PREFACE

The bright and vibrant calendars of the Sikh Gurus always offer an enigmatic charm and fascination to the viewer and due to a spiritual aura around them the presence of a calendar on the wall of Punjabi household almost becomes an essential decorative element which possesses the capacity to inspire and move the onlooker to be drenched in divinity and piousness. Thus a Sikh Calendar is not only an ordinary painting but a prolific amalgamation of lofty ideals of Sikhism which often provides a peep into the glorious historical episodes of Sikh history seeped in valour and divinity and this decorative article is in fact a mirror to the plethora of ideological, philosophical and ethical developments of Sikh tenets and a visual treat which portrays the artistic and aesthetical saga of the artists, writers, thinkers, preachers and philosophers. Deeply stung with their mystical charm and evocative stance the analytical study of Sikh Calendar art became the topic of my research work. As a plethora of facts pertaining to this captivating genre of Sikh Calendar art remained to be unraveled and explored, this most popular form of Sikh art is deeply rooted in the very psyche of Sikhism which further prodded me on a sacred endeavour to understand its genesis and its progressive journey to the present day. The whole experience of demystifying the true soul and essence of these calendars has enriched the research work as the elements and conceptual contents of these vibrant Sikh calendars derived their mesmerizing power from an array of factors pertaining to Sikh history, ideology, philosophy, spiritual, divine and ethical perspectives. Simultaneously the study has provided sumptuous revelations about its artistic, aesthetical and creative manifestations and influences. This study has covered the period when after the first appearance of Janam Sakhis in 1658 to
the present 21st century when this genre is at its pinnacle and enjoys the world-wide popularity as a representative object d'art of Sikh history, art and culture. It was a pilgrimage of sorts to pass through each and every magnificent element of the deep and engrossing study examining the manuscripts, specimens of original Sikh paintings, books and journals on the subject written by scholars and preachers and engaging interactions with artists, printers, scholars and experts to dig deep into the ocean of mystical aspirations behind these mesmerizing objects of art. These sources provided valuable information and knowledge which guided me to onward exploration of the subject. The visits to museums, art galleries, institutions, corporations, banks and other places of interest related to this art form added a new impetus in holding a firm grasp on this appealing subject. A remarkable treasure of the sources have infact offered an unfathomed vision and urgency with which several generations of artists and historians have poured in their valuable mental and physical faculties for the development and popularization of this genre of art which has its admirers in all the continents of the globe. This research work is divided into eight significant chapters which deal with various aspects of Sikh Calendar art. The following passages contain chapter-wise summary of the focus of this research work titled, **AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SIKH CALENDAR ART** which revealed numerous valuable and absorbing factors instrumental in the present day popularity of this genre of Sikh Calendar art:

**Chapter: 1 INTRODUCTION TO SIKH CALENDAR ART**

During the course of research the fundamental and basic introduction and definition was dealt with and efforts were directed towards the condensation and explanation of the very meaning and definition of Sikh Calendar art. Having done that the search was pointed towards finding the
genesis of this genre of art. The research work took me on a sojourn to see the fabulous collections and specimens of *Sikh Calendar art* done in myriad stylizations and techniques adopted by the stalwarts of this genre of art and many minute and fascinating factors and elements came to light while analysing them critically in terms of their aesthetic as well as thematic contents portraying the philosophy, ethos and ethics of Sikh religion which is the hallmark of these calendars.

**Chapter: 2 THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIKH CALENDAR ART**

While dealing with the chapter of emergence and development of the genre of *Sikh Calendar art* it was established through sustained study that the study of the emergence and development of *Sikh Calendar art* will not be complete without understanding the development of *Sikh art* which drives creative strength from the early *Janam Sakhi* illustrations. Later on the study was directed towards the critical analysis of frescos which were in vogue during the period and new additions of ornamental designs and motifs were incorporated. The factor that provided a much needed push to this genre of art was the adoption of Sikh themes and episodes from Sikh history by the well versed and articulate miniature painters of Rajasthan who migrated the Punjab hills. The other most enlightening and revealing element which acted as catalyst in the progress of this art was the emergence of European painters in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who brought with them new ideas, techniques, style and processes in painting and printing technology. The valuable contribution of Sikh painters who dedicated their lives in upgradation of this genre of art played a significant role in its popularization and promotion.
Chapter: 3 SUBJECT MATTER, PROCESSES, TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS OF SIKH CALENDAR ART

The third chapter is devoted to the study of subject matter, processes, techniques and materials of Sikh Calendar art where strenuous emphasis was laid on the study of these calendars in relation to the subject matter and other significant factors and processes which have resulted in the culmination of providing a new avatar to the visual appeal and aesthetic sensibilities to this genre of art.

