
EDITORIAL

GOD VS. SCIENCE

NAAM JAPNA AND NAAM SIMARNA

Naam Japna and Naam Simarna has become very popular among the Sikhs in these days. Sikhism has also been represented as *Naam Marg* (Path/Religion of *Naam Japna*). Scholars were requested to write articles on any aspect of this topic through an invitation published in the July 2006 issue of *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* to have a Mini-debate. Only 4 scholars accepted this challenge.

It was also felt that before discussing *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* it is necessary to know about God and 'Religion vs. Science'. Here again only 4 scholars came forward to discuss this important topic. The religious study indicates that *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* is being discussed from the time immemorial while the 'Religion vs. Science' is the recent topic, which gained its popularity during the Period of Renaissance (14th-16th centuries)

Concept of God

Dr Sukhraj Singh Dhillon says that God as the Creator is "One and only" and its creation, mankind is also one according to Nanakian Philosophy. God does not belong to one religion. God is for all. It's lack of God-vision that leads us to believe in polytheism, idolatry, superstitions and blind rituals. All human beings are capable of God-realization without any intermediaries. God (*Parmatma*) and Soul (*atma*) is explained by Guru Nanak as the '*Jot*', which is scientifically 'Energy'. The God is not in Gurdwara or temple or church or mosque only that appears every Sunday. God is also not sitting somewhere in the sky watching our actions. The God is in us, the God is in *sangat* (congregation). "*If we can't see God in all, we can't see God at all.*"

Religion vs. Science

Dr Sarjeet Singh Sidhu does not think that science and scripture (religion) will ever be reconciled. Any accurate reference to scientific fact in Sikh scripture is purely incidental. Attempts at fitting in scientific facts into revelation, via reinterpretations, even if plausible, cannot have been intended as such when the scriptural verse was first uttered or written. He further says that many scientists are religiously devout, and all religious people use science with nary a thought about it, and so do not call for abandonment of either science or religion. Even though the two are, in his opinion, irreconcilable and will

ever remain, many successfully manage to go about their lives keeping the two in separate "compartments" of their intellect, and that, perhaps, is the way it has to be.

God vs. Science

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal comments on the recent debate, 'God vs. Science' held by David Van Biema in *Time Magazine* of November 13, 2006 between two great scientists: Richard Dawkins, an atheist Biologist, and Christian Geneticist, Francis Collins. Dawkins says: "*If there is God, it's going to be a whole lot bigger and whole lot more incomprehensible than anything that any theologian of any religion has ever proposed.*" Whereas Collins says: "*Material signs point to God but that God also exists out side of space and time.*" Prof Chahal comments that Guru Nanak had declared it consistently in his Bani that God is whole lot bigger and whole lot incomprehensible more than 500 years before Dawkins could realize these attributes of God. Similarly Guru Nanak has already shown that God existed even before the time and space appeared after the Big Bang. Finally Chahal says: "Had the Sikh theologians and the custodians of Sikhism (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar) represented God in Its real perspective then Dr Richard Dawkins, the atheist scientist, and Dr Francis Collins, Christian Geneticist, would have quoted Guru Nanak's views about God during this debate, 'God vs. Science'. The irony is that Sikhism is still being represented as a mythical and ritualistic religion for the humanity of the Current Science Age.

Sikh Chairs in the West

Dr Baldev Singh has pointed out that: It is remarkable and commendable that within a short span of time, the first generation of Sikh immigrants to the West, has endowed several chairs for Sikh studies in the USA, Canada, and England to project Sikhism in its true perspective based on the Nanakian Philosophy enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Unfortunately, the work published by these Sikh chairs on Sikhism undermines the uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy and diffuses Sikh identity. It is incumbent upon the Sikh intelligentsia in general and the sponsors and advocates of Sikh-chairs in particular to evaluate this work! Finally he questions: **Does this kind of research carried out by these chairs promote Sikhism in its real perspective?**

Naam Japna and Naam Simarna

The practice of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* has become very common in Sikhism because of improper understanding of Sikhism. Some mentors of Sikhism and *Sant Babas* are exploiting the masses of the Sikhs and misleading them to get their wishes fulfilled through their methods of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna*. The terms '*Naam Japna*' and '*Naam Simarna*' are commonly found in Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] and Sikh literature. It is difficult to say when this system became popular with the Sikhs; however, it is prominently practiced by the Hindus for the last thousands of years. It is generally considered as to repeat the *Naam* (a word or a phrase) loudly (*Japna*) or silently (*Simarna*) again and again, may be for hours and sometimes whole night. Moreover, a number of methods have been devised for *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* by different theologians and *Sant Babas*.

