

COMMENTS ON PREVIOUS ARTICLES

Dr Sarjeet Singh Sandhu, Bois, ID, USA
Sikhism from Guru Nanak - Beyond 2000
 by Dr D. S. Chahal.

Professor Chahal has researched and published a precious piece of an original interpretation of *Gurbani*. It includes an exhaustive information for the education of those who are in need of it for understanding *Gurbani*. Besides, enlightening us about God and its conceptual comprehension, it shows us the way and leads us to follow all that is necessary for living the life of a *Gursikh*, in the society we have chosen to live in as its citizens. Most of the Sikhs and Non-Sikhs in India and abroad are not aware of the distinct contribution made by the Gurus of the Sikhs in advancing the cause of spiritual simplicity and temporal novelty for the common folk. The concepts adumbrated and advocated by the Gurus of Sikhs became the central point of various European struggles and strife- freedom of religious worship, human right, anti-tobacco laws, equal rights for women etc. Even in India most of the people do not know that the first battle in the freedom struggle of India was won by Sikhs in the Punjab.

Dr JaiDev Singh Kohli, Nepean, ON, Canada
1. Sikhism from Guru Nanak - Beyond 2000 by Dr D. S. Chahal.

Concept of Miri Piri

Whether man was aware of it or not, the concept of Miri Piri was present from the time man started to manage affairs through some organization what could be called a sort of Government. With the development of religions on one hand and the government getting organized better, power had to be shared between spiritual leaders or with political leadership. Often there was conflict.

In Christian world, spiritual leadership reigned for a long time and would not hesitate to excommunicate even the kings. Eventually, however, politicians took over the control of church also. It was specially noticed in England where king became the head of church and clergy remained subordinate to the authority of King. Pope tried to assert himself as the over Lord, but lost to the politicians.

In Islam when Mohammed was driven to Medina, He received a very great support from people there and

eventually he acquired lot of political leverage. Miri and Piri were thus combined together. Even today, clergy seems to have the last word in Islamic domain.

In India, Code of Manu laid down for *kashatriyas* to rule and Brahmins to handle dharma. But Brahmins eventually made rituals so complicated that *Kashatriyas* could still rule but only with the blessings of Brahmins. Brahmins, though not ruling directly, did manage to take control of the rulers. *Kashatriyas* were content and even happy as long as they ruled. Again Miri and Piri were invested in the spiritual group only.

In Sikhs Miri Piri has great significance. Guru Nanak saw the brutality of uneven war when Baabar invaded India with an army of about ten thousand warriors equipped with canons and gun powder, used for the first time in India. This was no just match, canons against swords and arrows. Guru Nanak expressed his anguish by addressing *Akal Purkh* if He too was moved by the brutality. Clearly Guru Nanak expressed that, He was not against warfare as such, but if it is against equally matched foes. I refer to Bani in Rag Asa M 1 page 360 in AGGS. In fact, Guru Angad used to encourage wrestling and other man's sports. When Guru Arjan went to Lahore knowing fully well that He was not going to return back to Amritsar, He appointed young Hargobind as charge of Nanak's *Gadi*. At that time He did advise Hargobind that it was high time that faith should be protected with force. At the time of His coronation, Guru Hargobind asked Baba Buddha to get Him two swords and put the traditional *Saili* away with great respect. The two swords represented Miri and Piri respectively. He wore two swords, one on each side, completely separate from each other meeting briefly at one intersection only, thus symbolizing that the two powers were separate altogether and yet so close they have to exist in life together. Guru Hargobind ji went even further. His father had earlier built Har Mandir Sahib, the sanctum sanctorum. He now built another structure, Akal Takht, in the same complex but separate from it and yet close. With *deori* coming in between, while meditating in Har Mandir one cannot even glimpse the Akal Takht. But while pursuing functions of Miri from Akal Takht one can see Har Mandir Sahib, symbolizing that while carrying out the functions of Miri one must keep *Akal Purkh* in mind always but while meditating in Har Mandir Sahib, all worldly considerations are to be forgotten and mind is to focus on ONE alone and nothing else. Thus Guru Hargobind ji separated Miri and Piri, recognizing both as the essential integral part of life.

