GIANTS IN SIKHISM

Giani Bhag Singh, Ambala       S. Gurbakhsh Singh Kala Afghana

Gyani Bhag Singh and S. Gurbakhsh Singh Kala Afghana are the giants in Sikhism because they have displayed the courage of their conviction, against fierce opposition by establishment Jathedars and handful Sikh sects with vested interests, by challenging the established traditions of belief system in spurious Granths at a great personal cost and risk to themselves. They believed, as every Sikh should, that Guru Granth Sahib is the only Guru of the Sikhs for all times and none other.

For the past seven years Sikh Center Roseville has been endeavoring to encourage constructive dialogue and civilized debate about crucial issues facing the Sikhs in diaspora and arriving at practical solutions. Part of that effort has been publication of literature. Gyani Bhag Singh’s book, ‘Dasam Granth Darpan’ was banned by Akal Takhat when Gyani Ji was excommunicated. We have published this book and are publishing S. Kala Afghana’s book that has been banned by Jathedar Vedanti even before its first publication. Gyani Ji’s and all of S. Kala Afghana Ji’s books are available from us. (Please see p.32)
GUEST EDITORIAL
CRIMINAL JATHEDARS
Gurpal Singh Khaira

The Akal Takhat because of its name and also its creation by sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind Ji, holds very special meaning for every Sikh. Its reverence is so deeply embedded in the Sikh community’s psyche that no one wants to defy the dictates (Hukamnama) issued by the appointed Jathedars in the name of Akal Takhat. The position of Akal Takhat Jathedar has been in turmoil since operation Blue Star, an Indian Army assault on Darbar Sahib in June 1984. Politicians, the likes of Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Parkash Singh Badal, have used this position as a revolving door. They appoint small people who are semi literate Granthis trained in Taksals and Deras to do their bidding. Their education mostly consists of orientations in myths and half truths in addition to reading Guru Granth Sahib without knowing its meaning. Once the Jathedar loses his usefulness to his political masters, he is tossed out like dirty water. Each new jathedar of Akal Takhat tries to exercise powers, which neither the position allows, nor he has the moral credibility to usurp it. It appears that each appointee to the position of the Jathedar of Akal Takhat has been competing to show he is bigger fool than his predecessor. Sikh religion and Sikh community have seen terrible times during the 399-year history of the Akal Takhat. But never before, the occupant of this most honored Sikh religious position had the dishonor to be labeled as Criminal Jathedar by the media and the large section of the Sikh community as the present jathedar Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti. Despite Vedanti Ji’s denials, Khalsa Panchayat has provided credible proof of corruptions and graft, by Vedanti Ji’s office, to Kirpal Singh Badungar, President of SGPC. This dishonor has now also been accorded to the recently sacked Jathedar of Takhat Kesgarh Sahib for alleged misappropriations of World Sikh Council funds and other financial misappropriations of donated property.

One after another controversy has dogged Giani Vedanti ji since his installation as Jathedar of Akal Takhat. He was appointed Jathedar on March 28th 2000 after the unceremonious removal of Giani Puran Singh. After three years as Jathedar he had failed to accomplish anything at all, solve any problems for the Sikh community and fulfill any expectations of the Sikh Panth so far. Instead Vedanti ji has created a litany of problems for himself by his actions on the bidding of sects and organizations, such as Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Bhindran wali Taksal, and morally corrupt but powerful Sant/babas. His own basic training is from his early days with the Taksal. This has firmly placed him on a confrontational course with the intellectual sections of the mainstream Sikhs. He is in a box of his own making. If he tries to do the right thing, he will alienate influential Sant/ Babas and will be toppled from power just like his colleague Professor Manjit Singh, who fell like the Statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. He may even end up in prison just like poor Kewal Singh, Jathedar of Takhat Damdama Sahib.

When Giani Vedanti ji was appointed Jathedar of Akal Takhat he was hailed as most educated and scholarly individual to ever occupy the supreme religious seat of the Sikh religion. However, very shortly thereafter many organizations and individuals, including the Sikh Bulletin, labeled him as Trojan horse. (SB June 2000, p.2) During three-year tenure as Jathedar Akal Takhat he (Giani Vedanti ji) has failed to take any independent decision pertaining to the Sikh Panth so far.

Since Indian Army’s destruction of Akal Takhat revolving Jathedars had remained controversial for reasons stated above in this article but Jathedar Vedanti had turned out to be the weakest Jathedar so far. Even though he sought immediate release of Sikh detainees who were languishing in various jails without facing trials, to this date he has been unable to get his directives implemented by SGPC and Shiromani Akali Dal.

His first order of Business as Jathedar was to revoke all hukamnamas, declarations, or directives issued by Giani Puran Singh between January 25 and March 28, 2000. In a three pages statement Vedanti ji described Giani Puran Singh ji as anti Panthic, anti maryada, and narrow-minded. It went on to say “these decisions of Giani Puran Singh were due to vested interests which caused colossal damage to the Sikh Panth”. Yet Vedanti did not object to Puran Singh’s appointment to the exalted position of head Granthi of Darbar Sahib. Tradition has it that no hukamnama of Akal Takhat is complete without the presence and participation of the head Granthi of Darbar Sahib. Jathedar Vedanti, through a directive of the Akal Takhat issued on March 29, 2000, had emphasized on coordination among all high priests. But the fact remained that he has failed to ensure the participation of head Granthi of Darbar Sahib in the meetings of Sikh clergy so far. Giani Puran Singh ji, head Granthi of Darbar Sahib, refuses to attend any meeting of high priests chaired or attended by Joginder Singh Vedanti ji in his capacity as Jathedar of Akal Takhat.

Even though Jathedar Vedanti ji is hailed as most educated and experienced person with good command over Sikh scriptures, he edited the book ‘Gurbilas Patshahi Shevin’. Interestingly SGPC considered this book tantamount to blasphemy and banned it during Vedanti ji’s tenure as Jathedar Akal Takhat, even though it was the SGPC that published that book at its expense at the recommendation of Jathedars Manjit Singh and Vedanti Ji. It was none other than S. Gurbakhsh Singh Kala Afghana that exposed the contents of that book.
Tử vi माझे

June 2003

The Sikh Bulletin

Kal Afghan’s conclusions on Dasam Granth are supported by over-whelming majority of Sikh intellectuals all over the world. The active opposition against his position on Dasam Granth comes from a Sikh religious sect popularly known as Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Bhindran Wali Taksal, and Sant/Baba deras. All of these organizations and sects promote ritualistic practices and demand parrot like recitation of Gurbani without any need to understand it. Further they believe in Guru Gobind Singh Ji to be the author of every word in the Dasam Granth including highly objectionable erotic poetry. The jathedar embraces and promotes Sant/Baba deras by visiting them despite loud protests from mainstream Sikh Gurdwaras. He rather visit private homes of the wealthy but gullible Sikhs because of large dollar cheques of offering for Akal Takhat he pockets for himself.

While he is prosecuting Gurbakhsh Singh Kala Afghan with a vengeance on behest of undisclosed complainants he is completely mute and/or passive on several important issues confronting the Sikh Panth. Gurtej Singh Professor of Sikhism in his press note on May 9th, 2003 stated some of these issues. 1) Equal rights of women - Tradition over Gurbani. 2) Pampering of fake and morally bankrupt Sant/Babas- visiting deras in Chicago and New Mexico, USA but ignoring the local Gurdwaras and sangats. 3) Ritualistic practices at Darbar Sahib – Washing of floors with milk etc. 4) Issuing Hukamnamas and pronouncing punishments to enslave Sikh people – especially when his political masters command. 5) On going blasphemy by Naam Dhari sect – Rejection of Guru Granth as Guru.

Jathedar Vedanti ji has been indolent in the case of Raghbir Singh ex manager of Darbar Sahib and at present personal assistant to the president of SGPC for not implementing Akal Takhat directive (Hukamnama) allowing women equal right to perform service at Darbar Sahib. It is sad that Vedanti ji’s behavior as jathedar of Akal Takhat tends to confirm younger generations’ perception that religion is today the source of evil.

In concluding I would like to quote Professor Manjit Singh, Ex Acting Jathedar of Akal Takhat, from his speech at Samundari Hall on April 10, 1994:

“The service as Jathedar, Akal Takhat is a bestowal of Guru Granth and Guru Panth. It is an entraînment by the guru panth. (It means it can be withdrawn by the guru Panth at its pleasure) In carrying out the service as Jathedar if one acts under the influence of fear of any person, any organization or institution, worldly greed, and shows bias under any circumstances it will result in one losing (in the eyes of God) in this world as well as in the next one”.

These high sounding pronouncements are seemingly issued for the gallery and not for acting on them. Jathedars are more interested in ex-communicating Sikhs than propagating Sikh way of life as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. Jathedars ought to realize their job is to explain Gurbani for the spiritual welfare of the Sikhs and not control of their minds through threats of punishments and ex-communication.

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LUSTER OF GURBANI OR GOLD?

In the last two issues we have been keeping our readers informed about the much-publicized visit by our religious and political leaders to the dera of Baba D. Singh (Daljit Singh’s legal name). We believe it was not the glitter of gurbani that brought Vedanti and his entourage to Baba D’s dera but the glitter of gold. We know that in the case of a not well-known Kathakar Baba D. not only paid his fare but also an envelope stuffed with $500.00. Vedanti must command at least ten times that much. We know that at least at two houses in the Bay area he and his entourage received cash. Disparity in payment at one house lead to grumbling by one who received only $500.00 compared to $1100.00 to one Jathedar and $2100.00 to Vedanti. The driver of the car in which these gentlemen were traveling, Vedanti being in another car, did not know their names but the pecking order would seem to indicate that Tarlochan Singh, replacement for Manjit Singh at Kesgarh Sahib, received $1100.00 and Ranjit Singh got $500.00 and he was the one bitching about it.
The behavior of Jathedars is bad enough which can be attributed to greed but what is even more reprehensible is the behavior of American Sikhs who were falling all over themselves honoring him – to see him and to be seen by him. In his article, ‘The man and the office’ (p.8) Dr I. J. Singh observes that in the august gathering of otherwise intelligent people no body asked this highest religious office holder any question about the multitude of issues facing the panth nor did the reception format allow that sort of thing. It was all merry making and photo opportunity.

There is a lot of talk at this time about unity between Tohra and Badal. That there will be some sort of ‘unity’ is a forgone conclusion. Would it be too much to expect from them that they should reign in these Jathedars and Granthis that are running amok in diaspora and bringing disgrace to their high positions as if they were for sale to the highest bidder wealthy foreign Sikh totally ignorant of his faith and hungry only for photo opportunity? Aren’t these people employees of the SGPC? Shouldn’t they be required to report and deposit their loot into the Panthic treasury? If that is done it will take away the monetary incentive to rush overseas to the dera of any Tom, Dick and Harry. Shouldn’t there be an official policy of SGPC to ban visits by their employees to deras and other non-Sikh establishments?

