

# SIKHISM

## FROM GURU NANAK 1469 TO VAISAKHI 1999 AND BEYOND VAISAKHI 2000

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### ABSTRACT

*It took 230 years for Guru Nanak and his nine successors to build a scientific and logical religion, Sikhism, and a unique nation, the Sikhs. On the Vaisakhi of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh, the Ninth Successor to the House of Nanak, renounced the continuity of the 230-year of lineage of Guruship in one person. He transformed the political affairs onto the "Collective Leadership" of the Five Elect (Punj Pyarae) and he reiterated the Spiritual Guruship onto the Sabd, Nanakian Philosophy, incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. In fact Guru Nanak had already declared the Sabd as Guru. The Vaisakhi of 1999, so-called Tercentenary of Khalsa, was celebrated with great pomp and show throughout the world. Ironically the evaluation of Sikhism from 1469 to 1999 and planning of future line of action for representation of Sikhism to the Sikhs of the Science Age was conspicuously absent from such celebrations. The present article describes briefly the Nanakian Philosophy, progression and regression of Sikhism from 1469 to 1999 as a base for concrete planning beyond the Vaisakhi of 2000 for representation of Sikhism and interpretation of Gurbani in their real perspective to the Sikhs and non-Sikhs of Science Age. A tentative line of action has been suggested for further discussion.*

### INTRODUCTION

**G**uru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of *Sikhi* (Sikhism) during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Period of Renaissance (between 14<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> century) when the scientists were challenging some of the concepts of the church in Europe. During this period Guru Nanak was busy in challenging the ancient mythology and rituals in which the peoples of South Asia were shackled for centuries and were unable to express their free will in any aspect of their lives because their lives were controlled by their religious mentors. Consequently, Guru Nanak gave a unique philosophy that is scientifically and logically very sound having universal acceptability [6-11, 38]. This philosophy is called *Nanakian Philosophy*. It was preached and enriched by the nine succeeding Gurus to the House of Nanak called *Nanakian School*. The follower of his philosophy is known as the '*Sikh*' and the philosophy is called as '*Sikhi*' in Punjabi. The word '*Sikhi*' (*Gurmat*) gave rise to the modern anglicized word '*Sikhism*' for the modern world. It is not possible to cover in toto the subject in this article. However, I have tried to present this subject with emphasis only on some of the salient features of Sikhism and its progression and regression up to the Vaisakhi 1999 and a tentative line of action to represent Sikhism beyond the Vaisakhi of 2000.

### A. EVOLUTION OF NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY AND A NATION (1469-1708 CE)

#### Nanakian Philosophy

As it is not possible to describe the evolution of Nanakian Philosophy in toto in the present article, therefore, a glimpse of the philosophy will be enough to explain some of the basic principles that lead to the evolution of a new nation, the Sikhs:

**1. *Sikhi* (Sikhism):** *Sikhi* (Sikhism) is based on the advice/principles of Guru's philosophy:

ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P 465.  
"*Sikhism is the philosophy of the Guru.*"

Where can one find the philosophy of the Guru? It is found in the '*Sabd*' (word) of the Guru. In the *Gurbani* '*Sabd*' is the Guru, and the philosophy of Guru Nanak.

ਸਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P943.

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

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰਾ ਗਹਿਰ ਗੰਭੀਰਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਜਗ ਬਉਰਾਨੰ ॥  
AGGS, M 1, P 635.

"The Guru Sabd is a deep philosophy and the world without it, is insane."

ਗੁਰ ਮਤਿ ਜਾਗੇ ਦੁਰ ਮਤਿ ਪਰਹਾਰੀ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P 904.

"Guru's philosophy awakens and evil thinking is removed."

Since the 'Sabd' is the 'Guru' for the Sikhs as declared by Guru Nanak, the same principle, 'Sabd Guru', was taught by the succeeding Gurus to the Nanakian School in their *Bani* that has been incorporated into the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS) [1]. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh reiterated that *Sabd* of the Sikh Gurus of the Nanakian School, incorporated in the AGGS, is the Guru of the Sikhs [Inferred from the data given in ref. # 20].

Guru Nanak handed over his Sabd to the Second Nanak, Guru Angad; the Second Nanak added his own and handed it over to the Third Nanak, Guru Amardas; and so on, until it reached the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan [36]. When he opened it he exclaimed in delight as follows:

ਪੀਉ ਦਾਦੇ ਕਾ ਖੋਲਿ ਡਿਠਾ ਖਜਾਨਾ ॥

ਤਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਿ ਭਇਆ ਨਧਾਨਾ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 185.

"When (Guru Arjan) opened and saw (examined) the ancestral treasure (the Sabd of the first four Gurus of the Nanakian school), his mind got immersed in the treasure (wisdom of the Sabd)."

**2. Aad Guru Granth Sahib:** Guru Arjan took the ancestral treasure, the Sabd of the first four Gurus received from Guru Ramdas, and added his own in it and compiled it into a *Granth* in 1604 CE [36]. Since the Sabd of the Gurus of the Nanakian School is the **Guru**, ipso facto, the *Granth* containing the Sabd is now called as the *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS). For detailed discussion on the title of the *Granth* see references # 11. The AGGS also contains the *Bani* of some *Bhagats* and *Sants* who revolted against the ancient mythology and rituals. In addition to these *Banis*, it also contains the laudation/eulogy of the first five Gurus of the Nanakian School, composed by Bhattas. The AGGS is the only primary source of the philosophy of the Gurus of the Nanakian School that has been authenticated by Guru Arjan, the Fifth Nanak [36] and Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Nanak [20]. It has not been altered or mutilated in the past and will not be allowed to be altered or mutilated in the future.

The *Granth*, that contains the Sabd Guru, was also declared as Guru (Enlightener) by Guru Arjan as indicated by his following verse:

ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ\* ਕਾ ਬਾਨੁ ॥

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ਰਹਾਉ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1226.

"The *Granth* is the Enlightener\*. (From which) the noble people discuss (sing) the characteristics (attributes) of the Almighty and the philosophy in the congregation."

