Anne Murphy’s
“The Materiality of the Past-History and Representation in Sikh Tradition”
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Anne Murphy is an Assistant Professor and Chair of Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.

The above mentioned book is Anne’s doctoral thesis. She completed her ‘research’ under advisor Dr. J.S.Hawley Columbia University. Her thesis is mainly in the spirit of Harjot Oberoi’s book. “The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition” (this book led to very strong reactions which culminated in his resignation from the Chair of Sikh studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada in 1996 (i.e. the same chair that Anne Murphy is occupying now).

Anne Murphy’s book seems to have been written specially to propagate that Guru Nanak founded no religion and Sikhism became a religion only in the 20th century. Her ‘intentions’ are revealed in her reference to Jainism and Buddhism: “…Jainism and Buddhism. What we now designate with the single term Hinduism…” (page 25 of Anne’s book). And, what Anne Murphy has tried to propagate, in this work, is exactly what the Hindus did with Buddhism and Jainism, the religions which were born many centuries before the advent of Hinduism in the nineteenth century.

She has a hidden agenda. Anne Murphy is trying to manipulate just as the fanatic Hindu intelligentsia has manipulated to describe Buddhism and Jainism. The first attempt to present Sikhism in such manner was done by the fundamentalist and extremist Hindus like Daya Nand (founder of the Arya Samaj), and, the Christian missionary W.H. McLeod who furthered his mission with a different but similar motive. McLeod’s student Harjot Oberoi followed the same contour. Now Anne Murphy has further carried the mission. Thus, this is a chain, and, all the activists of Anti Sikhism School are working in furtherance of the same academic conspiracy.

Interestingly, she claims that her thesis is based mainly on two premises: history of the Sikhs and the role of the shrines of the Sikhs. But, after reading her work, one can easily
say that she has neither read the history of the Sikhs nor does she know much about the Sikh shrines. I would like to discuss just two issues presented by her in this work.

1. The Sikh identity:
   
   (A) The nature of the Sikh identity has always been was fluid; it had never been clearly defined; it has evolved over a period of time (B) it was established by the British or/and by the Singh Sabha Movement; it was a result of the Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25). (C). Sikh identity was finally established through the Government legislation: the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925.

2. The Gurdwaras:

   Before the Gurdwara Reform Movement the Gurdwaras were not different from the Hindu temples.

1. The issue of the Sikh Identity

   Anne Murphy says that the Sikh identity is/was fluid; it was never defined; it developed over a period of time. I shudder at the thought that a university teacher and a researcher, can be so ignorant (or dishonest). I am afraid she has not read more than a couple of books on Sikh history (and those written by authors with vested interests and ulterior motives). Truth is that almost all the genuine works of Sikh history clearly mention that the Sikhs were never considered a part of Hinduism (notwithstanding the facts that the author of these works may be an ardent Sikh, a Hindu, a Muslim or a Christian/Englishman).

1. If the Sikhs were a part of Hinduism then why did all the Gurus ask them to renounce Hindu rites and rituals, not to visit places of pilgrimage of the Hindus, not to have dealings with Hindu priests, not to observe Hindu festivals?

2. Once Bhai Manjh, a follower of Sakhi Sarvar (a Mohammedan sect), visited Chakk Guru (now Amritsar). He was so impressed by the way of life of the Sikhs that he expressed his desire to join the Sikh faith. When he met Guru Arjan and expressed his desire. Guru Arjan told him that he could not remain a follower of two faiths; therefore he shall have to totally renounce the Sakhi Sarvar sect, only then he would become a Sikh. At this Bhai Manjh declared that he would have no relations with his former faith. He went home and removed all signs of Sakhi Sarvar from his residence.

3. Most of the Hindu priests and rulers were hostile to the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh had to fight roughly 14 battles in his life time and more than 10 were to defend himself from the
attacks by the Hindu rulers (i.e. on 18.9.1688 at Bhangani; on 29.8.1700 at Taragarh; on 30.8.1700 at Agamgarh; on 31.8.1700 at Fatehgarh; on 1.9.1700 at Lohgarh; on 8, 12 and 13.10.1700 at Nirmohgarh; on 16.1.1704 at Anandpur; on 16.3.1705 at Anandpur, on 6.12.1705 at Shahi Tibbi, on 6.12.1700 at Jhakkhian, near the Sarsa rivulet. On all these occasions the Sikhs had to defend themselves against the aggressions by the Hindu rulers).

