

Essentials Of Belief

Beyond Boundaries: A Search for Unlimited Powers of Mind Along the Path of Guru Nanak
By Dr. Devendra Singh

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“What brings Beyond Boundaries to life is its broad overview of the universality of the Sikh religion...”

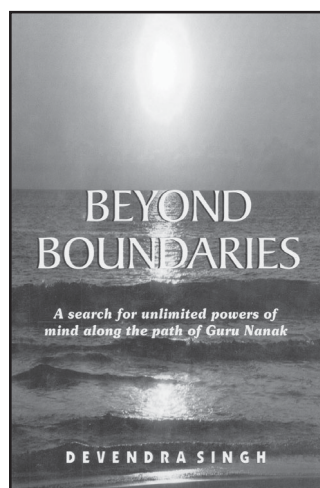
BY FRANCIS MATTHEW

Most religions start with a remarkable leader who inspires his followers with the message. This personal belief has to remain the core of any religion but the believers also need to organize themselves into a human institution and that institution can lose touch with the essentials of belief.

This is the challenge facing the Sikh community, according to Beyond Boundaries, a thoughtful book by Dr Devendra Singh. The problem is summed up by his sentence: “The foundation of Sikhism today is so flimsy that if a Sikh gets his hair cut, he is no longer a Sikh no matter how truthfully he or she is following the teachings of his or her holy book.”

Throughout the book, Singh argues that the teachings of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, and those of Sikhism’s other gurus are more important than the formal trappings of religion, no matter how important the symbols might be. He points out that the religion is still going strong and has a lot to offer the world, even if the famous five K symbols, which are the traditional essential identifiers of a Sikh, have fallen into disuse. The sword (illegal in many countries), shorts, steel bangle and comb are rarely used, while the uncut hair and turban are becoming less and less used in the modern world.

Beyond Boundaries is also a good introduction to Sikhism for a non-Sikh and has several chapters on the religion’s history, which continues into recent years. It goes into detail on how the Shiromani Gurdwara Prambandhak Committee (SGPC), the general assembly of the religion, was formed during the 1920s and how it defined modern-day Sikhism. Singh then takes issue with how



the SGPC has “ignored the interfaith spirit and universal character of the Sikh Gurus”.

What brings Beyond Boundaries to life is its broad overview of this universality of the Sikh religion, using a lot of very accessible quotations from the texts. While offering the reader a direct insight into the core of the religion, Singh makes a point of emphasizing the power of the human mind and how the mind can expand to achieve great things, particularly when harnessed to the universal values found in so many religions. Success without fulfillment is meaningless and several chapters describe how a universal value system helps us attain our ultimate goals. Such values include truthful living, contentment, spiritual wisdom, mediation, kindness and forgiveness; and Beyond Boundaries is very clear on how the teachings of the Gurus link back to these values and also carry a message for all people, not just Sikhs.

Singh makes a powerful case that we all need to hear and understand the timeless truths of the Guru’s messages of peaceful coexistence and individual uplift, so that we can achieve the higher goals of experiencing the unlimited powers of mind and establishing a peaceful society.

Dr Devendra Singh is a journalist at Gulf News in Dubai. He has previously worked in the Pioneer and the Indian Express. He holds a doctorate in Sikhism from Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India.

Source: Gulf News

New Books To Read This Month

“Akbar: The Mighty Emperor”: Written by Kavitha Mandana, published by Penguin-Puffin.

Kavitha Mandana’s book profiles the most charismatic of Mughal emperors, Akbar, in context of the times he lived in and the life he led in the Mughal court through short and offbeat anecdotes, character sketches of his relatives, aides and sons - who narrate the persona of the man as they saw him in lucid, prose rich in visual imagery. An exciting book for both children and adults.

“Love on Velocity Express”: Written by N. Sampath Kumar; published by Cedar Books.