(\* Parmesar = the Almighty = Guru = Enlightener)

It means, the day the *Granth* was compiled it was given the status of Guru as described above. The preaching of Nanakian philosophy was carried on from this *Granth* by Guru Arjan himself and by the succeeding Gurus to the House of Nanak. This situation is comparable to the fact that of an author of a textbook, who teaches from his textbook. At the same time the other teachers can also teach from the same textbook. Therefore, from Guru Arjan up to Guru Gobind Singh a 'Guru' in *Granth* and a 'Guru' in person continued to exist side by side, however, all the preaching was done from the *Granth*. After Guru Arjan, it was Guru Teg Bahadur, the Ninth Nanak, who revealed some *Bani*. His *Bani* was incorporated at the appropriate places in the same *Granth* by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 CE.

**3. Gurdwara:** The Sikh Gurus initiated the institution of *Gurudwara* or *Gurdwara*. In general a building where the *Sangat* (congregation) of Sikhs is held in the presence of AGGS is called *Gurudwara*. But in *Gurbani* 'Guru Dwara' or 'Gurdwara' has different meaning.

... ਗੁਰੂ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਹੋਇ ਸੋਝੀ ਪਾਇਸੀ ...॥ AGGS, M 1, P 730.

*Guurdwara* is composed of 'Guru', the metaphor of the *Sabd* as discussed earlier and 'Dwara' means a door, through which one enters into certain realm. Therefore, *Gurudwara* means opening (*parkash*) of the AGGS then entering into the realm of the *Sabd* of the Nanakian School. Since one finds the *Sabd* (philosophy) of the Sikh Gurus in the AGGS, analogically, the place where the AGGS is enshrined is also called *Gurudwara* / *Gurdwara*.

Consequently, *Gurdwara* system became a great institute where the Sikhs can get together to deliberate on the Nanakian Philosophy, future of Sikhism, social projects and their problems and to eat together without any discrimination of caste, creed, color, sex, social status, etc. in a langar hall. [also see Ref. # 8]

**4. Sharing Material Wealth:** Guru Nanak advises the

Sikhs to share some portion of their truthful earnings, the material wealth, with others. It gave rise to a new system of pooling such contributions at a central place for spending on preaching of Sikhism and on the collective welfare of the Sikhs at large and the needy Sikhs in particular. This advice is clearly mentioned in the following verse:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਬਹੁ ਦੇਹਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੋਇ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1245.

Nanak says: "The one, who earns with his sweat of brow and shares some of his earning with others, has recognized the real path of life."

During the Middle Ages (500-1500 CE) every Christian had to give a tithe (*daswand*) to the church - every tenth egg, sheaf of wheat, lamb, chicken, and all other animals. Beside this all the peasants gave about half their time for all types of manual work for the church [12]. In contrary Guru Nanak suggested to share their material wealth without any definite proportion like, the tithe, but as a sort of sharing with others voluntarily without any force. The funds, thus collected, are not for personal use by the person/s controlling the Sikh institute/s but for the spread of Sikhism and the welfare of the Sikh Nation.

**5. Sharing of Virtues:** Guru Nanak developed a novel system of sharing virtues with other communities that may be equated to the multiculturalism adopted in Canada. Most peoples take the multiculturalism in a very narrow term as taking part in folk dances, social functions, religious holidays, etc. of other communities. Guru Nanak emphasized that one should not only share the material or cultural values of other communities, but should also adopt their virtues:

ਗੁਣਾ ਕਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਵਾਸੁਲਾ ਕਠਿ ਵਾਸਿ ਲਈਜੈ ॥

ਜੇ ਗੁਣ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਸਾਜਨਾ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ॥

ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ਗੁਣਹ ਕੇਰੀ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਵਗਣ ਚਲੀਐ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 765-766.

"If you have virtues expose them and use them. If your friends also have virtues then share with them. One should share virtue and discard the evil characteristics."

**6. Freedom of Expression:** Importance of first listening and then expressing oneself as long as one lives in the world, is an important feature of the Gurbani:

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਰਹੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹੀਐ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 661.

"As long as one lives in this world one should listen and say (one's opinion to find out the truth)."

**7. Resolving Doubts:** If there is any doubt it can be resolved by sitting together in *sangat* and discussing the matter fully attuned:

ਹੋਇ ਇਕਤੁ ਮਿਲਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ਦੁਬਿਦਾ ਦੂਰਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1185.

"Get together to resolve the doubts while fully attuned."

**8. Intelligence and Discriminating Intellect:** Guru Nanak (M1 and M 5) emphasize the use of intelligence - the ability to learn or understand from experience; and the use of discriminating intellect to reason, to understand, or to perceive relationship and difference between good and bad, true and false, right and wrong, etc.:

ਅਕਲੀ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਮਾਨ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1245

"Realize the Almighty by using intelligence (ਅਕਲੀ) and achieve honor by using intelligence."

ਅਕਲੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਕੇ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਅਕਲੀ ਕੀਚੇ ਦਾਨੁ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1245

"Discover by studying (ਪੜ੍ਹਿ) intelligently and spread (ਦਾਨੁ) the discovery intelligently."

ਬੁਝੈ ਬੁਝਨਹਾਰੁ ਬਿਬੇਕ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 285.

"Those who have discriminating intellect can understand things in their real perspective."

ਸੋ ਧਨਵੰਤਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਬੁਧਿ ਬਿਬੇਕ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 1150.

"The one who has the discriminating intellect is wealthy in knowledge (wise)."

**9. Evaluation of Philosophy:** Gurbani teaches that one must first evaluate the philosophy carefully, if convinced then accept or adopt it:

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਵਸਤੁ ਸਿਵਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਕੀਚੈ ਵਾਪਾਰੁ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1410.

First evaluate the substance (philosophy) then trade in (accept/adopt).

**10. Importance of Research:** Gurbani explains that those who research progress while others disintegrate:

ਖੋਜੀ ਉਪਜੈ ਬਾਦੀ ਬਿਨਸੈ ...

AGGS, M 1, P 1255.

"The researchers progress while the others, who move

*aimlessly from one topic to the other, disintegrate."*

**11. Threaten not and Fear not:** To maintain universal brotherhood of mankind it is necessary to adopt the following principle according to the Gurbani:

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥੧੬॥  
AGGS, M 9, P 1427.  
"One who does not threaten anybody and is not afraid of anyone, is called an enlightened person."

