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## **Availability of Open Access Books on Sikh Religion and Sikh History over Sikh Book Club**

**Sunita<sup>1</sup>, Dr. PC Sehgal<sup>2</sup>**

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**Author's Affiliation:**

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Dept. of Library Information Science, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab 147301, India.

<sup>2</sup>Professor & Head, Dept. of Library Information Science, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab 147301, India.

**Corresponding Author:** Sunita, Research Scholar, Dept. of Library Information Science, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab 147301, India.

**E-mail:** anchalsandal80@gmail.com

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### **Abstract**

The history of Sikhism started with Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539). The religious practices were formalised by Guru Gobind Singh on 13 April, 1699. The history of Sikhism is closely associated with the history of Punjab and socio-political situation in 16<sup>th</sup>. Many Sikh scholars have written a number of books on Sikhism and Sikh history which are valuable to understand the Sikh religion and its history. In the age of Information Technology thousands of books are also available over different web portals. A web user can download the desired book(s) with single click of mouse. The present study highlights the role of Sikh Book Club in providing the valuable digitised books on Sikh religion and Sikh history. Number and types of books have also been described in this study.

**Keywords:** Sikh Book Club, Web Portal, Information Technology, Sikhism, Sikh History

### **1. Introduction**

Advances in computer applications during the last few decades have brought radical changes in the way information is gathered, stored, organised, accessed, preserved and used. The application of computers in information processing has brought several new products and services to the scene. The Internet and the web are constantly influencing the development of new modes of scholarly communication without any geographical barrier encountered earlier in the pre-Internet era by the producer as well as the consumer of the information. In the age of internet time lag between production and delivery of scholarly information has been drastically reduced – it is negligible. The world has become a global village, and the distance does not exist in the communication of information.

## Sunita & Dr. PC Sehgal / Availability of Open Access Books on Sikh Religion and Sikh History over Sikh Book Club

Thousands of digitised/electronic books in different languages on Sikh religion and Sikh history are freely available on the Internet. Regretfully, the web users are not much aware of these web portals and digital libraries storing open access on Sikhism. Sikh Book Club is one of them. The present study highlights its role in providing e-books on Sikh religion and Sikh history.

Sikhism is the sacred religion which leads to the ultimate goal of achieving salvation and uniting with 'One' God. A religion founded almost 550 years ago by Guru Nanak Dev is the epitome of highest Sikh virtues. It leads to a selfless and committed life that is based on the teachings of Sikh Gurus and the Holy book of Sikhism. Today, the Punjab state in northwest of India has a majority of Sikh population, and sizable communities of Sikhs exist around the world. Many countries, such as the United Kingdom, recognize Sikhs as a designated ethnicity on their censuses. Sikhs strongly believe in Sri Guru Granth Sahib which is the ocean of Knowledge in itself. Many prominent authors had written valuable books on the different topics of Sikh religion and Sikh history.

### Open Access

Open access to scholarly information is a burning issue in web based education and research nowadays. Open access has become an increasingly important and potentially divisive issue in recent years as journal inflation rates have increased. For many librarians and scholars, journal price inflation is itself the central problem and open access is the solution. Open Access holds promise to remove both price and permission barriers to the scientific communication by using Internet. In fact, 'Open access' (OA) is a step ahead of "Free Access" which removes just the price barriers by providing free access to end users. Open Access removes the permission barrier as well. In other words, under Open Access, the end-user not only has free access to the content but also have the right to further distribute the content.

### *Salient features of Open Access (OA)*

The salient features of Open Access are:

- Open access literature is digital, free of charge and free of copyright;
- OA is compatible with copyright, peer review, revenue, print, preservation, prestige, career advancement, indexing and supportive services associated with conventional scholarly literature;
- OA campaign focuses on the literature that authors give to the world without expectation of payment;
- OA literature is not free to produce or publish;
- OA is compatible with peer review and all the major OA initiative for scientific and scholarly literature insist on its importance.

### Vehicles of Open Access

There are mainly three primary vehicles for delivering open access to literature viz.

