

EDITORIAL

'WAR OF WORDS' AGAINST SIKHISM

The 'War of words' against Sikhism came into an open during the celebration of Tercentenary of Khalsa when the Sikh clergy and Sikh polity were fighting with each other rather than working together for portraying Sikhism to the world. Taking the advantage of the internal feud between Sikh religious and political authorities the anti-Sikh forces joined their hands and started to propagate Sikhism in their own way rather than on the Nanakian Philosophy that was strengthened and preached by the nine Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the **House of Nanak**. Recently the *Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (RSS)* became active and started to exploit the writings compiled in a Granth commonly called as *Dasam Granth*. They are portraying that Khalsa was created to protect the Hindus on the lines of Hindu scriptures; therefore, the Khalsa created by Guru Gobind Singh is a part and parcel of Hinduism. To meet their objectives the Rashtriya Swamsewak Sangh (RSS) has created another *Sangh* (association) with the similar abbreviation (*RSS*), the *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat* mostly composed of the Sikh members.

This 'War of Words' is not a new one. In fact, it started during the time of Guru Arjan and it became aggressive immediately after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. Therefore, most of the Sikh history and literature published during the 18th and 19th century is full of misinterpretations of Nanakian Philosophy and misrepresentations of Sikhism. Some of the notable writings from the old literature on Sikhism are:

Sri Gur Subha, 1711 CE, by Sainapat;
Gur Bilas Patshahi 6, 1718 CE, Anonymous;
Dasam Granth, ~1721 CE. The most controversial Granth in these days. Supposed to be compiled by Bhai Mani Singh after collecting various Banis ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh;
Bansavelinama, 1769 CE, by Kesar Singh Chibber;
Gur Bilas Patshahi 10, 1797 CE, by Sukha Singh;
Parchia Pathshayan Das, early 18th century;
Panth Parkash, 1809 CE, by Rattan Singh;
Sarbloh Granth, by Sukha Singh?;
Mehma Parkash;
Prem Sumarg;
Janam Sakhis and *Chamatkars of Sikh Gurus* by various authors,
Rehit Namae by various authors;
Hukmnamae issued by the Sikh Gurus at various times;

and many more such writings.

These old writings contain some useful historical data but a lot of information is contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS). I would like to add here views of some scholars in this connection:

1. According to Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha [3] the old Sikh literature (of the 18th and 19th centuries) has been written according to the level of intelligence and beliefs of the writers. From this old literature we are getting a lot of useful information as well as that is contrary to the *Gurmat*. He has also emphasized that the most important thing is that there is a dearth of research scholars but on the other hand there are many, who are deadly against the research scholars and would declare them as atheists or the enemies of *Gurmat*.
2. Piara Singh Padam [5] says about *Rehit Namae* that: "It is a mistake to accept every information given in every *Rehit Nama* is according to *Gurmat*. Many authors have written according to their own level of intelligence or under the influence of *manmat* (under the influence of ancient philosophy, ritualism, etc.), that are not right."
3. Similarly, Harinder Singh Mehboob [2] has reported that 85 out of 87 *Hukmnamae* recorded in the book, *Hukmnamae*, of Ganda Singh [6], are fake.

The second cycle of 'War of Words' started during the last quarter of the 19th century and that of the first quarter of the 20th century when the Arya Samaj started to amalgamate Sikhism with Hinduism. It was due to the efforts of Singh Sabha that Sikhism was protected from their attack. It is a pity that by and by the Singh Sabha became dominated with the members, who were under the strong influence of Arya Samaj. They started to put every type of hurdles in the work of the dedicated scholars like Prof Gurmukh Singh and Ditt Singh in dissemination of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective.

Prof Gurmukh Singh was excommunicated in 1887 CE by Maan Singh, the Manager of Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar due to the pressure put by the opposition members (Arya Samajists), especially, Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Raja Bikram Singh, and Avtar

Singh Vahiria, of the Singh Sabha. The opposition members were also trying to keep ancient mythology and rituals in Sikhism and to continue Guruship in living persons. Baba Khem Singh Bedi of this group was acclaimed as the 13th position in the Guru Nanak's lineage by his associates and followers. Similarly, the press of Ditt Singh, an excellent orator, writer, and a colleague of Prof Gurmukh Singh, was put out of business because of litigation by the opposing group (Arya Samajists) in Singh Sabha [Inferred from the data given in ref. # 4].

