

## LETTERS

**Dear Professor Chahal,**

To

To briefly summarize myself:

I was raised into mainstream *Sikhi* and I took *Amrit* when I was 16. Now that I'm 18, I've realized I want to discover the truth in all respects. Hence, the only truth I could prove to myself was science and logic so I adapted those as my foundations. Then, I tested various religious philosophies against this foundation and found that only *Sikhi*, rather the AGGS, passed the test. So I added *Gurbani* to my foundation. And using this train of thought I added other things, like martial arts, and generally whatever passed my tests. Then while researching I found your institute online and I read what articles you had online. In the world of *Sikhi*, this was the only thing I came across that I've ever been in virtual complete agreement with. I could go more into my philosophy but it's too much to write in an e-mail. If you ever need help w/ anything please let me know. I hope to one day follow in your footsteps and shed the light on the truth as *Guru Nanak* once did. As far as *Gurdwara*, does it matter how we respect since it is all subjective. I find that people bow to AGGS w/o ever having read it and I find that somewhat hypocritical. How can you accept something that you've never analyzed before?

**Amarpal Banger**, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

**Editorial Note:** There are many such young Sikhs who are looking for *Sikhi* in its real perspective. As soon as they come to know about the INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM and its Journal and the Web site, they admit that they have landed at the right place. We have developed Student-Student relationship instead of Guru-Student (Professor-Student) since he learns from me and I learn from him. This relationship is also maintained by me with other young Sikhs and scholars of *Sikhi* to learn from them. The ultimate aim is to make each other to understand *Gurbani* and *Sikhi* in their real perspective. Since Mr Banger wrote we have learnt a lot from each other.

**DS Chahal**

**Question: Is Sikhism an Amalgamation of Islam and Hinduism?**

Hi, I am doing a research paper on Sikhism and I have a couple of questions since I myself am not a Sikh but am interested in the religion and need some advice/ideas. My main question is that is Sikhism a religion that took "ideas" from the two religions of Islam and Hinduism? I feel that because many of the beliefs come from both the faiths. So I was wondering if the

faith started out like that, and what Sikhs feel about that statement. Thank you very much for your help.

serena shamash <[giraffe88@hotmail.com](mailto:giraffe88@hotmail.com)>

**Dear Serena Shamash,**

Thanks for your interest in Sikhism for writing a research paper on it.

Your question is very valid as many scholars think that Sikhism is an amalgamation of Islam and Hinduism. But it is not so.

When a Muslim study it he/she finds some similarities with Islam, a Hindu finds it as a sect of Hinduism, a Communist finds it as a revolutionary religion, a Socialist find it as a Socialism, a Rationalist find it as Rationalism, a Scientist finds it as a scientific and logical religion.

**Distinctive Nature of Sikhism:** The distinctiveness of Sikhism has already been declared by *Guru Nanak* in its *Bani*. However, *Guru Arjan* clearly distinguishes uniqueness of Sikhism for those who would club its philosophy with Islam or Hinduism:

ਵਰਤ ਨ ਰਹਉ ਨ ਮਹ ਰਮਦਾਨਾ ॥

ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਜੋ ਰਖੈ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ ॥ ੧ ॥

ਏਕੁ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨੇਬੇਰਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਉ ਨ ਤੀਰਥ ਪੂਜਾ ॥

ਏਕੋ ਸੇਵੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ॥ ੨ ॥

ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਉ ਨ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਉ ॥

ਏਕ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਲੇ ਰਿਦੈ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥ ੩ ॥

ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥

ਅਲਹੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ ੪ ॥

ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਯਿਹੁ ਕੀਅ ਵਖਾਨਾ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰ ਮਿਲਿ ਖੁਦਿ ਖਸਮੁ ਪਛਾਨਾ ॥ ੫ ॥

(AGGS, M 5, p 1136)

*Neither I keep the fast (of Hindus) nor observe the month of Ramdan (of Muslims).*

*But I Serve the One Who emancipate all. 1.*

*The Gosain (of Hindus) or Allah (of Muslims) is the same as the One for me.*

*Thus, I have released myself from both Hindus and Muslims. 1. Pause.*

*Neither I go to Kaaba to perform the Hajj*

*Nor I go to bathing pilgrimages to meditate.*

*(Because) I contemplate the One, not any other. 2.*

*Neither I worship the Hindu way nor I pray like Muslims.*

*(Because) I realize in my mind the only the One, the*

*Formless. 3.*

*I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.*

*(Because) my body belongs to the One to Whom you call Allah or Ram. 4.*

(Note: Guru Arjan has followed Guru Nanak not to give any specific name to the Almighty. Therefore, the most preferred word used to address the Almighty by the all the Sikh Gurus in the AGGS is the "ONE".)