4. When Guru Gobind Singh revealed the Khalsa, the Hindu hill rulers opposed it and became hostile to the Sikhs. The Hindu shopkeepers of Delhi declared a boycott of the Sikhs.

5. In 1709-10, when Banda Singh Bahadur freed the Sikh Homeland (Punjab and its surroundings) from the Mughal rulers, the Royal Army, which fought against the Sikhs, included a very large number of Hindu soldiers; and, the Hindu rulers of all the major states (Jaipur, Jodhour, Udaipur, Jammu Kashmir and several from the present Uttarakhand) led these operations against the Sikhs. So much so that when the Sikhs sent their emissaries to meet the Hindu rulers, they killed them and reported this to the Mughal emperor.

6. On the 10th of December 1710, Bahadur Shah, the Mughal emperor issued an edict for the annihilation of the Sikhs. It is remarkable to note that this edict was honestly obeyed by most of the Hindu rulers. Secondly, the Hindus of the Punjab shaved their heads and beards, so that they may not look like the Sikhs.

7. When 700 Sikhs, who had been taken to Delhi, along with Banda Singh Bahadur and were being executed there, at Chandni Chowk, a lady approached the authorities begging them to spare her newly married young boy, on the plea that he was a Hindu and not a Sikh (though the newly married young man refused to renounce his religion just to save his life).

8. During the reign of Zakaria Khan (1726-45), Yahya Khan (1745-46) and Mir Muin (1748-53), the three Governors of the Punjab, the command of the Mughal army was with the Hindu generals (notorious among them were Lakhpat Rai and Jaspat Rai, and, later, Diwan Bhiwani Das and Diwan Hira Mall), who carried out mass killings of the Sikhs; they were responsible for the murder of roughly one hundred thousand Sikhs.

9. While the Sikhs were being arrested and persecuted for not renouncing their religion, the Hindus had no such problem, not at all. On the other hand, during this period, there were several Hindu feudal, chieftains and rulers who were the informers of the Mughal rulers.
10. The Mughal rulers had declared awards on the heads of the Sikhs, whereas the Hindu elite were a part of the Mughal regime; Hindus were enjoying the comforts and benefits of power.

11. Maubad Zulfiqar Ardastani (wrongly mentioned as Muhsan Fani) completed his work (Dabistan-i-Mazahib), a treatise on the religions of South Asia in 1640s. He has mentioned, in very clear words, that the Sikhs are altogether a different religion, and are different from the Hindus.

12. Anne Murphy has made another observation that the success of the Arya Samaj in the Punjab was as a reaction to the Singh Sabha movement (1873). It is amazing that she does not know even this fact that Arya Samaj* was founded much earlier to the Singh Sabha Movement. Dayanand (1824–1883), a native of Gujarat, founded Arya Samaj in 1868. He began with establishment of "Vedic Schools" or "gurukuls" which put an emphasis on Vedic values, culture and religion to its students. The first was established at Farrukhabad in 1869, with 50 students enrolled in its first year. This was followed by four schools in rapid succession at Mirzapur (1870), Kasganj (1870), Chhalesar (Aligarh) (1870) and Varanasi (1873). Dayanand’s the Gurukul/Vedic School system collapsed and the last of the schools (Farrukhabad) was closed down in 1876.

2. The issue of the Gurdwaras as ‘temples’

Anne Murphy claims that “the Gurdwaras took central stage in the early formation of the Sikh community...” (page 31 of her book).

[I am surprised to note poverty of her knowledge/understanding of language and history: e.g. while referring to Gurdwara Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo, she says that this Gurdwara came up because Guru Gobind Singh ‘took rest’ there. Firstly, damdama is not a resting place, it means a stop-over/station (and not resting place) on way to a journey; secondly, Damdama Sahib has been built in the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Similarly her knowledge of the other Gurdwaras is poor hence I do not want to discuss that].

