

## EDITORIAL

# OVERHAULING OF SIKH INSTITUTIONS

**G**uru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of *Sikhi* (Sikhism) during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Period of Renaissance (between 14<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> century) when the scientists were challenging some of the concepts of the Church in Europe. During this period Guru Nanak was busy in challenging the ancient mythology and rituals in which the peoples of South Asia were shackled for centuries and were unable to express their free will in any aspect of their lives because their lives were controlled by their religious mentors. I am proud to claim that it was Guru Nanak who promulgated a scientific and logical philosophy during the 15<sup>th</sup> century for the world to create a sense of morality to establish peace on this earth, the tiny planet, which has all the characteristics of universal acceptability. The irony is that after five centuries if we examine the effect of Guru Nanak's philosophy on humanity in general and on the Sikhs in particular, it will not be difficult to come to the conclusion that what the Sikhs are doing today is exactly contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy.

It is happening so because of the absence of preaching of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective by the so-called custodians of Sikhism after the end of era of the Sikh Gurus in 1708. After the time of Banda Bahadur majority of the Sikhs were living in the forests and during this period preaching of Gurbani and Sikhism, and control of the Sikh institutions fell into the hands of the *Biprans* (*Who work against the Nanakian Philosophy*). This situation continued to be in the same state even during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and thereafter. During the Singh Sabha Movement some attempts were made to interpret Gurbani and represent Sikhism in their real perspective by some dedicated Sikh scholars. Soon this movement was taken over by the Sikh scholars who were heavily burdened with the ancient philosophy, mythology and *Bipreet* (*Ritualism or practices which are contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy*). During this period the use of discriminating intellect (*Babaek Budhi*) to find the truth was discouraged and was declared as sin by the *Biprans*. It is still happening so during the Age of Science.

During the early 1900s Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) came into existing with main objective to manage the Gurdwaras and preaching of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. The SGPC did very commendable work by establishing educational institutions, hospitals and improving managements of Gurdwaras. It was holding very prestigious position in the hearts of the Sikh masses and national political leaders of India, like, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, and others during the struggle of independence of India. Prof Harbans Singh declared SGPC as a "Unique Ecclesiastical Institution" of the Sikhs and Dr Khushwant Singh entitled it as "Parliament of the Sikhs" and "A government within the government."

Soon after the independence of India in 1947 the SGPC started to show decline in its administration and further improvement in the management of Gurdwaras and educational institutions. Rifts and strifes started among the members of the SGPC and with those of the Shiromani Akali Party (SAD). These rifts and strifes reached at their peak during the celebration of Tercentenary of Khalsa in 1999. This situation is still worsening every day; consequently, there are many SGPCs, Alkali Dals, many Sikh student Federations, many Sikh Youth Federations, many Sikh Councils, and many claimants of Akal Takht. Now recently a Khalsa Panchayat has come into existence that is after certain corrupt Jathedars of certain Takhts.

Recent struggle on the election of the President of the SGPC during October-November was a concern of many state governments as well as Central Government. It had once again confirmed that the Sikhs are so much divided that they spend most of their time and money on fighting with each other rather than on proper management of Gurdwaras, dissemination of Sikhism and welfare of the Sikhs. The Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS), Chandigarh has also reached to this conclusion in 2001 Conference that almost all the Sikh institutions, e.g. The Akal Takht, SGPC, Amritsar, Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Sikh Educational Conference and the recently formed World Sikh Council failed badly to represent Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective and to look after the interest of the Sikhs. They came up with an idea of forming an Apex Body constituting eminent Sikhs and experts from different disciplines. The INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM (IUS) has been striving for that since a long. The IUS stresses the need of an Advisory Committee comprising of Sikhs experts in various fields of Natural and Physical Sciences, Medicine, Philosophy, Psychology, History, Languages, Administration, Laws, etc. and each expert of these fields should be well-versed in Gurbani. They are not necessarily to be eminent Sikhs as suggested by the IOSS since all of them have been tested already. These experts should be unbiased, open-minded, and free from allegiance to any political organization; and should be representing various countries of the world since the Sikhs are living all over the world now. The IUS is already working on these lines and has an Editorial Board having members, expert in some of the above disciplines. The IUS considers that Nanakian Philosophy is original and unique, having universal acceptability. And this message is being disseminated through its biannual periodical, *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM –The Research Journal*, and by holding a seminar on important issues every year. The other Sikh Institutes should also follow these lines under the new Advisory Committee.

*Prof Devinder Singh Chahal*  
Editor-in-Chief