

NEWS & VIEWS

GURDWARA ACT - DEFINITION OF A SIKH

Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak during the 15th century, is the youngest, scientific, and logical religion of the world. Yet it originated at a time when the modern nations and ideas resulting from development in the fields of science, technology, economics, psychology etc. had not yet become part of the world consciousness. Even then the principles of Sikhism laid down in the "*Gurbani*" composed by the Sikh Gurus, incorporated in the **Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS)**, are found true in the light of modern science and are applicable during the Science Age (Space Age, Computer Age, and Information Age) for the welfare of the humanity.

Sikhism is an anglicized word for "**SIKHI**" derived from the *Gurbani* incorporated in the AGGS:

"*Sikhi sikhia Gur vichar.*" (AGGS, M 1, P 465)

"*Sikhism is the philosophy of the (Sikh) Gurus (incorporated in the AGGS).*"

Recent survey has indicated that Sikhism is the 6th among the living higher religions of the world according to the number of its more than twenty million followers [1].

Since Sikhism has been exposed to the Western world, its interaction with science and the other world's living religions is obvious. Therefore, it is imperative that *Gurbani* and Sikhism are represented in their real perspective as formulated by Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism.

The irony is that the Sikh scholars and theologians have failed to define a Sikh in its proper form according to the *Gurbani* incorporated in the AGGS. Whenever the Sikh scholars or theologians have defined a Sikh they defined it according to their own thinking and keeping in view the need of the time. Although there are many definitions of a Sikh found in various books, encyclopaedias, and journals, almost all of them lack consistency and precision. The definitions given in some outstanding documents, namely, the Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 [5], Bhai Kahn Singh's *Mahan Kosh* [4], and in the *Rehit Maryada* of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar [6], are worth considering here:

The Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925 [5]

(Part I, Chapter 1, Section 1)

(9) **Sikh** - "Sikh" means a person who professes the Sikh religion or, in the case of a deceased person, who professed the Sikh religion or was known to be Sikh during his lifetime.

If any question arises as to whether any living person is or is not a Sikh, he shall be deemed respectively to be or not to be a Sikh according as he makes or refuses to make in such manner as to the ¹[State] Government may prescribe the following declaration:-

"I solemnly affirm that I am a Sikh, that I believe in the Guru Granth Sahib, that I believe in the Ten Gurus, and that I have no other religion."

²[(10) "**Amritdhari Sikh**" means and includes every person who has taken *Khande-ka-amrit* or *Khanda pahul* prepared and administered according to the tenets of Sikh religion and rites at the hands of five *pyaras* or beloved ones".]

³[(10-A) "**Sehjdhari Sikh**" means a person -

- (1) who performs ceremonies according to Sikh rites;
- (2) Who does not use tobacco or *kutha* (Halal meat) in any form;
- (3) Who is not a *Patit*; and
- (4) Who can recite Mool Manter.]

⁴[(11) "**Patit**" means a person who being a *Keshadhari* Sikh trims or shaves his beard or *keshas* or who after taking *amrit* commits any or more of the four *kurahits*.]

1. Substituted for the word "Provincial" by the Adaptation of Laws Order 1950.
2. Inserted by Punjab Act XI of 1944 section 2 (b).
3. Inserted by Punjab Act No. 1 of 1959 section 3 (4).
4. Inserted by Punjab Act No XI of 1944, section 2 (b).

Comments:

The above definitions lack consistency and precision. For example,

- "*Sikh religion*" has not been defined/explained. It

raises a question. What is a Sikh religion?

- "*Believes in Guru Granth Sahib*" means idol worship. It should have been "follows the philosophy of the Sikh Gurus incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib."
- In the definition of "*Amritdhari*" a word "person" is used for whom that has taken *Khande da Amrit*. There is no mention whether the "person" believes in the philosophy of the Sikh Gurus or not.
- "*Sahjdhari Sikh*" has been defined as a person who only performs ceremonies according to Sikh rites and can only recite *Mool Manter*. It means he does not have to follow the Gurus' philosophy incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib to be a Sikh. Recitation of *Mool Manter* only, means believing in mantra-system that is contrary to the Guru's philosophy.
- The word "*Patit*" used in clauses 10-A (iii) and in 11 indicates that *Sahjdhari* is that person who was never *Keshadhari*, thus, cannot be called as *patit*. Its analogy is that children born in the Sikh families, who were never *Keshadhari*, cannot be called as *Patit*.
- The terms "*Amritdhari Sikh*" and "*Patit*" were added in 1944.
- "*Sahjdhari*" is the latest addition, i. e. in 1959

The above discussion indicates that there are three types of Sikhs in the present Gurdwara Act:

Sikh, Amritdhari Sikh, Sahjdhari Sikh, and Patit.