Upon his return from pilgrimage to the dera of Sant Baba D. Singh, Jathedar of Akal Takht, Gyani Joginder Singh Vedanti was asked about the issue of contradiction between the SGPC traditions and his recent visits to different deras. Jathedar Vedanti said he believed that there was no harm in visiting those deras, which had been propagating teachings of the gurus and gurbani. We would like to ask Vedanti Ji what makes Baba D’s dera more special than Dhanwant, Ashutosh, Sacha Sauda, Nanaksar, Pihowewala, Rarewala, Daudhara, Mastuana, Baru Sahib, Bhania, Harian Belan etc., because if you ask them no body else does gurbani vichar better than they do. Does the Jathedar of Akal Takht think that no Gurdwara in diaspora, other than this dera and yogi’s ashram, engage in gurbani vichar?

Hardev Singh Shergill

KALA AFGHANA DECLARED ‘TANKHAIYA’

Tribune News Service Amritsar, May 10, 203

A Canada-based Sikh scholar, Gurbaksh Singh Kala Afgana, who has authored a set of 10 books, “Bipran Ki Rit Sach Da Marg” has been declared ‘tankhiai’. He had pointed an accusing finger on Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti for editing a book “Gurbilas Patshahi 6”, which was later banned by the SGPC.

The meeting of the Sikh clergy, held at the Akal Takht secretariat, unanimously resolved that Mr. Kala Afgana had indulged in blasphemous activities and contents of his books were against the Sikh tenets. The Sikh high priests said Mr. Kala Afgana had failed to turn up to clarify his position, though he was given enough time. The deadline fixed for his appearance at Akal Takht ended today.

Mr. Gurtej Singh, a Professor of Sikhism, described the decision of the Sikh clerics as ‘unfortunate’. He said the decision was not as per the Sikh traditions. Mr. Gurtej Singh said he had called a meeting of Sikh intellectuals in Chandigarh tomorrow to discuss the matter at length.

Earlier, the Sikh high priests had accepted the plea of Mr. Kala Afgana and allowed him to give his explanation through videoconferencing, which was later cancelled. Mr. Kala Afgana had pleaded that he could not appear in person at Akal Takht due to ill health and his close links with Sant Jarnail Singh Bhinderanwale. He had pleaded that the moment he entered India he could be arrested by security agencies. However, the Sikh clergy justified the decision of backing out on the videoconferencing option granted to Mr. Kala Afgana saying that they had the right to change such decisions.

In his last letter written to Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, Jathedar, Akal Takht, Mr. Kala Afgana had used derogatory language describing him as a ‘liar’ and ‘maha papri’. Taking serious note of the language used, Jathedar Vedanti said it was unpardonable. The Sikh high priests said if Mr. Kala Afgana failed to appear before Akal Takht by July 10, he would be punished as per the Sikh ‘maryada’. In such a case Mr. Kala Afgana could be declared excommunicated from the Panth.

The meeting was attended by Giani Joginder Singh Vedanti, Giani Balwant Singh Nandgarh, Giani Tarlochan Singh, Jathedars of Akal Takht, Dandama Sahib and Kesgarh Sahib, respectively, Giani Bhagwan Singh, Head Granthi, Akal Takht, and Giani Jagtar Singh, Granthi, Golden Temple. Asked Mr. Kala Afgana had pleaded that he could not appear due to ill health, which had already been accepted by the Sikh clergy, Giani Bhagwan Singh quipped he was misleading the Panth. In yet another significant development, Akal Takht decided to send a reminder to the state government for banning the activities of controversial god man Ashutosh.

UNI adds: Akal Takht also endorsed the ongoing efforts for unity between Mr. Parkash Singh Badal and Mr. Gurcharan Singh Tohra. Talking to reporters, Jathedar Vedanti said he favoured the unity move between the two Akali groups and was of the firm belief that misgivings, confusions and misunderstandings should be sorted out through dialogue.

On the issue of contradiction between the SGPC traditions and his recent visits to different deras, Jathedar Vedanti said he believed that there was no harm in visiting those deras, which had been propagating teachings of the gurus and gurbani.

On the issue of release of Sikh youths detained in different jails, he said he would make efforts after the receipt of the list of such persons.

Those who have one thing in their heart, and something else in their mouth, are judged to be false. || 1 || ED.||

The Sikh Center Roseville, 201 Berkeley Ave, Roseville, CA. 95678
PRESS RELEASE  
Jasvinder Singh, USA  
Sikh sangats across North America (USA and Canada), U.K., Australia and Dubai have called the decision to make Kalu Afghana Tankhaiya very unfortunate and unfair. This clearly makes obvious the vindictive nature of the Jathedars since Kala Afghana had exposed their wrong doing through highlighting the anti-Sikh writings in Gurbilas Patshahi 6 - a book compiled by Vedanti. Vedanti is the one who distorted Sikh history through the compilation of the book Gurbilas Patshahi 6. Kala Afghana has not written against the teaching of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. When a Hukamnama is unfair it cannot be honored even if the Akal Takhat Jathedar issues it. Vedanti is destroying the dignity of the Akal Takhat. There is going to be open defiance of the Akal Takhat directive until Vedanti is removed from his post and Kala Afghana given the honor he deserves as a true Sikh. There are plans underway to honor S. Gurbaksh Singh Kala Afghana, at various Gurdwaras across North America.

Sadhun, a website supporting and promoting his work has decided to openly defy the directive from Akal Takhat. The books are available for free download from this website www.sadapunjab.com as well as another website www.kalaafghan.com. The publication and sale of Kala Afghana’s work has not been affected by the directive from the Jathedars. We want as many Gursikhs as possible to read this work and decide for themselves who is right as per the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The analysis of Gurbilas Patshahi 6 done by Gurbaksh Singh Kala Afghana is available online and will be available in print later on this year. This text exposes how attempts were underway to take the Sikhs back to Hindu mythology. Once this analysis is out with the Sikh sangat the SGPC and its Jathedars will have trouble defending themselves.

In open defiance of Masand Vedanti, S. Kala Afghana’s critique of Vedanti’s book ‘Gurbilas Patshahi 6’ is being published by Khalsa Tricentennial Foundation of N.A. Inc., 201 Berkeley Ave. Roseville, CA 95678. All nine of S. Kala Afghana’s already published books are also available from this Foundation. Fax (916) 773-6784, E-mail: sikhbulletin@surewest.net

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WHY THE SIKHS SHOULD DEFY THE AKAL TAKHAT JATHEDARS?

Is the Akal Takhat functioning on principles of Sri Guru Granth Sahib?

The Akal Takhat has been an important throne for giving directives to the Sikhs. The question is of practice standards. The practice standards have to follow the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The people who have to maintain these practice standards are the Jathedars. The Jathedars, as per Prof. K.S. Badungar, are hired and fired by SGPC, which is controlled by Akalis who are power hungry and under pressure from the Central Government. So you can figure out for yourself what is the status of the word of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in all this.

A scholar sends the drafts of his books to the Jathedars at least a year before publication, seeking direction. Did the scholar get any direction from the Dharam Parchar Committee? The answer is ‘No’.

Was there any fault finding in the books over the years? The answer is ‘No’ again. The charges brought against Kala Afghana have been baseless. Nowhere has he defied the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Vedanti asserts that a decision from the Akal Takhat is final. Then:

- Why was the videoconference with Kala Afghana not held? To this Badungar had said that they did not want to change the tradition. But bringing the Chapati making machine in the langar is keeping the Sikh tradition of langar. What a joke?

- Parkash Singh Badal was summoned to Akal Takhat by Jathedar Ranjit Singh but never showed to date. Was Badal declared Tankhaiya? The answer is ‘No’. Is this the same Takhat where even Maharaja Ranjit Singh had to seek forgiveness? Why has Badal been an exception? Why are there different rules for different people?

- The ‘chairs in langar’ Hukamnama was a big joke. How can we justify that chairs in langar were bad tradition but Chapati machine in langar is a good tradition? There are numerous other examples of nonsensical Hukamnamas.

- When Sri Guru Granth Sahib clearly states equality for women then why have the Jathedars not been able to resolve the issue of Seva at the Golden Temple? Because the Jathedars are there to please their employer i.e. SGPC, keeping the word of the Guru is not their job.

- In 2000 the Jathedars issued a directive to stop open debate on Dasam Granth. It has been 3 years. What is taking so long to reach a decision? What is not clear about Dasam Granth? There is no way that it was written by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. They will not resolve this issue because ‘Kabiyo Baach Benati Chaupai’ is from ‘Triacharitar’ where bulk of the pornographic charittars are and this has been part of Amrit Sanchaar. So if they do not accept ‘Triacharitar’ then they will have to exclude Kabiyo Baach Benati Chaupai. If they accept ‘Triacharitar’ for ‘Benati Chaupai’ then they have to justify all the pornographic charittars as being creation of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

The ten Gurus conveyed the same message. Their message is now before us in the form of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Every Sikh has to listen, understand and implement the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Our center for direction is under vested political influence so to expect fairness from Sri Akal Takhat Sahib in this day and age is a mere dream. Until dignity, honesty and fairness are brought to the Akal Takhat there is no reason to follow its directives, which are not in accordance with teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The political environment has gotten so bad that all one can expect is the control of our Akal Takhat by Mahants. Vedanti published the blasphemous book Gurbilas Patshahi 6 at the
expence of SGPC and had it endorsed by 14 Panthic gems including Jathedar Joginder Singh Kalsi. Why was no action taken against them? Just because they were politically important? And it is O.K. for an Akali leader / SGPC member to knowingly distort the Sikh history through release of this book and guess what the timing of release of this book by SGPC was, April 1999? This book was originally compiled in 1718 by Mahants and it is the basis for our current Maryada. It is shocking to hear all this but it is true. The Sikhs have become word worshippers. That is why these books made it so far and were being reintroduced to the Sikh sangat. Now the SGPC will say that they had banned this book but why did such a distortion of Sikh history and insult to the Gurus have happened to begin with under SGPC seal. Where was the Dharam Parchar Committee then? Were they sleeping?

The 14 Panthic gems that supported and promoted Gurbirnas Patshahi 6 (which is now banned) were not called to the Akal Takhat and declared Tankhaiya. The ban was announced in Oct 2000. There has been sufficient time to have called these 14 Panthic gems. Did Vedanti, the compiler of this book, ever seek forgiveness? They talk about Ram Rai’s incident in history on the stage but Guru Shabad was distorted through out this book, but this is not Guru Nanak’s Takhat that is why Jathedar Vedanti has not punished himself and the 14 Panthic gems.

The prevalent practice has been to fear the word from the Akal Takhat. The present Akal Takhat is just another building. It is a seat of double standards. Practice there is not per the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. So until the honor and dignity is re-established to the Akal Takhat for a true Sikh there is no reason to follow the directives of politicized Jathedar.

