

DISCUSSION SECTION

ARTICLES FROM Vol.1 No 1

System of Referencing

I find the system of listing of references as adopted by this journal a little bewildering. I have gone through various journals and books (mainly medical) and cannot find any of them using the system adopted by you. In all other journals/books it appears that wherever the authors are named in the article there the references are given in alphabetical order. For example if the author quoted at one point is 'Chahal' and at another 'Grewal' then the names of these authors would appear in the 'References' in alphabetical order. However wherever the quotation is referenced as a number ([1], [2], [3], etc) there the "References' are enumerated in numerical order, i.e. in the order that these quotations appear in the article. The obvious advantages of this system are that it is easy to make the references as well as to locate the use of the quotation in the article if one should so desire after seeing it in the list of references. As such I would request you to seriously consider adopting this latter method of referencing – it is easier for the writer as well as for the reader. In any case this system appears to be 'more universal'.

Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia

Yes I agree that there are two systems of referencing as explained by you: Alphabetical and numerical arrangements. The system adopted here is that references are arranged alphabetically, i.e. well-established system in the Biological literature as explained by you. Beside this the references have been numbered for additional advantages. When the name of the author is not directly involved in the discussion or when there are too many names to be mentioned then the use of numbers is easy. Our system may look cumbersome to some writers but it serves advantages of both the systems

Response by Prof. Chahal

In Sikh religion, use of adjective, in Islam and Hinduism, has been combined and adopted in "Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji" published by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. However, another publication by S.G.P.C., Amritsar, "Sri Guru Granth Sahib", Translated by Manmohan Singh does not follow the same name of the Holy Book as 'Ji' in the end of the title is missing. Thus the scholars referring to the Holy Book of Sikhs have to choose the standard name from the authorized publications of the

SGPC, Amritsar. All editions of the Holy Book consist of 1430 Pages. Thus, any reference to the Holy Book in respect of page and line is scientific and convenient as compared to the Mahla which is repeated under different Ragas as well as many a time on the same page. Since "Understanding Sikhism" is going to be published for the entire English speaking population of the world, the reference system must conform to the international standard as well as system. There are more than one systems followed by scientific journals such as author, Journal, year, volume and page or author, Journal, volume, page and year etc. Even the name of the journal is sometimes abbreviated differently in different countries. Thus any system chosen for this Journal must be followed consistently and continuously.

Sarjit Singh Sandhu, Boise, ID, USA.

The system given will be followed strictly.

Response by Prof. Chahal

Edition & Publishers of the AGGS

As the number of pages of the AGGS are fixed and each page of any copy of the AGGS is identical to a similar page in another copy I feel that there is no need to mention the 'Edition and Publisher' when quoting a passage from the AGGS. Again this will simplify matters without compromising the ease of locating the relevant quotation.

Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia

Please note that it is not 'Edition' it is 'Reprint'. You understand that 'Reprint' indicates only the year of printing only while the contents and style remains the same.

Response by Prof. Chahal

Reference to God

Having accepted that God is 'Formless' (*Nirankar*) we are aware that God is without 'gender' (i.e. neither male nor female). However traditionally and by convention God has been referred to in terms of 'He', 'Him', 'His', etc. Indeed He is referred to as the 'Groom' in the AGGS. Again by convention 'it' has been used to denote 'neuter gender' as well as in the case of animals whether male or female. Therefore I am a little uncomfortable when God is referred to as 'It' or 'Itself', etc. Perhaps it may be wiser (if not necessarily nicer) to stay with the conventional 'He'

and 'Him'. Again this is merely my opinion and will not affect God or His nature one way or another.

Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia

'It' has been used to denote an 'Abstract Entity' and I consider God is an 'Abstract Entity', therefore, it cannot be addressed as Male or Female. Although in Gurbani God has been addressed as Groom, and also as Father, Mother, Brother, Yaar - Buddy, i.e. Male as well as Female. But these are symbolic names. However, in Nanakian Philosophy there is no specific name or any pronoun like He or She for God. However, God has often been mentioned as Oh, Tou (You), It, etc. - neuter gender. Since God is an 'Abstract Entity' and is ineffable, therefore, I consider the title 'It' is quite suitable. It is not necessary that people should follow me.