**12. Idolism:** According to the Nanakian Philosophy there is no place of idolism in Sikhism because the Almighty cannot be structured into any form:

ਬਾਪਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਇ ਕੀਤਾ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਸੋਇ ॥  
AGGS, Jap 5, P 2.  
"It (the Almighty) cannot be structured or created. It came into existence of Its Own."

Therefore, in Sikhism worshipping of idol is useless to attain salvation:

ਜੋ ਪਾਥਰ ਕਉ ਕਹਤੇ ਦੇਵ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਸੇਵ ॥  
ਜੋ ਪਾਥਰ ਕੀ ਪਾਂਈ ਪਾਇ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਘਾਲ ਓਜਾਂਈ ਜਾਇ ॥  
AGGS, M 5, p 1160.  
"Those who call a stone as their god, their services are wasted. Those who fall at the feet of an idol, their endeavors (for salvation) go in vain."

**13. Distinctive Nature of Sikhism:** The distinctiveness of Sikhism has already been declared by Guru Nanak in his Bani. However, Guru Arjan clearly distinguishes uniqueness of Sikhism for those who would club its philosophy with Islam or Hinduism:

ਵਰਤ ਨ ਰਹਉ ਨ ਮਹ ਰਮਦਾਨਾ ॥  
ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਜੋ ਰਖੈ ਨਿਦਾਨਾ ॥ ੧ ॥  
ਏਕੁ ਗੁਸਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਮੇਰਾ ॥  
ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਨੇਬੇਰਾ ॥ ੧ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
ਹਜ ਕਾਬੈ ਜਾਉ ਨ ਤੀਰਥ ਪੂਜਾ ॥  
ਏਕੋ ਸੇਵੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ॥ ੨ ॥  
ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਉ ਨ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰਉ ॥  
ਏਕ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਲੇ ਰਿਚੈ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥ ੩ ॥  
ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥  
ਅਲਹੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡ ਪਰਾਨ ॥ ੪ ॥  
ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਯਿਹੁ ਕੀਅ ਵਖਾਨਾ ॥  
ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰ ਮਿਲਿ ਖੁਦਿ ਖਸਮੁ ਪਛਾਨਾ ॥ ੫ ॥  
(AGGS, M 5, p 1136)

*Neither I keep the fast (of Hindus) nor observe the month of Ramdan (of Muslims).*

*But I Serve the One Who emancipate all. 1. The Gosain (of Hindus) or Allah (of Muslims) is the same as the One for me.*

*Thus, I have released myself from both Hindus and Muslims. 1. Pause.*

*Neither I go to Kaaba to perform the Hajj Nor I go to bathing pilgrimages to meditate.*

*(Because) I contemplate the One, not any other. 2.*

*Neither I worship the Hindu way nor I pray like Muslims.*

*(Because) I realize in my mind the only the One, the Formless. 3.*

*I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.*

*(Because) my body belongs to the One to Whom you call Allah or Ram. 4.*

(Note: Guru Arjan has followed Guru Nanak not to give any specific name to the Almighty. Therefore, the most preferred word used to address the Almighty by all the Sikh Gurus in the AGGS is the "ONE".)

As this verse was written to advise Kabir also on his verse incorporated in the AGGS at page 1159, thus the last stanza is for Kabir:

*Hey Kabir! Say what is there in showing or practicing (the above mentioned rituals), because the Almighty can be recognized by oneself after meeting the Guru/Pir (teacher).*

In this verse Guru Arjan has reiterated in simple words that has already been laid in the Nanakian Philosophy. Here Guru Arjan rejects the old religious practices in first part of each stanza of this verse then emphasizes on the new way of life, i.e., life of theism - (believing in only the One, the Almighty, described by Guru Nanak in the beginning of the AGGS). To emphasize the distinction of the Sikh way of life Guru Arjan declared that he is neither Hindu nor Muslim and does not practice any of their religious norms / rituals. It is clear that Guru Nanak's mission was to develop a new way of life - theism (new religion) different from those already established.

**14. Benign State (Haleemi Raj):** If everybody abides by the above principles laid out in the Nankian Philosophy, it would definitely lead to the evolution of the benign sovereignty as conceived by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan, under which the whole humanity would live in peace on this planet, the earth:

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥  
ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥  
AGGS, M 5, P 74.

"Now the Almighty has ordained that no one will have fear from any one and all will live in peace as it is the benign state."

**15. Miri-Piri Concept:** In Christianity the concept of 'two swords' (temporal and spiritual - *Miri* and *Piri*) was enunciated by Pope Gelasius during 5<sup>th</sup> century. According to this doctrine, the church and state were coequal in status [39]. During the Middle Ages by and by the Pope attained more power and wealth than all the kings and nobles combined. His subordinate officials - the archbishops, bishops, and abbots - were usually great feudal lords, with rich possessions and military strength. The power of the church was rooted in the spiritual force of excommunication. A person guilty of offense against the church was expelled from it, and all Christians, even members of his family, were forbidden to associate with him. Emperor Henry IV was excommunicated by Pope Gregory VII in 1076. Populace uprisings soon forced Henry to beg absolution. If an excommunicated noble remained defiant, the church imposed an interdict. This closed the churches throughout the noble's realm. Marriages could not be performed, nor could the dead be buried in sacred ground. Few nobles dared risk the rebellious fury that such a decree would arouse in their subjects [12].

By the 13<sup>th</sup> century Pope Innocent III made extreme claims to the effect that Holy Roman emperor (state) was subordinate to the Pope (church) because of the relative significance of the different jurisdictions given the two institutions [39]. Wilson [39] reported three types of relationships between church and state: At one extreme is the subordination of politics to religion, as in a 'hierocracy' or rule of priests as the guardians of divine mysteries. The other extreme entails subordination of the religious institutions to the political regime, as in Caesaropapism. Between these extremes are various relationships ranging from an Erastian, or state-dominated, church to a theocratic political order, in which rulers are closely monitored by guardians of the dominant religious tradition, as in Iran in the early 1980s.

