

THE SIKH CONCEPT OF GURU

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses upon one of Guru Nanak's very important verses about the concept of Guru:

*" Within every heart is hid the Supreme One (Brahm);
Whose light is in all hearts and bodies.
By the Guru's instruction the adamant doors are opened. "*
(AGGS, M 1, P 597.)

These words make a fundamental statement, namely that all beings exist in Brahm, the One Reality. Awareness of this is only possible by the Guru's instructions. The question arises; who is the Guru? I have sometimes heard Sikhs assert that the Guru is one of the historical Gurus, if not Guru Nanak. What does this say about the first master especially, who always emphasizes his dependence on God? Also, what does it say about the validity of other Gurus, which I would interpret as other belief systems? Is liberation or salvation only possible through faith in Sikhi?

INTRODUCTION

One of the many important teachings of Guru Nanak is enshrined in the following words from the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS)

[1]:

ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈ ॥

ਭਜਰ ਕਪਾਟ ਮੁਕਤੇ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਈ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 597 [1].

*"Within every heart is hid the Supreme One (Brahm);
Whose light is in all hearts and bodies. By the Guru's instruction the adamant doors are opened."*

Not infrequently writers confuse the Guruship of the ten human messengers with the Guruship of God. An aim of this study is to distinguish between the two. Admittedly this is not easy when we are examining the words of Gurus subsequent to Guru Nanak but in his writings the Guru must surely be God. Guru Nanak would never have been so arrogant to ascribe "grace" to himself and suggest that "Gur Prasad" in the Mool mantra, "by the Guru's grace", referred to himself.

CONCEPT OF GURU

I will not invidiously name authors who have implied or explicitly stated that the phrase, 'ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ' should be interpreted as meaning "by the grace of Guru Nanak", they are to be refuted from the words of the

Guru himself:

ਭਦਬਖਤ ਹਮਚੁ ਬਖੀਲ ਗਾਫਿਲ ਬੇਨਜਰ ਬੇਬਾਕ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਬੁਗੋਯਦੈ ਕਨੁ ਤੁਰਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਚਾਕਰਾ ਪਾ ਖਾਕ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 721.

"I am the Lord's bard of low birth, I am your slave and the dust of your feet."

Using the imagery of a mendicant yogi he said;

ਭਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਭਾਂਗ ਖਲੜੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਚੀਤੁ ॥ ਮੈ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ਭਇਆਤੀਤ ॥

ਕਰ ਕਾਸਾ ਦਰਸਨ ਕੀ ਭੁਖ ॥ ਮੈ ਦਰਿ ਮਾਗਉ ਨੀਤਾ ਨੀਤ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 721.

*"O Lord, your fear is my hemp,
my mind is the leather pouch.*

I have become an intoxicated hermit.

My hands are the cup and

I am hungry to see you, O God.

Day by day I beg at your door.

Bless me with alms, a beggar at your door."

The true yogi possesses only what he stands up in, otherwise he is totally dependent on others. He may become intoxicated with drugs not with his own achieved inspiration. The cup of his hands is empty until God fills it. He begs from door to door hoping that someone will provide him with food.

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Guru Nanak's inspiration was not self-induced. He ran hither and thither like a chattrick bird, the pied cuckoo, in search of water:

ਚਕਵੀ ਨੈਨ ... ਨਾਨਕ ਤਪਤਿ ਬੁਝਾਈ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P 1273.

Earlier, on the same page, we read,
ਪਿਰੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਪ੍ਰਮੁ ਸਖਾਈ ॥

ਤਿਸੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਘੜੀ ਨਹੀ ਜਗਿ ਜੀਵਾ ਐਸੀ ਪਿਆਸ ਤਿਸਾਈ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1273.

"The love of my beloved is dear to me. It shall be my succor in the beyond. Without him, I cannot live in this world, even for an instant. Thus do I hunger and thirst for him."

He also compares himself to a fish who is dependent on water and a bride who needs the presence of her husband if she is to be happy.

The pious Sikh devotee may naturally wish to regard these and similar words of self-depreciation as examples of humility rather than expressions of real spiritual self awareness. (If I may refer to my own

Christian tradition, it is about the same as the difficulty which many Christians have in accepting that Jesus' words from the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark's Gospel ch. 15:34) might actually be a statement of his despair. It is inconceivable, they argue that one who was God's Son might feel so bereft). However, enlightened beings can experience the "dark night of the soul". While they are in their mortal bodies, there is a tension between light and darkness. Perhaps what I write is anathema to some Sikhs, hence my aside on Jesus, but especially in the bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur, I am acutely aware of it. Obviously, I am more than happy for my misconceptions to be corrected.

