

ABSTRACTS OF SIKH STUDIES

(Vol VIII, Issue 2)

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EDITORIAL

TASK BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

With the Gurus' grace, the ISC is in place. Efforts made by the IOSS and some other like-minded organisations, have fructified and the Confederation has been formally registered. A central office has been set up and is functioning under the charge of an honorary CEO. We are lucky to have the services of Lt Gen (retd) Kartar Singh Gill, a very brilliant officer and deeply committed Sikh, for this service. A campaign for enrolment of members has been launched and a large number of organisations and eminent Sikh individuals have already joined as primary members. Prominent among the organisations which have assured full support are Kendri Singh Sabha, Chief Khalsa Diwan, DSGMC, Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, Sikh Education Society, Chandigarh, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, Missionary College, Ludhiana, Sikh Intellectual Forum, Ludhiana, Academy of Sikh Religion and Culture, Patiala, Punjabi Lekhak Sabha, Ludhiana, the Akal Academy, Baru Sahib, besides the American Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and WSC (AR) along with their constituents and the Sikh Study and Teaching Society, Canada. Among the swelling ranks of individual members are H H Justice Mota Singh of UK, Prof S S Sodhi (Canada), Dr Sukhmandar Singh (USA), Prof Pal Singh Purewal, (Canada), Sardar Karnail Singh (Ottawa), Sardar Manjit Singh Calcutta, Sardar Bhag Singh Ankhi, S Devinder Singh Bedi (Shivalik Public School, Chandigarh), Sardar Mahanbir Singh Grewal (Australia) Sardar Jarnail Singh Arshi (Malaysia), etc., besides Sardar Gurdev Singh IAS (retd). Dr Sardar Singh Johl, Vice-Chancellor, Punjab State Planning Board, and Dr G S Kalkat, Chairman, Farmers

Commission, Punjab.

A large number of gurdwaras have been cooperating and are becoming members of the Confederation. Practically all well-wishers of the Panth have welcomed its formation, and consider it the right, though belated, step towards fulfilment of the doctrine of Guru Granth – Guru Panth. The mission and the responsibility bequeathed to the Khalsa by the Tenth Lord cannot be discharged without such a representative body.

Sikhs as a community are a divided lot and face several problems, which demand collective attention. None of the existing organizations, political, religious or social, is in a position to deal with them. The problems have been highlighted in the columns of the *Abstracts* time and again, and the organizers of the ISC are fully aware of them. This is clear from the fact that a seminar is being organized on the 8th April, 2006, at Chandigarh on the theme *Task Before the ISC*. It is hoped that the views of the participants will provide a sound basis for long-term and short-term plans of the ISC.

Sikhs want to live a peaceful life with dignity and honour in their home country as well as abroad. Their enemies have tried to paint them as terrorists, secessionists and anti-national. This mischievous propaganda has to be countered. Sikh identity continues to be challenged. Very little organized effort has been made so far to explain to the world at large the noble mission of love and universal brotherhood and service to mankind without distinction of caste, colour or creed, as preached by the Gurus. The youth has been subjected to criminal neglect, so that they are drifting away from religion and falling prey to drugs and other vices on a vast scale. The economically weaker sections of Sikhs like Vanjaras, Sikligars, Lobanas, etc., are facing threat of conversions from missionaries of other better organized faiths. Education, particularly at school level, is in shambles. Controversies, schisms, *derawad*, continue to rip the Panth apart, and self-seeking politicians mislead and exploit the common masses.

It is only this newly created ISC that can pull the community out of the present mess and morass. We, therefore, call upon all well-wishers of the Panth, particularly the intelligentsia and all Panthic

organizations and institutions to join the Confederation and contribute their mite towards achievement of a better future for the community as well as humanity as a whole. They have nothing to lose except their isolation and frustration, and everything to gain in terms of prestige and brighter fortunes. United, we pull in the same direction and become an irresistible force assured of rapid progress. Divided, we work at cross-purposes, pulling in different directions, leading to no progress and a sure fall.

There will be opposition from quarters that have never been friendly to Sikhs or those whose vested interests are threatened. But that should not deter us. For, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr, 'In the end we shall not remember the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends'. Let us not, therefore, keep silent, but express our support for the ISC, actively and without delay.

It is hoped that the deliberations in the Seminar scheduled for 8th April, 2006, will lead to resolutions of far-reaching consequences. Some of the things which need to be taken up on a priority basis may be mentioned below :-

- a) **A STANDARD ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF GURU GRANTH SAHIB:** This is necessary, because the available translations do not often do full justice to the spirit of *Gurbani*. We have witnessed in recent times, unprecedented interest in the teachings of the Gurus. The Scripture, therefore, has to be translated in all major Indian and world languages. Since very few non-Sikhs know the Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script, English translation will form the basis for future translations into other languages. It is hoped that the ISC will set-up a panel of competent scholars to produce a standard English version of *Gurbani*.
- b) **EDUCATION FUND:** Poor state of education, particularly at the school level, is a cause of serious concern, and is exercising the minds of all well-wishers of the Panth. To rectify the situation and to ensure quality education to Sikh children and youth, top educationists among Sikhs have to put their heads together, and an education fund should be raised, so that in future no aspiring Sikh is deprived of an opportunity to educate himself to the highest level.

- c) **T V CHANNEL:** Considering the role of electric and electronic media and the obsession of youth with TV programmes, it is an urgent necessity to set-up a 24-hour channel to project true image of Sikhism through attractive programmes with heroes/heroines in proper Sikh form, and to share with the rest of the world the lofty ideas of Sikh religion.
- d) **ACADEMIC CONTROVERSIES:** We are aware of several controversies that divide the Panth. It is necessary to constitute panel(s) of scholars to find solutions at academic level sooner than later, in the interest of the unity and integrity of the Panth.
- e) **RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS:** An institute for advanced studies in *Gurbani* and Sikh history alone is needed to be set-up immediately. Multi-faculty universities invariably tend to dilute this purpose. Besides research material, the institute will also produce text books for religious instruction in schools and colleges.
- f) **DERAS:** A number of *deras* have sprung up and claim devotion of large number of Sikhs. These *deras* often tend to divide the Panth. But, with proper direction, they can be persuaded to propagate the ideals of mainstream Sikhism. For this purpose, it may be necessary to convene a meeting of all heads of *deras*.
- g) **SPORTS:** This is one of the strong points of the followers of the Gurus, and a comprehensive programme is required to promote sports among Sikh youth. A beginning may be made with honouring a few outstanding Sikh sportsmen. They can do a lot in popularising Sikh identity.

The above list is only illustrative, and by no means exhaustive. The constitution of ISC provides for Advisory Councils for different subjects, to be manned by highest authorities in respective disciplines. We have no doubt, these councils will rise to the expectations of the people.

The ISC must succeed. For, there is no other way for the Guru's Panth to achieve its destined glory.

IDEA OF GOD IN SIKHISM*

DALJEET SINGH

The concept of God is a fundamental which forms the entire structure and world-view of a religious system. God has been described in numerous ways, but there are seven significant aspects which need particular mention in order to explain the concept of God in Sikhism. The understanding of these aspects is extremely essential, because these have a far-reaching effect and consequence in governing the life of the Sikh and in following the significance, origin and course of Sikh traditions, institutions and practices.

CREATOR

God is the Creator (Creator-Person) of the universe which is His creation. The universe is in time and space, and is changing and becoming. God is not identical with the universe. The Creator is different from the creation, which is limited and conditioned. God is uncreated, free and unlimited and thus different from His creation. God is not the material cause of the universe. But, no independent *Prakriti* is assumed. He creates everything.

The Universe is not illusory or unreal. Since God is limitless and Omnipresent, the creation is in God, but not God. The very concept of a Creator-God implies a universe as the creation of God and different from Him: "God created the world of life and planted Naam (Immanent God) therein."¹ "The Self-Existent God manifested Himself into Naam. Second came the creation of the world. He permeated it and reveals in His creation."² "He creates all, fills all, and is yet separate."³ There are many hymns in the Guru Granth which mention that God was there even before He created the universe,

* Reproduced from his book *Essentials of Sikhism*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1994

He being Transcendent Himself starts the creation. "He is the Sole-creator. There is no second one."⁴ "For millions of aeons the Timeless One was by Himself." "God was by Himself and there was nothing else."⁵ "There was no love or devotion. Nor was His creative power in operation."⁶ Again, in answer to the question of the Yogis, "When there was no sign and no form, where was the Word (*Sabad* or Logos) and how was He identified with Truth?"⁷, the Guru replied, "When there was no form, no sign, no individuation, the Word in its Essence abided in the Transcendent God; when there was no Earth, no sky (Time or Space) the Lord permeated everything. All distinction, all forms, then abided in the Wondrous Word. No one is pure without Truth. Ineffable is this gospel."⁸

The Gurus say that before He created Form, He was all by Himself; before He was Immanent He was Transcendent only; and yet all immanence, expression, creativity, were inherent in Him and so was His Word, in essence. "In the religion of Truth, God creates perpetually, watches His creation with a Benevolent eye. He is happy about it and deliberates over it, directing it with His Will."⁹ It means God is Ever-Creative. He has been called Ever-New, Ever-Fresh and Blooming (*Nit-navan, Navtan*).

The above gives a clear idea of the creative activity of God and the cosmological aspect of His creation which is distinct from Him.

TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT

God is both Transcendent and Immanent. He is both in the universe and outside it. The Self-created or Transcendent God was always there.

(a) *Transcendent*: While time and space, force and change are the aspects of the becoming universe, God is Eternal, Self-existent and cannot be conceived or explained in empirical terms. His being Limitless and Timeless cannot be understood in terms of space and temporal time. He is beyond space and beyond time. The first Guru describes the state of God when there was no universe of time and space. It only shows God's Transcendent character. In *Sidh Gost(i)*, in answer to a question as to where was the Transcendent God before the stage of creation, Guru Nanak replied, "To think of the Transcendent Lord in that state is to

enter the realm of wonder. Even at that stage of *Sunn* (Void), He permeated all that Void.”¹⁰ The Guru, in effect, means that to matters that are beyond the spacio-temporal world, it would be wrong to apply the spacio-temporal logic, and yet man knows of no other logic or language. Perforce, he has to be explained, howsoever inadequately or symbolically, only in terms of that language. That is why the Gurus have cautioned us against the pitfalls and inadequacy of human logic to comprehend the Timeless One.¹¹ He is Entirely Different. All the same, the Guru has mentioned the state when the Transcendent God was all by Himself and there was no creation. “When there was no form in sight, how could there be good or bad actions. When God was in the Self-Absorbed State, there could be no enmity or conflict. When God was all by Himself, there could be no attachment or misunderstanding.”¹² “For millions of aeons the Timeless One was by Himself. There was no substance or space, no day or night (i.e., no time), no stars or galaxies, God was in His Trance.”¹³ That state of God is not to be envisaged in terms of limitless space or time, but in terms of spacelessness and timelessness, i.e., something beyond the categories of space and time, something beyond a relative world. Actual space and time are the dimensions of a becoming, relative or changing universe. With these categories, we understand and assess the Universe in which we live. The nature of God transcends all known categories with which we describe the universe. The Gurus again and again describe Him as Wondrous, Infinite, Unfathomable, Unknowable, Indescribable, Ineffable and Immeasurable by human categories of thought and perception. We at best can only assess things by our own standard and measures which are of a limited and relative character, being the categories of a becoming universe. We, therefore, cannot completely comprehend God who is beyond us and unconditioned and unfettered by those dimensions and limits. God, who is the Creator of these limitations, cannot be judged by the yardstick of those created limitations within which we move, perceive, conceive, live and assess. Ultimately, the Guru calls Him Wondrous, the Wonder of Wonders, i.e., He is beyond description and comprehension or, ‘Wholly Other’ as described by Otto. “The

mind alone can never know Him.”

- (b) *Immanent*: The Immanent aspect of God has been variously described as His Will that directs the Universe, His Word that informs the universe and His *Naam* that not only creates the entire universe but sustains and governs the creation. According to the Gurus, God creates the universe, then becomes Immanent in it, being at the same time Transcendent. “He that permeates all hearts (Immanent) is Transcendent too.”¹⁴ “He pervades and is yet detached.”¹⁵ He creates all, fills and is yet separate.”¹⁶ “Having created the world, He stands in the midst of it and yet is separate from it.”¹⁷ In Sikhism, God is believed to be both Transcendent and Immanent. In Islam, God is supposed to be only Transcendent, even though the Immanent aspect of God appears to be recognised when it is said, “God is nearer to you than your jugular vein”. In Christianity, the Immanent aspect of God is clearly accepted and emphasized. This Immanence of God does not mean that God has two stages; but it is only a symbolic way of expressing God’s connection with the world. Naturally, when the world is not there the question of His Immanence does not arise. That is why when there was no form, the Word (immanence) in essence abided in the Transcendent God.”¹⁸

The Gurus’ statements about the Immanence of God are just to emphasize the spiritual and meaningful character of life and the universe and its capacity for relationship with God. They envisage only one God which has various characteristics as indicated in the *Mul Mantra*. Just as the Transcendent and Immanent aspects of God, all description of Him seeks to define only one and the same God. The term Transcendent describes Him as "Wholly Other". The Immanent aspect indicates the same God's love for his Creation. As in any theism, in Sikhism the Immanent aspect of God, called His Naam, Will and *Shabad*, is of great importance. On the one hand, it gives relevance, authenticity, direction and sanction to the entire moral and spiritual life of man and his institutions and goals. On the other hand, it emphasizes God’s capacity for revelation and nearness to man and His deep and abiding interest in the world. It is almost impossible to conceive of a theistic system without the Immanence of God. It is on the assumption of the Immanence of God that most of the theistic

institutions are based. In any system where God is only Transcendent, all moral and spiritual life and yearning would become pointless, irrelevant and superfluous.

Here a few words of clarification. When we say that God is both Transcendent and Immanent, it does not at all mean that there are two parts or phases of God. It is the Transcendent God who is everywhere, in each heart, place and particle and near the vein of the neck. It is He who is both *sargun* and *nirgun*. "The same God is *sargun* and *nirgun*, *nirankar* and Self God Absorbed (*Sunn Samadhi*)." ¹⁹ "God is near, not far away." ²⁰ "He is in the Creation, He is the *Ek Omkar* and no Other who permeates everywhere." ²¹ The Gurus repeatedly emphasize that He is One and we only give Him different names. But it would be highly inappropriate to confuse the Gurus' concept of *sargun* and *nirgun* (i.e. One Transcendent-cum-Immanent God) with the Advaitic connotation of these terms as also of *Ishvara*. These Advaitic concepts have distinct connotation of phases, stages or transformation. These have been clearly repudiated by the Gurus by their concept of One God. Shankra deems *Ishvara* to be a lower stage of God which has to be transcended to reach the higher stage of Brahm. For Ramanuj, a God is virtually pantheistic. The world, souls and *Ishvara* are three eternal principles. The world and souls are the body and qualities of Brahm. The three eternal principles of *Ishvara*, souls and the world constitute the Brahm, which is an entirely different concept from that of the One Creator, God of the Gurus, who is simultaneously Transcendent, Immanent and Everything. The Gurus never accept the Advaitic concepts of *sargun* and *nirgun*. Similarly, in the hymn of *Sach Kband*, the Guru calls the *nirankar* as One who resides, deliberates, creates and directs. He is Benevolent, Gracious and is delighted to see His Creation. But *nirankar* literally means the "Formless One" and similarly, has distinct Advaitic meanings. The hymn referred to above repudiates all those concepts and adds that *Sach Kband*, the abode of God, is full of endless numbers of forms, universes and regions.

By the above two examples we wish to convey that it would be extremely erroneous and misleading to introduce old Indian or Advaitic concepts and meanings while interpreting the ideas and terms of the Gurus. In their hymns, they have made every term and concept used by them unambiguously clear. The Guru Granth is the best authority

and interpretation to understand and convey the meanings of the concepts and terms used by the Gurus.

GOD OF ATTRIBUTES

The third aspect of God as flowing from the Immanent character of God is His being the 'Ocean of Attributes, Values and Virtues'. This aspect of God is of extreme significance to the validity and direction of moral life in the universe. Since all attributes are only relative, a God of Attributes indicates and lays down the standards and ideals for which man has to work. God has been described as full of all values, as Father, Mother, Friend, Brother, Enlightener, Protector, Shelter of the shelterless, Loving, Benevolent, Beneficent and Helper of the poor and weak, etc., "My Lord is ever fresh new; He is always benevolent."²² "You are my Mother, You are my Father, You are my Protector everywhere."²³ "He relieves the sufferings of the downtrodden; Succour of the succourless."²⁴ "God is eyes to blind, riches to poor, ocean of virtues."²⁵

This theistic aspect of the Immanence of God is extremely important and inextricably links God with the universe. It establishes, beyond doubt, the character and direction of God's Will and Immanence. This leads to four important inferences. First, Attributes and Values can have a place only in a becoming, relative or spacio-temporal world since all perfection is static and all qualities are relative. A God of Attributes has thus a meaning only in relation to the changing world of man. Evidently, for the expression of attributes, a changing universe is essential, and becomes an integral part of the plan of God. In other words, God and universe are conjoint and interlinked, the latter depending on the former, because it is impossible to think of a God of Attributes or His Immanence in the absence of a relative or changing world. This is why, when God was by Himself, the question of 'love and devotion', of good or bad actions or of saved or Saviour, could not arise, there being nothing other than Him. Secondly, and this is the most important inference, virtues and attributes emphatically indicate, apart from the standards of ethical values and moral life, the direction in which human efforts should be made because these point out the purposes for which the Will of God works. Thirdly, it indicates the benevolent and perpetual interest of God in man and the universe.

It, in a way, gives status and authenticity to life and the universe which is decried or downgraded in many other religious or mystic traditions. In addition, there is the benevolent character of God; since not only is He the Creator and Sustainer of it, He nurtures and develops it with a loving care. This gives optimism, hope and confidence to man in the achievement of his ideals and goals; because man knows the direction in which he should move, and he has also the assurance that there is someone to guide and help him with love in the achievement of those goals, God “rewards even an iota of good.”²⁶ “God helps the erring, it being His Innermost Nature.”²⁷ “He rewards your efforts and acknowledges your deeds; Life of life.”²⁸ “God rewards all efforts to become divine.”²⁹ “If you go one step towards God, He comes near you by ten steps,”³⁰ says Bhai Gurdas. All this shows the encouragement and aid received by man in his journey towards his goal. It also ensures a logical and deep interest of God in His created world and beings. This aspect of God is the most significant for man since it gives prominent meaning to life and full assurance of God's help for direction and aid in man's march towards his goal. God has also been called the “Enlightener” (Guru or guide) of man. Lastly, it gives validity and spiritual sanctity to moral and ethical life in the world. In many religious systems, moral life is deemed only an entanglement in the world, and at best some systems accept it as a preparatory method of purity for the spiritual life to be attained. But, in Sikhism this Attributive aspect of God gives spiritual character to moral life per se. This is a fundamental implication of God being a God of Attributes.

GOD OF WILL

The Gurus' God is a God of Will, everything is governed by His Will. This is the burden of so many hymns in the Guru Granth. “Everything happens within the ambit of His Will.”³¹ The concept of a God of Will also points out and emphasizes some of the aspects of God mentioned already. He being a God of Will, the entire universe is created, sustained, and moved according to His Will and Purpose. A God of Will naturally presupposes that He wants the universe to move not chaotically, but with a Purpose. Just as in the case of a God of Attributes, God's Will too can be exercised only in a changing world and towards a goal since the very idea of Will implies a direction and

an aim. This, too, re-emphasizes the same features and points as stated in regard to a God of Attributes, namely, God is guiding life towards a direction and purpose. The direction is governed by the Attributes of God and the Purpose is to evolve a God-centred man from a self-centred individual. God being, in this view, a God of Will, the highest goal of life is 'naturally to carry out His Will. The superman thus becomes on this earth the instrument of God's Will and Creativity.' Here a word of explanation. A God of Will does not at all mean a deterministic world, because God is creative and all movement in life is towards a creative freedom.

GOD DOES NOT INCARNATE

Another concept about God is that He does not come into the human form and is not born, nor incarnates. In the *Mul Mantra* God has been mentioned as one who never takes birth or form. The fifth Guru says, "May that mouth burn which says that God has incarnated."³² "God alone is not born of a woman".³³ "The Lord incarnates not."³⁴ "God is self-existent, without form and incarnates not."³⁵ The Gurus have definitely decried belief in the theory of incarnation, and in order to dispel such ideas, have stated that He created countless Brahmas, Shivas, Krishnas and Ramas.³⁶ Here too the idea that God never takes the human form has a distinct meaning and import. First, it shows that God is "Wholly Other" than man. For a God that is Transcendent and Unknowable, the question of His taking the human form does not arise. Secondly, all pantheistic and life implications as flowing from the idea of a God who takes human form have to be shed. Besides, the concept has three other corollaries, too. First, that man can never become God. This also involves that God and man are not identical but are different. Secondly, that the aim of spiritual effort is not merger in God as under some systems, but the ideal of man is to have a union or relation with Him. This, therefore, has a crucial significance in determining the human goal and in showing that the entity of man is distinct from that of God, and the two can never be one. Thirdly, it shows that spiritual activity is not stopped after the final achievement, and the superman has a role to perform in carrying out the Will of God. Consequently, so long as the universe is there and the Will of God is in operation, the

activities, role and duties of the superman too do not come to an end.

GOD OF GRACE

In the *Mul Mantra*, God is called Gracious and Enlightener. A God of Will and a God of Grace have a meaning only in a becoming world wherein alone His Grace and Will can operate. In addition, it also stresses the love and benevolence of God towards man and the universe which are different from Him. For, a Gracious being can bestow his Grace only on something other than Himself. It has been emphasized again and again that all "final approval of man is an act of Grace of God."³⁷ "All merits, miracles, intuition, penance, goodness are of no avail; only Grace works".³⁸ "Myriads of good actions, heroic acts and losing life are vain without Grace."³⁹

The Grace aspect of God also fortifies the truth of the other implications as described earlier in relation to a God of Will and Attributes. In addition, it implies that God is Wholly other, Free and Creative. He is not governed by any empirical law known to us. His activity is, therefore, incomprehensible except in terms of His Grace or Freedom.

GOD WITH PERSONALITY

Another aspect of God is His Personality. In fact, the heading of a couple of hymns is specifically given as: "That Person" (*So Purakh*), wherein He is described "That Person is Pure that God Person is Pure, God is Fathomless and Limitless".⁴⁰ A God of Will, Freedom, Grace, Purpose and Attributes, i.e., a Controller, and Director of the Universe, can be conceived only in terms of a Personality. In the hymn of *Sach Khand*, God is mentioned as Creating and Deliberating. He is Benevolent and is Delighted with His Creation. The emphasis on prayer and love towards God is there in almost all the hymns of Guru Granth. This can only mean that God is a Being with a Personality, to whom prayer can be directed and devotion and love expressed. Thus, the Creator, a God of Will, of Grace and of Attributes, who is Immanent in the world and controls it, can be conceived only as a God of Personality. Evidently, these aspects of God are only in relation to the world. Nor is a God of Personality conceived in terms of the limited personality of man, who is a finite being in a becoming universe.

The Gurus describe numerous attributes of God, including social, political, aesthetic, metaphysical, ethical and moral ones. But, we have mentioned only these salient aspects and features of God, as would be very relevant to our discussion. True, He is wholly beyond our description, but the above is only a symbolic and inadequate way of expressing His Nature. Every student should be greatly concerned with these ideas, and concepts of God in understanding the ideological and practical implications of Sikhism. Many of its distinguishing features are deeply and directly connected with these theological aspects and concepts of God. They have a far-reaching effect in shaping and governing the life of the Sikh and the course of Sikh institutions, ethos and tradition.

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SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS IN THE ADI GRANTH – A PERSONAL RESPONSE –

KULWANT SINGH*

The observations and assertions made in this paper are purely subjective and personal based on the daily readings of the sacred Sikh scripture, Shri Guru Granth Sahib by a devout Sikh and his accumulated experience acquired over a lifetime of browsing through the *gurbani* of the holy text. Everyday readings with faith, concentration and reflection have crystallized some of these observations in my mind and certain clear patterns of thought have emerged. I have further endeavoured to conceptualize some of these thoughts and make these concepts major postulates of my faith.

The foremost thought that strikes the mind of a devout reader of this text is the image and identity of God, His major attributes and manifestations, the burden of His existence and His unmistakable role in the life of the cosmos and in our own lives, irrespective of our mood swings ranging from denial of His existence to the sudden epiphanic oneness with Him or His will in moments of crisis. God, as perceived and conceived by Guru Nanak Dev, Sikh Gurus and other saintly contributors to this text, is that of a mysterious Life Force, a force at once invisible and manifest, an undercurrent very much like an electric current charging and activating every object. Metaphor of electric energy, to my mind, is so comprehensive and illustrative that it helps to elucidate majority of the attributes of the Godhead. God is the primal cause, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the created universe. He is self-willed, sovereign and independent of as well as involved in His creation:

There is but one God.

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True is His Name, creative His personality and immortal His form. He is without fear, sans enmity, unborn and self-illuminated. By the Guru's grace (He is obtained).¹

This world is the True Lord's chamber and within it is the abode of the True One.²

Thousands are Thine eyes, yet Thou hast no eye. Thousands are Thine forms, yet Thou hast not even one. By His light, the light shines within all the souls.³

He has a design and calculations of His own which are beyond the grasp of human understanding and rational calculations. Centuries of human explorations and scientific research have revealed only a fraction of the design of His creation, the so called “Tip of the Iceberg”. Vast invisible vistas of cosmic design still remain unknown. The more one explores this design the more it expands and looks infinite :

There are nether-worlds below the nether-worlds and lacs of skies over skies.

The scriptures say one thing; searching after (God's) limit and bounds, (without success, people) have grown weary.

The Semitic scriptures say that there are eighteen thousand worlds, but in reality there is only one essence (that the Lord is limitless).

If there be any account (of His), then alone man can write that the Lord's account finishes not and whilst describing the account (man himself) finishes.

O Nanak! call Him great.

