

UNDERSTANDING SABD GURU

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ABSTRACT

The Aad Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru of Sikhs in the present and time to come. Since this holy book is a compilation of Sabds of Sikh Gurus and Bhagats, it is in order to refer it as "Sabd Guru". In the pre-scientific days knowledge was sought principally in the sayings of saints/philosophers. At present science and reason can trump in most cases, the unrealistic meanings/translations as well as meaningless arguments based on inherited and preconceived wrong understandings etched in to the gray matter of brain since birth in Sikhs about the hymns of Sabd Guru. Such ingrained wrong impressions from oral traditions are very difficult to erase and bring the understanding to a neutral position except by an honest and active attempt of the individual through their discerning intellect (ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੁੱਧੀ) to understand the message in the hymns of Sabd Guru as written;

ਪੜਿਐ ਨਾਰੀ ਤੇਦੁ ਬੁਝਿਐ ਪਾਵਣਾ ॥

*Not by studying, but through understanding, is the God's Mystery revealed.
AGGS, M 1, p 148. [1]*

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਮਝਾਵੈ ਸੋਝੀ ਹੋਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਬੁਝੈ ਕੋਈ ॥

Realization comes only to rare Guru willed individual under the guidance of spiritual Master. AGGS, M 1, p 224.

INTRODUCTION

The danger to the Sikh faith comes from degeneration of morals, from beclouding one's mental horizon and from the atrophy of moral and spiritual nature. Individuals put their vested interest first, and truths and ideals go begging. Moral life cannot be lived in aloof. Morality is the nurse of spirituality. All the present problems are self-inflicted in ignorance. Ignorance of reality is no excuse. The only cure is self-knowledge; by making the individual's conscious of his infinite worth to progress spiritually towards God by getting rid of duality and correct understanding the message in the hymns of Sabd Guru.

ਦੂਜੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਲਗਿ ਵਿਗੁਤਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬੁਝ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥

*Attached to duality, all are ruined; without the True Guru, there is no understanding.
AGGS, M 1, p 1287. [1]*

Understanding the real meaning of the hymns is not granted or conferred upon but evolved by active effort in spirit and deed of the individual.

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਵਾਚਹਿ ਪੇਥੀਆ ਨਾ ਬੁਝਹਿ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

The Pundits, the religious scholars, read their books, but they do not understand the real meaning.

AGGS, M 1, p 56.

It is the reflection (ਵੀਚਾਰ) on the teachings, which is required for gaining spiritual wisdom and understanding otherwise there, is no magic or miracle per se in the words written in Sabd Guru. For the truly faithful, no miracle is necessary, but for those who doubt, no miracle is sufficient.

ਪੜਿਆ ਬੁਝੈ ਸੇ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਸਿਰਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਕਾ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥

*One who reads and understands is acceptable. Upon his forehead is the Insignia of the Court of the God.
AGGS, M 1, p 662.*

DISCUSSION

Mechanically reading the hymns of Sabd Guru without understanding has no spiritual beneficial purpose except an egotistical ritual of self satisfaction. Repeated recitation of the word Satnam (ਸਤਿਨਾਮ) etc has no spiritual or magic value until this word or Truth has been lived in, and this has never made God respond any better, nor made heaven or earth or hell or anything else and supernaturally bend to anyone's bidding. These deceitful situations are not a check that you can draw on the bank of God, whenever you are hard put to meet your needs. It is the sincerity, absolute honesty, and truthful living, which are of prime importance to progress in

spirituality. The moment you believe that these ritualistic practices have any powers or merit of their own, you believe in magic, you are being idolatrous, and you are breaking the teachings of your faith. All the false values in life due to closed minds are really the cause of stress in life causing diseases in the organism and loosing their hold on the mind, which otherwise can become free to dwell in bliss, health and peace as expressed by Guru Nanak:

ਮਨਹੁ ਜਿ ਅੰਧੇ ਕੂਪ ਕਹਿਆ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਨ੍ਹੀ ॥

ਮਨਿ ਅੰਧੈ ਊਧੈ ਕਵਲਿ ਦਿਸਨ੍ਹਿ ਖਰੇ ਕਰੂਪ ॥

ਇਕਿ ਕਹਿ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਬੁਝਹਿ ਤੇ ਨਰ ਸੁਖੜ ਸਰੂਪ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਨਾਦ ਨ ਬੇਦ ਨ ਗੀਅ ਰਸੁ ਰਸ ਕਸ ਨ ਜਾਣੰਤਿ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਸੁਧਿ ਨ ਬੁਧਿ ਨ ਅਕਲਿ ਸਰ ਅਖਰ ਕਾ ਭੇਉ ਨ ਲਹੰਤਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇ ਨਰ ਅਸਲਿ ਖਰ ਜਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਣ ਗਰਬੁ ਕਰੰਤਿ ॥

Those mortals whose minds are like deep dark pits do not understand the purpose of life, even when it is explained to them. Their minds are blind, and their heart-lotuses are upside-down; they look totally ugly. Some know how to speak, and understand what they are told. They are wise and beautiful. Some do not understand about the Sound-current of the Naad or the Vedas, music, virtue or vice. Some are not blessed with understanding, intelligence, or sublime intellect; they do not grasp the mystery of God's Word. O, Nanak, they are donkeys; they are very proud of themselves, but they have no virtues at all.