About a century ago, it was Karam Singh, a famous Sikh historian, who took courage to analyze the *Janam Sakhi* (biography) of Guru Nanak written by Bhai Bala. He proved in his book, *Katik kae Vaisakh* [7], that the stories recorded in it cannot pass the test of Gurbani, science, and logic, the touchstones of truth. Guru Nanak has been portrayed as a great Hindu but lower in spirituality than Bhagat Kabir and Hundal. His book was removed from the sale list by the Khalsa Diwan most probably by Giani Gian Singh soon after its publication [inferred from the letter of Giani Gian Singh published in the new edition. Ref. # 7].

Recently *Gur Bilas Patshahi 6* has been reprinted by the Dharam Parchar Committee of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar. It was edited by two scholars, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, the then Head Granthi of the Harmandar Sahib and now the Jathedar of Akal Takht, and Dr Amarjit Singh, Professor of Shaheed Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar. They compared various versions and made some corrections before it was printed [8].

Gur Bilas Patshahi 6 has been recited in many Gurdwaras in the past and is still being recited in many and also being used by many scholars to construct Sikhism. Its publication has been praised as 'a unique service, an authentic biography of the Guru, a matchless gift', etc. by the following religious authorities without analyzing its contents that how much the information given in it is worth and how much goes against the originality and uniqueness of the Gurbani and Sikhism: Bhai Ranjit Singh, the then Jathedar of Akal Takht, Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, the then President of the SGPC, Bhai Manjit Singh, Jathedar of Takht Kes Garh, Bhai Kewal Singh,

Jathedar Takht Damdama Sahib, Bhai Sukhdev Singh Bhaur, the then Acting President of the SGPC, Manjit Singh Calcutta, the then Minister of Higher Education, Punjab, Giani Sant Singh Maskeen, an approved Dharam Parcharak of the SGPC, Bhai Jaswant Singh, Katha Vachak of Gurdwara Manji Sahib, Dalip Singh Maloonagar, the Senior President of SGPC. Although Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti and Prof Amarjit Singh have admitted that it contains some denigrating information, even then they have not tried to distinguish that how much is true and how much goes against the Gurbani and Sikhism leaving the readers in confusion. It is not in the interest of Sikhism that the Sikh religious authorities publish and propagate such books without their proper evaluation, because false and misconstrued information given in such writings are being exploited by the anti-Sikh organizations to misrepresent Sikhism. Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, now the Jathedar of the Akal Takht, and Dr Amarjit Singh, Prof of Shaheed Sikh Missionary College have failed badly to perform the duties of scrupulous Sikh religious authorities.

It is not in the interest of Sikhism that the Sikh religious authorities publish and propagate such books without their proper evaluation, because false and misconstrued information given in such writings are being exploited by the anti-Sikh organizations to misrepresent Sikhism.

Besides, the religious authorities do not allow anybody to speak in Gurdwara or publish articles in any journal, magazine, or daily newspaper in the quest of truth by challenging misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepresentation of Sikhism, and unscientific codes and rituals introduced into Sikhism. My analysis of this situation is that most of

the Sikh scholars cannot dare to speak the truth because of Draconian sword of excommunication is hanging on the head of every Sikh scholar.

The fear of excommunication is comparable to the same situation that happened with Roger Bacon, a 13th century English priest. He had to spend the final 14 years of his life in a dungeon for writing that in the quest for truth; experimentation and observation are valid challenges to the uncritical acceptance of spiritual and secular authority [1]. Nevertheless, it was heartening news when the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar in the 1995 World Sikh Conference held at Amritsar, honored posthumously Prof Gurmukh Singh after 108 years, for his good services rendered for the promotion of Sikhism.

However, this goodwill soon vanished from the curriculum of the Sikh religious authorities and

excommunication of Sikhs of almost all levels of social and political strata started at lightening speed after the appointment of Bhai Ranjit Singh as the Jathedar of Akal Thakt. Unfortunately excommunications continued by Giani Puran Singh, who was appointed to replace Bhai Ranjit Singh, till he was also removed by the SGPC recently. The newly appointed Jathedar, Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, set another bad precedent in the Sikh history when all the closely associated religious and political personnel, who were excommunicated by the previous Jathedar of the Akal Takht, were exonerated while all the five Sikhs of British Columbia, Canada, who challenged the unscientific and illogical Hukmnama of Langar, remained excommunicated.

