

7 December 2024

Religious Punishment by the Akal Takht: An Overview

Context: Sukhbir Singh Badal, President of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), was targeted in an attempted assassination at the entrance of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, and while on guard duty. This event occurred amid Badal's religious punishment imposed by the Akal Takht, the supreme authority in Sikhism, for alleged misrule during the SAD-led government (2007-2017).

The Akal Takht: Significance in Sikhism

- The Akal Takht is a key institution in Sikhism, serving as the highest seat of both spiritual and temporal authority. Established in 1606 by Guru Hargobind, it is located within the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. The Akal Takht symbolizes the integration of religious leadership with temporal governance, representing Sikh identity and resistance against external political pressures.

Functions of the Akal Takht:

- Religious and Temporal Authority:** It provides spiritual guidance and issues directives for the Sikh community. It also addresses community disputes and moral concerns.
- Symbol of Resistance:** Historically, the Akal Takht has represented Sikh defiance against oppression, emphasizing the importance of both spiritual strength and self-defense.

Tankhah:

- Tankhah, or religious atonement, is a practice within Sikhism where individuals who violate Sikh principles are given a prescribed punishment by the Akal Takht. This form of punishment is designed not to harm, but to guide individuals back toward righteous living.

Tankhah Process:

- Voluntary Submission:** Sikhs who accept the Akal Takht's authority may be summoned for trial. The punishment, often involving acts of humility or public service, is meant to foster self-reflection and humility.
- Acts of Atonement:** The individual may be required to perform community service or other symbolic tasks to restore their standing in the community.

- In Sukhbir Singh Badal's case, his tankhah was the result of allegations concerning governance during the SAD's tenure, and it included cleaning public spaces within the Golden Temple complex.

Akal Takht's Role in Sikh Governance

- The Akal Takht plays a central role in Sikh governance, closely linked with the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which manages Sikh shrines. The Akal Takht has historically guided Sikh political leadership, reinforcing ethical governance and moral conduct.



Key Aspects of Governance:

- Guidance on Ethical Leadership:** The Akal Takht influences Sikh political decisions by holding individuals accountable for their conduct and ensuring they adhere to Sikh values.
- Collaboration with the SGPC:** The SGPC works alongside political entities like the SAD, and the Akal Takht's decisions are often intertwined with political dynamics within the Sikh community.

Conclusion:

The Akal Takht remains an essential institution in Sikhism, balancing spiritual and ethical leadership with community governance. The tankhah process serves as an important reminder of the need for humility and accountability. Sukhbir Singh Badal's case highlights the ongoing relevance of the Akal Takht in guiding Sikh leadership and ensuring that community figures adhere to Sikh principles of justice and moral integrity.

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7 December 2024

India's Trade Landscape Amidst Geopolitical Changes

Context: A recent report by NITI Aayog, Trade Watch, highlights India's struggle to fully utilize the "China Plus One" strategy. This approach, adopted by many multinational companies, aims to reduce reliance on China by diversifying supply chains. The report also points to new opportunities for India due to global trade shifts, especially amid rising tensions between the United States and China.

Geopolitical Context:

- **US-China Trade Tensions**
 - » **US Restrictions:** The US has placed export bans on critical technologies like chip-making equipment and high-bandwidth memory chips to reduce China's technological growth.
 - » **China's Response:** China has retaliated by restricting the export of key materials like gallium and germanium, essential for high-tech manufacturing.
- **India's Economic Opportunity:** India is in a strong position to benefit from global trade diversions caused by these tensions. However, it needs to address its internal issues and improve its competitiveness to make the most of these opportunities. Currently, India's market share in many global sectors is less than 1%, leaving significant room for growth.



Challenges in the "China Plus One" Strategy

- **Competition from Other Countries:** Countries like Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia have been more successful in attracting global supply chains due to:
 - » **Lower Costs:** Cheaper labor and easier regulatory

processes.