The time has come for Sikhs across the world to rise against our so-called religious bodies and establish and practice maryada as per the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Once in the recent past (1984) the Akal Takhat was physically demolished. The Jathedars are demolishing the principles of practice of the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The first step is removal of Jathedar of Akal Takhat Joginder Singh Vedanti for having compiled and publishing Gurbirnas Patshahi 6.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to the freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” Also check www.article19.org

The ban on books of Kala Afghana is a clear violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 19. How can the Sikhs not respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has defended thousands of them (asylum seekers) facing persecution from the Indian Government? Let us all protest against such a ban. Feel free to download these books from http://gurbani.sadapunjab.com and www.kalaafghana.com  Guru Fateh, Jasvinder Singh, USA

VEDANTI’S DOUBLE STANDARD
Former Jathedar seeks clarification from Vedanti.
Reacting to the excommunication of Gurbakhsh Singh Kala Afghana for his controversial writings by Akal Takht Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti, former Jathedar of Akal Takht Darshan Singh Khalsa, has sought clarifications from the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs on the anti-Sikh compilation in Purukh Guru, a ‘granth’ released by Namdhari sect.

In a letter to the Akal Takht Jathedar, he has said he was not casting any aspersions on the edict, but wanted to satisfy himself about the status of the granth which not only challenges the position and authority of Guru Granth Sahib, but also undermines the concept of baptism by ‘Khande Ka Pahul’ and questions the validity of Panj Piaras. He said it was unfortunate that Akal Takht took no notice of the controversy after the publication of the granth, but took a strong exception to the writings of Kala Afghana. In fact, the SGPC had honoured some of the prominent personalities during the World Sikh Sammelan in 1994-95.

Citing some of the blasphemous statements from the granth, he said throughout the book Guru Granth Sahib has been mentioned as Sri Granth Sahib. The book also says that it is a lie that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the status of guru on Guru Granth Sahib. It goes on to question the very concept of having an inanimate granth as guru in place of a living entity.” He said the book also mentioned that the practice of worshipping Guru Granth Sahib began during the British rule since the Britishers were afraid of the growing popularity of Satguru Ram Singh. They impressed upon writers and sardars to spread the word that no living being could be a guru and that guru Gobind Singh had conferred the status of the last guru on Guru Granth Sahib.

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AN OPEN APPEAL TO SIKH LEADERSHIP
Kirpal Singh, USA.
Date: Vaisakh 18, 535 NS (Nanakshahi)
Dear Veers & Bhain Jees,
Waheguru Jee Kaa Khalsa, Waheguru Jee Kee Fateh.
Unlike Delhi, Sri Akal Takhat Sahib is an eternal Throne of the Almighty that stands for nothing but Truth, Justice & Fair play. At this sacred seat there is no room for any kind of Falsehood, Injustice, or Deceit. The games of Deceit, Injustice & Falsehood belong only to Delhi, and not to Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. Unfortunately, due to our prolonged contact with Delhi, quite a few of us seem to have forgotten the distinction between the two.

Walking on the lines, (and perhaps even under the directions) of Delhi, the Bipar controlled "Masand Tolla," in control of our Sikh Institutions is about to force Sri Akal Takhat Sahib into committing an act of gross injustice of Historic proportions. The Masand Tolla, intoxicated with its power, is on its way to dupe the
Takhat into denying the process of fair play to a renowned Sikh scholar S. Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana. This scholar has authored a set of very Pro-Gurmat, anti-Bipar, & anti-Masand books titled "Bipran Kee Reet Ton. Sach Daaz Marag" i.e. From the Ways of the Bipars (Agents of the Brahmanical Snake) to the Ways of Truth.

The game of the "Masand Tolla", deceit, is already in place. With the vicious spread of misinformation of the unsubstantiated fabricated charges against the scholar, it has already succeeded in duping the Takhat into:

a) Refusing to listen to the Scholar’s counsel, the National Professor of Sikhism, S. Gurtej Singh.

b) Demeaning the Takhat by counseling it into backing out of its Takhat promise to listen to the Scholar through Video conferencing.

c) Demonizing the scholar through taking of the one-sided "act" of banning of his books without providing him an opportunity to defend himself.

d) Insisting into calling the Author to Sri Amritsar Sahib on May 10, 2003, despite being fully aware of his inability to do so.

From the game of deception being played so far, the mega-plan of the "Masand Tolla" seems to be to dupe the Takhat into getting the renowned author ex-communicated on one deceptive technicality or the other. Therefore, please act quickly before the "Masand Tolla" succeeds in its game of tattooing the sacred face of our Sri Akal Takhat Sahib with an irremovable blot of an act of gross injustice of "Sach Noo Phaansee." Please don’t let Sri Akal Takhat Sahib sink down to the Ways of Delhi. Please help it to maintain its dignity by following the Sikh Ways of "Truth, Justice, and Fair play."

SRI AKAL TAKHAT A SEAT OF DHAKAY-SHAHI
Kirpal Singh, USA.

Date: Vaisakh 30, 535 NS (Nanakshahi)

Why have the Jathedar Sahiban at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib chosen the path of DHAKAY-SHAHI (Terrorism) in dealing with S. Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana, a Canada based Sikh Scholar? Are the TRUTHS, exposed by the Sardar too harsh to bear? Why are the Jathedar Sahians turning pale with fear of facing the TRUTH? Instead of OPENNESS, why are they insisting upon a path of deceitful tactics of SECRECY? Why have they chosen to lower the prestige of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib by making the Takhat to back out of its Takhat Promise of holding an OPEN Video Conference with S. Kala Afghana?

Are the Jathedar Sahibs afraid of the leaking out of the TRUTH about the hollowness of their carelessly prepared, baseless charges against S. Kala Afghana? Do the Jathedar Sahibs lack the confidence to publicly face the meek Canadian Scholar? Why do the Jathedar Sahibs want to hold their proceedings in Secrecy? Why are they refusing to entertain S. Gurtej Singh, the knowledgeable Professor of Sikhism to appear before the Takhat on behalf of the Sardar? How come they are trying to hide behind some baseless argument of Maryada? Is their Maryada better than that of Guru Arjan Sahib? If Guru Arjan Sahib Jee could allow Bhai Ladha Jee to appear on behalf of Satta & Balwand, then what is the big deal here? Do the Jathedar Sahibs consider them to be above Guru Arjan Patshah? Since when has Sri Akal Takhat Sahib become a protégé of Delhi by adopting the tools of its tyrannical secret injustice, like the TADA and POTA (the tyrannical tools of the Indian Government used for inflicting injury, and denial of justice to its minorities)? How can the Beacon of Eternal Justice, Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, be allowed to become a Throne of "No Daleel, No Vakeel, and No Appeal"?

These are just a small sample of questions that come to mind when one sees the prestige of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib being dragged into the mud by the deceitful moves of the present day Jathedar Sahiban. If the Jathedar Sahiban think that they can get away with murder without anyone noticing, then they are highly mistaken. The whole Global Sangat is watching and nobody except some Chamchas of Bipars (Agents of the Brahmanical Snake) are liking the spectacle of transforming of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib from a Throne of Eternal Justice to a Seat of Dhakay-shahi (Terrorism.)

To maintain the dignity and prestige of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, it is requested that all of its proceedings should be conducted in an open, fearless, considerate, judicial, and truthful manner. An open Video Conference with S. Kala Afghana will be a good start. He should be openly and publicly questioned about his thoughts for everyone to see. If he is advocating anything that is Anti-Gurmat or Anti-Sikh, then let everyone see for himself or herself. The childish and deceitful game of forcing him to come to Amritsar at the risk of his freedom and life should be immediately dropped.

No body in the Sikh world should try to expose his/her stupidity by boasting that nothing will happen to S. Kala Afghana if he chooses to go to India. Helplessness of the Sikh World and its inability to get justice for the Sikhs is too well known. Cases of disappearances and murders of Jathedar Kaonke, S. Khalra along with thousands of others are too fresh, as a list of painful reminders. Let none of us forget that, as a result of Sikh efforts in Hindu India not a single Hindu Fly even has been punished for the Holocaust against the Sikhs. For the Agents of the Bipars, elimination of S. Kala Afghana or of any other Sikh is nothing more than, just another number.
Therefore, let Sri Akal Takhat Sahib not become a partner in crime by its insistence on DHAKAY-SHAHI, to force S. Kala Afghana to take the risky venture.

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THE MAN AND THE OFFICE
I.J. Singh, New York

The question was what to do with the visiting Jathedar of the Akal Takht.

Some Sikhs remembered that when Jathedar Ajnoha, who held the same office visited New York, a reception for him was mounted in Waldorf Astoria, arguably one of the most prestigious hotels in an incomparable city. It is a different matter that the function erupted in fisticuffs. I don’t quite remember how it all concluded because I walked out. Perhaps about ten years ago, Professor Manjit Singh, who was then the acting Jathedar of the Akal Takht, came calling and the Sikhs of New York honored him at a lavish spread at the Hilton.

Now the current title-holder Jathedar Joginder Singh Vedanti was visiting. Sikhs were falling all over themselves honoring him – to see him and to be seen by him. But now some uncomfortable questions had also surfaced.

Jathedar Vedanti seems like a very nice, genial, scholarly man. Every one tells me that he is much more approachable than most of his predecessors. They also tell me that he is well intentioned who wants to do the right things, but that he is hemmed in by the political realities in India. All this may very well be true; certainly I am as ignorant of Punjab politics as can be. But he seems to come with considerable unwelcome baggage.

I notice that his name (and therefore his office) has been associated with the summoning of Gurbaksh Singh Kala Afghana and the banning of his books. Now book banning like book burning is a practice that, to my mind, is completely antithetical to Sikh philosophy. The way to deal with bad ideas is by focusing the light of better and opposing ideas on them in the free marketplace of ideas, not by book banning and then punishing the messenger. Destroying the messenger makes us no better than the Mullahs of Iran and how they tried to silence Salman Rushdie. It also reminds me of the old Roman Catholic clergy and how it dealt with dissenters since before Galileo to nearly the end of the twentieth century when it finally stopped publishing lists of books that its followers were refrained from reading. This is not the company we need to cultivate.

It is also on the watch of Jathedar Vedanti that Sikh women have raised the flag of rebellion because they are not being permitted to serve – clean or sing the liturgy – inside the Harmandir (Golden temple) that is the premier gurdwara of Sikhs. It is not enough to sing paens to gender equality every morning as we do – “So kyon manda akhiye jit jamen rajaan.” There is absolutely no rhyme or reason to such a discriminatory policy, but the Jathedar sits like an ostrich with its head buried in sand studying the issue.

Sikh women the world over are asking that our practices be reexamined. Why is it that the woman walks behind a man during the Sikh marriage ceremony? Why is it that the bride’s father ceremoniously hands her over to the groom? In the ritual of the Sikh wedding ceremony (anand karaj) did we merely adapt the ceremony from the majority Hindu community; Hindus walk several times around a fire, so we perambulate the Guru Granth. These are issues that will not go away, yet the office of the Akal Takht sits with nary a peep.

Our gurdwaras all over the world, including our historical gurdwaras in India, are built so as to be inaccessible to the handicapped. Admittedly many were built decades, even centuries ago. But the world has moved since. Now laws demand that public buildings be within reach of the handicapped. I am reminded of the fact that Professor Darshan Singh, himself a renowned ragee and a former Jathedar of the Akal Takht was recently refused permission to perform by a Canadian gurdwara because he could no longer sit cross legged – he had both knees replaced. We need to modify our gurdwara facility to accommodate people who cannot sit on the floor, cannot walk in unassisted, need a wheelchair and a ramp. Yet, the Akal Takht issues no directives and makes no effort to initiate and impel changes.

