

FEATURE ARTICLES

THE YEAR 2000 IN SIKHISM

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I have been told by many scholars that we should not wash our dirty linen in public. Therefore, I kept quite for a long time. But we will not wash our linen until we know that it has become dirty. The quantity of dirtiness (weakness) in the Sikh clergy was building up for the last many years and nobody dared to point out their weakness because of Draconian sword of excommunication hanging on their heads. It was also being covered by the so-called well-wishers of Sikhism. The weakness continued to build up to that extent that it could not hold itself and burst like a volcano in 2000. What is being reported here is not hidden any more rather was openly discussed in the media. I have just put it together briefly to make the Sikhs aware of the facts and the Sikh intelligentsia to ponder on this issue seriously.

1. Nanakshahi Calendar (*Jantry*) was approved with great pomp and show by the SGPC Chief, Gurcharan Singh Tohra. It was published in very large quantity and was distributed throughout the world in the beginning of 1999. Soon it became a controversial issue and was banned by the then Jathedar Akal Takht, Giani Puran Singh. The controversy divided the Sikhs and the Sant Smaj came out as the powerful sect in deciding the issues for the Sikhs.
2. This controversy resulted in the excommunication of Bibi Jagir Kaur, President of SGPC by a Hukmnama issued from a telephone both through Fax from Guna in Madhya Pradesh on January 25.
3. The excommunication of the president of SGPC is the first time in the 396-year history of the Akal Takht.
4. The Calendar was withdrawn because the Sikhs do not want to break away from the Hindus by breaking away from the Bikrami Calendar, moreover, it was said that the new calendar is based on solar calendar of Christianity. The irony is that the Sikhs have started to celebrate New Year Eve in Gurdwaras in the Western world according to solar calendar of Christianity. On every New Year Eve almost all the Gurdwaras are seen full with the Sikh Sangat. But the Sikh Clergy at Amritsar hesitate to celebrate the Gurpurbs of the Sikh Gurus on the dates calculated with solar calendar, the most accurate calendar as compared to that of lunar calendar.
5. It is a pity that the Sikh Clergy does not realize the fact that celebration of Gurpurbs with difference of 1-10 days every year for every Sikh Guru is most sacrilegious. For example, the Gurpurb of Guru Gobind Singh was calculated to fall on January 5 every year in the Nanakshahi calendar that used to fall with a difference of many days in certain year. It may fall in December in some year and in January in other, and in some year there may not be any Gurpurb and in other year it may occur twice, i.e. once in January and then in December of the same year.
6. Sooner the Sikh clergy realizes the fact that Sikhism is most scientific and logical religion having the universal acceptability, better it would be for them to get full respect by the Sikhs of the Science Age, the Age of accuracy and precision. The Sikh clergy should also realize that there is no reason to believe that the celebration of Gurpurbs of the Sikh Gurus on the most accurate dates would break Hindu-Sikh relationship.
7. This was the first time that a Hukmnama issued by the Jathedar of Akal Takht was rejected by the five Sikh high priests. It was also rejected first time by the President of the SGPC, Bibi Jagir Kaur.
8. Consequence of rejection of Hukmnama by the Sikh high priests, Giani Puran Singh, excommunicated three high priests — Prof Manjit Singh, Jathedar Keshgarh Sahib, Giani Kewal Singh, Jathedar Takht Damdama Sahib and Giani Bhagwan Singh, head granthi Akal Takht on March 12 through another Hukmnama.
9. Giani Puran Singh was removed as the Jathedar Akal Takht on March 28 by pro-Bibi Jagir Kaur executive committee members.

10. Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti was appointed as a Jathedar of Akal Takht on March 28. On March 29 all Hukmnamas issued by Giani Puran Singh from January 25 to March 28 were revoked by another set of five Sikh high priests headed by Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti on March 29.
11. It was also the first time that the President of the SGPC, Bibi Jagir Kaur, remained underground, twice which is considered unprecedented development in the history of the SGPC. She was the first SGPC chief who remained underground during February after her excommunication and again after the registration of a criminal case by the CBI against her. She was the first SGPC chief against whom a criminal case was registered by the CBI.
12. Bibi Jagir Kaur, was removed as SGPC chief on November 30 and Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi was appointed as the new President of SGPC.
13. Jathedar Jagdev Singh Talwandi did not lag behind in passing unprecedented order in which he appointed the sacked Jathedar Giani Puran Singh as Head Granthi of Golden Temple. For this, Mr Talwandi has to apologize for this wrong decision. This is for the first time that the President of SGPC has apologized publicly for his mistake. Then Giani Puran Singh was again removed from this post.
14. Sale of Akhand Paath from the Harmandir Sahib, which is against the basic principles of Nanakian Philosophy, was announced on Web site of the SGPC. The Akand Paath can be bought through Email and the Hukmnama is sent through Email when Akhand Paath is completed. However, removal of sale of Akhand Paath from the SGPC Web site was requested by Mr Harpreet Singh of Sikh Heresy Regulation Board, New York (zafarnamah@hotmail.com). Finally removal of sale of Akhand Paath through Email was accepted by Jathedar Talwandi as reported by Kirpal Singh of SGPC Web in charge.
15. Controversy on Dasam Granth became again active during this year. Gurbax Singh Kala Afghana, from Vancouver, BC is under attack by the Sikh clergy and some Sikh scholars for airing his views on Dasam Granth. Now it is time that the position of Dasam Granth and its role in Sikhism should be clarified once for all. It should also be decided that no one is excommunicated in future for airing his/her views on Sikhism until it is thoroughly thrashed out in open debate that the views expressed by a person are really denigrating to Sikhism.
16. Recently a new Sikh organization, Rashtriya Sikh Sangat (called Sikh RSS) a branch of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang (called Hindu RSS) came very active for merging Sikhism into Hinduism. They announced to install Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) in temples to celebrate Gurburb of Guru Gobind Singh in collaboration with Hindus. It is very hard to understand this action of the Sikh RSS that how could they install the AGGS, the philosophy of which is deadly against the worship of idol of any deity, whereas a temple is a House of Idols of many Deities to be worshipped by the Hindus. It is a good sign that the Sikh RSS wants to celebrate Gurburb of Guru Gobind Singh with the Hindus in their temples, but if their intentions are to temper the uniqueness and independence of Sikhism as a religion then that can fire back and will create more friction between Hindus and Sikhs.
- The Sikh clergy continued to show their incompetence to be the custodian of Sikhism during 2000 as they did in 1999. They have proven themselves to be the most sacrilegious persons. A critical analysis of the behavior of the Sikh clergy clearly indicates that they lack comprehension of Nanakian Philosophy (Gurbani) and Sikhism in their real perspective. Now the salvage of Sikhism depends on the collective efforts of the Sikh intelligentsia to interpret Gurbani (Nanakian Philosophy) and to represent Sikhism in their real perspective first for the Sikh religious authorities and then for the Sikhs at large.
- Since there is no priesthood in Sikhism, therefore, the practice of maintaining priesthood of any type is against the Nanakian Philosophy. In fact the so-called priests are *Granthis* are responsible for daily chores to take care of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib in every Gurdwara according to the Gurdwara Act 1925. Consequently, any decision taken by or any Hukmnama issued by Head Priest or any five priests or any five Jathedars or any five Granthis is contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy. According to the Nanakian Philosophy decision is to be taken by the representatives (Sikh intelligentsia) of the *Panth*. In future decision on Sikh affairs should be taken by the Sikh intelligentsia after debating nationally and internationally under the supervision of the SGPC of each country. Similarly nobody should be excommunicated except the allegations of denigration of Sikhism are thoroughly debated nationally and internationally by the Sikh intelligentsia under the supervision of the SGPC of each country.