MEANINGS AND FUNCTIONS OF GURDWARA
ACCORDING TO NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD
Institute for Understanding Sikhism
4418 Martin Plouffe, Laval, Quebec, Canada H7W 5L9

ABSTRACT

A simple survey of Sikh history and literature will indicate that the term ‘Gurdwara’ has not been understood properly, although, the Sikh history revolves around it. In this article, meanings and functions of Gurdwara have been traced out from the Nanakian Philosophy enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Accordingly, Gurdwara means ‘Gateway to the Guru’; ‘Guru’ is ‘Sabd’ (philosophy); and Sabd is understood through vichar (discussion). Therefore, Gurdwara means ‘Gateway to the Guru (Sabd)’ or the institution for learning the philosophy of the Guru; and its functions are to disseminate it to the humanity.

INTRODUCTION

Guru Nanak was disseminating his philosophy (Bani) during the 15th and 16th century by going from place to place. Thereafter, Guru Amardas, the third Guru in succession to the House of Nanak, established 22 Manjis (bedsteads, cots, platforms, daises, thrones) on which representatives of the Guru (called Masand) used to sit for dissemination of Guru Nanak’s philosophy at various places in India [7]. When the Bani (word) of the Sikh Gurus were compiled into a Granth (Aad Guru Granth Sahib – AGGS) [1] then the Manji that was used by Guru Arjan himself was given to seat the Granth at night. During the day the Granth was displayed at the Harmindar Sahib, mid-sarovar, from which the Gurbani was preached [8]. Guru Arjan took this action to show reverence for the Gurbani and to impress upon the Sikhs that it is the Gurbani which is the Guru, not a person as a Guru. Similarly, at other places in India the copies of the Granth, from which the Masands preached the Gurbani, were also seated on the Manjis. Over a period of time, the building, in which the Granth was seated on Manji, started to be called first as Manji Sahib and then as ‘Gurdwara’. A small Manji is still used to seat the Aad Guru Granth Sahib in every Gurdwara throughout the world. The evolution of Gurdwara clearly shows that its primary and fundamental function is to disseminate the Gurbani and to make the Sikhs to understand it properly.

According to Bhai Kahn Singh, the author of Mahan Kosh (The Great Encyclopedia in Punjabi) [4], Gurdwara is more than a place of worship. It is a school for the student, the spiritual person, an hospital for the sick, sanctuary for woman’s honor, and a rest house for the pilgrim. In the recent times, the Sikhs all over the world as well as the people of other faiths have observed that most of the Gurdwaras are drifting away from its original meanings and functions and entering into ritualism. Moreover, it has also become a bone of contention among the Sikhs and its controllers for making the Gurdwaras as their fiefdoms.

Since this article is based specifically on the Nanakian Philosophy, it is important to define this new anglicized term so that readers could understand it properly:

Nanakian Philosophy:
A philosophy promulgated by (Guru) Nanak that was taught and strengthened by other nine Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak.

Guru Arjan in 1604 CE enshrined the Nanakian Philosophy in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib [8]. In around 1705 CE Guru Gobind Singh added the philosophy of Guru Teg Bahadur and reiterated the authenticity of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

The term, Nanakian Philosophy, has been conceived from the following information available from the AGGS and Sikh literature:

1. Swayaiae of Guru Arjan explains that Nanak is the Guru and his philosophy (Sabd) is a lamp of wisdom (enlightener) for the whole humanity. (AGGS, M 5, P 1385-1387) [1].

Moreover, Guru Ramdas says that Bani is Guru and Guru is Bani. And it is the Guru who says Bani as discussed later.

2. Bhai Kahn Singh
The Bani, which has been revealed through the mouth of Satguru Nanak and the successor Satgurus under the guidance of the Akal (the Almighty), is called Gurbani. But according to Bhai Gurdas, Bani revealed by any spiritually wise men is also called Gurbani. However, Bhai Kahn Singh insists that the word 'Gurbani' is especially used for the 'Bani' of our Satgurus.