The question of the authenticity of major portions of the writings of Guru Gobind Singh continues to divide the Sikhs worldwide; the Akal Takht refuses to act decisively, or even to direct an exploratory, investigative, scholarly process to deal with the matter. The issue of a Sikh (Nanakshahi) calendar hangs fire for years, and the Akal Takht looks for compromises that resolve little. Dare I say, like Nero it fiddles while Rome burns?

I look at the fact that Sikhs in India are vying to get reclassified as scheduled classes. Such labels are caste based and that would be absolutely contrary to Sikh teaching. What does the Akal Takht have to say about it? Probably nothing at all.

Then there are the events of 1984. How many Sikhs were killed in those dark years? How many were jailed for years without trials? There are no numbers and even now 19 years later there are no efforts at accounting or justice.

Think for a moment. The holocaust occurred in the 1940’s. Sixty years later the fate of the Jewish victims is still being investigated. Guilty Nazis are still being
identified. Oral history projects across the world are documenting who did what to whom, so that the world would never forget. The evidence of atrocities against the Sikhs in 1984 is still available but is becoming rapidly tainted and degraded every day. (Do not forget that uncounted Sikhs died in 1984 at the Akal Takht and in the Harmandir.) If the Akal Takht will not take the lead in preserving our collective history, who will?

Our history also lies in the rare and handwritten documents, many of which were destroyed in 1984. Other documents and artifacts over time have become the property of a few families, but they really belong to the nation. How to preserve them and yet make them available to people worldwide and to scholars is a question that we ignore only at our own peril. Who better to lead us in this in the name of all Sikhs than the Jathedar of the Akal Takht?

At a more personal level a book ostensibly edited by Jathedar Vedanti himself has become a lightening rod for criticism, but there is no systemic effort to evaluate it.

While major issues facing Sikhs remain unresolved, the office of the Akal Takht remains embroiled in local election disputes of gurdwaras or the matter of legitimacy of langar if it is served on chairs and tables, rather than on the floor, and that too in gurdwaras thousands of miles away, in local conditions of which the Takht staff remain entirely uninformed.

I have not raised any issues of which most Sikhs are unaware. These matter invade our consciousness everyday. Yet at the reception for the Jathedar, no one raised any such questions. No one initiated an honest debate. But then I have to add that the format of the meeting did not permit any debate or discussion.

It is as if to question the Jathedar would be disrespect to the office. I suggest that this attitude emerges from our Indian cultural heritage, where people in authority – parents, teachers, religious icons, even politicians and statesmen must never be questioned. A knee jerk response of respect and affirmation is the only way. I add that this could also stem from our colonial legacy when we had masters, but I suspect that the feudal Indian society with its caste system had perhaps already broken the spirit. The spirit of free inquiry and the emphasis on accountability are inseparable and essential, but they do not seem to be in the Indian cultural ethos.

Let’ s look at the President of the United States. I am aware that the office deserves respect, even if, at times, the office-holder does not. The classic examples are Presidents Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam years, Richard Nixon during his Watergate saga, and the current occupant of the office George W. Bush through much of his tenure so far. Most Americans are able to separate the office from the man. We have enormous respect for the office but this does not automatically translate into similar reverence for whoever happens to sit in that chair. His legitimate orders are obeyed, but analysis and criticism of the man can and does occur; in fact it never ceases.

The best example of the separation of the man from the office that I can think of occurred some years ago during the Presidency of Richard Nixon. The President was to honor American Nobel Prize winners. One man, Linus Pauling, who had won two – for chemistry and for peace – spent the morning outside the White house protesting the Vietnam War and then he dressed up and entered the White house for the ceremony that honored him and others like him.

The first example was his view of the President’s policies. Linus Pauling had the citizen’s right and the obligation to dissent, and he did so. His second action was respect for the highest office in the land – that of the president. In fact, not much later, Richard Nixon left the Presidency in disgrace. In retrospect, it was the man that was degraded, not the office. And that is how it should be.

Sometimes the office makes the man, other times the man shapes the office. It is a lesson that we Sikhs need to learn. We need to keep in mind that it is in discussion and debate that we sharpen our focus, define our goals and hone our skills.

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DISCOURSE WITH JATHEDARS

Dear Editor:

For a couple of days, the Jathedars of Akal Takhat, Anandpur Sahib and Patna Sahib were available at Chicago. The local dera Gurujot Parkash run by Baba Daljit Singh had invited them among two - dozen religious and political personalities to attend a ten-day long Keertan Darbar. The management of another local Gurdwara situated near Palatine has repeatedly filed their objections with Akal Takhat that by responding to Baba Daljit Singh the Takhat Jathedars are actually promoting Derawad. Baba Daljit Singh justifies the single person management on the ground that it is free from bitterness of group-ism and polities. Baba promotes his political interests by purchasing personal publicity and comfort when each and every one of his guests vie with each other to shower lengthy praises for inviting them, from as far as India.

Mahabir Singh Dhillon got permission from Baba Daljit Singh to talk to the Jathedars only for a couple of minutes. The room was full and we could talk while standing only.
Sardar Dhillon expressed his concern about the incident of T.V. Showing Sikhs beating Sikhs in front of S.G.P.C. Offices in the Darbar Sahib complex. And I also said that has given a very bad and shameful image of Sikhs worldwide. Jathedar Vedanti jee did not respond but the Anandpur Sahib Jathedar blamed the hostile media for it. Then I expressed my concern that root cause of problem is that we have no sound system in place that could ensure persons of merit coming to occupy the seats of religious power nor we have any system of checks and balances that could safeguard against any misuse. Though the Guru’s edict is, “Takhat bahe Takhte ke laik”. Resultantly we had to face very ridiculous situations about 

**Langar Hukamnama**, another one issue not from the Takhat but from Gunah hundreds of miles away. However, Jathedar Anandpur Sahib dismissed our concern saying they have already written to S.G.P.C. Then I presented a copy of my book titled “Evolution of Khalsa- Sufferings and Successes” and invited their attention to page 4 containing the proposal of worldwide electoral college of 2000 electing a council of 200, further to elect an executive of 20. Page 5 proposal is about the Jathedars and runs thus: “proposed minimum qualification for a Takhat Jathedar is at least an M.A. in Divinity, Sikh history, research, in Gurmat. 5 years term. (Renewable for one term), Bheta Rs. 15 to 20 thousand, car with driver, house, medical allowance.”

With me, I had a few sets of 3 papers pinned together. One was a copy of an E-Mail sent to Baba Daljit Singh requesting him to adopt the loving title of Bhai instead of Baba or Sant Baba. **However, he claims “Baba is my first name and not an assumed honorific title”.** The other was a copy of a highly well balanced editorial written by Punjab Times. It was having a fair proposal to solve Afghana problem. The 1st was my own article as published in the Punjab Times dated March 15, 2003 about the subject of The Sikh Institutions and Kala Afghana. While handing over the set to Jathedar Akal Takhat I was explaining to him that the contents of all were principle based and not personality based. On hearing the mention of the mere name of Kala Afghana the Anandpur Sahib Jathedar Gyani Tarlochan Singh left his seat and advanced towards me to say that “We have already decided about him, make no mention of him”. Then I told him that you have yet to hear him on May 10th. Then he reacted: “Send him”. (What arrogance! ED.) He was told that Kala Afghana couldn’t come because of warrant of his arrest. Then the Jathedar said there is no such warrant. I argued that he has repeatedly written in his books that the Govt. of India had twice approached the Canadian Govt. to apprehend him. Then the Jathedar said that Afghana was telling lies and making excuses. **Again I reminded the Jathedar that Afghana has written several letters to you repeating the same fact and “if you are so sure that there are no warrants then just write to him like that.” His reply was, “Why should I?” I said, “Because you are saying so.” Again he said “no”. Then I remarked that, “You are saying something but acting differently.”

Then I started addressing the Akal Takhat Jathedar that no writer is ever 100% correct; the ratio of 49 to 51 provides the acceptability or otherwise. Then I posed a question to Vedanti jee as to whether his writing in Gurbilas Patshahi-6 is 100% correct? His reply was that he has not written it. I replied, “You edited it and recommended it”. He enquired whether I have read the “bhumika”. I said yes and added the mere putting of a vague caution that there are some erroneous facts and the readers may check up does not absolve the editor from his responsibility to ensure that the content does not contradict Gurmat.

I questioned the Jathedar as to what extent the Parkash of Dasam Granth along with Guru Granth, as at Takhats Hazoor Sahib and Patna Sahib, is in accord with the Panthic Rehat Maryada of 1945? At that the Patna Sahib Jathedar left his seat to come near me to pose his question to me as to whether I have read the Jaap Sahib or not? I replied to him that here the question is different and it is whether the Panthic Rehat Maryada at both these Takhats is being duly observed or not? At that, Sardar Bhajan Singh Ahluwalia, General Secretary of Delhi Gurdwara Committee approached me to say that if I let him have my papers, he will correspond with me, after due study.

The above facts show that the attitude of Jathedars towards Afghana is hostile. As such they should themselves withdraw from judging the case of Kala Afghana. To ensure impartiality the matter may be given to a panel of retired Sikh Judges whose majority opinion should be binding on all concerned. Such an arrangement could ensure to look as if justice is being done.

Sincerely,

U. S. Gill, Arlington Hts. U.S.A.

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**Gurbilas Pranawh**

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AN INTERVIEW WITH PROF. DARSHSAN SINGH

For the good of Sikhism, politicians must be ousted from Gurudwara administration. Prof. Darshan Singh, Former Jathedar, Akal Takhat Sahib.

Q. Singh Sahib, you have had a brief stint as Jathedar of Akal Takhat, and you are regarded as the foremost among those 'Ragis' (singers of Gurbani) who, through the medium of 'Kirtan' have made true and faithful explication of Gurmat. You have observed Sikh leaders from close quarters and your reading of Sikh society too is beyond comparison. What would you like to say about today's conditions?

A. Truly speaking, today's conditions are similar to those...
obtaining during the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib. At that time, Guru himself was living, and so the truth came to light soon. Today the 22-pseudo claimants to Guruship are doing greater harm than they did at that time. Rather, today every 'Dhirmalia' has started calling himself 'Guru Panth'. They have usurped both political and economic power. With the help of money power, they have come to possess 'religious authority' also. 'Religious authority' is the backbone of a nation or community. The stranglehold of politicians, bereft of righteousness over this power, is proving to be highly detrimental to Sikh religion.

Q. Talking about religion, would you like to say that the situation is worse than that prevailing during the time of the 'mahants' (priests)?

