

Pal Singh Purewal

Do you know that Nanakshahi mohars were minted during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh? Do you know that even Baba Banda Singh Bahadur struck coins in the name of Nanakshahi? Do you know that some old buildings still have bricks called Nanakshahi bricks? Do you know that Dr Ganda Singh compiled Mukhtasir Nanakshahi Jantri (Urdu) published in 1949CE by the Sikh History Society, Amritsar? Do you know that the office of Sri Akal Takht Sahib has already started giving the Nanakshahi date with the corresponding date of the Common Era in its correspondence and in Hukamnamas? Do you know that most Sikh websites cite both the Nanakshahi dates and the Common Era dates on their homepages? Do you know that the Sikh Panth is more united on the issue of Nanakshahi Calendar than on any other issue?

Now is the time to be better informed and to join hands to contest any move to undermine the calendar in any small or big way.

Question: What is the relationship of Gurbani with the Nanakshahi Calendar?

Answer: 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:

rQaiPrCaeA Dn qikI tifiI vfiM U bary ] pI 1108

This refers to the date when the day is longest in the year; and usually t h e

# Nanakshahi is Immortal

## SIMPLE PRIMER OF THE ALMANAC

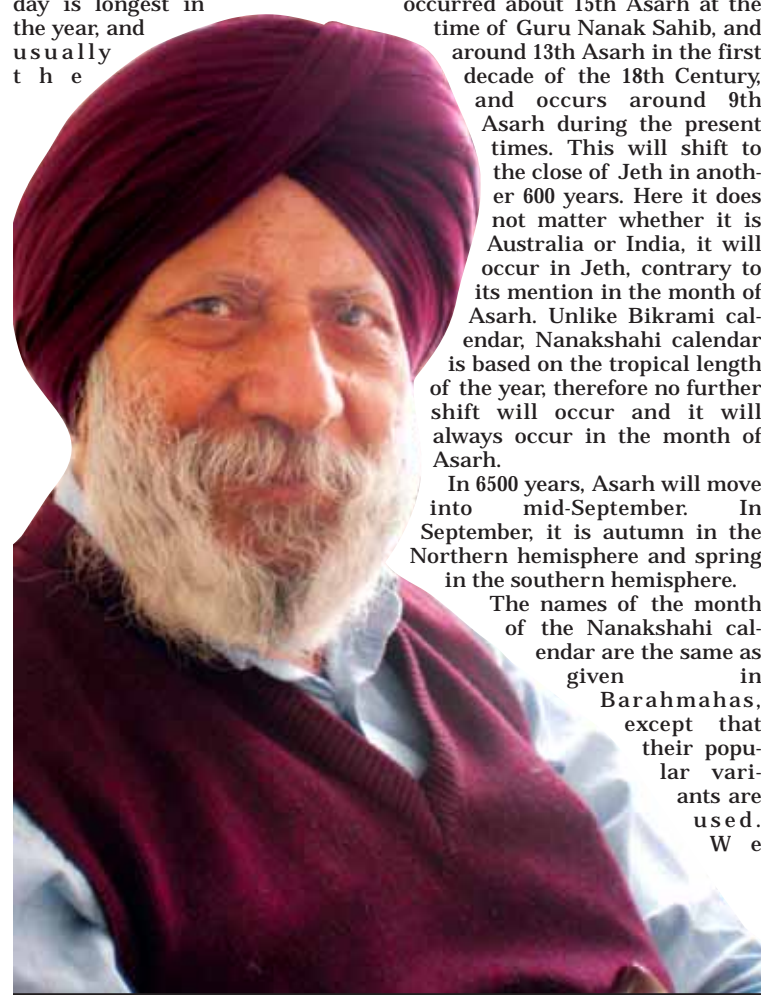
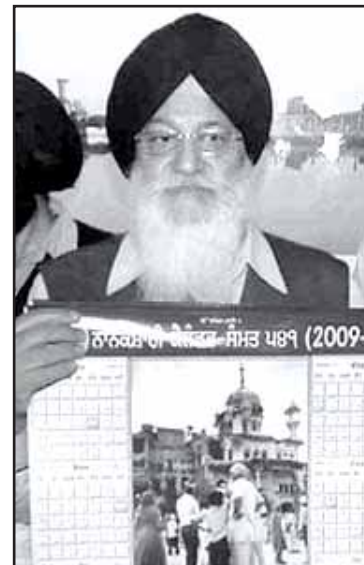
Nearly two decades of painstaking research resulted in the conception and creation of the Nanakshahi Calendar, which presented a flawless almanac to the beleaguered Sikh community in search of its sui generis status. Since its implementation in 2003, with the approval of the Khalsa Akal Takht Sahib, as its implementation was ordered at the Akal Takht Sahib, it has become part of the daily personal, religious and professional affairs of nearly 95 percent of the Sikh nation. The state government of Punjab and the government of India have adopted Sikh holidays as per this calendar.