3. Gurbilas Patshahi 6 indicates that Guru Hargobind taught the Sikhs that Nanak is the Guru and to follow his Sabd (Philosophy) [9].

My discussion on Gurdwara is confined specifically to the Nanakian Philosophy that has been incorporated in the AGGS and has been authenticated by Guru Arjan in 1604 CE and Guru Gobind Singh in around 1705 CE, when the Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur was added in it.

MEANINGS OF GURDWARA

‘Gurdwara’ (Guruduara) has been coined by the combination of two Punjabi words Guru (gurU) and Duara (dAwrw), which have been used many times in the AGGS.

But nowadays some Sikhs have replaced the word ‘Gurdwara’ with ‘Guru Ghar’ without paying any attention to the differences in the meanings of these two words. Although both words have ‘Guru’ in common, replacement of ‘Dwara’ or ‘Duara’ with ‘Ghar’ (house) makes lots of differences in their meanings because ‘Guru’ in Nanakian Philosophy means the Almighty, and a religious teacher.

But when one uses the term ‘Guru Ghar’ it means the ‘House of the Guru or the Almighty’. According to the Nanakian Philosophy there is no particular place in the universe for the Almighty to live:  

AGGS, Jap 27, P 6 & 347.

“What is that gate (door) of that house look like and what does that house look like wherefrom the Oh (the Almighty) resides and takes care of Its creation?"

Thus, to call ‘Gurdwara’ (Guruduara) as ‘Guru Ghar’ (Ghar = House) is not justified. However, those Sikhs who have coined this word, ‘Guru Ghar’, might argue that ‘Guru Ghar’ means where the Guru, AGGS, resides. But ‘Gurdwara’ is an institution whereas ‘Guru Ghar’, is a place of residence. An institution is an organization for promotion of a cause whereas a residence is a place where one actually lives, a building used as a house. Therefore, Gurdwara is an institution where Gurbani is preached; it is not a residence to live. Nevertheless, I must add here that Bhai Kahn Singh [4] has used ‘Gurdwara’ and ‘Guru Ghar’ as interchangeable terms. I do not agree to his interchangeable use because of the fact that Gurdwara is an institution and cannot be called ‘Guru Ghar’, which is a residence, as explained above.

To understand the meaning of Gurdwara (Guruduara) we have to examine the meanings of gurU (Guru) and dAwrw (Duara) in the Nanakian Philosophy.

Guru

In the Nanakian Philosophy the Guru is the Sabd (Bani) and Sabd (Bani) is the Guru as explained in the following verses:

AGGS, M 1, P943.

"Sabd is Guru, consciousness and intention toward it make one its disciple (Sikh)."

AGGS, M 1, P 55.

"Without Guru it is all darkness, but without (deliberation on) Sabd (Guru’s philosophy) one cannot attain any wisdom."

AGGS, M 4, P 982.

(2 & 3 gur, guru, gurU and guir means gurU according to Bhai Kahn Singh’s Mahan Kosh [4])

Who is the Guru here?

Bani (Sabd) 3 is Guru 2 and Guru is the Bani (Sabd) and it contains all the elixirs of life."

What is the Bani?

"Guru 3 says Bani and the servant (Sikh) 4,5 accepts 6 and practices 6 it. Obviously 7, this is the Guru who helps to get salvation 8."

Who is the Guru that says Bani?

AGGS, M 4, P 494.

"Nanak* person (jann) speaks the wise words (Gunn Bani), that is Gur Bani (Guru's words) in which the Almighty is imbibed."
swl bwl is auDry ipA wu]
qw op ymdu dwu]
jq pus Bue hUs bduh Ys wu]
AGGS, M 1, P 661.
Nanak* says:
"When one contemplates with love on the true Bani
(word).
Then one gets to the gateway to salvation.
(Understanding of )The philosophy in the Sabd (Bani/word) is equivalent to so-called jap (repetition) and tap
(austerities).
(* Nanak, in the above two stanzas, is with kaka having
onkar means Nanak himself as a person not as a pen
name for himself or for any other successor to the House
of Nanak. Sometimes Nanak with kaka as mukta also
means Nanak as a person but not as a pen name.)