A. Yes, it is worse than that. Whatever the 'mahants' did, they did so openly and their actions were transparent also. Today's politicians get everything done through their hirelings by sitting at a distance, and they themselves go to the extent of asserting that they do not interfere in religious matters whereas the fact remains, however, that it is their will that prevails in religious affairs. Whether it is the question of selecting SGPC President or of Akal Takhat Jathedar, all decisions are taken by the politicians and they do so keeping their own interests and convinces in view. On high positions too, the political bosses appoint those persons who are ready to dance to their tune-no matter, what their merits or demerits are. They are appointed in an arbitrary manner, and so are they removed in an equally degrading way.

Q. You too had accepted the office of Akal Takhat Jathedar, but you resigned after a short period?

A. When during SGPC General House meeting, they (members of the SGPC) did not give up squabbling and using abusive/foul language in the august presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and did not agree to show due respect to the Guru, I did 'Sukhasan' (closing of the holy scripture) and tendered my resignation.

Q. What do you think, should be done in the present circumstances so that Sikhism can prosper once again?

A. The first thing we have to do is to liberate the Gurudwaras from the politicians. People working in Gurudwaras will not be able to do their duty honestly so long as their nose-string is in the hands of politicians. If politicians continue to dominate Sikh religion for another five-seven years, Sikh religion will suffer irreparable damage, I tell you.

Q. Do you want to say that religion and politics should now be separated from each other?

A. The closeness between religion and politics meant that the politician should act as per the principles of religion and after taking guidance and direction from it and that he should manage religion in accordance with the dictates of politics. Today, the politicians who talk in term of 'politics and religion being one' in fact misuse religion for furthering their political interests, and they do not serve religion at all. When the BJP leaders say this, their one and only aim is to gain political mileage by misusing religion. This is fully applicable in the case of present-day Akalis also. The Guru-bestowed doctrine of 'miri-piri' was not wrong. It was a valid doctrine. But if, by repeating the refrain of "religion and politics are one", politicians make their politics establish its hegemony over religion, we will have to think in terms of ousting politicians from the Gurudwaras at least, if we want to save our religion. By doing so, religion will be saved and so will be the Gurudwaras, and the doctrine of 'miri-piri' will also remain intact. This doctrine is needed more outside the Gurudwaras that is, it is needed where the politicians or the ruler tyrannizes the people, where he is a tyrant or a dictator. A politician seeking guidance from religion is one who dispenses justice to the people, grants due recognition to them and regards himself not as the ruler but as the servant of the people. Repeating a principle in the manner of a parrot often proves non-productive also. It has to be seen why a good principle has started yielding negative results and what amendments it requires. Remove the causes, which have made it yield negative results. In this way, the doctrine too will be saved. But if no effort is made to remove the causes, which have turned it non-productive, then gradually people will start finding fault with the doctrine itself. Principles are laid down for the guidance of the people, but when we give them the shape of rites and rituals, they become a problem with us. Nations and communities, not aware of the changing situations, destroy even good principles by turning them into rituals. But awakened people find some way out to avoid ill effects of bad customs and rituals even. If by remaining a slave to the dead tradition, we continue offering lip service to the principle of 'miri-piri', it will produce only negative results for the Panth. But if by understanding its true meanings, we stop the gurudwara administration from going into the hands of politicians, then first of all religion will be saved, and secondly, we won't be disappointed and disillusioned with the doctrine itself.

Q. What would you like to say about the way SGPC authorities got the 'Satnam-chanting' Khalsa Panchayat workers beaten up by their hirelings?

A. It was a very cheap and ignoble action, which deserves the severest condemnation. Sikh congregations have every right to lodge a peaceful protest in front of the
SGPC office. SGPC officials’ statement that this cannot be permitted within the Darbar Sahib complex is not tenable at all. The ‘dhama’ (sit in strike or picketing) was not being offered in Darbar Sahib at its ‘parkarma’ (circumambulatory path round the pool), rather it was being done before the SGPC office. The committee office is separate from Sri Darbar Sahib. Within the Darbar Sahib precincts, one cannot go with shoes on while in the SGPC office, all go about their work in their shoes. Sri Darbar Sahib is a sacred place. It is a place of religious worship. The SGPC office is neither a place of worship nor is it a holy one. Even there, the Khalsa Panchayat workers did not do anything as was unbecoming of Gursikhs. Remaining completely peaceful, they were going there while reciting 'Satnam Waheguru' (True is God's Name). The treatment meted out to them was in no way different from the one meted out to the Akalis by Mahant Narainoo. It is beyond me how any Akali can behave in such a manner. Only a person in whom religion and righteousness are dead can treat his opponents in this manner. Even if the congregation indulge in some wrongdoing, it does not behoove the managers of a religious institution to make a devilish use of power and usurp the Sangat's right to protest or to present a demand or a memorandum. Surely, no Gursikh can do so.

Q. What would you like to say about the way S. Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana is being harassed and humiliated by summoning him at Akal Takhat?

A. The issues raised by S. Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana are perfectly valid. I have also raised the same issues in 'Ujjario Deep' and in my forth-coming book Brother Kala Afghana’s problem is that he does not know how to put restraint on his language and he needlessly makes people around him his enemies. About me also he has used the expression 'professional ragi'. This is not a good way of presenting one's point of view. Whatever may be the reason, but if he changes his style of writing only a little, then, as I have stated earlier, the issues raised by him deserve the attention of all of us. There is nothing wrong in summoning him at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, but it will be difficult to answer why they did not give him any reply when, before publishing the books, the writer had sought their opinion and direction regarding any shortcomings, failings and mistakes in his writings. A writer will be guilty in the eyes of only if he publishes a book without sending the manuscript and seeking its direction and guidance thereon. Even now the Akal Takhat Jathedar can give directions to the writer after getting the opinion of scholars, but he cannot be equated with those writers who did not seek Akal Takhat's direction at all before publishing their works.

Q. What would you like to say about the manner in which Sikh women are being denied some of the rights that Sikh men enjoy in Sri Darbar Sahib?

A. In Gurmat, discrimination between man and woman is a sin of ignorance, and not of our intelligence and understanding. In my press statements also, I have made it clear that doing so will amount to renouncing Gurmat. If this anti-Gurmat restriction was imposed during the time of the 'mahants' (priests), it will in no way be proper to continue with it. After reading my statement, I got a phone call from Head Granthi Giani Bhagwan Singh asking me not to support the demand raised by Sikh women. The argument he gave was that bad elements would also start coming and their interest would be limited to teasing the ladies. He said that this had happened on many occasions earlier also. He used some words, which I cannot utter from my lips. I observed that if it had happened earlier the negligence was theirs, but if he was worried about the future, I could tell him how to avoid any taking place for sure. Gurmat has to be enforced in toto and removing every obstacle or hurdle in its path is even more necessary. I am sure that Sikh women will get their rights soon.

[Courtesy The Spokesman Weekly's Monthly Issue April 2003]

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SIKHISM: ACADEMIC FORUM
Guru Nanak’s Mind & Historical Research
Part 3 of 3
Sulakhan S. Dhillon, Berkeley, CA
To assess the impact of the medieval period on Guru Nanak though a complex problem, we only reflect, in general, the spirit and the impressions of the medieval religious reality that appears to be hovering on the horizon. We have discussed this issue, more in detail, under the heading, Medieval Religious Reality in the 2nd part of this series, published in the May 2003 issue of the The Sikh Bulletin. Now, we will, in this discussion, only recall the spirit of the medieval religious atmosphere at the time of Guru Nanak.

10. Medieval Religious Spirit
The distinct feature of the Bhagti movement, at this time, was that it was appealing to the common man, and popularized the awareness of religious vitality, and seemed to bring God closer to man. This added new excitement and meaning in their lives, and the effect of producing a new religious consciousness in the society. It also produced new and popular literature, music and art, depicting the scenes of the stories and moods of the saints, which transformed the spiritual landscape of Northern India. Since its contents came out of the classical Hindu, Sufi, and Islamic traditions, it did not push the traditional religious ground away from the people, but instead pulled them together in a new religious fervor. The devotees or the Bhagats brought Rama, Krishna and the face of Allah closer to man’s daily life than perceiving it far removed on the metaphysical...
plane, which had been the case for centuries. Now they could feel and experience a religious spirit in their bones, through its poetry and music. The Bhajans and Qwalis that made religious experience vital became part of daily life to make it meaningful. Such a spirit easily crossed the rigid lines of accepted religions. Bhagats such as Kabir, who spoke boldly against the strict Islamic or Hindu restrictions that held people to the repressive lower status of social existence, began to feel freedom in their minds. This new spirit of the age was readily accepted and united people, giving them new hope. The effects of this new spirit have been long lasting, in certain layers of society, which, for a sensitive eye, are observable to this day. Bhagat Kabir and Farid are often quoted by people in their conversations. People became fond of engaging in Mahrafat (inquiry among the lovers of the transcendence). Guru Nanak was fond of such occasions as evident by his Bani Sidh Ghost and the conversations with the Sufis, particularly with Sheikh Ibrahim of Pak Pattan, as referred before. Guru Nanak, being a mystic himself, attracted Sufi mystics who felt kinship with him. One can experience such a spirit present as one reads or listens the Bani of Sheikh Farid. His Bani lifts the mind to the truth of the eventuality of human life on earth. This brings universal truth to the mind of man.

The Classical Hinduism came into contact with Islam as well as with Sufi mysticism prior to the 14th and 15th century which brought new dimensions of various religious contents and mentors together. Some scholars rightly classify this period as having the plurality of religious traditions. It brought the unity among other mystics whether of Hindu orientation or Muslim. The full credit for such a spirit of religiosity goes to the Bhagats like Kabir Farid, Mira Bai, Nam Dev, Guru Nanak and others. The respect of the Bhagats, who spoke fearlessly and gave people confidence to pursue religion on their own freed them from listening to the Pundits and their rigid methods of tapas which were full of restrictions. The rigid dogmas of the traditional religions began to crumble, which benefited the lower social classes, who have been oppressed in the class distinctions for centuries. These factors cross-fertilized and produced a new vital reality of its own.

This new reality produced the dynamics of mysticism and humanism. The Bhajans of the Bhagats and their writings achieved supremacy. In this atmosphere of romantic love of the divine, in which bhagats were speaking freely, brought hope to people for their salvation. In a sense, Bhagats, including Guru Nanak who delivered the new vision of “life divine” without the hierarchy of Brahmans made the growth of Sikhism easier since his message of experiencing God within man, coincided with that of the Bhagats.

Such a spirit of the poetic age of religious mysticism does blur the clear scholarly distinctions of the contents of traditional Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and other system of thought. The use of common words to express the religious experiences of various leanings and their usage got cross-fertilized. Terms such as Gian, Muksha and Virag are strictly meaningful during this period since they commonly lead one to what the Bhagats were saying in their writings. This terminology leads one easily to trace their Sanskrit origins. This factor further complicates the intellectual distinctions and meanings and usage. Terms such as Hari, Bhagwan, Khuda, Khassam, Rahim, Maya, Sahj and many others, created a new complex of language (milieu).

This trend of common usage of language encouraged unity as well as opportunity of open interaction among many Saints, Sanyasis, Bhagats, Yogis and Fakirs. Also, the elements of Sufism, for instance, blended in the literature of the medieval period and brought the philosophical and religious meanings of the terms such as Fana, Baka, Hallal, Hukam, Raza, and Sahj into the common and popular usage. This situation obviously presented some difficulties in the effort to trace scholarly origins of religious doctrines.

