

# EXPLICATIVE METHODOLOGY FOR INTERPRETING GURBANI

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## ABSTRACT

To understand the Gurbani in a holistic way, person needs to detect in applied words of the Gurbani itself. All subtle formations from the beginning, relationships and interrelationships with the God, Nature, the community, various processes and transformations of such processes, reflecting the laws of the Universe, realization of the Truth in Nature and simplicity of the person as an individual and community configuration are incorporated in the Gurbani. The available translations and interpretations of Gurbani are allegoric, laden with literal interpretations based upon controversial Vedic philosophy, twisted historical and anecdotal stories. The Gurbani, however, follows an explicative methodology, related to the fundamental nature of the world, its entities independent of human thought and existence; an inquiry into prevailing religious literature claiming knowledge of the world, and their praxis. This paper will discuss examples of misinterpretation of the Gurbani and the impact, and suggest an explicative methodology to be followed for appropriate interpretation of the Gurbani.

## INTRODUCTION

To formulate methodology for interpretation of any Holy Scripture, it is essential to comprehend the methodology applied in its composition, core theme, and sustaining attributes. There may be similarities in some inferences and references written in the Gurbani and the other religious philosophies of Indic origin. However, the salient characterization of each word in the Gurbani makes the Nanakian Philosophy unique, different and outstanding from other religious philosophies. Thus, when interpreting the Gurbani, one needs to be mindful of its comparative uniqueness inherent in significant words so that, one does not confuse it with other religious philosophies. Gopal Singh [5] while translating Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) wrote, "The Holy Scripture (Aad Guru Granth Sahib) mostly elaborated as metaphors, similes, analogies, and personifications represents the **theme of the Sabd expressed in specific words**. To appreciate complex feelings expressed by the author in the Sabd (*hymn*), **one must examine its complete context from the perspective of rhythm, images, obvious and implied**

**meaning. To understand emotional set up of the author, the time and space involving persons and places are also of vital significance in the cultural and historical background."**

## WHY METHODOLOGY IS IMPORTANT?

It is important because, it provides a pattern of operations that is CUMULATIVE & PROGRESSIVE.

## How?

Explained by Bernard Lonergan [3] when he wrote, "A method provides distinct operations, where each operation is related to the others, where the set of relations forms the pattern, where the pattern is described as the right way of doing the job, where operations in accord with the pattern may be repeated indefinitely, and where the fruits of such repetition are, not operations, rather cumulative and progressive."

## Need for Methodology

Most significantly, the **misinterpretation of the Gurbani** is causing confusion among its adherents by generating resources for ignorance and blind faith.

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Since the rivals of Sikh Gurus comprehended the power of Truth embedded in the Gurbani, misinterpreting has been going on among the relatives of the Gurus and others for personal gains. Subsequently, the Sikh and non-Sikh scholars are often misinterpreting the Gurbani to dilute its impact against the prevailing rituals, rites, and superstitions.

Guru Nanak, the succeeding Sikh Guru Sahiban and other authors of the AGGS, reviewed the Vedas, Simritis, and the rest of Hindu religious philosophies (Shastras, Puranas etc.) and found in them controversial and argumentative components as applied in practice of 'Shruti,' preaching between religious classes of Brahmans. The Gurus called it waste of time and effort.

Mahendra Nath Sircar [12] (1984) in his book on '*Hindu Mysticism, According to Upanishads*' wrote, "The Vedantic philosophy elaborated in the Upanishads is not systematic and methodical. There is not really any logical system, but rather intuitions and revelations received in the high flight of inspiration. They are more or less suggestive of dialectic thoughts rather than logical thinking."

**Resources for Ignorance and Blind Faith:** For example, Dr. Sangat Singh [11] in his article on "*Sikhism in 21st Century*" wrote, "According to one estimate there are now 250 hard core Sants or Sant-babas in Punjab alone, and members of Sant Samaj, who are operating all over the Punjab villages."

In his article, "*Deras and the Ecclesiastical Anarchy among Sikhs*" Kharak Singh [7] when questioning the reasons for attraction to the Deras, wrote, "Has the philosophy of Guru Nanak which changed the course of history, and brought about the above revolution, become inadequate to satisfy the spiritual or temporal needs of the people today? The question arises from the present influx of the people to the babas and their deras. What draws them to these deras? Do the babas dispense a superior spiritual philosophy or spiritual peace not available in the mainstream Sikhism or at the Gurdwaras? When somebody visits a dera, does it amount to conversion from his earlier faith to a new religion? These questions are important, and the problems arising from the dera phenomenon are serious and are assuming gross dimensions. The dera of 'Baba' Ashutosh at Nurmahal is very much in the news. His activities are a serious threat to peace and tranquility of the state. Thoughtless utterances and provocative statements issuing from his dera or his congregations elsewhere are an open invitation to trouble."