- » **Proactive Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** Signing more FTAs has helped these countries expand their trade reach.
- **India's Domestic Issues**
 - » India's labor and production costs are relatively high.
 - » Complex regulations make it harder for businesses to operate and attract investments.
- **Sector-Specific Challenges (Iron and Steel Industry)** India's iron and steel sector, which accounts for 23.5% of its exports to the EU, is under pressure due to new EU policies:
 - » **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):** The EU plans to impose 20–35% tariffs on imports like iron, steel, and aluminum based on their carbon emissions. This will increase costs and reduce demand for Indian exports.
 - » **Compliance Costs:** Indian companies will need to invest in detailed carbon emission reports, further raising expenses.
 - » **Declining Exports:** Indian iron and steel exports fell by 33% in Q1 FY25 due to weak domestic demand and oversupply from China.

Strategic Recommendations:

- **Improve Export Competitiveness**
 - » Diversify products and explore new international markets.
 - » Simplify regulations to reduce costs for exporters.
- **Revisit Tariff Policies**
 - » Avoid excessively high tariffs that can harm downstream industries and reduce global competitiveness.
- **Leverage Global Tensions**
 - » Use the ongoing US-China trade conflict to promote Indian industries, especially in sectors where the US imposes restrictions on China.
- **Focus on Free Trade Agreements**
 - » Actively pursue FTAs with major trade partners to increase market access.

Conclusion:

India is at a crucial point in its trade journey. While geopolitical changes offer opportunities to grow, India needs to address its domestic challenges to fully capitalize

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7 December 2024

on them. By improving its competitiveness, simplifying policies, and engaging more actively in global trade, India can position itself as a strong player in the global economy.

Showcasing India's Cultural Diversity: CBC's Contribution to IFFI 55

Context: The Central Bureau of Communication (CBC), under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, has taken a prominent role in showcasing India's rich cultural diversity at the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Panaji, Goa.

Featured Performances:

■ Assam

- » **Sattriya Dance:** A classical dance deeply rooted in Vaishnavism, this art form uses intricate movements and expressions to narrate devotional stories, blending spirituality with artistry.
- » **Bhortaal, Deodhani, and Bihu:** Folk dances embodying the spirit of Assam's festivals and agricultural lifestyle. Bhortal is rhythmic and energetic, Deodhani is ritualistic and trance-like, while Bihu captures the joy of harvest celebrations with lively movements and music.



■ Telangana

- » **Gussadi Dance:** A tribal dance performed by the Gond community, celebrating their cultural

heritage with elaborate costumes, vibrant music, and energetic movements that evoke a festive spirit.

■ Jammu & Kashmir

- » **Rouf Dance:** A traditional Kashmiri dance performed during festivals and weddings. The gentle and synchronized movements of the dancers reflect the elegance and serenity of Kashmir's culture.

■ Tamil Nadu

- » **Karakattam:** A lively folk dance where performers balance ornate pots on their heads while dancing to the rhythm of traditional music. This dance celebrates Tamil Nadu's rural customs, rituals, and devotion to deities.

■ Kerala

- » **Mohiniyattam:** Known as the "dance of the enchantress," Mohiniyattam is a classical dance characterized by soft, swaying movements, fluid grace, and expressive storytelling. It often portrays themes from Hindu mythology and is accompanied by soulful Carnatic music.

■ Himachal Pradesh

- » **Sirmour Nati, Dagyal, and Deep Dance:** These folk dances capture the essence of Himachal's cultural festivities and seasonal celebrations. Sirmour Nati is lively and rhythmic, while Dagyal and Deep Dance emphasize spiritual and ceremonial elements.

■ Karnataka

- » **Jogathi and Deepam Dance:** Ritualistic dances rooted in spiritual traditions. Jogathi features devotional themes, while Deepam Dance involves balancing lamps, symbolizing light and spirituality.

