

Nanakshahi Calendar: A Plea for Acceptance

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THERE HAD BEEN WELL ESTABLISHED tradition in India to start a new calendar from an event considered truly significant. A new calendar was initiated whenever a monarch ascended the throne (date of coronation) during the Muslim rule. It was known as monarch's *San-i-Jalus* – then used in all books written during the rule of that monarch. Some of these books are: *Akbar Namah*, *Tuziki-Jehangiri*, *Muasir-i-Alamgiri*, etc.

In the field of religion, the new era was traditionally counted either from the birth of the prophet or from some important event of his life. The Christian calendar, likewise, was started from the date of birth of Christ. The *Hijri* calendar dates back to the Prophet Mohammad's exodus from Mecca to Medina, Hijri at being migration.

In northern India, Vikrami calendar had been most popular. It dates back to the times of Raja Vikramaditya of Kannauj, now in Madhya Pradesh. In South India the Saka calendar has been in vogue. In the north –western India, Nanakshahi calendar had been in vogue among the Sikhs. Recently, there has started a controversy regarding some reform in Nanakshahi calendar. Normally calendar reforms should not involve violation of any religious tenets, nor is it in clash with any other calendar. Only custom makes it prevail.

Need for Reform:

The Sikhs have been celebrating all important days of the Ten Gurus as Bhai Gurdas, 17th century exponent has started, *Haun Balhari tina gursikhan bhae bhagat gurpurb karande* (I am sacrifice to those Sikhs who celebrate the days of Guru with love and devotion). The Sikhs therefore, have been in constant quest to find the actual date relating to birth, succession and death of the Gurus. The literature of Gurparnalli is the result of its quest. Bhai Randhir Singh has compiled these *Gurparanlian* which were published by the SGPC, Amritsar and had tried to find out correct dates with the help of newly discovered *Bhatt Vahis*. Karm Singh who has done pioneering work in calendaring wrote *Gurpurb Nirnay* (1912) in which he has discussed and worked out the birth dates, succession dates and death dates of the Gurus which are considered mostly correct. He has converted these dates to the Christian calendar viz common calendar.

The dates fixed by lunar calculation are variable every year. They cannot be fixed once for all. We celebrate Guru's dates by lunar calculation as is our current practice, we are celebrating the day before or after the actual date. We can find the actual date by solar calculation only. This can be illustrated by the following example.

Guru Arjun's Martyrdom day falls on the 2nd Harh – 1663 B.K. which is equivalent to May 30, 1606 A.D. It is *Jeth Shudi Chauth* (4th of light month of Jeth) of the same year. Every year *Jeth Shudi Chauth* is variable and it cannot be the same every year due to the following reasons:

- a) Lunar month is shorter than the solar month.
- b) After some years one lunar month is added which is called Laund month and is considered inauspicious.

In solar calculation we can fix Guru Arjun's martyrdom day on 30th May, every year. Similarly all the Gurpurbs can be fixed in this way.

Recently a laudable attempt has been made by a Canadian Sikh expert in calendaring by preparing new Sikh Almanac, popularly known as *Nanak Shahi Jantri*. It was prepared making two fold reforms. The Bikrami dates relating to the Gurus have been converted to the Common Calendar. Secondly, uniformity in the length of month has been effected. At present *Bikrami* calendar after 70 years advances one day, as Bikrami year is longer than the movements of the Sun. Though *Amavas* and *Puranmashis* have been shown in the *Nanakshahi Jantri* but the Gurpurb dates have been linked with the solar circulation and delinked from lunar calculation with exception of *Dewali*, *Hola Mahla*, etc. SGPC Amritsar has approved these reforms in their general body meeting but the process of reform was stalled by the reactionaries. The Christians have twice reformed their calendar. Once on the 5th October 1582 and second time on 2nd September 1752, Pope Gregory reformed the calendar. It is unfortunate that the Sikhs who have been spearheading reform in every field are now bogged down with the calendar reforms which have been due for long. Moreover it is the crying need of the times as the Sikh diaspora wants definite dates for Gurpurb celebrations based on Common Calendar which is prevalent throughout the world. It is only possible if we shift to solar calculation for fixing the Gurpurb dates and link it with the common calendar.

Acceptance of Nanakshahi Calendar will fix the dates for all Gurpurabs once for all without any change in future. This is also another feature of Sikh identity.

According to the Brahminical belief certain days and particular months are 'inauspicious'. This is rejected by Sikh tenets, as Guru Arjun has stated:

ਮਾਹ ਦਿਵਸ ਮੂਰਤ ਭਲੇ ਜਿਸ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ॥ [SGGS:136]

i.e. wherever there is His Grace all months, days and occasions are auspicious.