Other Comments

There are a few discrepancies, which need to be taken care of. Guru Arjan wrote "ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਬਾਨ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨ ॥" meaning that *pothi* is in place of *Parmeshar* and who sings the praises of Lord, in company of Sage, is the Supreme Wise, Guruship was not bestowed to the Pothi in 1604. In *Sukhmani Slok 7 Ashtpadi 8*, Guruji emphasized that Sage or the Supreme Wise are same as Lord Himself.

Response by the Author:

The author agrees that the Sage and the Supreme Wise is same as the Lord Himself. But I mean *pothi* contains the *Sabd* of the Gurus and *Sabd* was declared as Guru first by Guru Nanak and then by all the other Gurus in their *Bani*. Then Guru Arjan during the time of compilation of the *Bani* he equated *pothi* to the *Parmeshar*, the Almighty, as explained in the text. More will be discussed about this in the next issue.

2. Challenge of 21st Century by Dr Harbans Lal Ji

Beautifully said "Sikh spirit and Sikh practices will neither be up for a vote from any section, nor will be subservient to verdicts from any clergy." Well said and well done. I strongly believe that we the Sikhs in North America must loose our ties with Punjab and develop into our own identity, taking into account the teachings of the AGGS as also the local environment, culture, and conditions we have to face and live them. Europeans have developed into separate identity, which is distinct from those of their original homelands. Non-entity and only a few more years to live, I am hopeful that, sooner rather than later, we should have our own supreme clergy body which will follow the tenets of Gurus as enunciated in the AGGS strictly and not fall prey to Brahminic trends and rituals as in Punjab. Guru's Vision must be uppermost in our actions and thoughts.

Baldev Singh, Collegeville, Pa 19426, USA Sehjdhari Sikhs and Vaisakhi of 1699 by Dr Harbans Lal

In his recent article, "Sehjdhari Sikhs and Vaisakhi of 1699", Lal [1] made some statements which were questioned by Sandhu [5] and I [6]. He responded [2] to some of the questions, but avoided others, thus leaving the readers rather confused than enlightened. I think when we debate controversial issues, we should try to reach some conclusion, otherwise we will be adding more to the confusion already created by old

controversial writings about Sikhism.

I am repeating the unanswered questions and asking new ones hoping that Lal and other readers would respond to my inquiry. Their views will be very helpful in resolving the issues raised by this article.

Charan Pahul.

Who was the first Guru to initiate the ceremony of *Charan Pahul*?

Who authorized the *Masands* to administer *Charan Pahul* to the Sikhs?

According to Nirankari's writing based on *Ratanmala* as reported by Lal, there are three categories of Sikhs: *Sehjdhari*, *Charandhari* meaning those initiated by touch of holy water by the Guru's feet, and *Khandae de Amritdhari*. This statement implies that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs were not taking either of the two *Pahul* and it raises further questions

Lal has asserted that Guru Gobind Singh stopped the custom of *Charan Pahul* in 1699, and terminated the authority of *Masands* earlier to administer *Charan Pahul*, then who was administering *Charan Pahul* to *Charandhari* Sikhs.

What kind of *Pahul* do *Sehjdhari* Sikhs receive?

Are there any *Charandhari* Sikhs living today and who administers *Charan Pahul* to them?

Authenticity of *Hukmnamae* and *Rehit Namae*.

Who established their authenticity and by what method?

On the third page of his article he claimed, "There exists a *Rehit Nama* written and signed by Guru Gobind Singh specifically addressed to *Sehjdhari* Sikhs." He cited Padam to support his claim. I am inclined to think that Lal is in error, he may have misread the foreword of Padam's book. Padam also published [4] another book latter on about *Rehit Namae*, and this is what he wrote in the foreword, "Extensive research is needed to determine who wrote the *Rehit Namae*, and when? One thing is clear that no *Rehit Nama* is the composition of Guru Gobind Singh, otherwise it would have been include in the *Dasam Granth*. It seems that the *Rehit Namae* were written in the 18th century by Sikh writers, who assigned them to the names of close associates of Guru Gobind Singh like Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Dya Singh, Bhai Chaupa Singh and Bhai Prahlad Singh to enhance their value. It is possible that Bhai Nand Lal and others might have written some parts of these compositions. However, a closer look at the contents, details and the style of the language reveals that probably they were written after 1720. One can say with certainty that only Desa Singh's *Rehit Nama* is his own work. Some of the contents of some *Rehit Namae* are not consistent

with *Gurmat*, for example, Brahmin Sikh authors have excessively praised Brahmins, used abusive language against Muslims, and advocated against the learning of Arabic and *Farsi* languages (Persian), and Desa Singh has advocated the use of opium, marijuana and alcohol." Therefore, Lal's claim that Bhai Nand Lal wrote two *Rehit Namae* is also questionable.