- Open Access Journals
- Open Access Archives
- Open Access Books

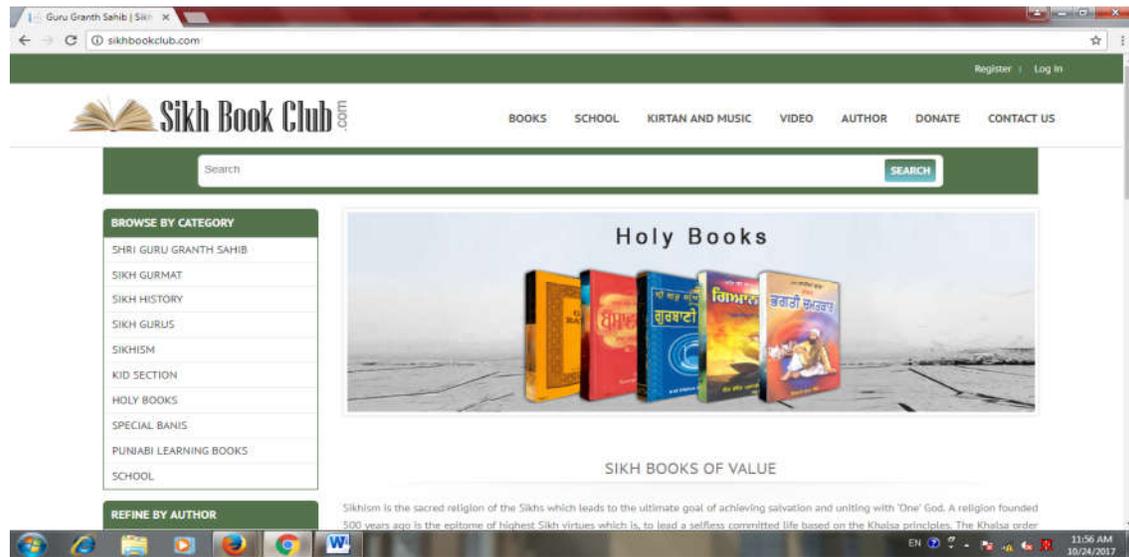
### What is a web portal?

A portal is a network service bringing together content from diverse distributed resources. It is a possibly personalized, common point of access where searching can be carried out across one or more than one resources and the amalgamated results viewed. Here information may be presented via other means, for example, alerting services and conference listings or links to eprints and learning materials.

### **Sikh Book Club (<http://sikhbookclub.com/>)**

It a web portal which brings in its collection of digitized books that unites the readers to the ideology and principles of Sikhism. It attempts to educate the high-tech generation of web users about the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. The huge digital collection comprises of digitised books written by Bhai Vir Singh, Giani Sant Singh Maskeen, Khushwant Singh, Prof. Sahib Singh, Bhai Randhir Singh and

many more eminent writers and notable poets. We may download the digitised books with the single click of mouse.



### Searching

The portal provides three types of broad access points to e-books namely category, author and language. Except these, there is a search box atop the homepage to retrieve the desired digitised books instantly.

### Format

The digitised books can be read only or may be downloaded in Portable Document Format (PDF). The readers have to create their accounts to download the desired e-book(s) or they can login with their Google accounts as well.

### Metadata

Each digitised book over the web portal describes its title, author and total number of downloads for the book. The web user can share the valuable book(s) on social networking as there is a list of social websites for sharing.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- To ascertain the numbers, types and formats of e-books in available on Sikh Book Club;
- To make the web users aware about e-books related to Sikh religion and Sikh history.
- To open a new way of creating every reader his/her personal library of open access books by connecting them with Sikh Book Club from where they can download books of their interest;
- To encourage the web users to use this web portal dedicated to Sikh history.

## 3. Methodology

The data has been collected online by visiting the official website of the Sikh Book Club, i.e. (<http://sikhbookclub.com/>). Data collected from the website was tabulated and then analysed and interpreted to reach at meaningful and value based conclusions.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

**Table 1: Language Wise Distribution of E-Books**

Sr. No.	Language	Number of E-Books
1	Punjabi	1787
2	English	853
3	Hindi	229
4	Urdu	14
5	French	10
6	Romanian	08
7	Spanish	07
8	Russian	05
9	Italian	05
10	German	04
11	Dutch	03
12	Kannada	03
13	Malay	02
14	Sanskrit	02
15	Portuguese	01
16	Thai	01
17	Sindhi	01

In the above table it may be seen that majority of the digitised books are in Punjabi followed by the E-books of English language. The digitised books in Hindi language are at third place. Five books are available in Sanskrit (2) and Kannada (3). The rest of the books are in other languages of the world.

