

EDITORIAL

UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM IN THE SCIENCE AGE

Sikhism is a scientific and logical religion of the world but it is being represented as mythical and ritualistic religion. It is so because Gurbani incorporated into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is not being interpreted in its real perspective; and Sikhism is not being represented on the philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani. A few such misinterpretations and misrepresentations have been discussed earlier in this Journal [2, 9, Dr Sidhu's article at pp 33-36] and now others have also realized about this phenomenon which is going on at a large scale [13]. The causes of misinterpretation of Gurbani are due to the fact that the Sikhs could not liberate themselves from the influence of ancient philosophy and mythology. Consequently more and more attention is being paid towards ritualistic aspects of the Granth Guru rather than on the deliberation of the Sabd Guru [5]. And misrepresentation of Sikhism is due to the fact that Sikhism is being constructed on information given in inauthentic writings of the 18th and 19th centuries rather than on the authentic source of information, the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1].

In fact Guru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of **Sikhi (Sikhism)** during the 15th century, the Period of Renaissance (between 14th century and 17th 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. Guru Nanak promulgated a unique philosophy that is scientifically and logically very sound having universal acceptability. His philosophy is termed as **Nanakian Philosophy** [3]. It was preached and enriched by the nine succeeding Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the **House of Nanak** or **Nanakian School**. The follower of his philosophy is known as the '**Sikh**'. The word '**Sikhi**' (commonly known as *Gurmat*) gave rise to the modern anglicized word '**Sikhism**' for the modern world.




Subsequently, Sikhism should have been disseminated scientifically and logically on the bases of Nanakian Philosophy. Instead Sikhism has been represented as a mythical and ritualistic religion based on inauthentic extraneous writings by the Sikh scholars rather on the primary and authenticated source, the Nanakian Philosophy, embodied in the Gurbani, which is

incorporated in the AGGS.

It is happening so because of the absence of preaching of Gurbani and Sikhism in their real perspective by the so-called custodians of Sikhism after the end of era of the Sikh Gurus in 1708. After the time of Banda Bahadur majority of the Sikhs were living in the forests and during this period preaching of Gurbani and Sikhism, and control of the Sikh institutions fell into the hands of the **Biprans** (*Who work against the Nanakian Philosophy*). This situation continued to be in the same state even during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and thereafter. During the Singh Sabha Movement some attempts were made to interpret Gurbani and represent Sikhism in their real perspective by some dedicated Sikh scholars. Soon this movement was taken over by the Sikh scholars who were heavily burdened with the ancient philosophy, mythology and **Bipreet** (*Ritualism or practices which are contrary to the Nanakian Philosophy*). During this period the use of discriminating intellect (*Babaek Budhi*) to find the truth was discouraged and was declared as sin by the **Biprans**. It is still happening even today during the Science Age.

Prof Puran Singh [14] wrote about this phenomenon during 1920s as follows:

"It is to be regretted that Sikh and Hindu scholars are interpreting Guru Nanak in the futile terms of the colour he used, the brush he took; are analyzing the skin and flesh of his words and dissecting texts to find the Guru's meaning to be the same as of the Vedas and Upanishad! This indicates enslavement to the power of Brahmanical tradition. Dead words are used to interpret the fire of the Master's soul! The results are always grotesque and clumsy translations which have no meaning at all."

Here I would like to quote an example in which our Sikh scholars have done exactly what Prof Puran Singh has noticed during 1920s. They have misinterpreted the first Bani (Jap) in the AGGS. In a recent study I have traced out the history of misinterpretation of the very first word/Logo, , of the AGGS (See Oankar/Omkar at pp 17-31). This study revealed that the pronunciation of  as '*Ek Oankar*' was started by Bhai Gurdas. Then Bhai Kahn Singh, Dr Sahib Singh, Prof Pritam Singh and many other great Sikh scholars accepted it. Since then the origin of  has been

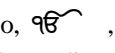
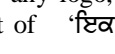
assigned to OM and OMKAR from Vedas and Upanishad. Consequently, some Hindu scholars have started to say that there is no originality and uniqueness in Nanakian Philosophy and Guru Nanak was preaching philosophy of Vedas and Upanishads [8].

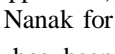
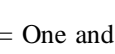
Recently the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) has geared up their activities for amalgamation of Sikhism into Hinduism as was done by Arya Samagists during 1930s and 1940s.