Amrita Chaudhry [2] Ludhiana, Saturday Jan 28 2012,

while writing her article on the subject of abundance of Sants and Deras in Punjab, for 'The Indian EXPRESS' explained, "While there is no statistical figure on how many deras do exactly exist in Punjab, Sikh scholars and rough estimates put the count at a whopping 9,000."

There are several polluted interpretations of Gurbani being circulated to malign the Holy Scripture, Aad Guru Granth Sahib. The very reason Guru Nanak revolted against the falsity, superstitions and worshiping idols is prevalent now more than ever in various Sikh-Deras and Swami preaching.

Because of expanding popularity of Guru Nanak's logical and truthful philosophy making sense to understanding humanity rivals of the Nanak's house (relatives and enemies to destroy budding logical philosophy challenging pretentious religious praxis) developed activities of misinterpreting Gurbani even in the times of Gurus that prompted Guru AmarDas to write:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਬਿਨਾ ਹੋਰ ਕਚੀ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Other than the True Guru, every-other Bânī is false.  
ਬਾਣੀ ਤ ਕਚੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਹੋਰ ਕਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Emphasizing again, the Bânī without the True Guru is unrealistic; and even more spurious narrations exist ਕਹਦੇ ਕਚੇ ਸੁਣਦੇ ਕਚੇ ਕਚੀ ਆਖਿ ਵਖਾਣੀ ॥

The immature preachers and the practitioners are all uttering false Bani to the immature listeners.  
ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਿਤ ਕਰਹਿ ਰਸਨਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਜਾਣੀ ॥

They may continually chant Hār Hār with their tongue as a routine, but they do not understand a bit what they are saying.

ਚਿਤੁ ਜਿਨ ਕਾ ਹਿਰਿ ਲਇਆ ਮਾਇਆ ਬੋਲਨਿ ਪਏ ਰਵਾਣੀ ॥

Those, with consciousness lured by Maya (worldly indulgences); are just verbalizing irrelevant nonsense.

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਹੋਰ ਕਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥੨੪॥ ਅ ਗ ਗ ਸ ॥੪:੩, ੫. ੯੨੦

Says Nanak, without the True Guru, all other Bânī is immature and false.

AGGS. M3, p. 920

To check against misinterpretations, promote and promulgate the reality inherent in the Gurbani, Guru AmarDas advised adherents of the Sikhi to follow his writing as:

ਆਵਹੁ ਸਿਖ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਪਿਆਰਿਹੋ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਸਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ॥

Come, O beloved Sikhs of the True Guru sing the True Bânī (Script).

ਬਾਣੀ ਤ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇਰੀ ਬਾਣੀਆ ਸਿਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ॥

Sing the Guru's Bânī, the supreme Script of Scriptures.  
ਜਿਨ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰਮੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਤਿਨਾ ਸਮਾਣੀ ॥

The blessed ones with the glance of Grace have their

hearts imbued with Bāni.

ਪੀਵਹੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਦਾ ਰਹਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ਜਪਿਹੁ ਸਾਰਿਗਪਾਣੀ ॥

Realize the essence to remain in meditative state for the Akal Purakh, the Sustainer of the world.

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਦਾ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਏਹ ਸਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥੨੩॥

Says Nanak, sing this True Bani forever.

AGGS. M3,p.920

There is plethora of translations and attempted interpretations of parts (*selected Bani*) of AGGS [1] as well as the whole of Gurbani incorporated in AGGS [1]. Almost every author of these literary resources has struggled to develop some sort of methodology for comprehensive interpretation of the Gurbani. Frustrated with unavailability of any standardized methodology for interpreting the Gurbani, Interpreters, like Max Arthur Macauliffe (Sept. 21st, 1913), Dr. Ernest Trumpp (Started translation in parts of Gurbani --1869- published in 1877), and Prof Sahib Singh [9] developed their own vocabulary and grammars, to provide reasonable translation and interpretation. Unfortunately, their translations still depended upon **earliest version of translation and interpretation called Faridkoti Tika, that was done by Sant Giani Badan Singh [10].**

