

EDITORIAL

BRINGING BACK SIKHISM TO ITS ORIGINALITY DURING THE 21ST CENTURY

Since the advent of science during the Period of Renaissance (14th to 17th centuries) the well-being of the humanity has improved tremendously. During the later half of the 20th century science has been progressing exponentially so much so that it is becoming difficult to keep up with the advancements in science. Science has already challenged a number of basic issues in religions and the 21st century may change entirely the religious and social set up, established during the last many centuries. This trend is visible in the following few examples:

1. Wadehra and Wadehra [8] say that the young Hindus in the North America do go to the temple and they do pray to the God but prefer to work hard for their success.
2. Shah [6] wrote about the fall of Rajneesh (known as Aka Acharya, Bhagwan, Osho, Zorba the Buddha, etc.) as follows: "The Guru who aimed to help people attain no past, no future, no attachment, no mind, no ego, no self became a megalomaniac with a passion for bejeweled caps and Rolls Royces." And "He consciously decided to discard truthfulness in favor of what he perceived as useful lies. He calculated that a majority of the earth's population was of such a low level of consciousness that they could not understand or tolerate the real truths. So he decided on the policy of spreading seemingly useful lies to bring inspiration to his disciples and on occasion stress his students in unique situations for their own personal growth. This was the downfall and the prime reason he will be remembered by the historians as just another phony guru which he undoubtedly was not."
3. Bhatt [1] has also exposed the Spirituality Supermarket of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, "The spirituality that Oshoites claim to teach to the world has actually never operated in their own lives and never operated in Rajneesh's own life."
4. Sonntag [7] has shown that those who believe in superstitions have low IQ. He also suggested that growing tendency towards horoscopes and belief in the paranormal in Western society could mean that the higher education system was failing people in not managing to make children "capable of critical analysis of information."

Now many Sikhs are aware of the fact that some *Sants* (saints), preachers, and Sikh religious authorities, like

Rajneesh, are deceiving the innocent and gullible Sikhs by telling them not to love wealth but are collecting a lot for themselves. These Sikhs also know that Gurdwaras are being run to make profit rather than to disseminate Nanakian Philosophy and Sikhism in their real perspective. It is a pity that the Sikhs cannot dare to raise any voice against malpractices in Sikhism because of Draconian sword of excommunication is always hanging over the head of every Sikh and threats from the local custodians of Sikhism.

Many theologians have already started to modify or to interpret their religions according to the new findings of science and they will be doing so ever faster and on larger scale through modern modes of communications and publications than before to keep up with the progress of science during the 21st century and to keep their followers attached to their religions. However, the situation in Sikhism is different than other religions.

During the 18th and 19th centuries a lot of ancient mythology and unscientific and illogical rituals and codes, which were rejected by the Gurus of the **Nanakian School**, were introduced into Sikhism by the then Sikh theologians and historians [3]. This trend continued during the last century (20th) by some modern Sikh and non Sikh scholars who failed to comprehend Gurbani in its real perspective. Subsequently, they represented Sikhism according to their own views rather than based on the *Gurbani* (**Nanakian Philosophy**) incorporated in the **Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS)**. What is being preached in Gurdwaras in these days is often without any scriptural basis instead is based on heresies recorded in the old writings of the 18th and 19th centuries [3].

It has been mentioned again and again in this Journal that Sikhism is scientific and logical religion which is based on the Nanakian Philosophy clearly outlined in the AGGS. It has also been mentioned that the Nanakian Philosophy has all the characteristics to be accepted universally [2, 4, 5]. Then question arises why did it not achieve that status by the end of the twentieth century.

If we look into the history of the Sikhs it would become clear that during the 18th and 19th centuries Sikhism was preached mostly by the Sikh clergy who

could not free themselves from the ancient myths, and unscientific and illogical rituals and codes. And the modern scholars of the 20th century used the information given in the unauthentic old writings indiscriminately without verifying their authenticity or authenticating it with what is said in the AGGS. Consequently, they failed to disseminate Gurbani and Sikhism in their originality and entirety.

During the last part of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century the **Singh Sabha** started to give the right directions to Sikhism and they brought about many improvements. Many books were published and many newspapers dealing with the Sikhs' problems were started. Punjabi was recognized as a language at the University level and was used to spread Gurbani and Sikhism. Unfortunately the Singh Sabha became dominated with the people having the ideology of Arya Samaj who started to put every possible hurdle in the work of right preachers, like Prof Gurmukh Singh and Gurdit Singh. Ultimately, Sikhism again fell into the hands of those people who were unable to distinguish Gurbani from ancient philosophy and Sikhism from Hinduism. Further, to meet the challenge of the time, the Singh Sabha had to be preoccupied excessively with formulation and strengthening of outer forms and symbols in order to define and preserve the external Sikh identity. Thus, they missed the opportunity to fully define the Sikh theology and its implications in modern life.

The same trend continued in the activities of the **Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)**, and almost in all the Gurdwaras in India and foreign countries. During the last 20 years the religious authorities and political parties of the Sikhs remained busy in fighting with each other and their differences reached at the peak during the celebration of Tercentenary of Khalsa during 1999 when they had a chance to present Sikhism as a universal religion to the world. Internal feud of 1999 continued throughout 2000 (Read 'The Year 2000 in Sikhism' in this issue) and now it is spilling over to 2001. And nobody knows when it will settle down so that the Sikh clergy can look into the dissemination of Nanakian Philosophy and Sikhism in their real perspective.

The result of internal feud is evident that now there are many claimants to the position of Jathedar of Akal Takht, and many Akali Dals, and all of them fight with one another. Because of the weakness of the Sikh clergy and Sikh polity the Hindu RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang) and its sister organization the Sikh RSS (Rashtriya Sikh Sangat) have intensified their anti Sikhism activities in India and foreign countries and are spending millions of dollars. (For

more information read the Indian Express Analysis Online December 21, 2000: "*When the Swayamsevaks Came Marching In.*"). Whereas there is no concrete efforts to put a check to their activities by Sikh clergy and the Sikh polity except issuing of ambiguous warnings. Moreover, they are so much entangled to perform perfectly the rituals, that are contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy, that they have no time to look into such threats to Sikhism. (Read '*Akhand Paath in Sikhism*' in this issue.) Although the controversy has subsided for the time being but it can raise its ugly head again anytime (see Editorial: "An Avoidable controversy" on p7 in this issue).

Duty of Sikh Intelligentsia during the 21st Century:

Since Sikhism is a scientific and logical religion that can be universally accepted by the humanity of the 21st century, therefore, it is imperative for the Sikh intelligentsia to bring back Sikhism into its originality. The **Institute for Understanding Sikhism** had already started to disseminate the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective by publishing research articles since January 1999 in its biannual periodical, **UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal**. The Institute will continue to do so through out the current century. Therefore, scholarly help of Sikh intelligentsia and financial help of every Sikh are solicited by the Institute to carry on the above duty.

Since the **Quadricentennial of the Compilation of the Ganth** (now called the Aad Guru Granth Sahib), which is only authenticated source of Nanakian Philosophy, is falling during 2004, therefore, at present the Institute has decided to bring out following two books before the end of 2003 so that these books become available for distribution before the celebration of the Quadricentennial during 2004:

- i) *Sabd Guru: Scientific and Logical Explanation;*
- ii) *Jap: Scientific and Logical Interpretation*

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