

## MINI-SYMPOSIUM UNIQUENESS IN SIKHISM II

### PREAMBLE

In the series of MINI-SYMPOSIUM discussion on UNIQUENESS IN SIKHISM is continuing since there are still many topics in Sikhism, which need to be discussed in their real perspective based on Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. In the current issue researchers are discussing *Death, Heaven, Hell* besides other topics according to Nanakian Philosophy, Science, and logic – the touchstones of truth.

*Prof Devinder Singh Chahal* is discussing about 'Death' (ਕਾਲ - Kal). He has emphasized that it is important to understand what is life and how did it originate before discussing death. It is the consciousness, the most integrative function of the body, which characterizes human existence (life). The irreversible loss of consciousness defines human death.

What happens after death? Will one go to heaven or hell? These are the questions, which have been discussed in every religion and are also a common talk among people. Almost every one is trying to find an easy path to reach heaven after death. The question is: Is there any heaven or hell?

*Prof Devinder Singh Chahal* has collated some information from various sources about *AFTER DEATH – Heaven or Hell?* He has reported the research work of Peter Novak and also that of Barbra who has interviewed theologians of most of the major religions and also atheists and scientists about the heaven and how to reach there. She presented her research on December 20, 2005 (9:00-11:00 pm. ET) in a special show on the ABC Television Network in Canada and USA.

While collating the research work of Peter Novak and that of Barbra Walter Prof Chahal found that both of them have done wonderful research to present how heaven is understood by various religions. However, Prof Chahal noticed that although both have covered almost all the major religions but did not mentioned any view of Guru Nanak, the founder of one of the great living religions of the worlds. The reason of not presenting the views of Guru Nanak is due to the fact that the Sikhs have failed to represent Nanakian Philosophy in an academic way to the humanity of the Science Age. Therefore, it remains ignored whenever any writer tried to compare philosophy of different religions of the world. Had we, the Sikhs, represented Nanakian Philosophy academically in its real

perspective, both the above researchers would have included the views about 'Heaven and Hell' in their research. Then millions of people who watched the Walters' show would have appreciated the original and unique philosophy of Guru Nanak about heaven and hell.

Although Peter Novak has mentioned the views of Hinduism in his research, Barbra Walter besides missing the views of Sikhism also missed that of Hinduism. However, when Walter's interview about the above show was published by Westcott [4] in Reader's Digest in India the deficiency of concept of 'Heaven' in Hinduism was filled in by Shanoo Bijlani [2] as an inset in the article of Westcott but the views of Sikhism again remained ignored by her also. This might be due to the fact that many Hindu and Sikh theologians consider that Sikhism follows the philosophy of Hinduism on this issue, 'Heaven and Hell'. The irony is that this issue, 'Heaven and Hell', has not been analyzed even by the Sikh theologians on the basis of Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Bani of Guru Nanak, which is incorporated in the AGGS.

Although Prof Chahal has briefly discussed that the concept of 'Heaven' and 'Hell' is quite different than that of almost all other religions, however, two researchers, Drs Grewal and Dhaliwal have discussed 'Unique Views about Heaven and Hell in Nanakian Philosophy' in details.

*Dr Virinder Singh Grewal* is covering the subject of 'Concept of Heaven and Hell in World Religions'. He says that the subject of heaven and hell is a prevalent topic all over the world in all religions, used to control their followers. He has represented this subject scientifically and logically, and according to Gurbani with an open mind and rigorous honesty. According to his understanding of Gurbani heaven and hell are right here depending upon the life one is living. Once you are on the spiritual path and veil of illusion is lifted by Divine Knowledge and with eradication of doubt and duality, it is a life in heaven otherwise it is hell.

*Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal* reports in his article, *Heaven—A Global Perspective*, that Heaven, a place filled with exquisite wonder and grandeur, has been studied, analyzed, and described extensively by clergy in every religion, as well as philosophers throughout civilization. His paper illustrates, the location, physical appearance, inhabitants, entrance criteria, and activities in Heaven vary from religion to

religion, with some similarities between all the major religions. In Sikhi (Sikhism) by contrast, Heaven is mentioned as a metaphor in reference to other religions, but, emphasized as a Supreme Bliss, realized during our time here on Earth.

In addition to above topics *Dr Baldev Singh* is concerned about the Sikhism being taught by the Sikh chairs in the western universities in his article, “*What Type of Sikhism is Represented at Western Universities?*” He says 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. Finally he poses a question: Does this kind of research carried out by these chairs promote Sikhism in its real perspective?

*Prof Devinder Singh Chahal* is of the opinion that application of Science and logic can help to understand Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective. In his article, “*Scientific and Logical Interpretation of Gurbani: Kalar Kaeree Chhapree*” he has demonstrated that even during the Modern Science Age traditional translations or interpretations of Gurbani is still going on without the application of science and logic to explore the originality and uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy. Scientific and logical interpretation of the Sloka # 10,

*Kalar kaeree chhapree...*, of Guru Nanak in the *Slok, Varan tae Vadeek* reveals the theme in this Sloka very close to its real perspective. Both the articles of Prof Chahal show that Science helps to understand Gurbani in its real perspective.

*Dr Sukhraj Singh Dhillon* in his scientific and logical interpretation about the “*Concept of God*” has explored that God (*Parmatma*) and Soul (*atma*) are explained by Guru Nanak as the '*Jot*', which is scientifically an '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.*” Sikh scriptures hold that all humans are capable of achieving union with God while still alive by realizing the Divine within.

**Devinder Singh Chahal, Editor**

#### REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar.
2. Bijlani, Shanoo. 2006. Concept of Heaven in Hinduism. Reader's Digest, March 2006, page 110.
3. [http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/show/CTVShows/20051130/Barbara\\_Walters\\_Heaven/20051202/](http://www.ctv.ca/servlet/ArticleNews/show/CTVShows/20051130/Barbara_Walters_Heaven/20051202/)
4. Westcott, Gail Cameron. 2006. In search of Heaven: Barbara Walter interviews true believers to find answers. Pp 104-110. Reader's Digest, March 2006 (Indian edition).

**Declaration:** The interpretations of some verses of one author may be different than that of others. It is due to the fact that every author has his/her own way of expression. Each author is responsible for the views expressed in his/her article.