Reverting to Guru Nanak, however, I also note that he said:

ਤਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਹਣ ਜਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਕਹਾਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 566.

"I speak only when you, O God, inspire me to speak".
And,

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੇਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥

AGGS, M1, P 722.

"As the word comes to me so I make it known."

We are not in the company of a professional holy man of the kind which Guru Nanak frequently criticized and ridiculed. The man we meet in the scriptures and

Janam Sakhis is modest and dependent on God for the words he utters.

Most significant of all are Guru Nanak's words describing his own calling to be a Guru:

ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਗੁਰੁ ਧਰਹੁ ਫਰਮਾਇਆ ॥

ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੇ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਸਚੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 150.

"I was an out of work minstrel, God gave me employment. God gave me the order, 'Sing my praise day and night'. God summoned the minstrel to His court and bestowed on me the robe of honoring Him and singing His praises."

If the Guru is a World Teacher Sikhs should surely use the languages of the world. The Guru is spirit and not to be confined to any place or time or mode of speech.

These are remarkable words. Not only are they one of Guru Nanak's few autobiographical passages in the Guru Granth Sahib, they are also the statement of a high caste *Khatri* who

was ready to describe himself as a low class *dum*, like the man he chose as his travelling and evangelizing companion, *Mardana*!

We are safe in concluding that Guru Nanak did not have a high opinion of himself and that '*Gur Prasad*' refers to God as Guru, not the first teacher of *Sikhi*.

(As for the bani of later Gurus it is important always to consider carefully the context of their utterances. As for the bards, such as *Satta* and *Balwand*, they can frequently be assumed to refer to the human Gurus).

Human Potential

At this point it might be useful to remind ourselves of the text upon which this article is based.

ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈ ॥

ਬਜਰ ਕਪਾਟ ਮੁਕਤੇ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਈ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 597.

"Within every heart is hid the Supreme One (Brahma); Whose light is in all hearts and bodies.

By the Guru's instruction the adamant doors are opened."

The Indian religious tradition, of which Sikhism is part, believes that God is present in all human beings, perhaps in all sentient beings, but the latter are not our concern here. The blessing that people have in being human is that they are potentially within reach of God's word through which spiritual enlightenment and liberation (*mukti*), can be obtained.

Guru Nanak taught that humanity is characterized by several distinctive, one might say unique features, which set it apart from the rest of creation.

- We have the power to discriminate between the good and the bad. We are aware of the possibility of making choices.
- We have the ability to choose between different forms of action. Our earnings can be used for gambling, for improving our home, or for helping the needy.
- We have the opportunity of entering into a conscious unity with God, through choice. Thus, the appeal of the Gurus is summed up in the following words of Guru Nanak:

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 441.

"O my soul, you have emanated from the light of God, know your true essence."

Guru Amar Das made the following remarkable affirmation:

ਅੰਦਰੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਭਰਪੂਰੁ ਹੈ ਚਾਖਿਆ ਸਾਦੁ ਜਾਪੈ ॥

ਜਿਨ ਚਾਖਿਆ ਸੇ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭਏ ਸੇ ਹਰਿ ਰਸਿ ਧ੍ਰਾਪੈ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ਪੀਆਇਆ ਫਿਰਿ ਕਾਲੁ ਨ ਵਿਆਪੈ ॥ ੧੭ ॥

AGGS, M 3, P 1092

"Humanity is brimful of the nectar of God's Name. Through tasting it its relish is known. Those who taste it become free from fear and find that God's elixir satisfies their needs. Whoever is made to drink it through divine grace is never again afflicted by death."

'Brimful of God's Name' is a challenging and thought provoking assertion. The truth of the matter, however, seems to be that most people are unaware of the presence of God in their lives and many would deny the existence of God at all. What is the explanation? Human beings are ignorant of their origin and their true destiny. The Gurus relentlessly informed their hearers:

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਨ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 378.

"You are blessed by being born human, it is an opportunity which has been given you to meet your God."

In other words, people are not animals who respond only to instinct. But the message often fell upon deaf ears.

