

# A Living Legend: Baba Iqbal Singh ji of Baru Sahib: On Mission Divine!

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ਸਾਜਨੁ ਬੰਧੁ ਸੁਮਿਤੁ ਸੋ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਦੇਇ ॥

ਅਉਗਣ ਸਭਿ ਮਿਟਾਇ ਕੈ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥੩॥

[Gauri Majh M:5, SGGS: 218]

THIS OBSERVATION BEST describes accomplishments of the Kalgidhar Trust, founded by visionary savant BABA IQBAL SINGH. In a short time-frame, he has brought a remote village in Himachal Pradesh on the world map, by devoutly carrying forward the rich legacy bestowed upon him. The legendary Sant Attar Singh Mastuane (1866-1927) and the extraordinary gifted Sant Teja Singh (MA, LLB, AM Harvard, 1877-1965), had envisioned the establishment of a key centre of education and learning at the 'Tapobhoomi': BARU SAHIB, that is believed to have been visited by ancient sages, like Vashisht Muni, Gautam Rishi, and the heroic Pandavas, as well as the Siddha yogis. In such pristine environs we discover a comprehensive **network of institutions:** The Akal Academy, a charitable Hospital, an Orphanage, de-addiction centres, a senior citizen's home, and a Women Care Centre - all under the aegis of The Kalgidhar Trust - a non-profit, charitable organization for the upliftment of under-privileged people.



**The Akal Academy**, a co-educational, residential senior secondary school, established in 1986, and affiliated to CBSE, Delhi is a happy amalgam of modern scientific education, rooted in spiritual inspiration – to turn out good global citizens. Now North India can boast of seventytwo Akal Academics in the rural domains.

When I met Babaji, on his visit to Kolkata in January 2011, he happily announced that The Kalgidhar Trust was aiming to set up 150 Akal Academies in North India! It is a daunting task to run efficiently a single school. How miraculous and awe - inspiring to see a single trust managing seventy plus institutions, while striving for more!

## **Childhood and Education:**

Tracing the journey of Baba Iqbal Singh's life, one marvels at his detachment from the material world since childhood. He inculcated this sense of lotus-like aloofness, after reading - and - listening to - the stories of lives of Sikh Gurus and their incredible sacrifices. Born

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into a flourishing family of farmers, in Gurdaspur, in 1929, he grew up with a resolve to dedicate his life for spreading the divine message of Guru Nanak.

Babaji joined the Punjab Agriculture College, Lyallpur (now Pakistan) in 1945 to pursue a course in agriculture sciences. Later, he received Bachelor's degree in Agriculture Science, and joined the state department of Agriculture.

While doing B.Sc, he met Sant Teja Singh, who had topped the Punjab University examination, joined All India Services and was posted as Vice-Principal, Khalsa College, Amritsar. During that stint, Sant Teja Singh met the legendary Sant Attar Singh, the pioneering missionary committed to providing value-based education to children. Sant Attar Singh had established a college for girls at Mastuana in the year 1906. At his behest, Sant Teja Singh visited Europe and America to study western model of education. After completing his Masters from Harvard, he returned to teach at a primary school in Mastuana, shedding all egoistic instincts of the mind, which only a saint-scholar like him could manage with aplomb!

When the Banaras Hindu University was established, its founder Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya invited Sant Attar Singh ji to lay the foundation stone. Sant Teja Singh served as its first Principal in 1920. Baba Iqbal Singh Singh's meeting with Sant Teja Singh inspired him to serve mankind - with humility and dedication. This reinforced his belief in the importance

of value-based education. **With this resolve, Sant Teja Singh, established the spiritual retreat at Baru Sahib, in the year 1956. In 1965, Baba Iqbal Singh joined as director of Agriculture, Government of Himachal Pradesh.**

The same year witnessed the formation of 'The Kalgidhar Trust' and Baba Iqbal Singh was appointed its President to carry forward the divine mission of the gurus. Baba ji retired as Director of Agriculture, (Himachal Pradesh) in 1987, after a remarkable tenure, best known for ushering in the Green Revolution.

### **Mission and Vision:**

The Akal Academy established at Baru Sahib in 1986, with only five pupils has now blossomed into a residential senior secondary school with more than one thousand four hundred students from all over India, U.S.A, Canada, U.K and other countries around the world. The institution seeks to establish peace in the world through value based education and spiritual rejuvenation, creating good citizens.

Today there are more than sixty thousand students, in seventy- two branches of Akal Academy, receiving holistic education - a combination of education laced with moral, ethical and spiritual values. Mere literacy without moral content, churns out egoistic and selfish humans. But value-based education includes spirituality, that allows students to discover: 'One in all and all in One' The vision of the institutions is to harness the energy

of the youth through value based education and persuade them to work for the betterment of the world, in turmoil. The uniqueness of Akal Academies lies in the fact that the code of conduct encourages **interfaith interaction**, which explains why students from Hindu and Muslim communities flock here for admissions.

The Kalgidhar Trust also provides free education to over 500 students belonging to the lower Hindu (and Muslim) castes. The Trust has now established a private university: "The Eternal University" at Baru Sahib, for higher education in health, engineering and other disciplines, impacting socio-economic status of the rural masses.

### **Women Empowerment:**

Commendable work is being done by the Kalgidhar Trust to empower women in rural India, where female foeticide is rampant, and the male-female ratio is heavily skewed. Around 1500 under privileged girls are selected, every year, and mentored intensively, for over four years, helping them to become teachers, then absorbed in the parent body. **There are several Women's Care Centres & 'Women Empowerment' programmes which train them in sewing, embroidery, etc, so that they are able to earn a decent living. Also, divorced and abandoned women are rehabilitated through these programmes.** The Kalgidhar Trust plans to branch out into remote areas by building about five hundred schools (and colleges) for girls, in

the next few years, to ameliorate their lot. Also, the Trust incurs an incredibly low administrative cost of three percent on running its institutions due to the presence of three hundred volunteers, who work without any remuneration.

### **Health & Medical Care:**

The Kalgidhar Trust has set up a modern 280 bed-hospital at Baru Sahib, which provides medical care to the rural people. Four medical camps are organized annually in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, in which doctors from Mumbai, Delhi, Haryana and Punjab provide free medical expertise, and perform free surgeries. In the spring of 2010, a team of twenty seven doctors belonging to the Canadian organization called "**Operation Rainbow**" visited Baru Sahib and performed over one hundred plastic surgery operations.

### **Conclusion:**

Incredibly fragile, yet Baba Iqbal Singh has made a tremendous contribution by which our progeny will benefit immensely by his pioneering leadership. He is a living example of devotion, humility and service. Aply assisted by Dr Khem Singh Gill, former Vice Chancellor of PAU Ludhiana, Dr. Davinder Singh (MBBS, MD) Dr. Neelam Kaur, (MBBS, MS) and a host of other luminaries, Baba Iqbal Singh's entire life epitomizes the principles of "Gurusikhi" - serving humanity with love and devotion.

“ਵਿਚ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਏ ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਨ ਪਾਈਐ ।।”

