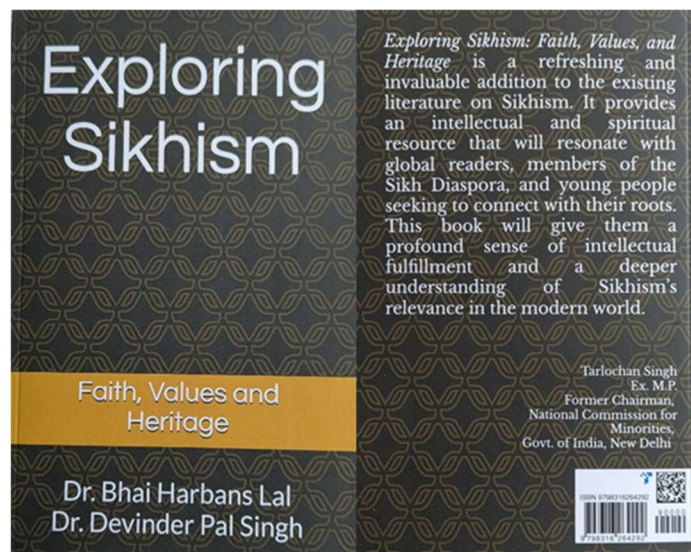


BOOK REVIEW

EXPLORING SIKHISM: FAITH, VALUES, AND HERITAGE

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It is my pleasure to write a review of "Exploring Sikhism: Faith, Values, and Heritage," authored by the esteemed scientists and theologians Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal and Dr. Devinder Pal Singh. It is a profound and timely contribution to Sikh scholarship, offering a comprehensive exploration of Sikhism's spiritual, philosophical, and cultural dimensions. This hardcover volume comprises 18 chapters, organized into four thematic arcs. It is enriched by a foreword from S. Tarlochan Singh, a former Indian parliamentarian, which serves as a detailed introduction to the book. The book is a scholarly yet accessible resource for both Sikhs and non-Sikhs, addressing the faith's timeless wisdom and its relevance in a rapidly evolving, technology-driven world.

The book is structured as a collection of various essential and innovative articles published by the authors in different journals and newspapers, bridging Sikhism's eternal teachings with contemporary challenges, making it both a theological treatise and a practical guide. Its four

parts—Foundations of Faith, Spiritual Praxis and Historical Legacy, Sikhism in the Age of Innovation, and Global Challenges and Sikh Identity—offer a logical progression from core principles to their modern applications.

Part I: Foundations of Faith (Chapters 1–5) establishes the philosophical underpinnings of Sikhism. Dr. Lal's opening chapter, *The Whole Earth is Exalted When Drenched in the Guru's Wisdom*, uses Guru Nanak's metaphor of the ocean and rivers to illustrate Sikhism's universal appeal, emphasizing its inclusivity and adaptability across cultures. The co-authored book *Sikhism - A Universal Religion* further dismantles misconceptions, highlighting Sikhism's emphasis on equality, tolerance, and ethical values through scriptural references, such as Guru Arjun's "No one is my enemy, and no one is a stranger" (SGGS, p. 1299). Dr. Singh's *The Spiritual Path in Sikhism* maps the soul's journey from love to eternal bliss. At the same time, Dr. Lal's *Three Pillars for a Fulfilled Life* revisits the ethical triad of *Naam*, *Daan*, and *Isnaan*, presenting them as dynamic principles for balanced living.

Part II: Spiritual Praxis and Historical Legacy (Chapters 6–11) delves into lived Sikh spirituality. Dr. Singh's *Compassion in Sikh Dharmic Tradition* portrays compassion as a way of life, embodied in practices like *seva* and *langar*. The chapter on *Khima* (forbearance), co-authored with Ek Ongkaar Khalsa Michaud, draws on the lives of the Gurus to illustrate how resilience fosters liberation. Dr. Singh's *Relevance of Guru Granth in the Present Era* highlights the scripture's guidance on contemporary issues, such as environmental stewardship, while Dr. Lal's *When the Light is Dimmed* cautions against moral decline, advocating for community-driven renewal.