The first formal interpretation of Sikh Scriptures, written by Sant Giani Badan Singh of Dera Sekhwan was at the request and encouragement of Maharaja Bikram Singh of Faridkot, Punjab, India. Initiated in 1776 CE. It took him six and a half years to complete this interpretation (Tika) in 1883CE. Mahant Shamer Singh of Patna was appointed to form a committee to review this interpretation (Tika). After incorporating the comments of this committee, the first edition of this Tika, funded by the Maharaja Balvir Singh of Faridkot, was published in 1906 CE by the Wazir Hind Press (started by Bhai Vir Singh) at Amritsar. Maharaja Harinder Singh of Faridkot published the second edition of this Tika in 1928. This Tika is known as the "**Faridkoti Tika.**" The language applied is 'Braj Bhasha' by the authors of '*Nirmala Sect-the Sikhs educated and trained with Vedic/Vedantic literature and philosophy.*' Almost all future interpretations followed this Tika as an ideal prototype. Thus, most of the translations and interpretations by Sikh and non-Sikh scholars' just copied **Faridkoti Tika [10]**, and all promulgators of the Sikhi have done the same.

#### Methodology of Tika questioned:

\*What was/is this methodology of the Tika based upon in interpreting the Gurbani by subsequent interpreters?

\* Was it just keeping the tradition? Or,

\* Was it blind leading the blind? Or,

\* Fear of some awful happening (like excommunication by the Akal Takht) to the person

accomplishing meaningful interpretation searching deeply into reality inherent in the Gurbani?

To understand misinterpretation embedded in the literal and imaginative interpretation of the Faridkoti Tika, let us consider *for example, the Sabd, "mittee Musulman ki" written by Guru Nanak, (AGGS, p-466)* that became contentious in the court of Aurangzeb (1661 CE), when his Islamic clerks applied sophistic interpretation of the Sabd to embarrass Baba Ram Rai, son of the 7<sup>th</sup> Sikh Guru, Guru Har Rai. The misinterpretation of the Sabd according to Faridkoti Tika "mittee Musulman ki" is implying disposition of human remains according to the Islamic law (burial) and then potter digging clay from the grave of Muslim to make pots, pans, and bricks. This interpretation has never been challenged by any Sikh or Non-Sikh scholar, instead from the same misinterpretation recorded in 'Faridkoti Tika,' every subsequent author has copied and interpreted the same sophistic interpretation of the Sabd.

#### Faridkoti Tika translates and interprets this sabd as:

ਸੇਖ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਨੇ ਕਹਾ ਕਿ ਹਮਾਰੇ ਮਤ ਮੇਂ ਲਿਖਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਜਲਾਏ ਜਾਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਸੇ ਦੇਜਕ ਕੇ ਜਾਤੇ ਹੈਂ ।ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਕਹਾ, ਸੇਖ ਜੀ ਜਲਨੇ ਸੇ ਤੇ ਕੋਈ ਭੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਚਤਾ ॥ ਸੇਖ ਨੇ ਕਹਾ ਕੈਸੇ? ਤਿਸ ਪਰ ਬਚਨ ਹੁਆ ॥

During conversation between Chief- (Islamic) Seikh (Seikh-*Brahm*) and baba Ram Rai, the Seikh raised a question, "Guru Ji, according to our (Islamic) religious books, "people, that are burnt (cremated) after death, are destined for hell" Gurū Ji replied, "Seikh, nobody is immune to burn." Seikh further asked, "how come?" Then, the following Sabd was narrated:

ਮਿਟੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਕੀ ਪੇੜੈ ਪਈ ਕੁਮ੍ਹਿਰਆਰ ॥

ਘੜਿ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਇਟਾ ਕੀਆ ਜਲਦੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥

ਜਲਿ ਜਲਿ ਰੇਵੈ ਬਪੁੜੀ ਝੜਿ ਝੜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਅੰਗਿਆਰ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰਤੈ ਕਾਰਣੁ ਕੀਆ ਸੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥੨॥

Interpretation according to FaridKot Wala Tika:

ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋਂ ਕੀ ਜਹਾਂ ਕਬਰੋਂ ਹੋ ਵਹੁ ਮਿਟੀ ਚਿਕਨੀ ਹੋਤੀ ਹੈ ਸੇ ਕੁਮ੍ਹਿਰਆਰ ਲੋਗ ਉਸ ਮਿਟੀ ਕੇ ਖੋਦ ਕਰ ਲੇ ਅਉਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਔਰ ਉਸਕੇ ਭਲੀ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕਮਾਉਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਫਿਰਉਹ ਮਿਟੀ ਕੁਮ੍ਹਿਰੋਂ ਕੇ ਪੇੜੈ ਪੜਤੀ ਹੈ ਅਰਥਾਤ ਉਸ ਕਾ ਪਿੰਨਾ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ ॥

The clay of the graves, where Muslim people bury their dead, is rather sticky; so, the potters dig in the area of graves for getting clay, and role it into clay balls.

