

LETTER TO EDITORIAL BOARD

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INTERPRETATION OF GURBANI

Mr Bhupinder Singh Dhaliwal wrote a lengthy letter to all the members of the Editorial Board of UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal on March 6, 2006. He started the letter as follows:

“The mission of IUS – The Research Journal ‘Interpretation and Representation of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective’ is commendable. Eradication of Brahmnbad from Sikhi is vital. A number of articles have appeared in the Journal in recent issues which have done a great job towards accomplishing that goal. I appreciate the efforts of the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board and particularly the authors for a job well done. However, some articles of the Editor-in-Chief (Prof Devinder Singh Chahal) and his coauthor (Dr Virinder Singh Grewal) fall short of that goal. It is my observation that he and his coauthors at a number of places in their articles misinterpret and misrepresent Gurbani. I would like to draw your attention to this fact in the article entitled ‘Mythological References in Gurbani’ in Jan. 2006 issue...”

Then he quoted a number of examples where he differs with our (Chahal and Grewal) interpretations of Gurbani.

The letter is too lengthy to be reproduced here due to shortage of space. But his main concern was that the authors of that article have interpreted Gurbani which does not match the interpretations of the well known authors like Dr Sahib Singh, Dr Gopal Singh, Giani Harbans Singh, Talib, Dr Sant Singh Khalsa and many others like his (Bhupinder Singh Dhaliwal) as mentioned in his another letter to Dr Avtar Singh Dhaliwal. For example, he quotes that: ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 266, has been wrongly interpreted and does not match with that of all the authors mentioned above.

He is absolutely right to point out that our interpretations are different than that of all the other authors mentioned above. I, Devinder Singh Chahal, particularly mention that there is need to interpret Gurbani in its real perspective since the traditional interpretations are literal translation, which have also been done under the influence of Vedantic philosophy. There is a need to interpret Gurbani in its real perspective. So after paying due consideration to other interpretations as given in the article, after careful analysis of the whole Ashtpadi, and keeping in view the basic principles of Nanakian Philosophy I reached that interpretation as reported on page 24. It is explained here again as follows:

The Effect of Influence of Vedantic philosophy on Interpretation of Gurbani

Let us take an example of interpretation of the following verse: ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ਼੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 266. It has been interpreted by many theologians under the influence of Vedantic philosophy in which recitation of Name of God is important to attain salvation. Therefore the above phrase has been interpreted by various authors as follows: Dr Sahib Singh

Recitation of Name of God and making your character pure is the greatest religion of all.

Giani Harbans Singh

The greatest religion of all and greatest karam (duty) of all to recite the Name of God.

Gopal Singh

Of all the religions, this one is the purest.

That one Meditates on the Lord's Name and does what is holy.

Talib

Of all religions the most exalted,

And of all the ritual actions, the purest,

Is contemplation (meditation) of Name of Divine.

Dr Sant Singh Khalsa

Of all religions, the best religion is to chant the Name of the Lord and maintain pure conduct.

In Vedantic philosophy recitation / repetition of Name of God or of certain deities or certain mantra is considered the highest of all religious duties. According to the basic principles of Nanakian Philosophy all such acts are of no avail but conducting a good deed is the highest social responsibility. Therefore, keeping in view the basic principles of Nanakian Philosophy the above phrase was interpreted as follows:

The highest religion of the human is to do good deeds.

The above action is equivalent to the repetition of God's Name.

AGGS, M 5, p 266.

To resolve the above issue a special discussion on ‘Meanings of Jap, Naam, Naam Japna, and Naam Simrana’ is being organized.

Devinder Singh Chahal

Editor-in-Chief

INVITATION OF RESEARCH ARTICLES ON MEANINGS OF JAP, NAAM, NAAM JAPNA AND NAAM SIMRANA

Naam Japna and Naam Simrana are becoming very important part of life of many Sikhs in these days. There are many Sants, Babas and also some well-educated theologians who are teaching how to do Naam Japna and Naam Simrana in special classes in Gurdwaras or in private houses. Before learning the technique of Naam Japana and Naam Simrana, it is necessary to understand the meanings of Jap, Naam, Naam Japna, and Naam Simrana according to the philosophy of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism. Well-researched and well-documented articles on the above subject are invited from the theologians, linguistics, researchers, philosophers, psychologists, physiologists, scientists in physical and natural sciences for the January 2007 issue of the UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal.

The interested writers are requested to contact the Editor-in-Chief any time till the end of August, 2006.