In Sikhism Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) brought Miri-Piri concept in the forefront at the time (June 12, 1606 CE) of his succession to the House of Nanak. On that day he wore two swords declaring one to be the symbol of the spiritual (*Piri*) and the other that of his temporal investiture (*Miri*) [28]. According to

Macauliffe [21], the Guru reported to Bhai Buddha Ji as follows:

*"It is through thine intercession I obtained birth; and it is in fulfillment of thy blessing I wear two swords as emblems of spiritual and temporal authority. In the Guru's house religion and worldly enjoyment shall be combined - the caldron to supply the poor and needy and scimitar to smite oppressors."*

The first portion of the above statement appears to be based on the stories found in the traditional literature. Nevertheless, from the later part of the statement of Guru Hargobind it is clear that he was not establishing two opposite forces (*Miri* and *Piri* - temporal and spiritual). He means that in Guru's house besides being religious one can enjoy all the worldly comforts and riches and must share with the needy and should be strong enough to defend oneself and others from oppression.

The term '*Miri*' (Persian word) has been used as a simile for the king, the ruler, and the rich, and '*Piri*' (Persian word) for the spiritual leader, Guru, and even for the Almighty in the *Gurbani* to explain various themes. The following verse would explain the prevailing position of *Mirs* and *Pirs* during Guru Nanak's time:

ਕੋਟੀ ਹੂ ਪੀਰ ਵਰਜਿ  
ਰਹਾਏ ਜਾ ਮੀਰੁ ਸੁਣਿਆ  
ਧਾਇਆ ॥

ਬਾਨ ਮੁਕਾਮ ਜਲੇ ਬਿਜ ਮੰਦਰ ਮੁਛਿ ਮੁਛਿ ਕੁਇਰ ਰੁਲਾਇਆ ॥  
ਕੋਈ ਮੁਗਲੁ ਨ ਹੋਆ ਅੰਧਾ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਰਚਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 417.

*"Hearing of the invasion of Mir (Babur - Mughal), millions of Pirs (religious persons) were engaged by Pathans (Mirs) for performing miracles (praying and reciting of Kalmas /mantras) to check the attack. But he (Mir - Babur) burned all the age-old temples and resting places, and princes (the other Mirs - Pathans) were cut into pieces and were thrown away. Not even a single Mughal (Mir) was blinded by Pirs and none of their miracles could check the invasion of Mughals (Mir)."*

At the end of the above verse Guru Nanak Says:

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

*"Laws of the Nature are going on under the order of the Almighty. Therefore, every one gets what one sows"*

(whether one is Mir or Pir)."

The theme of the above verse clearly indicates that Pirs engaged by Mirs (Pathans) had no power to check the invasion. Similarly, the Mirs (Pathan) having all the powers also failed to check the invasion by another Mir (Mughal). The winner was the one who had confidence in oneself (Piri) rather than dependence on other Pirs for miracles to be performed. The winner also had fighting ammunition (Miri) to defend and attack the enemy.

Guru Hargobind was propagating the philosophy of Guru Nanak that none of the forces, Piri or Miri is superior than the other. Becoming of Pir by renouncing the household is of no avail. Similarly, establishment of Miri (kingship, power) without good deeds is not the way of salvation. There is nothing like superiority of Piri over Miri or vice versa in the Nanakian Philosophy.

Guru Arjan had put the above philosophy of Miri-Piri in a precise and concise form as follows:

ਘਰੁ ਬੰਧਹੁ ਸਚ ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਗਡਿ ਬੰਮੁ ਅਹਲੈ ॥

ਓਟ ਲੈਹੁ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੈ ਦੀਨ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਖਲੈ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 320.

*"Build your homeland on truth and righteousness, the unshakable pillars. And take the support of the Almighty, who sustains the world."*

Here again there is no indication of superiority of one (Piri) over the other (Miri) or vice versa. The Gurbani teaches the development of truth and righteousness in individuals as well as in the governance.

The critical analysis of the above verse of Guru Nanak favors the cultivation of Miri and Piri both in every individual Sikh. However, the Miri-Piri concept of Guru Hargobind is interpreted differently by different scholars in the literature. The traditional literature favors the upper hand of Piri (religious authority) on the Miri (state) and also accept that Piri (Sikhism) cannot be disseminated and popularized without the power of the state (Miri). However, the following representation of Miri-Piri concept reported by Major Gurbax Singh [35] appears to be very logical:

*"Combination of Miri-Piri does not envisage a theocratic system of government. Among the Sikhs, there is no priestly hierarchy. Secondly, as is evidenced by the Khalsa rule in practice, first briefly under Banda Singh Bahadur and later under the Sikh misls and Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the form of government established was religiously neutral. Religion representing Piri did provide moral guidance to the state representing Miri, and the state provided*

*protection and support equally to the followers of different faiths. Along with the liberation of the individual soul, the Sikh faith seeks the betterment of the human state as a whole by upholding the values of freedom of belief from the oppressive authority, of man over man. Religious faith is the keeper of human conscience and the moral arbiter for guiding and regulating the exercise of political authority, which must defend and ensure freedom of thought, expression and worship. This juxtaposition of the moral and secular obligations of man is the central point of the Sikh doctrine of Miri-Piri."*

Keeping in view the recent struggle, during the celebration of Vaisakhi 1999, between the Shiromani Akali Dal (state - Miri) and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the Akal Takht (Piri), it becomes imperative for the Sikh intelligentsia to work out soon which type of Miri-Piri concept is applicable to the Sikhs. Is it one of the above three types of relationships reported by Wilson [39] or there is a need for further research to clarify the Miri-Piri concept in the Nanakian Philosophy.

The Sikh Raj during Banda Singh Bahadur (1709-1715) and Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799-1849) is considered as a secular state by some historians in which every religion enjoyed equal independence and state never interfered in the religions and no religion was controlling the state. The state employed people without any discrimination of religion, race, sex, status, etc. [29, 32]. In the United States, Canada and other modern democratic countries the governments have settled the struggle between church and state down to the point where governments do not interfere in religions and religions have no control over the state.