ਫਿਰ ਉਸਕੇ ਚੱਕ ਪਰ ਰਖ ਕਰ ਓਸੀ ਕੇ (ਭਾਂਡੇ) ਬਰਤਨ ਘੜਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਔਰ ਇਟਾਂ ਭੀ ਕਰੀਆਂ ਜਾਤੀਆਂ ਹੈਂ ਫਰਿ ਆਵੇ ਮੇ ਚਿਨ ਕਰ ਅਗਨ

ਲਗਾਉਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਵਹੁ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋ ਕੀ ਮਿਟੀ ਜਲਤੀ ਹੁਈ ਸੁੰ ਸੁੰ ਪੁਕਾਰ ਕਰਤੀ ਹੈ ਭਾਵ ਕਿ ਮੁਝ ਕੇ ਪਹਲੇ ਜਲਾਉਤੇ ਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਕਿਉਂ ਦੁਖੁ ਸਹਨਾ ਪੜਤਾ ॥

The potter puts the clay balls on the potter's wheel to create pots, pans, and bricks. After arranging clay goods in the oven, he fires them. The burning wet clay produces sounds as if saying, "because of bad deeds, I am being burnt and suffering?"

ਵਹੁ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋ ਕੀ ਮਿਟੀ ਬਿਚਾਰੀ ਜਲ ਜਲ ਕਰਕੇ ਰੋਤੀ ਹੈ ਔਰ ਉਸ ਪਰ ਸੇ ਅਗਨੀ ਕੇ ਅੰਗਾਰੇ ਗਿਰ ਗਿਰ ਪੜਤੇ ਹੈਂ ॥

The clay of those Muslim people exposed to fire, cries out and the embers fall.

Only the Creator knows the mystery of cause and effect.

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਹਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਹੇ ਸੇਖ ਜੀ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਨੇ ਕਾਰਣ ਕਾਰਜ ਰੂਪ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟੀ ਕੇ ਕੀਆ ਹੈ ਸੇਈ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਇਸ ਭੇਦ ਕੇ ਜਾਨਤਾ ਹੈ ਔਰ ਦੂਸਰਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਨਤਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕੈਨ ਸ੍ਰਰਗ ਕੇ ਜਾਤਾ ਹੈ ਅਰੁ ਕੈਨ ਨਰਕ ਕੇ ਜਾਤਾ ਹੈ ॥ ੨॥ ਵਾ (ਮਿਟੀ) ਪ੍ਰਿਥੀ ਆਦੀ ਪੰਜ ਤੱਤ ਰਚਤ ਸਰੀਰ ਰੂਪੀ (ਮੁਸਲ) ਰੂਪੁ ਇਸਦਾ ਮਾਨ ਹੰਕਾਰ ਕੀ ਕਰਨਾ ਹੈ ਤਤੋ ਰੂਪੀ ਮਿਟੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਰੂਪ ਯੁਮਾਰ ਦੇ (ਪੇੜੇ) ਪਲੇ ਵਾ ਲੇਈਏ ਭਾਵ ਜੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪ੍ਰਣੰਮ ਕਰ ਡਾਂਡਾ ਬਣਤਾ ਹੈ ਤਿਸ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਚੈਤਨ ਇਟਾਂ ਜੜਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਵ ਅਸਥਾਵਰ ਜੰਗਮ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟੀ ਰਚੀ ਸੇ ਬਿਚਾਰੀ ਗਰਭ ਮੈਂ ਜਲਤੀ ਭਾਵ ਦੁਖੀ ਹੁਈ ਪੁਕਾਰ ਕਰਤੀ ਹੈ ਪੁਨਾ ਬਿਵਹਾਰ ਮੈਂ ਜਲ ਜਲ ਦੁਖੀ ਹੇ ਕਰ ਵਚਾਰੀ ਰੋਦੀ ਭਾਵ ਮਿਟੀ ਸਬੰਦ ਸੈ ਜੀਵ ਰੋਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਅੰਗਾਰ ਝੜ ਝੜ ਪੈਦੇ ਭਾਵ ਦੁਖ ਮੈਂ ਹੋਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤਿ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ ਵਾ ਚਿਖਾ ਮੈਂ ਜਲਨੇ ਕੇ ਵਖਿਤ ਅੰਗਾਰ ਝੜ ਝੜ ਪੜਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਜੇ ਕਰੇ ਜੀਵ ਦੁਖੋ ਸੇ ਕੈਸੇ ਬਚੇ ਤਿਸ ਪਰ ਕਹਤੇ ਹੈਂ ਜਿਸ ਕਰਤੇ ਨੇ ਜਗ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਣ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਵਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਮਹਤਤ ਆਦਿਕੋ ਕੇ ਕੀਆ ਹੈ ਸੇ ਓਹ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣੇ ਤਉ ਦੁਖੋ ਤੇ ਰਹਤ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ ॥੨॥[10]