He Himself knows His Own-self.⁴

In fact, human mental faculty, the major tool employed by man in this spiritual quest, suffers from its systemic limitations. Its mental antennas cannot capture the full signification of His cosmic energy. In other words, human intellect is an inadequate tool to undertake this formidable task. How can a finite entity measure the infinite? The various linguistic epithets like omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent devised by man to describe the infinite, are vague inadequate approximations of His eternity, infinity and primal resourcefulness. No human metaphor completely befits or matches His grandeur. These linguistic equivalents devised by man are imperfect, as language itself is not a perfect medium to capture this experience. *Gurbani* compares this inadequacy of expression to the experience of a dumb person who fails to communicate the taste of sweetness after consuming

sweets. *Gurbani* states that not only human tools of perception are inadequate but the full extent of His divinity is incommunicable due to the inadequacy of the human medium of expression. So *Gurbani* exhorts us to abandon this inadequate flawed mental approach and adopt an approach of total surrender, faith and prayer. These three tools, adopted and exercised as a way of life, can awaken the supraintellect faculty, (call it soul, spirit, *Buddhi* or *Kundalini* - whatever *you* like) which can give us a glimpse of His majestic design. This one glimpse or spec of realization clears all the mental cobwebs and launches a devotee on a proper spiritual quest. He starts realizing that God, being the primal cause and creator of His grand design, does not suffer from any human weaknesses and inadequacies. He is indiscriminate both in His bounteousness and chastisement, fearlessness and impartial in his dispensation of justice towards His creation since everything flows from His own Will. Every created object is equally eligible for His grace and benevolence, irrespective of its genesis, size and location in space. His generosity and benevolence are like the bountiful rain which, when it falls *from* the skies, fills small pits, ponds, lakes, rivers and oceans alike. His presence is like the oxygen in nature which provides breath and life to the whole universe. He does not identify Himself with any species, class, region, religion and race, and *yet* is one with every object and every species. He energizes everything like an undercurrent of electric energy, which flows invisibly through the various gadgets, yet is discernible and variable. His is an inexhaustible source of energy eternally creative. His sovereignty extends beyond the dimensions of space and time. Human beings may attribute human cause-effect, rational, scientific reasons for the birth, death and extinction of species, continents, stars and galaxies, but one faithfully tuned to God's will through the medium of Guru's word or *Gurbani* and meditation upon 'His Name, will realize that all births and deaths of species as well as continents and civilizations, including the cycle of seasons and march of time, are governed by God's supreme Will. He further realizes that all rational explanations and scientific theories also fit into His grand design. For example, death of human body due to decay and ageing is a rational cause-effect explanation, but all earthly bodies, including human body, being time-bound, is God's grand design as well. God alone is timeless, beyond death and

decay.

As one delves deeper into the text of the *Adigranth* and reflects upon the deeper signification of sacred word or words, these words keep on acquiring new meanings and new connotations which, in turn, illuminate the devotee's mind with newer attributes of the Divine. As one proceeds further on this spiritual quest, all doubts, contradictions, petty desires, recriminations and attachments keep on dissolving. Ultimately, human psyche, purged of all carnal and mental squabbles, and illuminated with faith in God's Name and His Will, surrenders his self to God's Will, because he has realized that the soul rises above the petty barriers of caste, creed, colour, race and religion, and becomes an apostle of whole humanity. *Gurbani* calls such a person *Brahmgiani*, a divinely enlightened person. Such a person is the nearest epitomy, if not an exact replica of God, because he has all the attributes of the Divine.

The glory of the Brahm-gyani behoves the Brahm-gyani alone.

*Nanak, the mortal who knows God, is the Lord of all.*⁵

Thus, the *bani* of the *Adigranth*, projects an image of God which is cosmic, rather supra-cosmic in being autonomous and sovereign yet loving, and generous and benevolent in His governance and dispensation. Guru Nanak's "*Japji*" especially its opening lines and Guru Gobind Singh's preamble to "*Jaap Sahib*" project this image of the Divine. Rest of the *Adigranth* corroborates this thesis, besides having several other insights. Infact, Guru Nanak's "*Japji*" is a seminal work in the sense that it lays down the basic parameters of a spiritual quest, the primary Divine attributes, need for rising above the rational, intellectual approach, alone, and total surrender and submission to God's Will, human inability to gauge His infinite majesty, magnificent gains of dwelling upon His Name like cleansing of human mind and thought leading to spiritual rejuvenation and being worthy of His Grace, and finally redemption of the self as well as many others. *Gurbani* of the rest of the Gurus and saints in this text is an exposition and elucidation of these basic postulates and insights.

Once such a lofty image of God gets embedded in the devotee's psyche, his whole way of life starts undergoing a radical transformation and metamorphosis. Recitation of God's Name and prayer become a

part of his daily routine. As he dwells upon the Name of God with the full knowledge of His attributes, his conscience becomes a witness to all his deeds and actions. His urge to indulge in base animal pleasures and other debasing instincts is blunted by his awakened conscience. Purity of thought leads to purity of actions and purity of life. He starts eschewing all kinds of aggression and violence through word and deed because his conscience reminds him of God's presence in every being.

Break thou not anyone's heart as invaluable are all these jewels.

Precious like jewels are the minds of all. To hurt them is not at all good.

If thou desirest thy Beloved, then, hurt thou not anyone's heart.⁶

His inclination towards lust, greed, and mentality to grab what belongs to others, anger, sentimental attachment to persons and objects, egoistic dominance over others, give way to self-restraint, contentment, compassion, universal love, earning of livelihood through just and upright means, sympathetic understanding of other's point of view, a genuine concern and consideration for others, and a philosophical detachment from human bonds and material things. He becomes aware of the flux and fleeting nature of temporal things and his soul starts striving towards the prime source of all creation:

Long thou for the next world and turn thou not thy face backward.

Make thou thyself fruitful this very time and thou shalt not be born again.⁷

Gurbani makes a clear distinction between detachment and renunciation and approves of a conscious detachment alone. It disapproves of, rather condemns all kinds of asceticism and mortification of human body and its genuine needs and urges. It regards these mortifying practices as acts of escapism and self-disillusionment. It recommends an attitudinal shift, a conscious detachment and a spiritual non-involvement in the earthly bonds and objects even when one is physically involved with these acts and objects:

As a lotus-flower remains unaffected in water, as also a duck swims against the stream's current and becomes not wet, so with fixed intent on the Guru's word and uttering the Name, O Nanak, the dreadful world-ocean is crossed.⁸

He, who is affected not by pleasure or pain and to whom friend and foe are a like. Says Nanak, hearken thou, O my soul, deem thou him to be emancipated.⁹

O mind! Lead a life of such an Ascetic; As if all your mansions are an open health; Remain detached from all attachments. Let your food be frugal and sleep short. Compassion and forgiveness your embellishments; Lead a life of peace and contentment. Be detached from the trinity of material attachments.¹⁰

This sense of detachment comes when the true reality about “means” and “ends” is realized and a clear distinction between these two is made. All worldly attachments are means rather than an end. The end or goal is life, its eternal happiness, peace, its spiritual enrichment and its clear realization of its final destination. *Gurbani* exhorts us to live in the world, utilize its means to enrich life, but never to succumb to their temptations and become their slave. Thus, attachment, that *Gurbani* recommends, is an attachment with disinterest, an involvement with noninvolvement. This sort of *Gurbani* attitudinal shift towards aloofness from the madding world and its pleasures does not produce an existential loneliness / alienation or emotional vacuum, but a congenial space for an accelerated yearning for merging with the supreme source. The more one progresses in detachment, the more intense is the craving of the soul for unification with the Divine. *Gurbani* repeatedly uses the similes of fish’s endless craving for water, *papiha*’s (a song bird) thirst for the first drop of rain water from the sky, and *chakni*’s (a moonstruck bird) desperate craving for a glimpse of the moon, to describe the intensity of a devotee, living in detachment, for the Divine during his spiritual quest. As a fish fails to survive out of water or a *papiha* dies of thirst without the rain drop falling straight into his open beak and *Chakni*’s survival is threatened without a glimpse of the moon, so a spiritual pilgrim cannot survive without a daily dose of spiritual nourishment. This needs a permanent linkage with the eternal source of energy, God. This link is established through the repetition of God’s Name, and continuously dwelling and reflecting on His attributes. Gradually, it becomes a spontaneous, effortless process. In this way, this simultaneous and dual process of detachment from the temporal and attachment with the Divine leads to many visibly efficacious results which can be termed as psycho-spiritual, emotive and cerebral tranquillity; increasing peace of mind; deliverance from unnecessary tensions, fears, and complexes. At last, a stream of consciousness, steeped and saturated with the

Divine, flows clear, free from all doubts. *Gurbani* reminds a devotee that his life's pendulum does not swing completely according to his own conscious management of his life and its affairs, howsoever meticulous and planned, but as per the dispensation assigned for him by the Divine. This insight that human life is not as much a finished product of the human effort as of the Divine Will, sustains a devotee in moments of extreme adversity as well as good fortune. It saves him both from cynicism and egoistic boastfulness. *Gurbani* exhorts us to do our deeds earnestly and leave the rest to God:

*He has no pain, but all-comforts and with his eyes, he sees only the One Lord. For him no one is evil, but everyone is good. There is no defeat for him, but victory all through.*¹¹

*What He did or shall do, is all His own will.*¹²

If thou givest me an empire, what shall then, is this to me?

*If Thou makes me beg alms, what shall it, then, detract from me?*¹³

Another corollary of this spiritual quest leading to purity of thought and spiritual enrichment is its reflection in the human deeds and actions. *Gurbani* lays as much emphasis on purity of thought as on righteous deeds. Good thoughts must reflect and translate into good deeds.

*Everything is below Truth, the living with the Truth is even higher to all.*¹⁴

Says Nanak, meditate thou on the True Lord.

*If thou art unpolluted, then alone shalt thou obtain the True One.*¹⁵

Pious words, glib talk and ritualistic dress code of religiosity are a meaningless, fraudulent mask without a life and behaviour of good deeds. Addressing the contemporary priestly custodians of religion and religious zealots of Hinduism, Islam and *Gorakhpantbi* Yogis, *Gurbani*, especially the *Bani* of Guru Nanak, emphasizes the need for practising deeds of self-restraint contentment, compassion, tolerance, charity and truthfulness in one's daily lives and dealings with others, rather than in indulging in the hollow rituals of pilgrimage to sacred shrines, fasting, tonsuring of one's head, smearing one's body with ash and putting various kinds of marks on the forehead, etc. Purity and uprightness should be reflected through good human conduct rather than through a typical dress code.

Around your neck is the rosary, on your forehead the sacred mark and on

*your head is a towel and you have two loin clothes.*¹⁶

*Pilgrimage, penance, compassion and alms giving fetch, if any, a sesame of honour (merit).*¹⁷

The more one writes and reads, the more one burns.

The more the man wanders on pilgrim stations, the more he talks.

*The more he takes to religious garbs, the more discomfort; he causes his body.*¹⁸

Truth and truthfulness must be adopted as a way of life rather than as a concept for academic pursuit and pontification from the pulpit. Minimum dichotomy between one's word and deed is the true hallmark of a truly spiritual person. Such souls alone attain God's Grace. Sikh Gurus, both through precept and example, exhorted their followers to lead a life of honest living. Thus, *Gurbani* lays down a clear roadmap for human beings while leading a human existence. The Sikh fundamental principle of Trinity of labour, charity and meditation is based on this philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh Guru have successfully indoctrinated and ingrained these values in the *Sikh Panth*. The *Sikh* Community has, by and large, adopted and imbibed this value system in their communal ethos and life style. This partly explains their tough, industrious, enterprising nature, their generous charitable offerings to *Sikh* Shrines and institutions and God-fearing nature. These basic traits of *Sikh* psyche are a testimony to the contribution made by the value system enunciated by the Sikh Gurus in the *Gurbani*.

Apart from laying down a road-map for a harmonious human existence, *Gurbani* delves deep into the psychological repercussions of sinful acts of lust, deception, cheating, slander, calumny, perpetration of atrocities on the innocent and the pious, and upholds the inexorability inevitable of the moral law. Evil and wicked deeds cannot escape Divine wrath and Divine retribution. God, who is the embodiment of truth and all that is morally good, protects those who practise truth and piety, and punishes the sinners. Nemesis always catches up with the sinners and the wicked. Evil is self destructive, though it may triumph temporarily and even harm the innocent. But God's moral law is just, inevitable and irrevocable. No one can escape the consequences of one's deeds or (*Karma*s). Final settlement of the accounts of one's deeds settles all aberrations and contradictions. Moral

law has the longest arm and catches the wrong-doers at the end of their tether. Moreover, *Gurbani*, like other Indian scriptures, believes in the total span of a human soul rather than in the short span of a human body. Deeds, good and bad, are carried forward like figures in the accountant's ledger and creditside of the final balance sheet decides human destiny. *Gurbani* passes the final verdict:

*Falsehood shall come to an end, O Nanak and truth shall ultimately prevail.*¹⁹

*As the man sows so does he reap. Such is the field of actions.*²⁰

Leaving comely raiment and beauty in this world, the man departs.

Man himself obtains the fruit of his bad and good deeds.

One may issue one's heart-desired commands here, but he shall proceed by the narrow road hereafter.

All-naked when he goes to the hell, he, then looks very hideous indeed.

*He regrets the sins, he committed.*²¹

One is reminded of the words of 18th century Thinker and philosopher Immanuel Kant who writes, "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe; the more one steadily reflects on them: The starry heavens above and the moral law within". (The Critique of Practical Reason). Kant affirms his faith in God by reasoning that man should not merely seek to be happy but through obedience to that moral law, seek to become worthy of happiness that God can bestow. A significant portion of the *Adigranth's Gurbani* is in the form of a dialogue with one's own self about the temptations and weaknesses to which human beings are prone to falling a prey. Human predicament depicted in the *Gurbani* is that of a split personality, a self divided between the urges of the flesh and its consciousness to rise above the sleaze of human temptations. Human mind keeps on flickering between these two extremes throughout one's life. That is why the final balancesheet of one's deeds at the end of life's undertaking does not show any net profit on the creditside in terms of spiritual rejuvenation. That is why man lives and dies at the human level and fails to have a glimpse of Divinity or attain Divine attributes. *Gurbani* carries on this debate by addressing the human mind directly and reminding him of the operation of the inexorable moral law and exhorts him to abandon his pursuit of seeking happiness through material means. Man must change the rhythm of his life from a life of

indulgence to a life of contentment and allegiance to the Name of God:

Lord's elixir I have quaffed.

By which Nectar, I have forgotten other relishes. Pause.²²

Awake, O man, be awake; why art thou sleeping heedlessly.

The body, that was born with thee, even that shall not go with thee. Pause.²³

O my tongue, thou art engrossed in other relishes. Thy thirst departs not.

Thy thirst shall not depart by any means, until thou attainest to the Lord's elixir.²⁴

Through the regular spiritual enrichment of human mind and soul with the help of *Gurbani* and meditation, man can attain eternal happiness and rid himself of the vicious cycle of birth and death. From a spec of dust or a tiny drop of water, man can be a part of the super Design or Management governing this universe.

My soul, thou art thee embodiment (image) of Divine light, so know thy source. O my soul, the reverend Lord is with thee. By Guru's teaching enjoy His love. If thou recognise thy origin, then shalt thou know thy Spouse and understand the secret of death and birth.²⁵

Thus, *gurbani* partly through dialectical debate and persuasion, partly through the invocation of fear of the inexorable moral law and partly through the promise of eternal happiness through spiritual quest, encourages a devotee to lead a clean, virtuous spiritual life.

Gurbani's message, if adopted in practice and adopted as a way of life, can make a qualitative difference in man's life. In this age of stark rank materialism and expediency, what in Indian mythology is called *Kaliyuga*, man's continuous association with *Gurbani* can provide him with a bedrock of humanistic and moralistic values and make him immune from many temptations of the flesh and mental diversions. Need for evolving and adopting a moral code of conduct in one's individual and communal life has never been greater than in the present phase of human psyche. Never before in the human history and civilization, man and human society have been exposed to so much sleaze, greed for dominance over others and hegemony over others' territories through the subtle weaponry of economic domination and exploitation. The increasing incidence of intolerance and disaffection in individual human relationships and organized state sponsored

violence against certain regions and communities and the counter violence in the form of terrorism, both flow from the erosion of a moral value-system in the individual lives as well as the collective consciousness of communities and nations. T. S. Eliot's portrayal of a morally bankrupt Western civilization in his Nobel Prize winning magnum opus "*The Waste Land*" in the 1920s is equally relevant for the fast deteriorating Eastern Asian and Middle East societies. The stink and sleaze of moral human depredation has become global, thanks to the technological connectivity of the whole world. Mankind seems to have developed a strange kind of immunity against the most horrendous acts of barbarism and atrocities being committed daily both by the state and organized terrorist outfits. This daily dose of massive crime and sinful acts, reported through the print and electronic media, has almost immunized human psyche against crime and sin. The wellsprings of human values of compassion, concern for others, and moral justice, have dried in the individual and communal psyche of modern humanity. Beneath the material well-being and apparent affluence lies the cancer of human depravity. The path to rejuvenation of human soul and collective consciousness of humankind lies through the revival of human and moral values. *Gurbani*, if read and followed with devotion and faith, reflected upon with insight and adopted as a way of life, can bring about such a spiritual and moral rejuvenation. *Gurbani*'s basic postulate of earning one's livelihood through just and earnest means, sharing a part of it with the less fortunate and being grateful to the Lord for providing us an opportunity to sustain ourselves, is the first step towards this rejuvenation.

To conclude, *Gurbani* shows a holistic art of living, which, if practised and adopted in one's life, can make life meaningful and worthwhile. There are many other facets of this sacred scripture, such as, its rich literary poetic texture, its simplicity of language bordering on folklore and idiom of daily use, its diction, and composition of its verses in accordance with the Indian classical music – which need a separate discussion. The present endeavour is limited to the communication of personal experience and sharing it with the readers.

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 16. ਗਲਿ ਮਾਲਾ ਤਿਲਕੁ ਲਿਲਾਟੰ ॥ ਦੁਇ ਧੋਤੀ ਬਸਤ੍ਰ ਕਪਾਟੰ ॥
 17. ਤੀਰਥੁ ਤਪੁ ਦਇਆ ਦਤੁ ਦਾਨੁ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਪਾਵੈ ਤਿਲ ਕਾ ਮਾਨੁ ॥
 18. ਲਿਖਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਪੜਿਆ ॥ ਤੇਤਾ ਕੜਿਆ ॥ ਬਹੁ ਤੀਰਥ ਭਵਿਆ ॥
ਤੇਤੇ ਲਵਿਆ ॥ ਬਹੁ ਭੋਖ ਕੀਆ ਦੇਹੀ ਦੁਖੁ ਦੀਆ ॥
 19. ਕੂੜ ਨਿਖੁਟੇ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਓੜਕਿ ਸਚਿ ਰਹੀ ॥
 20. ਜੋਹਾ ਬੀਜੈ ਸੇ ਲੁਣੈ ਕਰਮਾ ਸੰਦੜਾ ਖੇਤੁ ॥
 21. ਕਪੜੁ ਰੁਪੁ ਸੁਹਾਵਣਾ ਛਡਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜਾਵਣਾ ॥
ਮੰਦਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਪਾਵਣਾ ॥
ਹੁਕਮ ਕੀਏ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵਦੇ ਰਾਹਿ ਭੀੜੈ ਅਗੈ ਜਾਵਣਾ ॥
ਨੰਗਾ ਦੋਜਕਿ ਚਾਲਿਆ ਤਾ ਦਿਸੈ ਖਰਾ ਡਰਾਵਣਾ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਅਉਗਣ ਪਛੋਤਾਵਣਾ ॥
 22. ਰਾਮ ਰਸੁ ਪੀਆ ਰੇ ॥ ਜਿਹ ਰਸ ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਏ ਰਸ ਅਉਰ ॥
 23. ਜਾਗ ਲੋਹੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਜਾਗ ਲੋਹੁ ਕਹਾ ਗਾਫਲ ਸੋਇਆ ॥ ਜੇ ਤਨੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਸੰਗ ਹੀ ਸੋ ਭੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ
ਹੋਇਆ ॥
 24. ਜਾਗ ਲੋਹੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਜਾਗ ਲੋਹੁ ਕਹਾ ਗਾਫਲ ਸੋਇਆ ॥ ਜੇ ਤਨੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਸੰਗ ਹੀ ਸੋ ਭੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ
ਹੋਇਆ ॥
 25. ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥ ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਜੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਰੰਗੁ ਮਾਣੁ ॥ ਮੂਲੁ
ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਤਾਂ ਸਹੁ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਮਰਣ ਜੀਵਣ ਕੀ ਸੋਝੀ ਹੋਈ ॥

POLYGAMY
– BIOLOGY AND ETHICS –

BIRENDRA KAUR*

THE MISCONCEPTION

What should one make of it, when a man as old in age as to be a grandfather, occupying a high position in society, remarks in a mixed company that he, from *personal experience*, can say that male is inherently bigamous? Infact, he meant polygamous, as he cited the example of one cock with ten hens, to make his point. Is it a comment made generally, or is it an effort to voice self-justification for deeds done, considering the comment is made in the presence of his wife in a social gathering of familiar acquaintances and strangers?

A few days later, a quote placed at a very prominent place in one of the newspapers, which reads as follows, attracted my attention:

“I don't think it is the nature of any man to be monogamous. Men are propelled by genetically-ordained impulses over which they have no control.”

– Marlon Brando** (1924 – 2004)

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** An Oscar-winner actor of American movies, sublimely talented, was the most beautiful actor of his times; turned down his Oscar to draw public attention to racial discrimination and social injustice to the Native Americans; women threw themselves at him; tumultuous personal life, married three women, but impregnated many; mentioned 11 children in his will, but speculation that others were overlooked; testified in court that he had failed as a father when his first-born son killed the boyfriend of half-sister, who later hanged herself; bizarre life style and facetious personality; expanding waistline – a source of worry and would, therefore, come on the sets without trousers and underpants, to ensure that the cameraman would not capture his girth; ended up as a bloated recluse; a giant colossus, his body gave out after a life of enormous, abusive appetites; suffered heart ailments and died of lung failure at the age of 80, penniless.

– Courtesy: Internet

The same quote reappeared at the same place, within a fortnight. It is one thing that Marlon Brando may have commented thus, in some context or the other, but it is another to publish it so prominently time and again.

When we make a comment based on personal experience, we are talking about ourselves. So what Brando is essentially saying is that *he* had no control over *his* impulses. This again is a self-justification for deeds done — an effort to try and be at peace with one's own, probably rather with the unpleasant self, without acknowledging that, deep inside, one knew what one did was wrong. And, the journalist who keeps reproducing Brando's comment might well be understood in the same light. Self-justification prods us to keep making the same mistakes time and again. But instead of justifying it, if we admit/accept our mistakes, the doors on the chance of repeating them will be closed.

Comments to the effect that men are polygamous by Nature are not isolated, but of a rather common occurrence. As a result, misinformation about the subject is spreading amongst gullible populace, leading, in a very subtle manner, to very grave, dangerous consequences, threatening the very stability of the social fabric that man has evolved over the centuries for the benefit of all. Hence, this article:

ILL LOGIC

To begin with, the logic offered by the Officer to justify polygamy in men by citing the case of 'one cock with ten hens', is nothing but hollow. Surely, what he observes is true; one cock *can* inseminate ten hens, as is the case when an average farmer family raises the birds in this ratio to meet its daily need of eggs. But it must be remembered that animals in nature do not occur in this ratio. Moreover, is this ratio a decision of the cock or the farmer? Further, even if the cock was replaced everyday by another, it would have gone unnoticed by the hens. The reversal of ratios, too, is a possibility. Should we not derive from this that females, too, are polygamous? For the sake of information, owing to advanced technologies, nowadays, hens do not even need to see a cock for laying eggs, the requirement of cocks being limited to hatcheries.

Farmers for their daily need of milk or for economic purposes also rear cows. In the process, the male calves are starved to death, and the few that are allowed to grow are castrated in order to tame them

for hard labour? Does it mean that bulls are polygamous, just because man rears, for economic gains, only a 'few' well-bred bulls for inseminating 'many' cows?

If a man can refer to 'one cock and ten hens', and that too artificially-reared ones, for his desires, then a woman, too, can refer to 'one queen bee and innumerable male drones', which, rather, occur in Nature. But, it will not serve any purpose. The idea is do we want to dismantle the social fabric and live in chaos, or should we work harder still to establish a kingdom of Almighty on earth? We do not have to imitate animals for our behaviour in general, and sexual behaviour in particular. Even in Nature, neither a bitch learns to call like the cow does during the breeding season, nor a dog learns from an elephant to get *musth* (intermittent periods of heightened sexual activity in high-ranking elephant male), then why do we want to learn from, and imitate, amongst all the various forms of reproductive behaviour, cocks and that too from those reared unnaturally? (Cock, being a bird, and bee being an insect, these are far more separated phylogenetically from mammals. And man, although a mammal, * is far more advanced even

- * Some such features in which man differs from even his closest relatives (monkeys, macaques, baboons, gibbons, and the orangutans, chimpanzees, gorillas) are:
- cerebral cortex of brain most convoluted, most developed, and more than thrice as large, per unit weight of body (only this portion of brain is responsible for consciousness, and it governs intelligence and reason);
 - high rate of fetal brain growth;
 - can make fire and tools;
 - erect posture at all times;
 - absence of tail (chimpanzee, gorilla too do not have a tail, but knuckle-walk);
 - much less hair on body, axillary and pubic hair grow at puberty;
 - very long hair on head;
 - males with characteristic facial hair, as secondary sexual character;
 - facial expressions much varied;
 - ability of speech/language (others make sounds, but these do not symbolize any object/idea);
 - ability to think abstractly, learn, transmit knowledge, and memorize;
 - arboreal tendency lacking; no brachiation, swinging on tree branches;
 - larger brain case, smaller jaws and teeth, straight face, shorter pelvis, curved backbone;
 - testes in scrotal sacs outside the body throughout life (in most others, sacs descend seasonally to be retracted when the breeding season is over);
 - large interval of infantile helplessness (linked to a developed brain) – human babies can not cling to mother;
 - prolonged childhood allows time for much learning;
 - developed an elaborate culture/civilization;
 - longer lifespan; and so on.

as compared to the rest of the mammals.)

TYPES OF REPRODUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Various animals of the animal kingdom in their reproductive behaviour exhibit immense variety. There are the lowest acellular forms, which reproduce simply by division of an individual into two (Asexual reproduction).

In Sexual reproduction, fertilization of the egg by the sperm may be external or internal. In External fertilization, the two sexes do not mate, but come together (frog) or may not even come together (clam worm), but release the eggs and the sperms simultaneously into the surrounding. In the case of Internal fertilization, there are the hermaphrodites, which have both the male as well as the female reproductive systems in a single individual. Each may inseminate itself (liver fluke) or two such individuals may come together and inseminate each other simultaneously (earthworm). In insects, such as, honeybee and termites, which show a highly advanced, socially organized behaviour, there is only one Queen per colony and innumerable male drones and sterile workers, all catering to her needs.

Amongst the higher forms, mostly there are forms in which the males and females are separate individuals. Amongst these, some species exhibit monogamous behaviour, whereas some are polygamous. In Monogamy, the pair may remain together for one breeding season only (annual/serial monogamy, as in sparrow, warblers, chickadees, etc) or may remain together for life (permanent/perennial monogamy, as in eagle, Siberian crane, swan, kittiwake, gibbon, etc).