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has recently distributed copies of JAP written in *Gurmukhi* script in which some *lagan matran*, considered to be superfluous and which are silent in pronunciation have been removed. This work is being done by Dr Vimraj Bhano Murti, Director of Gurbani Project under the sponsorship of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, New Delhi at the cost four (4) Crores rupees (Rs 40,000,000 = over one million Canadian dollars).

An excerpt of the first page of the JAP, being distributed by the DSGMC, is as follows:

ਇਕ ਓਕਾਰ ਸਤ ਨਾਮ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਨਿਰਭਓ ਨਿਰਵੈਰ
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰਗ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦ ॥
॥ ਜਪ ॥
ਆਦ ਸਚ ਜੁਗਾਦ ਸਚ ॥ ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚ ॥੧॥
ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥
ਚੁਪੈ ਚੁਪ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਲਾਏ ਰਗਾ ਲਿਵ ਤਾਰ ॥
ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਬੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ॥...

Please note that the original and unique logo, , designed by Guru Nanak has been replaced with wording, 'ਇਕ ਓਕਾਰ'. If we accept it then it means we have cut off the future researcher to find out if there was any logo, , which means entirely different than that of 'ਇਕ ਓਕਾਰ'.

According to my study (See Oankar/Omkar at pp 17-31)  is an original logo designed by Guru Nanak for the Eternal Entity. The open end of 'Oora' has been extended to characterize it as Infinite (ਬੇਅੰਤ - Beant or ਅਨੰਤ - Anant). Thus, the  should be pronounced as ਇਕੁ ਓ ਬੇਅੰਤ (Ek + Oh + Beant) (One Oh ∞ = One and Only, Oh, the Infinite or the One Infinite Being). Or ਇਕੁ ਓ ਅਨੰਤ (Ek Oh Anant)

On the other hand 'ਇਕ ਓਕਾਰ' means One + OM + KAR, and OM represent the Trinity of God which is contrary

to the Nanakian Philosophy.

Moreover, ਸਤਿ, which means 'Ever-Existing', has been written as ਸਤ, which means 'seven' (7). In ਨਾਮੁ, ਪੁਰਖੁ, ਜਪੁ, and ਸਚੁ *onkar* (_) has been deleted. In ਨਿਰਭਓ *Oora* with *onakr* (ਓ) has been replaced with Open Oora (ਓ). In ਸੈਭੰਗ *gagga* (ਗ) has been added to read it as ਸੈਭੰਗ. According to the grammar of the Gurbani devised by Prof Sahib Singh [15] the meaning of each phrase will change by removing some of the *lagan matran* or adding some *lagan mantran* or extra letters. For example, in ਆਦਿ *siari* (ਫ) has been deleted without knowing the fact that ਆਦਿ with *siari* means, 'Before the time and space appeared; Eternal; Beginning' whereas the ਆਦ without *siari* means etc. etc. (Now in modern Punjabi ਆਦਿ with *siari* is also used for etc. etc.

Here nobody can blame Dr Murti for deleting *lagan matran* or for adding extra letter since some of the Sikh theologians, e.g. Giani Harbans Singh [10], Dr Gurbaksh Singh (USA/Washington) adviser to the Dharam Parchar Committee of SGPC [personal communication], Sikh Missionary Colleges and many other Sikh theologians, have been recommending the pronunciation of certain words by ignoring certain *lagan Mantran* and also by adding some or extra letter to some words in their publications on Gurbani. All these scholars must understand the law that change of a statement or work of any author (including Gurus) either by changing spellings or otherwise is a criminal case.

If these orthographic changes are accepted by the so-called Custodians of Sikhism and become popular it would be very dangerous and damaging to the originality and uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Gurbani. The damage done by this project would be irreparable in the future. With the time the originality and uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy will be automatically eliminated from the Sikh literature forever.

It is worth mentioning about the observations of Dr Joginder Singh [11], who listed for the first time that critical study of interpretations of JAP by the Sikh writers can be divided into the following five different schools of thought:

1. School of Meharbaan
2. School of Odasis
3. School of Nirmalas
4. School of Gianis
5. School of Modern Scholars

His study indicated that the first three schools were interpreting 'Jap' under the heavy influence of ancient philosophy of Vedas and Upanishad. There was some improvement in the interpretation by the writers of the

fourth school but still their writings were heavily dominated by the ancient philosophy. Thereafter, the writers of the fifth school showed a little more improvement in the interpretation of 'Jap' but these writers also could not free themselves from the shackles of ancient philosophy.

