

# **SIKH RELIGION & ISLAM - A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**By G S Sidhu & Gurmukh Singh**

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*Foreword by Indarjit Singh, OBE, JP\* (UK)*

Today different religions which, at one time could have looked at other faiths with aloof superiority, have been thrown together in a way that demands dialogue and peaceful co-existence.

Whatever our religion, we live in a world in which family breakdown, escalating crime, stress and depression go hand in hand with a naive pursuit of happiness through material prosperity. Many feel that it is a society powered by greed that has lost its sense of direction.

It has always been the responsibility of our different religions to give moral direction and remind us of ethical imperatives for sane, balanced and responsible living. Never before has the need been greater; nor the opportunities. Wider educational opportunities and near-instant communications can clearly help our individual faiths to provide sound guidance for the young. More importantly, they can enable different faiths that find themselves in close physical proximity, as in Britain today, to work together for the common good. Interfaith dialogue has never been more important. It is only through understanding our neighbour's faith that we can learn about and rejoice in the values we hold in common, whilst at the same time respecting sensitive difference.

There is, however, a real difficulty in dialogue. Some religions, notably, Christianity and Islam, have missionary zeal, which some see as an imperative to *convert* others to their religion; to the 'one true faith'. This can make dialogue, at best difficult, and at worst impossible. In contradistinction, the Sikh Gurus taught that God is not interested in religious *labels* and that no one religion has a monopoly of truth.

We must all be true to our different religious beliefs. Sikhs do, however, object, as they did in the Gurus' times, to the use of force, coercion or misrepresentation as a means of conversion. The origin of this remarkable book by G.S. Sidhu and Gurmukh Singh lies in the systematic misrepresentation of both Sikhism, and importantly, the high ideals of Islam, by some zealous Muslims, particularly in schools and university campuses. The aim of the authors is to clear the fog of misrepresentation by presenting parallel teachings side by side, in an objective and respectful way.

The main teachings of Sikhism are described in an admirably concise way, and the parallel teachings of Islam given with detailed references. Meticulous research confirms that the two faiths have much in common: belief in one God, the importance of charity and compassion and the acceptance of God's will. There are also important differences, notably on the nature of God, the afterlife, gender equality and current social customs.

Gurbachan Singh Sidhu and Gurmukh Singh deserve every praise for this monumental work; but it is only a beginning. There is still much to be done to ensure the work is fully acceptable to both communities. A major area for further research is in the use of metaphor and allegory in both religions, and the danger of taking the illustration too literally. The authors have clearly done this in their presentation of Sikh teachings and endeavoured to do the same for the teachings of Islam. I suspect some Muslims scholars might feel that figurative language is sometimes interpreted too literally. There can clearly be a difference of perception between a believer and one looking at a faith from outside. No one who knows the two respected authors will doubt their sincerity. The hope is that a future edition will also carry the name of a distinguished Muslim scholar to take this important dialogue further to improve co-operation and understanding between the two communities in UK.

## ***Kya mukh le ke jaYenga***

**- Being Quotations from Gurbani on Character building**

**Text from Gurbani. Annotations by Sri Ram Chand Bhatiani**

**Introduction by Sr. Gurbakhsh Singh**

**Pp 240. Available free from: Suri Jewellers, WZ- 215 Shop No. 4.**

**Shiv Nagar. Som Bazar Road, New Delhi. 110058.**

Babu Ram Chandji Bhatiani has, once again, assembled gems of *Gurbani* wisdom for the benefit of common man. Quotations remind the reader to value time and live in constant presence of God, urging a life of devotion to virtuous living in service of fellow men.

The book reminds us of profound verities of life, expressed in simple work-a-day language, laced with chants of Waheguru - the Wondrous Lord of all creation.

**- S.S.**

## **SHRADDHANJALI: Stories of Guru Nanak Devjee**

**By Sita Sahi (Malaysia)**

**Published by Sanbun Publishers.**

**Email: Sanbunpublishers@hotmail.com**

**Pp 160. Price (Hard cover) Rs. 195.**

This is truly a devotional tribute to the glorious Guru Nanak by Sita Sahi, a former teacher at Convent of Jesus & Mary, New Delhi, who is no stranger to the regular readers of *The Sikh Review*, as a master story teller for three decades and more. In transparent chaste prose Sita lovingly tells of Guru Nanak Devjee's many journeys across India and West Asia. Everyone of the *Sakhis* has a message for people of faith, gently guiding the pious and the powerful along the path of righteousness. There is, for instance, the exposé of Sajjan's hypocrisy, the debunking of ritualism, the triumph of honest labour - each episode narrated in persuasive prose made easy for the new youngsters studying in English medium schools. The book deserves to be the prescribed study for the Sikh schools as part of moral science.

- S.S.