This division of Sikhs not only violates the basic principle of Gurus' philosophy of equality for the human beings but also for the Sikhs.

2. Mahan Kosh [4] (originally written in 1927 and published in 1930)

A *Sikh* is (p 192):

One who is the follower of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, one who adopts the Sikh religion of Satguru Nanak Dev, and one who considers Sri Guru Granth Sahib as his religious granth and ten Satgurus as same body and spirit.

A *Sahjdhari* is (p 137):

A branch of the Sikhs whose members do not adopt *khande da Amrit, kachh and kirpan*, but do not believe in any religion except that of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

And an *Amritdhari* is (p 78):

That *Singh* who had adopted *Amrit*.

Comments:

Here Bhai Kahn Singh accepts three types of Sikhs. Here again all the three definitions lack consistency and precision:

- It is to be noted that Bhai Kahn Singh [4] used a word '**Singh**' instead of a 'person' to define an Amritdhari. Then he used another word '**Kharagdhari**' in the '*Amritsanskar*' description (p 77). According to him a '*Kharagdhari*' is the one who keeps sword, i. e., *Kirpandhari* (p 370). Accordingly an *Amritdhari* is a Sikh or Singh who had adopted *Amrit*. Such a person is also called '*Kharagdhari*' and '*Kirpandhari*'.

Contradictory statements:

- "Sikh" is one who adopts the Sikh religion of Satguru Nanak Dev.
- "*Sahjdhari*" is one who does not believe in any religion except that of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The above two statements indicate that there are two kinds of religions: one of Satguru Nanak for a Sikh and the other of Sri Guru Granth Sahib for a *Sahjdhari*.

3. Rehit Maryada of SGPC [6]:

The definition of a 'Sikh':

ਜੇ ਇਸਤਰੀ ਜਾਂ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਇਕ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ, ਦਸ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਤੋਂ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤਕ), ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਅਤੇ ਦਸ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੇ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਦਸਮੇਸ਼ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਉਤੇ ਨਿਸਚਾ ਰਖਦਾ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਕਿਸੇ ਧਰਮ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀ ਮੰਨਦਾ ਉਹ ਸਿੱਖ ਹੈ ॥

The literal translation is as follows:

"A woman or a man, who believes in one Almighty, ten Guru Sahibans (from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib), Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Bani and advice of ten Guru Sahibans and the Amrit of Dasmesh Ji and does not accept any other religion, is a Sikh."

The definition of a 'Sikh' given in the *Sikh Rehit Maryada* of SGPC is much better than all the definitions discussed above and in references # 2 and 3. The irony is that the above definition also lacks consistency and precision:

- (1) A statement, "*The Bani of ten Gurus*", is incorrect because only 6 Gurus revealed *Bani* that has been incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS).
- (2) The other statement, "*The Advice of ten Gurus*", lacks specification because which advice and where that advice can be found, have not been mentioned.

- (3) The word '*nischa*' that means 'belief' or 'faith' is usually interpreted by many *Amritdharis* as 'obligatory', i. e. to be a Sikh it is obligatory and imperative to be blessed with the holy *Amrit* as finally ordained by Guru Gobind Singh. The word '**belief**' or '**faith**' cannot be interpreted as '**obligatory**' or '**imperative**' under any circumstances. It may be necessary to add here that 'belief' and 'faith' are often used interchangeably but 'belief' may or may not imply certitude in the believer whereas 'faith' always does even when there is no evidence or proof. Ultimately the 'faith becomes as 'blind faith'. However, Guru Nanak rejects 'blind faith' and advises to research, analyze, and evaluate before accepting and practicing any statement or philosophy.

Now a question would arise: What would be the implications, if only *Amritdhari* is declared as a Sikh?

The immediate implication would be that more than 80%, who claim themselves as Sikhs, will be declared non-Sikhs and the population of the Sikhs will immediately drop from already low population of about 20 million to 4 million. Then those who would be declared as non-Sikhs would lose their rights to vote and to become office bearer of Sikh institutions and Gurdwaras, to recite Gurbani and *Kirtan*, to do *Katha* (interpretations) or lecture on Sikhism in the Gurdwaras. However, they are allowed to donate as much money as they want, to dust the shoes of the *sangat*, to sweep the floor and vacuum the carpets, to clean the soiled utensils, and similar services. This allowance will not convince them, that losing their rights to participate and vote in the administration of Gurdwaras, is a justified act of the Sikh clergy.

