

NEWS & VIEWS

RELIGIOUS MEANS AND POLITICAL ENDS SIKHS FAILED TO EVOLVE A CONSENSUS

Religion has been variously defined and interpreted since time immemorial. It is as much "man's expression of his acknowledgement of the divine" as it is "a system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherents in a community", as the Longman Modern English dictionary defines it.

There have been wars between religion — struggles seeking the right to worship. Often these have developed heavy political overtones. And in Sikhism there always was a symbiotic relationship between religion and politics. Should the two be accepted as a whole and practiced as such or be compartmentalized? The great debate goes on.

In Punjab, a sound knowledge of the Sikh religion (and also history) is imperative if one is to follow Akali politics. The roots of Sikhism are traced to Guru Nanak who in the 15th century founded a scientific and logical religion for the benefit of the humanity. It is readily acknowledged that Sikhism has a "universal" appeal and relevance. And only last year the tercentenary of the establishment of the Khalsa was observed.

Yet, the Sikhs have failed to evolve a consensus on a variety of issues, concepts, practices, rituals, scriptures and even the manner of living (*rehit-maryada*). Difference of opinion persists even on the definition of Sikh. Should only those with "unshorn" hair be called Sikhs or even those who have "cut" their hair be covered by the definition? These people assert they very much remain within the fold of Sikhism arguing that symbolism, rather than substance, seems to weigh more with some scholars and theologians.

In fact even Sikh intellectuals have failed their community by not presenting Sikhism the way it should be by giving its meaning and substance in the manner the Sikh Gurus conceived and conveyed their message. For want of a clear, simple and reasonable explanation and interpretation of the "Gurbani", many myths and conceptions have crept into the religion, which is not being followed and practiced strictly according to the holy Guru Granth.

The sad part is that the intelligentsia has developed its

own political roots and offshoots. Moreover, the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) which is "accepted" as the final arbiter of religious affairs has often faltered. It has failed to fully perform its assigned duties. It is struck in the administrative matters (with a strong political bias) of Gurdwaras. It has miserably failed to end the cult of idol worship and ritualism widely prevalent among Sikhs, thanks to the existence of *babas, sants, mahants, deras* and sects.

Over a period of time many organizations have therefore mushroomed within and outside the country. In the same way, "educated" Sikhs, retired or serving, representing diverse interests and coming from different professions, have also joined hands to emerge as self-appointed "conscience-keepers" of the Sikhs' religio-political affairs. On any given occasion, these people express their views and render advice to the Sikh clergy as well as the political leadership. A few lucky ones even manage to become "advisers" to either a political party or the government.

Changing views and loyalties (to religio-political masters) is now all too common. This is one reason why nothing worthwhile and meaningful gets done. The only saving grace is that the codified holy book — Guru Granth Sahib has not been tampered with or wrongly interpreted. Some research scholars, who did come up with "radical" views, were summoned to Akal Takht. The rest is history.

It is, therefore, time that well-meaning Sikh and non-Sikh scholars who have dedicated themselves to understanding and propagating Sikhism in its universalist perspective, came forward and gave the much needed direction to Sikhism. Unfortunately, while accepting and practising religion and politics as one "entity", the Sikh political leadership has politicised the religion rather than drawing strength and sustenance from it. **For it religion is only a "means" to achieve political "ends"**. This interplay of the two and the emotions of the common Sikhs are responsible for the undoing of both. Consequently there is much media coverage and comment on Sikh religio-political affairs thanks to the controversies the leadership generates every now and then.

This is one reason why the Sikh institutions, notably, Akal Takht and its Jathedars, and the SGPC and its political wing, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), in its many manifestations, have messed up issues. It is a collective failure of the Sikh religio-political leadership and quiet acquiescence of the "alloyed" Sikh scholars and intelligentsia, which has played havoc with the Sikh religion and politics.

The fear of being summoned to Akal Takht and being awarded "*tankha*" (punishment for religious misconduct, which is usually in the form of the "accused" being asked to recite Gurbani, clean shoes and utensils in a Gurdwara and later seek forgiveness) is an inhibiting factor why the Sikh religion has remained confined to the Sikhs, who, by and large, lack knowledge of the finer points of the scriptures. This is one reason why parents are concerned about Sikh youths going astray as apostasy is surfacing surreptitiously.

