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EDITORIAL

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD The Editor

The 17th volume 2015 of *Understanding Sikhism - The Research Journal* is having two issues. The first issue is discussing three articles dealing with three different but important articles. The second issue will be covering the Proceedings of the Seminar, *Pothi Parmeshar ka Thaan*, held on September 13, 2015.

In this issue **Prof Dr Devinder Singh Chahal** is discussing about, *Environmental Ethics - Perspectives from Nanakian Philosophy*. The term 'environmental ethics' is a part of wider term, 'environment philosophy', which is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the natural environment and humanity's place within it. Our Earth is the third planet from our Sun. Nevertheless, the Earth is the only planet in this Universe known to us which can sustain life although there is the possibility that there may be millions of such planets which can sustain life. Since the Earth provides everything to sustain life, therefore, Guru Nanak calls it "Mother Earth" (ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਤਾ – AGGS, p 1021). Guru Nanak in his first verse, *Jap*, has equated Air as the Guru, Water as the father and

the Earth as mother during the early part of 16th century. Consequently, it necessitates that we formulate environmental ethics to keep Mother Earth and its environment safe for as long as possible. However, before formulating the environmental ethics one must be aware of the fact that the Earth has been constantly changing; it was never in the state we observe today and will never be in the same state in the future in spite of all our efforts to save it. In this paper he discusses formulation of environmental ethics according to Nanakian Philosophy.

S Gurvinder Singh Chohan is a frequent traveller around the world. He writes, *Guru Nanak's Travel - An Appraisal of Baku Visit*. During his travels to Baku, Azerbaijan he visited **Baku Ateshgah (Fire Temple)** in Surakhani, a suburb of greater Baku, Azerbaijan. He was inspired to visit Baku Ateshgah by reading an inscription of Commencing Verse of Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) on one of the wall of this Ateshgah (Fire Temple) reported in an article by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal. The picture of Commencing Verse was first published by Modi in his article

in 1924 but he did not mention anything about this inscription. It was Prof Chahal who identified it as the Commencing Verse of the AGGS. S Chohan not only confirmed the existence of this inscription but found another similar inscription with a slight difference. Besides this inscription of Commencing Verse in Gurmukhi alphabet he has posted other inscriptions in Devnagri and Arabic alphabets. One of the Arabic inscription shows the date 1715 CE in Fig. 5. There is no sign of any erosion on this inscription even after 300 years. If we compare this Arabic inscription in Fig 5 with that of Gurmukhi inscriptions in Fig. 7 and 8 which look too much damaged because of erosion. Therefore, these inscriptions in Gurmukhi may be much older than 300 years or close the time around 1521 CE when Guru Nanak was returning to Punjab from his Middle East travels through Baku Ateshgah, Azerbaijan.

Prof Dr Baldev Singh Sandha, Formerly Dean, Punjabi University, Patiala writes, *Sikh Identity - Sikhs are Passing Through*. Although the Sikhs have very prominent visible identity still the authorities on

Sikhism have failed to produce a concise and precise definition of a Sikh. Prof Sandha is handling this difficult question by starting with the following questions:

Who is a Sikh? Is a person who claims that he follows the teachings of Aad Guru Granth Sahib, a Sikh? Is a person who follows the “*Bachitar Natak*”, also referred by some as *Dasam Granth* or as *Dasam Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, a Sikh? Is a person who follows the Sikh code of conduct, a Sikh? Is a person who believes in one God, a Sikh? Is a person who maintains beard and long hairs and wears a turban, a Sikh? Is a frequent visitor to a Gurdwara, a

Sikh? Is a person born in a Sikh family, a Sikh? Is a person whose middle/end name is *Singh* or *Kaur*, a Sikh? Is a person as defined by SGPC or DGPC, a Sikh? Such and a similar set of other queries come to mind when one wants to identify a member of the community. But before identifying a Sikh, how does one identify a Sikh faith community (Sikhism) from the faith communities of the world?

This paper attempts to provide answers to the above set of queries with special reference to Sikh community in general and, a Sikh, in particular. Such an attempt raises,

in turn, such vital issues as relate to the identification of the main holy scripture of the faith and, if available, a supplementary work thereof. Apart from this, it calls for the identification of necessary conditions that lays bare the essentials of the belief system of the followers of the faith and the sufficient conditions that portrays the visible presence of the faith followers. Finally, **how far is the observed reality in tandem with the expectations?**

