

Dear S. Gurmit Singh Ji:

You say that the Sikhs do not have a country of their own. Does it mean that we, the Sikhs, should not have a calendar of our own? The Bahai faith is the newest faith, being about 200 years old. Its followers gave up on the Hijri calendar and have their own calendar which is based on tropical year length and has permanent correspondence with the Common Era calendar. All major religions of the world have their own calendar. Why should not ours?

The following quotation from 'Mapping Time' says it all:

“Today each of the major religions has its own calendar which is used to programme its religious ceremonies, and it is almost as true to say that each calendar has its religion. The Christians, the Moslems, the Jews, the Buddhists, the Jains, the Hindus, the Zoroastrians, and, more recently, the adherents of Bahai, all have their calendars.”

-Richards, E.G., Mapping Time, p.6

The dates for Guru Period given in history books

During the Guru period, mainly Bikrami luni-solar, Saka, and the Hijri calendars were in use in India, while the calendar used in England was the Julian calendar. The Gregorian calendar, known as Common Era now a days, that is in use throughout the world along with indigenous calendars, is not the same as the Julian calendar. The dates of the Julian calendar are not the same as those of the Gregorian. If we have to use the dates of the Julian Calendar then we shall have to follow the method the Greek Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church use. They celebrate Christmas on 25th December of the Julian Calendar and not on the 25th of the Gregorian calendar. The 25th December (Julian) falls on 7th January of the Gregorian calendar, now a days. Therefore, they celebrate Christmas on 7th January Gregorian.

The original date of Shaheedi of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib is 11 Maghar, 1732 BK / 11 November, 1675 Julian. We have converted 11 Maghar in the Nanakshahi calendar to 24th November Gregorian. This date, i.e. 11 Maghar, will always fall on 24th November. Coincidentally, if we convert 11 November Julian to Gregorian it is also 24th November in this century. The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib was on 23 Poh 1723 BK / 22 December 1666 Julian. Now a days, 22 December Julian occurs on 4th January Gregorian, and in the next century it will fall on 5th January. We have taken 23 Poh as the original date, and according to Nanakshahi calendar it will always fall on 5th January. The Julian dates as well as the dates of the Bikrami calendar will continue shifting in the Gregorian calendar. The shift of months in seasons, is even greater in the Bikrami calendar than it is in the Julian calendar.

I am of the opinion that we should neither use the Julian dates of the Guru period in the Gregorian calendar, nor convert the Julian dates into Gregorian and then use them. The original dates are in either lunar dates or the solar dates of the Bikrami calendar. The Julian calendar was unknown in Punjab at that time. We should celebrate the Gurpurbs on the original solar dates. For the Nanakshahi calendar we have taken those original solar dates. These original solar dates, as given in Nanakshahi Calendar, will always occur on the fixed dates of the Gregorian calendar. Don't we celebrate the Shaheedi purbs of Sahibzadas on 8 and 13 Poh, which are solar dates?

We are giving up the Bikrami calendar for the following reasons:

1. Its months do not have a permanent relationship with the seasons as mentioned in Gurbani.
2. We should have our own calendar. A calendar is a part of the identity of a Nation.
3. The lunar-date system is not very practical. For celebrations of important days we should use a calendar based on the solar tropical year. The Bikrami calendar is luni-solar based on the sidereal year.

When Guru Sahiban revealed Barahmaha and Ruti Sloka Banis, they had the seasons in Punjab and not the ones in Australia, in their mind, just like Guru Sahiban used the Indian units rati, tola, masa, ser, maan etc., and not the British units ounces, pounds, stone, nor the international units grams, and kilograms etc. It is true that Guru Sahiban's message is universal, but there are certain thoughts expressed in Gurbani which are region-specific. Barahmaha's spiritual message is universal, but the seasons and their occurrence in particular months is region specific.

In Barahmaha Tukhari in the month of Asarh the following line occurs:

ਰਬੁ ਫਿਰੈ ਛਾਇਆ ਧਨ ਤਾਕੈ ਟੀਡੁ ਲਵੈ ਮੰਤਿ ਬਾਰੇ ॥ ਪੰ: 1108

This refers to the date when the day is longest in the year, and usually the hottest, when the northern declination of the sun is maximum, when the sun changes its course from northerly to southerly direction (see Faridkoti Teeka, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha- Mahan Kosh, or Sampardae Teeka of Sant Kirpal Singh). This phenomenon occurred on the Sawan Sangrand at the time of beginning of Siddhantic astronomy. Because of the shift of the Sangrands due to the precession of the equinoxes, it occurred about 15th Asarh at the time of Guru Nanak Sahib, and around 13th Asarh in the first decade of the 18th Century, and occurs around 9th Asarh during the present times. This will shift to the close of Jeth in another 600 years. Here it does not matter whether it is Australia or India, it will occur in Jeth, contrary to its mention in the month of Asarh. Unlike Bikrami calendar, Nanakshahi calendar is based on the tropical length of the year, therefore no further shift will occur and it will always occur in the month of Asarh.