The overwhelming impact of the cultural, theological and linguistic milieu of the medieval period also created a paradoxical situation for the people as well as for the scholars who sought a more clear logical ground to seek historical links to some of the religious movements. How would you deal with the cross-cultural terminology such as found in the writings of the Adi Granth? This period creates a new field of religious reality in which Arabic and Persian terms such as Ishaq, Mohabut, Rte-rung, Parvardghar, Khair, Bakshundgi and many more occur and makes the interpretation of theology rather difficult. These terms indeed became part of Sikhism and bring new understanding of other traditions closer. The meanings and the usage of the terms like Raza, Sahj, Sainen, Hari, Maya, Hukam and many others of common usage, would strike a strong cord of possible historical connections and legitimately suggest that there could be a possible link to Guru Nanak coming from other religious traditions. The meaning, and the usage of the commonly used terms in each case may coincide in spirit but in actuality such terms may belong specifically to another religious tradition.

Guru Nanak, being a medieval man does not mean that his own vision is wrapped up with the other medieval religious contents and may have made it impossible to emerge independently. What could possibly prevent it from happening? How and why revelations occur, we probably will never know. All we have is the power of
reasoning and beyond that we may have to have a supernatural capacity to know for which human beings are lacking.

During the 15th century onwards for about another 300 years or so the political effects on the cultural history of Northern India are predominantly of Mughals. This effect is continuous since the Muslim population in India has grown large enough to sustain it. Islamic culture does claim the second place. Therefore any development in the Indian culture of religious nature will always have Muslim reactions to it.

Modern India, with its large population of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Christians, constitutes a new political and social reality, but clearly maintains its medieval religious character. It has hammered each religious tradition to the understanding of the limits of the other. In spite of the occasional conflicts the reality of each tradition is fairly safe.

Both Kabir and Guru Nanak’s thoughts, coinciding with the overall message of the Bhagati movement, added to the true spirit of humanism. The liberal elements of Sikh theology following Guru Nanak, continued to be practiced on the same lines which is evident by adding Bhagat Bani of Muslim and Hindu saints in the Adi Granth by the succeeding 6th Guru Arjan (1563-1606). Emperor Akbar, who advanced his own new religion along the similar liberal lines called “Din Allahi”, coincided with that of the Gurus. Khushwant Singh states, “Emperor Akbar was impressed by the Guru’s work, for it echoed the beliefs he held sacred. On one occasion he stopped at Goindwal for the express purpose of meeting the Guru”. The social distinctions of the caste system and its rationale were challenged by this new message of the Bhagti movement as well as by Guru Nanak’s teachings, which evidently put Sikhism on the road of acceptance and growth.

Hardly fifty years had passed, when the Mughal policies under the Emperor Jahangir, during the early 17th century, contrary to his father, posed harsh policies to squelch the growth of Sikhism. The death of Guru Arjan by torture in 1606, changed the social and political course of the Sikh tradition altogether. The Sikhs adopted militarism, as a way to protect themselves. His son, Hargobind, who was a young boy of only eleven years at the time, was entrusted with the enormous responsibility of defending the growing Sikh community. As the community grew the struggle for its survival became intense and reached to a crescendo under the tenth Guru Gobind Singh who during the late 17th century openly showed defiance and challenged the emperor Aurangzeb. Mughal policies forced the Sikhs on to the path of open warfare. The 17th century relays a spectacular series of dramatic events of the political struggle of the Sikhs against the Mughals. It demonstrated how religious tradition survives under repeated loss of spiritual leadership.

The political realities of Northern India, under the Mughals, revealed what the Bhagati movement tried to achieve. This situation created a paradox for the people who cherished humanism and love of liberal theological values, but ended up in serious and continuous religious conflict with the political power of the Mughals. This situation had a long lasting effect on Sikhism and changed it from a contemplative community into a community of brave soldiers. The modern India seems to be deeply caught up in uniting Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other religions under the umbrella of a secular democracy, which still is a distant dream. Hindu nationalism seen to have a different dream for India, which obviously threatens to destroy Humanism, ushered in by the spirit of the medieval period. Generally, man yearns for peace and love of mankind but it is always a little yonder from where man lives. India and its people are no exception.

11. Monism & Monotheism:
It is necessary to distinguish Monism and Monotheism so that we clearly understand where Guru Nanak’s belief system is based. The definition of Monism is the belief that there is ONE ultimate substance or principle, whether mind or matter like water, earth or any one physical substance as source out of all that is created. But Monotheism is the theory that ONE GOD is the source of all the creation. This distinction is elaborated by the evolutionists (scientists) and the religionists (believers in God). Guru Nanak’s Karta Purkh is an active creator of the world phenomenon, which makes Guru Nanak a Monotheist although some scholars inaccurately consider him a Monist. Among the early Greeks, Monists such as Thales (580 B.C.) held that the water is the basic stuff out of which all things are made We perceive both Kabir and Guru Nanak, contrary to seeking the one source of physical reality, holding the belief in One God, are Monotheists rather than Monists. We classify Guru Nanak as a qualified monotheist (one God with specific attributes) as has been previously referred. Both Kabir and Guru Nanak believe in ONE GOD but with different emphasis and variations. Guru Nanak’s concept of God is very specific in the concept of Karta Purkh. It is authoritative and judicial.

Many Bhagats of the medieval period are generally nirdgumias, mystics believing in God without attributes as pure spirit. They posed no threat to Sikh theology, since they are Monotheists hence complementary. To clearly perceive Guru Nanak’s Monotheistic vision J. S. Grewal indicates, in his discussion and quotes Majeeb M. by saying, “Guru Nanak was not a reformer. This simple but refreshing enunciation is followed by the logical explanation that: ‘we know he was not a Hindu who appealed to the Hindu scriptures in order to reform Hindu society. We know he was not a Muslim trying to
eradicate evils in Muslim society by speaking to Qur’an. Further more, in the teachings of Guru Nanak, there is no attempt at a reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam; both are set aside in order ‘to get at the source of religion itself’. Guru Nanak is thus ‘ an originator, a founder for his own ideals, he speaks with the voice of authority which appears to spring directly from his moral and metaphysical convictions.” 21.

It is very complex problem to assert that various Monotheistic thoughts may be connected somehow. As we briefly scan the world’s Monotheistic beliefs, we find the belief in One God has been perceived and practiced in many religious traditions long before Guru Nanak. During the first half of the 14th B.C., Tutankhamen, the Pharaoh of ancient Egypt, held the belief in One God and commanded his subject to follow it. Judeo-Christian tradition has Theistic belief in its roots called Jehovah (God) and holds the prominent place in the Bible, which is believed to be the word of God. Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God and was sent to this world by him so that mankind may be saved from original sin. The Islamic tradition held the notion of One God since the 7th century, almost seven hundred years before Guru Nanak. In the Greek tradition, during the 4th and 5th century B.C.Plotinus, Plato, Aristotle, and others held the belief in One God. In Greek mythology, like the Hindu mythology Gods and Goddesses were worshipped quite commonly. Some were clearly defined while the others were assumed to exist. During the medieval period in Europe, the scholastic philosophers argued vigorously to demonstrate the existence of God so that people would believe in Him. The effort of man to know God, in almost in every human tradition, has been the concern of man. Although the knowledge of God does not go beyond faith in Him but faith is not knowledge, it is a dynamic of experience. It is important for man to have faith so that he finds some authority, beyond himself that guides this world including him. This seems to be main reason people believe in God. Those who deny such belief have their reason to do so.

In Hindu tradition, Brahma (God) has always been in existence in its Vedic roots. Sankara, in the 8th century, interprets Vedas and glorifies Brahma in developing the theory of Transcendentalism (Vedanta). Ramanuja, during the 11th century develops the theory of Theism while critiquing Sankara’s Vedanta theory by saying that his God is somewhere in the sky and cares little for man and this world. In the 13th century, Ramananda brought these ideas to Northern India and developed this as ground for Vaisnavas. Its Theistic elements gave rise and vigor to the Bhakti movement that has widely influenced the people of Northern India. In fact, many scholars attempt to link historical threads of Bhagati movement to Guru Nanak, coming out from Tantric Yogis and Naths as well as Kabir.

Radhakrishnan holds the opinion that there are independent grounds for the development of Theism in India. Guru Nanak’s vision stated in Mul Mantra as in Jap Ji, the first Bani of the Adi Granth sustains his theory of Monotheism.

12. Sant Bhasha:
Guru Nanak, being a medieval man used medieval language called Sant Bhasha. What is Sant Bhasha? It is not a specific language but a hybrid of many languages and regional dialects. The language of the Adi Granth therefore is a common reservoir for all this terminology that connects back to Hinduism and Islam. Gurus successive to Guru Nanak have made ample use of these terms. For example, the term Khuda a-e that occurs in the Adi Granth 32 times, which Guru Nanak uses 11 times. Kadar occurs in the Adi Granth 32 times and Guru Nanak uses it 11 times, Kadar/kadru occurs in the Adi Granth 4 times and Guru Nanak uses it 2 times, Kartar/kartari occurs in the Adi Granth 52 times and Guru Nanak uses it 13 times, Karim/karimu occurs in the Adi Granth 9 times and Guru Nanak uses it 3 times, Khasam/khasamu occurs in the Adi Granth 175 times and Guru Nanak uses it 55 times, Bhagwan/Bhagawan occurs in the Adi Granth 59 times, and Guru Nanak uses it 1 time, and the term Hari, occurs 9289 times in the Adi Granth but Guru Nanak use it 588 times. 22. Guru Nanak used more Lehndi Punjabi than other Gurus while Guru Gobind Singh used more Brij than other Gurus though his writings are not part of the Adi Granth; nonetheless, it is part of the sacred writings of the Sikhs. Mcauliffe says, “the medieval Indian dialects in which the sacred writing of the Sikh Gurus and Saints were composed. hymns are found in Persian, mediaeval Prakrit, Hindi, Marathi, old Punjabi, Multani, and several local dialects. In several hymns the Sanskrit and Arabic vocabularies are drawn upon.” 23. As the Bhagats and Sants of the Northern region of India, including Guru Nanak, freely traveled to far off places they met and conversed with diverse people incorporating the new terminology in their conversations and writings. These terminologies carry various meanings, shades and hues whose analysis has bearings on the accuracy of relevant belief systems. They are extremely important to deal with which will involve philological and etymological considerations.