Prof. Sahib Singh [9] in interpreting this Sabd of Gurū Nanak, AGGS; p.466, copied word for word fro Faridkoti Tika. He did, however, mention that the disposal of human remains and afterlife has nothing to do with the Sabd.

Puran Singh, [8] a well respected scholar of the Sikh Religion in his book, 'SPIRIT OF THE SIKH,' wrote, "the clay of Musulmán's body falls into the Potter's lump like other earth, and is fashioned into pots; and the Musulmán's clay is in fire; the pots baked, and while burning, bemoans its fate. It burns and weeps; its

tears are sparks that fly about. Vain and foolish are these discussions of burial and cremation. Who knows the secret of such things? The Creator who made all this knows about it."

Following diligent research of the available interpretations of the Sabd by the Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, and observing their interpretations being not any different from the Faridkoti Tika; *it is fare to say that the translation and interpretations of 'the Sabd' have been grossly misinterpreted and not even close to the intended text in the Sabd.*

Apparently, the translators and interpreters of this Sabd neither searched the references written in the Holy Quran concerning 'origin of human from the clay (Surah 15, verse 26, 27, 28)' nor did they learn about the humans destined for hellfire (Holy Quran verses (59.3; 59.4).

Islam claiming the same fundamental belief as the Christianity and Judaism relies upon philosophy of creationism by God in Six (6) days; hence human being created from a figurine made from potter's clay and God breathing life into the nostrils. (Genesis 2:6)

According to Holy Quran Surah 59 verse 3 and 4, "the nonbelievers in the Allah and the Holy Quran as well as the evildoers that are destined to hell burn in the hellfire."

Furthermore, (the Seikhs)-Islamic clerks in Aurangzeb's court had sophistic intensions to malign the Gurbani written by Guru Nanak by associating cremation practices in the Hindu and the Sikh religions for disposition of human remains with their Holy Quran verses related to burning in hellfire.

Further critical analysis of the Sabd by Avtar Singh Dhaliwal [3] **provides logical certitude completely opposing traditional illogical interpretation; explaining new premise that the Sabd is epistemologically about the creation of a human (including Musulman) from clay, and sufferings (burning pangs in fire) are through indulgence in worldly entanglements.** Gurū Nanak, in this Sabd is neither describing disposition of human remains according to the ethics of any religion, nor elaborating any consequences in after life. Gurū Ji is emphasizing Islamic hypocrisy practiced at the time in India and promulgating the realities of human life. According to Gurū Nanak, the humanity indulged in materialistic world, agonizes, screams, and burns in egotism and ends in ashes. He concluded that humanity needs to understand the natural phenomena working within laws of the universe as deployed in the creation.

### **Formulating explicative methodology for interpretation**

To formulate methodology for interpreting the Gurbani



in its real perspective, the statement should be descriptive, well explained, and interpretive enough to include different types of inferences that can be made from empirical findings to conclusions about the significance of applied words and terminology. Realistically speaking, the Scriptures is good source of knowledge about God, Nature, Universal Laws (*Hukm*) and natural phenomena as explained by the authors of the AGGS. The Nanakian Philosophy or logical natural science written with inherent principles of reason do form touchstone of the truth, and these must be applied while interpreting the Gurbani.

The explicative methodology inherent in AGGS begins with 'THE TRUTH' promoted and promulgated by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhi and initiator of the Gurbani. He not only provided supporting arguments to affirm his proposition of the Truth; rather recommended methods to rise above the illusive and deliberate misconceptions and deceptions practiced in dominant religions of the time. The Gurbani is based upon the foundation of Truth that transcends physical causality and guides human beings to ascend in spirituality. For a person to become the *Truthful person*, realizing concrete reality is instrumental in *truthful living*.

