



The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors

By Max Arthur Macauliffe

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I BRING from the East what is practically an unknown religion. The Sikhs are distinguished throughout the world as a great military people, but there is little known even to professional scholars regarding their religion. I have often been asked by educated persons in countries which I have visited, and even in India itself, what the Sikh religion was, and whether the Sikhs were Hindus, idolaters or Muhammadans. This ignorance is the result of the difficulty of the Indian dialects in which their sacred writings are contained. Judaism has its Old Testament; Islam its Quran; Hinduism its Veds, Purans, and Shastars; Budhism its Tripitaka; the Parsi religion its Zendavesta; and Confucianism its Analects, its Spring and Autumn, its Ancient Poems and its Book of Changes. The languages in which the holy writings of these religions are enshrined, though all difficult, are for the most part homogeneous, and after preliminary study with tutors can generally be mastered by the aid of grammars and dictionaries; but not so the mediaeval Indian dialects in which the sacred writings of the Sikh Gurus and Saints were composed. Hymns are found in Persian, mediaeval Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, old Panjabi, Multani, and several local dialects. In several hymns the Sanskrit and Arabic vocabularies are freely drawn upon.

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