AGGS, M 1, p 1246.

Gurus Nanak, Amardas, Arjan and Kabir further stresses on the understanding of the message incorporated in their hymns:

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਵਾਚਹਿ ਪੇਖੀਆ ਨਾ ਬੁਝਹਿ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

The Pundits', the religious scholars, read their books, but they do not understand the real meaning.

AGGS, M 1, p 56.

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਰਹਿ ਕਹ ਬਪੁਰੇ ਨਹ ਬੁਝਹਿ ਇਕ ਏਕਾ ॥

What can the poor Vedas and Bibles do? People do not understand the One and Only - God.

AGGS, M 1, p 1153.

ਫੜੁ ਕਰਿ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਦਿਖਲਾਵਹਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਸੂਝੈ ॥

People practice hypocrisy, and make a show before others, without understanding anything about meditation or spiritual wisdom.

AGGS, M 1, p 1289.

ਆਪਿ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਲੋਕ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਪਾਂਡੇ ਖਰਾ ਸਿਆਣਾ ॥

You do not understand your own self, but you preach to other people. O Pundit, you are very wise indeed.

AGGS, M 1, p 1290.

ਤਤੁ ਨ ਚੀਨਹਿ ਬੰਨਹਿ ਪੰਡ ਪਰਾਲਾ ॥

They do not understand the essence of reality, and they gather their worthless bundles of straw.

AGGS, M 3, p 231.

ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਸਾਸਤ ਬੇਦ ਵਖਾਣੈ ॥ ਭਰਮੇ ਭੂਲਾ ਤਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ॥

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੇਵੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਨ ਪਾਏ ਦੁਖੇ ਦੁਖੁ ਕਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥

They recite the Simritees, the Shaastras and the Vedas, but deluded by doubt, they do not understand the essence of reality. Without serving the True Guru, they find no peace; they earn only pain and misery.

AGGS, M 3, p 114.

ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੁ ਨ ਪਛਾਣੈ ਮੂੜਾ ਅਵਰਾ ਆਖਿ ਦੁਖਾਏ ॥

The fool does not understand his own self; he annoys others with his speech.

AGGS, M 3, p 549.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਚਿਤੁ ਨ ਲਾਇਓ ਅੰਤਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਹੁਤਾ ਆਇ ॥

ਅੰਦਰਹੁ ਬਾਹਰਹੁ ਅੰਧਿਆਂ ਸੁਧਿ ਨ ਕਾਈ ਪਾਇ ॥

Those who do not focus their consciousness on the Lord, as Gurmukh, suffer pain and grief in the end. They are blind, inwardly and outwardly, and they do not understand anything.

AGGS, M 3, p 647.

ਪੜਣਾ ਗੁੜਣਾ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੀ ਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਵਿਕਾਰੁ ॥

ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਭਿ ਪੜਿ ਥਕੇ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਸੇ ਪੜਿਆ ਸੇ ਪੰਡਿਤੁ ਬੀਨਾ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਕਰੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਅੰਦਰੁ ਖੋਜੈ ਤਤੁ ਲਹੈ ਪਾਏ ਮੇਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਗੁਣ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਸਹਜਿ ਕਰੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਧੰਨੁ ਵਾਪਾਰੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਅਧਾਰੁ ॥

Reading and studying are just worldly pursuits, while there is thirst and corruption within. Reading in egotism, all have grown weary; through the love of duality, they are ruined. He alone is educated, and he alone is a wise Pundit, who contemplates the Word of the Guru's Sabd. He searches within himself, and finds the true essence; he finds the Door of Salvation. He finds the God, the treasure of excellence, and peacefully contemplates on God. Blessed is the trader, O Nanak, who, as Gurmukh, takes the Name as his only Support.

AGGS, M 3, p 650.

ਆਪਿ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਲੋਕ ਬੁਝਾਵੈ ॥ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਅੰਧਾ ਅੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ॥

ਦਰੁ ਘਰੁ ਮਹਲੁ ਠਉਰੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

One who does not understand his own self, but still tries to instruct others, is mentally blind, and acts in blindness. How can he ever find a home and a place of rest, in the Mansion of the God's Presence?

AGGS, M 3, p 832.

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਪੜਹਿ ਪੜਿ ਵਾਦੁ ਵਖਾਣਹਿ ਤਿੰਨਾ ਬੁਝ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥

The Pundits', the religious scholars, read study and discuss the arguments with out understanding.

AGGS, M 3, p 909.

ਚਤੁਰ ਬੇਦ ਮੁਖ ਬਚਨੀ ਉਚਰੈ ਆਗੈ ਮਹਲੁ ਨ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

ਬੁਝੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਏਕੁ ਸੁਧਾਖਰੁ ਓਹੁ ਸਗਲੀ ਝਾਖ ਝਖਾਈਐ ॥

By reciting the four Vedas from memory, one does not obtain the Mansion of the God's Presence hereafter. Those who do not understand the One Pure Word utter total nonsense.