Then and now, a section of the community, with little or no understanding or deliberate misunderstanding is attempting to undermine the calendar, through

amendment or rejection, from a belligerent group of people who want it to be replaced with the earlier anomaly-ridden Hindu mythology based Bikrami calendar, which is totally inimical to Sikh traditions and beliefs.

We believe that truth and facts can dispel the canards of forces out to destroy the institution of the calendar, dear to the Sikhs. As the Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib Giani Gurbachan Singh and the SGPC president Avtar Singh Makkar are working for a review of the same and have asked for views from the community prior to 5 January 2010, World Sikh News presents a set of FAQs about the calendar which will enlighten readers into the background and contents of the historic calendar, prepared by none other than the septuagenarian author of the calendar, Pal Singh Purewal.

### 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.



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 Sampardaee 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.

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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.

Question: Why was it necessary to give up the Bikrami calendar?

Answer: We gave up the Bikrami calendar for the following three primary reasons:

1. The months mentioned in the Bikrami calendar do not have a permanent relationship with the seasons as mentioned in Gurbani.
2. 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.
3. A calendar is a part of the iden-

tiety of a Nation and the Sikh nation should have its own calendar.

Question: All Guru Sahiban used the Bikrami calendar because that calendar was in common use. Guru Sahiban also used other units of time, weight and measure, which have been discarded and replaced. You are not using ghati, pal, ratti, tola, masa, ser, mann, and gaz, etc. Do we cite Gurbani concerning these units and try to convince people to go back to them?

Answer: Do you know that the Bikrami calendar used in Punjab these days is not the same as was in use during the Guru period? If you really believe that you should adhere to the Bikrami calendar because of mention of its dates in Gurbani, then you should discard all Jantris published in Punjab, and use those based on Surya Siddhanta which was used during Guru period to calculate Bikrami calendar. Do you know what Surya

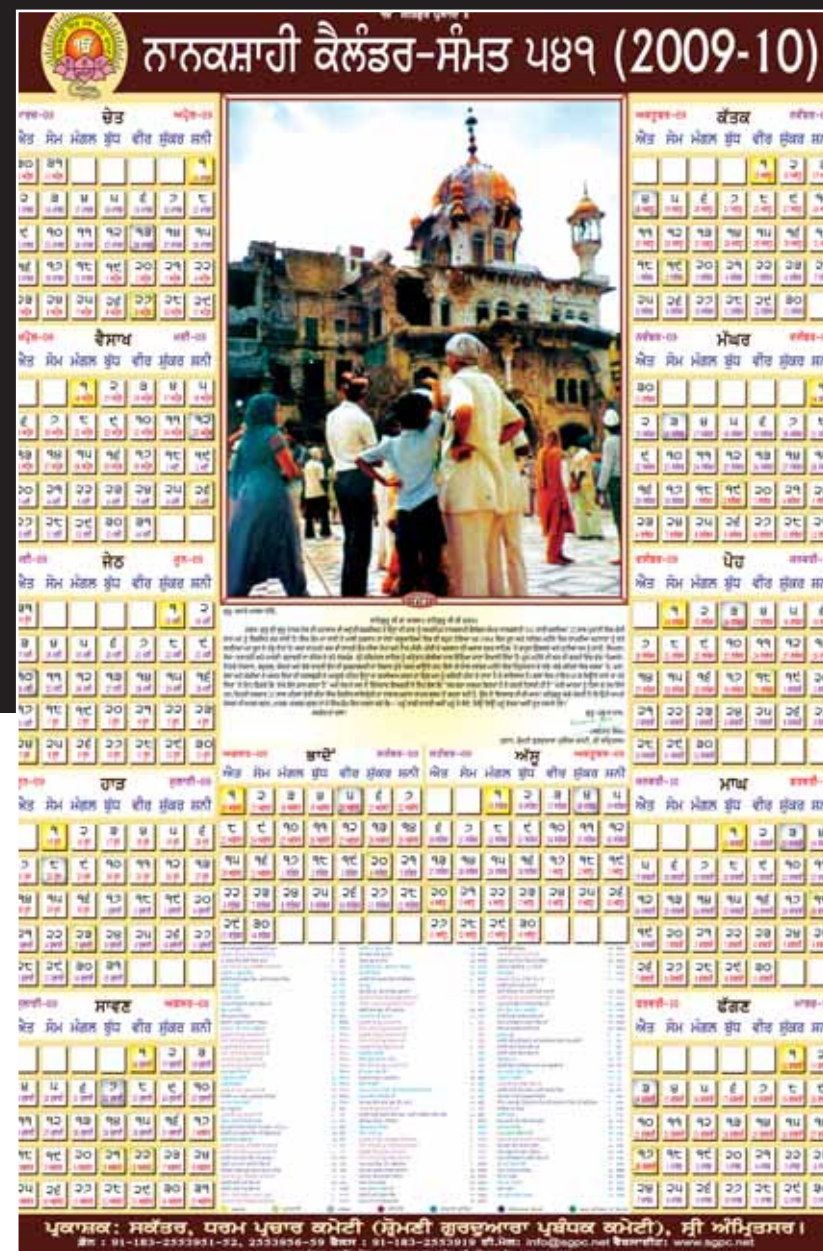
Siddhanta is? There are still some Jantris calculated according to Surya Siddhanta and published from Varanasi.

