

February 8th, 2013

Respected, Dr Arvind Pal Singh Mandair and Dr. Balwinder Singh Bhogal Ji

Fateh Parwan Karni ji,

Your association with DANAM has deeply hurt the Sikh Community and appears to be a veiled attempt to downgrade the independent identity of Sikh religion as envisioned by Guru Nanak. Being involved in Sikh academic affairs for long time the Community has asked me to write to both of you on this important Academic issue. My request is that you disassociate yourself immediately from DANAM or explain your position in writing or come to the conference in Southern California in May 2013 to present your point of view and explanation for Sikh Sangat and General Public. My opinion is based on the following academic observation.

**Sikhism an Independent Religion; Not part of any Network of Dharma Traditions
(Uniqueness of Sikh Scripture, Sikh Identity & Sikh Ideology)
By Dr. Jasbir S. Mann. California, USA**

This is in reference to the controversy raised in Sikh community by Dharma academy of North America (DANAM) on their mission statement click on <http://www.danam-web.org/missionpage2.htm> describing Sikh religion as Sikh Dharma part of a network of dharma traditions followed by distorted/veiled explanation of Sikhism which suits the academy's Motive. Sikhism does not believe in "law or principle 'Dharma', which emerged from Godhead itself, per Shukla Yajur Veda, Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.14, Godhead 'specially created that dharma-----". It is not a bone of contention that the word "Dharma" has its roots in Sanskrit literature and there is no epistemological problem when this word is applied to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism because these are variations of the same tenets. But Sikh religion has dimensions beyond the concept of Hindu aspect of Dharma. Neither of the Vedic religions, other than Sikhism, totally believes in oneness of God. Numina and phenomena do not have distinct demarcations in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, whereas Sikhism is a religion of Numina. Sikhism is a whole life system whereas other religions do not solely believe in it. Importantly, Sikhism believes in both temporal and spiritual aspects of life. The concept of Khalsa and Rehat Mayada is unique and integral parts of Sikhism. Therefore, it cannot be considered as system or network of other Indian Dharmas.

Sikhism is a revelatory religion, and this claim is made by Guru Nanak himself, "O Lalo, I speak what the Lord commands me to convey." Other Gurus have also spoken similarly. In the Siddh Gosht he says in reply to a question that his mission in life is, with the help of other Godmen, to ferry people across the turbulent sea of life. As to the Guru's concept of God, it is recorded, "Friends ask me what is the mark of the Lord, He is All Love; rest He is ineffable." He is also called: 'Ocean of Virtues' 'Benevolent', 'Gracious', 'Eyes to the blind', 'Milk to the child', 'Riches to the poor', etc. He is interested in the world. For, "True is He. True is His creation". God created the world and permeated it with His light". "It is the innermost nature of God to help the erring." "God created the world of life and planted Naam in it, making it the place for righteous activity." All above is well recorded in Guru Granth sahib on pages 722,739,459,830,463,930.

828 and 468.

The Dharma Academy of North America (DANAM) appears to be an outfit principally based on Sanatana Dharma. They are using academic parameters in an attempt to justify a self-established ideology, by redefining 'Religion', 'Dharma', and 'Religious Traditions'. This phenomenon is well-known among several Hindu sages and swamis. In fact there are several websites that are promoting such views under Sanatana Dharma.

It is interesting, but not surprising, to note that DANAM essentially is resonating ideas that are constantly discoursed by Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati in entirety. On his website it is clearly explained that Sanatana Dharma is: "Experience based rather than belief based without any ideological divisions. Beyond any historical date of founding. The process of growth, which comes from the seed. Inherent in, and inclusive of all. Applicable to all people of all places and times. In the world, while above the world. God-centered rather than prophet-centered. Devoid of sectarianism or denominationalism. Both immanent and transcendent. The whole and the parts. Loving of all and excluding of none. The universal flow of Dharma, regardless of what name you call it, whether Dharma or some other name, has eternally existed. It has been before any of the great teachers were born. It is not better than, or alternative to, but is inclusive of all.