Shyam, a rich spoilt brat, is jolted out of his conventional wisdom when the girl his parents want him to wed turns out to be “maverick”. She demands to be reunited with her ex-flame. Shyam battles confusion as he helps her sift for her love with a laboured nonchalance. He is ready to pretend to become anything - a friend, guide and confidant - to pull it off at the aisle. The romantic comedy takes several painful detours - some trifle artful - before Shyam and Megha marry to live out their lives under the arclights in Mumbai. They become television serial producers in a spillover from the story of their ultra-modern love. A good debut, though the prose drags occasionally.

3. “Legend of the Lepchas: Folk Tales from Sikkim”; Written by Yishey Doma, illustrated by Pankaj Thapa; Published by Tranquebar.

Poet and journalist Yishey Doma, author of the widely-acclaimed coffee table book, “Sikkim, The Hidden Fruitful Valley”, narrates the lores of her hills that centre on the gods, goddesses, people, animals and nature in a cohesive world where one cannot do without the other. Each short story is accompanied by an illustration.

‘Kites’ Swings And Sways But Does Not Soar

Film: “Kites”; **Cast:** Hrithik Roshan, Barbara Mori, Kangana Ranaut, Kabir Bedi, Nick Brown; **Director:** Anurag Basu; **Music:** Rajesh Roshan; **Producer:** Rakesh Roshan

BY MINU JAIN

Too many strings attached to this “Kites” that never soars to the heights it should and becomes a predictable tale of star-crossed lovers set in the glittering lights of Las Vegas and the brooding deserts of Mexico. It’s “Matchpoint”, “Bonny

The narrative moves back and forth in time, beginning with a bloodied Jai tumbling out of a train wagon and stumbling across the desertscape to look for his ladylove.

So you get a sense of what is in store. The predictability of the script is not really a problem - the opening line of the film lays the tenor, with Jai in a voiceover telling you that two kites flying together can never soar very high or very long because one has to get cut.

This is a chronicle of a tragedy foretold, much in the way of other epic romances. Dare I say Romeo Juliet!

It could have worked. The much talked about chemistry between the lead couple is in evidence, but not enough. Director Anurag Basu is at his best in the intimate scenes.

Like when Jai looks out of his window to see Natasha being roughed up by Tony and goes to comfort her. There are no words but the shadow play on the wall of their fingers intertwining is romance as it should be.

The soul of true love is there somewhere, but it gets lost in the two-hour



and Clyde” and much else rolled into one, failing to take off on its own.

The problem with “Kites” is that it is never truly its own film. The first half constantly takes you back to Woody Allen’s compelling “Matchpoint” with the doomed quartet of Jai (Hrithik), his girlfriend Gina (Kangana Ranaut), her brother Tony (Nick Brown) and his fiancée Natasha (Barbara).

Life is set to roll for the rakish, down and out Jai with Gina, the fabulously rich, hopelessly in love daughter of a Vegas casino owner, until he meets Natasha, the exotic Mexican immigrant also looking out for the good life. The attraction is inevitable - and fatal.

The pull is irresistible. Designer watches, flashy cars and jewels beckon but Jai and Natasha are caught in a relationship that transcends language. She knows no English and he knows no Spanish.

So far so good, before the script decides to meander into a “Bonny and Clyde” caper with the couple on the run from the powerful Tony robbing a bank, completely unnecessary and giving no time for the intensity of the romance to develop.

film that also brings in murder, torture and gunmen galore. Basu seems lost in the larger macro frame of the film.

The two main characters are not fleshed out enough, and the others around them are like caricatures. How many Bobs (Kabir Bedi as the powerful, ruthless casino owner who does not balk at shooting down cheaters) have we seen, or Tonys, the archetypal jealous boyfriend with an army of goons behind him?

Many loosely scripted scenes as well and gaps that really should have been filled for a lucid narrative. A script doctor was badly need to stitch up the loose ends.

But the superb cinematography of “Kites” that has the look of a truly international film, Rajesh Roshan’s lilting music — “Zindagi, zindagi” is true winner — and some heartwarming moments score.

Barbara Mori also strikes a chord, and she’s a real good looker. But the best for the last — Hrithik Roshan looks better than he has in any other film, and with him dominating virtually every frame, this one is a treat for his fans. Go swoon, if you must.

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