Relying on old controversial literature without paying attention to current literature for the publication of research work is unproductive and fraught with danger.

I agree with Lal on the careful and cautious use of 18th century controversial writings for the construction of Sikh history. However, I think that it is not necessary to dig deep into these writings for evidence to prove that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs are a vital part of the Sikh Nation. Every thoughtful Sikh knows or should know this fact. Let me put it this way succinctly. In the early 18th century, if faith in God, Guru and Khalsa ideals was the spiritual sustenance of the Khalsa forces, the source of their physical well-being was the *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. In the two major battles called *Wada Ghalughara* and *Chota Ghalughara*, the Khalsa forces suffered very heavy loses. However, within few years of each event, their ranks were replenished in greater number than before with fresh recruitment of sons and daughters of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. The following popular song [3] of the Khalsa of that time corroborates this fact.

"*Manu sadi datri, asin Manu de soai (vegetable),
Jion jion Manu wadda, gharin gharin asin hoa.*"

"Manu is the sickle and we are the soai, The more he cuts, the more we grow. "

Continued from page 23

To some extent this can be achieved by human effort. The *Janam Sakhis* contain many accounts which demonstrate this. For example, there was a man called Sajjan. He gave shelter to pilgrims, even providing a mosque and mandir as places for Muslims and Hindus, respectively, to pray and sleep. In the middle of the night he would kill them and take what possessions they had.

Sometimes these might be considerable, carefully hoarded savings which they were taking to give at the place of pilgrimage. Guru Nanak and his friend Mardana accepted his hospitality but instead of going to sleep they stayed awake singing hymns well into the night. Eventually, Sajjan began to listen to their words and became captivated by the message of liberation which they contained. At last, he burst in upon the

Where were the soai growing? Of course, in the homes of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs because the Muslim and Hindu populations were generally hostile to the Khalsa forces, and they were collaborating with the government forces in their annihilation. Most of the present days Sikhs are descendants of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. What more evidence is needed to prove that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs were and are a vital part of the Sikh Nation.

I think scholars especially those who claim to be Sikhs should not lose sight of the primary objective of Sikh ideology, which is to bring all mankind on one platform (*Manas ki jaat sabhai eko pehchanbo*, mankind is one family). We are reminded of this theme in our daily prayer (*Sarbat Ka Bhala*, pray for the well-being of all). The least the Sikh scholars can do is to bring all the Sikhs together instead of categorizing them into different compartments.

REFERENCES

- 1 Lal, (Bhai) Harbans. 1999. *Sehjdhari* Sikhs and Vaisakhi of 1699. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* p 37-41.
- 2 Lal, (Bhai) Harbans. 1999. Letters to Editor. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 1 (2), p.48.
- 3 Narang, Gocal Chand. 1960. *Transformation of Sikhism*. New Book Society of India, New Delhi, p 128.
- 4 Padam, Piara Singh. 1991 (5th ed.). *Rehat Namae* (Punjabi). Chatar Singh Jiwan Singh, Amritsar, p 43.
- 5 Sandhu, Sarjeet Singh. 1999. Letters to the Editor. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* I (2), p 23.
- 6 Singh, Baldev. 1999. Letters to the Editor. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 1 (2), p 47-48.

singers and asked to become a Sikh.

This story is pregnant with meaning. It speaks about the power of the bani to transform the listener, it implies the power of God's grace, it gives some indication of the need for effort on the part of the would be reformed person. Sajjan had to wish sincerely to be changed. It also affirms the Sikh belief that spiritual enlightenment should result in a transformed life as the former murderer was required to pay restitution to the relatives of the people he had bereaved and, after building the first gurdwara (known in those days as a dharamsala), gave the rest of his money to the poor.

The effort which Sajjan made was to put his self-centeredness behind him and re-focus his attention on