

## EDITORIAL POLICY OF THE JOURNAL

A survey of old and even contemporary literature clearly indicates that no two scholars agree with each other on the same topic of Sikhism. Recently, Grewal [3] has surveyed such literature where he has demonstrated that the scholars, whether Sikh or Non-Sikh, Eastern or Western, do not agree with each other on many aspects of Sikhism. Although the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh and the Center of Sikh Studies, Santa Ana, California tried to resolve some of the problems through various publications, Grewal [3] has indicated that the problems are still unresolved.

Controversy on certain points of Sikhism arose because many scholars represented Sikhism based on the information available in publications that appeared during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. If these publications are critically examined it becomes clear that every writer has tried to represent Sikhism according to his/her own level of intelligence, and the influence of writers' beliefs in mythology and the pressure from the governing power. The authenticity about their authorship and date of writing of many such publications are also doubtful. My own analysis of some of these writings indicated that their authors represented different views about Sikhism because they failed to understand the *Gurbani* in its real/original perspective.

Now the contemporary scholars are rebuilding Sikhism based on more than 80% of information from these old and inauthentic writings rather than on the primary source of Sikhism, the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS). The *Sabd* was declared as Guru by Guru Nanak and this doctrine was elaborated and strengthened by the following nine Sikh Gurus. Finally, the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, reiterated that the *Sabd* incorporated in the *Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan is the Guru of the Sikhs and there will be no more Sikh Guru in person. Since the *Sabd* Guru is in this *Granth*, ipso facto, the *Granth* is called the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib*. The 'Aad' in the title means 'Primal' {original, first in importance (not in number), primary} that remains primal throughout the ages [1].

It is worth to notice from some of the articles published in the Inaugural Issue of the Journal that even some of the members of the Editorial Board had different views on certain points represented in Prof. Chahal's article [1], although many of them agreed to many points. Some views that could not be incorporated into the system were printed at the end of the article. However, the following example will make it more clear to

understand the problem.

Dr Lal supported his views by quoting *Bansawali Nama Dasam Patshaian da* by Chhibber, *Ratanmala, Gurnat Martand* by Bhai Kahn Singh, *Hukmnamae*, and *Rehit Namae* that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs are also included into Khalsa [7].

The critic, Baldev Singh (current issue, P. 47-48), says that writings such as *Hukmnamae*, *Rehitnamae*, *Vaars* of Bhai Gurdas II, etc. are not reliable source material for the interpretation of *Gurnat* and Sikh history.

If we believe that the information given in the *Hukmnamae* and other writings quoted by Dr Lal is authentic then his interpretation is correct. On the other hand if the analyses of the *Hukmnamae* done by Baldev Singh and Mehboob [8] are taken as correct then the whole theory of Dr Lal falls apart. Now the question is who is right? If the *Hukmnamae*, *Rehit Namae*, and other old writings are inauthentic then another question arises. Should any scholar use the information available in such writings to construct Sikhism?

Let us examine a couple of more examples where the authors construed certain information to support their way of representations:

1. Bhai Nand Lal was one of the 52 poets in the court of Guru Gobind Singh. He is the most respected scholar among the Sikhs. He has written the most quoted *Rehit Nama* and *Tankha Nama* for the Sikhs. In all the writings wherever his name appeared for the last 300 years it has always been mentioned as Bhai Nand Lal. For the last few years his name has been changed to Bhai Nand Lal Singh. Now wherever his name appears in any article published in the monthly journal, 'Phulwari' of Sikh Missionary College, Ludhiana it is mentioned as Bhai Nand Lal Singh. Some scholars have even removed 'Lal' from his name and write it as Bhai Nand Singh. Now a new question arises. If his name was Bhai Nand Lal Singh or Bhai Nand Singh why it has been appearing as Bhai Nand Lal in all the previous publications for the last 300 years? The irony is that even during Singh Sabha movement, started during the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, nobody cared to present the correct name of this well-quoted person in Sikhism. Moreover, in the *Sikh Rehit Maryada* published in 1945 by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

- (SGPC), Amritsar, his name is Bhai Nand Lal.
- Albert Einstein is experiencing the fate that so many of the great men of history experiencing: his character and opinions are being exhibited to the world in an utterly distorted form [2]. Some Western scholars to support their whims of supremacy of religion over science have misconstrued a statement of Einstein as follows: "Science without religion is blind, religion without science is lame." Whereas the correct quotation of Einstein is as follows [9]: "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." The misconstrued statement has also been quoted by an Eastern scholar, Jivasudarshana, for that very reason to show the supremacy of religion over science [4]. The same misconstrued statement has been quoted by Manjeet Singh [10] and Nirmal Singh Kalsi [5] in their writings without verification of its authenticity.

The above two examples confirm that distortion of facts is still going on in Sikhism even today to represent Sikhism according to the whims of some authors or according to planned program by the anti-Sikh organizations (it includes Sikhs as well as non-Sikhs). It clearly indicates that if the scholars of today can change the name of a well known personality in Sikhism and misconstrue the well-established statement of a well-known scientist, Einstein, then one can easily imagine how much misconstrued information could be in the old writings on Sikhism? Therefore, it is imperative for each scholar to be diligent in quoting information from ancient writings and secondary sources to construct Sikhism, because there will always be somebody in this Science Age, who will challenge such misrepresentations.