The Human Reality

The form which ignorance takes is that of holding a materialist view of the universe and basing one's conduct upon it, of behaving like intelligent animals, but animals nonetheless. At its worst it could mean a life of selfish luxury exploiting the environment and other people. It might, on the other hand, mean living a life of praiseworthy moral rectitude. Each would be

equally fatal because they were really based upon putting oneself at the center of life. *Haumai* is the term, which Sikhs use to account for the flaw in human personality. They will say that it

Do the custodians of the Sabd Guru make its power available to the *sangat*? Or does the rhetorical verbosity of the *ragis* or *granthis* prevent the message penetrating the soul?

comes from two words, which mean 'I-I' or 'I-am-ness'. Selfishness may be an adequate rendering of *haumai* in many cases, but when we consider the altruistic materialist we realise that it is not wholly satisfactory. 'Self-reliance' is probably a better interpretation of the word's meaning. Often self reliance is regarded as a great human virtue, but for Guru Nanak it was a condition which blinded people to their dependence upon God. It reduces them to the level of animal-like ignorance. The Guru even said:

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਖੋਵੈ ॥ AGGS, M 1, P 466.

"We degrade ourselves from the human order because of haumai."

Once Guru Nanak visited a village where a rich money lender lived. Periodically he counted his wealth and when he passed another landmark on his way to becoming a millionaire he would erect another pennant to let everyone share in knowledge of his success. The Guru gave him a needle and asked him to keep it safe until he could return it to the Guru in the next world. Only when the man's wife ridiculed him did he realise that material objects cannot be taken with us and cease to have value when we die. The man's ignorance was dispelled, he gave away his wealth to those in need and became the Guru's disciple.

The following verse probably sums up our discussion on *haumai* as adequately as any:

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਇਆ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਗਇਆ ॥

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੰਮਿਆ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਮੁਆ ॥

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਦਿਤਾ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਲਇਆ ॥

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਖਟਿਆ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਗਇਆ ॥

ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ ਕੂੜਿਆਰੁ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਾਪ ਪੁੰਨ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਨਰਕਿ ਸੁਰਗਿ ਅਵਤਾਰੁ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਸੈ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਰੋਵੈ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਭਰੀਐ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਧੋਵੈ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਜਿਨਸੀ ਖੋਵੈ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਮੂਰਖੁ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਿਆਣਾ ॥
 ਮੋਖ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕੀ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥
 ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਹਉ ਵਿਚਿ ਛਾਇਆ ॥
 ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥
 ਹਉਮੈ ਬੁਝੈ ਤਾ ਦਰੁ ਸੂਝੈ ॥
 ਗਿਆਨ ਵਿਹੂਣਾ ਕਥਿ ਕਥਿ ਲੂਝੈ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਲਿਖੀਐ ਲੇਖੁ ॥
 ਜੇਹਾ ਵੇਖਹਿ ਤੇਹਾ ਵੇਖੁ ॥ ੧ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 466.

"In haumai one fails to perceive the real nature of liberation. In haumai there is worldly attachment (maya) and doubt, its shadow. By acting under the influence of haumai humans cause themselves to be born repeatedly. If haumai is understood the door of liberation can be found but otherwise there is argument and dispute. Our karma is inscribed according to the divine will. Whoever sees the nature of the divine will perceives the nature of haumai too."

Human beings are *Man-mukh*, self-centered.

Maya is a rich term in Indian philosophy. For Sikhs the world is not an illusion as some Hindu philosophers teach. The created universe, which God has made for human enjoyment, is real. *Maya* means the temporal world and human attachment to it, hence the translation 'worldly attachment' in the passage quoted above. Attachments may be of a socially acceptable kind. Yet love of family, even service of the Gurdwara, or patriotism, can be examples of *maya*, wrong attachment. Devotion to family can blind a person to the higher devotion, which is to God. 'My country right or wrong' can lead to the sanctioning of all kinds of atrocities. Sitting on Gurdwara committees, looking after the accounts, preparing schemes for extensions to the existing building, can be so all-absorbing that one has no time to enter the *Diwan* hall and listen to the *Bani*. It becomes background music relayed by the loudspeaker system.

Usually when Sikhs think of *maya* more obvious manifestations come to mind, especially the five evils of *kam lobh, moh, krodh and ahankar*. These are lust, covetousness, attachment, wrath, and pride. Each one might be seen as an acceptable quality, which has got out of control. *Haumai* turns love to lust or

covetousness as possessiveness replaces an affection, which puts the beloved before oneself and so it is with the other evils. As Guru Nanak said:

ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿ ਸਗਲ ਜਗੁ ਛਾਇਆ ॥
 ਕਾਮਣਿ ਦੇਖਿ ਕਾਮਿ ਲੋਭਾਇਆ ॥
 ਸੁਤ ਕੰਚਨ ਸਿਉ ਹੇਤੁ ਵਧਾਇਆ ॥
 ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਅਪਨਾ ਇਕੁ ਰਾਮੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ॥ ੧ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 1342.