Dharma is that out of which our earth and humanity itself emerged. Dharma not only is, but always was, and always will be. To live in alignment with, and to know the true nature of that Sanatana Dharma is one of the ways of describing the higher goal of life". Click on <http://www.swamij.com/sanatana-dharma-what-is.htm>

Also, on the same website it goes on to explain the differences of 'Religion' and 'Dharma' by Swami Rama. According to whom: "The words "religion" and "dharma" denote two entirely different concepts and perspectives. Religion is comprised of rituals, customs, and dogmas surviving on the basis of fear and blind faith. Dharma--a word, unfortunately, with no English equivalent--encapsulates those great laws and disciplines that uphold, sustain, and ultimately lead humanity to the sublime heights of worldly and spiritual glory. Established in the name of God, a religion is an institution that requires a growing number of adherents for its expansion and future existence. A religion discriminates against human beings who do not belong to its particular order and condemns their way of living and being, whereas dharma is eternal, looking for no followers for its propagation. With no discrimination whatsoever, it leads a human being beyond the realms of man-made, institutionalized dictums. Instead of creating fear of God, it makes God manifest in the human heart, not in an anthropomorphic form, but as the absolute and universal One in whom all diversities reside in perfect harmony." Click on <http://www.swamij.com/sanatana-dharma-what-is.htm>

The definition of a Sikh is given in the Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh Reht Maryada. It is not what DANAM is reinterpreting for the world with help of two Sikh chair holders supported by rich few Hindu trustees of north America (who may not even be aware of that they are being used by some conspirators). Sikhs had multitude of enemies since Guru Nanak's Cosmic Enlightenment. The

word Khalsa is missing altogether which differentiates the Sikhs from non-Sikhs. The Sikhs do not need definition of a Sikh from an outsider/DANAM. Sikhism is a universal religion, but it is NOT part of a "network" of religions even though the Sikhs respect other religions. Guru Nanak started a new and prestine religion - Nanak Nirmal Panth Chalaya.Few Sikh and Hindu scholars, under the umbrella, and influence of western liberal and imperial education systems, are trying their level best to further the agenda of Hindutava; enfolding Sikhism into Hinduism. It is despicable, inexcusable and conduct unbecoming of a true Sikh. But then these academicians are not required to be true Sikhs. They hide behind the walls of academics and float nontraditional ‘Traditions’ to continue putting bread and butter on their table and support their families even if it is at the cost of ridiculing their religion.

If Sikh religion is only a network of Dharma tradition and has no original, independent/unique and separate identity then ‘ Trustees, Academic advisory board members and steering committee members’ has to explain the following historical facts:

- History of Guru Period (Sri Chand , Mohan, Prithi , and Ram Rai transgressed Sikh beliefs in early Sikh history and were isolated)
- Sikh Scripture delineating independent Sikh identity. Guru Granth sahib is very clear “although the Six Hindu systems are prevalent everywhere but the Guru system is profound and unequalled”.
- Martyrdom of the 5th and 9th Guru to uphold religious freedom
- Testimony of Moshan Fani (Muslim Chronicle, 1645)
- Execution of Banda and 740 Sikhs in New Delhi (not even one desecrated while given the choice to do, 1715-16)
- First sikh Ghalughara in 18th century when governor Yahiya Khan issued proclamation killing all Sikhs
- Why prices on Sikh heads were fixed by Mughals?
- Misal Raj
- History of Maharaha Ranjit Singh period (His government was know as Sarkar-i-Khalsa; he issued coins in the name of the Guru and all his princes were addressed as Khalsa. He was made to appear at Akal Takhat and was granted Tankhah.)

Sikhism	Vaisnism	Vedantism	Nathism
1. Spiritual experience is that God is Love-Ocean of virtues. A dynamic experience.	Sach Chit Anand – Blissful and Quiet.	Sach Chit Ananad – Blissful and Quietist	Blissful Isolation Quietist
2. World Real-Arena of spiritual growth.	Maya	Mithya (Illusion)	Real but a place of misery.
3. Life Affirming	Life-Negating	World does not exist.	Death to the world.
4. Monotheism	Pantheism	Monotheism	Pantheism
5. God interested in the world. He is milk to child, eyes to blind, riches to poor and	Dichotomy between spiritual and empirical life	World an illusion – activity delusion. Sanyas	Yogi vows to withdraw from the world.