Keeping in view the above circumstances the Editor-in-Chief works in very close collaboration with the authors and the Editorial Board to represent each article in high academic quality and as close to the truth/reality as possible. In case an author is representing a new thought, philosophy, or formulates a statement by interpreting the information given in the old writings, and keeping in view the information in the AGGS and modern science and logic is acceptable. However, the views of the reviewers and the Editor-in-Chief, if different than that of the author, will also be published at the end of the article to make the readers aware of the other views to draw their own conclusions. The objectives of the 'Journal' are to search and present the truth/reality. It can only be possible through sincere and critical discussion supported with pertinent and authentic references that can stand the test of Gurbani, science and logic, the

touchstones of truth. In this respect King has said as follows [6]: "The fire of critical method can burn away whatever is gross in a religious tradition, and enable the believers to retrieve the pure metal."

## REFERENCES

- Chahal, D. S. 1999. System for referencing Bani from the Granth: The Holy Scriptures. Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 1(1): 9-15.
- Einstein, Albert (Translated by Alan Harris). (No Year) The World as I See It. A Philosophical Library Book, Citadel Press, Secaucus, NJ. (in Preface by J. H.)
- Grewal, J. S. 1998. Contesting Interpretation of the Sikh Tradition. Manohar, New Delhi.
- Jivasudarshana. 1972. Looking at the Vastness. Caravan. No. 477: 27-31 (March 11, 1972).
- Kalsi, Nirmal Singh. 1996. *Beej Mantar Darshan* (Punjabi). Kalsi Technologies, #15, 7711 - 28<sup>th</sup> Street, Surrey, BC V3W 4E6 (p 165)
- King, Noel Q. 1989. In: Advanced Studies in Sikhism. P 1-11 & 13. Eds. Jasbir Singh Mann and Harbans Singh Saraon. Irvine. Sikh Community of North America.
- Lal, Harbans. 1999. Sehjdhari Sikhs and Vaisakhi 1699. Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 1(1): 37-41.
- Mehboob, Harinder Singh. 1988. *Sehjae Rachio Khalsa* (Punjabi). Published by the author. Khalsa College, Gardiwalla, Hoshiarpur.
- Pais, Abraham. 1982. 'Subtle is the Lord....' The Science and the Life of Albert Einstein. Oxford University Press, Toronto. (p 319)
- Singh, Manjeet. 1973. Gurbani and Science - A Study. Gur Das Kapur & Sons (p) Ltd., Jalandhar (p 28-29).

**Prof. Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD**  
Editor-in-Chief

**Note:** It was reviewed by Dr W Owen Cole, UK; Prof Hardev Singh Virk, India, Dr Bikram Singh Dhillon, USA; Dr Harbans Lal, USA; S. Baldev Singh, USA; Dr Jasbir Singh Mann, USA; Dr Sarjeet Singh Sidhu, Malaysia; Dr Amar Singh Dhaliwal, Canada; and S. Nirmal Singh Kalsi, Canada. Their suggestions have also been incorporated.

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

### 1. By Dr Sarjeet Singh Sidhu:

**(Editorial Note:** Dr Sidhu has raised another very important issue worth keeping into consideration by all the authors and the members of Editorial Board.)

Your assessment of what is wrong with putting too much reliance upon the writings/publications of the

18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century writers appears to be wholly accurate. Your example of where even a recent source (Einstein's quotation) can be so easily misquoted, when contrasted against much older writings/oral sources, further enhances your view.

About the only point of agreement amongst the various scholars of Sikhism is the authenticity of the verses in the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS). Its uniqueness as a scripture, in that we still possess the original copy signed by Guru Arjan, makes it the most important reference material for the study of Sikhism. Any fundamental concept, dogma, ritual or supposed episode in the lives of the Gurus must be in consonance with the teachings of the AGGS. Anything that conflicts with the scripture should be rejected. Of course there will always be issues that cannot be resolved by merely referring to the AGGS. It is in these areas that Sikh scholars will have to tread carefully. Though not a scholar of history or ancient manuscripts I am aware that there are time-honored and well-established methods involved in studying these matters and arriving at reasonable conclusions. This is for the real scholars to work out.

Even where the AGGS is concerned scholars will sometimes tend to interpret the verse to suit their line of thought, or take one or two verses out of their context, and quote it to buttress their arguments. An example that comes to mind is the use of the line *Sabat soorat dastar sira*. Over the years I have often heard this verse used to enforce the notion that from the very beginning Guru Nanak himself had insisted that it was necessary to keep long hair and not to shave. Of course the fact that the verse came from the AGGS gave this notion Divine sanction. All this neither made sense nor seemed in tune with Guru Nanak's other teachings. It was only after reading about the true interpretation, in its right context, as explained by Prof. D.S. Chahal that I realized how I had been duped. So whilst the AGGS can guide us in separating the grains from the chaff it (AGGS) can also be deliberately misinterpreted by scholars to align the laity to their way of thinking. More knowledgeable, or at least more honest, scholars will have to show laymen like me the real meaning of the scriptural verses. The 'Journal' will provide the avenue for a correct and scientifically compatible interpretation of the AGGS.