As per studies on Animal Behaviour, Polygamy covers a variety of forms of multiple mating. It has two main categories: Polygyny, where one male mates with many females; and Polyandry, where one female mates with many males. As mentioned earlier, animals are not in 1 male to 10 females ratio in nature; they are fifty-fifty, roughly. As per logic then, if males are polygamous, would not females be too? Can males be polygynous without the participation of polyandrous females? Then there is another kind of polygamous reproductive behaviour, Promiscuity, in which both sexes mate randomly with several partners (bear, grouse, zebra, chimpanzee).

CHARACTERISTICS OF POLYGyny

Below are the characteristics of males of species that are classified as Polygynous by nature:

Territoriality

All polygynous males mark their territories with their urine (dog, fox, coyote, squirrel, monkey), or smear their faeces on prominent objects (tiger, lemur, skunk, hippo), or use both urine and faeces (antelope, sambhar, civet, hyena), whereas some others mark their territories by a pheromone, odor that acts as a sex-attractant, present in their urine (lion, leopard, tiger, big and small cats), and yet others use secretions of special glands, which may be present in their anal, cloacal or temporal region, or on fore arms, neck, forehead, or at the base of antlers, or between hind toes, on sides of head, below eyes, under chin, or in throat, cheeks (lemur, beaver, bear, dog, pig, deer, elephant, porcupine, reindeer), only to mention a few. Secretions of these glands are also used to mark their mate, and defeated rivals.

Lack of Patriarchal Instinct

Another related feature of polygyny is that the male does not stay with the female to assist in rearing the young ones (dog, cat, bull, tiger, leopard, cheetah). In other words, the patriarchal instinct is missing in such forms.

Establishment of Hierarchy

Moreover, in such polygyny forms, males have to literally lock horns, fight very aggressively amongst themselves, risking serious injuries, to establish their dominance rank/order or hierarchy to possess females. Only the most powerful male is successful. But even the most successful male is unable to retain his dominance for long, and is soon overcome by another younger, stronger male. Such 'Changing of Lord' is of common occurrence in Nature. (Note: the females too get more than one mate in the process). In yet other polygynous species, a few males fight/compete to possess a very small territory/mating station (Lek formation), which females visit, mate and leave, and, in this case, the female approaches the successful males.

MEN VIS-À-VIS POLYGYNous SPECIES

Coming to man, he does not get a mate(s) by way of locking horns with other men. Patriarchal instinct is well developed. He does

not mark his territory in the manner animals do, nor does he use his urine and/or faeces for the purpose. He does not possess glands and/or pheromones to mark his family members or enemies, nor does he mark them in any other way.

A particular behaviour is always accompanied by associated morphological and physiological modifications to complement that behaviour. For example, carnivorous by nature, cats/tigers/lions/cheetahs possess sharp canines and claws to be able to tear flesh, and speed to capture the prey, whereas cows/horses/donkeys possess flat molars and hoofs, as they are herbivorous by nature. Not going into detail, suffice it to know that, apart from these observable features, there are also accompanying internal modifications, anatomical as well as physiological, to complement these habits.

Absence of all related features of polygyny in men indicates that Nature does not intend men to be polygynous. A case from the recent past: Cows, vegetarian by nature, suffered from mad-cow disease when central nervous tissues, such as, brains, eyes, spinal column, parts of gut, etc, were processed into their diet to increase their milk yield, and then, due to this incurable disease, had to be slaughtered by the millions. Polygamous behaviour of human beings is now taking its toll through AIDS, teaching humans, probably, the unnaturalness of polygamy for mankind.*

Nature is perfect in its job and cannot be moulded. For those who disobey, the consequences are built-in and inevitable, and follow sooner or later.

AN OTHER ASPECT

From the above, rather, a very interesting fact has come to the

* But, mankind, instead of advocating monogamy, atleast as one of the ways of avoiding AIDS, can only think of recommending 'safe sex'. I have no data to support my conviction, but even if we let common sense prevail, then it comes clear that the so-called 'safe sex' recommended for checking spread of AIDS cannot be completely effective, as, till date, there is no filter known that can hold back viruses. Therefore, how can condoms do the job, which can only block semen? Can a strainer meant for tealeaves hold back fine coffee grains? Moreover, at the practical level, how is it proposed that couples of the present generation and onwards procreate with safe sex? Even a test tube baby will not escape the virus, as it can contract the disease during parturition.

fore, which is generally found wanting in the Biology books, that even in these Polygynous species, to which man wants to belong due to his 'genetically-ordained impulses', Nature rather ensures 'the healthiest and the most potent' of males to a female 'throughout her reproductive life,' whereas a male gets access to females only for a limited period of his lifespan, because he is at the peak of his fighting ability only for a short time.

Thus, a closer look reveals that in all categories of Polygamy, whether Polygyny or Polyandry or Promiscuity, both males as well as females, are polygamous, and not just either males or females. Such classification, therefore, is misleading.

GENERALIZATIONS MISTAKEN

We can safely infer that men basically have no features peculiar to polygynous males to justify polygyny by Nature. And, they could, thus, well be monogamous by Nature, but can behave polygamous, if they so desire. The same could be said of women.

Thus, the present widespread impression, that men alone are polygamous due to 'instinct', and, therefore, polygyny is 'beyond their control', and, as such, their innocence/helplessness in the matter, has no basis. Kings/men may have had/have more than one wife, but such situations are only under pressure, unacceptable to women, given the choice.

On the contrary, polyandrous females are a part of almost every society. For example, in many farmer families with small land holdings, to check further division of land among their siblings, all brothers have only one wife. The Western cultures give as much freedom to women as to men. Moreover, cases of adultery by women, even married in monogamous societies, are common. Stoning to death in public, laid down as a punishment for an adulteress in Islam is indicative of polyandrous females. And, not to forget the prostitutes across the globe. As such, it would be wrong and totally misplaced to generalize men as polygamous and women as monogamous.

In other words, in the present-day social context, both men and women can and/or do behave polygamous, and, as such, the category that best describes them, or comes in close proximity to, would be Promiscuity, environmental influences pending, as we shall see later

in the article.

INHERENT VS LEARNT BEHAVIOUR

Instincts are genetically transmitted, and are, therefore, the same in all individuals. Behaviour, on the other hand, is influenced grossly by environmental factors. The gender-related promotion of skills/beliefs is unfounded. Women have made their presence felt in every field on earth, be it Politics, Defence, Medicine, Engineering, Business, and so on, not to forget her ventures into Space as well. Cooking and tailoring are generally assigned to women, but majority of world's professional cooks and tailors are men. Women have taken to smoking and drinking, that were once considered to belong to man's world. Househusbands are, nowadays, replacing housewives, and so on. The beliefs, too, vary from society to society, and are not gender-specific. In the Jew world, society accepts that a Jew is a Jew only by virtue of a Jew mother, whereas in other faiths, the offspring belongs to the religion of the father. Females play the dominant role in the Matriarchal society, whereas the Patriarchal society is male-dominated. Thus, a complete reversal of roles of the sexes is a proven possibility.

In addition to similar abilities of the sexes to perform jobs or adopt roles, all animals, from the single-celled *Amoeba* to Man, need to, and do, learn from the environment for survival. Sociobiologists tell us that behaviour is also evolving just as there is morphological and physiological evolution and, in spite of being inherent, is modified/influenced by learning from the environment. For example:

- The instinct to survive is inherent, but one learns about the dangers in one's lifetime. A child knows not the danger from a snake or a lion or a live electric wire;
- Speech is inherent, English/French is not; one learns the language of the region, in which he/she grows up;
- Hunger is inherent, pizza/noodles is not; the food habits vary from place to place, or from faith to faith – pork a taboo for Muslims, beef for Hindus;
- Learning is inherent, but what one learns is dependent on the environment. None is a doctor or an engineer or a scientist by birth. Putting everything in mouth is inherent in human child, but, even at this age, it soon learns what is hot/spicy/sharp. Even

amongst the animals, although a keen sense of smell is inherent in dogs, they have to be trained to trace criminals/drugs/bombs. In the circus, animals learn to perform feats, which are otherwise unknown to their co-specifics in nature;

- Reproduction is inherent, but monogamy/polygamy is not; reproductive/sexual code/behaviour is learnt from the environment. Girls as well as boys from the Eastern cultures readily go in for an arranged marriage, whereas it is unthinkable for those from the Western societies to do so. Live-in is a workable, acceptable marital concept in the Western societies, whereas such a system is looked down upon and is highly objectionable in the East. In the West, parents begin to feel concerned if their unmarried, teenage daughter does not make a boyfriend, whereas in the East, parents' main thrust is to block such an eventuality and, in case they fail, she may even be eliminated. Caste is a foremost consideration while searching for a spouse, courtesy the caste system that finds religious sanction in Hinduism. Also, its concept of *sati* (to be burnt/burn alive on the husband's pyre) is still glorified in some regions, but it is beyond the comprehension of those from other faiths. Women professing the Sikh faith demand equality with men as a matter of right, because the founder of the faith has bestowed it upon them. The exclusive right of husband to divorce, by merely uttering *talaaq* thrice is peculiar to Islam. Muslim women accept their husbands with second, third and fourth wife, which is unacceptable to women from the other faiths, and so on.
- Parent-child bond is inherent, but female-foeticide is not. The parents of girl child have learnt to do it from the dowry-demanding, bride-burning, greedy society. Female-foeticide and bride burning are unheard of in the Western cultures, where dowry is unheard of.

If a mother and father can learn to kill their child, what else, on earth, cannot be learnt?!

GENETICALLY CONTROLLED BEHAVIOUR VS FREE WILL

There *are* certain behaviours that are beyond the control of animals. Most common example is of migration in birds. Some can

migrate even without having seen their parents doing it. Female digger wasp can carry out all the activities of nest-building, hunting, breeding, sealing the opening of the nest, etc., all in a few weeks long lifespan, in spite of the fact that its parents die before its birth. Such are the behaviours genetically ordained, beyond control, and their occurrence in nature is directly linked to either *no period* or a *very short period* available in their lifespan for learning from parents. Thus, the longer the childhood and the more dependent the offspring on the parents, the lesser is the occurrence of such behavioural patterns. Man has the *most dependent and longest childhood*, providing him with ample time to learn.

This ability to learn, coupled with the ability to reason and transmit knowledge, has taken humans far ahead of animals. His achievements are matchless. Animals are where they were centuries ago; cows have not learnt to do fodder farming, nor the lions deer farming. Birds have not improved upon their nesting skills, whereas man has moved from the jungles to multi-storied, centrally air-cooled/heated buildings, and is now on his way to even colonizing the moon. He can migrate defying climates, unlike the birds. He does not have to hibernate, like snakes and lizards. He can survive in a desert or polar region, penguins a failure in the former case, and camels in the latter. In spite of his inability to fly or breathe under water, he has mastered the skies and the seas. Space is his next target, its exploration yielding results.

Even at the personal level, humans have been given the freedom to choose and the ability to control/regulate their actions. For example, one is free to donate or snatch; one is free to be honest or a cheat; one is free to speak the truth or tell lies; one is free to go to a gym or take to drugs; one is free to go to a church or a casino; one is free to eat healthy food or junk food; one may decide to shave or let Nature decide; one is free to read facts or fiction; one is free to see an art movie or a blue movie; one is free to become a saint or a sinner; one is free to kill or save; one is free to enhance personality from within or without; one is free to be monogamous or polygamous; one is free to hold commitment dearly or commit adultery; one is free to follow the heart or the head; one is free to listen to outside noises or inner voice; and so on. All behaviour of a human being is under his will.

Thus, in humans, prolonged period of learning from the environment/parents/society brings behaviour of an individual well under one's control. No misbehaviours can be attributed to Nature. If we are human, we are responsible for our actions.

POLYGAMY Vs ADULTERY

Foremost expectation of a teacher towards his students is impartiality; foremost expectation of a servant towards his master is loyalty; foremost expectation of a spiritual guide is to lead his disciples towards Almighty; foremost expectation of a partner/spouse towards mate is fidelity. Otherwise, the very purpose is defeated.

Amongst the animals, there is nothing like immorality; they are living perfectly natural lives, as they do not devise a system that requires commitment of any nature from the couple. Moreover, polygamy and adultery should not be mixed up; these are two different things altogether. It is not polygamy, but adultery that is immoral, as it amounts to cheating one's spouse. Adultery, apart from earning disrespect from society, torments the spouse/partner, who feels extremely humiliated. The natural outcome of it is hatred, leading to broken/insecure homes – children suffering the most in the process. If the foundation of society is insecure homes, how secure can the building be? And, how long can it last?

Human behaviour is reflective of one's character – good or bad, be it a woman or a man.

Having multiple partners, each in the knowledge of and acceptable to all concerned, is another modern trend. It definitely is not cheating. But what would be its impact on society – men with no children to call their own, and children with fathers unknown! (Thank goodness for the contraception facilities.)

Polygynous males are short-lived, and invariably starve to death, having no one to call their own. Thus, it is easy to see the impact of the various types of reproductive behaviours in the long run, from the animal kingdom. And, lest we forget, man has 'free will', so that even if he wants to learn from animals, then there are monogamous animals too, which, rather, are so, in spite of having performed no formal, public commitment ceremony. Moreover, no male, be it from Promiscuity, Polygyny or Polyandry, can claim a child as his own,

whereas nobody, and no type of behaviour, can deny the child to the mother. Actually, therefore, only monogamous behaviour benefits males in the long run, the females being the beneficiaries in all cases.

RESPONSIBILITY DEMANDS

A person engages in cheating, stealing, killing, looting, raping, adultery, due to an unhealthy mindset, courtesy the environment in which he has grown up, and cannot lead a peaceful life; he must be helped to improve upon his conduct, for his own benefit. But the present so-called modern, broad-minded culture is, on the contrary, engaged in igniting lust*. Internet porn and cyber sex sites abound. Man has invented various media, but he is 'free' to use these to promote positive values or negative ones. Consequences are sure to follow, as these are inherent in His Order.

Unfortunately, a relationship appears to have become superfluous/outmoded. Man-woman bond, nowadays, is only of the body, *sans* the person. But responsibility demands that sincerity/commitment be stressed in both men and women as a virtue, for a truly healthy society from every angle, sexual, emotional, moral. As we have seen, humans possess the ability to adopt values and evolve concepts. But when society itself begins to promote values/concepts detrimental to society, through media or otherwise, what can we expect of its members? Having multiple partners is listed as the major cause of spread of AIDS, which is, therefore, passing on to newborns as well. Are the babies getting a gift of life, or of death? In addition to such noticeable effects of adultery, its subtle impact on society is far, far more serious, as, in the absence of any corporeal symptoms, it is outside the purview of medicinal treatment. It's a disease of the society, and will eat into the vitals of society. Man has the choice to be shortsighted or farsighted.

HEED ALL NEEDS

It is a pity that as man is advancing, the stress is on physical self,

* The topics under the category 'Sexual Health' according to a website Directory are reproduced below, in toto:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| – Breast Enlargement; | – Herbal Viagra; |
| – Penis Enlargement; | – Penis Pills; |
| – Pheromone; | – Sexual Enhancement; |
| – Viagra; | – Viagra Alternatives. |

going further and further from the natural look, and on the material front, having taken physical comfort to its heights. Value systems of yore have gone topsy-turvy: Boldness in woman is depicted by the extent to which she can expose her body, and to be able to walk the ramp or model in the nude is liberation; beauty is only skin-deep; persona is quantified into centimeters and kilograms; social status of a person is directly proportional to his financial status – one's honest conduct, educational qualifications, cultured background, etc., as of no consequence; and so on. Weird experimentations by people are underway – from adultery, to one-night-stand, to wife/husband swapping, etc. Toygasm distributors are flourishing. Socially, the emergence of homosexuality (lesbians/gays) is probably due to the frustration of the sexes with the opposite sex. Such behavioural patterns are reflective of man's state of frustration and/or confusion, and show, at the same time that he is in search of something. But, he is groping in the dark. Seeking happiness through consumption is the ideology of the day. He would eat gold for breakfast, diamonds for lunch and platinum for dinner, if he could. True happiness, and peace of mind lie elsewhere. Happiness is transient for those who cling to things transient in nature, such as youth, physical beauty, material wealth, political power, etc. The deer gets consumed by the mirage, as it does not learn in time of its illusory nature.

Conscience and the discrimination of good/bad are inherent to a human. He possesses a spiritual dimension to his personality. Unless he pays heed to this aspect, his thirst will not get quenched, and may end up becoming the cause of his own extinction. It is a fact that man is the first species to have the ability to make all life forms extinct – including himself. Ironically, man can also save these and himself. But, self-interest, even at the cost of others, is the sole criterion and the basis of all the decisions that are being made at every level, individual, national or international, by those in power. The desire to rule/dominate may be by 'instinct', but unless we 'learn' to do so by wisdom, honesty, justice, and grace, we are destined to doom.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Polygamy (practically only Polygyny), coupled with varying degrees of discrimination against women at some level or the other,

finds mention in the scriptures of almost all religions. Men as well as women, who grow in such an environment, too begin to believe that women do not warrant an equal status/respect and that men are polygamous by Nature. But these beliefs are purely environment-generated, and have nothing to do with genetics. Otherwise, how do we explain the totally contrasting, celibate behaviour of monks, priests, *sanyasis*, *yogis*, etc? On the other hand, growth of facial hair in men from puberty onwards is natural and genetically regulated. Still so many men shave.*

Potentially, every man/woman can be monogamous, polygamous, or celibate; it is the environment (cultural values/religious ideology) that shapes one's personality. In the present times, various reproductive codes are being experimented, depending on the family needs or demographic figures or financial independence in women or so on, but woman is still at the receiving end in every society. For example, the Polygyny in Islam, which sanctions upto four wives to a man, is sometimes exploited by Muslims by either ignoring the limit on number of wives or by marrying a fourth wife for short periods of time (say, every Thursday for a week), and by non-Muslims by converting to Islam when they want to remarry. And, prostitution thrives in even the legally bound monogamous societies. As such, it is not any particular reproductive code that can ensure respect for her, but rather a change in the mindset of society towards her and marital relationship.

Sikhism is *the* ideology (enshrined in its scripture, the eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, which addresses entire humanity) that stresses on truthful living above everything else, including Truth itself. Further, the Guru gives woman absolute equality to man, and a place of honour in society — she is not made to feel guilty on any pretext; she is never condemned, nor projected as a reward; she is not expected to cover her face in the presence of men; she is not expected to change her name or looks following marriage; she weds unescorted; virginity finds no reference; her beauty lies in her qualities and not physical attributes; she maintains natural looks; she is debarred from no religious ceremony, neither is any ceremony earmarked exclusively for her; her initiation is

* The established possibility of spread of AIDS at the barber's shop is not being highlighted enough by AIDS awareness campaigns.

similar to that of men, and the concept of the ideal, the saint-soldier concept, is for her too; she enjoys equal rights and responsibilities even in the gurdwaras; and so on, leaving no scope for her exploitation. She has, at certain crucial times, led her menfolk/community and directed the course of history effectively. In other words, it is for the first time in the history of mankind that she is made to feel human, and 'gifted' equality – more equality than even the feminists of the day can think of 'demanding'.

Rather, man is made to understand with logic how dependent he is on her throughout his life. He is advised to inculcate qualities like patience, humility, compassion, etc., that come naturally to her. Commitment to wife is expected of him and he is to respect all other girls and women as daughters and sisters. He is never to cast an evil eye on others' women. (It has been recorded by none other than their opponents, British as well as Muslim, in the eighteenth century, that Sikh soldiers would not abuse enemy's women captured as war booty.) Asceticism/celebrity (unnatural to the instinct of reproduction), which looks down upon marriage, and is adopted as a way of attaining salvation, is redefined as commitment to one's spouse.

Sikhism stresses on truthful, respectable conduct for man as well as woman in marital relationship. Husband and wife are two bodies, but one and the same soul. Soul is to Almighty as a drop is to ocean; all are, thus, equal before the Lord. Equality is absolute in that gender is rendered irrelevant, as a human being, the bride, is guided towards attaining spiritual bliss by merger with the Almighty, the Spouse of all humanity. Not only as Spouse, the Lord is also referred to as the Mother, the Father, the Brother, the Friend, etc., in many hymns and, thus, is not a 'male' God only (the concept of male God is objected to by some feminists).

Further, Sikhism is *the* ideology that guides humans to also rise above regions, castes, religions, races, and so on. It elevates man to such lofty heights that he views the world and its composite cultures/religions as a garden of flowers of various hues. Justice to the weak and the suppressed is his moral obligation, to be performed even defying the instinct of survival. He is to overcome the instinct to dominate and not frighten anyone, and yet be bold enough to overcome the instinctive fear. His prayer is to be universal in character, seeking the welfare of all,

as opposed to the instinct of placing the self before others.

Sikhism is *the* Ideology that lays bare the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Liberation of mankind being its aim, it does not lure or instill fear. On the contrary, expectations are defined, heaven/hell projected as irrelevant, and fears drilled out, teaching man to become bold, confident, loving, Almighty-like.

In short, the Guru guides man to conquer his mind, and, thereby, also the vices, even if inherent therein, and inculcate virtues that may prove beneficial to him in the centuries and the millennia to come. The history of the Gurus and their followers shows it is a possibility, as, sparrows turned hawks, *bairagis* turned warriors, thugs turned *sajjan*, lowly turned lords, and so on, during that period. The Guru equates the conquering of one's mind to conquering the world, and encourages man to recognise his origin, as he is but an embodiment of the Almighty.

There is a price to every good thing, which makes it valuable. There is no effort required to go downhill, i.e., unleash the animal instincts. To progress, we have to look ahead. We are free to handle the gift of freedom with responsibility, or let freedom handle us.

THE SOONER, THE BETTER

If we fail to learn or learn too late, another smarter species, with better ability to learn, may emerge, and carry out selective breeding of humans too, for skilled/hard labour and/or flesh.

□

*O dear, I would sell this body to the saint,
If he causes me to meet my Beloved.
The pleasures and decoration of sin are futile,
And I have forsaken and abandoned them, O Mother.
Lust, wrath and avarice forsook me, O dear,
When I fell at the feet of the True Guru.
The persons, who are imbued with the Lord, O dear,
Go not anywhere else.
They, who have tasted God's essence, O dear,
Remain satiated and sated.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 431

CREATING THE IMAGE OF PROPHET MOHAMMED – A QUESTION OF FREE SPEECH ? –

VERPAL SINGH*

The recent protests by Muslims all over the world against the publication of caricatures of Prophet Mohammed and the justification by Mass Media outlets in western countries for publishing them, raise questions that should be answered now to pre-empt any such situation arising again in future – whether concerning revered personalities of one religion or another. This article seeks to analyse the causes behind the publication of offending caricatures and what led to the protests. The aim is to identify the forces which caused this major upheaval in the world and a possible way to neutralize them.

Let us recount the history of the whole episode in order to give context to the issues involved.

In September of 2005 a Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoons caricaturing Prophet Mohammed (creating an image of the prophet is considered a blasphemous act in Islam) not as founder of Islam but as founder of terrorism thus equating Islam with terrorism (in eerily similar ways to the Sikhs as a whole being painted as terrorists in 1980s and 1990s).

For the next two months, the Danish Muslim organizations worked to press the Danish government to take action over this deliberate insult to the Muslim community. They collected 17,000 signatures and delivered them to the office of the Danish Prime Minister, but the Prime Minister's office did not deem it necessary to even acknowledge the petition. They met the Minister of Culture as well as the editor of *Jyllands-Posten* but got no action on their concerns.

As their frustration mounted, feeling stifled they started contacting

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ambassadors of Muslim countries in Denmark in order to reach the Prime Minister through them. Quite surprisingly, the Prime Minister refused to meet the ambassadors on this issue, thereby making it clear that he or his government did not care about the Muslims' grievances.

With the ambassadors snubbed, the Danish Muslims found themselves out of options to find a solution within the Danish administration. The matter was further complicated when those who had publicly spoken against the caricatures received more offending images in their mail. This forced them to prepare a 43 page dossier on the persecution they as a community were being subjected to, listing actions that deliberately sought to insult them for being Muslims.

It was only in December of 2005 that a delegation of Danish Muslims went to Cairo and met the Grand Mufti, officials of Egyptian government and the head of Arab League there. This resulted in the Danish Ambassador to Egypt being summoned for talks. Soon enough the media in the Muslim world picked up the story of the cartoons and the response of the Danish government to the petitions of Muslims there. Arab League was soon seized of the matter.

By the end of December 2005, with no apology forthcoming from the Danish government or the editor of *Jyllands-Posten* a boycott of Danish goods was beginning to be seen as the only option left. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, comprising more than 50 states posted on its website the proposal to boycott Danish goods in retaliation for "the aggressive campaign waged against Islam and its Prophet" until an apology was offered for the drawings.

In a statement, Abdulaziz Othman al-Twajiri, the organization's Secretary General, said, "We encourage the organization's members to boycott Denmark both economically and politically until Denmark presents an official apology for the drawings that have offended the world's Muslims." A few weeks later the Jordanian Parliament condemned the cartoons, as did several other Arab governments.

Till this point, the caricatures were being seen in the Muslim world as the work of some extremist right-wing Danish Christians bent upon provoking Muslims. The actions that were being taken to counter the insults were aimed at forcing the Danish government to act to prevent such a thing happening in future.

It should be remembered that Denmark is today ruled by a right-

wing government which makes no secret of its anti-Muslim stance. Like the right-wing politicians everywhere, the Danish Liberal Party headed by Anders Fogh Rasmussen thrives on propagating xenophobia. In the snap election called by the then Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (no relation to the present Rasmussen) hoping to cash in on the Danish people's show of patriotic feelings for their government in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks in New York, the Liberal Party with its anti-immigration, anti-Muslim stance was voted to power at the head of a right-wing coalition. This was the beginning of the Danish Muslims feeling the heat of being treated as second class citizens and fearful of the very safety of their life and limb.

The Anders Rasmussen government quickly made it clear that immigrants were not welcome to Denmark, not even as asylum seekers. It set up a new Cabinet post of Minister of Immigration and Integration the purpose of which is to make the immigrants shed any signs of having roots in a different culture. This and other such openly advocated policies (in the background of George Bush's "War on Terror") helped create an atmosphere where anyone could target a Muslim through physical or verbal violence without fear of any action from the government.

By 2005, even the Danish queen was openly speaking against Muslims and Islam. In her authorised biography, *Margrethe*, she tells the Muslims "to improve their Danish language skills".

The queen said people had to take the "challenge" of Islam seriously.

"We have let this issue float around for too long, because we are tolerant and rather lazy," she said.

The queen said Muslims should learn Danish properly, so they would not feel excluded from society.

In the book *Margrethe*, written by journalist Annelise Bistrup, the queen is quoted as voicing disapproval of "these people for whom religion is their entire life".

Calling for opposition to radical Islam, she said: "We have to run the risk of being labelled in an unflattering way, because there are some things for which we should display no tolerance."

