Institutionalization of Sikhism, first of all, evolved with the experience of the life and mission of Guru Nanak himself. With the practical manifestations of the institution of the gurbani and the kirtan (singing the praises of Almighty in the company of the like-minded through the medium of the shabad, the Word as the Guru) were laid the foundations of institutions of fundamental importance such as the dharamsal or the gurdwara and the sangat (congregation) and the pangat (langar), representing the idea of social equality through the practice of dinning together. What needs to be underlined is that these institutions have played crucial role in shaping the socio-religious and cultural life of the Sikhs over the five centuries. For example, the institution of the Gurdwara alone has played considerable role in shaping the history of the Sikhs from its very inception, hence the study of the Sikh Shrines in proper literary and historical perspective.

During the Singh Sabha period, the Udasis were targeted by the Tat Khalsa, as they were very close to Hinduism. The Akali reformers launched their struggle against the Udasi Mahants for reforms in the Sikh Shrines. In the early 20th century, the Akali-Udasi conflict and the Gurdwara litigation and legislation, not only gave birth to the polemical literature but also affected the management and functioning of the institution of the Gurdwara, hence its politicization.

Significantly, the period of Singh Sabhas and the Gurdwara Reform Movement witnessed the emergence of a new form of Sikh historical literature concerning the Sikhs. Thus, a few important works which were written exclusively on Sikh shrines by some eminent Sikh scholars during the late 19th and early 20th centuries are Pandit Tara Singh Narotam's Sri Guru Tirath Sangrah (1884 AD); Giani Gian Singh's Gurdham Sangrah (1921 AD); and Giani Thakar Singh's Gurduare Darshan (1923 AD). Also, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh (1930 AD) is an important literary source on Sikh shrines. Unfortunately, so far, these works have not attracted the serious attention of the modern scholars and historians of the Sikhs and their literature. Hence, the proposed work has been undertaken to analyse these works for enhancing our understanding of the evolution of the institution of the Gurdwara and the various types of the Sikh shrines as well as other sacred sites of historical importance. In a way, this is an attempt to reconstruct
the history of Sikh shrines from Sikh historical writings as well as to bring out their historical value for re-writing the Sikh past. On the whole, thus, the works taken for historical analysis contain information of considerable historical value regarding the history of Sikh shrines as well as their role in the history and politics of the Sikhs during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

I

The study has been divided into six chapters. Each chapter contains the profile of the author and a critical analysis of the work. Various lists of the historical Sikh Shrines of the Sikh Gurus, their consorts and descendants as well as the prominent Sikhs showing the details of their sources of their income and administration, have been prepared and given in Appendix, Glossary, Maps and comprehensive Bibliography are an integral part of the work. In the first chapter, evolution of the institution of the Gurdwara and its socio-cultural significance has been dealt with. The issue of its control and management before and after the annexation of the Punjab, too, has been take up. The second part of the introductory chapter deals with the critical review of the existing literature on the Sikh shrines, written before and after 1947. The second chapter brings to light the historical significance of Pandit Tara Singh Narotam's Sri Guru Tirath Sangreh. The first part deals with his life and works and the second part contains very useful information provided by the author on various types of the Sikh Shrines and their administration as well as the relics or antiques of the Sikh Gurus. In the third chapter, analysis of Giani Gian Singh’s rare work Gurdham Sangreh has been taken up. Analysis of Giani Thakar Singh’s work Gurduare Darshan has been taken up in the fourth chapter. Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha's Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh (1930) is, infact, an Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature, and not an exclusive work on the Sikh Shrines like that of the works of his contemporary Sikh scholars of Sikh Shrines. Analysis of this work forms the subject matter of fifth chatper. The last chapter sums up the upshot of the whole analysis of the extant Sikh historical literature on the Sikh Shrines. As an important category of the Sikh literature, its historical significance is unique and distinct. Each work has historical value of its own kind.

II

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_Daljit Kaur Gill_