Part III: Sikhism in the Age of Innovation (Chapters 12–15) is particularly innovative, exploring the intersection of Sikhism and artificial intelligence (AI). The co-authored book, *At the Intersection of AI, Spirituality, and Sikhism*, proposes ethical AI frameworks rooted in Sikh values, such as humility and justice. Dr. Singh's *Khalsa Synergy* envisions AI amplifying Sikh education and activism. At the same time, *AI and Sikh Heritage* explores digitization efforts to preserve manuscripts and oral histories, cautioning against reducing heritage to mere data. Dr. Singh has written many papers on the role of AI in Sikhism. He cautioned the Sikhs to be careful while using AI information about Sikhism because some of such information may not truly represent Sikhism.

Part IV: Global Challenges and Sikh Identity (Chapters 16–18) addresses existential threats. Dr. Singh's *Sikhism's Perspective on Environment and Sustainable Development* draws on the Guru Granth Sahib's reverence for nature, citing initiatives like Eco-Sikh's Guru Nanak Forest project. *Empowering a Global Movement for Sikh Renaissance* calls for an intellectual and creative revival, while *Braving the Challenges to Sikh Identity* addresses issues such as discrimination, assimilation, and misrepresentation, advocating for education and interfaith dialogue.

The book's greatest strength lies in its interdisciplinary approach, seamlessly blending theology, science, and technology. Both authors, distinguished scholars with backgrounds in neuroscience (Lal) and physics (Singh), bring rigour and clarity to their analyses. Their complementary perspectives – Lal's focus on theological nuance and Singh's emphasis on practical applications, create a balanced narrative that appeals to diverse audiences, from scholars to practitioners.

The exploration of AI's role in Sikhism is a standout feature, addressing a gap in religious studies. By proposing ethical AI frameworks and practical applications, such as digitizing scriptures and virtual reality tours of historical sites, the authors position Sikhism as a forward-thinking faith that can engage with modernity without compromising its core values. The book's global outlook, reflected in its discussion of the Sikh diaspora and initiatives like Khalsa Aid, underscores Sikhism's universal relevance, aligning with Guru Nanak's vision of a faith without borders.

The use of primary sources, particularly the Guru Granth Sahib, grounds the arguments in authentic Sikh thought. Quotes like "The One God is our father; we are the children of the One God" (SGGS, M. 5, p. 611) reinforce the faith's inclusivity. The inclusion of historical anecdotes, such as Guru Nanak's rejection of Sanskrit elitism, adds narrative depth, making complex ideas accessible.

While the book is comprehensive, its ambitious scope occasionally leads to uneven depth. For instance, the chapter on AI and Sikh heritage could benefit from more detailed case studies of existing digitization projects to strengthen its practical recommendations. Additionally, the book's focus on North American and Indian contexts somewhat limits its engagement with Sikh communities in other regions, such as Southeast Asia or Africa, which could enrich its global perspective.

Writing, while clear, occasionally veers into academic density, which may be challenging for casual readers. Simplifying certain sections or including more visual aids, such as timelines or infographics, could enhance accessibility. Lastly, the book's discussion of internal community challenges, like fragmentation among Sikh institutions, is insightful but could be expanded to offer more concrete solutions.

"Exploring Sikhism" is a vital resource in an era of rapid technological and environmental change. Its emphasis on Sikhism's ecological ethics, exemplified by principles like "*Pavan Guru, Pani Pita*" (SGGS, Jap Sloka 2, p. 8), aligns with global sustainability goals, making it relevant to policymakers and activists. The book's call for a Sikh renaissance, driven by youth empowerment and interfaith dialogue, resonates with diaspora communities navigating identity in multicultural societies.

For Sikh youth, the book serves as both inspiration and a roadmap, encouraging them to leverage technology and education to preserve their heritage.

For non-Sikhs, it offers an inviting entry point into a faith often misunderstood, countering stereotypes through its emphasis on universal values like compassion and justice. The foreword by Tarlochan Singh and endorsements from figures like Arnold Toynbee and Pearl S. Buck enhance its credibility, affirming Sikhism's place in humanity's spiritual treasury.

"*Exploring Sikhism: Faith, Values, and Heritage*" is a masterful work that celebrates Sikhism's rich legacy while boldly charting its future. Dr. Lal and Dr. Singh have crafted a book that is both a scholarly milestone and a heartfelt invitation to engage with Sikh wisdom. Its interdisciplinary lens, particularly its pioneering exploration of AI, positions it as a must-read for anyone interested in religion, technology, or global ethics. As the authors conclude, Sikhism is not a relic but a "compass for the future," guiding humanity toward justice, equality, and truth. This book is a beacon for that journey, deserving a place on the shelves of scholars, practitioners, and seekers worldwide.