DUARA:
The word ‘Duara’ has been mentioned in Nanakian
Philosophy as ‘gateway’ many times. For example,
siq gun yh mk K A g v w w ] iPir Eie ikQhu pwe m
mk dww ]
mir jMih iPir iPir Awih jm dir cbw
KwixAw 4 ]
sbd Ys wuj h k w w qw Ap nc Pcwih ] inrml bwl sbid
Kwih ]
s c y w v s d s K up w e i n na u in D n w m H vs wixAw 5 ]
AGGS, M 3, P 115.
This verse explains that the one, who does not understand
the True Guru, is greatest fool, blind and illiterate. He is
hurt again and again. If so then where can he achieve
gateway (door) to the salvation.
When one understands the Sabd and the self, and way
shown by the Sabd then he achieves all the pleasures and
treasures of life and imbibes the Naam (the Almighty) in
his mind.

Note: Here it is important to know the meanings of
salvation because it has been used again and again in the
verses presented here.
Salvation:
1. A saving or being saved from danger, evil, difficulty,
destruction, etc.; rescue.
2. Theol. deliverance from sin and from the penalties of
sin; redemption
Meaning given in # 1 is more close to the one given in
the Nanakian Philosophy and is more scientific and
logical.

I have seen the whole humanity is perishing because of
greed and egoism.
Gateway to salvation is reached through the service to
the Guru.

What is the service to the Guru? It is explained in the
following verses:
gomiq nmmun vls Yh hj yip q wvAY]
A Mr sbdun Dwuh Ymrl A pug v wvAY 7 ]
AGGS, M 1, P 229
When you do not forget the philosophy of the Guru then
you receive the honor of tranquility.
When the treasure of Sabd (philosophy) has been
imbibed in mind then ego is eliminated.
sqg s yq y s q w g m K q Ys M w w ]
sc Y nh w r q y b Yg] p w i e m mk dW w 4 ]
AGGS, M 4, P 559.
The above phrase again explains almost the same
theme of the above verse that method to reach the
gateway to salvation is by understanding the Sabd and
applying its principles in such a way that we transform
ourselves into a reflection of the Guru.

lw c Cif r ch u Ap r Mr ie a up h u m k i q d W w hy 1 ]
AGGS, M 1, P 1030.
By getting rid of greed and by imbibing (understanding) the Infinite one reaches the gateway to
salvation.

ikr qu n ke m x h w w ]
go K Ys bdym mk dW w ]
pUb il KAw sPl p w A w i j n A p u m ir pc w hy 7 ]
AGGS, M 3, P 1052.
Here the Sabd (word) is the gateway to salvation
because nobody can erase good deeds (kirt). Such
achievements are also inherited, one finds by
eliminating the ego.

go ps d l j Yq m Ymry j lvYs bd k m w e ]
mk i q d W w s l p v y i j ivch uA p u g v w e ] 3 ]
AGGS, M 3, P 1276.
With the blessing of the Guru ego is eliminated and
understanding the Sabd attains new life. Therefore,
gateway to salvation is achieved by eliminating ego.

In all the above verses dW w (Duara) means ‘gateway’
and ‘gateway to the salvation’ is through the Sabd.
(Note: In all the above verses and all other verses in the
AGGS, dW w is spelled with ‘A’ (aera), therefore, in
English it should be written as GURUDUARA rather
than GURDWARA as is found in the literature.)
Once one enters (chalia) this gateway one will be honored.
Then human being will be honored everywhere (in the three worlds).
Nanak says: You yourself will be contented and will make your filial generations contented.”