As this verse was written to advise Kabir also on his verse incorporated in the AGGS at page 1159, thus the last stanza is for Kabir:

*Hey Kabir! Say what is there in showing or practicing (the above mentioned rituals), because the Almighty can be recognized by oneself after meeting the Guru/Pir (teacher).*

In this verse Guru Arjan has reiterated in simple words that has already been laid in the Nanakian Philosophy. Here Guru Arjan rejects the old religious practices in first part of each stanza of this verse then emphasizes on the new way of life, i.e., life of theism - (believing in only the One, the Almighty, described by Guru Nanak in the beginning of the AGGS). To emphasize the distinction of the Sikh way of life Guru Arjan declared that he is neither Hindu nor Muslim and does not practice any of their religious norms / rituals. It is clear that Guru Nanak's mission was to develop a new way of life - theism (new religion) different from those already established.

I hope it will serve your purpose. Please don't hesitate if you need any clarification or further information.

Wish you success in you mission of writing a research paper.

**DS Chahal**

**Dear Professor Chahal,**

**Subject:** queries about articles featured on your website  
I recently came across your website and was glad to find that, unlike many other websites on the subject of Sikhism, you actually tackle issues, which are frustratingly ignored by a large majority of the Sikh community. I am particularly interested in the fact that you are also giving a scientific perspective in order to understand the religion.

Being a student of language studies and traveling around has put me in contact with many different people thus enabling me to understand different points of view. Personally, I have been unsatisfied for some time with Sikhism and am finding it difficult to understand its logic. Therefore, as a university student I have been compelled to carry out my own research and reading. I

would be grateful for any opinions that you may have.

I have some questions having read your articles: An Open Forum for Discussion and Interpretation of Gurbani: A Scientist's Approach.

Firstly, I noticed that in the former you say, "Gurbani is the revealed one".

Secondly, in the latter article mentioned above you give scientific explanations of certain misinterpreted teachings in the Gurbani regarding *sanjog* and *vijog*. You also continue to mention what Guru Nanak revealed about evolution even before the time of Darwin.

My queries are the following:

- Do you mean to say (by the quotation cited above from your website) that Gurbani was revealed by God to Guru Nanak?
- My understanding from your second article is that there are scientific explanations in Gurbani, which are only just being discovered by modern technology and science.

**Mindy Sunner**, UK (Through E-mail)

**Dear Miss Sunner,**

Your letter is being reproduced here to emphasize my above point in the above letter of Mr Banger that there is a dire need by the young Sikhs to know the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. And many of them are baffled with Sikhism being taught in Gurdwaras, common Sikh literature in print and Online. I may add here that the INSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING SUIKHISM (IUS) with its meager financial assistance and with the help of a few dedicated Sikh and non-Sikh scholars is doing its best to disseminate the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective through this research Journal, Web site, and by holding seminars of the selective topics.

The IUS is proud to hear such good words from the young Sikhs that the IUS is doing something for them.

**On the other hand**, I do not hesitate to say it loudly and clearly that all the Gurdwaras approached so far refused to finance the IUS in its research work and dissemination of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. There is only one Gurdwara, Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara Society, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, which has been supporting it regularly for the last 5 years. There is one Gurdwara from USA in Roseville, California, which gives some financial help. Whatever meager financial help is coming in, it is from my friends and the some devout Sikhs who are interested to disseminate Sikhism scientifically and logically to the Sikh youth and the rest of the humanity

of the world of the Science Age. It is a pity that Gurdwaras and *Sant Dehras* instead helping the IUS are busy to fool the Sikhs in the vicious cycle of rituals of *Akhand Paaths* and other such unproductive and useless rituals.

Miss Sunner I was side tracked since I became a little emotional. Now I come to your queries. Since I have replied in details about all your queries through E-mail I just wanted to emphasize for the readers of this Journal that you have raised a very good point about 'Revealed Bani' which is very often mentioned by the preachers and has mentioned in the Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS).

I am thinking to write a full article on this issue since a long. The same question came up a couple of years ago in general discussion after a Conference on the Aad Guru Granth Sahib held at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. There were very diversified views on this issue. But no definite conclusion was drawn. So far no Sikh scholar has written any thing on this issue.

**DS Chahal**

**Dear professor Chahal,** Sat Sri Akal,

I want to draw your attention to Dr Bindra's article and your comments on it published in Vol 5 (1). May be someone else might have contacted you regarding this,

as I got several inquiries recently. You both are right that *Setaj* (spontaneous generation of life) is a myth and it takes life to reproduce life. You are also right that Guru Nanak simply used the four names for four modes of reproduction of life, he did not comment on their validity. However, there are forms of life like virus, bacteria, fungi and mushroom etc., which don't fall in the domain of *andaj* or *jeraj* or *Setaj* or *utbhuj* so such forms of life could generally be included either under the fourth or a new fifth mode. At cellular level life is replication of RNA and DNA catalyzed by enzymes. Since you are a microbiologist, you can throw more light on this subject and write a clarifying note on this issue in future issue of the Journal. Regards.

**Baldev Singh,** Collegeville, PA, USA

**Dear Dr Baldev Singh,**

You have raised a very good point about the other methods of reproduction. It is too late to write about this in the current issue since it is a quite a big subject. Hopefully a detailed article about "*What is life and its methods of its reproduction*" will be written in one of the next forthcoming issue. You are one of the those scholars who have been inspiring me with new topics and ideas to be discussed in this journal and also for insisting to maintain high academic standard of this Journal. Thank you very much.

**DS Chahal**