


MINI-SYMPOSIUM UNIQUENESS IN SIKHISM

PREAMBLE

In literature Sikhism is usually represented as syncretism (Islam and Hinduism) and lately it is being represented as sect of Hinduism based on Vedantic philosophy. From the discussion in Editorial of the current issue of the Journal it is apparent that the custodians of Sikhism and the Sikh scholars have equated the philosophy of Sikhism to that of Vedantic philosophy. Consequently, it was quite safe for some scholars like, Prof Perma Nand and Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji and many others to openly declare that there is nothing new in the philosophy of Guru Nanak since it is based on Vedantic philosophy, therefore, Sikhism is a sect of Hinduism. The irony is that many Sikh theologians accept that too.

In the previous attempts of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS) to represent uniqueness of Sikhism it has been clarified that the Commencing Verse of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] is not a Mool Mantra according to the Vedic principles but a precise and concise and unique definition of God. The first word of Commencing Vers, , is unique logo coined by Guru Nanak which can be pronounced as 'Ik Oh ∞' ('Ik Oh Beant/Anant - The One and Only, Oh, the Infinite' that portrays the characteristics of Oneness and Infiniteness of Oh, the Almighty. The essence of Nanakian philosophy in the Jap, the first Bani of Guru Nanak in the AGGS, has also been explained [2]. It is followed by explanation of the intrinsic values of Sabd, Sabd Guru, Guru, and Granth Guru, which helps to interpret Gurbani in its real perspective [3]. In the present Mini-symposium other aspects of uniqueness of Sikhism are being represented by various experts.

Mr Gurmukh Singh from UK is discussing that Sikhism has been completely Indianized and says there is a need to portray uniqueness of Sikhism in India. *Dr Ramendra Nath* from India has busted the myth of unity of all religions and recommending the need of developing 'rational humanism' for achieving fellowship in human beings; and *Dr Sarjeet Singh Sidhu* from Malaysia says that for a long time the Sikhs, like others, have made claims that Sikhism is a unique religion, or that it is a universal faith. If it is truly unique then why has the faith failed to find a following amongst non-Punjabis in any significant numbers?

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal from Canada and *Dr Virinder Singh Grewal* from USA have attempted to prove that mythological references have been used in Gurbani as

allegories, metaphors, and similes to make the people understand the unique philosophy embodied in the Gurbani. It does not mean that references of Yuga system, reincarnation of God into anthropomorphic forms (various gods and goddesses), life after death, and other Vedantic philosophy are accepted as true. *Mr Jarnail Singh* from Australia has attempted to explain that Sikhism is a unique religion or way revealed by Guru Nanak. He says that the only religion in this world, which has universally acceptable principles by the humanity of the Modern Science Age, to be adopted and adhered to.

Dr Baldev Singh explains that Sikhism has been distorted in literature largely because of the influence of Vedantic philosophy to represent it as part of Hinduism. Now some Christian theologians are using this flawed literature to compare Christianity with Sikhism. He has discussed the uniqueness of Sikhism from Hinduism and Christianity. *Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal* from USA discusses that Sikhism is neither an offshoot of the Bhagati Cult inspired in its basic tenets by Bhagat Kabir nor is it a synthesis of Islamic monotheism and Hindu metaphysics. These inept misperceptions of Sikhism have been caused by a lack of serious scientific and cogent research of the doctrines in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. In his article he discusses the main principles of Sikhism, which secure its position as a unique and universal religion of the world.

Finally, *Prof Devinder Singh Chahal* from Canada discusses the Origin of Universe in Sikhism. Sikhism is unique since it stresses the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science; therefore, it has the right to draw reverence and awe hardly tapped by the other conventional faiths as pointed out by Carl Sagan.

Devinder Singh Chahal, The Editor

REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. Chahal, D. S. 2003. JAP: The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy. Institute for Understanding Sikhism, Laval, Quebec, Canada. and Singh Brothers, Amritsar.
3. Chahal, D. S. 2004. Sabd Guru to Granth Guru. Institute for Understanding Sikhism, Laval, Quebec, Canada. and Singh Brothers, Amritsar.

Declaration: The interpretations of some verses of one author may be different than the that of others but the theme remains almost same.