**16. Renunciation of Guruship in One Person:** The Vaisakhi of 1699 CE is the most controversial event in the history of the evolution of Sikhism because of diverse views found in the old writings. (There are too many such writings that cannot be enlisted here.) Nevertheless, it is generally agreed upon that Guru Gobind Singh did call five Sikhs one by one from the biggest gathering on the Vaisakhi of 1699, who could sacrifice their lives for the welfare of the Sikhs. In spite of the fact that there is a lot of controversy on the description of this event in the old literature, still I have tried to draw the following inference based on the information available in the old literature and the Gurbani. On this day these five Sikhs, the *Five-Elect*, were initiated to the new system of **Collective Leadership**. In the literature the Five-Elect are commonly called as *Panj Pyarae*. Immediately, after their

initiation to the new system of Collective Leadership, Guru Gobind Singh bowed before them and requested to be immersed into the newly created Collective Leadership. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh on this day of the great event renounced the system of continuity of Guruship in Sikhism in one person. By doing so, he gave practical shape to the Nanakian philosophy in which the Guru is equal to the Almighty; the Almighty is equal to the Guru; the Guru is equal to the Sikh; and the Sikh is equal to the Guru. Nanakian Philosophy supports his transformation of Guruship to the Sikhs as follows:

ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ ਗੋਵਿੰਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਭਾਈ ]

AGGS, M 4, P 442.

*"Guru is in the Almighty and the Almighty is in the Guru, Nanak says there is no difference between them (the Almighty and the Guru)."*

ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਏਕੋ ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਲਾਏ॥

AGGS, M4, P 444.

*(When the Sikh understands the philosophy of the Guru, then..)*

*"The Guru becomes one with the Sikh and Sikh becomes one with the Guru, Then the enlightened Sikh can disseminate the same philosophy of the Guru."*

ਆਪੇ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਆਪਿ ਹੈ ਚੇਲਾ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਕਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਆਪੈ ॥

AGGS, M 4, P 605.

*"The Almighty (ਆਪੇ) is the Guru that exists (ਸਤਿ) forever and the Almighty (ਆਪੇ) is the follower (Sikh) also. The Almighty (ਪ੍ਰਭੁ) Itself preaches." (That means the Almighty preaches through Its Sikh - Chaela).*

ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਚੇਲਾ ਹੈ ਆਪੇ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨਾ ॥

AGGS, M 3, P 797.

*"The Almighty (ਆਪੇ) is Guru as well as the follower (Sikh) and the Almighty (ਆਪੇ) is the treasure of virtues."*

ਤੂ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਚੇਲਾ ਹੈ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਵਿਚੁ ਦੇ ਤਝਹਿ ਧਿਆਈ ॥

AGGS, M 4, P 758.

*"The Almighty is Guru Itself and is follower (Sikh) too at the same time. The follower (Sikh) dwells on the Almighty through the Guru."*

Since there is no difference between the Almighty and the Guru; and between the Guru and the follower (Sikh) thus, Guru Gobind Singh realized that the time had come to renounce the 230-year lineage of Guruship in one person and to vest the Guruship onto the **Collective Leadership**. He also reiterated that the Sabd incorporated into the AGGS is the spiritual Guru

of the Sikhs. That is what happened 300 years ago on the Vaisakhi of 1699.

The following account by Banerjee [3] about the great steps taken by Guru Gobind Singh to give final touches to the evolution of a new and unique nation, the Sikhs, is worth of consideration:

*"When Guru Gobind Singh said that the Guru was the Khalsa and the Khalsa was the Guru he was merely adding one more to the several equations to which the Guruship had already been submitted and though the change was, no doubt, revolutionary in some of its consequences, no revolutionary effort was required to achieve it. In one form or other the Sikhs were already familiar with the idea and the vesting of the spiritual leadership of the community in the Guru Granth Sahib and of the temporal leadership in the Khalsa itself was the culmination of a process that had long commenced in Sikhism."*

Similarly, Major Gurbax Singh [35] has indicated that Guru Gobind Singh surrendered Guruship before he left for heavenly abode and handed over the command of the Sikh Nation in the hands of the Five-Elect to work under the guidance of the Divine Word (Sabd) incorporated in the AGGS:

*"Ending personal guruship before he died, he bestowed the stewardship of the community on the Khalsa functioning under the guidance of the Divine Word, Guru Granth, in perpetuity."*

Grewal [18] reported from Bhagat Lakshman Singh's book [34] that Guru left his *gaddi* (Guruship) to the whole community which consisted of men with brave souls united by noble ties, investing them the power to govern in matters spiritual and temporal.

From the above observations of Banerjee [3], Major Gurbax Singh [35], Bhagat Lakshman Singh [34], and the information available in the Gurbani it is inferred that on Vaisakhi of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh vested the political affairs of the Sikhs in the Five-Elect, the **Collective Leadership**, and also terminated the 230-year lineage of Guruship in one person when he bowed before the Five-Elect for his own initiation to be the part of that Collective Leadership. Since the time of Guru Nanak Sabd is the Guru thus, Guru Arjan also declared that the Granth (*Pothi*), containing the Sabd of the Gurus of Nanakian School, is the Enlightener (ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਬਾਨੁ ॥ AGGS, M 5, P 1226). On that very day, Guru Gobind reiterated that the Sabd, incorporated in the AGGS, is the Guru for the guidance of the Sikhs. In other words on this day of the great event practical shape was given to all the above great

principles of Nanakian Philosophy by Guru Gobind Singh nine years before he left for heavenly abode. It is also apparent from the above discussion that it is wrong to say that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed Guruship onto the Granth when he was leaving for heavenly abode in 1708 as reported in traditional literature.