Whenever there has been a ray of hope of something worthwhile taking place, a chorus of voices, mostly discordant, is heard. The issue fades away but bitterness lingers on.

There have been several occasions when the religio-political leadership could have sat together and sorted out controversies and issues in proper perspective. This was, however, not to be. For too long the Sikh leadership (read the Akalis) has survived and sustained themselves on "*panthic*" sentiments and "emotional" issues.

A typical example is of framing of the All-India Sikh Gurdwara Act. This issue is as old as the SGPC itself. No serious attempt has been made to have this Act passed by Parliament. Punjab has a Gurdwara Commission, which had prepared a draft, but it has been lost in the political labyrinthine.

Of recent concern and at the center of a controversy is the role and functions of the *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat*, an affiliate of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*, and its mode of propagating the Sikh religion. This threatens to create serious problems for the State. Then there is the controversy over the "authenticity" of the Dasam Granth and that about the 'Nanakshahi' calendar.

Even as the issue of resolving the "**crisis of Sikh identity**" persists, the task of distinctly redefining the role and functions of Sikh institutions and other mundane matters remain untouched. There is no common meeting ground even in respect of following certain rituals and practices in the Golden Temple and at Akal Takht. At the other end of the spectrum are the purely political matters pertaining to inter-state differences on sharing

water and territory, the status of Punjabi language in educational institutions besides disputes with New Delhi, regarding redefining Centre-State relations and devolution of funds or having a second look at the Constitution.

In such a scenario The Tribune has received the first three issues of yet another magazine, titled "*Understanding Sikhism — The Research Journal*". It has been brought out by the **Institute of Understanding Sikhism**. It is based in Canada, Quebec, to be precise. Its editor-in-chief is Dr Devinder Singh Chahal, who retired as Professor of Applied Microbiology from the University of Quebec. The editorial board has a global spread with members from Canada, Malaysia, India, the United Kingdom and the USA.

In India, on a short visit last week, Dr Chahal said the idea behind the journal was simple: To bring on one platform scientists, philosophers, theologians and administrators to correctly interpret the Gurbani and represent Sikhism as envisaged by Guru Nanak. Unlike other publications, the Journal has been designed and produced as any "science" journal, where a team of experts drawn from the streams of theology, physical sciences, natural sciences, political and social sciences, medicine, philosophy, history, languages and law examines each article which is submitted for publication.

The whole concept is to create interest and impart knowledge about Sikhism to the present generation, particularly, in the West, which is alien to Sikhism and which requires to be educated on this sensitive issue with reason and logic rather than by creating fear of the "unknown" and the "divine". There is a vacuum, which has to be filled, globally, by networking and keeping intact the umbilical cord the Sikhs have with the holy Guru Granth back home in Amritsar Golden Temple, he added.

Dr Chahal, who was invited to present a paper on "*Sikhism — scientific and logical religion for the third millennium and beyond*" at Punjabi University, Patiala, told The Tribune that there were a variety of journals being published by various Sikh institutions and societies. These are in English as well as in Punjabi. Mostly such journals dealt with the traditional or conventional methods, dominated by mythology and rituals, for interpreting the Gurbani and Sikhism. In this respect "Understanding Sikhism" will be different.

Browsing through the articles in the three issues published so far one finds a wide range of topics by scholars.

Nearer home, there is the "*Institute of Sikh Studies*". Another one calls itself the "Sikh Core Group". Among the members are those who fight for human rights groups and civil liberties. There is then the "*Akhand Kirtani Jatha International (Prabandhi Panhchain)*" which also brings out a magazine "*Atam Rang*". All these and several other organizations have openly come out in "revolt" against the activities of the RSS, which recently held a convention of its national executive in Chandigarh, and warning against its designs. They fear that it would damage communal harmony.

On the **Dasam Granth** the feeling is that deliberations on it should be initiated by the SGPC and held in camera. The Akal Takht Jathedar has also said no provocative statements, which will complicate matters, should be issued. Religious sensitivities and sensibilities must be respected and the political executive and clergy along with scholars should sort out all contentious and controversial issues.