Response by Prof. Chahal

Evolution of Man

In your article *Nanakian Philosophy for World Peace* on page 25 of the journal, under the heading *Status of Man among the Living Organisms* you state "...the status of man...developed through long evolutionary processes." This seems to imply evolution in the Darwinian sense. I would think that the verses quoted would seem to imply that one reaches the status of man after having gone through life in other forms. In other words even as a particular soul exists in a non-human form other souls are already in existence in the human form. Equally it would appear, as a corollary, that depending upon ones *karma* there is every possibility of being born in a lower animal form after having had the privilege of having been born as a man. Thus the verses quoted cannot mean 'evolution' in the Darwinian sense. That being the case it would be best not to imply Darwinian evolution for at least two important reasons. Firstly, Darwinian evolution is not alluded to by the verses quoted. To even remotely suggest that would amount to a misinterpretation. Secondly, even if an allusion to Darwinian evolution could be successfully defended the theory is far from conclusively proven. Academics continue to disagree among themselves even if the cumulative evidence thus far seems in favour of the theory. In other words the issue is far from conclusively settled. If for some reason, in the future, there should be some irrefutable evidence proving Darwin wrong then it will become necessary to reinterpret the relevant verses or admit that the scripture was wrong all along.

Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia

I agree with your comments but my statement does not confirm or reject the Darwinian theory. There is no reference in Gurbani that Man appeared on earth as

man. There is also no reference that man was evolved from lower forms. But the references I quoted do indicated that Man was evolved after passing through a number of generations of evolution and has reached the highest order of evolution in the line of its original source. Scientifically soul and karma do not play any role in the evolution processes. We have to understand soul and karma properly both from Gurbani and scientific point of views before we could interpret their roles in evolution or in the life of a man. It is a good topic I would like to initiate discussion in some forthcoming issues of the 'Journal'.

Response by Prof. Chahal

Keeping an Open Mind

I have no doubt that with the passage of time there will appear some views that may not coincide with the views of the editorial board. As long as the views are logically supported, especially with quotations from the AGGS, we must make space for such views to be aired. If we are not in agreement with the author of those views then we must logically refute those views. The aims with which this journal has come into being would suggest that the editorial board intends to keep an open mind, and I may therefore be unnecessarily belabouring the point.

Dr. Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia

The 'Journal' is meant to discuss the matter freely provided the views are supported with authentic references from Gurbani, science and logic, however, the views of the Editor and the members of the Editorial Board will also be appearing along with that of the authors.

Response of the Editor

SEHJDHARI SIKHS AND VAISAKHI

I agree whole heartily with Dr Lal that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs are a vital part of the Sikh *Panth*. Furthermore, I am in full agreement with the views of Bhai Kahn Singh, Bhai Ardaman Singh and Dr Maan Singh Nirankari quoted in his article about *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. However, I don't agree with Dr Lal that the term *Sehjdhari* was used for Sikhs before the *Vaisakhi* of 1699, and the authenticity of *Hukmnamae*.

The introductory paragraph of Dr Lal's article states that the distinction between *Sehjdhari* and *Amrtdhari* Sikhs began during the time of the tenth Guru. It is then reasonable to believe that this distinction started after the initiation of the *Khalsa*. There is no evidence that the term *Sehjdhari* was used for Sikhs before the initiation of the *Khalsa*. Therefore, it is misleading and

wrong to call the Sikhs who participated in the battle of Bhangani as *Sehjdhari Sikhs* because this battle was fought many years before the initiation of the *Khalsa* [4, p-54].

The *Hukmnamae* were collected by professor Ganda Singh [3] and others as source material for the study of Sikh history. However, they did not vouch for their veracity. Their authenticity is highly doubtful. Mehboob [1] has argued very forcefully and logically that most of the *Hukmnamae* were not issued by the Gurus, but by corrupt *Masands* and unscrupulous Sikhs for their personal gain. I think it is ethically incumbent upon the authors to disclose the controversial aspect of their source material otherwise we will fail in our mission in projecting the true message of Sikhism.

The name of the person who became one of the Five Beloved ones was Bhai Dharm Das [2, 4, p-57], not Bhai Dharm Chand as reported by Dr Lal. Bhai Dharm Das belonged to a Jat family from Hastnapur (UP) whereas Kesar Singh Chhibbar [4, p-91] belonged to a Brahmin family. There is no possibility that they were related to each other. Intercaste marriages were unthinkable in those days.