In 6500 years Asarh will move into mid-September. In September, it is autumn in the Northern hemisphere, and spring in the southern hemisphere (Australia included). My request is to understand the problem with the Bikrami calendar and not to offer far-fetched explanations.

The names of the month of the Nanakshahi calendar are the same as given in Barahmahas, except that their popular variants are used. We read Gurbani, and we want our children to read and understand Gurbani. We have to tell them about calendars as well, when explaining Gurbani Barahmahas.

On the beginning month of the Nanakshahi Calendar, I just want to reiterate that in the calendar we cannot have Chet as the twelfth month, when it is the first month in both the Barahmahas, and Ruti Slok Banis.

Amavasyas, Pooranmasis, and Panchamis

You have totally mis-stated that in Nanakshahi Jantri we have kept most of the Sikh dates attached to the Sudis and Vadis. We have kept only Guru Nanak Sahib's Gurburb celebration, and Bandi Chhor Divas (Divali) according to the Pooranmasi and Amavasya respectively. That too, only for the time being. However, yielding to the pressure from the 'Sants' Hola Muhalla date was also made an exception. Even this did not appease the 'Sants'. They do not want to give up the Bikrami Calendar. It appears that you have not looked at Jantris for earlier years, produced by the SGPC, and by Sikh Publishers. We have included the festivals of other Nations in the Nanakshahi Jantri for information. We decided to keep most of the festivals from previous publication of the SGPC, but put them in the category of 'Other Festivals'. Gurburbs and Sikh festivals have been shown separately.

Perhaps you are not aware that one 'Sant Baba' manhandled me during meeting at Akal Takht Sahib on December 23, 1999. He and his 'masters' were upset that we had placed the Hindu festivals, Republic Day, Independence Day and Divali etc. in the category of 'Other Festivals'.

The Calendar Reform Committee decided that dates for Amavasyas and Pooranmasis should be given in the Jantri, even though we do not believe in their observance. We have to educate the Sikh masses first. Thousands of Sikh pilgrims go to the Gurdwaras on these occasions. Panchamis are regularly observed in Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib in Patiala. If we do not give the dates of these tithis, people would simply take them from Hindu Panchangs. The best approach is to explain the real meanings of Gurbani to the Sangat on all these occasions, and persuade them not to follow these ritual-based festivals. This applies to Sangrands as well. We have mentioned in the Nanakshahi Jantri, that, this being the first day of the Nanakshahi months have nothing to do with the sun's entry into the rasis as is the present practice. That is why sangrands of some months of Nanakshahi calendar differ from those of the Bikrami calendar. Eventually all will differ, since the Bikrami Sangrands will go on shifting while Nanakshahi sangrands remain fixed in relation to the CE calendar, since the precession of equinoxes has been taken into consideration.

You write in your letter:

"I am of the view that we should neither celebrate birthdays of Gurus: ਪਿਤਾ ਕਾ ਜਨਮੁ ਕਿ ਜਾਨੈ ਪੂਤੁ ॥ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ 3-16)

I do not agree with your view. Does it behove a Sikh to celebrate the birthday of his children but not that of the Gurus?

The line you have quoted from Sukhmani Sahib, should be interpreted along with other lines:

'ਜਾ ਕੀ ਲੀਲਾ ਕੀ ਮਿਤਿ ਨਾਹਿ ॥ ਸਗਲ ਦੇਵ ਹਾਰੇ ਅਵਗਾਹਿ ॥
ਪਿਤਾ ਕਾ ਜਨਮੁ ਕਿ ਜਾਨੈ ਪੂਤੁ ॥ ਸਗਲ ਪਰੋਈ ਅਪੁਨੈ ਸੂਤਿ ॥
ਸੁਮਤਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਜਿਨ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਜਨ ਦਾਸ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥' p. 284