Regarding past dates I would like to mention that there have been changes in calendars the world over. The change is applicable from the implementation time and not retroactively. Old dates are always interpreted in the then prevalent calendar.

I would also like to add, to clear the air that Guru Ji did not create the Bikrami calendar. It was there before their time.

Question: Is there mention of rasi and sankranti in Guru Granth Sahib?

Answer: There is no mention of any rasi in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Hindus have defined the 'sankranti'. (By the way the sun does not enter a new zodiac belt, it enters the next rasi in the same belt.) When in 1998CE Nanakshahi Jantri (Calendar) was first published we called the day 1 of the months of Nanakshahi Calendar



Mah Arambhta, which it really is. We are not sun worshippers. We are worshippers of Akalpurkh. At all Gurdwaras Giani Jis and the lay worshippers too, mention in the Ardaas 'commencement of the new month' and seek Akalpurkhs blessings for the new month, and not Rasi Pravesh of the sun. Next time when any of you go to the Gurdwara on a 'Sangrand' day, talk to the members of the Sangat, and find out how many know from which rasi the sun has moved to which rasi.

Question: What is seriously wrong with the Bikrami calendar?

Answer: The Bikrami Calendar is already out of tune from the seasons by about 24 days. How many know what ayanamsa is?

In the Panchanga Divakar (Hindi) or Martand Panchanga (Hindi) for 2060BK or 2061BK, the value of Ayanamsa for the first of every month is given. I leave this as an exercise for the inquisitive reader to find out what it means. It is very relevant to why the Bikrami calendar months are shifting in seasons. Even the Hindu Pundits agree that months of the Bikrami calendar are drifting in seasons, since its year is not based on the length of the tropical year, on which most other solar calendars of the world are based.

By Guru Nanak Sahib's time, the Bikrami calendar was out by about 16 days. There has been a further drift of about 8 days since then. Bikrami month of Chet will shift to about middle of June in 6500 years. Similar shift of other months including Vaisakh shall occur. The rate of shift is roughly 1 week in 500 years. These are basic astronomical facts.

In the Ganesh Aapa Panchanga (Hindi) for the same year (2060BK or 2061 BK), compare the dates of sankrantis given in each. Which

ones you would celebrate - the ones from Kurali Pundits or the one from Varanasi Pundit? Compare the dates and times of tithis given in each. It will be a revelation.

Question: During the Guru period, mainly Bikrami lunar-solar, Saka, and the Hijri calendars were in use in India, while the calendar used in England was the Julian calendar?

Answer: The Gregorian calendar, now commonly known as Common Era, which 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. Now a days, the 25th of December (Julian) falls on 7th January of the Gregorian calendar. Therefore, they celebrate Christmas on 7th January Gregorian.