(*Gateway or a means to access or a road or path to the Guru’ is more appropriate interpretation than ‘Through the Guru’, since it is g u U d A w Y (Guru Duaray). Moreover, in the next sentence (stanza) it says e j q d A w Y means ‘through this gateway or path’ of the Guru. Then again c i l A whas been used that means walking through.)

The main theme conveyed in this verse by Guru Nanak is as follows: The polluted mind cannot be cleansed by washing the body. It can be cleansed only by entering the gateway to the Guru, i.e. by following the philosophy of the Guru. Because here ‘Guru Duaray hoay’ means by entering the ‘gateway’ that leads to the ‘Guru’, the Sabd or the Nanakian Philosophy, and when one deliberates, understands and brings the philosophy into practice then the mind is cleansed and one gets the salvation. There is another point to be noted carefully in this verse that salvation is not attained after the death as is mostly understood by many scholars; it is attained here while living on this earth.

Let us examine more verses from Nanakian Philosophy to find out the meanings of ‘Guru Duarae’ (g u U d A w Y):


Interpretation
“Only that body (mind) is pure that is liked by You (the Almighty).
The body (mind) that is extremely polluted with vices cannot be cleansed just by washing.
It is only when one enters the gateway (path) of the Guru*, one can get wisdom.
It is this gateway where after entering one can cleanse one’s polluted mind.
Then the Almighty Itself will make one to distinguish between the polluted and cleansed mind.
One must not understand that the verdict/judgment of deeds is declared after going to the next world.
(It is here in this world) What one sows so shall one reap.
The elixir of the life is the realization of the Almighty and
The Guru himself will distribute this elixir (to you).

From the above discussion it becomes clear that ‘Guru’ and ‘Duara’ in Gurbani means ‘Guru’ and ‘gateway’, respectively, according to the Nanakian Philosophy. Therefore, Gurdwara (Gurudwara) means ‘Gateway to the Guru’. Since Guru is the Sabd and Sabd is the philosophy, therefore, Gurdwara means gateway to the philosophy of the Guru.

**GURU DUARAY**

There is another word g u U d A w Y (Guru Duaray) which has been used in the Nanakian Philosophy many times. Now let us find out what does the critical interpretation of the following verse of Guru Nanak teaches us when the word is g u U d A w Y (Guru Duaray):

BWwh Cw be j i q s u Bw s l]
BWw A i q m l x u D g w h C w n h b s l]
 g u U d A w Y h e b s l p l w s l j
 e j q d A w Y D b e h C w h b s l j
m y y h C y k w v l C w A W p v r q w s l j
m q u k j w Y w e A g y w w s l j
 j p y k r m k w i e q j w h b s e l j
A M n q h i r k w n n A w p v r q w s l j
c i l A w p i q l s a u j n m u s v w r w w w w w s l j
m w s u k e w v w q w i h u l b s w w s l j
n m k A w p i h w u s I B k u q w s l j
AGGS, M 1, P 351.

The main theme conveyed in this verse by Guru Nanak is as follows: The polluted mind cannot be cleansed by washing the body. It can be cleansed only by entering the gateway to the Guru, i.e. by following the philosophy of the Guru. Because here ‘Guru Duaray hoay’ means by entering the ‘gateway’ that leads to the ‘Guru’, the Sabd or the Nanakian Philosophy, and when one deliberates, understands and brings the philosophy into practice then the mind is cleansed and one gets the salvation. There is another point to be noted carefully in this verse that salvation is not attained after the death as is mostly understood by many scholars; it is attained here while living on this earth.