Before a Sikh starts to practice this system, it is necessary for him/her to study critically the philosophy of Guru Nanak, the founder of *Sikhi* (Sikhism), to understand the meaning of '*Naam Japna*' and '*Naam Simarna*' in its real perspective by keeping in mind the following methodology of Guru Nanak:

ਅਕਲਿ ਏਹ ਨ ਆਖੀਐ ਅਕਲਿ ਗਵਾਈਐ ਬਾਦਿ ॥
ਅਕਲੀ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਾਨੁ ॥
ਅਕਲੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਕੈ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਕੀਚੈ ਦਾਨੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਰਾਹੁ ਏਹੁ ਹੋਰਿ ਗਲਾਂ ਸੈਤਾਨੁ ॥
ਅਗਗਸ, ਮੰ ੧, ਪ- ੧੨੪੫.

*It is not a wisdom that is lost in strife (disputation).
Through wisdom, one learns how to serve the Almighty,
Through wisdom, one attains the honor.
Through wisdom, one can read and realize (the truth),
Through wisdom, one can decide the right charity.*

Nanak says:

This is the methodology (as explained above) to find the truth,

All else will lead to the devilish actions.

AGGS, M 1, p 1245.

Now we let the readers evaluate the views of these Sikh scholars about this issue.

Dr Dalvinder Singh Grewal discusses '*Chanting of Waheguru*'. He says that Dr Sarjit Singh Sandhu states that '*Waheguru*' has not been used by Gurus or Bhagats for God. It is the same opinion of McLeod that '*Waheguru*' was never a part of vocabulary of Guru Nanak. However, S. Kapur Singh, Professor of Sikhism, has declared that "*Waheguru* is the focal word around which the Sikh Yogic discipline of Name revolves. It was adopted as the basic concept of Sikh theology and the esoteric essence of Sikhism, from the times of Guru

Nanak. Although Dr Sandhu refuted the statement of S. Kapur Singh, Dr Grewal has justified '*Chanting of Waheguru*' – a practice started by Bhai Gurdas. Then it was followed by many Sikh theologians including S. Kapur Singh. *Editorial Note:* If it is a fact that neither Guru Nanak nor any other Sikh Guru has coined or used '*Waheguru*' in their Bani, then the question is should the Sikhs follow the writings of others than that of the Sikh Gurus. I think it is necessary for the Sikh theologians to look into this issue: Should the Sikhs follow the information given in the Bani of the Sikh Gurus or that information, which is extraneous to the Bani of the Sikh Gurus?

Dr Virinder Singh Grewal explains that '*Naam Japna*' in Nanakian Philosophy is controlling the mind, and focusing it on the Sabd/Absolute Principle/Lord. Mind can only be controlled by the Grace of '*Akal Purkh*', which only is obtained by performing service to the Guru, which in itself requires a good moral character with inner piety. He further says that the most important of all is the action on the message in the Sabd than just verbally repeating it. Sabd has to be contemplated, deliberated and reflected with devotion in one's daily affairs is called '*Naam Japna*' as he understands by performing, selfless service of humanity, which indirectly is the service of the Guru.

Dr Aytar Singh Dhaliwal says that according to Gurbani, *Simran* is an essential resource for a healthy happy life with peace of mind leading to ultimate realization of the Truth. *Simran* helps reduce stress, control mind, become more productive, loving and caring, and improve mental and physical health. *Simran* simply interpreted according to the Sikh theology means meditation by singing the praises and contemplating attributes of God. He has further enumerated some advantages of *Simran* and disadvantages of not doing *Simran*.

Mr. Gurpreet Singh Sumra says that *Naam Japna* is becoming a latest trend to attain spirituality in Sikhism. Various methods and postures are recommended for *Naam Japna* by various theologians, *Sants*, *Dehrewalay Babe*. However, very few understand what the meanings of *Naam* and *Naam Japna* according to Gurbani are. He suggests studying and understanding Gurbani, and trying to follow its principles means *Naam Japna*. According to his study *Naam* is Bani, *Gurmantar* is Bani, and *Naam Japna* means always having God in your mind/heart.