If the Sikhs can achieve a consensus on issues which have time and again caused pain, created a fear-psychosis among the principle communities, threatened peace, led to divisions within the Sikh community and ridiculed their institutions, the objective of tercentenary celebrations and the essence of Guru's message of "universal brotherhood, peace and well-being of all" would be achieved.

For all this to happen, there has to be sincerity of purpose at the level of the political leadership, which alone can check a further erosion of religious values and stop the "misuse" of religion for improving one's personal career graph.

P. P. S. Gill
The Tribune, Chandigarh, India

(Reproduced with permission from the Tribune, Chandigarh, Editorial Page, May 21, 2000)

WHO IS AN APOSTATE?

The term, **apostate**, has been used in a religious sense since the beginning of institutionalized religionism. *One who once held a faith but has since renounced it is considered an apostate in every religion.* For the purpose of relating to this term the holding of a faith is ritualized by a ceremony of initiation or baptism in every religion. In contrast those, who are practicing a religion at any stage prior to a specific initiation or the ultimate adherence to a religious infrastructure, are never considered apostates. They are rather labeled as aspirants to full conversion.

More recently, a great concern has been voiced in Sikh circles that the apostasy is on a rise. Many Sikh leaders have promoted many conferences and institutes. Many pages of Sikh press are assigned towards remorse on this real or perceived wave of apostasy. A concern such as this is not anything regretful. Such would be an expression of a religious community, that is vibrant, and would exhibit a commitment to be the responsible doorkeepers of a religion. Therefore, the prevailing situation, should it be ascertained to be valid in Sikh community, indeed needs a serious attention and analysis.

This letter is not to argue about numbers or the statistics on apostasy among the Sikhs. Rather it is to draw attention to a certain growing but a genuine psychology of the community, which is leading to

many local and national conflicts. The holocaust of 1984, and its aftermath is a source of a real concern to every Sikh. Our community's pre-occupation with collecting the ashes of the holocaust has not yet permitted to systematically gather data and assess the exact extent of the damage done with respect to apostasy. There are many horror stories of forcing Sikhs to abandon their form and symbols. This letter is not meant to belittle our grief. Rather it is about the debate on the definition of apostasy that is ongoing in the community.

The purpose of this letter is also not to analyze the extent of the prevalence of apostasy, which is a matter deserving separate treatment. Rather, the point we wish to make is one of the misplaced emphases on the matter. There is no denying the fact that there may be some prevalence of apostasy among the Sikhs. However, by and large the Sikhs, who take Amrit appropriately and after appropriate preparation for commitment to its goals, do not denounce the Amritdhari discipline with any significant frequency. They are seen diligently adhering to the life style of an Amritdhari even in the face of many odds and difficulties. They value their mission of serving their Guru with their head they had offered for the purpose without any reluctance. However, those who do renounce those commitments once they had reached their adherence are certainly apostates. However, you

do not see very many such apostates. Amrit and a conscious commitment to it are such a strong motivation and a drive that rarely any one is seen renouncing it. Further, there is an abundance of social pressure and support from the community that discourage any Amritdhari to fall to apostasy. As a matter of fact, an absolute number of the Amritdhari Sikhs has been increasing with every decade of the Sikh history. We see this in our Gurdwara every day even in the west. Then, where lies the problem?

The problem lies in the definition of an apostate. There are many more Sikhs who may long to reach the commitment of an Amritdhari, but have not done it. Some of them were born in Sikh families and many more came over from other faiths. They are Sikhs but not yet Amritdhari Sikhs. Rather they are at various distinct steps and stages of practicing a Sikh life. Among the Sikhs they will be known as Sehjdhari if they have not yet taken to carrying the five Sikh Ks, all in an un-tampered form. The problem is that some of our scholars and leader have labeled them mistakenly as apostates. Most of the recent scare is about them, rather than those who were once Amritdhari and have denounced its tenets since then. This is particularly true outside the Punjab state of India. Outside Punjab, there is a larger number of Amritdhari Sikhs now than at any other time of the Sikh history. In larger Gurdwara such as one in Vancouver, Yuba City, San Jose, Los Angeles, London, or New York, where there was no Amritdhari Sikh among the office bearers only a few years ago, the managing committees today consist almost totally of Amritdhari Sikhs. Similarly those who were born of Sikh parents but have yet not embraced Sikhism are increasingly claiming their allegiance to the Sikh community. Some time they are hooted upon but this is only a misguided attitude, the Sikh ethics do not permit this treatment of any one. In contrast, the frequency of those from other faiths, who are attracted towards Sikhism from time to time, has been decreasing steadily. This should be the real concern of those, who wish to play a part in propagating their faith during the 21st century.