Let us examine more verses from Nanakian Philosophy to find out the meanings of ‘Guru Duarae’ (g u U d A w Y):

k i r i k r p w A p n Y G r A w e A w q w i m i l s K l A w k j u r c w e A w j
K y u d y K j n A n d u B i e A w s h u v A w k x A w e A w j 1]
g w h u g w h u k w m x i l b b j k l c w w j
h m r Y G r A w e A w j g j l v u n B q w u j 1 r h w u j
 g u U d A w Y h m r w v l A w k h j h w j W s h u m i l A w q W j w n A w j
i q h u l b w m h s b d u r i v A w h YA u p u g i e A w n m u m i n A w j 2 j
AGGS, M 1, P 351.

This verse of Guru Nanak revolves around the marriage of a devotee (as a bride) with the Sabd (as the husband). It means union with the Sabd of the Guru. Hey my friends! sing songs, which can discriminate between good and bad, and right and wrong (l b b j k l c w w j).

The next sentence #2 explains symbolically solemnization of a marriage of a devotee with the Sabd, i.e. accepting the path of the Guru. Then it was understood that the Sabd (the Almighty) is everywhere and my ego had vanished.

k i r i k r p w A p n Y G r A w e A w q w i m i l s K l A w k j u r c w e A w j
p a x p w l A g n l A s r j u j
e k o B v r u B v Y q h u l b e j
e k o B j Y s j Y q h e
In this verse Guru Nanak explains that the Transcendent Entity is One and Only. It was learnt through the Guru (Guru Duaray).

In the above verses the word 'Guru Duaray' means 'through the Guru' ('Through' means: by way of; by means of; as result of; because of). Therefore, the meanings of 'Guru Duaray' are: through Guru; by way of Guru; by means of Guru; as a result of Guru; because of Guru.

Gurdwara and Dharamsal

In literature sometimes Gurdwara is interchanged with dharamsal or vice versa [4-6]. Bhai Kahn Singh [4] has mentioned that from Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan the Sikh Religious temple was used to be called as 'dharamsal'. Guru Arjan was the first who built 'dharamsal' (Harmandir) amidst the Amritsarovar. At the time of Guru Hargobind the dharamsal started to be called as Gurdwara. Fauja Singh [5] also quoted that at the time of Guru Hargobind the Dharmsal started to be referred to as Gurdwara.

There is a great confusion in the Sikh history and literature about the use of terms, Manji or Manji Sahib, dharamsal and Gurdwara as synonymous with one another [4-7]. Major Gurmukh Singh [6] described 'dharamsal' from Sanskrit as court of justice, tribunal, charitable asylum, religious asylum, and in Punjabi it stands for a place of worship or the village hospice (inn). It is surprising that when Major Gurmukh Singh [7] writes about Manji, he does not mention about dharamsal and vice versa when he writes about dharamsal [6] in the same source of information. Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, he does not mention about Manji. According to him dharamsal is a Sikh institution as precursor of Gurdwara. (Please see also the article of Dr Dhillon in this issue on pp 13-17) Major Gurmukh Singh [7] drew this meaning from the Janam Sakhi (biographies) that usually contains unauthentic information. He said that wherever Guru Nanak went he established dharamsals to sing praises of the Lord and to discuss matters of common concern.

What is a Dharamsal in Nanakian Philosophy?

Let us examine a few verses to find out in which context the word 'dharamsal' has been used in Nanakian Philosophy:
at many places in the AGGS. Different writers have interpreted vichar differently. But according to the general meanings of vichar in Punjabi and the meaning given by Bhai Kahn Singh [4], vichar may be defined as: The method to determine the truth by discussing and deliberating the subject matters thoroughly in a group.

The meanings of the word 'discuss' in English dictionaries are: To investigate by reasoning or argument; to discourse about something to arrive at the truth or to convince others of the validity of one's position.

i) Vichar Means Deliberation/Discussion
Since proper understanding of any subject matter can only be achieved through discussion, highest importance has been given on vichar (deliberation) of the Sabd in the Nanakian Philosophy:

\[ \text{sBsY aUpir gur sbdu bIcwru} \] AGGS, M 1, P 904.