Dr Shan [27] had discussed the most quoted report by a news writer, Gulam Mohi-ul-Din alias Ahmed Shah Batalvi or Batalia from the *Twarikh-i-Hind* (History of India). This report does not describe in any way about the initiation of the Five-Elect as described in the literature, however, it does establish that on Vaisakhi of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh made an historic speech after the initiation of Collective Leadership. He invited people of all creeds and castes like Brahman, *Keshatri*, *Vaish*, and *Shudar* to come into the fold of a new nation, the Sikhs, founded by Guru Nanak where every one had the rights of liberty and equality. Although thousands of people refused to accept his offer because they did not want to surrender their ancient religion of Vedas and *Shashtras*, even then twenty thousand men pledged to join the commonwealth of Guru Gobind Singh on that day. Guru Gobind Singh was about 88 and 100 years ahead of the American Revolution and French Revolution, respectively, when peoples of those countries formed the republic giving the rights of liberty and equality to their citizens [2, 16]

**17. Evolution of a Nation:** All the above sixteen principles lead towards the evolution of a unique nation, the Sikhs. For details consult, *Are Sikhs a Nation*, by Mehar Singh Chaddah [5]. In conclusions he has quoted many authors who have accepted the Sikhs as a Nation:

1. Dr R. Hume in his book "World's Living Religions" 1931: *"Politically Sikhism is the only religion in the history of the world which gave birth to a 'Nation'. With the exception of judaism."*
2. Dr Hari Ram Gurpta: *"The story of Guru is a struggle in pursuit of a new challenge to create Nation of self-respecting people out of down trodden and oppressed society."*
3. Dr Sir Gokal Chand: *"It was reserved for Nanak to lay those foundations on which Gobind Singh built a new Nationality and gave practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."*
4. Dr Indubhusan Banerjee [3]: *"It goes without saying that the future Sikh Nation grew on the foundation provided by Nanak and it is, thus clear*

*that he had planted the germ of a Nation."*

5. Dr J. D. Cunningham [13]: *It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform and to lay those broad principles which enabled his successor Guru Gobind Singh to fire the name of his community with new Nationality."*
6. Khushwant Singh [33]: *"Guru Gobind Singh had all that his predecessor Gurus had - and something more, the power to change mice into man, to mould men into a Nation with an ideal of Khalsa Commonwealth."*

Grewal [18, p 33] has expressed the analysis of Cunningham [13] about the establishment of Sikh rule as follows: *"The Sikh movement for Cunningham was one single movement from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. The establishment of Sikh rule was a logical and historical extension of this movement. Cunningham was unique among the British historians of the Sikhs to appreciate the role of the Sikh ideology in shaping Sikh history."*

## B. SIKH SOVEREIGNTY (1708-1849 CE)

In 1707 CE Guru Gobind Singh sent Banda Singh Bahadur (1670-1716) and five Sikhs to the Punjab to establish the Sikh sovereignty. Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon him a drum, a banner, and five arrows as emblems of authority. Banda gained supreme power from the neighbor land of Delhi in the South to Lahore in the North, including the hilly tracts. By 1710 he was the virtual master of territories between the Yumna and the Sutlej, yielding revenue of 3,600,000 rupees. He introduced new calendar of his own, struck new coins in the name of '*Guru Nanak - Guru Gobind Singh*'. His seal contains the word '*deg*' (langar -food) and '*teg*' (sword). He appointed his own police, levied land revenue and ruled the country. He introduced a tenure system, which is still the envy of present day rulers and in which no appreciable change has been made [29].

But Banda had to face the huge military power of the Mughals, which he ultimately failed to cope with, with the handful of men and meager resources at his disposal. He was arrested and butchered to death in 1716 CE. Thereafter, the Sikhs remained under continuous persecution. About 10,000 Sikhs were killed in a '*Chhota Ghalughara*' in 1746 and about 35,000 in the '*Wadha Ghalughara*' in 1762 [5].

The Sikhs continued to fight for their sovereignty under the command of various *Misls*. Finally, Maharaj Ranjit Singh was able to become master of the capital, Lahore, by July 7, 1799 and ascended the throne on

April 12, 1801, after 102 years of completion of the Sikh Nation by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. He ruled over a domain extending from the Khaibar Pass in the west to the river Sutlej in the east, from the northern extremity of Kashmir to the desert of Sindh in south, comprising the provinces of Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir and their dependencies. It covered an area of 100,436 sq. miles and population of 5,350,000 [32].

At least 80% of the population of the territory he ruled over was Muslim, 10% were Hindus and remaining 10% were Sikhs. He was devout follower of Guru Nanak, he never discriminated against any faith. Once he told his foreign minister Fakir Azizuddin [14]: "*God intended my looking upon all religions with one eye that is why I was deprived of the other eye.*"

The Sikh kingdom fell to the English in 1849 [40] and remained under them till 1947. At the time of independence of India the Punjab, the home of the Sikhs, was divided into two halves. The western-half went to Muslim Pakistan and the eastern-half to Hindu India. The Sikh leaders allied with Hindu India.

### C. DEGENERATION AND REGENERATION OF SIKHISM (1849 - Vaisakhi 1999)

**Misrepresentation of Sikhism and Misinterpretation of Gurbani:** Although Sikhism came into being, when the science was in its primordial form, I found it the most scientific and logical religion and devoid of any myths and rituals [6, 7]. Nevertheless, some writers (Sikhs and Non-Sikhs) had and still are trying to portray it as another mythological religion. A lot of ancient mythology and unscientific and illogical codes and rituals were introduced into Sikhism during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Dark Period in Sikhism. During this period the *Gurdwaras* and Sikh Institutes were in the hands of *Mahants* and the Sikhs, who could not get rid of ancient mythology and unscientific and illogical rituals that were imprinted permanently in their minds. Keeping in view misrepresentation of Sikhism and misinterpretation of Gurbani by these so-called custodians of Sikhism, and to check the inroads of Christianity and Hinduism on the young Sikhs, an organization, called *Singh Sabha*, was created in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Singh Sabha did a lot of good work in establishing educational institutes, hospitals, introduction of Punjabi in Gurmukhi script at college and university levels, publication of books, journals, newspapers etc. to propagate Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. Unfortunately, an element of old stock, whose minds were still under the strong influence of ancient mythology and rituals, steadily dominated the Singh Sabha. They started to

put hurdles in the propagation of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective. For Example,