The implications of taking away the most important rights (to vote and to become office bearer of Sikh institutions and Gurdwaras, to recite Gurbani and *Kirtan*, to do *Katha* - interpretations or lecture on Sikhism in the Gurdwaras) may force such Sikhs to decide to renounce Sikhism. Either they would start a new religion, **Neo-Sikhism**, or will join some sects/cults like, Hare Rama, Satya Saiyn Baba, Baba Balak Nath, *Dheras* of different Sants, Namdharis, Radhaswamis, or Narankaris, as many Sikhs have already joined such sects/cults. In the Western countries Christianity and other religions will pick them up.

The issue of defining a 'Sikh' was discussed at length in the World Sikh News, Stockton in 1992 [2] and in the Sikh Review, Calcutta in 1994 [3] where some improvements in the definitions of 'Sikh' and 'Sikhism'

were suggested for further research by a committee of eminent Sikh theologians, having some knowledge of science; eminent Sikh scientists of various fields, having some knowledge of Gurbani; and eminent historians and linguists having some knowledge of both Gurbani and science. I had put an emphasis on the knowledge of science for all the members of the committee because the Sikhs are now living in the **Science Age** (Space Age, Computer Age, and Information Age). And they are also settled in almost all parts of the world and interact with peoples of different religions and ideologies.

Since I wrote the need of defining a Sikh in 1992, I have not come across any effort by any Sikh institute or Sikh authority to define a Sikh [2]. Now all of a sudden a new definition of a Sikh is being coined in haste under the pretension to meet the requirement of forthcoming election of the SGPC. A Sikh defined in haste will have a lot of implications that will effect the whole Sikh nation especially those Sikhs living in the foreign countries. **The Institute for Understanding Sikhism request the SGPC, Amritsar with great concern to hold its amendments till a debate is held by the Sikh intelligentsia of the world at international level to define a Sikh.** However, the Institute suggests the following definition of a Sikh to be considered in the forthcoming debate on "Defining a Sikh":

A person who follows Sikhi (Gurmat-Sikhism) that is based on Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) by Guru Arjan, and Guru Gobind Singh, the Fifth and Tenth Guru in accession to the House of Nanak (Mahla), respectively. Consequently, that person is the solely follower of Sikhism and does not practice any other religion simultaneously.

Since many Sikh scholars and theologians acclaim Sikhism as a universal religion, in fact it is, then it is necessary that the definition of a Sikh should have universal adaptability/acceptability and is based on the *Gurbani*, incorporated into the AGGS. The AGGS is the only authentic and original source of *Gurbani* that has been reiterated as the only "GURU" of the Sikh by Guru Gobind Singh.

An Appeal to the SGPC:

Please do not define a Sikh with which you may win the control of Gurdwaras but lose the uniqueness and universality of Sikhism.

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3. Chahal, D. S. 1994. Religion: Who is a Sikh? Search for a definition. The Sikh Review, Calcutta. 42 (May): 21-33.
4. Singh, Kahn (Bhai). 1981. *Mahan Kosh* (Punjabi). Bhasha Vibag, Punjab, Patiala. (Originally started on February 1926, completed on October 26, 1927 and printed on April 13, 1930.)
5. The Sikh Gurdwara Act, 1925 (Punjab Act 8 of 1925).
6. The Sikh Rehit Maryad. 1945. Published by the SGPC, Amritsar.

DERIVE DEFINITION FROM THE DIVINE MESSAGE GIVEN IN THE AGGS

The word Sikh is derived from *shishya*, which means a disciple or a learner. A Sikh, therefore, must seek guidance, instructions, directions and answers to any question(s) pertaining to Sikh beliefs from the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), our eternal living Sat-Guru. Recently, an amendment [2] to the Sikh Gurdwara Act of 1925, namely, to exclude the term *Sehjdhari* (clean shaven Sikhs) from the Sikh community, has been proposed by the Chief Commissioner of Gurdwara Elections, Justice Harbans Singh. This then is the right time to come up with a definition of a Sikh based entirely on AGGS so that it will meet the needs of all the Sikhs for all the times to come. May I, therefore, respectfully propose the following definition of a Sikh, which is completely derived from the Divine Message contained in AGGS.