**Table 2: Major ten authors**

Name	No. of digitised books
Bhai Vir Singh	147
Sikh Misiionary College	122
Sant Waryam Singh	114
Simarjeet Singh	73
Dr. Ganda Singh	62
Prof. Sahib Singh	59
Sant Singh Maskeen	56
Giani Harbans Singh	45
Dr. Ajit Singh Aulakh	42
Principal Satbir Singh	39

It means that majority of the digitised books have been written by the prominent Sikh scholars.

**Table 3: Category wise digitised books**

Category	No. of digitised books
Sri Guru Granth Sahib	187
<i>Dictionaries</i>	063
<i>Steek</i>	140
<i>Special Banis</i>	203
Sikh Gurmat	438
Sikh History	785
Sikhism	672
<b>Sikh Gurus</b>	

<i>Life of ten Gurus</i>	48
<i>Guru Nanak Dev</i>	108
<i>Guru Angad Dev</i>	36
<i>Guru Amardas</i>	17
<i>Guru Ramdas</i>	13
<i>Guru Arjan Dev</i>	24
<i>Guru Hargobind</i>	12
<i>Guru Har Rai</i>	09
<i>Guru Harkrishan</i>	12
<i>Guru Teg Bahadur</i>	48
<i>Guru Gobind Singh</i>	60
Kid Section	108
Holy Books	72
Punjabi Learning Books	47
School Books	144

Above table depicts that majority of the digitised books are on Sri Guru Granth Sahib and its shabad kosh, *steeks* and special Banis, such as Japuji Sahib, Asa di Var, Bara Maha, Nitnem, etc. Open access books on Sikh history come at the second place followed by the e-books on Sikhism. Books of Gurmat essays and lectures rank fourth. Digitised books related with lives and teachings of Sikh Gurus are 387. It is further divided by the individual Sikh Guru in the above table. Besides these valuable books, books for the children are also available on Sikh Book Club that are primarily related with stories books, comics, Punjabi learning books and school books upto grade 8<sup>th</sup>.

### 5. Other Web Portals

Besides Sikh Book Club, a number of web portals and digital libraries related to Sikh religion and Sikh history are also available on the web. They are:

*Vidhia.com* (<http://www.vidhia.com>): It is a project of USA based Khalis Foundation dedicated to raise awareness about Sikhism and Sikh history. It holds 29 folders under different subject headings consisting of 432 files of PDF books in Punjabi and English. All the digitized books are related to Sikh religion and Sikh history. It is a useful subject portal for scholars and students of religious and spiritual study.

*Punjabi Library* (<http://www.punjabilibrary.com>): The purpose of this web portal is to promote books by using information communication technology. It holds prominent and widely read titles of books related to different subjects. Readers may download PDF files easily. Those who are interested in reading books on Sikhism can visit this portal.

*Digital Library of India* (<https://www.archive.org/>): The archive of Digital Library of India (DLI) consists of digitized books in different languages on different subjects. Valuable books on Sikh religion and Sikh history are also available on different subjects. Available books have been published by the reputed publishers, e.g. National Book Trust, Punjabi Sahit Academy, Delhi, etc. Here, there are a number of formats to download the desired ebooks such as PDF, ePub, Plain Text, DAISY and Kindle. Users may download the books in their desired formats.

*Panjab Digital Library (PDL)*: It is dedicated to locate, collect, digitize, preserve, and make accessible the accumulated wisdom of the Panjab region, without any distinction to script, language, religion, nationality, or other physical condition. Objectives of the library are: address heritage loss due to environment, ignorance and destruction; save invaluable treasures to enrich the present and enlighten the future; connect people globally by providing continued free online access of digitized documents. Thousands of digitized documents consisting of books, manuscripts, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets are available on different subjects in different languages. Interesting titles of books of Sikh religion and Sikh history can be read here. Documents can be read online/onscreen.

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There is no option to download the desired document. It may be said that it is a place where researchers and students may have a peep into the past of Punjab with the help of social, cultural, political, economic, and historical documentary heritage.

*Academy of the Punjab in North America* (<http://www.apnaorg.com>): A large number of e-books in different languages are available on apnaorg.com. Web users can download e-books in PDF. Some e-books have not the option to download. They can only be read online. Except the e-books, large collection of old Punjabi songs, movies and plays can also be found here.

### **6. Conclusion**

It has been seen that Sikh Book Club is playing a vital role in providing books on Sikhism and Sikh history. Majority of the digitised books are in Punjabi language followed by the English. The available digitised books are written by the prominent Sikh scholars who are read all over the world. The best feature of this web portal is it also provides digitised books that are utmost need to strengthen the foundations of children.

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