- 1) Prof. Gurmukh Singh of Singh Sabha, who was trying to represent *Gurbani* and Sikhism in their real perspective and was trying to eliminate the ancient mythology and rituals, was excommunicated in 1887 CE by Maan Singh, the Manager of Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar due to the pressure put by the opposition members, especially, Baba Khem Singh Bedi, Raja Bikram Singh and Avtar Singh Vahiria of the Singh Sabha. The opposition was trying to keep ancient mythology and rituals in Sikhism and to continue Guruship in living persons. Baba Khem Singh Bedi of this group was acclaimed as the 13<sup>th</sup> position in the Guru Nanak's lineage by his associates and followers. Similarly, the press of Ditt Singh, an excellent orator, writer, and a colleague of Gurmukh Singh, where the articles of Gurmukh Singh and of his own were published, was put out of business because of litigation by the opposing group in Singh Sabha. This group wanted to maintain the status quo of ancient mythology and rituals in Sikhism [Inferred from the data given in ref. # 25].
- 2) About a century ago, it was Karam Singh, a famous Sikh historian, who took courage to analyze the *Janam Sakhi* (biography) of Guru Nanak written by Bhai Bala. He proved in his book, *Katik kae Vaisakh* [30], that the stories recorded in it cannot pass the test of Gurbani, science and logic, the touchstones of truth. Guru Nanak has been portrayed as a great Hindu but lower in spirituality than Bhagat Kabir and Hundal. The falsehood given in this *Janam Sakhi* crossed all the boundaries when Karam Singh emphatically proved that Bhai Bala was never a partner of Guru Nanak and it was a fictitious figure and the *Bhai Balae Wali Janam Sakhi* was written by the anti-Sikh group of Hundal. It was this *Janam Sakhi* that popularized the celebration of Birth of Guru Nanak in *Katik* (October-November) instead of in *Vaisakh* (April). This *Janam Sakhi* was used to be recited in all *Gurdwaras* before the Singh Sabha came into existence. Unfortunately, the book by Karam Singh was removed from the sale list by the Khalsa Diwan most probably by Giani Gian Singh [inferred from the letter of Giani Gian Singh published in the new edition. Ref. # 30]. It is a must to be read, although Harinder Singh Mehboob [23] does not have good opinion about this book.

Since then misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepre-

sensation of Sikhism is still going on and it remained unchecked by the Sikh authorities and the Sikh intelligentsia till today. Moreover, nobody is allowed to speak in Gurdwara and publish articles in any journal, magazine or daily in the quest of truth by challenging misinterpretation of Gurbani and misrepresentation of Sikhism, and unscientific codes and rituals introduced into Sikhism. It is the same situation comparable to that what happened with Roger Bacon, a 13<sup>th</sup> century English priest. He had to spend the final 14 years of his life in a dungeon for writing that in the quest for truth, experimentation and observation are valid challenges to the uncritical acceptance of spiritual and secular authority [15]. Nevertheless, it was an heartening news when the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar in the 1995 World Sikh Conference held at Amritsar, honored posthumously Prof. Gurmukh Singh after 108 years, for his good services rendered for the promotion of Sikhism.

#### D. SIKHISM TODAY (On Vaisakhi 1999)

Although many seminars and conferences were organized for the celebration of the so-called "Tercentenary of Khalsa", in most cases the same old stuff was presented as usual without testing its authenticity and validity with the Gurbani, science and logic - the touchstones of truth. So much so that nobody even cared to give an appropriate title for this most important event in the Sikh history (see item # A-16) being celebrated after 300 years. Is it a "Birthday of Khalsa", a new Nation, created by Guru Gobind Singh or "Completion of the Sikh Nation" founded by Guru Nanak? The information given in items A-16 and A-17 support that it was 'Completion of the Sikh Nation', founded by Guru Nanak. The irony is that the Sikhs, what to talk of spreading the Nanakian Philosophy to the rest of the world, even failed to teach it in its originality and entirety to themselves. It is evident from the fact that they continued to struggle among themselves. For examples, some of the current struggles are as follows:

1. Control of *Gurdwara Golaks* (funds);
2. Modernism versus traditionalism;
3. Recognition of *Sants Smaj* as an independent institute in Sikhism by Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) Amritsar and Singh Sahib Bhai Ranjit Singh, Jathedar of the Akal Takht;
4. Domination of one Sikh authority or Institution over the other;
5. Domination of religious authority (SGPC) over the Sikh political authority (Shiromani Akal Dal) and

vice versa; etc.

A critical analysis of history reveals that the current turmoil in Sikhism is the result of the wrong activities of some unscrupulous Sikhs of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries who had wrapped Sikhism in a cocoon woven with the silken fibres of unscientific and illogical ancient writings. Although Sikhism is scientific and logical religion having the universally acceptable principles [6 -11, 38], even then it is being represented by many scholars and preachers along the lines of the ancient writings without looking into their authenticity and validity according to *Gurbani*, science, and logic - the touchstones of truth.

Now let us think over another question: Why and how did misrepresentation of Sikhism happen?

It happened so because in general people easily accept it to be true that is false, do something that is wrong, and follow the path that is crooked as explained by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan:

ਝੂਠੁ ਬਾਤ ਸਾ ਸਚੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਤੀ ॥ ਸਤਿ ਹੋਵਨੁ ਮਨਿ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਰਾਤੀ ॥

ਬਾਵੈ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਟੇਵਾ ਚਲਨਾ ॥ ਸੀਧਾ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਪੁਠਾ ਬੁਨਨਾ ॥

ਦੁਹਾ ਸਿਰਿਆ ਕਾ ਖਸਮੁ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸੋਈ ॥

ਜਿਸੁ ਮੇਲੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੪ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 185.

*"What is false, one takes it to be true. What is truth is not imbibed in one's mind. One (usually) takes the forbidden and crooked path.*

*One abandons the right method but weaves the wrong pattern. Nanak Says: Although the both ways (right and wrong) are happening under the Laws of Nature. But only those, who are introduced to the right path, are liberated."*

Because of the above-explained inherent weakness of humanity, the Sikhs at large took every information given in the early writings of Sikhs theologians and historians as true. Moreover, discontented and acquisitive people in general are more inclined to believe in mythical works coated with various allurements.

Some scholars [23, 24, 26, 37] accept that most of the information given in the early writings is contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy. Nevertheless, they themselves and many more modern Sikh scholars still refer to misinformation given in the early writings without verifying their authenticity and validity for construction of Sikhism for the modern Sikhs. It appears that they are either intentionally or inadvertently or ignorantly shackling Sikhism with mythology, and unscientific and illogical beliefs, rituals and codes.

Until and unless Sikhism is represented based on the Nanakian Philosophy incorporated in the AGGS, it will not be accepted by the generations of the Sikhs or the Non-Sikhs of the Science Age.