History of the Gurdwaras:

Anne Murphy claims that “the Gurdwaras took central stage in the early formation of the Sikh community”, but, the question is: how many Gurdwaras were there in the whole of
the Sikh Homeland, before 1800, and again before 1925, and what and how much was their role in the scope for ‘creating’ or ‘shaping’ a religious identity?

By 1765, when the Sikhs finally captured power in the Punjab, there were only a few Gurdwaras (they could be counted on finger tips) i.e. Amritsar, Anandpur, Keeratpur, Goindwal, Khadur etc. Though Bakala, Dhamtan, Paonta, etc, too had been major Sikh centres but there were no activities because of aggressive attitude of the local Muslim rulers, and, Tarn Taran was just a tank. Besides, there were some centres which were under the occupation of the excommunicated members of the families of the Gurus i.e. the Sodhi clan: at Hehar (Lahore), four villages of Malwa (residences of the four sons of Harji, the grandson of Pirthi Chand), Kartarpur Jalandhar (belonging to the successors of Dhir Mall), Khur Vadhi, now Dehradun (under the control of the followers of Ram Rai) etc. Thus, there were not more than five shrines of the Sikhs; and, by this time there was no Gurdwara even at Nanakana Sahib, Tarn Taran, Muktsar, Baba Bakala, Sultanpur Lodhi etc.

Who built most of the Gurdwaras?: Most of the Gurdwara buildings were constructed by (A) Ranjit Singh (ruler of Lahore, ruled 1799-1839), his Sikh generals and the Sikh elite/feudal in the land under Ranjit Singh’s rule, (B) Karam Singh (ruler of Patiala, ruled 1813-1845) in the present Malwa zone (C) Baghel Singh (in Delhi); these were built by Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia between 1783 and 1790, (D) the shrines at Nander and other part of West and East and Dravid (South) lands were built by Diwan Chandu Lal, with financial help from the Muslim ruler of Hyderabad. Thus, there were not more than 100 Gurdwaras in the whole of the Sikh Homeland (i.e. present East Punjab, West Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Delhi, J & K); this was the position in the middle of nineteenth century. Most of the urban Gurdwaras were built in the later part of the nineteenth century, and, the village Gurdwaras came up after the Gurdwara Reform Movement (1920-25). When the Gurdwara Act was passed, there were only 700 Gurdwaras in the 20000 villages of the then British Punjab and the adjoining Sikh states i.e. present (the East Punjab, West Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Delhi, J & K). Further, there were no regular gatherings in these Gurdwaras (because there was no priestly class which could hold regular sessions in the Gurdwaras). On the other hand when the priestly class took over the Gurdwaras, they introduced the Hindu practices there. So, Anne Murphy’s thesis that the Gurdwars played pivotal role in establishing the Sikhs as a religion, a distinct community, an institution does not hold water.
How un-Sikh practices were introduced in Gurdwaras?

When Ranjit Singh settled on his throne and had sufficient command of the military and economic sources, he began behaving in the fashion of his predecessor (Mughal) rulers. By this time Brahmins like Khushal Chand (later Khushal Singh) and the Dogras of Jammu had intruded his army and administration. As the Brahmins and the Dogras were clever and cunning, they observed that Ranjit Singh had weakness for beautiful young girls and whiskey and other intoxicants; besides Ranjit Singh was fond of flattery too; and, the Brahmins and the Dogras were experts in exploiting such weak points. As a result, they became favourites of Ranjit Singh, and he granted them high positions in his court and even in his household; the posts of chamberlain, treasurer, finance officer, scribe etc. all were with the Brahmins of Hindustan or with the Dogras (Hindus) of Jammu.

From amongst the Brahmins from Hindustan (now known as Uttar Pradesh), Misr Beli Ram was the in charge of the treasure of Ranjit Singh; he was also responsible for issuing religious grants; and he made Ranjit Singh issue lavish grants to the descendants of the Bedis and Sodhis; the Udasis, Nirmalas as well as the Hindu temples at Thanesar, Jawala, Kangra, Jammu, Benaras too received large amounts of money; the temples at Tilla Gorakh Nath, Dhianpur, Pandori, Dhamtal, Purmandal also received big grants; so much so that Ranjit Singh sent 36 maunds (about 1000 kg) of gold for gold-plating one Hindu temple at Kashi/Benaras (now Varanasi). Besides, the Brahmin minister of Ranjit Singh got the land of Darbar Sahib Amritsar transferred to the Udasis and the other non-Sikh and anti-Sikh cults; today, there are several such sites which are, in fact, the property of Darbar Sahib (as the land of the whole of the town had been purchased by Guru Ram Das in 1564 from the owners of the village Tung; and there was no non-Sikh shrine in Amritsar up to 1804.