A **Sikh** is a righteous (true, pure, and holy) devotee (disciple) of Guru Nanak who believes in: One God

(absolute Truth or The Reality) to be realized through the grace of True Guru, the AGGS as a divinely inspired Scripture and living True Guru, Truthful and Righteous living through F.A.I.T.H., (acronym for "Following All Instructions of the *Har*") and Willing Acceptance of H.O.P.E., (acronym for "Higher Order Prevailing Eternally"), and the Ten Gurus (Guru Nanak through Guru Gobind Singh) as embodiment of the root Guru, Guru Nanak.

References

1. Excerpt from paper presented at the Sikh Renaissance Conference, Los Angeles, California. U.S.A., on July 17, 1999.
2. India Abroad, New York, 29 (52): p.9, 1999.

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INCOMPETENT SIKH LEADERSHIP

Currently discussion on the amendment of definition of a Sikh in the Gurdwara Act 1925 is going on. Every Sikh organization has become active to define a Sikh. The Sikhs should not get entangled in complications of defining a Sikh. Rather they should follow the definition of a Sikh given in the Sikh Rehit Maryada, published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar in 1945. The present situation is so fluid that no Sikh either as an individual or as a society should take any step with which the Sikh Nation is further damaged. The reality is no Sikh as an individual or as a society has any right to take any decision that effects the whole Sikh Nation. If the definition needs any modification then the *Sarbat Khalsa* should do it. (Consult Prof Chahal's Portion for definitions of various Sikhs.) The power of modification is only invested in the *Guru Panth* and it can only be done in the *Sarbat Khalsa* keeping in view the *Gurmat*. The

irony is that under the present circumstances there does not seem to be any hope even to hold a *Sarbat Khalsa* to take any decision about the future of the Nation.

Today the both prime parties of the Sikhs, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and SGPC, are the prisoners of the Brahmanical thoughts. Their activities have done colossal damage to the Sikh Institutions (*Guru Granth, Guru Panth, Akaal Takht*) that it will take a long time to set it on sound footing. There can be a hope of rescuing the Panth from its present unfortunate plight only if some thoughtful Sikhs, who are well versed in the *Gurmat* way of life and sincerely wish for the *Panthic* betterment, develop a plan, which should also be shared with the Sikhs at large.

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GURDWARA ACT - DEFINING A SIKH

Personally, I like the definition of a Sikh as given in the *Rehit Maryada* of SGPC or in the Gurdwara act of 1925. Categories of Sikhs such as *Kesadhari*, *Amritdhari*, *Sehjdhari* etc. etc. are entirely a different matter altogether. Great Sikh scholars and theologians of those days coined the 1925 definition. It was done when the Sikhs were at the crossroads and the Arya Samaj movement was in full swing in the united Punjab. To me, it would be illogical to temper with such a definition. Of course, there is always a room for improvement, but the core phrases in the previous definition should not be changed.

From my perspective, if we Sikhs have to make a claim in the today's world that Sikhism is a universal,

caring and sharing, and all embracing religion, then categorizing the Sikhs is not fair. Categories of Sikhs will not only create divisiveness, ignite fires and infights among Sikhs but will also increase power struggle in the Gurdwaras and management committees. Sikhism/*Sikhi* as enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan as well as preached and practiced by the Sikh Gurus is a religion of Humanism and recognizes the mankind as one. The Sikh Gurus preached oneness of God and oneness of mankind, conversion was never the purpose or mandate of the Sikh Guru.

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DEFINING A SIKH?

At the highest level, our Gurus defined us as synonymous with the Divine. They recognized the divinity and unity of all people, despite our common perception of being separate, stratified and divided (AGGS, M 9, P 1428). For them, a Sikh was an individual who recognized this central unity and in so doing, became capable of bringing others to a similar realization of their own divinity (AGGS. M 5, P 274). This is the basis of *Satsangat*, upon which our Gurus place so much emphasis. Are our temporal definitions of *Sikhi* based upon this most basic of understandings? Are they truly

of service to all people, both within and outside of our community? If your answer is no, then we must join in reminding the world of what a Sikh actually is. If we succeed, then no definition will be required because our mere presence will be enough to let all people know who we truly are. (Also see his article: *Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 1(1): 33-36.*)

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DOES SIKH RELIGION NEED A DEFINITION

Sikh religion needs no definition. Even if we want a definition it should be generalized which should have universal appeal and the people of other religions should feel comfortable in accepting and calling themselves as Sikhs. A simple definition, which has a universal appeal and still keeps the basic principles of the Sikh religion, is as follows:

"A person, who has complete faith in one God, believe in ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib is a Sikh." This will open the gate for the people to join the Sikh religion. We will then be practicing the universality of the Sikh religion.