ਜਿਸ ਪਿਤਾ ਦਾ ਜ਼ਿਕਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੁਕਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਕੋਈ ਜਨਮ ਦਿਨ, ਗੁਰਗੱਦੀ ਦਿਵਸ ਅਤੇ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤ ਦਿਵਸ ਜਾਂ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਦਿਵਸ ਵੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ। ਆਪ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਦੇ ਗੁਰਗੱਦੀ, ਤੇ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤ - ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਦਿਵਸ ਮਨਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਤਿਆਰ ਹੋ, ਪਰ ਜਨਮ ਦਿਵਸ ਨਹੀਂ। ਇਹ ਦਲੀਲ ਠੀਕ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।

ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ ਬਹੁਤ ਪੁਰਾਣੇ ਸਮੇਂ ਤੋਂ ਮਨਾਏ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਨ:

"ਕੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਤਿਨਾ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾ ਭਾਇ ਭਗਤਿ ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ ਕਰੰਦੇ।" - ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ, ਵਾਰਾਂ, 12.2

"As late as the Sambat 1872 it was in Baisakh that the anniversary fair of Guru Nanak's birth was always celebrated at Nankana. -----" -- Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, first edition 1909CE, reprinted by Low Price Publications, Delhi 1996 p. lxxxiv.

Discussion of a few important dates:

The dates given by you in the list are a mixture of Julian and Gregorian calendars. Some of them are outright incorrect. Of course, you must have taken them from various sources.

There are two types of problems with the dates. First, we might not be 100% sure of the correctness of the original date, usually given in Bikrami solar/lunar or Hijri format. Second, its conversion to the CE date may not be correct, even if the original date is correctly known. Dr Ganda Singh, Dr Hari Ram Gupta, Prof. Sahib Singh, Principal Satbir Singh and others have erred in converting the dates. Most of the calculations and conversions by S. Karam Singh Historian are correct, but in a very few instances his conversion is out by 1 day. But, perhaps he did not check his manuscript thoroughly. This caused a very wrongly converted date to make its way into history books, and also in the Mahan Kosh.

This is what happened:

S. Karam Singh takes 21 Harh, 1652 Bikrami as the birth date of Guru Hargobind Sahib

He converts this to Harh Vadi 6 (this is wrong by 1 day, conversion should result in Harh Vadi 7)

Then he converts Harh Vadi 6 to 18 June, 1595 Julian and gives this as the CE birthday of Guru Sahib.

In the summary of the chapter he makes a mistake (perhaps a typo error or transcription error) and writes 14 June, 1595 (correct conversion of 21 Harh 1652 BK is 19 June, 1595 Julian).

(He did all the calculations using *Indian Calendars by Sewell and Dixit*)

These calculations are given in his book *ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ ਨਿਰਣਯ*.

This wrong date can be seen in :

Mahan Kosh, which gives ਹਾੜ ਵਦੀ ੬, ੧੪ ਜੂਨ, ੧੫੯੫

ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਡਾਇਰੀ ੧੯੯੧ (SGPC) - ਹਾੜ ਵਦੀ ੬, ੧੪ ਜੂਨ, ੧੫੯੫

ਸਿੱਖ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ - ਪ੍ਰਿੰ: ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਡਾ: ਗੰਡਾ ਸਿੰਘ - ੧੪, ਜੂਨ, ੧੫੯੫

ਗੁਰ ਰਤਨਾਵਲੀ - ਸੰਪਾਦਕ ਡਾ: ਮਨਵਿੰਦਰ ਸਿੰਘ - ੧੪ ਜੂਨ ੧੫੯੫.

Can we say then, that, since so many authors have given this date of 14 June, therefore it must be correct? Not at all. All these authors have one source - S. Karam Singh's *Gurpurb Nirnaya* (summary at the end of the chapter on Guru Hargobind Sahib).

ਗੁ: ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਪਾ:੨ ਤੋਂ ੯ - ਪ੍ਰੋ: ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿੰਘ, ਹਾੜ ਵਦੀ ੧, ੧੯ ਜੂਨ, ੧੫੯੫, ੨੧ ਹਾੜ ੧੬੫੨ ਬਿਕ੍ਰਮੀ

It was Harh Vadi 7 on 19 June, 1595 Julian. Therefore, either Harh Vadi 1 is incorrect or 19 June. On 21 Harh it was not Harh Vadi 1. Therefore, either Harh Vadi 1 is correct or 21 Harh, but not both.

If you compile the date of birth of Guru Hargobind Sahib from various sources, which I have done, you will discover the chaos.