Bhai Gurdas (Second) was a clever fellow who was successful in distorting Sikh philosophy by appending his *Var* (ode) to the composition of Bhai Gurdas (Bhalla) [5]. In the book “*Varan Bhai Gurdas Ji*,” [5] there is a note at the end of this book (p. 332) which says that the author of the first 39 *Vars* is Bhai Gurdas Bhalla, *Var* 40 is the work of an unknown author, and *Var* 41 is the composition of an other Bhai Gurdas. It is surprising that Dr Lal ignored the third verse which says that Guru prayed to goddess *Chandika Devi* on the eve of the creation of *Khalsa* (*Gur simar manai Kalika khandai ki vaila*). It is a pity that even today, Sikhs sing this *Var* without understanding its implication. The worship of a goddess by a Sikh, let alone a Sikh Guru is a repudiation of Sikh philosophy. This is a perfect example of subversion of Sikh theology [4, p-91]. Furthermore, there are verses in this *Var* on pages 322-324, which are full of hate and false propaganda against Muslims. For example, the author wrote, “Ascendancy of *Khalsa* brought about the destruction of mosques, mausoleums and grave yards. Muslims were so afraid that they stopped praying to Allah and having circumcision. This way the ignorant followers of Mohammed were annihilated and the creed of Mohammed disappeared from India.” This is an absolute falsehood and contradiction of the teachings of Sikh Gurus. Either this author was totally ignorant of *Gurbani* and the loving relationship of Sikh Gurus with Muslims or he had an ulterior motive [4, p-

91]. When he wrote this *Var*, most of India was under the grip of Muslim rule. I am inclined to think that *Var* 41 fits the pattern of those writings which have subverted Sikh history and philosophy and have acted as a stimulant to undermine the cordial relationship between Sikhs and Muslim populace.

In my opinion, such writings are not a reliable source material for the interpretation of *Gurmat* and Sikh history. Furthermore, research based on this type of material does not raise the level of scholarship. I would also like to appeal to all the Sikhs to shed their labels and become Sikhs of *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* for the sake of unity and well being of the community.

References

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2. Padam, Piara Singh. 1991 (5th ed.). *Rehit Namae* (Punjabi). Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, p-7.
3. Singh Ganda. 1985. *Hukmnamae* (Punjabi). Punjabi University, Patiala.
4. Singh, Sangat. 1995. *The Sikhs in History*. Published by the author, New York, New York, p-54, p-57, p-91.
5. *Varan Bhai Gurdas Ji* (Punjabi). 1976. Bhai Jwahr Singh Kirpal Singh and Co., Amritsar, India, p. 318.

Baldev Singh, Collegeville, PA, USA

I am thankful to Singh (above) and several others [7] who perused through my above article and provided their thoughtful critique. Their agreement on the vital status of Sehjdhari Sikhs with the recommendation of our prominent Sikh scholars and leaders is appreciated. Regarding the origin of the term Sehjdhari Sikh there may not be a contest if in its currently prevalent meaning the term may be considered originating from the time of the Vaisakhi of 1699 [4]. Then the martyrs of the battle of Bhangani may be considered as Sikhs without any qualifying adjective. Regarding Kesar Singh Chibbar's relationship to Bhai Dharam Singh, one of the Five Beloved Ones, it was my error which I will correct in any reprint or subsequent publication. (Ed. this act of the author is highly appreciated.)

A point of more serious concern is the questioning of authenticity of certain Sikh writings of the past three centuries. Singh and others question the authenticity of some of the older writings. These writings include the Hukmnamae, writings of Second Bhai Gurdas, Rehitnamae derived from Bhattaan Dian Veheean and other such monographs as Bhai Chaupa Singh's Rehit Nama, Bansawali Nama of Chhibber, Suraj Parkash of Bhai Santokh Singh etc. The point is that even though many Sikh scholars and Sikh organizations questioned the authenticity of certain portions of these writings from time to time, these writings have not been totally rejected

as a source of our history. As a matter of fact, these documents are quoted exclusively to describe the Vaisakhi of 1699 and the history that followed. Until representative Sikh organizations reach a verdict on those writings, they have to be taken into account, though with caution, while constructing the Sikh history of Guru's and post-Gurus' times. Without referring to them as sources many of our current beliefs on the institutionalization of Sikhism would lack evidence.

Finally, I would whole heartily support Singh's "appeal to shed their labels and become Sikhs of Aad Guru Granth Sahib for the sake of unity and well being of the community". Probably no other generation in Sikh history is so much hung up on the definitions of a Sikh as today (for a discussion, see a more extensive survey of the recent literature on the term Sikh by Chahal [1, 2]). Previously, for centuries, only one definition was considered to suffice. For example, the popular belief once polled by the Singh Sabha leaders and recorded in the premier Sikh press of the organization was published in 1886 [6] as: "All those who believed in the sanctity of the Sikh gurus and the Adi Granth were Sikhs". This was according to what was believed in the times of Guru Gobind Singh as was recorded by Kesar Singh Chhiber [3].

ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਸਿਖ ਪਕਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਈ ਗਰੰਥ ਬਚਨ ਸਭ ਕਰ ਮਾਨੇ ਜੋਈ ॥ ਜੋ ਗਰੰਥ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਕਹੇ ਚਲੇਗਾ ਸੋਈ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਘਰ ਰਲੇ ਗਾ

You should recognize only that person as a staunch Sikh who believes in all of the sayings of the Granth. One who follows the path laid down in the Granth will be the only one belonging to the House of the Guru.