The explicative methodology in the Gurbani becomes obvious from the primal verse that describes attributes of the Akal Purakh (God), the Truth, and supportive statements for uniqueness of the proposition, Gurū Nanak wrote:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

The One Supreme pervading ALL, The Eternal Truth, The Creator Being, Without Fear, Inimical, Beyond Time, Un-incarnation-able, Self-Extent, The Enlightener.

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੇਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥੧॥

True In The Primal Beginning. True Throughout The Ages.

True Here And Now. O Nanak, Forever And Ever True. ॥1॥

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥ (referring to Yogic physical cleaning maneuvers)

Mere *physical cleaning millions of times exponentially* does not accomplish *purification of Mind*.

ਚੁਪੈ ਚੁਪ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਲਾਇ ਰਹਾ ਲਿਵ ਤਾਰ ॥ (Ref. to people practicing complete silence for life)

Neither *Silence* avails *Peace of Mind*, howsoever one shrinks (Yogic Trance);

ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ॥ (Ref. to hunger for vices and attempted control)

nor hunger (desires) for worldly goods/vices get satiated by piling loads of them.

ਸਹਸ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ

Even possession of myriad clever treachery, nothing works in the long run;

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

then, how to become a *truthful person* and rise above the *illusive wall of worldly purpose*?

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲ ॥

Nanak explains, by Comprehending and *Accepting of the Universal laws (Hukm) (AS IT IS)*.

Truth in the beginning, Truth in Primordial ages, Truth in Present, and Truth shall ever be.

Nanak explains, by *Acceptance of the Universal laws (Hukm)*.

It is rather unfortunate that the Sikhi during eighteenth and early nineteenth century, under control of Vedantic priests, got corrupted with interjected Vedantic rituals and rites. Not only the Gurbani got misinterpreted, it effected application of Gurmat principles in Sikh life.

For example, Hindu Dharma promotes pilgrimage and dipping in Holy pools for cleansing one's sins and calming mind; whereas, Gurmat promulgates against such practices.

In the following lines of another Sabd Guru Nanak rationalizes against the **pilgrims bathing in Holy pools** hoping to cleanse their sinful polluted minds. He wrote:

□

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਲੋਭ ਬਹੁ ਝੂਠੇ ਬਾਹਿਰ ਨਾਵਹੁ ਕਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥

when the mind is filled with loads of filth of greed and falsity, then why you bother dipping in pools to wash physical body.

ਨਿਰਮਲ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਹੁ ਸਦ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਤਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ

॥3॥

Its much better to achieve introspection and realize emancipation (peace of mind) by praising the (*Naam*) attributes of the Akal Purakh (God) exponentially.

AGGS, M1, p.598

The Gurbani coordinating nature/existence (ontology) and natural phenomena (Knowledge-epistemology) in explicative mode is considered perfect and complete, enabled to relate itself to every person and the universe. This potential in relating to every soul/person brings solace, peace and harmony both in individual and community for realization of the Truth. The inherent spiritual vision, may lead to creative rethinking by the persons to understand inner dynamics of human existence, and their participation in activities in the world. This methodology consists of a vision and an ever-deepening understanding of the human person in the

context of human relationships and in contexts of principles governing interrelationship within and outside with the universe.

Among many Sabds written in AGGS referring to Existence of Nature and prevailing Natural phenomena, following is one example that reflects Gurū Nanak's philosophy:

#### Mehlā 1. First Mehlī

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਦਿਸੈ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਭਉ ਸੁਖ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

through nature we see, with nature we hear, and it is with nature we perceive happiness and well being.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਪਾਤਾਲੀ ਆਕਾਸੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਰਬ ਆਕਾਰੁ ॥ through natural creation the universe exists and shapes different forms.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਕਤੇਬਾ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਰਬ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

Through nature exist the religious Scriptures like the Vedas, Puranas, and the Semitic books with various deliberations.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਪੈਨ੍ਹਰਣੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਰਬ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ eating, drinking and wearing cloths for sustenance is all reflecting love through affectionate nature.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਰੰਗੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਜੀਅ ਜਹਾਨੁ ॥ its all through nature that myriad species of creatures having varied colors and kinds exist in this world.

By His Power come the species of all kinds and colors; by His Power the living beings of the world exist.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਨੇਕੀਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਬਦੀਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਮਾਨੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥ through nature exist all virtues, vices, evil deeds, honors and egos.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਖਾਰੁ ॥ Nature is prevalent in the winds, waters, fires, earth and the dust storms.

ਸਭ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਾਦਿਰੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪਾਕੀ ਨਾਈ ਪਾਰੁ ॥

Through the nature is reflected All the creation and the Creator, the Holiest of the Holy.

