

The Sikh Heritage Beyond Borders

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Pannu, Dalvir S. *The Sikh Heritage Beyond Borders*. India, Pannu Dental Group, 2019. 416 pages.

Decades after the 1947 partition of Indian subcontinent and post-1947 political antagonism, the bonds of land and love between people across India-Pakistan borders are still strong. *The Sikh Heritage beyond Borders* is yet one more manifestation of that.

“The communal riots of 1947 manifested that religion is what the believers make of it,” writes Dalvir S. Pannu in his introduction to the book – and rightly so (12). In this book, Pannu provides a textual and pictorial narration of a multitude of Sikh heritage sites in Pakistan. Pannu offers a comprehensive and nostalgic view of the Sikh history in Pakistan through the photos he took during his travel to Pakistan which is pleasing to the eye, comforting to the heart, and satisfying for any curious reader.

After opening the introduction to *The Sikh Heritage beyond Borders* with a brief historical overview of British colonization plan, Pannu shares the heart wrenching memories of both Sikhs and Muslim who were forced to migrate to either side of the India-Pakistan border. These stories echo the stories that we have all seen on screens, read in memoirs, or heard from our ancestors – they share a sense of loss and longing.

The book is divided Sikh heritage sites into five sections, each devoted to a city in Punjab in Pakistan: (i) Nankana Sahib, which includes fourteen sites; (ii) Sheikhpura, which includes three sites; (iii) Sialkot, which includes six sites; (iv) Kasur, which includes

seventeen sites; (v) Lahore, which includes forty sites. For each site in each city, Pannu provides an introduction to the city itself, details about the construction and architecture of the site, origin stories for the site, significance of the site for the Sikhs, and the current status and usage of the site in Pakistan. Each site is accompanied by multiple finely and professionally captured photos which almost transports the reader to the site itself.

So thorough is Pannu in their approach in this book and such is the range of diversity of these sites that the book contains gurdwaras like Gurdwara Janam Asthan Sahib and Gurdwara Baal Leela Sahib (which remain sacred sites) to Gurdwara Sant Nagar and gurdwara Jamait Singh Ji (which are now being used as residential buildings) – along with multiple small cities. The photos in this book themselves are a testament to the openness, warmth, and hospitability of the people in Pakistan: a lot of these sites have been turned into residential or commercial buildings, which would require occupants' permission for photos. Pannu has also included multiple maps in the book to provide a clear geographical background to the reader. The book is printed on a really fine paper, which enhances the reading experience even more.

Books like *The Sikh Heritage beyond Borders* are even more important and enjoyable now that there have been active efforts from Pakistani government to facilitate Sikh visitors to Pakistan in recent years. The book is not only significant for research on Sikh heritage sites but is also an antidote for those who had to migrate during partition and who grew up listening to nostalgic and painful memories of their families' lives, migration, and their longing for the land that now Pakistan.