C. Shacklie, who classifies the Adi Granth’s language, as ‘The Sacred Language of the Sikhs’ (SLS) which is composed of three sources namely, Torki, coming from Islamic tradition, Sahaskriti, coming from Hindu tradition and South-Western, from Regional sources of the South-West, says, “The core language of the AG- that mixture of Punjabi and Western Hindi (including Khari Boli and, later especially, Braj) - as completing the set of dichotomies suggested by the three peripheral varieties.”
These views are also shared by Harkirat Singh who states, “The language used by the Sants and the language of the Adi Granth does not have any standards of usages. Guru Nanak used his native Lendi Punjabi, Farid used Multani, Kabir and Namdev used Purbi-Hindi and Marathi. The terms like Devas, Datas, Avtars, Kadar karim, khuda, Ishaq, Muhabut, Parvardigar, Khair, Buhkshandgi, Hukam, Raza, Saein, Sahib and many others are commonly used by all the Gurus and the Bhagats in the Adi Granth. Guru Nanak is a frequent user of these terms. Therefore, it is plausible to seek historical links from relative religious traditions to Guru Nanak whether these links are valid and verifiable is another matter. As we seek the genesis of Guru Nanak’s thought, our treatment has to go clearly beyond linguistic meanings and expressions, otherwise we will under assess the nature of his theology. After all, words and sounds, the body of any language, are only vehicles for the actual experience of the mind. Language carries, not makes the mental reality whatever its nature may be. The reality of any language is only real when we communicate, write or utter a sound. It is a tool of expression only. Mind, not the language, is the only source of creation and experience. The language of Sant Bhasha in which Guru Nanak is supposed to have written and spoken with other seekers, therefore is strictly a medium without which it would have been extremely difficult to communicate. In Buddhism, for instance, silence is considered a language, which means that the expression of the body without sound is perceived as a language in itself. They call the complete silence of a Zen monk, portrayed in art and titled, “thundering silence” which for an ordinary person appears to be a contradiction in terms.

Since the language and the substance of the belief system are two different categories. We need to perceive their workings together while recognizing the conjunction of the two. Belief system is primary having its own substance and category while the language is secondary tool, a vehicle to carry out the belief system to others, is a separate category. Therefore, we have to perceive Guru Nanak’s thought, in the category of the metaphysical reality of his mind, transcending the ordinary language category. Without this distinction it would be difficult to perceive the true nature of Guru Nanak’s theology.

Our concern here is to examine the role of language and its terminology as it is used in the inferences and becomes the tool of history to draw historical conclusions. The various terminologies suggesting connections and influences on Guru Nanak, therefore, come under strict analytical scrutiny, whose validity may be difficult to prove. Previously, in the early part of our discussion, we have analyzed the term “Sahj” in this context to show that it failed to work as an evidence to show Kabir’s and Nath’s influence on Guru Nanak. The same treatment can be applied to other terms that are commonly used.

In Rag Maru, Mohala I, in the 22 Sohlas, the reflections of Guru Nanak’s mind, using Hindu terminology, describes the nature of the divine Being, prior to the creation of Vedas, Shastras, and the Puranas including Krishna and the Gopies. This belief of Guru Nanak in this context, clearly establishes that his vision has to be perceived beyond the heavy use of Hindu terminology. It is hard to understand some of the scholarly views of Dorothy Field, T.C. Archer, Tara Chand, Hew McLeod and several other western scholars who hold the view that Hinduism more than Islam provides the ground for Guru Nanak’s theological vision. Similarly, inferences used by other scholars based on the terms like Hukam, Raza Sain, Patshah and others assume to show the influence of Islam. Obviously, Islam’s presence in Northern India for almost 500 years prior to Guru Nanak provides strong grounds, like Hinduism, for the plausibility of such conclusions. Any such historical assumptions have to be demonstrated in the valid and verifiable arguments before they are acceptable as true. It appears that, if historical methodology and the historical assumptions are not critically examined, the story of discovering Guru Nanak’s total reality will remain elusive and inaccurate. The arguments based on Sant inheritance, language terminology and meanings of the terms, which come under serious scrutiny, do lose their validity. Hence, the Sant and Sant synthesis and many other traceable elements that can be alleged to provide Guru Nanak’s theological vision, are nothing more than accumulations of plausibility. They reveal more about the religious setting of the late 15th and early 16th century Northern India than providing specific antecedence to Guru Nanak’s thought. If Guru Nanak draws his theological message from both of the traditions referred to above then the distinctness and the independent growth of his theology would be hard to explain accurately. We cannot therefore, clearly establish and measure the originality of Guru Nanak’s mind if we rely on seeking some historical influences on him no matter in what shape and form they are presented. Therefore, the shadow of historical assessments of Guru Nanak’s theological vision is inaccurate and a futile activity, which is, not more than a metaphysical fantasy. During the medieval period in Europe, the scholastic philosophers argued vigorously to show proofs for the existence of God so that people would believe in Him. The effort of man to know God, in almost every tradition, has been most important concern of man. Though the knowledge of God does not go beyond faith in Him but faith is not knowledge but a dynamic of belief system. It is important that faith guides man’s action for living a life that could be acceptable to Him. This appears to be the reason people have faith, hence give religion a prominent place in society.
13. Conclusion:
Accumulatively, in the three articles (two previously published in The Sikh Bulletin of April and May 2003 under the same heading “Guru Nanak’s Mind & Historical Research”) and this one, have carried the same argument that Guru Nanak’s theological vision is independent and not arrived or derived from other existing religious traditions such as Hinduism, Islam, Sufis or any school of Nath, Sant or Bhagati movement so popular at the time of Guru Nanak during 15th and 16th century. We have analyzed the terminology, their meanings and usage to show that the belief of Guru Nanak can be understood if we transcend the mechanics of language and their usage and meanings, which control human thought. Logical applications, in examining the inferences and the conclusions, have been applied as carefully as possible.

We have argued that the metaphysical status of the Mul Mantra is the original expression of Guru Nanak’s belief system. We perceive that this basic belief slowly emerges into his theological system, which we have classified as the theory of Qualified Monotheism. This is clearly stated by him in Jap Ji, the first Bani of the Adi Granth. It can easily lead us to interpret, systematically, to full fledged ‘Theory of Ethical Realism in Sikhism’. Though the Bani is difficult to be systematized since it is written in poetic form, carrying esoteric terminology that is used cross culturally, this difficulty is possible to overcome, somewhat with a good working knowledge of Punjabi language and Sanskrit philosophical terminology. Besides this, one can make more progress provided one has some knowledge of analytic processes so that ambiguities are eliminated. We have tried to do all that in this inquiry to explore Guru Nanak’s mind and hope the results are acceptable.

The best empirical evidence of the reality of Sikhism (Sikh Theology and culture) is that it has emerged, grown and withstood all odds and continues to maintain its uniqueness. This fact is irrefutable.

Notes and References:
22. Gurbani Researcher, CD-ROM, International Institute of Gurmat Studies, Tustin, CA
25. Singh Harkirat, Gurbani di Bhasha te Viyakaran, (punjabi), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1997, p. 25-6
26. Adi Granth, p 989
[Part 1 and 2 in this series have appeared in The Sikh Review of Nov. 2001 and March 2002, respectively. This part 3 will be published in a forthcoming issue. ED]

GENDER EQUALITY IN SIKHISM

SGPC urged to convene meeting of Sub-committee on gender equality
Prabhjot Singh Tribune News Service
Chandigarh, May 16, 2003

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has been accused of dragging its feet over the important issues of gender equality and allowing women to perform “seva” at Darbar Sahib.

The SGPC had under its Dharam Parchar Committee set up a five-member subcommittee on March 11 to submit a report on the petition filed by the Voices For Freedom (VFF) in February this year seeking “gender equality” and permission for women to perform “seva” at Darbar Sahib. The subcommittee was asked to submit its report by May 15. The Voices For Freedom, a human rights organisation, has been spearheading the “seva” campaign.

The last meeting of the subcommittee, which was to be held at Amritsar on May 8, was adjourned because all members either did not get sufficient notice or were not informed in time about the change in the venue from Chandigarh to Amritsar.

Meanwhile, Mr Navkiran Singh, convener of the Voices For Freedom, has urged the SGPC President, Mr Kirpal Singh Badungar, to call an emergency meeting of the Dharam Parchar Committee to investigate the delay in producing a report on Sikh women’s equal right to undertake “seva” at Darbar Sahib. The VFF has maintained in its petition that gender equality in Sikhism had been established more than 500 years ago by Guru Nanak Dev. Sikh women have been denied permission to perform “seva” at Darbar Sahib in spite of the fact that the SGPC’s religious advisory committee passed a resolution on March 9, 1940, to allow “amritdhari” Sikh women to perform kirtan inside Darbar Sahib.

Further, on February 9, 1996, the Jathedar of Akal Takht (along with four other Singh Sahibans) directed the SGPC to allow Sikh women to perform “seva” at Darbar Sahib. This was done following a petition from the Sikh sangat. This issue has been outstanding since February 13 when two UK-based Sikh women, Ms Mejindarpal Kaur and Ms Lakhbir Kaur, were refused the right to participate in the “sukhasan” procession at Darbar Sahib. The following day they lodged a complaint with the Akal Takht Jathedar and the SGPC sought immediate restoration of the right of Sikh women to undertake all types of “seva” at Darbar Sahib.

THE SIKH DISABILITY PETITION

Khalsa Ji,
This is a humble request on the behalf of disabled Sikhs. It has come to light that disabled wheelchair bound Sikhs are treated differently at some Gurudwaras. They are discriminated against and are often asked to leave the inner sanctuary of the main hall (Darbar). As Sikhs we are taught to provide shelter for the poor, weak and disabled. We need to help everyone understand this philosophy and ensure that our actions convey this message. A petition has been raised to act as a voice to help initiate a change

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and to ask that a hukumnama be issued in that respect.

Please take the time to, read, sign the petition and distribute this email to as many Sikhs as possible. If you are either in a position to post this petition on a Sikh web site or can take this issue to a Sikh organisation then please do so. The petition can be found here:  
http://www.petitiononline.com/equal/petition.html

Sadh Sangat Da Das, Bhagwant Singh

[Don’t look towards Jathedars They are too busy collecting ‘dakshna’ in dollars from dera of akhauti Sants. You do not need a hukumnama to accommodate disabled Sikhs. Just do it as we have been doing at Gurdwara Sahib Roseville, Ca. That way you will also be in compliance with the laws of this land that we call home. ED]

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Over the years I have been reading the Sikh Bulletin from beginning to end but had never thought of ever writing to you until I read S. Ishwinder S. Chadha’s statements in the April 2003 issue. He ridicules Dr. S. S. Dhillon’s opinions. Before I give my opinion on this, we all who read the Sikh Bulletin agree that you are doing a great service to the Sikh community by bringing out the facts and exposing the thugs and fakes, so I would like to thank you.

S. Ishwinder Singh Chadha accuses Dr. Dhillon in an arrogant way of reading Guruji’s mind and he is doing the same thing himself. The fact is many of Guru Gobind Singh Ji’s beloved Sikhs were not amrit dharis. The man who cooked and served the guru’s house and household for 22 years, including nine years after the Amrit Ceremony, was never made an amrit dhar by the guru or fired for not being amrit dhar.

I will try not to write a long story about this since we all know the history. There is no Sikh who does not respect and believe in amrit. This is the ultimate achievement in Sikh life but it has prerequisites. Without these it is fakery. No one tells the candidates how their life has to be. All the dera saints perform the ceremony to add more names for them to boast about. A true amrit dhar is a saint-soldier, and we all know the meaning of this.

