



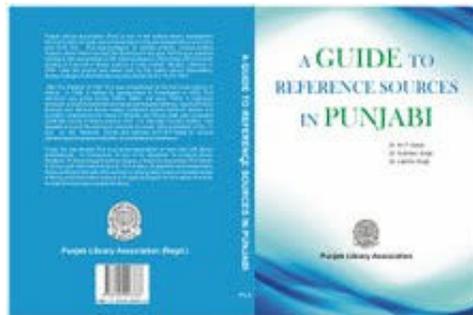
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Book Review



“A Guide to Reference Sources in Punjabi” by MP Satija, Sukhdev Singh, and Lakhbir Singh. Patiala: Punjab Library Association, 2010. xiii+297 pages. PLA Series in Library and Information Science. Paperback. ISBN-13: 978-81-909933-3-3. Rs. 800. US\$35 (including airmail postage).

This is the first guide to reference sources in Punjabi language (Gurmukhi script) and therefore its authors deserve appreciation. Many quality bi- and multi-lingual works in English and Indian languages are generally not included in *Walford's/Winchell's/Sheehy's* guides to reference materials. This work is the first attempt to fill this gap for reference works in Punjabi. Prof. Satija is a prolific author in library and information science (LIS). Dr. Sukhdev Singh and Dr. Lakhbir Singh are experienced librarians working in the higher education sector. The Punjab Library Association (PLA) has also done a yeoman service to the profession of librarianship in Punjab by starting its new series ‘PLA Series in Library and Information Science’ with this book.

Authors claim that ‘this has been a descriptive work’ (p. 273), but scope of this guide is neither specifically mentioned nor becomes clear from the reference works selected in it. Authors contradict themselves in the same paragraph, when they state that ‘... we started from ground zero. A data sheet, ... was prepared. To identify and locate the literature the researcher visited libraries.... We looked upon every source with a critical eye.’ (p. 273). The number of reference sources in Punjabi is small but growing, and this guide covers 220 sources. But a few important ones, such as *Maangwe Moti* (=Borrowed Pearls) (2009), the first index to translations in Punjabi are not included, while a few insignificant ones are included. Besides, the *International Bibliography of Sikh Studies* has been included, along with a weak justification for its inclusion. These issues raise questions about the comprehensiveness and selection of reference works for this guide. Prof. Satija’s style of writing, as seen in his earlier works, is missing from the most part of this work. The bulk of descriptive, and at times prescriptive, account of reference books does not bear Satija’s trademark. This is aptly illustrated by description of a biographical dictionary of Punjabi writers.

‘In this dictionary, only 80% writers could send their information; the other 20% remained incapable of sending their information to the editor.’ (p. 236)

That this guide is an attempt in publishing a hurriedly updated research work of the third author is further evident from words highlighted by reviewer in bold.

This guide has 13 chapters, first being an introduction of types of reference sources. Second chapter covers origin, history and development of reference sources in Punjabi. Next 10 chapters (nos. 3-12) describe reference sources by type, namely: Bibliographical Sources, Catalogues, Indexing Services and Directories; Encyclopedias; Dictionaries (General); Multilingual Dictionaries; Technical Lexicons or Glossaries; Reference Sources in Religion; Special Subject Dictionaries: Natural Sciences, Arts and History; Reference Sources in Linguistics and Literature; Biographical, Geographical and Statistical Sources; and Miscellaneous Sources and Addendum. There is no uniform treatment of reference books included. Detailed information of important sources covers 3-4 pages with subheadings, but many important sources contain minimal detail in a paragraph or two.

An elaborate numbering system of sections and subsections that extends further to many reference works described therein has been followed so meticulously - and at some places, unnecessarily - in same font and size that readers might get lost in this maze. This monotony briefly gets interrupted wherever numerous, but inadequate, sample entries mainly in Gurmukhi script form part of reference works' description. Printing errors in changing a font from Roman to Gurmukhi has resulted in strings of meaningless alphabets e.g. on pages 167, 216, and 229.

The last chapter is entitled gaps and conclusions. This is followed by two appendices. Eighteen points on which information about each reference source was collected are listed in Data sheet (Appendix-1). New editions of annuals/serials are not included, e.g., information about 'Statistical abstract of Punjab' (bilingual annual) is of 2006 edition. Index of reference sources evaluated (Appendix-2) lists 221 sources, repeating an entry (80 and 81). A 'name and subject index' at the end is incomplete, contains many spelling and filing errors, besides use of non-standard abbreviations. Besides, spelling and grammatical errors abound the text and footnotes, of most chapters. Misspelling of personal and institutional names, and book titles in English are far too many to be ignored as misprinting errors. A few glaring misspelling errors and nonstandard abbreviations used are on pages 37, 40, 58, 59, 69, 187, 212, 241, 259, 263, 290, 293, and 295. The casual and hurried approach of authors to see their name in print gets established, when in an unnecessary description of a small local Gurudwara directory, one finds a paragraph dealing with a dictionary. Paragraph starting with 'For the word collection of this book, those dictionaries ...' on p. 69 doesn't fit a directory description.

The cost of the book is little more than average paperback editions of this size. Despite many shortcomings, being the first book for Punjabi materials, it would be very useful to librarians, students, teachers and researchers in Punjabi and Sikh studies, besides being a valuable addition to libraries having collections in these subjects. Many academies, and research centers have come up in recent years wherever Punjabi diaspora is settled in large numbers, might also find this useful in developing their library collections. LIS teachers and researchers in Punjab working on these subjects might also find this valuable.

HPS Kalra

Department of Library and Information Science,
Punjabi University, Patiala, India
Email: hpskalra@gmail.com