All those, who are in the pipeline for becoming an Amritdhari Sikh, but have not done so yet, are certainly Sikhs but in no way apostate no matter how far they are from committing themselves to an Amritdhari life. It is fruitless to call them apostates because such an attitude from our religious elite comes in their way of progressing towards their cherished goal of being a Sikh. In the way of their commitment they continuously and publicly announce to believe in Sikh tenets exactly as required of them by the presently promoted Sikh Rehit Maryada (see the definition of a

Sikh in SGPC Rehit Maryada). This should be continuously encouraged. To be intolerant towards them is going against the lofty traditions that were promoted by the Gurus and to continue to do so will be against the Guru's teachings in word and essence. Pronouncing them to be apostate or inferior akin to untouchables only exhibit arrogance and intolerance on the part of those who are self professed guardians of the faith. It only shows that such a Sikh does not pay attention to many of the Guru's commandments of tolerance and eradication of prejudices, does not see God in every one or show love and compassion towards those who take first step towards the faith. They fail to realize that the Guru promised to come thousands of steps to embrace them.

To be militant, hateful or abusive of a person, who has yet not met all the commitments of a fully knighted Amritdhari life, is a disservice to the faith. It is a disservice because this attitude will be counter-productive in the end. It has a potential of repelling a would-be convert who may even start to treat with contempt of a faith that is perceived as insecure enough to need such tactics. Rather, efforts are needed to welcome more of such aspiring Sikhs. We must welcome them in the kinship and provide support to their soul. They will need our support and encouragement so that they can fight many other cognitive, intellectual and political obstacles. They are going to face numerous obstacles and pressures by discarding the faith they once practiced or the one they were born in and began inching forward towards their new faith, the *Gurmat*. The Guru will bless those who assist the Sikh aspirants. This way the Sikhs become tool of the Guru's mission and work towards its expansion in times to come.

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TARAKSHEEL CAUTIONS AGAINST GODMEN

Mushrooming of the godmen in the state has alarmed the activists of the Taraksheel Society floated to make people aware against “magical tricks” played by them under the guise of spiritual powers. Growing influence of godmen is being attributed to insecurity prevailing in the society on account of adverse economic conditions. People, especially the farmers, who are hit by repeated failure of crops, are increasingly turning to godmen’s centers for solace in the Malwa region of Punjab.

Coupled with public support and political protection, the number of godmen’s centers is multiplying fast in backward areas of this region. Irrespective of their religious affiliations, men and women of all communities line up at these centers.

“It is a long battle. The public faith they enjoy is almost centuries old, whereas ours is a fledgling outfit founded in 1984”, says Kishan Bargarhi, senior vice-president of the Taraksheel Society. He admits that the resourceful godmen have made a place for themselves even in the modern civilization with the help of electronic media. “We are still lagging behind in the race due to paucity of funds”, he laments.

Most of these godmen play “magic tricks”, which are misconstrued as miracles by a layman. Besides, taking advantage of the prevailing socio-economic crisis, they try to lay trap to draw crowd by delivering spiritual discourse. These godmen are also accused of consuming nutritious diet to appear extra-ordinarily healthy. Glow on their faces lends credence to the claim that they possess supernatural powers. Gradually, some of these godmen manage to cultivate relationship with powerful politicians, who often rely on them during elections. Cutting across party lines, most political leaders visit their centers to draw attention of their disciples.

Likewise, these godmen take all help from the ruling parties to get subsidized or free of cost land for running centers. The presence of maximum number of VIP cars at any spiritual center makes it more popular in the public eye. “Be it a Congress Minister or an Akali Dal MLA, the nexus between the godmen and politicians is bound to remain intact”, another Taraksheel movement activist Rajinderjeet says.