Helper of the weak. This means combination between spiritual and empirical life of man.	of man. Hence monasticism & Sanyas.		
6. Householder's life with full social responsibility.	Celibacy and Sanyas	Celibacy and Sanyas	Vow of celibacy and never to work
7. Equality of man and woman. Women in charge of missionary districts.	Woman not fit for Vaishnava path.	Woman a hurdle in spiritual Path.	Vow of celibacy. Nath do not even eat with Nath woman.
8. Equality and brotherhood of man.	Hierarchical caste – Sudras not fit for Bhakti	Accepts caste	Accepts caste. Low castes not admitted.
9. Man's spiritual assessment of his virtuous deeds. By our deeds we are near or away from God. Higher than Truth is truthful living.	All morality is supernal-moral. To do only one's caste duty or ritual acts.	No deeds ritual acts for man of low intellect.	Vows never to work
10. Work and sharing essential	Sanyas	Sanyas	Vows never to work
11. Methodology of remembering God and of virtuous deeds and social responsibility.	Ritualistic, formal, or emotional dancing, meditational.	Meditational. Also value of ritualism accepted.	Hath Yoga and Kundalini Yoga
12. Use of force accepted if other means fail	Sex-methodology accepted. Ahimsa.	Ahimsa	Sex-Methodology also accepted
13. Goal is to be the instrument of Gods Will.	Merger in Brahman	Realization of I am Brahman	Vow of Ahimsa, blood sacrifices done. Merger in Siva
14. Jivan Mukta active and accepts social responsibility. IN the above context Guru Nanak did three things. He created a panth and appointed a successor to continue the mission. He identified the social problems of caste and that of the political oppression. Rejected Ahimsa as an inviolable rule. Finally Panth was created and Guru Granth was appointed as Guru in	Individual salvation. Ritual duties performed.	No interest in the world. Unconscious of the world.	Individual Salvation. No interest in the world – A place of misery.

pursuance of the doctrine of
Miri and Piri.

Sikhism: A Religion of Numina (Naam) and not Phenomena

Guru Gobind Singh himself directed the Sikhs to follow **guru granth** and no other book nor any human being. Numinous experience is inherent in Frie's Ahndung (longing), Schleiermacher's Feeling, Kant's Things in Themselves (numina) and Kapur Singh's Antithesis of phenomena. It stands for the holy minus its moral factor and without any rational aspect. It is irreducible to any other factor. Numinous consciousness involves shaking fear of repulsion and an element of powerful fascination. It can only be understood by "ideograms" i.e. not through logic, but only symbolically. The core of religious experience is inherent in the awareness of non-moral holiness as a category of value. The numinous experience is the core and base of Sikh religion and its ingredients i.e. religiously sensitive mind in relation to his/her apprehension of himself/herself and universe around him/her. The ultimate reality is not comprehensible through the sensory motor perceptions and speculations. Sikhism is a religion of Naam (neumina), which is asserted through 30,000 hymns of Sikh scripture through revealed statements, literary similes and allusions. Naam is God, and God is Naam, and the practice of religion revolves around the Naam. Sikh religious thought cannot be interpreted through any phenomenal process. Guru Granth is a unique scripture and Sikhism has its own identity as follows:

1. Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Scripture is purely monotheistic. It accepts only one God and rejects all other deities, spirits, angels, etc. Only God is immortal. All other deities are mortal and prone to death.
2. The religion of Guru Granth Sahib, being free from inhibitions of any kind regarding the way of life and its adaptability in all the religions of the world vouches its universality. It is not a religion of the chosen people (like Judaism), but instead, it is the religion of the entire humanity. It raises above all the regional barriers.
3. It rejects all ritualism, formalism, and symbolism. It has no belief in any sacrament.
4. It focuses all its attention on the enfoldment of discipline for the attainment of the unity of the soul with God. The emphasis has been laid on the adoption of godly qualities by the seeker.
5. It repudiates the prevalent theories of Creation and scans the universe as the work of the Creator, whose existence pulsates everywhere in His Creation. The extent and expanse of the Creation of the Infinite Lord cannot be delimited.
6. It lays great emphasis on honest and sincere labor. Its religion is the religion of workers and householders. Therefore it decries the renunciation and all types of ascetic practices.
7. It advocates the equality of all human beings, irrespective of birth and sex. The woman is in no way inferior to man. It rejects all distinctions of caste and color.
8. The State has to play its part in the provision of food, shelter, and clothing to the members of the society. There can be no devotion, if the individual is not carefree about his requirements.
9. It presents a balanced combination of action, devotion, and knowledge. Whereas the body has to work for the well-being of family and society while the mind has to remain in tune with the Lord. Service is, thus, the motto of an adherent of Guru Granth Sahib. His best service toward the Guru and the Lord is the remembrance to the Name.

10. The religion of Guru Granth Sahib is most practical. The devotee overbrims with love and devotion. The whole world appears as a family to him. The earth is an abode of Dharma for him.
11. Breaks dichotomy between spiritual and empirical lives.
12. Rejects Ascetism.
13. Rejects Varnasharm Dharma which incorporates basic caste system.
14. Rejects Ahsma.
15. God Never incarnates. He is Un-Incarnated and Transcendent.

World-View and Guru Granth

Both the surveys of Maxwebster and Schwitzer bring out that all Indian religions are life-negating and suggest withdrawal from life. This is quite true of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Vedanta and even the Sant Tradition. All these Hindu systems as indicated above, involve withdrawal from life, and denial of social responsibility. Evidently, systems that recommend Ahimsa, asceticism, monasticism, Sanyasa, celibacy or withdrawal from life, reject every kind of social involvement, much less social responsibility, as an unwanted bondage. S. K. Mitra, who has surveyed the ethics of all Hindu systems, says “that the common feature of all doctrines of the ideal life, or Moksha, is the conception of ideal as strictly moral idea.” It is so, because all these systems accept a clear dichotomy between the spiritual path and the empirical path, and, thus life-negation is a natural and logical consequence of all these religious systems and their world-view. But Sikhism, as the hymns and lives of the Gurus express and demonstrate very clearly, has a world-view of life-affirmation, since in the Sikh ideology there is an inalienable combination between the spiritual life and the empirical life of man. For, whatever is within the domain of God, is also within the sphere of operation of the Godman. In short, Sikhism is a whole-life religion with a world-view entirely opposed to that of other Indian religions.

Guru Granth as a New Scripture with New Ideology with New Religious Experience

Vedas and Upanishads are without doubt the scriptures of all Hindu systems. But Sikhism completely denies their authority, and Guru Nanak even calls some of their injunctions to be wrong. The Sikh Gurus were so clear and particular about the independent and separate identity of their religious system and the complete originality and newness of its character, that they took very significant stage which no other religious leader in the world had done. They specifically compiled and authenticated the Sikh Scripture. Secondly, since the time of its compilation in 1604 A.D., it is the complete repository of and the final authority on the Sikh ideology and its doctrines. Since the Gurus called it revealed Bani, it has been regarded as the Shabad having the sanction of God. The Tenth Master took two important steps in this regard. First, he introduced the Nash doctrine, thereby making a complete and final break with all other Indian ideologies. Neither the Vedas and Upanishads, nor any other religious systems is given any sanction or accepted as authentic. We all know that the Bani of Bhagats in the Guru Granth is a selection. It is accepted only to the extent it is in consonance with the doctrines of the Gurus. And even where differences seem to be suggested, the Gurus have made adequate comments and clarifications. The Bani of Bhagats outside the Granth Sahib is not given any authenticity. Secondly, he made the Sikh Scripture not only as the exclusive vehicle of the Guru’s message,

but also gave it the status of the Guru, Guide or Teacher of the Sikhs. The creation and sanction of Guru Granth as the sole scripture of the Sikhs reveals that the Gurus were very clear and conscious of its independent and separate character, and wanted their ideology to remain as such without chance of any addition, alteration, or any departure from its authenticity or contents.