[as published on BBC website in April 2005]

It is illustrative of the hostility Muslims were being subjected to in Denmark that even the Queen weighed in on the side of those who see Muslims as a threat — as terrorists. Danish Supreme Court also became a player in this “1984-esque” Ministry-of-Integration scenario, when it ruled in January of 2005 that a supermarket chain had the right to fire a young Muslim woman for wearing a headscarf to work. It should be obvious to any observer of human behaviour that when we treat someone with hostility and then advise them to do something, they would tend to show their reaction to our hostility by refusing to do what we ask them to, even when doing it would do them good.

By mid-2005 the situation had become such that some prominent Danes were beginning to openly advocate extermination (a la holocaust) of Muslims as a viable option without any proper reprimand from the State. For instance, in one of his broadcasts on *Radio Holger*, a presenter, Kaj Wilhelmsen, said: “There are only two possible reactions if you want to stop this bomb terrorism — either you expel all Muslims from Western Europe so they cannot plant bombs, or you exterminate the fanatical Muslims which would mean killing a substantial part of Muslim immigrants.” The only reaction to this from the State was suspension of broadcasting license of the radio station for three months.

Any redeeming feature of this State-reaction was neutralized by Mr Wilhelmsen’s reaction. “...Kaj Wilhelmsen has vowed to fight on. He says he will continue to broadcast on the internet, for which no licence is required. ‘Local radio is only one type of media and we will use the media available,’ he was quoted as saying.

“Use the media available” towards what purpose? To spread his message of expulsion or extermination of Muslims from Western Europe? Quite interestingly Mr Wilhelmsen also invoked the “freedom of speech” right by threatening “to sue the members of the Radio Licence Commission for blocking freedom of speech”.

This is not the first time that there is talk in Europe of integration or expulsion or extermination of a whole community. An article published anonymously in the year 1872 in the German language weekly *Ausland* (later accepted by its editor Friedrich von Hellwald, as his

own work) proclaimed :

“The Jews are not merely a different religious community, but, and this is to us the most important factor, ethnically an altogether different race. The European feels instinctively that the Jew is a stranger who immigrated from Asia. The so-called prejudice is a natural sentiment. Civilization will overcome the antipathy against the Israelite who merely professes another religion, but never that against the racially different Jew... .. In eastern Europe the Jew is the cancer slowly eating into the flesh of the other nations. Exploitation of the people is his only aim. Selfishness and lack of personal courage are his chief characteristics; self-sacrifice and patriotism are altogether foreign to him.”

[*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, under ANTI-SEMITISM, 1904]

West, feeling threatened by the “alienness” of the Jews and refusing to accommodate them in European cultures first campaigned to integrate them. This campaign to integrate the Jews then turned into one to expel or exterminate them because they had become indistinguishable from the locals. All this was taking place alongside the entrenchment of voting rights in European countries towards the later half of the 19th century. The local cultures found it difficult to digest that the Jews enjoyed equal rights in the land without having roots therein, forgetting that democracy means equal rights — unconditionally. The locals also did not relish the idea of competing in their own countries for influence with the alien Jews.

Hundred years earlier it was the right to vote, today it is the perks of the welfare state which some of the Western people find hard to share with immigrants. Then it was the Jew who was at the receiving end, today it is the Muslim and other immigrants (except the Jews). That campaign ended in the killing of 6 million Jews. The same fate is being advocated for the Muslims today. And perhaps other immigrants tomorrow.

The publication in September of 2005 of caricatures of Prophet Mohammed needs to be seen in this context in order to understand why Muslims saw this as the last straw.

There are around 400,000 immigrants in Denmark’s population of 5.4 million. Out of these, 150,000 are Muslims, making them the

second largest religious group (and the prime target of the right-wing extremists) behind the Lutherans who comprise 85% of the population. The efforts of the Ministry of Immigration and Integration are, thus, seen as mainly targeting the Muslims.

Majority of the immigrants in any country do try to integrate themselves in the local culture in order to lessen the impact of open hostility by becoming less and less conspicuous. However, they soon realize that the goal they are aiming for is unachievable. Again, we have the example of the Jews who were subjected to the same sort of “integrational” approach by the Europeans a hundred or so years earlier but then became alarmed at their having become too integrated. At that time it was “claimed that, although the Jews have amalgamated to a considerable extent with their surroundings, they no longer adopt commercial pursuits exclusively, have their children educated in the public schools, and are eager to give up their peculiarities, the Jew remains a separate individuality, and, while he participates in the spiritual and political work of the nation, his desire is to make it subservient to the rule of Judaism (Jules Richard in *Le Constitutionnel* Nov. 24, 1872).” [*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, under ANTI-SEMITISM, 1904]

Today we are hearing the same refrain of “trying to foist their values on us” from Europe about Muslims.

It is thus impossible to “integrate” with the local cultures, especially as it is impossible to shed one’s skin-colour. The immigrants soon realize that by disowning their cultural roots and still being subject to discrimination, they are left not only humiliated but also without any redemption. Wearing their cultural identity on their chest gives them the redeeming feeling of undergoing the humiliations to preserve their identity.

It is the search for redemption that makes any immigrant group discriminated against in its adopted land to cling more visibly to its cultural roots than it would possibly have done even in its place of cultural origin. A vast majority of us seek security in belonging to a readily identifiable group amongst the population. With the entrenched groups not ready (or unable) to welcome an immigrant in its fold, the only choice usually left is to belong to their “own kind”. The “own kind”, like the host group of people, is never a monolithic whole —

the Danish Muslims for instance are represented by 27 organisations. It is only the hostile host which turns them into a monolithic whole by targeting them as one.

As is obvious from the initial reaction of the Danish Muslims to the publication of the offensive material, they sought intervention of the State to redeem the situation but met only with indifference, even more provocation when those speaking out found more insulting images in their mail. The situation would still have resolved itself if after coming under pressure from the Arab League the Danish State had acted to put a stop to the targeting of Muslims and Islam. However, as the Danish State is controlled by the right-wing extremists, it seems that it saw any action aimed at redemption of Muslims as a step backward for its agenda.

Getting increasingly cornered by the boycott of the Danish goods in the Muslim countries, the Danes found a “saviour” in Norway when a newspaper there republished the offending caricatures on January 10 this year “as an act of solidarity with the Danes” as it put it. That effectively turned this into an issue of “West vs. Muslims” instead of an issue of Danish extremists targeting Muslim immigrants. With more and more newspapers reprinting the offensive material in western countries, the search of the Danish Muslims for redemption turned into the rage of the world Muslim community against the rightly perceived western affront to their cultural and religious beliefs.

As is obvious, it was never a question of freedom of speech. Freedom of speech was only used as a tool to turn the tables on those who were putting pressure on Denmark to temper its xenophobic policies. Invocation of freedom of speech has turned those openly advocating “extermination of Muslims from the West” into champions of “freedom of speech” while those opposed to western hostility to Islam and Muslims are suddenly finding themselves labelled as repressive regimes bent upon making the “democratic West” forego “its sacred right to freedom of speech”.

Interestingly, there have been statements issued that the “Muslims must learn to accept the democratic values” when they migrate to western countries. But as is obvious from the course of events before and after the first publication of the offending material the Danish

parliamentary monarchy turned a blind eye (even contributed) to the sense of humiliation of the Danish Muslims. It was the failure of the Danish State to provide redemption to a section of its population that forced them to turn elsewhere and not any perceived “lack of acceptance of democratic values”. Common man everywhere wishes to have a say in how they are governed — that is the simplest definition of democracy. And it is ingrained in every human being. Portraying West as a champion of democracy while having a continuous record of sabotaging democratically elected regimes everywhere and putting in place or propping up repressive regimes to further its own agendas is like following the dictum of Goebbels that if you keep repeating a lie it becomes “the truth” at some point. That the whole argument of “freedom of speech” is an attempt at obfuscation is borne out by the statement of Roger Koepfel, editor-in-chief of the German newspaper *Die Welt* which also published the offensive material on Prophet Mohammed.

Mr. Koepfel says the cartoons were not published to annoy but to question a growing tendency for press self-censorship in delicate matters. At times, he says, it may appear there is a double standard. “Evenhandedness cannot be a goal,” he says. “It has to be clear that the majority culture rules and the minority culture has to accept the rules. If the rules are not acceptable, no one is forced to live there.”

[As reported on *The Christian Science Monitor* website, dateline Feb 8, 2006]

This whole issue raises questions which we need to ponder so that the vested interests in western countries do not succeed in furthering their agenda of bringing about a “clash of civilizations” in order to position the West as the ruler of a strife-torn world.

Taking a hypothetical scenario, if a religion is subjected to a similar insult, as the Muslims in the present case, what options have they got?

- (a) Let it pass without any reaction except perhaps for a statement of disapproval from some community organisation.
- (b) Explore legal options available to take action against the perpetrators of the insult so that no one repeats their action.
- (c) Seek political intervention to pressure the perpetrators into backing down.

Those who think that Muslims should have simply ignored the

cartoons should note that if someone is bent upon provoking them (or some other community) they would not stop till they have perpetrated an insult that is impossible to ignore. It might have been better if the Muslims had reacted to the humiliations they were subjected to in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 attacks in New York and had sought to put a stop to it, rather than risking aggravating the situation to the extent that it gained its own momentum and spun out of control.

Courts of Law, though claimed by every country (especially in the West) to be impartial, work in accordance with the ideology of the party in power. We are seeing this in America where it is a clear possibility that in near future US Supreme Court will take the legality away from abortions, in accordance with the ideology of party in power. We have also seen how the Indian Supreme Court's rulings kept changing according to the ideology in power, *vis-à-vis* the killings of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984.

When the party in power is perpetrating (or supporting) a crime, it is virtually impossible to achieve accountability, so long as that party remains in power. Again we have the example of 1984 genocide of the Sikhs and the efforts to make Congress leaders account for their crimes.

If this article has succeeded in presenting the whole issue in its proper perspective and made even a few of the right-thinking people to rally together to oppose the increasing hold of extremist elements on reins of power in virtually every country of the world, especially what is termed as the "West", then its purpose has been fulfilled.

ADVOCACY OF ENDOWED SIKH CHAIRS AT WESTERN UNIVERSITIES

BALDEV SINGH*

In *Sikh Review* of February 2006, pp. 56-59, Prof Raghbir Singh Basi, Prof I J Singh, Prof Harbans Lal, and Dr Inderjit Singh (group of four) have argued for the establishment of Sikh academic chairs in Western universities. However, the editor in his cautionary comment questioned the benefit of such chairs by pointing out the “contribution” of Pashaura Singh and Harjot Oberoi.

The Group of four says: “We do believe, however, that in general an endowed Chair at a university is an excellent and also the least expensive way to have a place on the table in the hallowed halls of academia.” Judging from their enthusiasm for Sikh chairs, one would suppose that they have an added expertise on Sikhism. One would also suppose that they are aware of the “Sikh-work” done at the University of British Columbia, University of Michigan, University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Toronto. Could these gentlemen point out what these chairs have done to enhance the understanding of Sikhism for Sikhs and non-Sikhs? Have they studied or critically examined the publications coming out of these Universities?

I am not aware of the expertise of Prof Basi or Dr Inderjit Singh on Sikhism, but I am quite familiar with Prof Harbans Lal and I J Singh’s writings on Sikhism.

Has I J Singh or Harbans Lal ever critiqued the work of W H McLeod, Pashaura Singh, Harjot Oberoi, and Gurinder Singh Mann? If they have what do they think of it? They say, “An endowed Chair is the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a professor, who has

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already accumulated an excellent track record in the speciality area.” If that is so, could they point out Harjot Oberoi’s or Pashaura Singh’s or Mann’s “already accumulated excellent track record” before they became the occupants of Sikh chairs? To my knowledge the one “common outstanding qualification” of the three is their relationship to McLeod, who supervised Pashaura Singh’s thesis and was consultant to Oberoi and Mann for their Ph D theses.

It is deplorable to fabricate false statements to buttress their argument:

“While Muslim swordsmen conquered for the faith, Christian missionaries were willing to explore tentatively on the frontiers of empire to bring the good news to even a few more souls.... In our own Sikh tradition, beginning right from the time of our Gurus, Sikh theologians were sent to the centers of higher learning such as the famous Benaras Hindu University for research and dialogue.”

Could these scholars tell us when did the Islamic armies invade Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Tanzania? Would they enlighten us as to what happened to the aborigines of Australia, Americas and Africa? Do they know that Maharaja Dulip Singh, a ten years old boy was kidnapped by the British colonists and put in the custody of a Presbyterian missionary couple, Dr & Mrs John Login. The young boy was totally cut off from his mother and other relatives, brainwashed and then converted to Christianity and, his long luxurious *Kesh* were presented as a trophy to Mrs Login.

Now, who were those Sikh theologians who were sent to the famous “Benaras Hindu University”? Could the four gentlemen name a single Sikh who was sent by the Gurus to the famous place—Benaras Hindu University? Did this university or anything like that exist at the time of the Sikh Gurus? What are the names of Gurus who sent Sikh theologians to this university? Don’t they know that Guru Nanak rejected all the essentials of Hinduism: incarnation of God, caste system, transmigration, *karma*, hell, heaven, gods, goddesses, and idol worship? Guru Nanak also rejected the method or approach of attaining salvation preached by the Semitic and the Indian religions. Besides, he rejected Sanskrit as well as its script as a medium for the propagation of his philosophy. Given these truths, I ask: Why would any Guru

send Sikhs to Benaras and for what purpose?

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬੀ ਭੇਦੁ ਨਾ ਜਾਤਾ ॥

Neither the *Vedas* (four Hindu texts) nor the four *Kateba* [Semitic texts: the *Torah*, the *Zabur* (Psalms), the *Injil* (Gospel), and the *Quran*] know the mystery of the Creator of the cosmos.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1021

ਕਥਾ ਕਹਾਣੀ ਬੇਦੀ ਆਣੀ ਪਾਪੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਦੇ ਦੇ ਲੇਣਾ ਲੈ ਲੈ ਦੇਣਾ ਨਰਕਿ ਸੁਰਗਿ ਅਵਤਾਰ ॥

ਉਤਮ ਮਧਿਮ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਭਰਿਮ ਭਵੈ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥

It is the teachings of *Vedas*, which has created the myths of sin and virtue, hell and heaven, and *karma* and transmigration. One reaps the reward in the next life for the deeds performed in this life and goes to hell or heaven according to the deeds. The *Vedas* have also created the fallacy of inequality of caste and gender for the world.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1243.

In recent past, I wrote a critique of Harbans Lal's three articles in which he portrayed Sikhism as an appendage of Hinduism. He has not bothered to reply. He says that the Gurus sent Sikhs to Benaras for "research and dialogue." Prof Lal needs to come out in the open to resolve this conflict. As far as I J Singh is concerned his expertise on Sikhism is limited to what he learned "on his grandmother's knee" or the writings of Sir Sobha Singh's son, Khushwant Singh, whose views about Sikhism change from day to day. Khushwant took a tour of Punjab with that notorious killer K P S Gill urging him to kill Sikh young men. But after reading *Reduced to Ashes: The Insurgency and Human Rights in Punjab*, the same Khushwant laid the entire blame on K P S Gill: "K P S Gill, You Have Questions to Answer."

McLeod, Oberoi and Mann locked up their theses until their objectives were achieved. Do academic scholars hide their work from public scrutiny? Is not research for public good? McLeod and Pashaura Singh bitterly complain that Pashaura Singh's unpublished thesis was copied and distributed among Sikhs. What is wrong with that? Did he not get Ph D for that thesis and didn't the Sikhs pay for his research?

Isn't it true that the Sikhs paid for the research work done by McLeod's associates? Do Sikhs have the right to attend seminars or conferences where they present their work? Why don't they allow

Sikhs, who criticize their work, to attend such seminars? Since the group of four have argued for the establishment of Sikhs chairs, are they aware of a book published in 2000 by Doris Jakobsh under the direction of Harjot Oberoi (British Columbia University, Canada): *Relocating Gender in Sikh History: Transformation, Meaning and Identity?* Using Talib's translation of Guru Granth Sahib, Jakobsh distorted Guru Nanak's hymns to argue that Guru Nanak was for keeping the status quo; Nanak supported the rulers; Nanak wanted women to bear sons, especially those of noble birth; and Nanak was biased against women. Do these four gentlemen want this type of research on Sikhism? They claim that the Sikh academic chairs would help the overseas Sikh community get better acquainted with their neighbors or vice versa. Does Jakobsh's research accomplish that? Did any of the holders of Sikh chairs challenge her work? On the contrary, Pashaura Singh, in a publication, he authored with Prof Barrier, applauded her work. Since Lal and I J Singh have assumed themselves the role of "Ashoka's missionaries" for Sikhism, have they challenged her work? They need to wake up and smell the rat.

On what basis do these four gentlemen argue that Sikhs should endow more chairs, when in fact they seem to have no idea about the poor performances of established chairs? Let us look at the case of a newly established chair at the University of California at Riverside. Dr Kapany was heavily involved in funding of this chair, which now is occupied by Prof Pashaura Singh. Singh's background is worthy of bringing out: He was hired as assistant professor at the University of Michigan. Then he was demoted to a lecturer until the time he moved to UC, Riverside with the rank of a full professor. Is it fair that someone being demoted from assistant professor to lecturer at one university be hired as full professor at another university, everything else as being equal? Pashaura Singh has published "Recent Trends and Prospects in Sikh Studies," in *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses*, 1998, 27(4), pp. 407-25. Can anyone explain to the Sikhs what is academic about this article and how it advances the understanding of Sikhism? Another good example of their poor performance is of textual analysis of Aad Guru Garnth Sahib (AGGS). With respect to Mann's work, his thesis rests on the manuscripts of schismatic sects of Baba Pirthi Chand Sodhi and Baba Mohan Bhalla. Interestingly, Bhai Gurdas had called

former “*mina*, crooked” and the latter mentally “*kamla*, deranged”. Moreover, the *mina* manuscript is extinct. Therefore, how is it possible to conduct textual analysis of an extinct manuscript? Further, in 1994 at a Sikh congregation when people questioned Gurinder Singh Mann about his “locked up” thesis, he gave his favorite answer: “I am a historian not a theologian.” In that case how could someone who is not a Sikh theologian, be qualified to perform textual analysis of Aad Guru Granth Sahib? In addition, Mann’s work has been refuted by Prof Pritam Singh and Prof Balwant Singh Dhillon of Guru Nanak Dev University. I have not seen Mann’s response to date. The same is true about Pashaura Singh’s textual analysis of Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

Dr Kapany’s financial contributions in the name of his late beloved mother are commendable. In doing this *sewa* of setting a Sikh chair at UC, Riverside, he must carry over on his shoulders a high degree of responsibility and must exercise a degree of oversight. His failing to do so has forced me to say the following: I would urge the Sikhs to put a moratorium on the establishing new Sikh chairs. Let us dispassionately evaluate the already established Sikh chairs.

Last year, I published a detailed article on McLeod, his writings, and his associates. Currently, that article is posted at three Internet sites. There has been no response from McLeod or his associates as yet. Since these four gentlemen are urging Sikhs to establish more Sikh academic chairs, I invite them to debate my article on the Sikh Spectrum or any other medium. If they think that McLeodian research is off limits for discussion to Sikhs, I would encourage them to see the merits of open and free discussion. There is a lot to learn through that forum. Research is search for truth, which involves exchange of ideas and debate on ideas, not one-sided propaganda. What good is research if holders of the Sikh Chairs are unwilling to debate their work? Our known Sikh intellectuals/scholars, including this group of four, should reflect upon themselves and seek out the wisdom for what is right.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS TO WORLD PEACE

KHARAK SINGH

Peace has eluded mankind ever since the dawn of history. If somehow, a complete list of all the battles and wars fought so far, could be prepared, the figure would indeed be mind-boggling. The twentieth century alone witnessed two major World Wars, besides innumerable local conflicts. Huntington who has made a comprehensive study of the prevailing World situation says :

“World War I was the ‘war to end wars’ and to make the world safe for democracy. World War II, as Franklin Roosevelt put it, would ‘end the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries – and have failed.’ Instead we will have ‘a universal organization’ of ‘peace-loving Nations’ and the beginnings of a ‘permanent structure of peace.’ World War I, however, generated communism, fascism, and the reversal of a century-old trend toward democracy. World War II produced a Cold War that was truly global. The illusion of harmony at the end of that Cold War was soon dissipated by the multiplication of ethnic conflicts and ‘ethnic cleansing,’ the breakdown of law and order, the emergence of new patterns of alliance and conflict among states, the resurgence of neo-communist and neo-fascist movements, intensification of religious fundamentalism, the end of the ‘diplomacy of smiles’ and ‘policy of yes’ in Russia’s relations with the West, the inability of the United Nations and the United States to suppress bloody local conflicts, and increasing assertiveness of a rising China. In the five years after the Berlin wall came down, the word ‘genocide’ was heard far more often than in any five years of the Cold War. The one harmonious world paradigm is clearly far too divorced from reality to

be a useful guide to the post-Cold War world.”¹

In the changed environment, culture appears to play a dominant role in determination of relationships. “In the post-Cold War world, states increasingly define their interests in civilizational terms. They cooperate with and ally themselves with states with similar or common culture and are more often in conflict with countries of different culture... ..

“Now that a Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union no longer poses a threat to the Free World and the United States no longer poses a countering threat to the communist world, countries in both worlds increasingly see threats coming from societies which are culturally different... ..

“As of early 1993, for instance, an estimated 48 ethnic wars were occurring throughout the world, and in 164 ‘territorial-ethnic claims and conflicts concerning borders’ existed in the former Soviet Union, of which 30 had involved some form of armed conflict.”²

To give an idea of the destruction caused by such conflicts underway in early 1990s, the following commonly accepted figures of deaths are quoted³ :

50,000	in Phillipines
50,000 - 100,000	in Sri Lanka
20,000	in Kashmir
500,000 - 1,500,000	in Sudan
100,000	in Tajikstan
50,000	in Croatia
50,000 - 200,000	in Bosnia
30,000 - 50,000	in Chechnya
100,000	in Tibet
200,000	in East Timor

And virtually all these conflicts generated much larger numbers of refugees.

Practically all the states of the world are in the process of aligning themselves on the basis of religion, language and culture into the following eight major civilizations⁴ :

<i>Civilization</i>	<i>Population, in thousands (1993)</i>
Sinic	1,340,900
Islamic	927,600

Hindu	915,800
Western	805,400
Latin American	507,500
African	392,100
Orthodox	261,300
Japanese	124,700

Source : Calculated from figures in *Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994 Book of the Year* (Chicago : Encyclopedia Britannica, 1994), pp. 764-69.

A “global war involving the core states of the world’s major civilizations is highly improbable, but not impossible. Such a war, we have suggested, could come about from the escalation of fault line wars between groups from different civilizations, most likely involving Muslims on one side and non-Muslims on the other.”⁵

“At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and Western Christian neighbours. At the macro level, the dominant division is between ‘the West and the Rest’.”⁶

Should unfortunately, such an escalation trigger a conflict between two civilizations, it will surely engulf the whole world, and with the huge stocks of nuclear weapons available with major powers, the outcome will be catastrophic. Mankind may be completely annihilated, marking the end of its history.

ROLE OF RELIGION

Although religious division has often led to conflict, religion can also play an important role in averting this catastrophe, if its real spirit is invoked. As Regis Debray put it, “It is not the opium of the people, but the vitamin of the weak.”⁷ Unfortunately, however, the emphasis is on the features that divide, rather than on the ones that unite. Islam and Christianity have followed an aggressive programme of proselytisation. As a result, the percentage of the former in the world population rose from 12.4 in 1900 to 17.1 in 1985, and that of the latter increased from 26.9 to 29.7 during the same period. While the increase is due to conversion in both cases, in Islam it is also effected through reproduction. As a result projections for 2000 are 19.2% Muslims and 29.9% Christians in the world.⁸

To put an end to clashes between religions, some well-wishers of humanity would like a common universal religion or a global civilization to emerge. Ninian Smart says :

“So long as humans are brought up in different paths, so they will see the world differently, and for each path some things will seem natural and right and others not. But the paths cross. We can benefit from that. Social justice, which Marxists struggle for; human freedom, which liberals emphasise; love of God and fellow humans, which Christianity preaches; brotherhood, which Islam promotes; calm and mysticism, which go with Buddhism; devotion and pluralism, which Hinduism points to; harmony with nature, which Taoism commends; the cultivation of interpersonal behaviour, which is a lesson from Confucianism; holism in life, which we find in Africa; finding meaning through suffering, which Judaism has had to emphasise; the importance of inner sincerity, which we find among the Sikhs : these and many other spiritual and moral values are not of course mutually incompatible. In that respect, though we may not achieve a global religion, we may achieve a global civilization in which values from the great traditions are woven together in a glittering net. Perhaps it will turn out like the jewel net of Indra, of which Hua-yen so eloquently speaks : each stone reflecting every other.”⁹⁹

This pious wish, however, is unlikely to be fulfilled at least in the foreseeable future. No faithful follower of a religion will shed his belief in his own religion in favour of any new syncretic universal system. What is required is respect for other religious systems side by side with faith in one's own, or a philosophy of multiculturalism.

This is exactly what Guru Nanak preached. Although his system includes all the elements of a universal religion listed by Ninian Smart, the Guru never called for conversion. He laid emphasis only on the basic values and firmly held that no label of a religious denomination or rituals prescribed by it, can lead to salvation. The salvation of an individual as well as the human race can only come from an understanding of God's Will and carrying it out in life. God is the Creator. He is immanent in the universe. He is the Father of us all. He is benevolent and looks after and loves His creation. In fact, He is all love, and it is through love alone, that He can be realised. One's love for God can be expressed only through altruistic deeds in the

service of mankind.

A movement to bring about inter-faith understanding started over a century ago in Chicago. Since then a number of inter-faith meets have been organised, in which lip service is paid to the movement. Leaders of the major religions have, in fact, their own agenda of domination for which they want to use these forums. So long as leaders of a particular faith believe that their system is the only way to salvation, and that all others are non-believers, how can there be any genuine cooperation ?

It is necessary that leaders shed their arrogance, and agree to lay stress on common values like the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind and respect for variant systems, that can ensure peace and prosperity for the world.

Leaders can sit together and have a common minimum programme to be followed by all religions. In this context the problem shared by all religions is that the youth is moving away from religion. Leaders of all faiths have to unite to face this serious problem with any hope of success.

It must also be realised that hatred and conflict arise from injustice and inequality. All wars in the past were the result of these. It is necessary to remove these causes to eliminate the danger of another war which will be far more disastrous than any previously fought. Leaders of various faiths must give serious thought to this formidable problem. This is the need of the day.

In the end, let me remind us all that dozens of functions have been held for creating peace. They all proved futile. I suggest the establishment of a Foundation for Peace. It should have representative of all major political and religious organisations. They must take oath not to commit violence and to decide all controversies through honest and peaceful dialogue. If they continue to instigate their followers for limited temporary gains to commit violence against their opponents, politicians continue to obstruct justice and judges, and police do not commit to do their duty honestly and without any favour to those in power, peace will remain a dream.