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THE SIKH: GURUS' DISCIPLE

A Sikh is an individual who believes in ten Sikh Gurus, their teachings, and believes in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Sikh scripture with unflinching faith in *Akal Purakh*, God. This individual takes *Amrit* Sikh initiation, follows *Rehit Maryada* Sikh code of conduct, and does not adhere to any other religion. He/she surrenders *haumain* (ego) and practices *Naam Marga*, the ethical

and spiritual path laid down by the Gurus. The present religious and political leadership has failed very badly for performing their responsibilities and has done a lot of damage to the Sikh Nation. It would be a mistake to keep any hope in future from this incompetent leadership.

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ANALYSIS ON NANAKSHAHI CALENDAR CONTROVERSY

Introduction

Nanakshahi Calendar was the one of the many steps to strengthen the identity of the Sikhs, the followers of an independent, original, and unique religion, *Skhi* (Sikhism), of the world. It was prepared by Canada-based Mr Pal Singh Purewal [4]. The already established identities of Sikhism are:

- i) Sikhism ranks sixth among the world religions [2].
- ii) The Harmandir Sahib (Darbar Sahib - Golden Temple) is the third religious icon in the world (first being Cross and second being the Kabba in Mecca) [6].
- iii) Only the Sikhs have their Holy Scriptures written by their Gurus.
- iv) Punjabi is 13th spoken language in India and many Indian films became hits because they had some Punjabi phrases, proverbs, a Punjabi song, or a *Bhangra*. Punjabi is being recognized as one of the other much spoken languages in Canada, UK, and other countries. Punjabi is appearing on street signs in UK and North America (Vancouver, Canada).
- v) The Sikhs have not only established themselves in different countries of the world merely to improve their financial position but have contributed a lot in the economy and politics of their adopted countries. It is a pity that there are many Sikh leaders and clergy, who lack the vision [5], are bent upon to destroy the progressive image of the Sikhs. Opposition to the Nankshahi Calendar is one of their activities.

Calendar [3], system of measuring time for the needs of civil life, by dividing time into days, weeks, months, and years. Calendar divisions are based on the movements of the earth and the regular appearances of the sun and the moon. A day is the average time required for one rotation of the earth on its axis. The measurement of a year is based on one revolution of the earth around the sun and is called a seasonal, tropical, or solar year. **A solar year contains 365 days, 5 hr, 48 min, and 45.5 sec.** A month was originally calculated by ancient peoples as the time between two full moons, or the number of days required for the moon to circle the earth (29.5 days). This measurement, called a synodic, or lunar month, resulted in a **lunar year of 354 days, 11.25 days shorter than a solar year. In modern calendars, however, the number of days in a month is not based on the phases of the moon.** The length of the months is approximately one-twelfth of a year (28 to 31 days) and is adjusted to fit the 12 months into a

solar year. The ancient Egyptians were the first to replace the lunar calendar with a calendar based on the solar year. They measured the solar year as 365 days, divided into 12 months of 30 days each, with 5 extra days at the end.

First to discard Lunar Calendar: According to the Encarta Encyclopedia [3] the ancient Egyptians were the first to replace lunar calendar, I guess the second were the Christians who adopted the solar calendar. Although Islam came into being after Christianity, the Muslims are still sticking to the lunar calendar, the most difficult one to correlate with the modern calendar. **The Sikhs became the third nation in the world when the SGPC declared the Nanakshahi Calendar, based on modern solar calendar last April 1999.** The modern solar calendar is used almost throughout the world and it is the most accurate calendar that is adjusted every four year to its accuracy. Since this has been accepted throughout the world it is no more called as Christian Calendar. It is called **Common Era Calendar (CE)** and the period before it is called **Before Common Era (BCE).** **The Sikhs should be grateful to Mr Pal Singh Purewal, who proposed the Modern Nanakshahi Calendar; to the SGGPC, who accepted it; and to the Akali Party - BJP Punjab Government and BJP Central Government, who declared Sikh holidays according to this calendar.**

Retrogressive Forces in Sikhism: There have always been some retrogressive forces in Sikhism. Not going into details of all the retrogressive forces of the past I come to the present one. It was first Bhai Ranjit Singh, the then Jathedar of Akal Takht, who stopped the implementation of Nanakshahi Calendar till April 15. The SGPC obeyed his directive and then published the calendar for distribution. Similarly, the Punjab Government published her calendar and declared the Sikh holidays according to the Nanakshahi Calendar. The Punjab Government of Akali Dal - BJP and the Central Government of BJP declared January 5 as holiday and restricted holiday for Gurburb of Guru Gobind Singh, respectively. However, Mr Balram Das Tandan, a senior BJP leader and cabinet minister in the Punjab Government, opposed the Nanakshahi Calendar. On the other hand all the Jathedars of five Takhts, Sant Samaj, and other institutions celebrated Gurburb on January 13 or 14.