Sikh community in North America funded the Sikh chairs with following views in mind

- Sikh chairs will have a positive impact on North American scholarship about Sikhism.
- Will present authentic view of Sikh history and religion
- Will present Sikhism as an independent religion with separate Doctrinal identity as envisioned in Guru Granth sahib.
- Promotion of concept of Khalsa and Rehat Maryada as unique and integral parts of Sikhism.
- Community accepted no strings

Sikh religion and its independent identity cannot be studied with DANAM,s background and its mission, It is strange that Sikh chair holders Dr. Arvind Pal Mandair (University of Michigan) is on Academic advisory board members panel and Dr. Balwinder Singh Bhogal(Hofstra university) is a steering Committee member of the DANAM. Mission statement of Dharma academy of North America completely misinterprets and misrepresents Sikhism by applying that sikh religion not an Independent Religion but rather it is a part of network of Dharma Traditions click on <http://www.danam-web.org/missionpage2.htm>. Dr.Arvind and Dr.Balwinder as Sikh chair holder's support for mission statement of DANAM has caused embarrassment, humiliation and disgrace to the independently emerging Sikh religion and community in north America. Supporting DANAM,s mission by Sikh chair holders shows their pathological identification and an attempt of nihilistic depersonalization by biting the hands that fed them. My sincere request to Dr. Arvind Pal Mandair(Uni of Michigan) and Dr. Balwinder Singh Bhogal(Hofstra uni.) is that they should focus their energy to represent Sikhism as an independent religion with separate Doctrinal identity as envisioned in Guru Granth sahib.

Therefore request is made to Dr.Arvind and Dr.Balwinder to immediately resign and dissociate from DANAM positions. Or issue an immediate statement to Sikh community by giving their opinion 'Sikh religion not an independent religion but rather it is a part of network of Dharma Traditions per DANAM' with their academic basis of supporting their argument.

This issue touches the heart of community. Therefore for clarification on this important issue to Sikh community I am inviting both of you to a public forum which we will arrange in southern California in 2nd week of May 2013(May 6th to may 9th 2013) any day depending on the suitability of Dr. Arvind and Dr. Bhogal. I will also write to DANAM,s president of such request. Will pay for the Travel and Board Expense. Will also invite Head of Guru Granth sahib department Panjabi university Patiala and Guru Nanak Dev Universty Amritsar respectively. Please email me the contact email and telephone Numbers of the DANAM,s all scholars, trustees and elected officers immediately. Specifically also write me contact of scholar who wrote the mission statement for DANAM,s Web.

Suggested Topics focusing on the issue in suggested May 2013 public forum :

1. 'Sikh religion as a Network of Indian Dharma Traditions'; Dr.Arvindpal singh Mandair,Prof. sikh chair university Michigan.
2. 'Sikh religion as a Network of Indian Dharma Traditions'; Dr. Balwinder singh Bhogal Prof. Sikh chair Hofstra university New York.
3. 'Sikhism as an Independent Religion" Dr.Balwant Singh Dhillon Prof. and Director, Center on studies in Shri Guru Granth Sahib, GuruNanak Dev University, Amritsar.
4. 'Sikhism as an Independent Religion" Dr. Sarabjinder Singh. Prof and Head: Dept. Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Panjabi University Patiala.

Each Speaker will have 30 minutes speaking time. Will prefer Written Papers or will Record will video presentations of the lectures? Speaking assignments will be followed by one hour answer and question session from the audience.

My sincere hope is that Dr. Arvind Pal Mandair (Uni of Michigan) and Dr. Balwinder Singh Bhogal(Hofstra university) will accept our invitation for final clarification on the subject for the Sikh community of north America.

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President, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Foundation, Anaheim. California.

For debates on Sikh Study Issues Click On our web WWW.globalsikhstudies.net