Guru Nanak demonstrated that peace is practical if we practise what we preach. He made Hindus and Muslims, high caste and low

caste sit together, eat together *langar* as equals and pray together to God, Who can be loved by all names, Allah, Ram, etc. Mutual regards can be rebuilt, but it needs sacrifice of ego and selfish-interest, besides living a sincere, honest and un-biased life.

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- 6 Ibid., p. 183
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*Other than Thee, none else do I cherish;  
 Thou in my heart are lodged.  
 Thou art my friend and comrade,  
 Therefore, why should I entertain fear in my mind?  
 Thou art my refuge and Thou art my hope.  
 Sitting, standing, sleeping, waking, breathing or eating,  
 May I never forget Thee.  
 Lord! keep me ever under Thy shelter, in this terrible ocean of fire.  
 Holy Master of Nanak! bestower of joy,  
 Thy protected children are we.*

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 378



## SIKHISM AND RACISM

TEJPAL SINGH\*

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Sikhism is a universal religion. It is an absolutely monotheistic religion. The basic creed of Sikhism says that:

God is the Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation, immanent reality, without fear, without rancour; timeless form, un-incarnated, self-Existent, Realised by the grace of the holy Preceptor.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1

*Guru Granth* is the holy Scripture of Sikhism; but its appeal is to whole of mankind. Its vision is splendid and vast, which focuses on the basic inherent characteristics of man: his ego, tensions, fears, frustrations, anxieties, prejudices, temptations and aspirations. It prescribes a panacea for all ills of man, both physical and mental. Its appeal is ecumenical. It is for everybody irrespective of caste, creed, religion, race, gender, region, etc. *Guru Granth* is a major repository of spiritual thought. It enshrines the richest spiritual experience of humanity. It has a vast humanitarian doctrine based on truth, compassion and social justice. *Guru Granth* has the pursuit of excellence in its content and form. Sikhism eulogises the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to the higher values of life. *Guru Granth* sings hymns of the God-inspired men, who have expressed the Divine Word in a spirit of deep humility and compassion for humanity. Obviously, there is no place for racism in the preambles of Sikhism. Sikhism discards racism, which is defined as : “... the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races : prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against

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someone of a different race based on such a belief....”

– *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*  
Oxford 1998, p 1526

On the contrary, Sikhism preaches equality and supremacy of whole mankind, because it is created by God Himself:

*Anwali Allah nuru upaiya kudrati kei sabb bandei*

God first created Light; all else to His might subject.

Since from one Light is the whole world created—who is noble, who inferior?

Folks, brethren! be not lost in illusion.

The Creator is in the Creation; in the creation abides the Creator,  
Pervasive everywhere.

– Guru Granth Sahib, pp 1349-50

Racism is the bane of mankind.

Racism: 1. the belief that human races have distinctive characteristics which determine their respective cultures, usu. involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule or dominate others. 2. offensive or aggressive behaviour to members of another race stemming from such a belief. 3. a policy or system of government and society based upon it.

*The Macquarie Dictionary.*

Second Edition 1992, pp 1450-51

Racism has enslaved people and has spread hatred. Hatred begets hatred. It has produced economic exploitation, depravity and deprivation. Racism created the Holocaust, the genocidal murder of Jews by the Nazis in World War II. It is the cause of making the outcastes as Shudras (untouchables) in India. It is the motive force of massacre of minorities in India especially of the Sikhs, Muslims and Christians. Similarly, the enslavement and repression of the coloured people by the Whites in Europe and America is well known.

Sikhism denounces such type of behaviour. It condemns every type of terrorism whether it is state or individual. It pronounces that:

Now is the gracious Lord's ordinance promulgated:

None to another shall cause hurt

All mankind now in peace shall abide—

Gentle shall the governance be.

Guru Granth Sahib, p 74

Sikhism visualizes an ideal state where everybody is free, all are equal, none is harassed, no body can repress others, there is no economic exploitation, there is no political repression and there is no social injustice. To some it may be a Utopian state. It is based on utilitarianism. Everybody respects the rights of others. Saint Ravidas says:

The City Joyful is the name of that city—  
Suffering and sorrow abide not there.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 345

Conversely, racism violates the Human Rights and perpetuates terrorism. The racist governments are hostile to some of their own citizens. They precipitate genocide of their subjects, who have constitutional rights to be protected.

Rulers are turned beasts of prey, their officers hounds;  
None do they allow in peace to rest.  
The subordinates wound the people with their claws:  
You dogs! lick on the blood and marrow of *the poor*.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1288

It is crystal clear that Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the IX Sikh Guru, laid down his life to uphold the people's right to practise the religious creed they professed. He was beheaded in public by the orders of Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi in 1675. It is a unique sacrifice to preserve Man's Right to Worship, which has been upheld by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) by the U.N.O.

Racism is deaf to the woes of others. Consequently, there is no communication between the oppressors and the oppressed. Racism perpetrates genocides. It has perpetuated Pogroms, organized massacre of Jews in Russia and eastern Europe.

But Sikhism, on the other hand, advises to communicate with others and resolve tensions with dialogue instead of fighting. We should adopt the policy of detente:

As long as we live in this world  
We should try to communicate with others,  
And listen to them also.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 722

Sikhism condemns aggressors, like Mogul Emperor Babur, for perpetuating bloodshed of the innocents:

Babur with wedding-party of sin from Kabul rushed down,  
And forcibly demanded surrender of Indian womanhood.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 722

Racism leads to segregation, divisions in society, alienation and tensions. It develops an attitude of ‘us and them’. Drug addiction, trafficking, alcoholism, free sex, obscenity, suicides are the offshoots of racism. It is divisive. Humanity is divided into haves and have-nots. On the one side, there is abundance and, on the other side, is penury. One group exhibits opulence, the other is condemned to live in abject poverty.

Sikhism denounces this segregation and unites humanity:

Brethren ! All in union meet,  
And by devotion to God cast off duality.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1185

Like Christianity, Sikhism preaches service to mankind. Altruism is one of the basic tenets advised and promoted by Sikhism:

By devotion in this world,  
Shall ye get a place at the Divine Portal.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 26

Sikhism preaches universalism. ‘Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man’ is the motive:

The One God is our only Father,  
We are all children of that One Father

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 611

In place of economic exploitation of natural resources and acquisition of them by the few, Sikhism puts forward ecumenism that all belong to the Divine Commonwealth, none is debarred from it:

In Thee are all sharers;  
to none dost Thou appear alien.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 97

Sikhism shows and publicizes harmonious living and good neighbourly relationships. It adheres to the policy of Multiculturalism:

Neither is anyone my foe, nor I am enemy of anyone,...  
All have I made my loving friends; friend of all I grown.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 671

None is our foe not anyone is a stranger

With all are we in accord.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1299

In place of divisions into religions, Sikhism says that ‘Man is the measure of all things.’ Man is above divisions. There is unity of God and solidarity of mankind in Sikhism:

We neither are Hindus nor Musalmans;

Our body and Life is Allah- Rama’s

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 1136

Sikhism preaches egalitarianism. Castes and classes are obliterated and a classless society is established:

One common spiritual message for Khatris, Brahmins,

Shudras and Vaishyas is meant.

– Guru Granth Sahib, p 747

Racism leads to isolation, aggressive behaviour, competition, Pogroms, Holocausts, Apartheid, Nazism, Fascism, Hindutva, Islamic fundamentalism and a totalitarian regime. Conversely, Sikhism leads to socialization, modesty, harmony, human values, co-operation, egalitarianism, democratic reforms and welfare of all. Subsequently, Guru Gobind Singh has proclaimed:

“Recognize all humanity as one.”

*Dasam Granth*

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

English version of *Guru Granth* is based on the translation rendered by Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, which is thankfully acknowledged.

– Author.

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ALCOHOL, OTHER DRUGS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

AMARJIT SINGH*

INTRODUCTION

During the 1990s and 2000s alcohol consumption levels and drug misuse levels increased enormously in the state of Punjab. This has been accompanied by a disturbing increase in drug and alcohol related problems, including those involving young people. A preliminary study by the Punjab Health Department showed that more than 40 percent of those aged 15-25 were addicts. Over 60 percents of households were found in the survey by the Institute for Development and Communication (IDC) to be affected by alcohol abuse (IDC 2003). Over two third of the victims were regular alcohol users and 26 percent illicit drug users; 18 percent reported that alcohol and drug abuse was an important cause of suicide by farmers.

This is not unexpected in the light of the often dramatic reporting of alcohol and drug misuse by the media, and of public anxiety in the face of evidence of increasing availability and misuse of alcohol and drugs. The recent articles in *The Tribune* have raised concern and fear that the consumption of alcohol and other drugs is becoming a serious problem in Punjab. Dr Rajeev Gupta, a consultant psychiatrist in Ludhiana writes in *The Tribune* that alcohol consumption has risen considerably over the past couple of years. There is hardly any social function where alcohol is not served. The per capita alcohol consumption in Punjab is considered one of the highest in the world and every indicator of alcohol-related harm has shown a substantial increase. Use of illegal drugs is also increasing among teenagers and use of smack and alcohol in high schools is increasing at an alarming rate. Even Punjab teenagers are seen celebrating various occasions with

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beer and champagne (*The Tribune*, December 12, 2005). Young people are regarded as vulnerable by the print medium in Punjab. Their alcohol and drug misuse have become the focus of public concern.

A S Rai, SSP of Patiala (2005) writes in reply to the e-mail he received from UK: "It is not just alcohol. Drugs of all kinds have made their inroads into Punjab and they are being used by all sections of society. Young people are taking to crime in order to meet their drug expenses. Chemists are selling drugs which should be given under prescription. It is a problem as serious as terrorism and we will have to do some thing very soon, otherwise things may just go out of hand".

Neerja and Goyal of IDC based in Chandigarh (2003) conducted a survey of Drug abuse in Punjab and found that "the lower strata consume almost all the available drugs and the upper caste Sikhs use alcohol and opium, and generally avoid tobacco products. The peasantry, which classifies itself as the higher caste, boast of the use of alcohol and opium attaching chauvinism to it. The poor are moving towards cheap tablets, available at every drug store and from quacks in the neighbourhood. The offsprings of the rich are trying smack in the cities where they are sent for studies by the rural parents. Every third male and every 10th female student in the state has had drugs on some pretext or on one occasion or the other." Accordingly, alcohol and other drugs may very easily be misused with tragic consequences.

While addressing the annual convention of the Punjab IPS Officers Associations, the Punjab Chief Minister in 2003 challenged the police officers to name a single village where drug and alcohol problem had not attained frightening proportions. No police officer was able to name the village, knowing full well that the whole state was in the grip of intoxicants, which was destroying a whole generation (C Chandel, 2003). The increase in licensed liquor shops are four times higher than these were some years ago. It would be difficult to find a village which does not have a liquor shop or two. In 1992, Rs 485 *crore* was collected from the sale of liquor shops. The amount in 2003 was more than Rs 1350 *crore*, a three-fold increase.

ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AND THEIR MEDICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Alcohol misuse or alcohol-related problems encompass a wide

range of adverse consequences, somehow connected with the inappropriate or deleterious use of alcohol. These problems may be due to prolonged heavy drinking and involve alcohol dependence or more episodes of heavy drinking. The consumption of alcohol is implicated in a daunting array of problems. The brain goes through dynamic change during adolescence and alcohol can seriously damage long- and short-term growth processes (American Medical Association Report). In large quantities alcohol can cause damage to the oesophagus through acute haemorrhage and acute gastritis, increase blood pressure, and increase the risks of acute haemorrhagic and ischemic strokes by ten fold and the risk of acute heart failure (Marques-Vidal, *et al.*, 2001; Murray and Lopez, 1996).

Alcohol is also a cause of breast cancer and mouth cancer in western countries, and is becoming responsible for quite a number of serious psychological problems, like depression, behavioural abnormalities and paranoid states, and is also being blamed as important cause of road accidents. Cognitive, perceptual and motor functions are affected by alcohol (Anderson, *et al.*, 2002).

If people drink moderately, alcohol would cease to be one of the chief causes of contemporary health and social problems. Clearly, as is the evidence from the articles in *The Tribune*, alcohol consumption above a moderate level has been found to be significant contributory factor in almost every situation in which harm is done by people to themselves or to each other, whether this is in relation to physical and mental health problems, disability, family and social relationships, work, injury, death, violence or law.

Under the effect of alcohol, one may do certain undesirable acts, which one may never do without it. Young drinkers and drug users reported experiencing individual problems (e.g., reduced performance at school and college), relationship problems (e.g., quarrels or arguments) and delinquency problems (e.g., scuffle or fight). Drinkers are more likely to be involved in anti-social behaviour and offenders are more likely than non-offenders to be frequent drinkers (The 1999 European School Survey Report, 2000). These include illness, death, public disorder offences, and a host of social, family and occupational problems (Honest, *et al.*, 2000).

American studies suggest that binge drinking and other forms of

substance abuse during adolescence increase the likelihood of experiencing psychological problems later in life. There is also evidence that heavy drinking in adolescence increases the risk of alcohol dependence later in life (NIH Publication, USA, 2000).

New research also points to the practical dangers of taking drugs. A study by Barnard Laumon and colleagues (2005) used blood and urine samples obtained from car crash victims, and found that the higher levels of cannabis in their blood were associated with even greater risk of being responsible for the crash, while drivers with cannabis and alcohol in their blood were 16 times more likely to have caused the crash than a faultless victim.

Given the ubiquity of alcohol and the contribution of alcohol to so many contemporary health and social problems, it has become widely recognised that there is no such thing as 'the alcohol problem'. There are many problems in which alcohol consumption is a component. All these suggest that alcohol and other drug abuse is ruining young people's life. The drug culture is now one of the most influential and negative ingredients in the lives of young Punjabi people. Drug and alcohol misuse is a stark reality and is accepted as a way of life for too many.

Alcohol and drug misuse among young people is a subject of great concern amongst professionals, politicians and religious leaders in Punjab, and they are concerned about the harm it is doing to youths of Punjab. Akal Takht Jathedar called upon "the Sikhs to launch a drive against social evils like drug, liquor consumption, dowry and female foeticide. He urged the leadership to set an example by fighting all social evils and to take a pledge in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib that they would never promote liquor, or any kind of drugs" (*The Tribune*, January 2006). Drug de-addiction camps are being organised to increase awareness of the treatment available.

SIKH RELIGION AND ALCOHOL AND DRUG CONSUMPTION

The majority of the peasantry in Punjab are of the Sikh faith and they boast about their use of alcohol and opium showing their chauvinism, because they think they belong to a higher caste. This is against the teachings of Sikh Gurus. All intoxicants are forbidden in Sikh religion. Some Sikhs mistakenly think that perhaps only tobacco smoking is prohibited. There are Divine declarations in Guru Granth Sahib, which prohibit use of alcoholic drinks.²

“Alcohol even if prepared from Ganga *jal* is a bad thing to drink. It deprives the human mind of its control and causes depression.” (Guru Granth Sahib – p, 1293);

“One should drink the nectar of Name of God and not the useless alcohol” (Guru Granth Sahib – p, 360);

“One should strictly avoid alcohol drinking with which one loses control of his faculties and forgets God. Alcoholics would be punished in God’s court.” (Guru Granth Sahib – p, 554).

Guru Gobind Singh declared:

“*Kutha* meat, tobacco, alcohol, *chakras*, *ganja*, *tari*, *cap*, *khakoo*, should never be used by Sikhs.” – *Rebat Nama*, Bhai Daya Singh

The Sikh Gurdawaras Act 1925, gave it the legal sanction by disqualifying the Sikhs to even become the voters for SGPC elections for taking alcoholic drinks. Sikh *Rebat Maryada* made them *tankhayaas* (defaulters) liable to punishment in accordance with Sikh traditions.

MISUSE OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

In order to prevent the misuse of alcohol and other psychoactive substances, it is necessary to have some ideas about why they are used and in what way. This is a complex task. There is no single cause of drug misuse.

The factor to be considered is that of availability. It is now thought by many that availability is one of the most influential factors in accounting for differences in rates of consumption and of the problems associated with drinking. India has made alcohol easily available by virtue of increased sales outlets, relatively low cost, relative freedom from restriction on ages at which drink can be consumed, and hours during which it can be consumed on licensed premises - restaurants, hotels and bars, etc. Social changes may selectively affect drinking rates of particular sections of the population. Cost may be considered as an availability factor. The cost of beer and spirits in Punjab is considerably lower now in comparison with average earnings and costs of commodities than what it was 10 years ago. The manipulation of cost can be one effective way of preventing drinking problems.

Research in Western countries and experience has shown that the amount of alcohol-related harm in any society tends to rise and fall in line with changes in the total or average consumption and availability. The more alcohol is consumed by a society, the higher its

level of alcohol-related harm is likely to be. Equally, the lower is its level of consumption, the lower its level of harm. This is partly because societies with a relatively high average consumption also tend to have relatively high proportions of heavy and excessive drinkers in the population. Also, the major burden of alcohol problems arises from light and moderate drinking. This is because problems from alcohol use can occur at all consumption levels, and whilst the heaviest drinkers suffer more problems individually, there are many more light and moderate drinkers than heavy drinkers in the population, and they collectively contribute to the larger share. (Slog, 1985)

Although all members of society are subject to social influences on their alcohol consumption, this is an especially important aspect of young people's use of alcohol and other drugs. Newburn and Shiner (2001) carried out a review of literature on young people and alcohol and found that the most important aspect of parental influence was the attitudes of the parents towards drinking, most especially those of the father. This was found to have a greater influence on children's level of consumption than either parental drinking behaviour or general family relationships.

The abstaining adolescent is most likely to come from abstaining parents, the moderate drinker from moderately drinking parents and heavy drinkers either from homes where parents are heavy drinkers or from homes where both are abstainers. (Gordon and McAlister, 1982)

Peer group pressure is a further social influence acknowledged that plays an important role in the young people's use and/or misuse of alcohol. As the child grows older, friends provide the overall context and location for drinking. In addition to the social pressures, the role of individual factors such as developmental maturity, heredity and personality have been acknowledged.

Prevailing attitudes towards consumption is another set of cultural/social factors. The acquisition of particular attitudes towards alcohol can be found in quite young children, often many years prior to their first direct experience of consuming alcohol themselves (Johoda and Cramond, 1972). Inevitably, such attitudes are interwoven with religious and other sets of beliefs about what is safe or dangerous, sensible or foolhardy, manly, womanly or childish, and with images of toughness and physical attractiveness.

In order to understand how people learn to drink, there is a need to consider some of the factors and processes involved in becoming a drinker. The substance use and misuse cannot be viewed in isolation. They occur as all social behaviour occurs within a frame of cultural, political and individual factors. The resultant effect of any drug is a product of the drug, the user and the environment.

SOME THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

Theories of substance use and their implications for prevention are of little value unless they take into account the wide range of potential influences of factors identified in previous section on substance use. The forces operating at the social group level are amongst the most powerful influences on drinking. Even when there is no frank persuasion involved, the pressure to conform to group norms is difficult to resist, particularly for those whose group membership is new or uncertain. Here, the psychology of learning by modelling or imitation is as relevant as the social psychology of conforming behaviour. We should expect people to follow styles of drinking behaviour they see in parents and friends. Indeed, there is substantial evidence both from surveys in North America and England (Jessor and Jessor, 1977, 1987; Singh, 1994) and from experiments on social drinking (deRicco, 1978) that this occurs. This is an example of socially transmitted behaviour. Thus, different aspects of drinking behaviour may be strongly reinforced socially. Drinking and other drug use as behaviour is learned in a social context and is functional.

Furthermore, such behaviour results from a complex interaction between characteristics of the individual and characteristics of his or her social environment (Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Jessor, 1987). There is growing recognition now that psycho-social, behavioural and environment factors may also be implicated, particularly for some young peoples' drinking and drug use. According to the Theory of Adolescent Problem Behaviour (Jessor, 1987) many problem behaviours including drugs misuse are interrelated, so that personal and situational factors influencing one's behaviour may be the same as those influencing behaviour. This has been the most important theoretical contribution to understanding problem behaviour in the two decades. Recently, researchers in the USA, Canada and the United Kingdom have applied the Problem Behaviour Theory to the understanding of impaired and

risky driving and other deviant behaviours. (Wilson and Jonah, 1988, Jessor, 1987, Bierness and Simpson, 1990, Singh, 1995)

Jessor and Jessor (1977) further point out that heavy drinking is associated with a variety of factors, all of which are themselves associated with tolerance of deviance and risk-taking behaviours. This problem behaviour theory is characteristic of social psychological theories which are based on the assumption that most social behaviours, including those related to alcohol and other drugs use are largely a result of rational decision-making processes (Ajzen and Fishbein 1990). Conscious decisions about whether or not to engage in having a drink are termed behaviour intentions. These are seen to mediate between the attitudes that individuals hold and their actual behaviour (Fishbein 1990). The more positive the attitude, the more positive the behavioural will be, and the greater the likelihood of that behaviour being carried out.

It is clear that the theoretical explanations of substance use behaviour can help us to understand and explain drug-related behaviour of youths of Punjab, which in turn can assist in the process of developing approaches to school-based alcohol and drug education.

It may therefore be more profitable in the understanding of drinking behaviour of young people to search for the individual factors involved in the process of acquiring, developing, and changing drinking patterns. In particular, it may be helpful to view drinking in the context of other family, educational, occupational, and leisure time activities, rather than as an isolated behaviour. Like most social behaviours, drinking is linked with, or embedded within other behaviours, via a complex network of associations and discriminations.

An understanding of how links with eating, socializing, sport, driving behaviour, etc., and discriminations on the basis of time of day, day of the week, dose, perceived effect, etc., are developed and how they are maintained or break down, may tell us a great deal about drinking, both normal and abnormal.

PROPOSED RESEARCH ON YOUNG PEOPLE, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

The young people are to be regarded as being high priority targets for alcohol education. This is because of two reasons. First, young people are commonly perceived as being especially vulnerable to

alcohol misuse due to their inexperience. Second, it is sometimes hoped that if youthful drinking habits could be influenced for the better, this might provide a degree of protection both in the short term and later in life.

Abundant evidence from studies discussed above supports the conclusion that alcohol and illicit drug misuse is associated with many types of problem such as illnesses, mental health, deaths and crimes. Attempts to curb alcohol and drug misuse, therefore, face major social, moral and political problems. The American experience of prohibition and the recent attempt in Russia to reduce alcohol production, and thereby consumption, both failed because they lacked popular support. Strategies to reduce or curb alcohol misuse in Punjab have to operate within the framework of what is morally, socially and politically acceptable. The ideal solution for alcohol misuse would be if social health education could successfully insulate young people from the risks of misuse or harmful drinking. The contribution of education in the context of psychoactive substance use is, therefore, important.

School-based alcohol education has an important and effective role to play in curbing alcohol misuse. It is important as a symbolic statement that society is concerned about alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug problems. It is important that available knowledge should be disseminated as widely as possible. Young people, the population at large, those in the 'helping professions', journalists and politicians are all legitimate and important target groups for health education (Plant, *et al.*, 1985). Discussions on the prevention of alcohol and drug misuse inevitably highlight the role of education.

If young people are to be able to make informed decisions about alcohol- and drug-related issues, they will need information on all aspects of their misuse. There is thus an urgent need that young people are given information about the harmful effects of over-indulgence in drug and alcohol upon themselves, parents and community. There is a need to understand what contributes to the rapid rise in youth drinking. Health education and social and personal development programmes for schools offer a means of tackling drug misuse in a wider social context.

In short, a credible starting point is to explore the motivations, values and meaning that young people ascribe to such drinking and

taking drug behaviour. Understanding precisely why young people drink in this manner is a useful first step in informing policy and practice aimed at reversing the worsening trends highlighted in the media.

In order to design and recommend appropriate health education initiatives, an assessment of people's perceptions of healthy living are needed: what, where and why young people drink or take drugs, young people's drinking habits and experiences when drunk, the extent of their knowledge and, given their particular circumstances, what leads them to hold certain attitudes and opinions. Ultimately, what is needed is to know what motivates young people into changing or continuing certain patterns of behaviour.

The extent of the gap between what is perceived to be a healthy lifestyle and what happens in practice needs to be studied, so that realistic incentives to encourage people to change their behaviour can be developed. The amount and nature of health education received will be explored, at school and college, in the home, and via the professional medical and nursing network, and the degree of satisfaction.

Currently, there is little reliable information available on youths' alcohol and drugs use to help support development of health improvement programmes tailored to the needs of young people aged 13 to 18 year olds.

The proposed survey also hopes to provide a baseline by which the extent of the future take-up of health education messages can be measured.

1. How can young people develop a responsible attitude to alcohol and drug use?
2. What role does school-based alcohol education have to play in curbing alcohol misuse?
3. What are the problems involved in developing a successful programme of alcohol education for young people?

To seek answers to these questions, it is proposed that a survey of young people be carried out in order to gain a picture of their behaviour which has, to a greater or lesser extent, some bearing on their current and future health. Research into the needs and experiences of young people aged between 15 -19 is urgently required in relation to alcohol and drug misuse, sport and exercise and diet.

In short, the proposed research aims to provide a measure of health and lifestyle characteristics amongst young people in order to assist the authority in planning for future provision, and to monitor the effectiveness of health education initiatives.

A postal enquiry among a random sample of independent and state secondary schools is also proposed for the collection of information about current practices and trends in alcohol and drug education curricula. Its objective would be to obtain information which can be of help to those concerned with developing teaching materials in alcohol and drug education.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The proposed research is divided into four phases :

Phase 1: Develop questionnaires and interview schedules for students, and head teachers in English, Punjabi and Hindi with guidance and advice from educationists, sociologists and psychologists. The questionnaire will contain items about alcohol and drug use, attitudes, opinions and beliefs about alcohol use and deviant behaviours, intolerance of deviance (perceived seriousness of offences and misbehaviour), interpersonal relations, peer and parental influence, achievement, travel patterns and accident involvement.

Seek the reactions and advice of experts to questionnaires and schedules, and revise them.

Phase 2 : Carry out pre-testing of students' questionnaires and interview schedules and head teachers' questionnaires in ten schools.

Revise the questionnaires and establish their reliability and validity. Print them for use in schools.

Phase 3: Carry out testing of students randomly selected in each district of Punjab.

Head teachers of these schools and from other schools will be asked to complete head teachers' questionnaires.

Phase 4: Analyse the data and write up the reports and hold meeting for head teachers, teachers and educationists.

OUTPUTS FROM THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. The final report, it is hoped, will present major insight into the health-related factors affecting the lifestyles of Punjabi young people, especially in the area of alcohol use and experimental

with drugs and attitude formation.

2. The survey will provide accurate, reliable and, in many instances, new data on youth health and lifestyles.
3. The findings will assist in designing appropriate health education programme about alcohol and drugs for use in schools.
4. The survey will also provide a benchmark for consumption of drugs, including alcohol.
5. Production of Students' Questionnaire for future use to trends and changes in their perception, and attitudes towards, alcohol and other drugs use.