After Jathedar Ranjit Singh, the new Jathedar of the Akal Takht, Giani Pura Singh, in collaboration with

Sant Samaj, also banned the use of the Nanakshahi Calendar. On January 5, Giani Puran Singh even refused to participate in the Nagar Kirtan arranged by the SGPC. Then the Akal Takht Jathedar, Giani Puran Singh, Sant Samaj and other organization celebrated the Gurburb at Amritsar on January 13 based on Punjab Jantri whereas the Jathedars of Takhts of Patna Sahib and Nadar Sahib celebrated Gurburb on January 14 based on Varanasi (Kashi) Jantri. Mr Kirpal Singh, Chief Khalsa Dewan went to Gurdwara Nanakmata in Uttar Pradesh to celebrate Gurburb on January 14. It appears that Akali Party - BJP Punjab Government, the SGPC, and some Sikh institutes and some intellectuals are on one side and Jathdars of five Takhts, Sant Samaj, some Sikh institutes and some intellectuals are on the opposite side.

Actual Date of Birth of Guru Gobind Singh:

The irony is that Guru Gobind was born on Poh sudi 7 Bikrami Lunar, which is Poh 23 Bikrami Solar, of 1723 Bikrami. If Poh 23 Nanakshahi Calendar is converted into Modern Solar Calendar (Current Era Calendar) it becomes January 5. The Nanakshahi and the Common Era Calendars are so accurate that the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh will always fall on Poh 23 of Nanakshahi Calendar and January 5 of Common Era Calendar every year. But Poh sudi 7 will never fall on the same day (when Guru Gobind Singh was born) every year. Would you observe January 5 (Poh 23 Nanakshahi) as the right day for the birth of Guru Gobind Singh that falls on the same day every year or Poh sudi 7 that never falls on the same day every year.

Some of Common Objections to the Calendar:

1. Some of the opponents are worried that brotherhood with Hindus will be affected because the Sikhs will not be able to celebrate some festivals with Hindus as the dates of their festivals will not coincide with the Nanakshahi Calendar. There will not be any effect to brotherhood between the Hindus and the Sikhs because the Sikhs will celebrate Gurburbs and other festivals according to Nanakshahi Calendar and the Hindus could join them. Similarly, the Hindus will be celebrating their festivals according to their Bikrami Calendar and the Sikhs can join them as they would join the Muslims, Christians and others for the celebration of their festivals fixed according to their calendars. This way the brotherhood with the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others will be strengthened rather than weakened.
2. Some of the Sikh clergies and the Sikh intellectuals are worried that the new calendar will upset the

themes given in the Gurbani. It will not be affected as Gurbani is against observing any *thithis* or *vaars* as auspicious or inauspicious. Accordingly, *Pooranmashi* (full moon) is not auspicious and *Messia* (dark moon) is not inauspicious. Moreover Guru Amardas says that those who think so are the great fools.

ਬਿਤੀ ਵਾਰ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਮੁਗਧ ਗਵਾਰ ॥

AGGS, M 3, P 843 [1].

"Those, who attach auspiciousness to certain days or dates, are great fools."

And Guru Nanak in Barahmah says:

ਬੇ ਦਸ ਮਾਰ ਰੁਤੀ ਬਿਤੀ ਵਾਰ ਭਲੇ॥

ਘੜੀ ਮੂਰਤ ਪਲ ਸਾਚੇ ਆਏ ਸਹਜਿ ਮਿਲੇ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1108.

"For those, who have realized the Almighty, any time during the 12 months of the year, or any season, or any thith (the day measured according to the moon phases) are auspicious."

3. Moreover, a new festival, the new year eve of Common Era, is celebrated by the Sikhs with great enthusiasm in the Gurdwaras throughout the Western World, although this festival has nothing to do with the *Sikhi* (Sikhism).