"The love of worldly values stretches over the whole world. Seeing a beautiful woman a man covets her. With his sons and gold man increases his love. He considers everything to be his own. He does not heed God."

The potential for attachment to *maya* is present from the beginning of time. The possibility of being attached to the world is the consequence of being born as a discriminating human being able to make choices. *Maya* like the rest of creation, is the consequence of God's will or *hukm* but because we might fall victim to it we cannot blame God any more than an ambulance crew collecting a patient from a house in an emergency can be blamed for the actions of a young person who climbs into the empty cab, drives it away and causes a crash. Such attachment is the lot of most people. Guru Amar Das said:

ਏ ਸਰੀਰਾ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਤੁਮ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਖੀ ਤਾ ਤੂ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ
 ਆਇਆ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਖੀ ਤੁਹੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਾ ਤੂ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਆਇਆ ॥
 ਹਰਿ ਆਪੇ ਮਾਤਾ ਆਪੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਜੀਉ ਉਪਾਇ ਜਗਤੁ
 ਦਿਖਾਇਆ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਬੁਝਿਆ ਤਾ ਚਲਤੁ ਹੋਆ ਚਲਤੁ ਨਦਰੀ
 ਆਇਆ ॥ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਕਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਰਚਿਆ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਾਖੀ ਤਾ ਤੂ
 ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਆਇਆ ॥ ੩੩ ॥

AGGS, M 3, P 921.

"A child is born when it pleases God and the family is happy. Love of God departs, greed attaches itself to the child and maya's writ begins to run. God is forgotten, worldly love wells up and one becomes attached to the love of another (instead of God). Those who enshrine love for God, by grace, obtain the divine being in the midst of maya. Nanak Says, those who enshrine love for God in their hearts, through the Guru's grace, obtain God even in the midst of mammon."

The path to spiritual liberation put simply, what must be done to achieve liberation is reversing the process which has led to a person being ensnared and so living under the rule of *haumai*. One must become *Gur-mukh*, God centered, instead of being *man-mukh*, self centered.

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with *Gurmat*, for example, Brahmin Sikh authors have excessively praised Brahmins, used abusive language against Muslims, and advocated against the learning of Arabic and *Farsi* languages (Persian), and Desa Singh has advocated the use of opium, marijuana and alcohol." Therefore, Lal's claim that Bhai Nand Lal wrote two *Rehit Namae* is also questionable.

Relying on old controversial literature without paying attention to current literature for the publication of research work is unproductive and fraught with danger.

I agree with Lal on the careful and cautious use of 18th century controversial writings for the construction of Sikh history. However, I think that it is not necessary to dig deep into these writings for evidence to prove that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs are a vital part of the Sikh Nation. Every thoughtful Sikh knows or should know this fact. Let me put it this way succinctly. In the early 18th century, if faith in God, Guru and Khalsa ideals was the spiritual sustenance of the Khalsa forces, the source of their physical well-being was the *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. In the two major battles called *Wada Ghalughara* and *Chota Ghalughara*, the Khalsa forces suffered very heavy loses. However, within few years of each event, their ranks were replenished in greater number than before with fresh recruitment of sons and daughters of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. The following popular song [3] of the Khalsa of that time corroborates this fact.

"Manu sadi datri, asin Manu de soai (vegetable),
Jion jion Manu wadda, gharin gharin asin hoa."

"Manu is the sickle and we are the soai, The more he cuts, the more we grow. "

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To some extent this can be achieved by human effort. The *Janam Sakhis* contain many accounts which demonstrate this. For example, there was a man called Sajjan. He gave shelter to pilgrims, even providing a mosque and mandir as places for Muslims and Hindus, respectively, to pray and sleep. In the middle of the night he would kill them and take what possessions they had.

Sometimes these might be considerable, carefully hoarded savings which they were taking to give at the place of pilgrimage. Guru Nanak and his friend Mardana accepted his hospitality but instead of going to sleep they stayed awake singing hymns well into the night. Eventually, Sajjan began to listen to their words and became captivated by the message of liberation which they contained. At last, he burst in upon the

Where were the soai growing? Of course, in the homes of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs because the Muslim and Hindu populations were generally hostile to the Khalsa forces, and they were collaborating with the government forces in their annihilation. Most of the present days Sikhs are descendants of *Sehjdhari* Sikhs. What more evidence is needed to prove that *Sehjdhari* Sikhs were and are a vital part of the Sikh Nation.