**Interpretation of Gurbani:** The difficulty in proper understanding of Gurbani is due to the fact that the message given in one verse of the *Gurbani* is closely intertwined with that of the other verses. Therefore, the message given in one verse will not become clear until the other verses are studied along with that. Moreover, Guru Nanak has extensively used allegories, metaphors, and similes to make his *Bani* easily understood. One has to be very careful to recognize allegories, metaphors, and similes used in a verse before interpreting it. Similarly, in some verses, he has used ancient mythology and rituals symbolically to make his point of view easily understood, but it does not mean that Guru Nanak accepts them as a part of his philosophy. All the Gurus of the Nanakian School in their *Bani* have followed the same writing system, developed by Guru Nanak. Therefore, interpretation of the *Gurbani* is not an easy task. However, it has also been noticed that some scholars, preachers, and *Sants* misinterpret Gurbani and express divergent views of the same verse to serve their own cause. Most probably it is so because it is not easy to comprehend the Gurbani in its entirety and originality. This fact has been pointed out by Guru Nanak that very few Sikhs will be able to comprehend and deliberate on the *Gurbani*:

ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਰਲੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਸੀ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਇ॥  
ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ 40 ॥  
AGGS, M 1, P 935.

*"A rare Gurmukh (who proclaims as the follower of Guru) will be able to comprehend and deliberate on Gurbani. This is the Bani of the Awakened (Great) person everybody should try to understand and make it to abide it in one's mind."*

Similarly, Guru Amardas, has recorded in the AGGS the problem of understanding the *Gurbani* as follows:

ਸਚਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਸਚੀ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵਿਰਲੈ ਕਿਨੈ ਪਛਾਣੀ ॥  
ਸਚੇ ਸਬਦਿ ਰਤੇ ਬੇਰਾਗੀ ਆਵਣੁ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਾਈ ਹੇ ॥  
AGGS, M 3, P 1044.

*"The word (sabd) is true. The verse (bani) is true. The rare follower (Gurmukh) could recognize it. The one who integrates oneself with the true word (sabd) gets salvation\*."*  
(\* Salvation = Liberation from ignorance or illusion)

My study of AGGS reveals that the Nanakian Philosophy enshrined in the AGGS is the most scientific and

logical ever recorded in any religious text [6-11]. It also indicates that the Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus in the AGGS is in the most crystalline form rather than in an amorphous form and there is one and only one real interpretation of each verse of Gurbani and that is consistent throughout the Nanakian Philosophy. There cannot be more than one interpretation whatsoever the circumstances may be if the interpreters keep in their minds the scientific information about the origin of universe; origin of life; origin of man; and other fields and grammar of the Gurbani. In fact, the Gurbani enshrined in the AGGS does not give any divergent views. It is only the intentional perversion of the Gurbani by certain persons, by particular organizations or by particular schools of thought to give the divergent views to serve their own motives.

## E. SIKHISM BEYOND VAISAKHI 2000 (FUTURE LINE OF ACTION)

1. The time has come for the Sikhs to ponder over how much false or spurious information (ਝੂਠ) has been accepted as truth (ਸਚੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਤੀ) in Sikhism. Therefore, formation of a very strong group of Sikh intelligentsia is needed. The members of this group should be free from the influence of ancient mythology and are not under any obligations of any religious and political authorities (SGPC, SAD, Akal Takht, etc.). This group will work towards the representation of Sikhism and Gurbani in their real perspective and the liberation of Sikhism from misinformation that has crept into Sikhism, with the hammer of Gurbani and chisel of science and logic.
2. There are many shortcomings in the Sikh Rehit Maryada, and Punjab Gurdwara Act. These ought to be discussed at length by the international Sikhs scholars of high caliber and having high academic qualifications in various fields. While discussing these matters they would keep in view the Gurbani, advances in science, logic and the conditions in which the Sikhs are living in different parts of the world. The most immediate tasks to be settled are:
  - a) Defining a Sikh;
  - b) Ownership of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (whether it belongs to the Sikhs or the humanity);
  - c) The Miri-Piri Concept in Sikhism;
  - d) The role of Takhts and the powers and duties of their incumbents;
  - e) Determination of whether it is a Priesthood/Pope-like authority with all powers over

- religious and political affairs of the Sikhs or it is a Collective Leadership as devised by Guru Gobind Singh on Vaisakhi of 1699; and
- f) Elimination of *Sant Samaj (dheras)* from Sikhism;
3. One of the many approaches to achieve the above objective is to write and publish well-documented research papers to explore Sikhism and the Gurbani in their real perspective and to present them to the humanity through a research journal of high academic standard. *The Institute for Understanding Sikhism* has recently inaugurated such a journal, *Understanding Sikhism-The Research Journal* to meet this demand. It is being already acclaimed as the journal of high academic qualities. Many more such journals and magazines should be published by other Sikh Institutes.
4. Holding of regular seminars on various aspects of Sikhism and Gurbani throughout the world. The results of such seminars should be made available at nominal costs.
5. The other most important approach for preaching Sikhism and Gurbani in their real perspective is the institution of Gurdwara. To achieve this objective the Sikhs have to change the working system of Gurdwara drastically (also see Ref. # 8). For example,
- All the *Kirtans* and recitation of the AGGS should be done by the members of the Sangat. Dependence on the professional *Kirtan Walas* and *Kathakars* and preaching by *Granthis* and *Sants* should be curtailed step by step to bare necessity.
  - At least 30 minutes should be reserved for the discussion on a topic/theme recited in the *Kirtan* or in a lecture or in *Katha* for its better understanding.
  - Influence of *Sants* of various *dheras* should be eliminated.
  - Provision of Kindergarten facilities for young children. The children should be exposed to simple principles of Sikhism in the form of pictures, puzzles, drawings, paper cuttings, and through stories, etc. in addition to the normal facilities for playing. With these facilities the children will develop interest in Sikhism as they grow up and the parents can participate in Gurbani, *Kirtan* and discussion with full concentration.
  - Provision of rooms for the young Sikhs of High schools level and separate rooms for the young Sikhs of College and university level where they can discuss various topics on Sikhism and Gurbani academically and also their problems in practicing Sikhism.
  - Maintenance of a good library and of teaching aids at each Gurdwara.

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