Chapter: 4 SOURCES OF SIKH CALENDAR ART

The sources of Sikh Calendar art are both diverse and numerous as being a popular genre of Sikh art, it has been successfully catering to the manifestations of humanism and essence of its content is embedded in the high annals of Sikh history, culture and traditions which proliferate a long saga of valour and sacrifices.

Chapter: 5 MAIN FEATURES OF SIKH CALENDAR ART

To identify the main features of Sikh Calendar art due consideration was devoted to highlight the basic features and characteristics employed by the artists in context to their stylisation and use of iconic symbols related to Sikh religion vis-à-vis martial and spiritual aspects. These features amply illustrate the very essence of this art which is embedded in Sikh philosophy and ideology. The main features pertaining to these calendars are benign presence of the sacred scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib, solo and group portraits of Ten Sikh Gurus in profile and frontal poses, use of the Ik-Onkar symbol in many forms, designs and manifestations, presence of a Khalsa symbol (Khanda Kirpan), Nishan Sahib, depiction of Karah Prasad, depiction of Sri Harimandir Sahib, Amritsar, portrayal of presence of all five Takhts and other historical Gurdwaras related to particular Sikh Gurus, depiction of holy inscription Satnam Waheguru and couplets or verses from Gurbani.
Chapter: 6 DESCRIPTIVE AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT SIKH CALENDARS AND THEIR ARTISTS

In this chapter a sustained effort was made to make a descriptive and critical analysis of important Sikh calendars and their painters revealing the psyche of the artists in the creation behind a particular calendar and the creative and aesthetic mode the painter employed to express the specific thought in pertinent visual manifestations and stylisations using his mastery in the study of the content and transform the thematic essence to the visual form and at the same time the technical aspects which were the hallmarks of a particular artist and why a specific theme is depicted in a manner which transcends from the very life-style and thought-process of a particular artist. It also deals with the artist’s interest in Sikh religion and his spiritual aspirations and manifestations. Descriptive visual elements used by the artists have been fully analysed to bring in sharp focus the study of Sikh historical material and books on Sikh philosophical dimensions.

Chapter: 7 PSYCHO-ANALYSIS OF THE PROMINENT PAINTERS OF SIKH CALENDAR ART

The study of various aspects of Sikh Calendar art proved to be an overwhelmingly enlightening and a revealing experience and it turned out to be an extremely enriching phenomenon encompassing all shades and hues of Sikh religion, history, philosophy, culture, traditions, social ethics, psychological and political dimensions in an mosaic of multifarious perspectives. While repeeling the veneer of visual stylization of these Sikh calendars, there appears underneath a reservoir of unfathomed dedication, artistic synergy and personal moral convictions of the stalwarts of Sikh Calendar art who reinforced the foundations of these wonderfully painted enchanting works of Sikh Popular art after deep contemplation and reinvention of their true selves.
Chapter: 8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today these calendars are available globally and command immense popularity. Due to the untiring efforts and monumental contribution of Sikh religious institutions, Gurdwaras, organizations, corporations, banks, museums and art galleries, painters, printers, promoters and scholars of Sikh thought and ideology, these Sikh art calendars have emerged as a single most popular mode of Sikh art which exudes essence of Sikh religion, history and vibrant culture. As a matter of fact this form of art has attained wide acceptance and is raring to spread its wings in limitless expansion. Due to its ever increasing demand even highbrow connoisseurs of art have started evincing a keen interest in Sikh Calendar art as a vivid and serious form of art. It is indeed the most visible genre of Sikh art which has crossed national boundaries and found a respectable place in every nook and corner of the globe.