

Research Project

DID GURU NANAK TRAVEL UP TO ISTANBUL, TURKEY?*

PREAMBLE

We, Prof Devinder Singh Chahal and Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal, set out during May 2007 to prove if the word NANAK in the inscription on a monument discovered by Prof Chahal in 1994 on the shore of Straits of Bosphorus, Istanbul, Turkey, where the East meets the West, is for GURU NANAK or it is something else. In many research projects what usually happens is that one is looking for something but discovers something else, which in most of the cases adds new information on the same subject or on another entirely new one. Exactly this happened with us when we were conducting the research on the above project in Turkey. I being Editor-in-Chief, therefore, decided to dedicate the current issue of *Understanding Sikhism – The Research Journal* to our findings about the monument's inscription containing the word NANAK at the end of its first line and the discovery of new system of Religious Education in the Republic of Turkey. This new discovery may be a great example for the other countries to handle the relationship of religion and the State to establish Secular Governments in their real perspective.

The *Editorial* discusses “*A Lesson from Republic Of Turkey: Religion And Conscience.*” Turkey is the only country among the Islamic countries which has included secularism in her Constitution and practices it. With the abolition of the Caliphate and the Ministry of *Shariah* (Islamic Law) and Foundations on 3rd March 1924 during the Republic period, significant steps were taken on the course to secularism and by providing the unification of education (including religion) and later the unification of the judiciary. These steps were followed by other steps such as the Hat Reform, closure of the Sects and Convents, changing the weekly holiday from Friday to Sunday and the adoption of the Latin alphabet and the Gregorian calendar.

Prof Dr Yurdagül Mehmedoglu writes more on this aspect in her article, **Institutions of Religious Instructions and Problems of Religious Education in Turkey**, at pages 27-30.

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal and Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal report the results of their extensive search to verify if the word NANAK in the inscription on the monument situated at the shore of Straits of Bosphorus is for GURU NANAK

in their article, “*Did Guru Nanak Travel up to Istanbul, Turkey?*” at pages 7-23 The first and preliminary deciphering of first line of the inscription and its interpretation by Mr Iqbal Qaiser indicated that it was about Guru Nanak. Later further research by him and other researchers deciphered that the word NANAK is in fact KHANIK[N] in which the hook of Arabic alphabet ‘*Khey*’ was damaged due to weathering agencies thus everybody who looked at it was reading that word as NANAK. The word KHANIK[N] means “*of Khan*”. This conclusion was accepted after consulting many experts of the Faculty of Divinity of Marmara University and the Department of Archeology of Istanbul. The irony is that no written information about the original inscription of the monument could be found in any library of any university or in the records of any municipality and that of the Department of Archeology. The Department of Archeology told us that during Ottoman Empire no monument could be constructed of any person other than that of Emperor. Therefore, the possibility of this monument for Guru Nanak is next to impossible. Similarly, our research could not find any clue about the visit of Guru Nanak to the shrine of Mevlana (Maulana) Jalaluddin Rumi in Konya. However, it does not rule out that Guru Nanak visited Istanbul or Konya during his travels of at least 11 years in the Middle East.

Besides a brief life history of Mevlana (Maulana) Jalaluddin Rumi is given at pages 24-25.

Dr Hülya Küçük, was requested to write an article, **SUFISM: The Mysticism Developed by Muslims**, for the readers so that they could understand and compare Sufism in Islam with that of in Sikhism. It appears at pages 31-33.

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal has reported in his article, **How Long was Guru Nanak's Travel Towards Middle East?** at pages 34-36, & 26, that it is strange that no definite dates of travels of Guru Nanak in South Asia and Middle East are found in the Sikh History. Similarly, no information on starting date of travel towards Middle East and how long it took him to complete this travel is available in Sikh history. I was surprised to calculate the period of stay of Guru Nanak in Middle East to be at

least 11 years. This was calculated from the date 1511 CE on the inscription about Guru Nanak on the wall of the Shrine of Bahlol Dana (Gurdwara) in Baghdad, Iraq and the description of *Babarbarani* in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib that Guru Nanak was in Saidpur (Eminabad) in Pakistan when Babar sacked this city in 1521 CE. This is the longest (11 years) stay of Guru Nanak in Middle East, especially in Baghdad and around. Therefore it raises a question: How could it be possible that he would have not visited the Shrine of Mevlana (Maulana) Jalaluddin Rumi in Konya and the Emperor Salim in Istanbul, Turkey

In another article, *Discovery of Commencing Verse of the Add Guru Granth Sahib in Baku, Azerbaijan*, Prof Devinder Singh Chahal reported that while browsing through the Internet he found the inscription of the Commencing Verse, commonly known as Mool Mantra in an old Temple in Baku, Azerbaijan in an article of Dr Modi. Nothing was written about it in his article except the caption, *Another Inscription*. Immediately after the Commencing Verse there is some writing, which is not easy to be deciphered. However, it appears that some

chela (disciple) has inscribed or got it inscribed. It is also not known whose disciple is this and there is no date of inscription. I assume that Guru Nanak might have spent some time in Baku during his travel of 11 years in Middle East before returning to India.

Some information about the Gurdwara Sahib at Lakhpat, where Guru Nanak stayed on his way to Mecca is reported by Mr Sukhvir Bilku at page 30.

Mr Tej Thind and Dr Teja Singh have contributed some universally acceptable quotes of Rabindra Nath Tagore at page 25 immediately after the quotes of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi.

The irony is that there are so many universally acceptable quotes in Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Bani of Guru Nanak, which the Sikh scholars have failed to bring to the notice of scholars of the world and the humanity at large. Unfortunately the Bani of Guru Nanak is being represented as a very strong organized religion, Sikhism, like others.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Institute for Understanding Sikhism

The Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS) has been publishing its bi-annual periodical, *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal* of high academic standard. To commemorate its ten years of success, IUS will be hosting a seminar in the month of September (tentatively) 2008.

From 2009 the *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – the Research Journal* will be completely on online at www.iuscanada.com. Some of the back issues are currently available at the site, however the rest will be updated soon.

Besides publishing bi-annual Journal the IUS has also published three books:

1. JAP: The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy
2. Sabd Guru to Granth Guru
3. Some Salient Principles of Sikhism

Other publications:

- A Chapter on Bioethics in a book ANNALS OF BIOETHICS
- The fifth book is on its way and will be released on the Tenth Anniversary of the IUS.
- The IUS is also proud to announce that 13 DVDs on BASICS OF SIKHISM have been produced by Jefry Communications, Toronto, ON, Canada at Winnipeg – 1 Universal Production, which will be broadcasted on SIKH VIRSA TV Program on Omni 2 from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada during the second season of 2007. These DVDs will also be available from the IUS thereafter.

The Trustees and Board of Directors of the IUS are highly indebted to all the generous sponsors to enable us to represent Sikhism and interpret Gurbani logically for the humanity of the modern world. Your continuous moral and financial support is solicited to continue to disseminate Gurbani and Sikhi (Sikhism) in their real perspective.