In conclusion, education is the most powerful instrument we have to meet the challenge of alcohol and drug misuse. For education to be effective, it is necessary to have some ideas about why alcohol and other psychoactive substances are used, and in what way. This is a complex task. It is hoped that the proposed research will provide the information on these questions and personal factors such as attitudes, beliefs and cognitions in addition to social learning through modelling and reinforcement. Schools-based drug education programmes hope to help young people to understand the dangers of alcohol and other drugs use and to learn how to make positive, informed and healthy choices about their behaviour, and keep free of drugs.

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**STATUS OF SIKHS**  
**– SHARING THE BENEFITS –**

NANAK SINGH NISHTER\*

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**INTRODUCTION**

I congratulate the Department of Commerce, Osmania University, Hyderabad, for organising a UGC Sponsored National Seminar on *Entrepreneurship Development Among Minorities – Opportunities And Challenges* on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> December, 2005. In India people with vested interest misrepresent the term Minority for Muslims alone. I am deeply touched by the spirit of the Convenor & Seminar Director, Janab Prof Mohd Akbar Ali Khan Sahib, for involving minorities other than Muslims by making them participate actively and project their grievances at a Truly Common Forum For All Minorities. Personally I, from the depth of my heart, express my gratitude for involving me as a Guest of Honour at the Valedictory Function.

Yesterday and in the morning session today, I focussed upon the challenges faced by the minorities in general and suggested certain solutions. In this paper, I would like to focus on the challenges the Sikh minority group is facing throughout the country.

You would agree that unless each and every minority community gets its share in development, the concept of development of the Nation does not fulfil itself. That is how several minority welfare schemes have been introduced, but failed to achieve their desired results. Unfortunately, a vast majority of the minorities does not get its share in the welfare schemes; only the lucky few with pulls and pressures get the lion's share, remaining do not get the fruits of these

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schemes. I know my limitations, I am not competent enough to speak about other minorities, and will confine my paper to project the grievances of the Sikh community.

You will be surprised to know that, in India the status of the scattered Sikh minority outside the Punjab is miserable. There is a wrong notion that Sikhs belong to Punjab, whereas according the Government of India Census 2001, about one fourth of the Sikh population reside, outside Punjab.

They are the most neglected lot of all the religious groups and are severely discriminated due their separate identity and appearance. There are certain misconceptions behind it. Though this statement seems to be not related with the subject of the Seminar, but we can never assess their grievances unless this background is understood.

#### **RESERVATIONS**

The Constitution says that, “ No person professing a religion different from Hindu or Sikh religion can deemed to be a member of Scheduled Caste ”, but in none of the State in the country any community of the Sikh, like the Hindus is considered as Scheduled Caste except in the erstwhile territories of bi-lingual Punjab state. Sikhism does not believe in caste system, but some downtrodden communities do exist under the influence of Indian culture, social behaviour and their professions. Unfortunately, beyond Punjab, not even a single Sikh community is recognised as Backward Class. Whereas, almost all other religious communities avail the benefits of reservations in education, scholarships and employment, by their classification as Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste or Backward Class. Even the very well placed Anglo-Indian community with a population of hardly 4 *laks* has got reservations in professional courses, services, Legislative Assemblies and Parliament.

#### **POVERTY LINE**

There is a misconception that Sikhs are the affluent community, because no Sikh is found begging any where in the world. Poverty is our National Phenomenon and Sikhs are no exemption to it. The reason for their not begging lies in their First of the THREE BASIC TENETS. 1. Earn livelihood with honest labour, 2. Always remember God, 3. Utilize your earning by distributing among people. In Sikhism,

the worship comes after the labour. So, no person can claim to be a Sikh unless he works. This prevents the Sikh to spread his hand before anybody.

The 2001 Government of India Census shows the literacy rate among Hindus as 54.92 %, Muslims as 59.1 and the Sikhs as 60.55 %. For census purpose a person is considered literate if he is able to read and write with understanding in any one language, regular education is not necessary. This alarming rate of about 40% illiteracy among Sikhs is just because of poverty only. This shows that about half of the Sikh population is living at poverty or below poverty line. They are ranked third from the bottom, i.e., they are slightly better placed than the people who do not have shelter on their heads and do not get one square meal a day.

#### **FRUITS OF FREEDOM**

The Sikhs have paid the heaviest price for the freedom struggle, partition of the country and in defence of the Nation. Though they consist about 2% of the total population, in the year 1863 they initiated Swadeshi Movement popularly known as Kuka movement. Subsequently launched Non-Violent Satyagraha for freedom of Gurdwaras and the country. They contributed cent percent, i.e., 16 martyrs were blown off by being tied to the mouth of the canons in a Public Show. Their share was 80% in all other sufferings and sacrifices including the confiscation of properties. In Free India, the Sikhs are constrained to believe that discrimination against them is continued; for them only the rulers are changed from Foreigners to Indigenous. Out of Punjab, they do not have any representation in legislature, judiciary, bureaucracy and public bodies, so their grievances are not focussed. As such, there are quite a few negligible Sikh beneficiaries in almost all minority or other welfare schemes.

#### **STATUS OF THE SIKHS**

Outside Punjab, the Sikhs are the most neglected lot of the population. They are economically downtrodden, educationally backward, socially isolated and the most misrepresented and ignored lot of the Indian Citizens. I am not asking that they should be included in any of the reservation categories at par with other religious communities, but I am rightfully demanding to provide them and all

other minority groups' equal opportunities of development, which they deserve as a part and parcel of the Nation. On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 2005, in a public hearing at Hyderabad, I have also brought these facts to the knowledge of the Chairman, National Commission For Religious & Linguistic Minorities and submitted a memorandum demanding for 10% reservation for Sikhs in all welfare schemes.

#### **PROPOSAL FOR JUSTIFIED SHARE**

I am concluding with a proposal for development of minorities in view of the subject of the seminar. My humble submission is that every minority community should compulsorily have certain allotted percentage of share in all welfare schemes. This will enable all minorities to avail the welfare schemes uniformly, without any voice of discrimination. My submission before this august body is, to recommend to allot a reservation of 10% for Sikh Minority Group in all Minority Welfare Schemes so that they could also avail their due share in entrepreneur development at par with other minorities of the Nation.

#### **RELEASE OF MARGIN MONEY**

Presently, the Minorities' Financing agencies are releasing the margin money to the entrepreneurs through Scheduled Banks after they agree to advance the loan to the individual. It is a general complaint that the attitude of the bankers is not encouraging in most of the cases. They prefer to advance the loans only to the resourceful and affluent borrowers. It is beyond the reach of a common man to satisfy their rigid norms. Through this forum, I would like to appeal to the Minorities' Financing Agencies to extend the purview of releasing the margin money from the Scheduled Banks to the Co-Operative Banks and Co-Operative Credit Societies also, which can scrutinise and advance loans to the entrepreneurs. This will provide smooth access and interaction with the beneficiaries. It will serve the very purpose of uplift of the minorities in the long run.

# ON CONSTITUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

KARTAR SINGH\*

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## BRIEF HISTORY

Having studied the constitutions of similar World Organizations including the World Sikh Council, we came to the considered conclusion that our's needs to be its own unique one. The words of the noted Sikh thinker and philosopher. Late Prof. Teja Singh, rang a bell in my mind. He said, "The question of having a supreme Panthic Body is most important. It is essential that, for the exercise of corporate authority, they should create for themselves a Central Body. We must dispense with the personal leadership of one man."

Christianity has the largest following in the world with Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs well below their numbers (Christians 2000 million, Muslims 300million Hindus 900 million and Sikhs just 23 million). Christians have a Hierarchical system. They appoint Bishops worldwide who in turn elect the Pope in a well-accepted electoral process. The Pope rules supreme. Other religions too have preachers at various levels but each adopts its own method of selection/ election at various levels. These processes are not as well defined and clearly hierarchical as that of the Christians. We, as Sikhs, have the holy Guru Granth Sahib passed on to us by our Ten Gurus to believe and follow. The Akal Takht has the history of being the central gathering place for Sikh leaders and Scholars to meet and discuss problems of the day. Traditionally, *Gurmattas* passed in the hallowed location of the Shri Darbar Sahib were accepted by all and implemented faithfully by the majority. Hence the Akal Takht Sahib is an established sanctimonious

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entity. The system of appointing the Akal Takht Jathedar has not been streamlined to be acceptable to all. We also have independent Takhts with Jathedars at their head.

The SGPC which appoints the Akal Takht Jathedar is now a politically involved organization which has pretensions of being autonomous. It has not really followed any qualitative requirements for the appointment of the Jathedars within even its own constituency, Punjab. In fact all Takhts, within and without the SGPC sway, act most autonomously. At times, this is rather embarrassing and hard for the learned to accept. It is in this scenario that we put our heads together to formulate our constitution.

### **BASIC CONCEPTS**

Our envisaged Constitution needs to encompass Indian and global Sikhs in a very fair and proportionate representation. While we have Sikh societies and population spread widely all over the world, the major concentration remains in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Himachal Pardesh. This factor cannot really be downplayed. We need to give adequate representation to Sikh institutions, gurdwaras/ societies as well as a wide section of Sikh scholars and professionals. Here, a word of caution. Infiltration by subversive individuals/ organizations, whose sole aim is to disrupt and create problems must be strictly monitored and ruthlessly curbed. We have suffered too much in history to have this repeated.

Thirdly, the envisaged constitution should be accepted by a majority of Sikhs as authority. Decision making process must be so streamlined that it is professional, democratic and meets the current needs of Sikh society including youth. This will ensure smooth implementation of Sikh *maryada* in its true form.

Fourthly, this authority should genuinely act as an umbrella to existing Sikh institutions/ Societies/ Organisations. Since it has global representatives, it can, with authority, represent Sikhs in international affairs. It can tackle any crisis in identity, wearing of turban and *kirpan*, and other similar disputes. Governments concerned will have a one point authority to deal with, and this will prevent bitterness due to long drawn agitations.

The fifth basic principle would be to formulate a progressive,

modern and truly impartial system of representation. This can be achieved by a democratic system of selection/election. An enlightened electorate that is visualized here, will definitely not disappoint us as we envisage a qualitative rather than quantitative electorate.

Sixthly, we need to streamline decision making. Our constitution needs to institute Advisory Cells manned by Sikh professionals in each important sphere of activity. There is really no dearth of qualified and able individuals in our progressive community. These cells will then deliberately research a problem and arrive at a mature and considered decision which may well be adopted, if necessary with modifications, by selected/elected elders. In any case the Sikh community has today lost faith in the adhoc issuing of *Hukamnamas*, most of which have prominently been disobeyed or ignored. Our prestige as a community has surely suffered. This cannot be ignored any more. I would go even further to say that while tackling sensitive and complicated issues let us not hesitate in co-opting experts from other communities, if considered necessary. This will lend vitality to decision making.

Finally, as per the teaching of our Gurus, in an organisation such as our's, Panth should and will reign supreme. No individual must be allowed to garner glory or prominence. Everyone of us is dispensable. Let humbleness be the motto of our members. Leadership is certainly required to take decisions and actions—let these be collective ones. We will rotate our leadership and take decisions by consensus. The individual urge for pelf and power must be ruthlessly curbed.

To conclude, I must confess that constitution making is a very difficult and thankless task. I admire personalities such as George Washington, William Pitt and our own Dr B.R. Ambedkar who toiled over years to produce brilliant constitutions for their countries. We have also produced a draft constitution which has attracted suggestions from all sections of our community. The totally revised constitution will now be presented to our General Body in the meeting to be held on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2006 in the Shivalik School Auditorium, phase VI, Mohali. Let us finalise it and put it into effect as early as possible, so that the Sikh community can march forward into the Twenty First Century with confidence and hope.

## ALL RELIGIONS ARE SOVEREIGN

SANTOKH SINGH\*

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About three centuries before the declaration of human rights by UNO, Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for freedom of faith. He challenged the mighty Mughal Empire for forced conversions. Hypocrite rulers, having no morality, misused the communal passions to promote their politics. Fanaticism is bad, but communal fanaticism is the worst. With the spread of education and advanced technology, justice and respect for human rights have become most imperative for social harmony and international peace. In a civilized society, use of force proves counter productive. Logic, reasoning and rationale are essential for advancement of human race. Politicians have no magic rod to make any society prosperous, unless people are lead to prosperity by educating and enlightening them, and further motivating them for work culture and assuring that they would not be exploited and would definitely get the fruit of their hard work. Guru Nanak, a great spiritual personality and founder of Sikh religion, also cogitated on social, economic and political problems of masses.

He preached what western philosophers and sociologists wrote three centuries later. He condemned human exploitation and stressed for work culture. After deep cogitation, he drew the conclusion that caste system was responsible for poverty and slavery of the Indian masses. Brahmins had made the masses to believe that caste system was ordained by God. Guru Nanak rejected this theory and the religion backing that system. He refused to wear sacred Hindu thread or to practise Hindu rituals, and worship of gods was also decried by him. Guru Nanak declared that God is the only Infinite One, the Only Supreme Being, the Eternal, the Universal Spirit, the Creator, the All

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Pervading, the Sovereign, the Harmonious, the Immortal, the Embodiment, the Un-incarnated, the Self-existent, the Enlightener, the Bountiful. As per Sikh philosophy there is no god or goddess (*devta/devi*) and that God never comes on this earth in the form of man; but as per Hinduism, *avatars* were incarnations of God. So, Sikh philosophy and theology is totally different from Hindu (Brahminical) theology and philosophy. Rather, spiritually, Sikhism is nearer to Islam as both religions believe in One and only One God, no *devta/devi* (god & goddess) and no idol worship. Utterance of *Allah hu Akbar* is not against Sikh philosophy, because it is Arabian translation of universal truth "God is great", but Sikh doctrine (theology) does not permit a Sikh to utter "*Jai Bhole Shankar*".

It is a false, baseless and intriguing propaganda that Islam is in conflict with Sikhism and committed atrocities on Sikhism. Indians accepted Mughal rule, and to gain positions in Mughal court certain high ups married their daughters to Mughal kings. Since Sikh doctrine preached equality of humanity, self-respect and sovereignty, so this doctrine influenced Sikhs for sovereignty from alien rulers. Which they achieved ultimately. During the long drawn struggle for sovereignty, Mughal rulers committed inhuman atrocities on Sikhs. British imperialism also committed similar atrocities on Sikhs. If the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh is massacre by British imperialists, and not the barbarity by Christianity, then how the barbarity of Mughals can be attributed to Islam? Guru Nanak was revered by Muslims. First person to embrace Sikhism was Bhai Mardana, a Muslim. Mian Mir, a Muslim saint laid the foundation stone of the most sacred Sikh Shrine (Golden Temple), and hymns of Muslim and Dalit Saints are incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib.

Politicians have no right or jurisdiction in religious affairs. Scriptures and Prophets are the only authority in religious matters. Only prophets can define/declare/decide what his religion is. At page 1136 of Guru Granth Sahib (revealed Scripture), Sikh Prophet has declared that Sikhs are neither Hindus nor Muslims. The above discussion makes it abundantly clear that Sikhism is an independent Religion, committed for the peace and prosperity of human race. A cosmic religion having no geographical boundaries. A religion with scientific approach and having nothing to do with Hindu philosophy,

mythology, theology. When Guru (Prophet) himself declares that Sikhs are not Hindus, then how the Sikhs can be declared as part of Hinduism.

On 2-8-2005, Supreme Court of India, while delivering a judgement, declared that Sikhs are part of wider Hindu Community. On 10-9-2005, Sikh organizations and gurdwaras of Chandigarh held a meeting in the office of Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, and discussed the implication of the above judgement. Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, also published an editorial in *Abstracts of Sikh Studies* (Oct – Dec, 05) under the heading *Who Decides One's Religion?*. Many Sikh politicians and intellectuals are aggrieved with the judgement. Courts are to interpret the law and the judgement is perfectly in order. So long as Article 25 of Constitution of India exists in the present form, Sikhs are Hindus for all legal purposes. Sardar Tarlochan Singh, ex-Chairman, Minority Commission, exhibited extraordinary prudence by requesting the Government of India to amend Article 25 of Constitution of India and to declare Sikhism an independent religion. Sikh political and religious leaders should not beat about the bush, but should try to understand the legal position and gravity of the matter. No raising to communal passions, but application of mind for finding solution of the problem by adopting democratic methods and to proceed with logic and reasoning. Secular, progressive and enlightened sections of Indian society be approached for requesting the law makers for declaring Sikhism an independent religion in the Constitution of India. India can certainly become a big power by eradication of illiteracy, poverty and un-employment, but not by eradication of minorities.

The great Sikh Gurus and their family members made supreme sacrifices for upholding the revealed doctrine of Sikhism, which is independent and sovereign, and not part of any other religion.

Let truth and righteousness prevail.

## POLITICAL MURDERS IN THE PUNJAB

INDERJIT SINGH JAIJEE\*

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On Wednesday, SAD President Parkash Singh Badal stated that Congress had got killed 24 SAD candidates through police “cats” in 1991 during the campaign for the Punjab Assembly that was cancelled at the 11th hour. The 1992 elections were boycotted by the SAD. When the Assembly elections were held in 1992, not a single Congress candidate was killed. Badal said, “The matter is worth investigating.” He further stated: “We have long been saying that the ruling Congress is maintaining a private army of criminals and ‘cats’.” (quoted in *The Tribune*, Feb 22, 2006)

A two-hour debate in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on spread of decade of militancy is insufficient. The role of both Amarinder and Badal during the period of militancy was questionable. To hear them speaking now is like listening to two cops discussing who was more responsible for continuance of militancy. During the discussions in the Assembly, no one talked about the genesis of militancy, which is indeed complex and multi-causal and requires an in-depth study.

**TWO ELECTIONS:** Let us review that brief period of 1991 to 1992 with its two elections:

In 1991 the Chandrasekhar Government fell and a new parliament had to be elected. The whole country was going to the polls. Citing the necessity of deploying security forces in strength to ensure peaceful conduct of the elections in Punjab, the Chief Election Commission directed that the poll to elect both Lok Sabha and State Assembly members would be conducted in Punjab two weeks after the rest of the nation had voted.

The law decrees that polling for a given seat is countermanded if

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any of the candidates for the seat meets a violent death before the voting. On account of murders, polling for 28 seats had been countermanded. Of the 28 who were killed, two were Hindus (one standing on the Akali Dal (Longowal) ticket and one fielded by the Communist Party (Marxist) and 26 were Sikhs. Of the 28 murdered candidates, six were Akali Dal (Badal), four were Akali Dal (Mann), two were Akali Dal (Longowal) and one belonged to the SAD. Twelve independent candidates represented Sikh radical groups. One candidate belonged to the CPI, one to CPM and one belonged to the Bahujan Samaj Party.

**1991 – THE OBLIGING CEC:** The Congress party (which itself had boycotted the elections in Punjab) had been returned to power at the Centre just before the countermand was decreed. Former CEC T.N. Seshan writes in his book that he countermanded the 1991 elections at the eleventh hour on the request of Congress PM-designate Narasimha Rao. Rao told Seshan that he wanted to retain him as CEC during his prime ministership. The poll was countermanded hours before the electioneering was to close. Clearly, Rao feared that the Akalis would come to power in the state, and confided this fear to Seshan.

**1991 – MURDERED CANDIDATES:** Immediately after the countermand of the 1991 elections, police hit squads went around killing suspected radical candidates. In one small area of Sangrur district alone, four candidates were killed – three contesting for the Lehra seat<sup>1</sup> and one from adjoining Dirbha constituency. Murders of candidates were reported from all over the state. Who could have

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1 Shutrana: The fate of many of these candidates is shrouded in mystery and the death of Avtar Singh, who in June 1991 was contesting from Lehra, should have been a mystery too, but because of the intervention of his neighbours, what happened to him is known.

On the afternoon of June 27, witnessed by a large number of his neighbours, the police picked up Avtar Singh from his Village Shutrana. On July 2, a report appeared in the press that Avtar Singh leapt from the police truck into a canal and was drowned. On July 6, the police corrected this version, stating that Avtar Singh and only Avtar Singh was killed in crossfire between police and militants.

When his body was brought to Shutrana, along with wood for quick cremation, the villagers forcibly took it from the police. They photographed the corpse and these photographs were published in many newspapers and magazines. The photos showed that the limbs were disjointed, the palms and soles of the feet were burnt and at many places all over the body the skin was burnt away and the burned patches exactly matched the shape of an electric iron.

killed these men? Who benefited?

Right from 1992 onwards, Human Rights organizations have been petitioning the Chief Election Commissioner, and later the National Human Rights Commissioner (in 1994) to ascertain the number and identity of candidates killed, disappeared and taken into custody and harassed during the countermanded June 1991 election, between June 1991 and February 1992. No inquiry has been conducted. Punjab Human Rights organizations estimate the number of murdered candidates killed from 1991 to 1992 at about 80. Fifty-eight died after the countermanded 1991 poll, and before the 1992 poll.

**1992 – AKALI DILEMMA:** In January 1992, the Chief Election Commissioner announced that elections for both the State Assembly and the Lok Sabha would be held in Punjab and set a date in February. The message went out that the militants were opposed to holding the elections. At places, policemen were seen putting up such posters bearing messages to this effect.

The Akali Dals, fearing that hard-liner candidates put up by their parties might be slaughtered, were apprehensive. (Such murders did indeed happen, but after the elections. It may be recalled that for the 1992-93 period, 41,684 gallantry awards were conferred on personnel of the Punjab Police. It is very likely that some of the political victims were on the receiving end of police “gallantry”.)

Two sets of messages were coming from the extreme leadership: Sohan Singh, president of the dominant faction Panthic Committee, favoured participating in the poll in spite of the risk involved, while Daljit Singh Bittu, another militant faction leader, was said to favour boycott of the poll on the grounds that Sikhs did not accept the Indian Constitution. Considering the Sikh community’s resentment against the Centre at that time, outwardly the call for boycott did not seem inappropriate or strange. Whether the decision to boycott was right or wrong, is another matter, but going against the Akali strategy to boycott the election and thereby splitting the Sikh vote clearly played into the hands of the Congress.

Strangely, G S Tohra led the campaign to boycott the elections, and literally coerced other leaders such as Parkash Singh Badal and Simranjit Singh Mann into adopting the boycott strategy. BJP and Leftist parties had reached a tacit understanding with the Congress to



encourage the Akali boycott. The Congress was prepared to share power but, buoyed by the results, it reneged

**BARNALA & AMARINDER SINGH:** Two Akali sections did not boycott the poll, namely, the Barnala group and the Amarinder group. When Barnala saw through the Congress stratagem and realised that participating in the poll would help the Congress, he withdrew.

The police went into overdrive, trying to convince Amarinder Singh that as per their intelligence reports, he and his candidates would win hands down and he would become the chief minister – an irresistible allurements.

**THE GREAT VICTORY:** Not surprising, police was out in full force, in carrying Congress voters in government vehicles to booth after booth in a well orchestrated capture campaign. In the absence of the Akalis, the remaining opposition parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party, the two Communist parties and the Bharatiya Janata Party, raised a hue and cry, but it fell on deaf ears as the Chief Election Commissioner and the government refused to entertain any objections. In the absence of any opposition, the Congress won the elections with a thumping majority of MLAs, but the with an official voter turn-out of 23 per cent (unofficially 8 per cent). Some candidates were returned with fewer than 400 votes.

The poll boycott strategy had the full support of the Sikhs in Punjab, and in terms of compliance it was a roaring success. The Akalis successfully registered their protest through the low turn-out. It did seem strange, however, that having so effectively succeeded in boycotting the election, the Akalis took no followup action. The Akali Dals, including Amarinder Singh who was also an Akali, failed to drive home the advantage accruing from the boycott strategy. It is here that the role of the main proponent of the boycott strategy comes into doubt.

## GLOBAL TERRORISM, EMERGING ISSUES AND OUR RESPONSES\*

HARISH K PURI\*\*

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The term global terrorism came in a package with 9/11. Both of these have become slogans and metaphors. The word terrorism is derived from the Latin *terrere*, which means 'to cause to tremble', the way an earthquake makes the earth and buildings and men tremble. Its usage came to notice with reference to the "reign of terror" during the French Revolution of 1789. A writer recently reminded us of the argument made by Mark Twain in this regard. Twain talked about the double face of terror in France at that time. One related to the "horror of swift death" and the other, which emerged from "lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty and heartbreak". Not many in our age are blessed to see the other face. Many in the world, however, witnessed the live Television visuals of the airplanes smash into the twin towers in New York, producing mighty fire and smoke, and their collapse into rubble, burning alive about 3000 people who got no moment to escape. And we experienced a horror, a suddenness of a phenomenon of a nightmare. The President and the Vice President were hidden in distant secret places and, within half an hour, the White House, the Treasury, the State Department buildings were evacuated. All airports were closed. All private planes were banned within 18 kilometres each of the 86 nuclear plants. The sense of horror and terror (trembling) was palpable.

Terrorism has been known in the world for a long time. Indians

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\* Courtesy, *Bulletin of the Christian Institute of Religious Studies* (XXXI-I, Jan 2004)  
Baring Union Christian College, Batala - 143 505

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in general and all of us living in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir in particular have been victims or witnesses to a variety of terrorist attacks. However, never before in history had such a large number of people all over the world witnessed a terrorist action spectacle of this magnitude. It tended to make a worldwide statement that even the mightiest of the mighty is vulnerable to the wrath of the disenchanting and angry people outside the corridors of power. Among those killed in the inferno, there were people hailing from at least 20 countries, belonging to different religions, races and languages. It was in a sense global in terms of the constituency of the victims and those who were terrified. It was also so in terms of the geographical reach of the network of the different terrorist groups and their supporters and financiers. It was not surprising, therefore, that according to a survey of 275 opinion leaders in 24 countries, conducted by the *International Herald Tribune*, 79% of both the US and the non-US respondents considered the terrorist attacks of September 11 as “a new chapter in history”.

In a recent outstanding scholarly study, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, Rohan Gunaratna, makes a candid observation. Gunaratna is an expert on terrorism. He writes that, “The global fight against Al Qaeda will be the defining conflict of the 21st century”. Defeating Al Qaeda and the wide network of the terrorist organisations, will be, according to him, ‘the single biggest challenge’ for the governments, the international security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies and the national militaries “in the foreseeable future”. President George Bush called for an endless war on terrorism – ‘the first war of the 21st century’. According to his doctrine “so long as anybody is terrorising established governments, there needs to be war”. This war cannot but be more lethal counter-terrorism. The first theatre of that war was Afghanistan. The targets were Osama bin Laden and all those associated with the Al Qaeda and the Taliban. However, more of the victims were such innocent civilians who had been for years the victims of the atrocities of the Taliban and the other feuding war lords. The Taliban and other Islamic fundamentalist forces, as we know, were recruited and trained largely by Pakistan’s ISI with full support of US Intelligence Agencies, and Saudi Arabia, through finances and massive supply of arms by USA. They were

hailed as *Mujaheddin* when they perpetrated terrorism on their own people.