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਵਰਤੈ ਤਾਕੇ ਤਾਰੁ ॥੨॥ Nanak, realizing natural universal laws appreciates the unrivalled nature of the Creator. ||2||

AGGS. M1, p. 464

The Sabd is self explanatory in reflecting the explicative aspect of Gurbani affirming Truth in Nature and Natural Phenomena. This is even beyond the perceptions of ontology and epistemology explaining our existence and functioning of natural phenomena.

### Methodology: Possible for Correct Interpretation

The methodology has to be Explicative to explain something, especially a literary text or a Holy Scripture, in a detailed and formal way; and develop an idea or theory and show its implications. The interpreter/s have to comprehend various associated perspectives applied in composition of the Gurbani including enquiry, nature and natural phenomenology, interactions, feminism, ethnography, action research, spiritual and empirical realization of the Reality. Therefore, misinterpretations of Gurbani and their consequences will be discussed as the need favoring formulation of methodology for comprehensible interpretation.

The prophets, distinguished from ordinary people by their particularly active, intuitive and vivid imaginations, adapted various literary devices to convey a simple moral and religious message and to inspire readers to obey it. Any exposition of the Gurbani based on philosophizing the Scriptures must harmonize with its inherent 'constitution,' or at least, be neutral and not offending against its general principles.

While seeking appropriate perspective in interpretation of scriptures, one should take every precaution against the undue influence of one's own prejudices, but **rely on the faculty of reason in so far as that is based upon the principle of natural cognition.** To avoid confusion between true meaning and truth of fact, the former must be sought simply from linguistic usage, or from a process of reasoning that looks to no other basis than Scripture.

Assuming, that the interpreter is well versed with the **Significant Characteristics in the Gurbani**, the Sikh history (1469-1708 AD), cultural values of the times in the Punjab, India, and middle eastern countries, languages--a mixture of Hindi, Prakrit, Braj, Punjabi, and some vocabulary of Persian and Arabic literature (Urdu), and the rulers and ruling Governments of the time; following are some suggested rules for interpreting the Gurbani.

To start with, review 'essence of the theme' sentence with the *Rahao* ਰਹਾਉ (pause) and then relate it with the rest of the Sabd. Keeping in mind, that some aspects of the Gurbani like Jap, Anand, Siddh Ghost, Oankar Bani, and Bhagat Bani may not have every Para with theme sentence applying *Rahao*. For example:

ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਸੁਖ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ Nectar of the Name of God in essence is the pleasant peace of Mind;

ਭਗਤ ਜਨਾ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਬਿਸ੍ਰਾਮ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ that joyful peace pervades the minds of the devotees. *Rahao* ||Pause||

The couplet referred above in the whole Bani of

Sukhmani Sahib being the “essence Theme” pervades all the 24 Ashtpadis/cantos. The Sukhmani by itself is brilliant example of Explicative nature of the Gurbani by reflecting upon Divine immanence, Divine compassion, Divine grace, merit of devotion, praising virtues of the Akal Purakh, and seeking emancipation during life. The verse concludes by reiterating the ‘Theme’ stated as:

ਸਭ ਤੇ ਉਚ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਸੇਭਾ ਬਨੀ ||highest glory achieved among ALL OTHERS;  
ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਗੁਣਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ||੮||੨੪|| O Nanak, virtues of the NAAM (attaining peace of mind) is THE SUKHMANI.  
AGGS, M5, p. 296.

**Review the whole Sabd:** Every Sabd must be comprehended in Toto for identifying the truths, because parts do not make the whole of anything.

**Grammar** is very important in interpretation, particularly for compound words and the applied vowels (*Lagaa(n) Maatraa*).

Careful attention must be paid to references, inferences (metaphors, symbols, allegories, similes etc.) and possible implications. Gurbani applies these inferences very frequently. For example, in the following Sabds, Mind is referred as an intoxicated elephant/ wild horse and the spousal relationship of the Akal Purakh and a human/devotee as the good husband and wife.

**ਮਨੁ ਮੈਗਲੁ ਸਾਕਤੁ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ||**

The mind of the faithless cynic is like a crazy elephant.  
ਬਨ ਖੰਡਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿ ਹੈਰਾਨਾ ||□

wondering in the attachment of Maya (indulgences), It wanders around the forest (world).

*Metaphor for wandering mind indulged in worldly attachments applied is that of an intoxicated lewd elephant wandering in the forest. The essence theme of whole Sabd reflects indulgence of human mind in worldly attachments and how to calm it down by remembering virtues and commands of the Akal Purakh.*

AGGS, M 1, p 415.