■ Rajasthan and Bihar

- » **Cheri and Kalbeliya Dances:** Representing the dynamic spirit of Rajasthan, Cheri Dance involves balancing pots lit with fire, while Kalbeliya, performed by the snake charmer community, showcases fast spins and fluid movements.
- » **Jhijhiya Dance:** A vibrant folk dance from Bihar, performed to celebrate community life and mark festive occasions. It often involves women balancing traditional brass vessels on their heads while dancing to rhythmic tunes.

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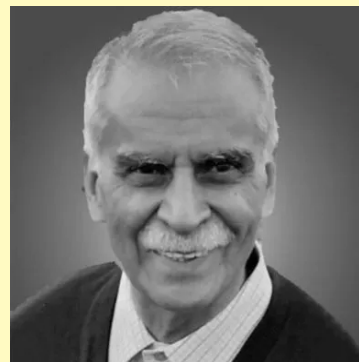


7 December 2024

Power Packed News

Raj Manchanda: A Legacy in Indian Squash

- Raj Manchanda, a renowned squash player, passed away at the age of 79 in New Delhi. Known for his exceptional skills, he was a six-time national champion, securing his first title at the age of 33. Dominating the national squash scene from 1977 to 1982, Manchanda also won 11 titles representing the army.
- A key figure in Indian squash, Manchanda led the Indian team to a silver medal at the 1981 Asian Team Championship in Karachi and a bronze medal at the 1984 Asian Championship in Jordan.
- His contributions to the sport were highly regarded, and in recognition of his achievements, he was honored with the prestigious Arjuna Award in 1983.
- Manchanda's legacy in Indian squash remains significant, both for his individual accomplishments and his role in elevating the sport within the country.
- His career continues to inspire future generations of squash players, cementing his position as one of the most prominent figures in Indian squash history.



Sentinel-1C Satellite Launch

- The third Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite, Sentinel-1C, was successfully launched aboard a Vega-C rocket from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana. This launch marks the return of the Italian-built Vega-C launcher, which had been grounded for two years after a failure during its first commercial mission.
- Sentinel-1C is designed to provide high-resolution radar images to monitor changes in Earth's environment. It supports many applications, including tracking maritime traffic, studying climate changes, and managing disasters.
- The satellite also contributes to advancing scientific research and adds new capabilities to the Copernicus program.
- Copernicus is the world's largest Earth observation system and consists of 12 Sentinel satellite families. It holds the largest collection of radar data in the world, making it a vital resource for understanding our planet.

Slovenia

- In a recent development, India and Slovenia announced a five-year plan to strengthen their cooperation in science and technology. This partnership aims to boost collaboration in various fields and reflects Slovenia's growing role in global innovation and development.
- Slovenia, with its capital in Ljubljana, is a small country in central Europe. It is bordered by Austria to the north, Hungary to the northeast, Croatia to the east, southeast, and south, and Italy to the west and southwest.
- Slovenia also has a coastline along the Gulf of Venice, which connects it to the Adriatic Sea.
- The geography of Slovenia is known for its beautiful landscapes, including karstic plateaus, steep ridges, and the stunning Alpine peaks.
- The highest point in Slovenia is Mount Triglav, which is a symbol of the country. Major rivers like the Sava, Drava, and Mura flow through Slovenia, contributing to its natural beauty and economy.



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Current affairs summary for prelims

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Launch of 'Anna Chakra' to Improve PDS Logistics

- Union Minister of Food and Public Distribution, Pralhad Joshi, has launched 'Anna Chakra' in New Delhi to make the Public Distribution System (PDS) supply chain more efficient. This tool was developed with support from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) at IIT-Delhi.
- 'Anna Chakra' aims to modernize the PDS logistics network by using route optimization, ensuring smooth and timely movement of food grains across the country.
- It will also help reduce transportation-related emissions, contributing to a lower carbon footprint and supporting environmental sustainability.
- Along with 'Anna Chakra,' a portal called the Subsidy Claim Application for the National Food Security Act (SCAN) has been launched. This portal automates the processes for releasing and settling food subsidies, improving transparency, efficiency, and accountability in the system.



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