Prof. Sahib Singh's books contain many errors, so far as dates are concerned - here is a monstrosity:

"ਸੰਨ ੧੫੧੫ ਸੀ, ਜਦੋਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਪਹੋਏ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ, ਸਤੰਬਰ ਦੀ ਤਕਰੀਬਨ ੧੩ ਤਾਰੀਖ ਸੀ। ਅੱਸੂ ਦੀ ਚੌਦਸ । ---- ਅਗਲੇ ਦਿਨ ਮੱਸਿਆ ਸੀ, ਤੇ ਸੂਰਜ ਨੂੰ ਗ੍ਰਹਿਣ ਲੱਗਣਾ ਸੀ ----" - ਜੀਵਨ ਬਿਤਾਂਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ

But, there was no solar eclipse on the date mentioned. Therefore the date is wrong.

Shaheedi date of Elder Sahibzadas

In your list you have mentioned 22 December 1604. But this is wrong. Even Dr Gupta and so many others have given this date as 22 December. Most authors agree that the battle of Chamkaur took place on 8th Poh. It was 7th December on 8th Poh, the Shaheedi day of the Elder Sahibzadas. It was 13th Poh when the Younger Sahibzadas achieved Shaheedi, and the corresponding date was 12th December, Julian. Many historians have just given the present day Gregorian date equivalent to 8th Poh, and 13th Poh.

If 8th Poh which was on 7th December can be celebrated on 22nd December now a days, why cannot Vaisakhi which was on 29th March 1699 Julian, be celebrated on 14th April? It is the same logic. The important thing here to note is, that the Shaheedi day celebrations are fixed on 8th Poh and 13 Poh - and not on 22 December and 27 December. These Bikrami dates will go on shifting in CE calendar, but since 8 Poh in Nanakshahi calendar is on 21st December for all times to come, these dates will not shift in relation to the CE calendar. By the same process 23 Poh, birthday of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib converts to 5th January, in Nanakshahi calendar.

Vaisakhi 1756 BK - 1699 Julian

You write:

"Since all the past authors have reckoned the 30th March 1699 why to go on sticking to Vaisakhi Day on 13/14th April."

You must have seen from the above discussion that if most authors have given 30 March, 1699 as the Baisakhi date of the 'Creation of the Khalsa', it does not necessarily mean that they have all done the calculations. In fact, Dr. Ganda Singh's source was Indian Ephemeris - Swamikannu Pillai. In it Pillai gives Sankranti date as 29 March, but gives Vaisakh 1 against 30 March. The date of 30 March applies to Tamil Nadu, because the rule there is - if the time of Sankranti is after sunset (the Sankranti time on 29th March was 9:06 p.m.), then the Day 1 of the month is on the following day after Sankranti. The rule in Punjab is that it does not matter what time the Sankranti is, day one will be on the day of Sankranti (sunrise to sunrise rule). Obviously, Dr Ganda Singh was not aware of this rule. Perhaps, he did not read the introduction, otherwise he would have taken March 29 given on the same page. *Indian Calendars*- Sewell and Dixit also give 29th March 1699 Julian as the date of Sankranti. Of course, in my *Jantri 500 Years*, I have given 29 March 1699 Julian.

Most historians have either followed Dr Ganda Singh, or made the same mistake using IE of Pillai. However, Dr Sangat Singh in his book *Sikhs in History* correctly gives this date as 29th March, 1699 Julian.

Dr Ganda Singh was an historian par excellence, but he was not an expert on calendars. Most historians have made many blunders doing conversion of dates. This was the reason, I produced my *Jantri 500 Years* so that dates could be easily, correctly, and quickly converted without calculation. I have great regard for Dr Ganda Singh as an

historian. But, where he is wrong I have not minced words. However, the following is the dedication I wrote in my book:

“This book is dedicated to the memory of late Dr Ganda Singh who spent his life to discover the truth and sift fact from fiction.”

I have already said that I do not subscribe to the view that Julian dates should be observed in Gregorian Calendar. In Nanakshahi calendar we have fixed 14th April as the day of Vaisakhi for ever.

You are trying to make a case that we should adopt Gregorian Calendar and a mixture of Julian and Gregorian Dates. But some critics are already saying that Nanakshahi calendar is a Christian calendar, which it is not. I think that you should sort it out with them. The only thing common with the Christian Calendar is, that Nanakshahi Calendar is also based on the length of the tropical year, so that months do not shift in seasons.