Osama bin Laden and splinter groups of the terrorist organisations are reportedly still around, issuing warnings. The nightmare is not over. Meanwhile, the second theatre of the war has been opened. This relates to War on Iraq. Not because of its complicity in spreading terrorism (the US Government agrees that there has been no evidence of Al Qaeda connection in Iraq) but because, as the US Department of State explained, “ the Iraqis make a region of great importance to us unstable” (*Washington File, NEA210 03/12/2002*) The importance is of one who controls the oil reserves. President Bush seems hell bent on attack, with an excuse or without. In the 42 day Gulf war in 1991, over 80,000 tons of explosive bombs were dropped on Iraq, which was equivalent to seven Hiroshimas, killing tens of thousands of civilians, women, children and men. Saddam Hussain’s atrocious control over the Iraqi people became stronger. Since the War the embargo on import of food, medicines and other supplies are reported to have killed half a million, mostly children and women.

In the year 2000, Yossef Bondansky, who was then Director of US Congressional ‘Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare’, published a major work: *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America*. One of his astute observations was that it was the 1991 Gulf War and Saudi Arabia’s collaboration in USA’s imperial war which led to Bin Laden’s emergence as the leading figure in the fundamentalist Islamic movement for war on America. Another major book published in the same year was by Ahmed Rashid, titled: *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia*.

Rashid traced the roots of the warfare in Afghanistan to the political strategy, what he described as “the new great game” for control over the vast untapped reserves of oil and gas in parts of Central Asia. Another scholar Michael Griffin had in his earlier book of 2001, *Reaping the Whirlwind -The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan*, wrote of many players in the Great Game - US, Russia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. According to him, the CIS states had 40 per cent of known oil and gas reserves of the world. Some of the seasoned US observers have surmised that the plan to ‘attack Iraq was related more to control of oil reserves than Iraq’s suspected weapons of mass

destruction. Peace demonstrators in Washington last week shouted: “No Bloodshed for Oil”. That the UN Inspectors have not been able to report any evidence of the suspected weapons does not matter. Also, forget about Bin Laden for the time being. Saddam Hussain must be destroyed first. However, this will not be the only other war. There are others in the listed seven “rogue states”. These are: Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, North Korea and even Cuba. Meanwhile, some other rogues may emerge in the “axis of evil”. The war against terrorism, says President Bush, is going to be long, very long, perhaps endless. All the countries of the world have been called upon to join the war led by USA. Make a choice, he says, “Either you are with us in this fight or else you would be considered on the side of the terrorists”. He seems to divide the world into the good personified by USA, and the “Evil Other”. Mark Seldon, writing recently in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, raised a question, “What gives the nation that dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that has waged war from its shore throughout the world on an unprecedented scale... the prerogative to define global norms of absolute good and absolute evil? But that prerogative is a veritable trap. We have to seriously ponder over our response. Not merely the response by the Government of India, but also our response as concerned citizens and human beings.

Before formulating our response, it is necessary to make an effort to clarify some of the important issues related to it. The scholars studying terrorism and public men have not been able to agree on the definition of terrorism and the terrorist. We may remind ourselves that the 9/11 attack in USA was described as terrorism ‘by many of the witnesses and by those who were terrorised. Most of the people in many countries seemed to agree with that. However, many others, not only Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda, Taliban supporters and Islamic fundamentalists and the like, but also many others used terms like “punishment for crimes of America”, “God’s punishment to the Satan’, as the “teaching of a lesson” or an “unfortunate reaction” against Americans’ imperial arrogance. We have heard about the cliché that “one man’s terrorist may be another one’s freedom fighter”. There is now a fairly wide agreement that the term terrorism may be applied to a violent action committed with a suddenness against non-combatants,

i.e., innocent civilians with the intention of intimidating governments and larger number of people, for a political purpose. Yet there is lack of a consensus. It may not be inappropriate to ponder over another finding of the survey conducted by the *International Herald Tribune*, referred to earlier. This was: "It is good that Americans now know what is like to be vulnerable". Many Indians also expressed a kind of mean satisfaction that the Americans would now appreciate what we have gone through at the hands of Pakistan sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and elsewhere for 20 years. We know from our experience of exchanges with people on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2001, and later that not a few people expressed feelings like, "America had it coming" or a "well deserved slap" across the face. The humiliation and panic of the self-appointed policeman of the world appeared to warm the hearts of many. Perhaps none of them had good feeling for Bin Laden or the Islamic fundamentalists. In fact the latter were regarded as no less than a 'Frankenstein monster'. There were no two opinions on the need to powerfully deal with the terrorist groups. India was among the first to offer full support to the war against global terrorism. In the Indian Muslim community, second largest in any country of the world, there was no evidence of support of Bin Laden or the other terrorists in Afghanistan. The USA received 46 multilateral declarations of support. 142 countries issued orders freezing the assets of the suspected terrorist. Yet there were also the apprehensions about the American motives and her political games. There was no less apprehension about the consequences of a further rise in American unilateralism, arrogance of power and terrorism spelled as counter-terrorism, there is also a fear of large scale destruction of lives and livelihoods of innocent civilians in many parts of the world, who in any case suffer the most in wars. And above all there is a serious doubt about the wisdom and efficacy of controlling violence by more frightening violence. It is not so easy to make a categorical choice.

We know that terrorism has never succeeded in its objectives. It may be equally important to remind us that the USA launched three major wars unilaterally in Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf. The total death toll, mostly of civilians, in these wars was about 5 million. And many more were disabled, displaced and turned into refugees. Not

one of these conflicts ended in US victory. This suggested, as Seldom emphasised, “the limits of power of even the most powerful of military machines despite the capacity to kill civilians on an unprecedented scale”. (EPW Sep 14, 2002:3796)

Secondly, we need to distinguish between the terrorists and terrorism. It may be easier to identify and fight the terrorists, and destroy their support structure, to create a powerful deterrent against it. But terrorism refers to the ideology and the methodology or strategy of fighting. Kanti Bajpai in his recent book, *Roots of Terrorism*, considered it an extension of Guerrilla warfare. It is generally a weapon of the weak. But the stronger may also often resort to terrorism. “We will rid the world of the evil-doers,” Mr. Bush said, adding a moment later, “They have roused a mighty giant, and make no mistake about it, we’re determined.” It is likely that the terrorism of the stronger may be successful for a while, or even prevail for a long time. Though even this is not going to be easy. The US Intelligence Agencies, with the conceivable best of technology failed to anticipate the attack. Now they refer to a million possibilities of terrorist strikes. The report of the Famous Gilmore Commission of USA pointed to possible worse nightmare scenarios, which have been the stuff of Hollywood movies; the most chilling being a terrorist strike with a nuclear device. So how is victory over it perceived? The question was posed to Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Considering the seriousness of the question, he appeared evidently reflective. And what was his reply? He said, “Victory, actually, is in persuading the American people (to understand). This is not a quick matter that will be over in weeks, a year or even five years”. What do you make of it? Not only that he did not have an answer but also that the onus was going to be on the American people to give to the Bush government patriotic support for warfare, with enough supply of funds for stronger military, more advanced weapons of destruction, through higher taxes, restriction on their liberties and surveillance of their private lives, without questioning. And for how long? He obviously did not know. The basic issue is whether we can end terrorism without dealing with the reasons and causes of terrorism. You cannot eliminate a method of vengeance or warfare so long as some equally effective means, other than terrorism, are made available.

President Bush has declared his fight as a War. We have to examine how far is a war different from terrorism. Most of us seem to consider war as more legitimate than terrorism. But Bin Laden has also described his fight as a war. War is known to be politics by other means. So is terrorism. The U.N. definition of terrorism states that “all war crimes will be considered acts of terrorism”.

Thirdly, while discussing elimination of terrorism we cannot ignore state terrorism. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defined the terrorist as “one who favours or uses terror inspiring method of governing or of coercing government or community.” Most of us, generally overlook the first part, i.e., “terror inspiring methods of governing”. It is no surprise that to President Bush, terrorism relates only to acts, “against established governments”. Most social scientists, however, tend to agree now that the phenomenon called state terrorism, cannot be ignored.

The sovereignty of state is rooted in its coercive authority; it is designed for legitimate use of coercion for security of life, liberty and property. A major concern of political thinkers for centuries has been about mechanisms which could effectively safeguard the people and their rights against the state's abuse or misuse of the coercive authority. Constitutions, Bills of Rights, Courts, the UN and its institutions, international treaties and conventions, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are some of the mechanisms to check the state's propensity towards illegitimate exercise of coercive or military power. Terrorism by the state is, however, different from abuse of power or misuse of power against the people. Acts of states which may be classed as terrorism may be two kinds. One, domestic, i.e., relating to the use of terrorising violence against own subjects and citizens, and second, use of such violence against other peoples as an instrument of foreign policy. We in India may recall, General Dyer's massacre of the people gathered at Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar in 1919. All of those killed were innocent common civilians, mostly villagers, who had come out to visit the Golden Temple on the 13th April day of Baisakhi festival. The city people were not allowed to come out of doors to attend the injured. General Dyer did not hide his objective.

He explained in unambiguous terms, that the objective was to make a telling effect, to intimidate, to teach a lesson to the Punjabis,



a small section of whom had been protesting against the Rowlatt Bills. The reign of terror in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) by Pakistan's Army under President Yahya Khan in 1971, the liquidation of over 200,000 Cambodian people under Pol Pot, the massacre of a hundred thousand Tutsi tribals in Rwanda, the repeated massacres of Kurds in Iraq, the large scale ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia for which the President Milosevic is being tried in the International Court of Justice at Hague, the Taliban terrorism in Afghanistan, all these involved targeting of non-combatant civilians by the state authorities with a view to cause the populations to tremble. How else could these acts be defined except as terrorism. What else was the purpose, for example, in the massacre of the Sikhs in Delhi and other areas in 1984 and Post Godhra violence against the people of one community in areas of Gujarat last year. How do we describe the complicity of the governments in these cases?

The other kind of state terrorism, of sponsoring, supporting terrorist actions outside their own borders is exemplified by what our neighbour Pakistan's Government has been doing for attacks in Jammu and Kashmir and other areas of India including the attack on Indian Parliament. Where do you place the recruitment, training and organisation of the Taliban like armies by Pakistan and USA for their terrorism in Afghanistan? Afghanistan did not know that kind of violent Islamic fundamentalism before this dubious external intervention. Further, if we come to think of it, what impact has the proliferation of such state patronised terrorist groups and the massive public availability of sophisticated weapons in Pakistan has made on the society in Pakistan? The multiple terrorist and Islamic fundamentalistic organisations, on the one hand, and the ISI, the Army and the police working in the name of protecting the people from the former, on the other, have left the people of Pakistan devoid of basic human rights and dignity, and held captives to pervading fear and hopelessness.

These may perhaps appear to be weak examples if we recall the Japanese state terror — Nanjing Massacre of an estimated 300,000 Chinese, mostly civilians, and the sexual enslavement of about 200,000 “military comfort women” mainly Korean and Chinese, or the planning and support to a series of terroristic actions in other countries by USA for over half a century. How do we, for example, describe the rationale

and objective of the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945? President Truman was well informed that Japan was going to surrender within days, not even weeks. Who were the targets? No military or military establishments, but exclusively non-combatant civilian population, including at least two generations of the radiation afflicted survivors. And what was the objective? The State Department Papers, recently opened to scholars and the public, show clearly the US intention to intimidate the Soviet Union and also the world about her destructive power. Chris Nineham, in a recent article, cites Truman's Secretary of State James Bryan, having advised the President to use the horrendous weapon because "The atom bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war".

Professor Fred Halliday of the London School of Economics wrote at the end of 1980's:

The most striking feature of the Reagan Doctrine was the way in which Washington itself came to be a promoter and organiser of terrorist actions. The *mujahedeen in Afghanistan*, UNITA in Angola and the Nicaraguan Contras, were all responsible for abominable actions in their pursuit of "freedom" – massacring civilians, torturing and raping captives, destroying schools, hospitals and economic installations, killing and mutilating prisoners... Reagan was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people through terrorism".

According to Noam Chomsky, USA was the only country in the world which rejected the Jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice with regard to the "invaded country" Nicaragua's complaint against USA's "terrorist war". As he writes, "When the court condemned the US for the 'unlawful use of force', ordering Washington to – cease its international terrorism violation of treaties, and illegal economic warfare, and to pay substantial reparations, the Democrat-controlled Congress reacted by instantly escalating the crimes while the court was roundly denounced on all sides as a "hostile forum' that had discredited itself by rendering a decision against the United States".

It may help us to look at the rationale given by the terrorist leaders, on the one hand, and that of George Bush, on the other. Both have the same kind of logic and prescriptions. Both talk of building a world order around violence. David Morris, Vice President of US

Institute of Local Self-Reliance compared the languages of argument of Henry Kissinger and Osama Bin Laden and published an article: "You take one to know one". According to him, "both believe that the end justified the means". Both believed that innocent civilians are pawns on global chessboard and sometime must be sacrificed for a higher geo-political cause..... Bin Laden despises the North and the West for highjacking and perverting history. Henry Kissinger has contempt for the South. "Kissinger planned a big coup to overthrow Norodom Sihanouk in Cambodia, to bring in Lon Nol for pushing Cambodia from determined neutrality to intervention in Vietnam in 1970 when the US war in Vietnam was not delivering results. Two million Cambodians were displaced and then followed Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge terrorism. Why had millions of Cambodians to suffer? He asks. He cites William Safire who remembers Kissinger telling him, "We are trying to shock the Soviets into calling a (Summit) conference, and we cannot promote this by appearing to be weak". Al Qaeda and the Taliban would kill civilians in USA and other parts of the world to tell USA that they are not weak. So, David Morris says, through satire: *"Henry Kissinger was overthrowing government and is aiding and abetting the murder of civilians to protect us. Osama Bin Laden is trying to overthrow governments and is aiding and abetting the murder of civilians to destroy us"*.

We need to take serious note of the fact that fighting terrorism, as the major purpose of the governments has given to most of the failed, incompetent and corrupt governments in the world a patent *excuse* for freedom from accountability. We know that without Godhra and the engineered fear and hatred against one community, Modi had little chance of retaining power. He needed a Mian Musharraf as much to win election as Musharraf in Pakistan benefits from Modi's and aggressive Hindutva in India. Both of them flaunt the patriotic cause to cover all their failures in governance. It is understood that as the problems of administration have mounted for Bush in America, he feels that nothing less than quick victory over Iraq could help him in winning the 2004 election. Fighting terrorism has become the scoundrel's. It is said with righteous justification that there is no way of fighting terrorism without extraordinary restrictions on the rights and liberties which people enjoy in normal times. Social security will be considered after full national security is achieved. On the other

hand, since the economy is affected, George Bush has given to the big business corporations massive tax exemptions, subsidies, freedom from restrictions regarding pollution control by withdrawing unilaterally from the Kyoto treaty. The US Space Command has made a strong plea for more advanced weapons. The argument is that the need for total dominance will increase as result of the globalisation of the economy. Increasing economic disparities between the world's 'haves' and 'have-nots' and miseries of the people will create unrest. So, the argument is that the USA must develop Missile Defence Weapons on priority to protect the US citizens by precision strikes from space. Noam Chomsky described the scenario as "*The Abyss of the Future*".

We are living in a world possessed by a certain madness. A few years back a question was posed by Leslie Stahl of CBS to the former US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright: "We have heard that half a million children have died in Iraq (as consequence of the embargo), I mean more children than died in Hiroshima. And and you know is the price of taming Saddam worth it"? Her reply was: "I think this is very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it". It is a horrifying form of Narcissism, of inhumanity and madness. We are caught in a dilemma. Terrorism has to be fought. But those entrusted by us to make decisions are pushing the world towards endless hatreds and bloodshed. Let us heed the warning given by one of the senior political scientists of America, Harold A Gould:

The world community needs to be wary of super powers that act out of political desperation and parochial expediency rather than measured wisdom.

We are being fed on fear and panic. Peace is nowhere on the agenda. We need to struggle to retain our sanity. We must strongly oppose the US attack on Iraq. We must raise our voice for peace, for disarmament, for accommodation, for compassion in bid to confront terrorism with reason.

## REVIEWS

### HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF SIKHISM

A REVIEW BY I J SINGH\* & LAURIE BOLGER\*\*

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*Author : W H McLeod*

*Publisher : Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Maryland, USA*

*Pages : 297+XXX; Price : \$70.00*

*Edition : Second (2005)*

According to the most recent figures at the beginning of this century, there are almost twenty-five million Sikhs, making Sikhism the sixth largest religion in the world. Slightly less than a million Sikhs live outside Punjab and India, with significant populations spread across six continents. North America (the United States and Canada) boasts slightly over half a million, while Europe has over one quarter of a million. Oceania (Australia, New Zealand and Fiji) has the least number, about 24,800.

The numbers are modest enough that much of the general public remains ignorant about their Sikh neighbors - who they are and what they believe. But these figures are rising enough to warrant increasing curiosity about 'the Sikh next door.' More importantly, a new generation of young Sikhs growing up in the diaspora, far from their historical roots, requires new ways to understand and preserve their heritage. Hence, the obvious need for well-written, brief, descriptive nuggets of information on all aspects of Sikh belief, culture, and lifestyle.

Perhaps the most authoritative and complete encyclopedia on

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\* I J Singh is professor of anatomy at the New York University and the author of four books, including his latest, *The World According to Sikhi* (2006). [ijs1@nyu.edu](mailto:ijs1@nyu.edu).

\*\* Laurie Bolger is conservation librarian at the University Club Library in New York City. [lbolger@nyc.rr.com](mailto:lbolger@nyc.rr.com).

Sikhism remains *Mahaan Kosb* by Kahn Singh Nabha in 1930. This monumental work is wide-ranging and exhaustive; even the most arcane facts and obscure events are covered. However, it is in Punjabi, which limits its usefulness. There have been other attempts to compile shorter, more linguistically accessible encyclopaediae in English, such as the ones by Harjinder Singh Dilgeer and Surinder Singh Kohli, as well as a very comprehensive four-volume *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, published by Punjabi University, India, that was the brainchild of Professor Harbans Singh.

Hew McLeod has spent a lifetime in research on Sikhism. His scholarly writings have not been free of controversy, but they have nevertheless been instrumental in defining a place for Sikhism and Sikh studies in the consciousness of Western societies.

McLeod first published his *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism* in 1995. This book is a revised, much expanded second edition. It is small enough to be non-intimidating, with an inviting, user-friendly style that a wide range of readers will find appealing.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first section begins with a map of Punjab, a 'family tree' of some of the Gurus, and a chronological timeline. It then gives an abbreviated outline of the teachings of the Gurus, several paragraphs on Sikh identity, and a brief discussion of two contrasting approaches to history. The map needs some clarification, since Punjab has been repeatedly truncated and its boundaries redrawn. In 1947, half of Punjab went into creating Pakistan; from the remaining part in India, two other states – Himachal Pardesh and Haryana – have since been carved out.

In his outline on the teachings of the Gurus, as he has done in many of his writings, once again McLeod casts Nanak as a teacher of the Sant tradition. This diminishes the revolutionary nature of Guru Nanak's message and its enduring effect on Indian society. In this section, there is also a paragraph about the institution of the Khalsa; it fails to note that this momentous event underscored the Sikhs' sense of themselves as a separate faith that developed over two centuries from Nanak to Gobind Singh - a faith clearly demarcated by its beliefs and practices from the many Indic religions that dotted the Indian landscape.

The discussion on successors of Guru Nanak is concise by

necessity. But some parts could have benefited from an extra sentence or two. For example, Guru Tegh Bahadur is described as a 'recluse' who was 'executed by the Mughals.' The fact that he accepted death in support of the rights of a people of another faith is highly significant and rated at least a few words.

Guru Gobind Singh is portrayed as 'the leader of his Sikhs, fighting to sustain his position as the ruler of a small Shivalik principality!' This makes him seem like some petty warlord instead of a Guru! His four sons were martyrs to the cause, but McLeod's description sounds as if the older two sons were killed running away instead of defending Chamkaur in battle. It would have also been appropriate to add that the younger two sons, even as small children seven and eight years old, were willing to be martyred rather than accept Islam. A continuously held and deeply loved belief that permeates Sikhism is that in 1699, five Sikhs (Panj Piarey) were the first to accept initiation in the Khalsa, and that Guru Gobind Singh himself accepted initiation from their hands. Hew McLeod elides by this very significant point. It is as if in a presentation on Christianity, one were to ignore the detail of crucifixion because not all the facts may be historically clear.

A fundamental doctrine in Sikhism is the connectedness and continuity of the message from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Somehow this linkage does not clearly come through in McLeod's exposition of the Sikh faith.

McLeod then steps into an area that has proved so difficult for him in the past. His emphasis on 'traditional' historian vs. 'skeptical' historian is disconcerting. His ideas of 'tradition' are completely suffused with a sense of his head-shaking doubt. It is as if believers of a faith - 'traditional' interpreters - are incapable of intellectual rigor when looking at their own faith. The best that can be done is to give them 'a measure of cautious trust?' The 'skeptical' ones are the only ones who 'investigate?' Although he ends his section with the proviso, 'History is constantly being rewritten and no interpretation is forever fixed,' he states that 'this historical dictionary adopts the contrary view,' i.e., tradition is not generally reliable. Many entries in this book seem to be colored by this attitude.

We would argue that an inherent conflict between intellectual rigor and faith does not exist. One can honestly believe and yet question

whatever in a tradition may be only inadequately documented. An unbiased scholar can and should just as easily start with the assumption that the unbroken continuity of a tradition speaks generally to its veracity, unless incontrovertible evidence is found to debunk it.

Like a giant glossary, the second section of the book covers the gamut of topics on Sikh religion, history, and culture. Many entries stand out for the brief, but complete, treatment of their subject. For instance, the ones on 'Gender' and 'Gender of God' are excellent and terse commentaries on the unequivocal Sikh ideal of gender equality, and the actual practice that varies considerably from it. Another example of this is 'Sikh Architecture,' a short, but tantalizing, note on its distinctive style. The development and sentiment for a Sikh 'Nanakshahi' calendar finds well-deserved space.

Other entries are, perhaps, somewhat less adequately presented. One of these is the entry on 'Art.' It talks about the popular genre of calendar illustration, and mentions the artists Sobha Singh and Kirpal Singh. However, there is little analysis or discussion of other influences on Sikh art, or the course of its development. McLeod's 1991 book, *Popular Sikh Art*, albeit a work of much greater specificity, provides a far more useful introduction to this topic.

Among famous Sikhs, Giani Zail Singh, the president of India in 1984 when the Indian Army attacked the Golden Temple, rates inclusion, as does another major personage of this period, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. But the entries on both are much too skimpy; they whet the appetite, but do not satisfy. Kapur Singh is dismissed in one sentence by a mention of his participation in the agitation for Punjabi Suba and Khalistan. His role as the major architect of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, as well as his significant analytic contributions to the exposition of a uniquely Sikh worldview are neglected.

One accurate measure of the importance of a historical event is the extent of the resulting consequences. For this reason, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution deserved a more complete treatment. The Indian government repeatedly blamed this resolution as the root of the troubling events of the two decades that brought the country to the brink of fragmentation in the 1980s.

The five articles of Sikh faith (*panj kakkars*) that all Amritdhari



and many Keshadhari Sikhs wear are defined. However, the entry notes that perhaps there were only three - *kesb*, *kirpan* and *kacchera* (long, unshorn hair, sword, and knee-length breeches) - that were mandated on the historic Vaisakhi of 1699 at the inauguration of the Khalsa. McLeod suggests that the other two appeared later. Most Sikhs would find this interpretation difficult to accept.

The third, and final, section comprises over one hundred pages of bibliography and source materials, with its own very useful 'Contents' listing, compiled by subject headings. Librarians would find this approach extremely valuable when organizing their collections on Sikhism. This is a superb and extensive collation, ranging from the traditional hagiographies known as *janam-sakbis*, to more intellectually rigorous scholarly works. McLeod even provides references to publications that have been sharply critical of his own writings.

There is also a listing of the plethora of websites on Sikhism that have appeared, particularly in the diaspora, over the past two decades. These offer a whole gamut of topics, ranging from forums of opinion and debate to search engines and translations of Guru Granth Sahib as well as other texts. However, McLeod has omitted listing websites such as the Sikh American Legal Defence and Education Fund (SALDEF), formerly known as the Sikh Mediawatch and Research Task Force (SMART), as well as the Sikh Coalition. These sites deserve inclusion on the basis of their unparalleled activity and assistance in matters of equal rights in our complex North American existence.

Scarecrow Press has sponsored a unique series of publications under the aegis of its editor, Jon Woronoff. It has published a range of notable historical accounts of most major world religions, including, not only Sikhism, but also Catholicism, Ecumenical Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, and the Baha'i faith. It has also put out accounts of philosophies and movements whose ideas have served to shape humankind, such as the Civil Rights Movement, the Gay Liberation Movement, Organized Labor, the Welfare State, the Olympic Movement, and many others. This book by Hew McLeod is a worthy addition to this excellent series by Scarecrow Press.

## THE SIKHS IN THE NEW CENTURY

A REVIEW BY GURCHARAN SINGH\*

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*Editor : Dr Harchand Singh Bedi*

*Publisher : Khalsa College, Amritsar, 2001*

*Pages : 299; Price : Rs. 200/-*

This is a collection of essays by twenty Sikh scholars compiled by the author. The essays are on different Sikh topics. Many address issues which we are facing in the New Century and others concern mostly academic issues which are repeated over and over again in various seminars.

Before I set down for a review, I looked up the author's comments of the points raised by each contributor in the chapter "Towards 2151 Century". The comments are fairly longish and do not follow the sequence in which the scholars have presented their ideas in this book. Also, the focus or the important issue touched by each scholar is missed. It is rather lost in a verbose commentary. But for this, this chapter could have formed a good basis of the gist of the book.

My effort is to focus the reader's attention to the core issues and that too, briefly.

The first of these articles is by Dr J S Neki on *Blueprint For Sikh Renaissance*. In this, Dr Neki has lamented the situation of the community like a rudderless ship with its leaders discredited. He has desired the revival of the collective wisdom of the Panth in some newer instrument through which Guruship of the Panth could be established. He has talked of Akal Takht, Sarbat Khalsa, 'Gurmata' institutions. The fact remains that in the present form their institutions hardly influence the community except for causing chaos. Some new ideas, new definitions,

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new roles are a must. We cannot quote what happened in seventeenth or eighteenth century as guidelines for the New Century.

Dr G S Dhillon in his *Problem of Sikh Identity* has defined major ideals of Sikh Faith and practical life. No doubt we should feel proud of our distinct identity and heritage. But in the new century we have to deal with a global situation with inter-faith dialogues and adjustments. That aspect becomes more relevant.