"Highest of all deeds is the deliberation / discussion on the Sabd of the Guru (Nanakian Philosophy)."

\[ \text{swcu nwm gur sbid vIcwr} \] AGGS, M 1, P 355

"The Ever-Existing (Almighty) is realized through the deliberation of Guru's philosophy."

ii) Vichar Means Philosophy
Vichar also means philosophy as is indicated in the following phrase:

\[ \text{isKI isiKAw gur vIcwir} \] AGGS, M 1, P 465.

"Sikhi (Sikhism) is the advice of Guru's philosophy."

When Guru Arjan compiled the Gurbani into a Granth, he mentioned vichar as the whole philosophy of Sikhism under the heading of Mundavani (seal, conclusions) at the end of the AGGS, and he described the importance of vichar as discussion/deliberation of the subject matters (wastu) in it (AGGS) as the final instructions to the Sikhs:

\[ \text{miMdwvxI mhlw 5 Qwl ivic iqMin vsqU peIE squ sMqoKu vIcwru} \] AGGS, Jap 34, P 6.

Here in this verse, Guru Nanak says that the whole earth is a dharamsal meaning a place to live in righteousness.

\[ \text{mohn qyry aUcy mMdr mhl Apwrw} \]
\[ \text{mohn qyry sohin duAwr jIau sMq Drm swlw} \]
\[ \text{Drm swl Apwr dYAwr Twkur sdw kIrqnu gwvhy} \]
\[ \text{jh swD sMq iekqRhoh qhwqBih iDAwhy} \]
\[ \text{kIr dieAmwMieAw dieAw swAm l hbdun iKbrw} \]
\[ \text{iLnvRh nwk dRs ipAwymil drs n sUsSw} \]

AGGS, Jap 34, P 6.

Here Guru Arjan describes that the temple of the Almighty has no boundary. Hey the Almighty! Your beauteous abode is a sanctuary (dharamsal) for the noble people (sants). The infinite glory is of Your sanctuary (dharamsal) where all sing your praise. Here again the dharamsal is a place of no boundary and a sanctuary for the noble people.

\[ \text{mY suKI hUM suKu pwieAw} \]
\[ \text{guir AMqir sbdu vswieAw} \]
\[ \text{siqguir puriK ivKwilAw msqik DrkY hQu jIau} \]
\[ \text{9} \]
\[ \text{mY bDI scu Drm swl hY} \]
\[ \text{gurisKw lhdw Bwil kY} \]
\[ \text{pYr Dovw pKw Pyrdw iniv iniv lgw pwie jIau} \]
\[ \text{10} \]

AGGS, M 5, P 73-74.

Here in this verse Guru Arjan says that I have found happiness by following the philosophy given in the Sabd of the True Guru. That means I have founded a true place of righteousness (dharamsal) where I bring together the Guru-oriented Sikhs and serve them (the philosophy of humility and righteousness). It means the dharamsal is a place of no boundary (means the whole earth) to learn and practice humility and righteousness through the Guru (Sabd).

From the above verses it is evident that ‘dharamsal’ in Gurbani means a place of unlimited boundary to live in righteousness and a sanctuary for the noble people (sants) to sing the praise of the Almighty. And Gurdwara means the ‘gateway to the Guru (Sabd)’, the institution to deliberate on Sabd to understand its philosophy.

I IMPORTANCE OF VICHAR (DELIBERATION) IN NANKIAN PHILOSOPHY

Vichar
A great importance has been given to vichar in Gurbani
Mundavani (Seal, Conclusion)

“In the platter (The Granth) are found three subject matters - truth, contentment and the vichar (philosophy of the Guru).

The elixir from the Almighty is also there, for which everybody has the desire to have it. Whosoever adopts (khavé) it and practices (bhunché) it, is saved. (i.e., Whosoever discusses/deliberates and practices it, is successful.) These subject matters (truth, contentment, vichar) in no way can be ignored or discarded, keep them in mind all the time.