Therefore, all the Sikh festivals can be celebrated on the dates fixed according to the New Nankshahi Calendar. However, in the West the Sikh will continue to celebrate their festivals on the exact date indicated in the new calendar or the date that falls close to the next Sunday.

Finally I would request all the Sikhs to follow the new calendar to be the third in series to surrender lunisolar calendar and adopt the modern solar calendar, Nanakshahi Calendar. If there are any discrepancies found during its implementation then that can be resolved later on.

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Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD

Inside Story by Mr Pal Singh Purewal

(Personal Communication to Prof D S Chahal,
October 27, 1999)

This year I attended two meetings at Amritsar regarding the calendar, one in February 1999 and the other in June 1999. In the first meeting, after about 3 hours of discussion, it was resolved not to take any decision on the calendar, in deference to the edict issued by Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh, the then Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, to avoid making decision on controversial issues till 15th April. The meeting, however, unanimously appreciated work on the Nanakshahi Calendar, and also felt that the Sikhs do need their own calendar.

In the June meeting, it was unanimously decided to implement Nanakshahi Calendar, citing earlier decision of the General House of the SGPC, which had passed it in May 1998. In the meeting I was also bestowed with a 'Siropa'. Bibi Jagir Kaur had presided over the meeting.

After a few days, Bibi Jagir Kaur announced the implementation of this calendar. Immediately some Sants rushed to Amritsar, and got Jathedar Singh Sahib Puran Singh to announce the stay of its implementation. He also announced that a larger meeting would be called to discuss it again.

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Now, this meeting has been scheduled for November 4. I have not received any information regarding this meeting. Whatever I have got is through the press from the Internet. In the meantime, Bibi Jagir Kaur has made a statement that the new Calendar will be got re-endorsed in the general body meeting of 10th November, when election to the new executive will take place.

Update on Calendar, January 18, 2000

Meeting of 4th November, 1999: The next meeting took place on 4th November, 1999. I was informed about this on 28th October. I tried my best to attend the meeting but could not get a seat on any flight to Delhi. I informed Singh Sahib Giani Puran Singh Ji that I would be available on the phone for the duration of the meeting to answer all questions. When

the meeting started I received one phone call asking me to be available, but that was all. I waited for more than 4 hours until 3:00 a.m. MST, but no phone call came. Next day I found out that in the meeting most of the scholars were in favour of implementation of the Nanakshahi calendar and some scholars and Sant Samaj led by Sant Kashmira Singh were against. The meeting remained inconclusive.

Meeting of 23rd December, 1999: Another meeting was called by the SGPC on 23rd December 1999. I was asked to attend this meeting. This time I was able to get a seat on the plane and I flew to India on 20th December reaching Amritsar on 22nd. During the evening I along with Dr Gurbachan Singh Bachan Secretary SGPC, met Singh Sahib Jathedar Puran Singh Ji, and explained to him the necessity and basis of the Nanakshahi Calendar. I answered all his questions.

The meeting of 23rd was held at Sri Akal Takht Sahib. Sant Kashmira Singh and Giani Mohinder Singh addressed the meeting. When I requested for time to reply to the issues raised by them, I was not allowed to speak. Soon there was pandemonium. Bibi Jagir Kaur asked Granthi Singh to perform the '*Sukh Aasan*' ceremony of Aad Guru Granth Sahib. There were problems still after this. Singh Sahiban and Bibi Ji moved to the office of the Akal Takht. Sant Kashmira Singh along with his followers was still there in the hall. I requested him to let me speak for a minute. He refused. At this time Sant Mangal Singh held me by the shirt and shook me. I did not react to avoid the situation getting worse. Then one official of SGPC led me to the office of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, where meeting was now to take place. After lots of representation to the Singh Sahiban from both the proponents and the opponents of the NS Calendar, and exhortations by Bibi Jagir Kaur, Singh Sahib Giani Puran Singh remained adamant in his support of the Bikarami calendar. Eventually, Singh Sahiban formed a seven-member committee to hold deliberations and give their verdict on the NS Jantri as soon as possible. The committee consisted of the following members (the criterion for the members was that they should have knowledge of calendars)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. S Pal Singh, myself, | 5. Dr Jasbir Singh Rai, |
| 2. Col Surjit Singh Nishan, | 6. S Santokh Singh, Covener, |
| 3. S Ajit Singh, | 7. Dr Kirpal Singh |
| 4. S Pritam Singh, Bhupali, | |

The next day that is on 24th December, 1999 S Pritam Singh Bhupali 'resigned' and in his place Singh Sahib Jathedar Puran Singh appointed Sant Mangal Singh as member. Sant Mangal Singh was appointed to the

committee even though the Singh Sahiban were not unanimous on this. The convener spent almost 10 days to find a 'convenient' date for the first meeting which was set for the 6th January, 2000.