Kartar Singh Duggal in *Challenges of the Twenty first Century and the Sikh Youth* has some new ideas. He has talked of return to the sacred in a consumerism-conscious market-based, conflict-torn world, where Guru Nanak's ideals of divine life & sharing the produce suit the coming world. A stress on English as international language for communication is considered desirable.

Surjit Singh Narang in *Ethnic conflicts & Minoritarian Mould Case of Sikhs in Punjab*, talks of our frustrating struggle for justice. How the future rulers will avoid this, what are the ideas for future have not been mentioned.

Hardyal Singh Paul talks of social audit. The question facing us is the same that is facing the world: how to overcome present frustration, anger, of the youth. Have we come to an end as far as religion is concerned? We must do an honest critical appraisal and do heart searching. Our eminent scholars/educators, preachers, social scientists, historians can do this. The most serious problem is unity of the Sikhs, functioning of gurdwaras & other institutions, qualification & background of *pracharaks*, status of women, their malnutrition, female infanticide – foeticide. Are our socio-economic systems compatible with Sikh philosophy? Is consumerism playing havoc with our life creating a parasite class? Do our volunteers promote 'sewa' in all walks of life or do cosmetic work in gurdwaras only. Do we understand other religions, live in harmony with other groups? Are we using modern tools like computers / Internet for the good of humanity at large. We must ask these question and find solutions & act on them.

D P Singh exhorts us to rise above casteism (which has crept in the Sikh community), use modern media for *parchar*, care for environment, reform education, pay stress on moral education, etc. We must recognize that we are a minority and must work hard.

Gurbax Singh Shergill focuses our attention on dismal standards

of education & need for improving these. Amar Singh Dhaliwal wants a psycho-social review so that Sikhism is known to all as a unique and universal religion. Ujagar Singh Bawa discusses 5 Ks, specially the importance of *keshas* which sustain our enthusiasm, cohesion and organization. Avtar Singh Canadian is concerned with challenges from BJP/RSS & lack of vision of our SGPC to face it. Birendra Kaur is concerned at our not adhering to Sikh values & symbols. Gurmit Singh discusses discriminatory attitudes of the ruling majority towards minority, lower classes and of the biased laws which ignore them. Kashmir Singh desires SGPC's domain all over the world for Sikhs & wants learned, honest & effective leaders. Baljit Singh Kharara wants academic concepts of saint-soldiers, *Ajapa-jap* to be understood. Paramjit Singh Sidhu thinks of developing Punjabi language in the world of multimedia and computerization. Dr Gurnam Singh takes us to value of *ragas*, style of singing, *chaukis*, *kirtan* & all other details, enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib according to which it must be rendered. Dr Darshan Singh Maini outlines glorious concepts of Sikhism in a very sophisticated language. Saran Singh attacks damaging effects of reckless modern culture, consumerism and wants disciplined way of life. At the end, Sukhdev Singh & Santokh Singh outline the status of Sikh Reference Library before & after Operation Bluestar and needs of the 21st Century.

We see that each author discusses some aspect or the other, which effects or is going to influence our community in the New Century. Each has its own importance in the scheme of things. But what matters is the overall life of the community lived according to the ideals, laid by the Gurus enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. Challenges of pluralism, modernism & consumerism, neglected lot of minorities, and the poor will have to be faced & overcome.

Attacks by majority on identity & dignity of the Sikh community will have to be challenged and got stopped.

For this, social audit recommended by H S Paul is the best tool to asses each aspect, arrive at workable strategies, systematic and concerted action. Honesty of purpose will be necessary and priority laid so that maximum effect is achieved within minimum time. Who will direct such an analysis, provide guidance, supervise action, is a big question. Institute of Sikh Studies' recently proposed idea of an International Sikh Confederation provides a possible solution.

## **PUNJAB ATÉ SHER-É-PUNJAB**

**A REVIEW BY M S AHLUWALIA\***

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*Author : Dr H S Shan*

*Publisher : Publication Bureau, Punjab University, Chandigarh*

*Pages : 156+xvi; Price : Rs. 300/-*

It is an honour to review a book written by a scholar like Dr Harnam Singh Shan. His contributions in the field of religious studies, Sikh history and literature are well-known. His book under review ਪੰਜਾਬ ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ੇਰੇ ਪੰਜਾਬ” or *Punjab and the Lion of Punjab* is a significant addition to the growing genre of literature on Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The author deserves our appreciation for his efforts in collecting, the material on Maharaja Ranjit Singh in English, Punjabi, Urdu and Persian, and assembling it in a meaningful manner in the form of a monograph which certainly serves as a ready-reckoner for all those who are interested to know more about the ‘Lion of Punjab’.

The writer of the monograph seems to be very conscious about the arrangement and pattern of chapters as they systematically unfold the philosophical ideas about the character and achievements of the Maharaja, his love for Punjab and the Punjabis, defense of Punjab and the Punjabis, unification and consolidation of Punjab and the dimensions of his power, personality and patriotism. Though each of the twelve chapters is important in itself, together they form a systematic whole, providing a distinct perspective. The author has successfully presented an objective analysis of the most powerful state in the north during the nineteenth century.

The main thrust of Dr Shan’s book lies in the fact that it throws a lot of light on the inter-relationship between the Maharaja and the

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\* Dr, HIG 761-C, Sector 63, SAS Nagar, Chandigarh

contemporary events and developments – an issue which had remained neglected so far. The book helps us in knowing the character and personality of the ruler as well as the concept of Sikh sovereignty thus removing many desultory ramblings.

Published by the Punjab University, the book is a valuable addition to the existing literature on Maharaja Ranjit Singh's life and times. The book will go a long way in helping the readers who are interested in knowing more about the secret of the Maharaja's success.

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**FIRST SEMINAR OF THE ISC**

A seminar  
on the theme

**TASK BEFORE THE ISC**

will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> April, 2006, (10.00 am to 4.00 pm) in the Auditorium of Shavilik Public School, Phase 6, SAS Nagar.

Papers by reputed scholars will be presented. All are cordially invited to attend and participate.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2006, a general meeting of the primary members of the ISC will be held at the same place (10.00 am to 2.00 pm) to formally adopt the Constitution of the ISC and consider its future plans.

## NEWS & VIEWS

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### PRESS NOTES BY THE INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION

#### I

Chandigarh, January 29. At the historic first meeting on January 29, 2006, of the newly launched International Sikh Confederation (ISC) the meeting hall was packed to full capacity. The ISC had recently inaugurated its Head Office in the premises of the Kendri Singh Sabha in 28 Sector, Chandigarh.

The meeting was conducted by Lt Gen Kartar Singh Gill (retd), and a galaxy of Sikh scholars and statesmen adorned the stage. These included Dr Kharak Singh (Convenor), Sardar Gurdev Singh IAS (Co-convenor), Sardar Manjit Singh Culcutta, Member SGPC and former Chief Secretary, SGPC, and now Chairman of the International Sikh Committee of the DSGMC, Delhi, Sardar Bhag Singh Ankhi, Secretary, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sardar Tarsem Singh, Chairman, Dharam Parchar Committee, DSGMC, Dr Charan Kamal Singh, Chief Secretary, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Dr Kehar Singh, Former Chairman, PSEB, Giani Harinder Singh, Chairman, Kendri Singh Sabha, and Dr G S Kalkat, Ex-Vice-Chancellor, PAU, and now Chairman, Punjab Agriculture Commission.

Dr Kharak Singh welcomed the members and audience, and explained in brief the objectives of the ISC. Noted members among the audience were Sardar Sukhdev Singh, Guru Angad Dev Education Welfare Council, Sardar Karamjit Singh Aujla, President Punjab Lekhak Sabha, Ludhiana, Sardar Gurcharan Singh Jaijee, Sardar Mohinderjit Singh Sethi, former Advocate General, Dr Kirpal Singh, noted Historian, Sardar Anup Singh Ex-Member Railway Board and Ex-VC, Punjab Technical, University, Jalandhar, Major Gen S S Randhawa,

Maj Gen Charanjit Singh, Maj Gen Mehar Singh, Brig Iqbal Singh Dhillon and a galaxy of eminent intellectuals from all walks of life. There were distinguished members from the USA and Canada, such as, Sardar Dilawar Singh Dhatt (Washington), Sardar Kulwant Singh Hundal (Chicago) and Sardar Major Singh Tada (Victoria).

The meeting was conducted in a very cordial atmosphere. In their speeches, Sardar Manjit Singh Culcutta, Sardar Bhag Singh Ankhi and Sardar Tarsem Singh, DSGMC, lauded the efforts of the organisers for bringing the ISC into being. They gave their whole-hearted support and felt that the ISC would lead to unity among various Sikh Organisations in India and abroad. All other eminent speakers supported the above views and promised full support to the ISC. Lt Gen Kartar Singh then proposed the passing of a resolution spelling out the need for committees to launch a membership Enrolment Drive and increased liason with Press and other Media. The House approved involvement of Sikh youth, need to halve the subscription for individuals and standardising subscription by gurdwaras as for societies. The support by DSGMC and Chief Khalsa Diwan was highly appreciated by the House. This resolution was unanimously passed with a voice vote and a loud *jaikara*. The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the august members and distinguished invitees. A number of invitees then expressed their desire to become members which was duly accepted and implemented.

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## II

### SIKH BODY FOR BRIDGING DIFFERENCES

Chandigarh, January 29. The International Sikh Confederation (ISC), a body of prominent Sikh thinkers, has decided to chalk out a common minimum programme for Sikhs and the handling of the Sikh affairs.

The body held its first ever general body meeting in an effort to bring all Sikhs on a common platform here today.

It was decided to bridge all differences and divisions amongst Sikhs. Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian said the idea was to have a common platform for all representative Sikh bodies where all issues are discussed and sorted out, rather than lead to divisions.

Crucially, the ISC discussed its proposed constitution that will lay down how its affairs are run.



Today's meeting was part of the refining process for the constitution that is expected to be finalised in April.

"We will iron out all differences within the Sikh bodies by using the *Gurbani* as our guide", said Bhai Bagrian. The interpretation of the *Gurbani* would be done through discussions of all bodies. "Another aspect is removing caste-based differences that have arisen among the Sikhs. We want to break all divisions," he added.

Preference would be given to organisations and not individuals. The ISC also asked people to come forward for the formation of various councils. Care would be taken that no existing Panthic organisation was supplanted or its authority diluted. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) and various factions of the Akali Dal would continue to function as such.

Prominent among those who participated were Dr G S Kalkat and Dr S S Johl.

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III

INTERNATIONAL SIKH CONFEDERATION GENERAL BODY MEETING

Chandigarh. January 29. The General Body of the ISC in its historic first meeting held at ISC HQ, Plot No.1, Sector 28A, Chandigarh, at 1500 hrs on 29th Jan, 2006, hereby, resolves to approve of the revision of subscription to be paid by individuals and gurdwaras as follows:-

Category	<i>Existing Subscription</i>		<i>Revised Subscription</i>	
	Indian	Others	Indian	Others
(a) <i>Individuals</i>				
Primary Members	Rs.1000/-	US \$75	Rs.500/-	US \$40/-
Associate Members	Rs.500/-	US \$50	Rs.250/-	US \$20/-

(b) *Gurdwaras* : As per Income

Subscription is for two years. Those members who paid Rs 1000/- their membership will continue for four years. There is no change to other rates as laid down in "para 11(a) of the Constitution existing today.

The General Body highly appreciated the early establishment of the HQ ISC and the helpful role played by the Kendri Singh Sabha Plot No.1, Sector 28-A, Chandigarh, in this regard.

The General Body approves the setting up of two committees to

improve Membership Drive and Review of the Draft Constitution, the target date to complete the review was set at 15th March, 2006. The General Body expects the revised Constitution to be available to members at the next General Body Meeting which is slated to be held on 9th April, 2006.

It was also approved that the ISC hold a Seminar on “Future Tasks for the ISC” on 8th April, 2006, prior to the General Body Meeting on 9th April, 2006.

The General Body appreciated the presence of special guests, i.e., Advisor Dharam Parchar Committee S. Tejbir Singh of DSGMC, Delhi, S Bhag Singh Ankhi, Secretary, Chief Khalsa Diwan, S Manjit Singh Calcutta and other honoured guests.

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SIKH AMERICAN NAMED REPUBLICAN WHIP

Sikh American Nikki Randhawa Haley has been named as majority whip for the House Republican caucus in the South Carolina General Assembly. As majority whip, Rep. Haley will be responsible for lining up votes in support of caucus priorities and setting the direction of the 74-member Republican majority. “Rep. Haley was selected because of her proven leadership skills. She is always prepared when we go to the floor and she is passionate about issues of concern to her constituents,” Republican chief whip Shirley Hinson said.

For Nikki, this is the third leadership position she’s held in her first two years in the General Assembly. “I am honoured to be recognized again by my peers and I know this new position helps me serve my constituents,” Nikki said. In addition to serving her constituents from Lexington country, Rep. Haley serves as secretary of the medical, military, public and municipal affairs committee and was elected chairman of the Freshman caucus before the last session.

“Republican Randhawa Haley proved throughout first year that she is a said majority leader,” adding, “her hard work and enthusiasm will be a valuable addition to our leadership team in June 2004, Nikki trounced incumbent Larry Koon in a run-off election in South Carolina’s House District 87. Koon was the longest-serving member of the South Carolina House of Representative. (*Courtesy : Indian Express, January 18, 2006*)

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CANADA GETS FIRST WHITE GURDWARA CHIEF

Halifax (Canada), March 20. Sardar Jarnail Martin Singh has become the first white Sikh in the whole of Canada to head a gurdwara.

Based at Musquodoboit near Halifax in Nova Scotia, Martin Singh was unanimously elected the president of the Maritime Sikh Society for 2006 early this year. Set up in 1968, the society runs the local gurdwara in Halifax where the Sikhs started arriving in the early '60s. "This gurdwara built in 1978, caters to about 100 Sikh families in the region," say 33-year Martin Singh who sprinkles his conversation with words like 'uncleji', 'gora', 'pugree' and 'sangat', Born in Halifax to Protestant parents, Martin Singh says that as a teenager he did all those things that teenagers do, "I mean those few bad things. Then I also believed in God. But I found that the Protestant faith was not my path. As an alternative, I looked at Catholicism, Islam and Judaism because they have similar prophets as Protestants."

Finding no solace in these religions, he looked further afield and studied Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions. Then something happened which changed his life forever. "As a Liberal Party supporter, I went to Calgary to attend the leadership conference in 1990 and ended up meeting quite a few turbaned Sikhs who had come from Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary."

In response to his questions about their faith, some of them sent him a packet of six/seven books on Sikhism. "I read them, and I realised I had found my path," says Martin who started growing beard and hair in 1991.

He was baptized as Sardar Jarnail Martin Singh in Calgary in 1996. Next year, he took another step closer to Sikhism, when he visited Punjab and found a Sikh wife. "Prof Gursharanjit Singh of Guru Nanak Dev University introduced me to Amandeep Kaur who had just finished her MA degree in Punjabi literature. I instantly knew she was the one I was looking for. So in July 1997 we got married in Amritsar."

Today, the couple has twin sons - Sukh Amrit and Har Amrit – aged four and a half, and a daughter – Arya Deep, aged three. "Life has been on a roll since my baptism. My parents visited my in-laws in India in 2000, and they were very impressed by their hospitality. Now they are very pleased with my decision to embrace Sikhism. In fact, my wife and I stayed with my parents when I was doing my (third) pharmacy degree," says Martin Singh.

Attending the Maritime Society Gurdwara since 1991, Martin has been instrumental in bringing many young people into its executive. "The beautiful thing about our society is that there has never been a contest for any position on the executive. There is no fee for services like Akhand Path or wedding ceremonies," says Martin who was elected its president early this year.

"I must be the first gora Sikh to become the president of any gurdwara in Canada. We have not yet come across any other example so far," he beams.

He has his job cut out. "We are trying to bring in very seasoned *raagi jathas* from other places to serve our community. Coming up in June, we have a multi-cultural festival here. We want more and more young people to learn about Sikhism," explains Martin Singh, who, with his brother, run the family business of pharmacy in his hometown. (*Courtesy : Indian Express, March 23, 2006*)

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#### **WATER TABLE TO FALL BETWEEN 70-160 FEET IN PUNJAB**

Ludhiana: The water management experts forecast that the water level in the central districts of Punjab will fall between 70 and 160 feet by 2023 due to over exploitation of ground waters by farmers. "Ground water is being overdrawn by farmers especially for rice plantation, the level in the central districts comprising Moga, Sangrur, Patiala, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Kapurthala would rapidly come down to an alarming stage by 70 and 160 feet by 2023," PAU, Additional Director of Research, G S Hira said. The water table in 95% of central zone areas of Punjab has dipped to over 30 feet with a falling rate of 2 feet per year. "As a direct fallout of the consistent declining of ground water, farmers will have to switch over to more powerful submersible pumps from centrifugal pumps to extract more water which will lead to high input cost for farming. It will also result in deterioration of ground water quality," Hira said. Experts suggest crop diversification and reducing area under wheat and rice crops to improve water level. (*Courtesy : Hindustan Times, February 8, 2006*)

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GUILTY VERDICT FOR CHICAGO BABA

Amritsar, February 10. The five Sikh high priests have found

Baba Daljit Singh of Chicago guilty in a case of moral turpitude and directed him to appear before them. They heard arguments from both the parties before arriving at the decision.

Some Sikhs settled abroad had lodged a complaint with the Akal Takht against Daljit Singh, alleging that he was found in a compromising position with a woman in a US motel.

Akal Takht Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti said the decision on pronouncing '*tankab*' on Daljit Singh would be taken at the next meeting of high priests. The clergy have allowed the SGPC to open counters for dry '*parshad*', along with '*karah parshad*' counters, at Harmandar Sahib and other religious and temporal seats of the community. They also directed the SGPC to form a convention of representatives of various religious organisations to discuss the issue of ban on turbans in France schools. (*Courtesy : Hindustan Times, February 11, 2006*)

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SCHOOL CAN'T FORCE SIKH BOY TO SHAVE OFF FACIAL HAIR :

OFFICIAL

Kuala Lumpur, January 15. In a relief to a Malaysian Sikh student, who was asked by school principal to shave off his beard and moustache, a senior education official has ruled that he can sport facial hair as long as it was kept neat and presentable.

"As long as he keeps it neat and presentable, I don't see a problem," Education Deputy Director-General (Schools) Datuk Khusaini Hasbullah said about the order that Ranveer Singh, 17, should shave off his facial hair, kept as religious custom, or seek admission in another school.

"The policy is that religious practices should be allowed if they are not extreme," he was quoted as saying by *Sunday Star* newspaper today. Schools should look at the "whole situation" when dealing with religious issues, Khusaini said, adding that as such, the boy does not have to shave off his beard and moustache.

For Sikhs, this means they can wear a turban and keep facial hair, the daily quoted Hasbullah as saying.

Ranveer's father Jasmel Singh, 45, had yesterday claimed that school principal had told him that if Ranveer refused to follow instructions, he should get himself transferred to another school. Jasmel Singh had described the rule as discriminatory and said it was ridiculous

to have to seek permission for a religious obligation. Sikh bodies in Malaysia had criticised school's saying that it went against the freedom of religion enshrined in Malaysia's constitution. (Courtesy : *Hindustan Times*, January 16, 2006)

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CANADA SC OVERRULES SCHOOL BAN ON KIRPAN

Toronto, March 2. In a significant ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada today said a ban by a Montreal school board on wearing of the ceremonial dagger, or *kirpan*, by Sikh students is not justified.

In an 8-0 judgment, the court overturned a decision that barred teenager Gurbaj Singh Multani from wearing a *kirpan* to class, Canadian Press news agency reported. The Montreal school board went too far in imposing a blanket ban on the wearing of *kirpan* by students, the court said. It said a total ban cannot pass muster under the Charter of Rights, because the policy infringes on guarantees of religious freedom.

But the court left room for some restrictions to be imposed on the carrying of *kirpans* in the name of public safety. A number of schools in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario have long permitted the wearing of *kirpans* subject to certain conditions. The rules often include a size limit on the blade, or a requirement to keep it sheathed and to wear it under clothing and out of sight. The Montreal dispute arose in 2001 when Gurbaj Singh, 12, first wore his *kirpan* to school in Montreal. One day it accidentally dropped from his clothes and one of the mothers who noticed it complained to the principal.

Gurbaj was told by the principal he had to leave the *kirpan* at home. However, his family refused and pulled him from the school while the matter went to the school board, which eventually banned him from it. (Courtesy : *Hindustan Times*, March 3, 2006)

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TURBAN ISSUE SORTED OUT, SAYS ADVANI

Chandigarh, February 20. French President Jacques Chirac today assured the Sikh community that the turban issue would be sorted out, Talking to former Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani at New Delhi today, he said the earlier legislation was aimed at a certain group of fundamentalists and Sikhs should not worry about the issue.

Advani said the French President said very categorically that the

issue would be resolved. “In fact, he came right up to the elevator to escort me and said I should convey to the Sikh community that the issue would be sorted out,” Advani quoted Chirac as saying.

Speaking from his Delhi residence, Advani said he took up the issue very forcefully with the French President, who is on a state visit to India. Earlier, the Sikh community was up in arms against the French Government following a legislation that banned wearing of head scarves in government schools. Though the French law was aimed at the Muslim *bejab*, some Sikh boys were forced to leave school because they were wearing a turban. Since then, the Sikh community has held demonstrations all across the world against the French Government.

“Since the Sikh community is concerned about covering the head, *patka* or a smaller turban would be allowed,” said Advani who discussed the issue with former Akali minister Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa before meeting Chirac.

Advani told Chirac that the issue had cropped up at a time when Indo-French relations were looking up. “On the one hand, we are talking of strategic partnerships while on the other we allow such issues to linger on,” Advani remarked.

Advani said almost every day Sikhs were coming up to him and requesting him to take up the issue with the French President. Punjab BJP co-convener R P Singh, who led a delegation of Sikhs to Advani early this morning, described it as a welcome step. (*Courtesy : Indian Express, February 21, 2006*)

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## ***Letters To Editor***

### **LET ISC DECIDE ACADEMIC ISSUES**

Dear Editor,

I could fully realize, that for most of our modern-time self-witted or younger Sikhs, it is something like a “Hobby” to criticize their own religion (merely because they themselves are not observing it properly). It is, as if, someone scratches a well plastered floor to show some phenomenon. Or, it is like churning, just by fingers to extract butter. In this way, they can never understand the essence of ‘Sikh-philosophy, its divine principles and/or the heroic deeds of those, who have performed unmatched sacrifices, etc., for its ideals.

Doubtlessly, *Gurbani* and our glorious heritage are superb, which, it is unfortunate, that due to our carelessness and not realizing its great values, we often fail to appreciate. And this state of affairs has brought us to a downtrodden position, which may be described as ‘*dbobi da kuta, na ghar da na ghaat da*’ (homeless is the washer-man’s dog). Sorry to add, that we as well have little or no pride in our Punjab, Punjabi and our own heritage “Sikh-Rehat-Maryada” (as was prescribed by our Guru ji and/or dedicated Gursikhs). Our historical records are not properly preserved, and every now and then a new person claims to be ‘an authority’ to dictate a revised *Sikhi-rehat*. For this reason, we notice various ‘Sant-Babas and their sects, having their own code of Maryada (different from what Guru ji had prescribed).

And, very often, articles suggesting ‘Ultra Sikh-maryada and Pathh’ are being published, creating confusion among the devotees. Why should, therefore, we let every “Tom, Dick & Harry”, act as self-imposed leaders. I humbly request, these must be stopped.

And now, as our noted intellectuals have organised the “Sikh Confederation”, we hope, they will consider all such issues seriously. We can surely rely on them for appropriate decision and advice.

Rajinder Singh Vidyarathi,

# 8, Gray Lane, Singapore 438940

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ISC – THE SARBAT KHALSA

Dear Sirs,

This is to endorse your endeavour to approach all Sikh organisations to form the Sikh Confederation. The first need of the Panth today is to have a platform where the representatives of all the units of the Panth may jointly address the problems facing them. There are many urgent issues which must be dispassionately discussed in a joint meeting of competent specialists well-versed in related disciplines to those issues. In the present situation, when there are not just dozens, but hundreds of Sikh organisations spread all over the world, this is the only way to revive the Sarbat Khalsa tradition. It is this tradition which united the Panth, brought glory to it, and led to the Khalsa *raj* in the Punjab.

In the present state of affairs, the Sikh faith will get split into mutually contradicting and hating sects, as has already happened with

other major faiths in the world. In some cases, the sects within a faith show more hatred and enmity among themselves than that against people of other faiths. Some recent decisions made by the Akal Takht ignored the opinion of large parts of the Panth. That is why most of the decisions were not unanimously accepted causing split in the Panth, rather than uniting the Sikhs.

The root causes of split in the Panth obviously lie with the religious and political leaders. They were interested in serving their personal/party/sect/*dera* interests, rather than keeping in mind the welfare of the Panth and *Sarbat da Bhala*, the Panthic mission. The major aim of the Confederation should be to introduce the cardinal principles of the Sikh faith to guide our preachers and politicians. They should be exposed, when they try to twist these principles to serve their selfish interests.

The Panth is fortunate in having many such mature and cool headed Sikhs who are expert and fully qualified to discuss and analyse the issues without bias, for the guidance of the leaders. I understand such scholars have already agreed to go with you and without getting into limelight for any personal gains. Only such volunteers (*nishkam sewadars*), committed to the cause of the Panth, can lead the Panth to its pristine glory.

It is a good chance for all Sikh organisations, whatever their views on religious, historical or political issues, to take advantage of this effort, and re-establish the Sarbat Khalsa tradition, ignoring the hurdles which selfish politicians/leaders and anti-Panthic Powers create.

May God bless you,

Yours sincerely,

Gurdit Singh

#509, Gurbax Colony, Patiala

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### **FUTURE TASKS BEFORE THE ISC**

Dear Sir,

Teachers in Khalsa Schools and Colleges need to be contacted and guided for teaching correct Sikh Code of Conduct, Maryada.

Village level gurdwaras / organisation should be advised to practise Panthic Maryada and educate villagers about it.

Sikh organisations, institutions, for example, Damdami Taksal, Sant Samaj, Sewa Panthi, Nirmal Panthi, etc., be associated to spread

the *gurmat* message.

Suggestions be obtained from Sikh organisations in foreign countries for achieving the aims and objectives of the ISC.

The essential purpose is to teach *gurmukhi* to the youth and encourage them to recite *gurbani* regularly, so that they feel the pride of their heritage and benefit from it.

S Darshan Singh  
# 1698, Sector 61,  
Phase VII, Mohali

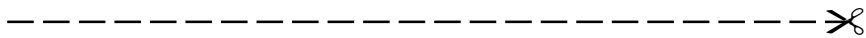
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| I, Kharak Singh, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to my<br>knowledge and belief.                                             |                                                                                                             |
| Chandigarh: Dated, 1st April, 2006                                                                                                                   | Sd/ Kharak Singh<br>Signature of Publisher                                                                  |

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