

Bhai Baldeep Singh

Bhai Baldeep Singh is the 'Renaissance Man' of Punjab, India. He has compassionately dreamt & zealously worked towards a radical reclamation & transformation of the cultural landscape of South Asia. Descending from a long lineage of masters of Gurbāni Sangīt & social reformers, he has rendered the vintage etiquettes of Gurbani Kirtan with utmost ease & perfection. By personally intervening with the wisdom & profundity of a magical luthier, he has revived extinct musical instruments. Besides setting up a conservatory at Sultanpur Lodi, he has developed a comprehensive educative process & is recognised as one of the finest teachers.

At 18, Bhai Baldeep Singh had exclaimed that the era of Gursikh Renaissance and Cultural Resurgence is upon us. A keen aviator, he shocked the world around by renouncing a promising career in aviation at 20 and by beginning to salvage the near extinct cultural heritage of Gursikh Panth from the ruins of Punjab. He went on to study and research with 27 elders including the legendary Bhai Arjan Singh Tarangar (1900-1995), Gyani Bhagat Singh, Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh, doing comparative studies with Ustad Fahimuddin Khan of Dagurvani and Ustad Mohammad Hafiz Khan Khandehre Talwandiwalale, Bibi Jaswant Kaur, and others.

As a 13th generation exponent of Gurbani Kirtan, Bhai Baldeep Singh belongs to the last remaining direct Guru-Sikh lineage blessed by all ten Gursikh gurus from Guru Nanak till Guru Gobind Singh. He is a direct descendent of *Nanak-Panthei* Bhai Sādhāran Sembhi, who was blessed with the title “Bhai” by Guru Amar Das after doing the sewa of Baoli Sahib for the third Gursikh guru. Bhai Sādhāran was a master craftsman, blacksmith, warrior, architect, designer, musician and calligrapher. Starting with him, his descendents were all blessed to serve all Sikh gurus, served in all battles for Gursikhgurus and constructed strategic buildings for the gurus. Bhai Sahib Singh, the great-grandson of Bhai Sādhāran Sembhi, was endowed with *Khande-di-pahul* by the Dasam Pita, Sahib Sri Guru Gobind Singh on Baisakhi Day of 1699, with whom he was very closely associated since their childhood. Bhai Mehtab Singh, Baba Tehel Singh aka Bhai Punjab Singh (as mentioned in Encyclopedia of Sikhism), Bhai Diwan Singh aka Baba Dewa Singh, Baba Narain Singh and Baba Jwala Singh of Thatha Tibba are among various illustrious family elders all of whom served as premier memory bearers and original sources of Gursikh Panth across the centuries. Blessed by all ten Guru Sahibs, the descendents of Bhai Sādhāran were always revered and mentored almost all the old Gursikh family lineages. It is notable to mention that Gursikh genius of Bhai Sahib Jwala Singh inspired Baba Attar Singh to start an institution at Mastuana, and Baba Partap Singh, Mukhi of Namdhari Darbar, to start specialised training at Bhaini Sahib. Both of these institutions continue to serve the Gursikh Panth in their own unique ways.

Bhai Baldeep Singh also heads the *Sultanpur Lodhi-Amritsari Bāj*, which is the oldest surviving system of percussion in South Asia. he is also a pioneering luthier having revived several extinct

musical instruments such as the *taus (mayuri veena)*, *dhrupadi rabab*, *saranda* and *jori/pakhawaj* by handcrafting them under the guidance of Gyani Harbhajan Singh (1920-2005) who last built them until 1949.

Bhai Baldeep Singh served as member of the Advisory Council of the Punjab Languages Department (2008-10) and helped the Punjab Government form the Sultānpur Lodhi Development Board in 2007. From 2009-14 he represented the State of Punjab in the General Council of the National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama (Sangeet Natak Akademi) in New Delhi, where he also served in the Executive Board, in the Advisory Committees for Music, Archives and Documentation and in the Advisory Committee for Grants.

In the last 20 years he has emerged as a great Gursikh preacher through his performances and lectures inspiring scores of people to pick up traditional musical instruments. He continues to educate people regarding the importance of preserving traditions, cultural heritage and human values. He has been associated with various committees, boards, academies and advisory councils. Unarguably the most respected pedagogue of his era, he has recovered the original practices of Nāda Yoga and the indigenous pedagogical processes that produced master aestheticians over the centuries. The various concerts given by him and workshops and seminars conducted in India as well as in many foreign countries turned out to be significant markers in a number of ways insofar as the symbiosis of Gurbani with rāga-nāda-laya ved is concerned.

He was a consultant to the Department of Religions, Hofstra University (New York) teaching a credit course (September 11 – October 2, 2008). Several of his articles, poems and papers have been published in renowned academic journals. He has won many awards and honours for his contribution to Gurbani Sangeet and Indian Classical Music and has been a role-model to many a popular names. An ace audio-restorer, he has to his credit more than 1000 hours of recording of Indian classical and Gurbani Sangeet compositions. He donates his spare time to restore old recordings in his studio, which is among the world's finest audio-restoration suites.

He continues to encourage young artists and taking care of the elderly irrespective of forms of expression they serve. He founded The Anād Foundation which is dedicated to the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage of South Asia. Anād also offers major awards in the field of music, arts and poetry. He has founded the Anad Conservatory, an institute exclusively dedicated to the study of arts, aesthetics, cultural traditions and developmental studies at the 9 centuries old ruins of Sultanpur Lodhi, Punjab.

Bhai Baldeep Singh was the Aam Aadmi Party candidate from Khadur Sahib constituency in the 2014 Parliament Election. An ardent socio-political activist and commentator, on April 13, 2015, he began contemplating on the future course of action that could actually benefit Punjab. After an extensive research and visits to the Bancroft Library, Bhai Baldeep Singh, proposed the revival of the Hindostan Ghadar Party, or The Ghadar, on April 13, 2016. Among his many vital contributions is the Sarbat Khalsa of 2015. Incidentally, he had to distance himself after witnessing the movement getting manipulated for petty political gains by a few individuals. Bhai Baldeep Singh has also initiated the 2nd Gursikh Gurudwara Reform Movement and wants to see the Gursikh institutions freed from state control both, overt and covert.