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal says that *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* are considered to be one of the major principles of *Sikhi* (Sikhism). And various methods of

(Continued on page 10)

There is no such thing in Sikhism as eternal damnation or an everlasting pit of fire created by the revengeful God. Guru's grace erases the blot of thousands of evil deeds of the past and the present. It is also the savior of the future. Meditation on *Naam* burns countless sins. Singing the glory of the God through the Divine Word, can redeem a repentant sinner and, thus, doctrine of Karma ceases to operate. Such is the splendor of Guru Nanak's doctrine of God's Grace and Compassion.

The realization of God of spirituality means to be a good person while living in the real world with all its pressures and temptations of desires, evil inclinations with the limitations and complexities of human nature called humanity. You can't be spiritual when you are unkind to others. To develop this kind of human nature, one has to practice restraint, self-control or subjugation of the lower instincts.

It is easy to dwell on the past, instead of focusing what is important now. It is better to wear out rather than rust out. Sikhism is a religion of action and not just philosophical reflection.

What is the purpose of a life of a religious person? It is to be righteous and walk the way of life with God. Otherwise we can drown in a sea of material abundance. We primarily have to place our emphasis on the spiritual rather than the material side of the life. Sikhism should prize perspective, balance, and responsibility. At the same time we do not have to give up complete benefits and blessings of life in order to enjoy a powerful spiritual life. God does allow some legitimate pleasures with limits.

nwnk siquiqir ByitAY pUrI hovY jugiq]
hsMidAw KylqidAw pYnqidAw KwvMidAw ivcy
hovY mukiq]2]
AGGS, M 5, p 522-10.
O Nanak, meeting the Sat Guru (realizing God), one comes to know the Perfect Way. While laughing, playing, dressing and eating, he is liberated.

So there is only one "Peak" of One God...and many Paths up to that peak... Sikhism's Path is straight and easy almost like riding an Elevator all the way up.

CONCLUSIONS

- Creator is His Creation. The Creator is "One and only" and its creation, mankind is also one according to Nanakian Philosophy. God does not belong to one religion. God is for all. It's lack of God-vision that leads us to believe in polytheism, idolatry, superstitions and blind rituals.
- As believed in Sikhism, with God's grace, all human

beings are capable of God-realization without any intermediaries. This human life is our only opportunity to realize the spark within us. God-realization, will remove our ignorance about life after death.

- An integral congress of all minds and souls operate on the same spiritual vibration. Our aim is to realize the glory of the One Reality.

REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahala, i.e., succession number of Sikh Gurus to the House of Guru Nanak, P = page-line number of the AGGS. M is replaced with the name of Bhagat or Bhatt).
2. Chahal, D.S. 2006. Origin of Universe in Sikhism. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 8 (1): 46-52.
3. Dhillon, S.S. 2007. Science, religion, and spirituality. Publish America, Baltimore, MD.
4. Dhillon, S.S. 2005. Gurbani, Science, and Soul. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 7 (1): 59-63.
5. Dhillon, S.S. 2004. Universality of the Sikh Philosophy: An Analysis. *The Sikh Review.* 52 (May): 15-20,.
6. Khalsa, Harjinder Singh. 2005. "What makes you a Sikh?" *Sikh Bulletin.* 7 (6&7): page 9.
7. Newsweek, September 5, 2005, "Spirituality in America."
8. Singh, T. 2006. Religious Fanaticism - Part 5 and 7. Reflections on Gurbani. www.gurbani.org.

(Continued from page 4)

practicing this system have been recommended by various mentors in Sikhism. This is a very sensitive topic among the Sikh theologians and the Sikhs at large. His study indicates that *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna* have become very common in Sikhism because of improper understanding of Gurbani and some mentors of Sikhism and Sant Babas are exploiting the masses of the Sikhs and misleading them to get their wishes fulfilled through their methods of *Naam Japna* and *Naam Simarna*. His critical analysis of Gurbani clearly indicates that there is no recommendation of recitation of *Naam* or any name of God or any phrase or any Sabd from the Gurbani again and again. The emphasis is on deliberation and pondering upon the Gurbani to understand the main message and to practice that message in one's life.

Devinder Singh Chahal
Editor-in-Chief