Meeting of 6th January 2000: The meeting was held in the office of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. Dr Kirpal Singh could not make to the meeting because of his prior commitment. Sant Mangal Singh (opponent of Nanakshahi Jantri) was made chairman for this meeting. It was decided in the meeting that greater awareness about the Nanakshahi Jantri be created amongst the people by holding seminars. Whenever I tried to speak the convener interrupted me. I satisfactorily answered Sant Mangal Singh's questions and those from Col Nishan. I never said that there was anything wrong with this Jantri. Col. Nishan was made the spokesman for reporting to the press waiting outside. After the conclusion of the meeting Col. Nishan talked to the press while I was still within the complex. I did not know what he had communicated to the press.

January 7: Most of the newspapers carried the story that the Nanakshahi Jantri had been rejected by the seven-member committee, that the committee had requested the Akal Takht Jathedar Sahib to ask Bibi Jagir Kaur to appear before him for disobeying his edict about the suspension of the Nanakshahi Jantri. Of course, most of the report that appeared in the press was totally wrong and a blatant lie. I was shocked. I immediately decided to resign from the committee as a protest. Two other members, Dr Jasbir Singh Rai and S Ajit Singh concurred with me and tendered their resignation, while I faxed my resignation from Jalandhar. Dr Kirpal Singh said that he would resign the following day, and he issued a very strong statement criticizing the so called 'sants' who knew little about calendars and were trying to make decisions about this. At night I received a phone call from Col Nishan (opponent of Nanakshahi Jantri) imploring me to stay on, on the committee saying that the press had distorted what he had reported.

January 8: In the morning I received phone call from S Santokh Singh (Convener and opponent of Nanakshahi Jantri) requesting me to withdraw my resignation and persuade the other two to do so as well. He spoke in very humble tone. I told him I would think about it.

January 11: On my return to Canada in evening, a fax from Jathedar Sahib was waiting for me telling that the resignations were not accepted, and that I should meet him personally to get 'misunderstandings'

removed. Obviously I cannot go back to India so soon.

Mr Purewal: Indian Express, Chandigarh, January 6, 2000: The Gurbani refers to several months of the Bikrami calendar and associates them with seasons. Unfortunately, the Bikrami calendar, unlike the Common Era calendar throughout the world, is not attuned to seasons and with the passage of time aberrations are bound to count. The year used as a basis for the Bikrami calendar differs from the tropical year, which is attuned to seasons and is used as a basis by the Nanakshahi Calendar and the Common Era calendar. In the Gurbani, the month of Poh has been described as one of the cold weather but with time, this month instead of overlapping with January will shift to February and then to March. The Bikrami calendar then will no longer be true to the Gurbani.

All we needed was to fix one date, which was the date for Basakhi. There were many suggestions but what we finally agreed upon was to use the Basakhi date of 1999, the 300th year of the Khalsa, as the pivotal date. All the Gurbani and seasonal festivals will continue to fall on the same day from now on according to the Nanakshahi Calendar. Since the Common Era calendar is also based on the tropical year, the dates will be fixed in this calendar as well.

Dr Kharak Singh: The Tribune, Chandigarh Online, January 19, 2000: Dr Kharak Singh, Founder Secretary, Institute of Sikh Studies and member of the Dharam Parchar Committee, was nominated as Convener of the 11-member sub-committee on the controversial Nanakshahi Calendar by the five Sikh high priests and the SGPC Executive. He said the "jantri" (calendar) was neither a religious nor political issue, but a highly technical and scientific matter. Those who have been raising a hue and cry on this issue are either ignorant of the subject or are mischievous elements who want to take some political mileage out of it.

Sant Samaj: The Tribune, Chandigarh Online, January 21, 2000: It appears from the statement in Tribune of January 21 that the Gurbani Gurmat Sidhant Sant Samaj headed by Sant Kasmira Singh in collaboration with Sant Mangal Singh and various sects of Sant Samaj are going to have a head on collision with the SGPC on the implementation of Nanakshahi Calendar. Their first step is to remove Dr Kharak Singh, the Convener, from the 11-member Sub-committee. They have also declared that they will continue to celebrate birth anniversaries and other Sikh festivals on the basis of the Bikrami Samvat.