Under the patronage of the Brahmin ministers of Ranjit Singh, the priests, sarbrahs (managers) of Darbar Sahib and other shrines received good salaries, lavish grants, and precious gifts. Besides, these people also embezzled offerings of the devotees. This made them loyal to the Brahmin ministers and the Dogras (and, later, to the British rulers). A reading of the daily diaries of Ranjit Singh (in Umdatut Twareekh) shows that more than 75% of the grant of Ranjit Singh went to the Hindu shrines; 10% to the Gurdwaras and 15% to other non-Sikh centres. So much so that Ranjit Singh had appointed a Brahmin, Rulia Ram Misr as the tax collector of Amritsar.

Akali Phula Singh died in 1823. After him there was no one to monitor the activities and the practices at Darbar Sahib or other shrines. Now, the shrines at Amritsar were under
the occupation of the Nirmalas (Surat Singh, his son Sant Singh and the latter’s son Gurmukh Singh and so on) and the Udasis. The Brahmin minister of Amritsar had allotted the land around Darbar Sahib to the Udasis and the Nirmalas. The present Akharas of the Udasi had been illegally allotted to them. It was during the period of these Nirmala and Udasi priests that Hindu practices found their way in the Gurdwaras. Even after the death of Ranjit Singh and the occupation of the Punjab by the British, the management of Darbar Sahib remained in the hands of the Hindus. In 1859, the English rulers formed a ‘Committee’, under the chairmanship of Raja Teja Sinh Misr-Brahmin (He was the same Tej Ram Misr, the traitor, who had cheated the Lahore Darbar and handed over the Punjab to the English in 1845-46) which was to administer Darbar Sahib and other shrines, and, it was this ‘committee’ which drafted the Dastur-i-Amal. With the general command of Tej Ram Misr, Darbar Sahib came under the direct control of the Brahmans; and, with this not only the Hindu idols made their place in the premises of Darbar Sahib but also began performance of the katha (exegesis) of the Hindu scriptures in the bungas established on the land of Darbar Sahib. Besides, during this period a large number of Brahminic rituals and ceremonies were also introduced in Darbar Sahib; and, had there been no Sikh revival movement, Darbar Sahib would gradually have become a Hindu temple. The same happened with most of the Gurdwaras. It remained so till 1920. Thus, there was no so-called ‘secular’ character of the Gurdwaras, as claimed by Anne Murphy, but, rather it was illegal occupation by the Brahmin-Hindu forces who desecrated the sanctity of the Gurdwaras.

So, Anne Murphy’s assertion that the Gurwaras played role in establishing the distinct identity of the Sikhs is misleading. On the other hand the Hindu priests of the Gurdwaras raped Sikhism, misled the common Sikh and polluted the Sikh way of life. Had there been no Singh Sabha Movement and the Gurdwara Reform Movement, the Gurdwaras would have become centres of the mythical and fictitious gods and goddesses with Guru Granth Sahib lying in some chest, wardrobes or some corner of the building.

Had the British been interested in creating the Sikhs’s identity why would they have sided with the Hindu Mahants (priests and caretakers) who were occupying the Sikh shrines and practicing un-Sikh ceremonies and rituals there? The British regime killed (or collaborated the killings) of more than 500 Sikhs, imprisoning of more than 50000 Sikhs when they struggled for freedom of their shrines.
Anne Murphy’s research methodology

Another remarkable point of Anne’s work is that she has deliberately used only those sources which are either controversial works, or non-sources, or propaganda literature or the writings of the activists of the Anti Sikhism School (about 90% of the modern authors quoted by her are from the Anti Sikhism School e.g. W.H. McLeod, McLeodian flag carriers* (Harjot Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, Gurinder Mann, Louis E. Fenech, Doris Jacobsh, Nikky Guninder Kaur, etc). This unequivocally proves that either Anne Murphy has malice in her designs; hence her book can be condemned as a conspiracy and a piece of propaganda. In his Book “SIKHISM”, published By Penguin Books, in 1997, H.W. Mcleod, on the dedication page of the book, wrote: ”For Harjot Oberoi, Pashaura Singh, Gurinder Singh Mann, Lou Fenech who keep the Flag Flying”. This proves that they are most beloved ‘sikhs’ (i.e. followers), and flag carriers of McLeod.