It was Dr Hardev Singh Virk [Forward in # 4] who added the sixth School of Science Scholars, which includes, Prof Puran Singh, and Dr Chahal. (Note: Dr Hardev Singh is in fact the second Science Scholar after Prof Puran Singh in this school.)

It is apparent that our Sikh theologians and scholars have continuously been undermining the originality and uniqueness of Gurbani in the AGGS either ignorantly without understanding the deep philosophy in the Gurbani or they are doing it under the influence of ancient philosophy and mythology from which they could not free themselves or doing it intentionally by hook or by crook as observed by Prof Puran Singh [14] to meet their own hidden agenda.

Misinterpretations are happening 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 due to lack of genuine and proper information [7]. Guru Arjan explains this phenomenon as follows:

ਬੁਠੁ ਬਾਤ ਸਾ ਸਚੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਤੀ ॥
ਸਤਿ ਹੋਵਨੁ ਮਨਿ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਰਾਤੀ ॥
ਬਾਵੈ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਟੇਵਾ ਚਲਨਾ ॥
ਸੀਧਾ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਪੁਨਾ ਬੁਨਨਾ ॥
ਦੁਹਾ ਸਿਰਿਆ ਕਾ ਖਸਮੁ ਪੁਭੁ ਸੋਈ ॥
ਜਿਸੁ ਮੇਲੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੪॥

AGGS, M 5, P 185 [1].

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.

Although the both ways (right and wrong) are happening under the Laws of Nature, only those who are introduced to the right path are liberated.

Due to the above-explained inherent weakness of the humanity, the Sikhs at large took information given in those old writings of Sikh theologians and historians as true. Moreover, discontented people in general are more inclined to believe in mythical works coated with various allurements for quick salvage of their problems. And there was no dearth of such people then and even now. Now the information given in such writings have been imprinted permanently in their minds. If any tradition, belief, or code, given in such writings, are challenged by some researchers then many devout Sikhs, *Sants, Babas, Raagis,*

traditional preachers, Sikh theologians, and the Sikh authorities - the so-called custodians of Sikhism, declare such actions as a blasphemy of *Gurbani* and Sikhism.

The solution to this problem lies in liberating Sikhism from the cocoon woven with the silken fibers of inauthentic old and the contemporary Sikh writings. It can only be done to go back to the original and unique philosophy promulgated by Guru Nanak during the 15th century in his Bani on which Sikhism is based.

The first step is to forget all the information given in *Janam Sakhis* (biographies of the Sikh Gurus), old Sikh literature, old Sikh history, and ancient philosophy and mythology while interpreting Gurbani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, the only authentic source.

Before interpreting Gurbani one must understand the methodology used by Guru Nanak in expressing his philosophy in his Bani. I had done some work on this methodology, called 'Nanakian Methodology' [6].

The next step is to look into the language spoken at that time with its various accents of various regions and its grammar. The grammar of Gurbani formulated by Prof Sahib Singh is based on the grammar of Sanskrit, which is a wonderful work but it is not applicable at many places in the Gurbani. Therefore, further research on grammar of Gurbani is also needed which should be based on *Prakrit* and *Pali* (the ancient Punjabi). Then proceed towards scanning the truth from history and *Janam Sakhis* by evaluating with Gurbani, science and logic – the touchstones of truth.

Before the advent of science there were two subjects: Natural Philosophy and Natural Theology, which dealt with nature and natural phenomena. Guru Nanak has observed the nature and natural phenomena from many angles and has written his observations in his Bani with the limited vocabulary of the Punjabi language known to people of that time. Therefore one has to keep in view the knowledge of Natural Philosophy, Natural Theology, modern science, and logic to interpret his Bani. Besides one must understand the limitations of the language and its vocabulary of the 15th century, used by Guru Nanak to write his philosophy and the natural phenomena observed by him.

Therefore, there is a need of collective efforts of experts of old Punjabi and other languages and their different dialects, History – especially Sikh history, Physical Sciences, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Philosophy, Psychology, etc to rediscover Nanakian

Philosophy in its originality and uniqueness by adopting the above approach to understand Sikhism in its real perspective and its universal acceptability by the humanity of the 21st century (Science Age) and that of the Future.

Devinder Singh Chahal
Editor

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