A critical analysis of history reveals that the current turmoil and degeneration in Sikhism is the result of the misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepresentation of Sikhism in the old literature that has been accepted as true by many scholars. This fact is confirmed by the recent publication of *Gur Bilas Patshahi 6* by the SGPC, without proper evaluation of authenticity of information given in it. Moreover, in these days Sikhism, being preached in Gurdwaras and reported in the current literature, is based on about 80% of inauthentic, unscientific, and illogical information given in the above mentioned old literature, whereas, only 20% is based on the Nanakian Philosophy, that was authenticated and recorded in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh. The feud between the Sikh Clergy and Sikh polity during the whole year of celebration of the Tercentenary of Khalsa was also due to the fact that, Nanakian Philosophy and Sikhism were not understood in their real perspective by them. As a result today degeneration of Sikhism has reached to its lowest ebb since it was founded during the 15th century. And there are no serious plans either from the custodians of Sikhism (SGPC) or from the Sikh intelligentsia to check further degeneration of Sikhism and for its revival till today. Until the Sikh religious authorities (SGPC), Sikh Institutes, and Sikh intelligentsia cleanse their house and start interpreting Nanakian Philosophy (Gurbani) and representing Sikhism in their real perspective without any influence of ancient mythology / philosophy and ritualism, they cannot defend the onslaught on Sikhism by either the (Hindu) RSS or the (Sikh) RSS or any other anti-Sikh organization.

Keeping in view the above-explained situation, Sikhism is passing through, the **Institute for Understanding Sikhism** has initiated to interpret Gurbani and represent Sikhism in their real perspective through its periodical, **UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM**

– *The Research Journal*, published biannually since January 1999. It is my great pleasure to announce that within a brief period of its publication, it has been acclaimed as the most needed research journal on Gurbani and Sikhism for the Sikhs of the Science Age.

The current issue of the Journal discusses the present degeneration of Sikhism and its rejuvenation through scientific and logical interpretation of Nanakian Philosophy and Sikhism. Editorial from Across the World discusses, *A Question of Maryada*. Following research articles in the section of **Feature Articles** discuss scientific and logical explanation of Gurbani and Sikhism: *Sikhism: Scientific and Logical Religion for the Third Millennium and Beyond* by Prof DS Chahal; *Aad Guru Granth Sahib as a Juristic Person* by Prof Kashmir Singh; *Guru Gobind Singh's Unique Experiment on Behavioral Science* by Dr AS Dhaliwal; and *Definition of a Sikh* by Dr JS Mayell. In the **News & Views** section the degeneration of Sikhism, feud between Sikh Clergy and Sikh polity, efforts to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism and other topics have been discussed: *Religious Means and Political Ends* by PPS Gill, *Who is Apostate* by Dr Gurbax Singh and Dr (Bhai) Harbans Lal, *Tarksheel Cautions Against Godmen* by Gurpreet Singh, *Sikhism as a Separate Religion* by Roopinder Singh, *The Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex* by Sarup Singh Alag, and *Gurbani Vision TV* by Haim Narain Singh. It also contains the **Readers' Comments on Previous Articles, Letters to the Editor and Book Review.**

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD
Editor-in-Chief

REFERENCES

1. Bender, David L. and Leone, Bruno. 1981. *Science and Religion: Opposing Viewpoints*. Greenhaven Press, 577 Shoreview Park Road, St. Paul, Minnesota.
2. Mehboob, Harinder Singh. 1988. *Sehjae Rachio Khalsa* (Punjabi). Published by the Author. Khalsa College, Garhdiwala, Hoshiarpur.
3. Nabha, Bhai Sahib Bhai Kahn Singh. 1996 (5th ed.). *Gurmat Martand* (Punjabi). Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar.
4. Oberoi, Harjot. 1994. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries*. Oxford University Press, Delhi.
5. Padam, Pyara Singh. 1984 (3rd ed.). *Rehit Namae* (Punjabi). Kalam Mandar, Lower Mall, Patiala.
6. Singh, Ganda. 1985. *Hukmnamae* (in Punjabi). Punjabi University, Patiala.
7. Singh, Karam. 1979 (Reprint). *Katik kae Vaisakh* (Punjabi). Lahore Bookshop, Ludhiana.
8. Vedanti, Giani Joginder Singh and Singh, Dr Amarjit. 1998. *Gur Bilas Patshahi 6* (in Punjabi). Dharam Parchar Committee, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar.