PDL strives to serve 120 million Punjabis worldwide.” A platform for all Punjabis is representative of Punjabyat. This led me to follow PDL on this side of Wagah. Therefore, I feel comfortable in ending this chapter by reproducing the ‘Introduction’ of ‘Panjab Heritage Digital Library’ – a project of Baba Farid Punjabi Academy:

What led me to ‘Panjab Heritage Digital Library’ was the ‘Panjab Digital Library’ (PDL) Chandigarh, Punjab, India which I had been consulting during my work for quite some time. On their website <http://www.panjabdigilib.org> this is how they have narrated their history:

**“By the grace of Guru Nanak Sahib, PDL began operations in 2003 as a small organization tasked with a gigantic mission. Starting with one agenda, one desktop, and one employee, PDL has come a long way since.**

**“The project emerged from the concerns shared by a group of individuals for the fast-disappearing or already-lost heritage of Sikhs and Panjab. In many such cases, valuable material, rare literature, architecture and signs of much celebrated memories were completely destroyed, whether by ageing, accident or human aggression. Despite these losses, it was clear there was still a lot left that worth saving. This vision of preservation was the primary motivation for the project. After much deliberation and brainstorming, the project was established with a focus on archiving the endangered invaluable manuscripts and other literature to conserve and defend the heritage, culture and language of the Panjab state.**

**“A typical digitization project, even on a small scale, requires a big budget by any conservative estimate. Without any initial infrastructure, expertise or funds to support the project, PDL somehow not only survived, but excelled through sheer motivation and concern for the heritage.**

**“PDL went through rigorous research and ground work initially to establish commonalities and fix mutual priorities. With each passing day the organization grew in skill, talent, experience and number. The budding library acquired equipment, and skills in preservation, digitization, data management and archiving. Projects around the globe were closely studied to build an understanding of what would be needed to establish a successful digitization project. Internationally recognized benchmarks were referred to and complied with. In the process, the organization also created benchmarks**

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**and documentation relevant to the realities of South-Asia that conformed to the international standards.**

**“With increased expertise, efficiency and indigenous development of equipment, PDL has marked numerous milestones and seen exponential growth in terms of digitization output and resources. We continue to research ways to reduce operational costs, and increase digitization throughput and work quality while creating successful low cost models to emulate and make digital preservation a viable option for heritage preservation.**

**“PDL seeks to promote an entirely new culture of awareness, where the masses contribute to the safeguarding of old texts. Come and be a part of the growing revolution.”**

I believe this is more than sufficient in any way for any Pakistani Punjabi who is concerned about his/her heritage to begin work on similar lines for Pakistan part of the Punjab. History is not divisible. It is deeply satisfying that 1947 has not in any way blurred our vision and the totality of Punjab is always in our sight. I decided about a year back to start the work as early as possible. Therefore, to begin with, we launch this website today on December 25, 2016. Although the aim is generally clear, the way forward cannot be defined presently due to lack of human and material resources. My political work and advancing age are other factors. Therefore, it has to be piecemeal and as we move forward, we shall, Insha’Allah, continue to be enlightened by the experience of PDL. I pray this initiative should also culminate in Pakistani Punjab’s joining in PDL’s ‘growing revolution’ in every possible way. We are based in Lahore, Pakistan.

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Sarab Punjabi Manifesto

### **My village Mastiwal**

This is from the story of Rana Muhammad Azhar Khan of Okara (Pakistan) as told to Dr. Ishtiaq Ahmad on 06 March 2016 in Lahore and published in ‘The Friday Times’ 08 July 2016 under the title ‘Friendship in a time of mass murder’. The Punjabiyaat is everywhere in what Rana sahib narrated and for me a personal touch too. He told:

“I was born on 14 December 1934 in a family belonging to the Naru clan of the Rajputs who converted to Islam some centuries earlier and were settled mostly in Hoshiarpur district and the areas around it. My elders were the chiefs of the Naru Rajputs. We belonged to Haryana, a *kasbah* (hamlet) nine miles north of Hoshiarpur district. Haryana is at the foot of the Sivalik mountain range.

“The first attack which took place in our neighbourhood was on a Muslim Gujjar village, Mastiwal, by Sikhs. The Gujjars were employed in the army and so they fought back while their women escaped on foot. We offered them refuge but they wanted only milk and some food and preferred to stay in the refugee camp which had been set up when attacks began to take place. I remember our Hindu neighbour Prem Sagar and another Hindu came to the refugee camp and expressed great sorrow. ... I was born on 14 December 1934 in a family belonging to the Naru clan of the Rajputs who converted to Islam some centuries earlier and were settled mostly in Hoshiarpur district and the areas around it. My elders were the chiefs of the Naru Rajputs. We belonged to Haryana, a *kasbah* (hamlet) nine miles north of Hoshiarpur district. Haryana is at the foot of the Sivalik mountain range. ...”

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I happened to read this and found the mention of my village ‘Mastiwal’ in this. As I calculated from the map, Mastiwal is about 3.5 kilometres from Garhdiwala on the north-east (ten degrees north) line passing through Garhdiwala. And Garhdiwala itself is about 15.5 kilometres from Haryana toward Dasuya on the Hoshiarpur-Dasuya road. Therefore distance between Haryana and Mastiwal is about 19 kilometres.

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We continue with Rana sahib’s narrative:

“... Apart from Muslim Rajputs the other main religious community in our area were Hindus. The Rajputs owned most of the land while the shops were owned by Hindus. There were very few Sikhs. The Rajputs held important positions in the traditional social order and were granted administrative and honorific titles such as honorary magistrate, *zaildar*, *lamberdar*, *sufedposh*, and so on, by the government.



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“Haryana was a paragon of communal harmony, peace and solidarity. Our idyllic community could pride over a school called Hindu-Muslim High School. The name of the school and the idea of building it was that of Pandit Lala Harcharan Das, a local Brahmin. He approached our elders for a grant of land, which my uncle Rana Muhammad Ali gave happily. ... The novel name of the school – Hindu-Muslim High School – attracted idealistic people from all over the Punjab of those days. Lala Madanlal Chadha, who belonged originally to Bhaati Gate, Lahore, joined the school as headmaster. ...

“Our teachers were saintly people. Maulana Rahimuddin belonged to Meerut. He used to teach Persian. He also led prayers on important occasions. During the daily hour reserved for *deeniyat* (religious) studies, Pandit Mast Ram used to teach Hindus and Sikhs their scriptures while Maulvi Fateh Mohammad taught Muslim students about Islam. ...

“All the religious festivals were celebrated with great joy and with all communities taking part in them. *Dussera* was a Hindu festival but Rana Mohammad Hussain Khan *zaildar* (Haryana) presided over the organising body of the function. ... Haryana remained largely free from the confrontational politics of the 1940s. Once Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad and some other Congress leaders came to our remote community. They had heard about the Hindu-Muslim High School and wanted to express their support to such an initiative. A *pehlwan* type fellow of Haryana lifted up Gandhiji on his shoulders so that everyone could see him. ...”

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Everywhere there was tragedy. The established order of society of Punjab which generation after generation created bit by bit was being dismantled. Humanity was in bewilderment and unable to understand and do anything but to try to escape. The forces of evil created and let loose by the British during 1947 was their departing ‘gift’ to the sub-continent. Obviously, we were so vulnerable and this happened! And today I have to see the map to connect myself with my village! The state powers continued to widen the gulf between people who were once one and eventually have to be one again. We must resolve and commit ourselves and declare ‘Never Again’. ■