Taraksheel movement activists, therefore, enact similar tricks to convince public that these are not miracles. “This will take some more time, as faith in the science

has not yet been fully restored among the public”, Rajinderjeet says.

*Gurpreet Singh
Tribune News Service*

(Reproduced with permission from the Tribune, Chandigarh, May 29, 2000).

IS THERE ANY PLACE OF GODMEN IN NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY? (Editorial Note)

The godmen in the Punjab are Sants, Babas, sorcerers/sorceresses, Tantric persons, astrologers, etc., who are playing with the emotions of the discontented, gullible, and destitute people of the Punjab under the guise of spiritual power and capability of future predictions. They promise children to issue-less parents, treatments of various diseases, riches to the poor, winning of election to the politicians, success to the students in their examinations, etc. In other words they claim that they have the panacea for every type of ailment and miraculous solutions for every type of problems for people of all the strata of the society.

The Nanakian Philosophy, recorded in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), clearly declares that there is no mantar, Jantar, tantar and any other magical or astrological power with any godmen to grant the above blessings. Even then many Sikhs, including Amritdharis, SGPC members, Akali Party members visit many *Dehras* of various Sants or Babas, sorcerers/sorceresses, astrologers, so-called religious places of various goddesses, the graves (*Darghahs*) of various Muslim Pirs. Beside that the Akal Takht, the SGPC, Amritsar, and various Akali Parties have unofficially recognized various Sants / Babas to use them for their political ends. The mushrooming of a large number of such godmen in the Punjab is due to the fact that the SGPC has failed very badly to disseminate the Nanakian Philosophy to the people of Punjab.

It was the duty of the SGPC, Amritsar to teach Nanakian Philosophy to free the Sikhs from the clutches of such godmen. Nevertheless, UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM -The Research journal, that debuted last year, will continue to disseminate the Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective. And we also appreciate the Taraksheel Society for their commendable work to dissuade people from such godmen.

We have always looked upon Sikhism as a separate religion

A political leader and a former diplomat, Dr Karan Singh is primarily a scholar who is equally at ease expounding on the Vedanta and the Upanishads, or talking about the luminaries of quantum mechanics. In fact, he sees parallels between the two. For many years, he has been the Global Chairman of The Temple of Understanding, a world-wide interfaith organization with headquarters in New York. The former *Sadr-e-Riyasat of Kashmir* was in Chandigarh recently; to launch the local chapter of the organization.

How long have you been involved with interfaith activities?

I have been involved for over 30 years. The Temple of Understanding was set up in 1960. I have always been interested in interfaith issues because I am a born Hindu, in a Muslim-majority state — we were also worshipping at Muslim shrines since childhood. Our family owes its rise to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and our connection with the Sikh Darbar and the Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) was also very deep. We were told from childhood that respect which you give to your own temples is the respect that you should give to the *ziarats* and the Darbar Sahib. I was educated in Christian schools...so in a way, interfaith is built into my life and I was always interested in Vedanta. Now, Vedanta is that aspect of Hinduism, which is very universal. It fits in very well with the interfaith movement.

I have been attending conferences and meetings the world over for the past 30 years. I have been the chairman of The Temple of Understanding for many

years. We have opened an India chapter, which has centers in various cities. The theory behind the interfaith movement is to bring together representatives of various religions in a creative dialogue. We are not seeking a debate on the merits of the religions; we are far from the notion of no religion or syncretic religion. What we are aiming at is that people should look into their own religious traditions and try and find those elements, aspects, and concepts that are conducive to harmony, because in most religions you can find both types of concepts — love, harmony and brotherliness and those of opposition, disharmony and hatred. In global society now there is no alternative but to move to an interfaith pattern.

What do you think about the recent controversy over the RSS calling Sikhism part of Hinduism?

We have always looked upon Sikhism as a separate religion. Certainly Hinduism has been the predominant religion, both chronologically and demographically, **but the religions that have emerged — Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism — are independent religions.** There may be many factors in common, but it would be wrong to say that one religion is part of another.