The sea of darkness (ignorance) can be crossed by the time.

The Almighty pervades everywhere.

Although great importance is given to the deliberation of Gurbani, the irony is that very little deliberation of the Gurbani is done in Gurdwaras. Whatever a little deliberation or viakhia is done by the kirtanias, kathakaars, sants or others is always one-way, i.e. from the speaker to the sangat (congregation). It is not a deliberation until it is two ways, i.e. from speaker to sangat and from sangat to speaker. There is a general impression that discussion in Gurdwara is against the main function of Gurdwara should be of reading, listening (understanding), and practicing of the Gurbani. On the contrary there is no deliberation of the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. Consequently, the young Sikhs of the Science Age are drifting away from Gurdwara, as they are not satisfied the way Gurbani and Sikhism is being taught or preached there.

FUNCTIONS OF GURDWARA

According to the evolution of institution of Gurdwara, the main function of Gurdwara should be of reading, listening (understanding), and practicing of the Gurbani (Nanakian Philosophy) as explained in the following stanza of JAP:

qms Buwrn l ig l A YBwnm b Rms psw 1
AGGS, M 5, p 1429.

It is a pity that very few academicians present their views on the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective in Gurdwaras. It may be due to the fact that in general the sangat is fond of listening to professional kirtanias, sants and kathakaars only. It has also been noticed that most of the devout Sikhs when enter into the Gurdwara they would offer a little money before the Aad Guru Granth Sahib but double or manifold of that to the kirtanias, kathakaars, and sants even without listening and understanding their preaching because they have been taught to do so.

In these days preaching of ancient philosophy and mythology by professional kirtanias, kathakaars, sants and by some Sikh scholars is on the increase and very little is discussed about the Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. Consequently, the young Sikhs of the Science Age are drifting away from Gurdwara, as they are not satisfied the way Gurbani and Sikhism is being taught or preached there.

Since the Gurbani and Sikhism is most scientific and logical, it is necessary that it should be taught scientifically and logically to make the young Sikhs to understand it properly. We have to stop wrong preaching if we want to represent Sikhism as a universal religion of the world and to bring back the young Sikhs into the fold of Sikhism.

Instead the Gurdwara is busy in arranging uninterrupted recitation of the AGGS (Akhand Paaths), uninterrupted kirtan for whole night (rehsabai), celebration of barsis (anniversaries) of sants and Babas of various dehras, massiyas, puranmashis, sangrands, etc. in spite of the fact that such practices are condemned and rejected in the Gurbani. On the contrary there is no deliberation of Sabd by the sangat.

It is earnestly suggested to the executive of every Gurdwara to invite academicians on the same bases as the kirtinias, kathakaars, sants, etc. to present well-researched and documented information on the Gurbani and Sikhism. A definite time should be fixed for every speaker to answer the inquiries or questions from the sangat to resolve their doubts. I do not have to mention here that our young Sikhs are living in the Science Age (Space Age, Computer Age, Information Age) and they will not be convinced until the Gurbani and Sikhism are represented scientifically and logically and they are encouraged to pose questions to the speakers (kirtanias, kathakaars, preachers, sants, etc.) to resolve their doubts.

SUGGESTIONS TO PONDER UPON

Now it is easy for me to sum up the whole discussion that Gurdwara is a gateway and on entering it one finds the Guru, the Sabd that has been enshrined in the Aad
Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh. Then after entering the gateway it becomes the most important duty of the Sikh to vichar (discussion/deliberation) the Gurbani with the sangat to find out the truth and to achieve the contentment and salvation.