One can understand what kind of academic message W.H. Mcleod had in his mind when he wrote this dedication? What kind of ‘flag’ Mcleod group is referring and what is he implying? It seems to imply the flag of ‘Operation Obliterate/distort Sikhism’ by carrying on academic deception in Sikh studies. Although McLeod claims in his Autobiography that he became Atheist but on the contrary in the Register of New Zealand Presbyterian Church Ministers web page ‘revised entry after his death’ reads him as ‘Reverend’: [www.archives.presbyterian.org.nz/Page181.htm](http://www.archives.presbyterian.org.nz/Page181.htm).

Conclusions:

1. Anne Murphey has interjected references from unauthentic sources
2. She has used either propaganda literature or controversial works or books written with ulterior motives.
3. She has ignored hundreds of works, which are special studies on the subject, thus exposing her intention to produce a propaganda literature.
4. She does not base her work on Sikh scriptures, authentic works of Sikh history and writings of the period she has discussed in her work.
5. She reaches a conclusion before going through work and then tries to find references suitable to her motives.
6. When she writes about Sikh religion, its philosophy, scripture or institutionalization, she cannot conceal her prejudices and lop-sided views.
7. Thus, her work is just hate propaganda intent at distortion of Sikhism; it is a conspiracy with heretic approach.
8. She seems to be a perverse writer, dishonest researcher, mischievous propagandist intent at some ulterior motive, probably to further the malicious designs of the Anti Sikhism School. This work is nothing different from other works by Anti Sikhism School referring to the discussed issues (especially Hew McLeod, Harjot Oberoi and J S Grewal’s works).

9. Besides, I wonder why Oxford University Press published each and every book by the Anti-Sikhism School mafia, even without bothering about the commercial value of the book. It appears/creates suspicions that there might be a Christian conspiracy as well?

10. Finally, I can say that the work by Anne Murphy is a sin against intellectualism, research and scholarship.

A Part of Larger Conspiracy against Sikhism

There seems to be a world-wide conspiracy of the Anti-Sikh fundamentalists to distort Sikh religion, philosophy, culture and way of life. This conspiracy has its roots in Hindu fundamentalism which has been not only hostile to Sikhism in politics but also active in distorting it due to an inferiority complex. The Hindu fundamentalists know that the Sikh ideology is a revolution among the philosophies of world religions. The Sikh Faith is in fact a religion and a way of life for the millenniums to come. It has a solution to most of the spiritual, social and ethnic/racial problems of the world. It is this superiority of this religion that causes prejudice and hatred in the minds of the notorious fundamentalist Hindus and Christians; and, to translate their hatred and aggressive opposition into action they have launched a movement of distortion of Sikh philosophy. Christian missionary H.W. McLeod, of New Zealand, launched clandestine activities against the Sikhs as early as the 1960s. This leader of the Anti Sikhism School, with the help of the fundamentalist politicians and rich elite among the Christians, established his cells in the universities world-wide and got his comrades-in-arms and his associates to some key positions. With the blessing of various Christian churches he was able to intrude in some Sikh circles too.

On the other hand, the Hindu fundamentalists, who had been inimical to the Sikh religion right from its origin, have always had had the state support (and even financing) of the Hindu fundamentalist, racist and terrorist organizations within India as well as abroad. They had already successfully launched a movement against Sikhism, through print, electronic and other media, and, under this planning they had begun distorting Sikhism, promoting Sikh apostates, traitors, and, organizing religious mafia-like activities against Sikhism.
It is not known that whether the fundamentalist Hindus invited Christian missionary McLeod the leader of the Anti Sikhism School to India or they began collaborating after his establishment in the Punjab; but, one thing is sure that this illegitimate union of fanaticism spread its influence in political, economic, academic and even within the Sikh religious world. Their joint efforts were collaborated by some Russia-financed Communist groups with equal vigour. The result in establishment and expansion of the Anti-Sikhism School with Mcleodian flag carriers like Pashaura Singh, Gurinder Mann, Harjot Oberoi, Louis E. Fenech, and the latest, Anne Murphy. They could manage to win over careerists like J. S. Grewal, Dr. Owen Cole (England) and some others.

