

How Europe is Indebted to the Sikh?

by

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Published by

Sikh University Press Belgium 2005

REVIEW

The book is the first attempt illustrating the contribution and experiences of **Indian Army in Europe during the First World War**, with a focus on the Sikh soldier. Besides the military events of that period, the book also covers the successful efforts and contribution made by the author, the local Sikh organizations and the local Government from 1998-2002 in recognizing the contribution of the Indian Army and the Sikhs in World War – I, by inviting them to participate in various “Memorial Services” held across Europe and **setting up a monument at Hollebeke** (Belgium) where the Indians fought their first battle of World War – I.

The book is divided into **three parts** –

- **Part I Devoted to Sikhism** : The six chapters explain all about Sikhism, Sikh tenets and give description and significance of some of the visible, distinct and easily recognizable Sikh features (Turban, Sword, Beard, Moustache etc.) in great detail.
- **Part II Western Front** : It covers the history of the Indian Army in Europe during World War – I (1914 – 1915). From the arrival of the Lahore Division (Ferozepur, Jalandhar & Sirhind Brigades), and subsequently the Meerut Division & Secunderabad Cavalry Brigade; till the transfer of these two divisions to Mesopotamin in 1915. This portion of the book covers the events of Lahore Division in the First Battle of Ypres (Ypres - Belgium) in October 1914, the Second Battle of Ypres

in April 1915 in great details, including the heroic and courageous action of many brave soldiers mostly belonging to the erstwhile undivided Punjab. These historic and courageous deeds of officers and men of the Indian Army halted the German advance further West to the Sea. Also well researched and documented are the names of Indian soldiers inscribed on various War Memorials spread across Europe. The book covers all the war memorials in Europe which are dedicated to the Indian soldiers.

- **Part III Role of Sikhs in Europe** : This chapter covers the efforts of the author, the Sikh community and the local government in recognizing the role and contribution of the Sikhs during World War – I as follows:-.

- (a) **First** : The participation of the Sikh contingent in the “**Poppy Parade**” through the Street of **Ypres** and participation in the Memorial Service at the ‘**Menin Gate**’ in wreath laying on the ‘**Armistice Day**’ – 11 Nov 1998 for the first time.
- (b) **Second** : The “**Celebration of Peace**” jointly organized by the European Sikh community and the Government of **Ypres** from 2-4 April 1999 to celebrate the Baisaki and 300 Anniversary of the Birth of the Khalsa. The book covers in detail the Akhand Path, Kirtan, Langar, the exhibition on **Sikhs**, and setting up of a **monument at Hollabeke** (rear Ypres) where the Indian soldiers fought their first engagement in October 1914.

The book is well researched and has many illustrations and photographs of events from 1914-15, 1998 & 1999. However, the maps could have been of better quality and bigger scale.

The book covers in sufficient details, all the relevant and important issues about the Sikh religion and Sikh’s contribution in Europe during World War I. It also gives an account of how a committed and dedicated person can bring the focus on the contribution of a particular community in the lime light, and help earn the place of honour it deserves.

The Book is a must read for all SIKHS based in Europe and should be read by all Sikhs around the world.

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