I think scholars especially those who claim to be Sikhs should not lose sight of the primary objective of Sikh ideology, which is to bring all mankind on one platform (*Manas ki jaat sabhai eko pehchanbo*, mankind is one family). We are reminded of this theme in our daily prayer (*Sarbat Ka Bhala*, pray for the well-being of all). The least the Sikh scholars can do is to bring all the Sikhs together instead of categorizing them into different compartments.

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singers and asked to become a Sikh.

This story is pregnant with meaning. It speaks about the power of the bani to transform the listener, it implies the power of God's grace, it gives some indication of the need for effort on the part of the would be reformed person. Sajjan had to wish sincerely to be changed. It also affirms the Sikh belief that spiritual enlightenment should result in a transformed life as the former murderer was required to pay restitution to the relatives of the people he had bereaved and, after building the first gurdwara (known in those days as a dharamsala), gave the rest of his money to the poor.

The effort which Sajjan made was to put his self-centeredness behind him and re-focus his attention on

Guru Nanak and through him on God in the form of the hymns which he heard. Human striving has its place but only up to a point. Guru Nanak taught that:

ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

AGGS, Jap 4, P 2.

"Good actions may result in a human form, but liberation comes only from God's grace."

and,

ਆਚਾਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਜੀਤਿਆ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਪਾਠ ਪੜੈ ਨਹੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਪਾਇ ॥

ਅਸਟਦਸੀ ਚਹੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 355

"God cannot be won through rites or deeds. Learning cannot give help in comprehending God. The Vedas and eighteen Puranas have failed to reveal the mystery. That comes only from the True God."

Grace

The word 'grace' is used to translate a number of Punjabi words. One of these is *darshan*. This is used to describe or refer to the benign glance, which a guru bestows on a disciple. It is more than a friendly look. It is powerful and transforming, conveying peace or energy, and enlightenment. *Darshan* cannot be obtained, it has to be bestowed. In other words *darshan* is given by the guru only to those who are deemed ready to receive it. Simply to see a guru is not to receive *darshan*.

The Guru as a Remedy for *Haumai*

I may have labored the point that God is the Guru. Divine Guruship is the means of self revelation to human kind. God is ineffable but self-revealing. Otherwise finite mortals could never be liberated from materialism, even of the best kind, like love for family or Gurdwara, which besets them. However, God, as Guru, does use human beings through whom to articulate the life-giving message. Such a person was Guru Nanak. One story in particular shows how he was used to convey the message. Sajjan was a particularly nasty *thag* who offered religious hospitality to travelers and ministered death. Guru Nanak and Mardana were welcomed enthusiastically. Instead of sleeping they stayed awake singing the bani far into the night. Sajjan was at first angry. Then he began to listen to the Word and finally they penetrated his soul. He repented, confessed his faults, and became a follower of the Guru, that is God.

Guru Nanak was the medium chosen by and used by God to reach Sajjan. Today the medium is the *Bani* itself whose power has in no way diminished. Two questions remain to be asked. Do the custodians of the Sabd Guru make its power available to the *sangat*? Or does the rhetorical verbosity of the *ragis* or *granthis* prevent the message penetrating the soul? Music has charms, but it can become an end in itself and can deflect attention from the Word. Secondly, without meaning to be contentious, God did not send the Gurus with the *anahad sabd*, the sound Om, but with an articulate message, with intelligible words. How are young Sikhs to receive it when they and their parents have little or no Punjabi? The installed Guru Granth Sahib will always be in the language in which it was revealed and must be read in that tongue to the congregation, but what is wrong with using translations in French, English, Japanese, or German to make the Word comprehensible? Did Guru Nanak in Sri Lanka or Macca use Punjabi? (If I, a non-Sikh can be moved by the *Gurbani* in English I'm sure that a Sikh can)! If the Guru is a World Teacher Sikhs should surely use the languages of the world. The Guru is spirit and not to be confined to any place or time or mode of speech.

CONCLUSION

Humanity is brimful of the nectar of God's Name. Through tasting it its relish is known. Those who taste it become free from fear and find that God's elixir satisfies their needs. Whoever is made to drink it through divine grace is never again afflicted by death (AGGS, M 5, P 1092). For me this is one of the most telling of Sikh teachings. I respectfully ask, does the Panth convey the availability of the nectar or may it, like so many other religions, be in danger of obscuring it by adhering to practices, which may actually hinder the power of Brahm? Ultimately, if one has a religious belief, it is impossible to believe that humans can prevent God's will from being realized, but can they make the chosen vehicle, in this case Sikhism, so ineffective that some other instrument has to be chosen, some other teacher sent?

REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Guru Nanak, P = Page of the AGGS).