As I was growing up in Punjab, Akali and Sikh were synonymous. A Sikh believed in the teachings of Guru Nanak Ji and believed that it was the spirit of Guru Nanak Ji that traveled through all the Gurus for 239 years, and now resides for the last 295 years and will reside until eternity in the eternal Sikh Guru, Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji by the order of Siri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. There are three golden rules for Sikhs that are set by Guru Nanak Dev Ji and have been preached ever since:

1. Remembering Waheguru at all times (Naan)
2. To earn a living through honest means (Kirt)
3. Share some of the earnings with those who are less fortunate (Bundshakna)

It was believed that any Sikh who followed these rules is a good Sikh because all the other rules are rooted in these three rules. We always believed that anyone who tries to live with these rules and believes in the guru is a Sikh. Like anything else in the world or in life, there are stages in every Sikh’s life. The ultimate stage is when a Sikh is totally devoted to the service of humanity, he or she has reached the top stage or degree to receive amrit and becomes true amrit dhari (saint-soldier). This is what my generation grew up believing and still believes. Right or wrong, only Guru knows.

I was a teenager when Rahat Maryada was being written. It took over ten years and majority of the committee did not go along and minority compiled their version and it became Rahat Maryada. Now we should check and see how many Sikhs live by this Rahat Maryada and how much of it is practiced in the Gurdwaras, which would probably be very little.

When we say that the Sikh religion is a universal religion, how can anyone believe this after reading the rahet nama that states that an amrit dhar should not associate with non amrit dharis in any way, shape or form? This is only an example.

I better get to the point and state some facts. We know that Guru Ji preached equality. He never said to anyone that he or she was a bad person or that he or she was not his Sikh. He always judged and still judges by the deeds (Karms) of the individual and not by fake rituals.

There have never been more than ten percent of the Sikhs who were or are amrit dharis, which means that more than eighteen million of the Sikhs are non-amrit dharis and only two million are amrit dharis. Outside of our country there are even less. Where I live there are less than five percent that are amrit dharis.

No matter where we live, over ninety percent of adult Sikh males drink alcohol regardless of amrit dhar or not. This is very easy to confirm. Count it yourself. There are a lot of things I can write but I only wanted to make a point that the Sikh religion is universal because Guru looks at everyone as equal and judges them only by their deeds and it will always be the same because our Guru is an eternal Guru and has the same message always. Guru teaches us not to be fakes or do fake rituals, not to be superstitious and not to believe in janter-manter. He preaches against cutting organs or a part of the organ. Guru does not tell us what we should look like, dress like, eat like, sit like and stand like to achieve peace of mind. That comes through living by the three golden rules for a Sikh (remembering waheguru always, earn a living by honest means, and sharing some of it with the needy).

Can S. Ishwinder Singh Chadaha, or someone else, find it and prove it to the world in writing that our eternal guru (Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) says that to be a Sikh you have to be an amrit dhar and look a special way, otherwise you are not a Sikh? Guru Gobind Singh Ji ordered us to believe in Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and not to believe in human guru or any other granth. This means only and only Siri Granth Sahib Ji is our eternal Guru. One whole shabad, not just one line (Tuk), will stop us all from insulting each other and create a lasting unity and love amongst all Sikhs. Thank you very much.

Very Sincerely, Dr. Gulzar S. Johl, M.D., Yuba City, California

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This is in response to your Editor's Preface concerning the above in April 2003 issue of The Sikh Bulletin. I have been carefully watching over the last may be two decades or so that these "so called " Panthic leaders/Singh Sahibans Sikh Scholars, Kathakaars, Lecturers on Gurbani etc. etc. running and rushing to North America, Canada and England all the time and particularly in Spring and Summer to escape the oppressive heat of Panjab. They come here supposedly to educate and inform the Sikh Diaspora about Sikhism, Its Ideals & Its Institutions. What their real motives and or intentions are, only they or their Sponsors in the above-mentioned countries know.

As you have mentioned, another group of 25 such people are on their way (at the time this letter is being written) to participate from 4/20/2003 to 4/27/2003 in Chicago in who knows what?. How many of them will come who knows and sometime names are added just to attract importance to the function so that organizers can get large attendance and fleece innocent people of their money. One such example is April 5, 2003, The Sikh Foundation meet in San Francisco, California.

Recently, a New York Sikh family residing here fore almost three decades visited Panjab. From what they shared with me briefly on the telephone, things are not at all looking good for the Sikhs in the Land of Its Birth. He told me that he didn't see any Sikh Children around town in Chandigarh and when he visited families and old friends, they all converse not in Panjabi but language of some other State. I got independent confirmation of the former when I picked up March 24, 2003 copy of "The Tribune, Chandigarh" from my mail box and the front page had the picture of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in village Kharaudi, Dt. Hoshiarpur and none of the youngsters were Sabat Surat.

Through the esteemed pages of The Sikh Bulletin, I ask these Sikh Scholars/Leaders etc. mentioned on page 22 of The Bulletin, as to what are they doing there all the time and what are they doing here? APOSTACY IS AT ALL TIME HIGH. CAN'T THEY SEE.OR ARE THEY BLIND OR DO THEY NEED MAGNIFYING GLASS TO SEE WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND THEM? Or are they tied to the APRON STRINGS OF NOT OF THE SIKH GURUS BUT OF SOME PEOPLE OUTSIDE PANJAB WHO ARE HELL BENT UPON DESTROYING SIKHISM IN PANJAB. Although Sikhs in this continent have been coming for almost 100 years, those who came in the last 4-5 decades can be classified in two distinct categories. Sabat Surat Sikhs and Patit Sikhs. The former have tried and mostly succeeded in connecting their children (next generation) to Sikhism and do not need this "NEW BREED" from Panjab to educate or inform them about Sikhism. The Patit Sikhs do not care. Their agenda is different and they cannot be educated at all by these "VISITORS". These Scholars/Leaders etc. are needed in Panjab for connecting Sikhs with their Heritage, Values and with all what Sikhism stands for. Anybody, who wants to know about Sikhism in N. America, can go to any library or (now on Inter-net) and can get information about Sikh Religion, Sikh History etc. any time. The only other way one can learn is from the "JEEVAN" of the people. I'm sorry to say, I do not see that in any of the Dignitaries mentioned in The Bulletin.

What is the solution? Sikhs in N. America, England & Canada should not waste their resources on these junkets for these people. Instead, pool these resources, provide residential Summer School classes at some convenient locations in Panjabi, Sikh Religion and Sikh history. In turn, this will provide theses youngsters an opportunity to meet Sikhs and may be and hopefully, make lifetime friendship and establish long term relationships. I'm saying this because is my information that expenses for all these tours are borne by Sikhs outside Panjab.

Sikhs in Panjab have resources enough (if they don't waste them on Alcohol and Drugs) and provide them excellent education so that they can become good SIKHS. For that is what will ultimately count and we shall not face any humiliation before HIM when the D-DAY comes.

With regards,
Amarjit Singh Buttar, CT. USA

The efforts, the discipline and sincere dedication you show in bringing the Sikh Bulletin every month, is an admirable service to the Panthic cause. To keep up with issues, including the knowledge and the shenanigans of the jokers who keep pulling Sikhism down to the level of a KANGAROO court, is an arduous job. They do not know what DAYA, KIRPA, NIMARTA and SEVA are. Since the do not practice those Sikh values their ignorance is understandable. Dealing with the subject matter must make you feel that you should go home and take a good shower.

I want to comment on the letter that Mrs. A. Singh from Canada wrote recently. She showed great concern for her community and articulated some of the issues very well. She beautifully grinds the misdeeds of Deras, the Hinduized activities in Gurdwaras in Central India and SGPC bigwies who do the bidding of the BJP in destroying the identity of the Sikh religion both in theory and practice. It is a matter of wonder that Sikhs in general allowed all that to happen. She brings our attention to the future course of our community, its links to the heritage in Punjab and the need of our children, raised in the west, in the cyber age. They will have to define themselves as to who they are and where they are going. She warns us that we must help them in their life’s struggles to discover themselves.

Let me state that unless we reject the wave of selfish, political and the ill prepared religious instructions harangued over the speakers in the Gurdwaras in the Diaspora by the stream of outdated Jathas, we will not make a fresh start, which we must. It outrages me to follow the stupid Hukammamies issued by ignorant Akal Takhat Jathedars like where and how I should sit and eat my langar.

Also we in the Diaspora must learn how to run our basic institutions like the Gurdwaras. The youth politics is a strange business, which is, neither mature in public service nor is interested in it. They are wrapped in their politics without any plan and direction. They have done nothing except reducing the sacred to the profane. This is the worst confusion in Sikhism of today. It is almost sinful to give offerings to pay expensive and callous lawyers to settle Sikh disputes. What do these lawyers know and care about Sikhism? We have no serious disputes except fighting over management of money. Youth is absolutely ill equipped to handle that. This chaos reflects who we are. As Mrs. A. Singh said "The onus to get organized is on us.” Is not that true?
We need senior Sikhs, 50 years old or younger, in management and control to spend money on making our Gurdwaras comfortable for the elderly and developing first rate educational programs, both in Punjabi and in English, that can cover Sikh history, religion and culture, as well as the sociological understanding of Sikhs in other cultures. Some Sikh professors who are already teaching in various universities should be brought in to have programs in the community education. This seems to be their obligation to take the lead. This is their own community, which needs help! If others can do all this why cant we?

I highly recommend that Mrs. A. Singh write more about these issues. We need bold Sikh women to speak out about the issues that are affecting their lives wherever they live and work.

Sincerely,
Sulakhan Singh Dhillon, Berkeley, CA.
4- केवलदेवी की दिन दिन मर्यंति करती है वो देवी देवी नै। हे, देवी सब्जियों जैसी ही इसी मित्र सहित बलीबुली चढ़ाने लगते हैं। (4)  

5- राम उस देवी के स्वाभाविक अंदर वह है जब राम देवी के स्वाभाविक अंदर वह है जब राम देवी के स्वाभाविक अंदर वह है। विशेष विशेष ख्याति आग्रह करने के लिए राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी ने उस राम की होटल से राम जी
WHY KILL A CHICKEN?

Title of the Book should have been - Why kill a Hen? as mentioned at page 36. Then same argument what about "cocks, eggs, goats, hares, rams, rhinos, sheep, etc" though literary meaning is not enough. In fact, essence of the Revealed Word seems to be – "Why take advantage of a helpless animal or person or say why exploit the weak?"

Hence, Title of the Book: "Why kill a Chicken?" is a misrepresentation and sensational because photo shown is neither of a chicken nor of a hen but it appears to depict a "Cock"!

Gurmit Singh, 9 – HAMLIN ST, QUAKERS HILL, N S W - 2763, AUSTRALIA
Tel/Fax No. 61 – 2 – 9837 2787 Email Address: GurmitSingh@bigpond.com

Sant Singh Maskeen’s Role in Excommunication of Giani Bhag Singh

(Continued. Ed)
वर्तमान दिन रहे हैं। इसलिए भाविक समय नहीं है।

The Sikh Bulletin

June 2003

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