In the following Sabd, Guru RamDas applies metaphor of a lewd horse (vices indulged human mind) and controlled by inserting reins as simile; and in the second sentence using metaphor of an intoxicated lewd elephant for mind engrossed in worldly attachments to be controlled by Guru’s Sabd (Word), he wrote;

ਕੜੀਆਲੁ ਮੁਖੇ ਗੁਰਿ ਅੰਕਸੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਰਾਮ ||

*The Guru has placed the reins in the mouth of the body -horse.*

ਮਨੁ ਮੈਗਲੁ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਵਸਿ ਆਇਆ ਰਾਮ ||

*The mind-elephant is overpowered by the Word of the Guru's Shabad.*

ਮਨੁ ਵਸਗਤਿ ਆਇਆ ਪਰਮ ਪਦੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸਾ ਧਨ ਕੰਤਿ ਪਿਆਰੀ ||

*The bride obtains the supreme status, as her mind is brought under control; she is the beloved of her Husband Lord.*

AGGS. M4, p. 576

For a wife (human mind) imbued in love with her husband (Akal Purakh), the metaphor applied is that of spousal relationship in true love, he wrote;

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੁ ਲਗਾ ਹਰਿ ਸੇਤੀ ਘਰਿ ਸੇਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਨਾਰੀ ||

*Deep within her inner self, she is in love with her Lord; in His home, she is beautiful*

- she is the bride of her Lord God.

ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਿ ਰਾਤੀ ਸਹਜੇ ਮਾਤੀ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ||

*Imbued with the Lord's Love, she is intuitively absorbed in bliss;*

*she obtains the Lord God, Har, Har*

AGGS. M4, p. 576

The inferences and references to metaphors, similes, personifications and other similar modes are frequently applied in poetry to indulge human thoughts into inherent message. Bhagat Kabir in the following Sabd is applying multiple metaphors for human body and mind, when he wrote;

ਕਬੀਰ ਕਾਇਆ<sup>1</sup> ਕਜਲੀ<sup>2</sup> ਬਨੁ<sup>3</sup> ਭਇਆ ਮਨੁ<sup>4</sup> ਕੁੰਚਰੁ<sup>5</sup> ਮਯ<sup>6</sup> ਮੰਤੁ<sup>7</sup> ||

*Kabeer, the body<sup>1</sup> is like elephant habitat<sup>2</sup> in the forest<sup>3</sup>, and the mind<sup>4</sup> is an intoxicated<sup>6</sup> elephant<sup>5</sup> (worldly indulged human mind)<sup>7</sup>.*

AGGS, Kabir, p 1376.

5. Interpretation must comply with the **implied Gurmat Principles** of the Gurbani promoting truthful living.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The methodology begins within the Gurbani that is considered perfect and complete, enabled to relate itself to every other person. This potential in relating to every soul/person brings solace, peace and harmony both in individual and community for realization of the truth. The inherent spiritual vision may lead to creative rethinking by the persons’ to understand inner dynamics of human existence and their participation in activities in the world.

2. Pressing needs for logical explication of the Gurbani

are discussed to avoid further misinterpretations being promoted by self-serving religious exploiters.

3. The Holy Scriptures is given the reverences that written material in them are the words of God. However, considering the God is invisible, without any form or feature, and unfathomable; the Scriptures have words created by prophets adoring God's attributes for our realization of the reality. Any interpretation of the word implied must contain its inherent meaning with demonstrable Scripture's Truth.

4. Guru Nanak in the very first verse of AGGS tells us that the Akal Purakh is immaterial and does not get birth in any anthropomorphic form; thus any reference to the Akal Purakh must be interpreted metaphorically.

5. The Gurbani, being an exhaustive treasure of inspired divine wisdom is not that simple to understand, realize and introspect; it needs more appropriate methodology to interpret inherent meaning promulgating the ultimate truth.

6. The interpretation of the Gurbani must maintain its intended meaning with demonstrable truth in line with the inherent purpose to foster spirituality and righteous living.

**7. Any interpretation giving just literal translation must be scrutinized critically and rejected.** The Gurbani is revered as sacred and its words divine only as long as it moves its believers to dispel falsity, superstitions, and idolatry worship to the propagation of truth and truthful living.

The suggestions made in my paper, conforming to formulate methodology for interpreting the Gurbani, are to establish preliminary notion and an urgent need for standardizing methodology for realistic interpretation to have progressive and cumulative results.

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