The Sikh Rehit Maryada of Shiromani Parbandhak Committee modified the theological definition to be more pragmatic as:

ਜੋ 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 ਨਹੀਂ ਮੰਨਦਾ ਉਹ ਸਿਖ ਹੈ ॥

Any woman or man, who pledges faith in one Timeless Lord, ten reverend Gurus (from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib), Sri Guru Granth Sahib along with the scripture and the teachings of the ten Gurus, and the Amrit of the tenth Guru, and who does not follow edicts of any other religion is a Sikh.

This definition was reviewed by all sections and organizations of the Sikh opinions, and was accepted by all Sikhs, Sehjdhari Sikhs or Amritdhari Sikhs. It is only more recently that the theological and pragmatic

definitions of a Sikh are giving way to the racial, historical and political ones. Further, there is a tendency among some community leaders to exclude large populations of Sikhs from Khalsa Panth as was recently illustrated by Nirankari [5]. The suggestion of Baldev Singh will bring us back to the roots and will certainly be a befitting tribute to the Tercentenary Celebration of the Coronation of Guru Granth as the Eternal Guru of Sikhs.

References

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2. Chahal, Devinder Singh. 1994. Who is a Sikh? Search for a Definition. The Sikh Review, Calcutta. 42 (May): 21-33.
3. Chhiber, Kesar Singh. 1972. Bansavalinama Dsaan Padshaaheena Da (Punjabi). Edited by Rattan Singh Jagi. (Note: Title of the journal is missing???) Punjab University Vol. 11, 1972.
4. Lal, Harbans (Bhai). 1848. Vaisakh Sohava (Punjabi). A Publication of the All India Sehjdhari Sikh Organization, Ambala.
5. Nirankari, Man Singh. 1999. Significance of Khalsa. The Sikh Review, Calcutta. 47 (May) : 30-32.
6. Oberoi, Harjot. 1994. The Construction of Religious Boundaries. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, pp.242-243: In 1886, the Singh Sabha Amritsar polled the Sikh opinion on a variety of issues to publish the standard definitions in its magazine entitled Sri Gurumat Prakash. The major objective of the journal was to define Sikh identity and clarify popular terms describing the Sikh religion. The answer to the very first question, "who is a Sikh?" was derived very quickly and was entirely unequivocal. It was recorded and published in Sri Gurumat Prakash, September 1887, pp. 24; translation provided by H. Oberoi.
7. Among those providing critical reviews and suggestions in person were Dr Hakam Singh, Dr Gurbaksh Singh, Puran Singh and Dr Kulwant Singh.

Response by Dr Lal

The battle of Bhangani took place in April of 1689 [1] that is almost ten years before the Vaisakhi of 1699. The Sikhs at that time were followers of Guru Gobind Rai and not that of Guru Gobind Singh. Amongst those who fought along with Guru Gobind Rai were his family members and friends besides the Muslim Pathans and Pir Buddhu Shah as well as his followers, and his Sikhs. Perhaps the word Sehjdhari did not exist in Sikh Psyche in 1689 as has been implied by the statement of Dr (Bhai) Harbans Lal in his paper. Dr Lal has pinpointed a very important historical reality that before the Vaisakhi of 1699 all Sikhs were initiated by administering *charan pahul*

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10. Fromm, Eric. 1963. The Dogma of Christ. Holt, New York.
11. Toynbee, Arnold and Spengler, Oswald. 1983. Persons of Repute. Compton's Encyclopedia.
12. The International Dictionary of Thoughts. 1969. J. G. Ferguson Publishing Co., Chicago.

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of the Guru. If we accept that the Sehjdhari Sikhs were those who continued to follow the old practice of initiation through charan pahul after the Vaisakhi of 1699 then who was doing it. Dr Lal in his paper has asserted that the Masands who were doing it before 1699 on behalf the Guru, were stopped to do so at the orders of Guru Gobind Singh after the institution of initiation ceremony by administering *Khande dee Pahul*. This is the moot point which needs attention of all Sikh religion has followed a policy of allowing everyone to enter its premises with a few conditions such as cover up your head, be bare footed and without any tobacco product on your person. Most of the religions allow other people to enter only after initiation of the person into its fold. Most likely this open door policy has something to do with some, if not all, of the problems Sikh religion faces today and is likely to face in the future.

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1. Singh Kartar.1987. Sikh Itahas, Part I-Jiwan Das Patshahian. Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar.

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It has been addressed above.

Response by Dr Lal