Not being fully conversant with all the verses in the AGGS my next point is based purely on 'probability' and conjecture. There is a possibility that some verse in the AGGS, even when taken in its context, may conflict with another. If the conflict/contradiction is between a verse by a Sikh Guru and one by any of the

other 'saints' the possibility of a resolution is possible – by accepting the premise that the Guru's verse takes precedence over the other verse. What if the conflict is between verses by two different 'saints' or even two verses of the same 'saint'? What if the conflict is between two verses of two of the Gurus or even two verses of the same Guru? **If** any of these scenarios presents itself will there be a need to correct or expunge the less acceptable verse? Who will decide? And once the process of correcting or expunging starts where will it end? The reason for asking these very sensitive questions is "Will the 'Journal' explore the issues dispassionately and risk the wrath of, perhaps, the entire community?" For the moment this and other questions remain hypothetical since there may well be no controversy between any of the verses in the AGGS. Scholars of other scriptures have raised such issues – more so in this age of liberalism, science and technology. Such scholars have not all been anti-religion or from without the religion whose scripture is being scrutinized. It is a matter of time before even true-believing Sikhs similarly scrutinize the AGGS. The 'Journal' may therefore be faced with the uncomfortable task of explaining the apparent contradiction if it is brought to its notice. The Editorial Board of this 'Journal' has courageously decided to search for the truth. It is hoped that **if and when** the problems raised here arise the Board will not be found lacking in courage. That such a proposition will be divisive is a foregone conclusion. It is my fervent hope that the problem never arises.

There are several *Rehit Namae* available, each claiming to have been written at the express command of Guru Gobind Singh and therefore approved by him. Yet even a cursory appraisal of those documents will show that no two documents are alike. Even the common features of the documents do not prove that at least those common portions are authentic. They could well be from a common source/tradition that was erroneous to begin with. As you have rightly pointed out even well known writers are known to use questionable *Rehit Namae/hukmnamae* in their writings. In compiling the Sikh *Rehit Maryada* the experts rightly omitted some of the obviously absurd or outdated or embarrassing injunctions from the available sources. The possibility that other absurd/unreasonable injunctions were at that time accepted is strong. Hence the need to review the *Rehit Maryada*.

I seem to have digressed but let me sum up my comments by saying I think you have the Editorial policy on the right tracks. I endorse your comments and your stand.

**2. By S. Nirmal Singh Kalsi:** In the first paragraph Grewal has mentioned that scholars do not agree with each other on many aspects of Sikhism. Despite the effort of resolving those problems, the problems are still unresolved. He is undoubtedly right. Unfortunately, the problem will remain unresolved, so long as a critical research, satisfactory to the Sikh Panth, is not carried out.

The second and third paragraphs invite the attention of scholars for interpretation of Sikhism according to Gurbani. The fourth paragraph with examples is mazy. It confirms that the Editor's word is not "written in stone", there are always other sides of the argument.

Example No.1 of Bhai Nanad Lal is a good one.

Example No. 2 clearly shows that the Editor is suffering from the whims of supremacy of science over religion.

**Note by the Editor:** While commenting on the second example, Sirdar Kalsi became too emotional. He tried to prove that the misconstrued statement of Einstein, "*Science without religion is blind, religion without science is lame.*" was used by him to show that Einstein was theist. He further cited the following references to support that the misconstrued statement of Einstein is the original One:

1. John N. Clayton in: "Does God Exist" Under the heading Christianity the Best Friend Science Ever Had.
2. Dr Paul Pearson in his book, "The Heart's Code" Cellular Memmory.
3. Dr Alan G Issac. "Re: Krugman-Arthur Brouhaha."
4. Dr Andrew H. C. Chang. "Re 32<sup>nd</sup> Terzaghi Lecture"

From the above information it becomes clear to me

that the Western scholars were the first who misconstrued the statement of Einstein as following: "*Science without religion is blind, religion without science is lame.*" That misconstrued statement was picked up by Eastern scholars, like, Javasarshana [4]. Then Manjeet Singh [10] picked up from Javasarshana. From there Sirdar Kalsi [5] picked up. Now the misconstrued statement of Einstein has become the original statement for some scholars, in spite of the fact, that the original statement of Einstein is "*Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.*" To confirm it please see the following reference of Einstein: Einstein, Albert (Translated by Alan Harris). *The World as I See It*. A Philosophical Library Book, Citdel Press, Secaucus, NJ. (p 319).

ਆਗਾਹਾ ਕੂ ਤ੍ਰਾਘਿ ਪਿਛਾ ਫੇਰਿ ਨ ਮੁਹਡੜਾ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਸਿਝਿ ਇਵੇਹਾ ਵਾਰ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਹੋਵੀ ਜਨਮੜਾ ॥੧॥

Nanak says:  
*"Think about the future, look not on the past.  
Make the present life a great success  
Because there is no birth again."*

AGGS, M 5, P 1096