The original date of Shaheedi of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib is 11 Maghar, 1732 Bikrami/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 Bikrami/22 December 1666 Julian. Now a days, the 22nd of 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

World Sikh News editor Jagmohan Singh met Pal Singh Purewal while he was in Delhi en route to Edmonton, after a brief trip to Punjab during which neither Akal Takht Sahib authorities or the SGPC thought it wise to discuss with him the proposed changes to the Nanakshahi

Calendar. Pal Singh Purewal was not apologetic about anything and forthright and clear about every aspect of the calendar. Suave, gentle Gursikh Pal Singh Purewal was determination personified while talking about the Nanakshahi Calendar.

## Nanakshahi Calendar cannot be bartered for votes

### INTERVIEW WITH PAL SINGH PUREWAL

WSN: Pal Singh Ji, tell us a little about yourself?

Pal Singh: I belong to village Shankar in Jalandhar district and I my father and grandfather had inculcated love for Sikhi in me at a very early age. I migrated 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.

WSN: Tell us about your father and grandfather?

Pal Singh: My grandfather Deva Singh, who was a real Gurmukh, was my greatest inspiration. He was a true Gursikh and he inculcated the spirit of enquiry, the spirit to learn throughout life in me. Similarly my father - Harbans Singh who died a couple of months back at the ripe age of 95, also influenced me a lot and helped me in my journey of Sikhi.

WSN: What prompted you to make the Nanakshahi Calendar?

Pal Singh: If you go back on the calendar that the Sikh nation had been using, you will find that it was the Bikrami calendar for most of the years in history. I thought that it was very necessary that the Sikh nation had its very own calendar. We also knew that the Bikrami calendar was not according to Gurbani, the months according to the Bikrami calendar were slipping in seasons and we wanted to make a calendar in which we could fix the months in seasons for all times to come. It was also known that the lunar part of the Bikrami calendar was such that the Gurdwaras were shifting from year to year and they were going back by 11-10 days next year and the year after and then go forward by 19 days in the subsequent year, making the predictability of the Gurdwaras very difficult. One had to wait for the

Pandit's Jantris to find out the dates of the Gurdwaras.

WSN: What all did you study for standardization of the Nanakshahi Calendar?

Pal Singh: 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.

WSN: How much time have you spent on this project?

Pal Singh: I have spent years and years on the calendar.

**"My appeal to the Jathedars and everyone else is 'Go with the opinion of the Panth.' Awaaz-e-Khalak ko Naqarah Khuda samjho -Consider the voice of the People as the voice of God."**

Working on this project was my hobby for the past more than 40 years, off and on. Since my retirement, it has become a passion and continues to this day. It took efforts of many many years. Before the Nanakshahi calendar could see the light of the day, a lot preparatory work had to be done.

WSN: What kind of preparatory work had to be done?

Pal Singh: First, we had to settle about the correct dates of the historical events and for this I had to calculate and prepare a 500 year Jantri, beginning with 1469 and continuing for 2000 years, which Jantri had comparative dates of the

Bikrami calendar, the Hijri calendar, the Gregorian and Julian calendar, the Shaka calendar. Of course at that time, the Nanakshahi calendar was the same as the Bikrami calendar. This made it easier for us to check the historical dates. This took many years of calculation and preparation. It also involved the study of Hindu Granths like Surya Sidhant, which I mastered as it was necessary for the calculation of 500 year Jantri.

WSN: Was there any other factor which contributed to the making of the calendar?

Pal Singh: The tragic events of 1984 affected every Sikh's psyche and I was also deeply moved and I redoubled my efforts so that the Sikh nation has its own calendar.

WSN: What do you think is the basis of the present efforts of the Jathedar Akal Takht Sahib and other Jathedars to incorporate certain older aspects into the Nanakshahi calendar?

Pal Singh: I think the whole thing is motivated by political pressures and I want to say that the Nanakshahi calendar should not be bartered for dera votes. The calendar is accurate, it has been tried for seven years, its acceptability is more than 95 percent from Norway to New Zealand, from Hong Kong to India, to Middle-east, Europe, USA and Canada. The Sikh Panth has whole heartedly accepted it and greeted it with great joy, as the Sikhs have their own calendar.

WSN: What are the problems that are being talked about?

Pal Singh: There are no problems. What they are trying to do is to go back to the Sangrands of the Bikrami calendar, which will end the identity of the Nanakshahi calendar.

WSN: You have often said that the Nanakshahi calendar has Gurbani as its base, can you dwell on this a little more?

Pal Singh: Yes, there are three Banis which give us some direction towards calendar science, Barahmaha of Guru Arjan Sahib in Maajh Raag, Barahmah of Guru Nanak Sahib in Raag

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