Your question to the editor of Sant Sipahi (not addressed to me):

"Why Purewal is considered to be the sole authority to answer the Sikhs' doubts/Questions regarding Sikh Nation's Calendar?"

I would be very glad, if someone else takes up this task of answering questions and criticism from those who have very little knowledge about calendars, and the problems with the historical dates. Perhaps I am given this task, because I happened to be the ‘culprit’ in that I had proposed and worked on this calendar for the Sikh Nation. Do you still want me to make corrections to your list? Or do you want to send it to someone else?. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Pal Singh Purewal

Postscript

S. Gurmit Singh Ji, you have not read the ridicules that the critics of the Nanakshahi Calendar, have showered on me because of their total lack of knowledge of the Bikrami calendar. If you think that I have responded in a little not too pleasant tone, then I say, it is very mild compared to what I have been receiving. You have unnecessarily taken your wrath on the Chandigarh intellectuals, and scholars who participated in meetings and contributed ideas for the Nanakshahi calendar. They and I are as committed Sikhs as anyone else. Name calling doesn't help any cause, rather, it turns people off.

I shall be soon completing 68 years of my life. I emigrated to the UK in 1965 and worked my way up the ladder to the position of Senior Engineer with Texas Instruments in Bedford. I moved to Canada in 1974 along with my family. Here I changed my profession to computing, and eventually became manager of the Data Processing Department of a local company. Now I am retired. I gave up work at the age of 54 and spent full time on my pet project *Jantri 500 Years*. For this work I had to study on my own, ancient Hindu astronomical works like Surya Siddhanta, Graha Laghava, and Makrand Sarni, and many more books including books on modern astronomy. Working on this project was my hobby for the past more than 40 years, off and on. I have given the above personal details, because you had also provided personal information .

If you make a visit to Canada you will be welcome to stay with us for the holiday.

PSP

November 16, 2000

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Dec 9, 2000

S. Gurmit Singh Ji:
Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

I received your letter and attachments through the mail on 6th December. Since you are repeating the same concerns as in your earlier communication, I have to say that I have already answered them. I am attaching herewith some further material for you to read, since you said that you did not have the Faridkoti Teeka. I have with me Prof Sahib Singh's Teeka, Talib's translation, Faridkoti Teeka, and I have borrowed and studied partly S. Manmohan Singh's Teeka from a friend, and I have studied Gurbani, all 1430 pages, from the viewpoint of calendar as well.

Dr Avtar Singh Sekhon is a friend of mine, and we have known each other for more than 20 years. Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgeer came to Edmonton, on the occasion of the marriage of Dr Sekhon's daughter, and he visited me and we sat for a few hours in my library, and discussed many things. I met him a couple of times in India, too. Also he was present in the meeting on calendar which was held in Teja Singh Samundri Hall, Amritsar, in February, 1999.

I presented a copy of my book to Dr Darshan Singh (Head Dept. Guru Nanak Studies, Punjab University Chandigarh), in 1995, when I met him on the occasion of Vishva Sikh Sammelan held at Amritsar. He sent this copy to Dr Dilgeer in Norway. Dr Dilgeer has used Guru Kian Sakhian (Punjabi) and reference therein to Bhatt Vahis, and converted the dates using my *Jantri 500 Years*. However, we cannot say for sure that all dates given in Guru Kian Sakhian or Bhatt Vahis are authentic. In fact, a few are very wrong.

The whole world is using Common Era calendar for civil purposes, and not for celebrating religious festivals (except Christians) -

The Jews use the **Jewish calendar** for religious purposes and CE calendar for civil use
The Muslims use **Hijri Calendar** for religious purposes and CE calendar for civil use
The Hindus use **Bikrami calendar** for religious purposes and CE calendar for civil use
The Bahaiis use the **Bahaii calendar** for religious purposes and CE calendar for civil use
The Sikhs, to all intents and purposes, **have been using Bikrami calendar** for religious purposes and CE calendar (after Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time) for civil use

Of course, **the Christians** use the CE calendar for both civil and religious purposes.

We should use the Nanakshahi calendar for religious purposes and CE calendar for civil use

Dr Kharak Singh Mann is still the Secretary of the Committee which was to give a decision on the Nanakshahi Calendar. I am also on this committee. I had sent a copy of my reply to your earlier communication to him, along with your letter to me. The copy of this letter and attachments is also going to him. I suggest that you direct all your further queries and concerns to the committee and if they think that I need to clarify any further point I shall gladly do that.

Looking forward to meeting you next year here in Edmonton.

Sincerely,

Pal Singh Purewal