*Roopinder Singh
The Tribune, Chandigarh, India*

(Reproduced with permission from the Tribune, Chandigarh, Editorial Page, May 21, 2000)

THE KHALSA HERITAGE MEMORIAL COMPLEX

The Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex is envisioned as an integrated multi-dimensional presentation of Khalsa heritage, reflection of Sikh values, outstanding legends of Sikh history, Sikh ideals and experiences over the last 300 years.

PARKASH SINGH BADAL during a visit to Israel saw the Jewish Museum there. He was highly impressed with the way the history and culture of the Jewish people was preserved. He thought of making a

similar complex for Sikhs. He enquired about the architect who had designed the Jewish Museum and was told that it was conceived and completed by a US-based Israeli, Moshe Safdie. Incidentally, Safdie was in Israel at that time and they both met. Safdie offered his services for designing the Khalsa heritage museum and, subsequently, visited Anandpur Sahib to see the location and acquaint himself with the salient features of Sikh culture. This is how the '*Ajooba*' (wonder) project was conceived.

Safdie was provided the basic input about the Sikh culture, which he kept in mind while shaping the Khalsa Heritage Museum Memorial Complex, which is being constructed to commemorate the 300 years of the birth of the Khalsa. It is envisioned as an integrated multi-dimensional presentation of Khalsa heritage, reflection of Sikh values, outstanding legends of Sikh history, Sikh ideals and experiences over the last 300 years.

When contacted, Moshe Safdie informed this writer that the Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex is divided into two smaller units that straddle either side of a ravine and are connected by a bridge. The western complex, adjacent to the town of Anandpur Sahib, is based around an entrance piazza, and contains a 400-seat auditorium, a double-storeyed library, and galleries where exhibitions can be put up. The eastern complex contains a permanent exhibition space. It consists of two galleries that reflect fortress architecture of this region and form a dramatic skyline against the surrounding terrain of sand cliffs. The clustering of the galleries in groups of five, depicts the five virtues, a central tenet of the Sikh faith. A series of dams in the ravines create pools in which the reflection of the complex is caught at night.

As per Moshe's conception, the Khalsa Memorial building, a major constituent of the eastern portion of the Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex has unique architecture. The building is set in water. Its sandstone-clad walls reflect the exteriors of the surrounding gallery clusters. In the interior, visitors will move through a spiraling space, surrounded by murals depicting Sikh history and traditions. They will be able to see a series of flames, in the memory of Sikh martyrs. The whole complex, when complete, would house a library, auditorium, temporary galleries, cafeteria, permanent galleries and the Khalsa Memorial. The 100-acre complex will have 23,225 sq meters of built-up area and would cost about Rs 300 crore (Rs 3,000,000,000 = about US\$80,000,000). The complex is expected to be ready in about three years. Its foundation stone was laid by the *Panj Piaras* on November 22, 1998, the day of *Gaddi Nashini* (Bestowing of Guruship) of Guru Gobind Singh.

The entire complex will showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Sikhs. The museum itself with its state-of-the-art exhibit design and computer technology will

impart, to the visitors, splendid stories of heroism and courage. Through a rich canvas of the multi-faceted exhibits, the Sikh history will be depicted in an interactive format, allowing the visitors to not only see but experience Sikh history in a way that was never possible before.

According to the authorities, latest technology such as sound and light effect; integration of artifacts into story-telling; re-creation of historical events; use of computer controlled lighting to create an aura; use of laser and fiber optics to animate events, use of the movement of sound over space through intelligent controls; use of animatronics; latest technique of virtual reality to create the Sikh saga; use of interactive multi-media and cyberspace will be used to involve visitors.

A multi-national company, Larson and Toubro Ltd, began the challenging task of the construction work on the *Holla Mohalla* festival this year. According to Piara Singh Bhopal, Nodal officer of Anandpur Sahib foundation, the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, has already started preparing prototypes and conceptual designs. It is hoped in six months, the complex will be ready. A core group of historians and scholars has started working on the concept and content of the Heritage Complex. The basic postulates of Sikhism, namely universality; equality; freedom of conscience; social justice; ethical living; heroism and martyrdom; *charhdi kala* or dynamic power; love, service and sacrifice; goal of life, harmony with nature; man as a custodian of life on the planet; dignity, self-respect and honor, are given due weightage so that spirit of *sewa*, *simran* and *sarbat da bhala* is vividly depicted.