When so much importance is given to the vichar (discussion/deliberation) in the Gurbani then why it has not been adopted in Gurdwara? It means the term, Gurdwara, was never understood properly before. It is never too late to amend and adopt the right path. The executive of every Gurdwara should immediately adopt the following procedure to achieve the above objectives:

a. Raagi should recite Gurbani in the form of a kirtan with right explanation of the Sabd. After the kirtan about 10 minutes should be devoted for discussion on the topic of the kirtan. The discussion should be lead by the stage secretary himself to encourage the sangat to ask questions for further explanations. The first question should be asked by the secretary to initiate the vichar (deliberation / discussion). Every member of the sangat has the right to ask questions and to give his/her opinion on that particular topic of the kirtan. A word of caution: Maintenance of scrupulosity is most important aspect of discussion.

b. Similar method should be followed for the academicians, sants, preachers, kathakars and politicians when they are lecturing on some topics. After their talks, again it is the duty of the stage secretary to reserve about 10 minutes for discussion and also to initiate the discussion as explained above.

By this method, a poorly prepared and unqualified raagi or sants or preacher or academician or politician will not be able to face the sangat next time and will be automatically eliminated from this easy-money collecting business. By adopting this method better raagis, sants, preachers and politicians will be produced, who could represent Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. Consequently, the sangat and the executive would become more aware of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. In fact kirtan, katha, and discussion should be done by the sangat in Gurdwara and expert academicians, raagis, and kirtanias should also be invited occasionally.

Sangat is also advised to be in Gurdwara before the commencing of Divaand (congregation) and should stay there until the ardas (prayer) of smapati (closing ceremony) is performed. Coming in and going out, while the Divaan is in session, should be restricted. Langar (eating together without any discrimination) should be served only after the performance of the Ardas.

There would be some executive members of Gurdwara, who would object to this system of discussion/deliberation of Gurbani under the disguise of disrespect to the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, because of the fact that they are not interested that the Sikhs should know Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. Instead they are more interested to find the means and method by which they could collect more funds for the Gurdwara. But we (the sangat) have to decide ourselves whether we have to obey the instructions given in the Mundavani (conclusions) to vichar (deliberate / discuss) to find out the truth and to achieve contentment and salvation or we have to follow those executive members, who object to hold discussion to keep the Sikhs in the darkness as before forever, as they have done until this time.

Finally, formation of a new organization, International Shiromani Gurdwara Parmbandhak Committee (ISGPC) each for Canada, USA, UK, and others countries, constituting members of high caliber, reputation, and prestige; a legally valid constitution; and a scientifically and logically sound Rehit Maryada (code of conduct) based on Gurbani, are needed immediately. Such an organization could take care of the proper functioning of Gurdwaras and the representation of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective during the 21st century. In vast countries like Canada and USA there should be regional ISGPCs for each region. Recently a North American Shiromani Gurdwara Parmbandhak Committee (NASGPC), constituting 41 Gurdwaras, i.e., 36 Gurdwaras of British Columbia, and 5 from across the border, has been established. Mr Balwant Singh Gill of Surrey, BC is the spokesperson for the NASGPC.

Such an organization should be constituted by eminent Sikh theologians, having some knowledge of science; eminent Sikh scientists of various fields, having some knowledge of Gurbani; and eminent historians and linguists having some knowledge of both Gurbani and science. I had put an emphasis on the knowledge of science for every group of experts because we are living in the Science Age (Space Age, Computer Age, Communication Age) where scientific and logical interpretation of Gurbani and representation of Sikhism is needed. I hope the NASGPC would form Board of Directors of the qualifications explained above.

CONCLUSIONS
Gurdwara is an institution for the dissemination of Gurbani and Sikhism where one can deliberate on Gurbani with the sangat (congregation) and the scholars to improve one's temporal and spiritual thoughts to live in righteousness on this earth. It is also a place for resolving community problems, for holding educational

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seminars and conferences, and religious functions - *Gurpurbs*, and social functions - naming of newly born baby, birthdays, marriages, *antam sanskaars*, etc.

**REFERENCES**

2. Gurdas, Bhai. *Vaaaran*: 1.27.  