The activities of the Anti-Sikhism School began with publication of introductory books on Sikhism. They did so to become well known among the Sikh circles. Soon, with the funds from secret sources, they began alluring research scholars to take up topics of research on Sikhism. They offered them scholarships and jobs. All the researchers, who worked under the supervision or guidance of this Anti-Sikhism School, chose subjects attacking the Sikh identity, Sikh scriptures, Sikh institutions and Sikh philosophy. As promised by them, McLeod got all his students were appointed against the chairs established for Sikh studies.

A perusal of the research work done by the researchers of this Anti-Sikhism School establishes the fact that none of the thesis produced by them is of value of high school standard; but, all of them were awarded Ph.D. degrees.

The first to produce such anti Sikh ‘research’ work was Pashaura Singh, who based his entire thesis on a hand written document of the nineteenth century and established as seventeenth century work. Then came Gurinder Mann who produced a thesis based on the non-existing hand written volumes. Both these projects were taken up to distort the very basis of Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. Within a few months of their completion of the degrees of their Ph.Ds they were given professorships in the Canadian and American universities rejecting dozens of scholars who were many times senior to them and each one of them had published dozens of books. Sikh scholars immediately brought to the attention of the readers the truth about the authenticity and other academic issues of these heretical manuscripts including, Pothi Har Sahai, Ms#1245 GNDU, Govindval Pothis, Vanjara Pothis, Bahowal Pothi, Amritsar Pothi/Boorey Sandhu Vali Beerh, Ms # 1192 GGS Panjab Universty Chandigarh and others.

After attacking the Sikh scripture, the Anti-Sikhism School attacked the Sikhs’ glorious tradition of martyrdom. This time McLeod could not find a traitor among the Sikhs
and he had to prepare a non-Sikh Louis E. Fenech to attack this institution of the Sikhs. Louis E. Fenech like other McLeodian flag carriers picked up a couple of secondary sources, made vague and phoney formulations, and got Ph.D. in no time and also a job in a university. **The latest to attack on Sikhism is Anne Murphy, who has chosen to attack the very Sikh identity.**

Request has been made for academic debate on all above important Sikh study issues but, So far no academic clarification or any other response received.

**The role of the Oxford University Press**

Then came several books by these authors, and. All these were published by the same publishers: The Oxford University Press. The Oxford University Press, is ever ready to publish books by these researches even if they are of most poor standards and even don’t have any commercial value to the publishers. This is how this Anti Sikhism School is involved in international conspiracy against Sikhism.

**An interesting observation:**

When W.H. McLeod and other associates of the Anti-Sikhism School do not have answers to their criticism, they point out only at the spellings and/or grammar mistakes in the articles/papers criticizing them.

**Books and Articles For further reading on Sikh study Academic issues:**

1. *Psychoanalysis of Dr. W. H. McLeod* by Dr. S. S. Sodhi and Dr. J. S. Mann
2. *McLeod and Fenech as scholars on Sikhism* by Dr Sangat Singh
3. *Earnest Trumpp and W.H.McLeod as scholars of Sikh History, Religion and Culture* by Dr Tarlochan Singh
4. “Sikhism original distinct and revealed religion” by Harnam Singh Shan,
5. “Sikhism: its identity” “Sikh ideology” “Essentials of Sikhism” by Daljeet Singh,
6. “Perspectives on Sikh Studies” “Sikh Revolution” by Jagjit Singh:
8. “Perspectives on the Sikh Tradition” - Ed. by Gurdev Singh et al

11. “Early Sikh Scriptural Tradition” - Dr. Balwant Singh Dhillon

12. “Sophistry of Dr. W.H. Hew McLeod” by Amarjit Singh Bal

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