To add grandeur, magnificence and majesty to the complex, a 60-metre-high *Nishan-e-Khalsa* is to be installed. The centerpiece of this monument is the *khanda*, a steel dagger soaring into the sky from a pentagon-shaped base. The steel *khanda* like the roof top of the museum reflects light, contributing to the complex's overall unity. The *Nishan-e-Khalsa* is connected to the ravine and the museum.

Sarup Singh Alag

(Reproduced with permission from The Tribune, Chandigarh, July 1, 2000)

"GURBANI" Vision TV– Canada

Saturday, March 11, 2000 (10:30 to 11:00 AM EST)

I, being a Sikh, was fortunate to be in time to tune this TV Program. The host, Mr Raghbir Singh, introduced the guest, Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, Editor-in-chief of UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal, briefly then projected his two main questions as to what do we intend to gain by research of Gurbani, which is the divine revelations, compiled and projected by Guru Nanak?

The guest responded in earnest to explain the objects and purpose of research, as the correct interpretation of Gurbani was felt necessary to arrest any further disarray that is presently taking place between Sikhism and its followers, by promoting correct interpretation of Gurbani. It is not a research on Gurbani it is the research on presentation of Gurbani scientifically and logically.

The host, though did not appear happy, questioned the Mool Mantra research of eleven pages done by the guest speaker. What do we gain from this research? The host also wanted to know, as to who is financing this research journal, and who receive these issues?

The guest explained, that a few devoted and intellectual individuals have joined hands, realizing the need for true interpretation, that will put the Gurbani in its real perspective, this will go a long way to overcome the present day confusion. He told that the Journal is distributed to its donors, Gurdwaras, and libraries.

The host appeared to be also allergic to the word "Scientific Religion". The guest speaker answered that Sikhism founded by Guru Nanak is scientific and logical and should be explained scientifically and logically.

My Views on this Topic: Now that the scientific and modern religion is on the anvil of *illusion* and under the hammer of *reality*, and opportunity for researchers is to shape and reform it *by separating the real from the false values*. The research is a must to realize the Truth, the Divine Will of God and His latent whim to know His Creation. This latent urge is the psychic energy that can be harnessed to attain the knowledge for emancipation.

In human form we are self-centered with individuality, the real "I", Egoism:

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਅਲਖੁ ਨਾ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਰਦਾ ਹਉਮੈ ਪਾਈ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 205.

"(The Almighty) is in ourselves (in our minds) but we cannot realize it because of the curtain of egoism."

This reveals that despite intellectual knowledge we are not free from the influence of this Ego. Besides, this is the influence of our past "KARMAS" (Mental impressions) we inherit from our evolutionary past. This is the law of cause and effect, by which nature governs the evolution of consciousness, continuously progressing for unity with the Creator, the only One that exists, the only One that matters, all the rest is illusionary, the shadow of God, ephemeral.

Now coming to the main point, we find that some members of the same ethnic religion have deep differences between them causing confusion within the religious community. Researchers should apply their resources to pinpoint the causes. If we keep the research within the religious limitations the progress will be limited. We must tap the universal aspect of reality, which is spiritual in nature and not material.

My findings are that we have to be free from the binding of our past karmic impressions, and align our egoistic "I" presently aligned with self-interest of body form, to the real "I", which is the real source of our being in the life. Creation is the playground for evolving these aspects and attributes in our life, which are virtuous in lasting values and not ephemeral by nature. Human life is an opportunity for everyone to strive to develop traits that advance and not retard human consciousness. Appropriate quotes for this subject are:

"Truth is high, higher still is truthful living."

Guru Nanak

"Regard all human race as One."

Guru Gobind Singh

*Haim Narain Singh
Kamloop, BC, Canada*

***"The problem is never how to get new innovative thoughts into mind,
but how to get old ones out."***

Dee Hock, Founder, Visa, Cited in BITS & PIECES