AGGS, M 5, p 216.

ਨਹ ਜਾਪੈ ਨਹ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਨਹ ਕਛੁ ਕਰਤ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਸੁਆਦ ਮੇਹ ਰਸ ਬੇਧਿਓ ਅਗਿਆਨਿ ਰਚਿਓ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥

People do not see, and they do not understand; they do not reflect upon anything. The world is pierced through with attachment to tastes and pleasures, engrossed in ignorance.

AGGS, M 5, p 297.

ਬਾਹਰਿ ਭੇਖ ਕਰਹਿ ਘਨੇਰੇ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਉਤਰੀ ਘੇਰੇ ॥

ਅਵਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੈ ਆਪਿ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ॥

ਐਸਾ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਕਹੀ ਨ ਸੀਝੈ ॥

Outwardly, religious individuals wear various religious robes, but within, they are enveloped by poison. They instruct others, but do not understand themselves. Such Brahmins will never be emancipated.

AGGS, M 5, p 372.

Spiritual ignorance is the shore less ocean of darkness, with no light at the end of the tunnel. The belief in the philosopher's stone, the jewel in the serpent's head, alchemy, and miracles is all a matter of ignorance. Those engaged in the worship of idols, symbols, materialism, gods, goddesses, in fasting, uttering blessings and curses, are all living in spiritual ignorance. By reciting Sabd Guru's hymns without understanding them even a good person cannot find acceptance of one's God.

ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਸਮਝੈ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਗਵਾਰਾ ॥

The ignorant clown will never understand.
AGGS, M 5, p 738.

ਜੋਗੀ ਜਤੀ ਤਪੀ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਬਹੁ ਤੀਰਥ ਭ੍ਰਮਨਾ ॥

ਲੁੰਜਿਤ ਮੁੰਜਿਤ ਮੇਨਿ ਜਟਾਧਰ ਅੰਤਿ ਤਉ ਮਰਨਾ ॥

ਤਾ ਤੇ ਸੇਵੀਅਲੇ ਰਾਮਨਾ ॥

All the activities of Yogis, celibates, penitents, Sannyasees or persons with heads plucked of hairs, or with shaven heads, or ones observing silence, or ones with long hairs wandering to places of worship as pilgrims, will not lead them any where as finally all are going to face death.

AGGS, Kabir, p 476.

ਕਬਨੀ ਬਦਨੀ ਕਹਨੁ ਕਹਾਵਨੁ ॥

ਸਮਝਿ ਪਰੀ ਤਉ ਬਿਸਰਿਓ ਗਾਵਨੁ ॥

ਕਹਤ ਕਬੀਰ ਪੰਚ ਜੇ ਚੂਰੇ ॥ ॥

ਤਿਨ ਤੇ ਨਾਹਿ ਪਰਮ ਪਦੁ ਦੂਰੇ ॥

All preaching, ranting and raving, and arguing, is forgotten when one comes to understand.

Says Kabir, who conquer the five demons of the body passions, for them the state of supreme dignity is never far.

AGGS, Kabir, p 478.

ਜਾ ਕੈ ਜੀਅ ਜੈਸੀ ਬੁਧਿ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਜਾਨੈਗਾ ਸੋਈ ॥

According to the wisdom within the mind, says Kabir, so does one come to understand?

AGGS, Kabir, p, 342

CONCLUSIONS

The approach to spiritual growth is different between blind believers and the student of truth, who is trying to find the real essence (ਤਤ) and being more objective and intellectually respectable---seeming to the former as less religious and may be blasphemous. The former IMHO are enemies of the true Sikh Faith having a pious credibility of a closed mind. Some students of the truth with inherited oral traditional information etched in the cortex of their brains do not want some features of their faith to be coldly dissected or having their faith reduced in some way. Traditions evolve and change over time is an important fact of life. Sikh traditions have emerged from medieval Hinduism and still are being dictated by

(Continued on page 31)

materialize, then Sikhs imbued in Sabd Guru must participate in the governments of their countries.

Democracy may be the best form of government but it is not perfect. It would not permit private armies or even private arms such as swords for religious militia that were prominent in our proud history in India. Our new weapon has to be a popular vote. Sikhi goal is the betterment of all mankind. There are still many needs not being met -- of the homeless, of the battered women, of the abused children, of the people with no adequate housing or access to education or medical care and of the other segments, currently “invisible” to the governments. Without “affirmative action,” and the empowering legislation of 1960s in the U. S., an Obama may not have arrived on the scene today. We need to keep enlarging and improving such empowering legislation. For the universal social justice, Sikhs face many new challenges in Diaspora but are fortunate to have the needed abiding resources in Sabd Guru.

Our gurus have declared this life to be our "dharamsaal. They wanted the greatest success to us in it. To all of us, "Chardi Kala!" .

CONCLUSIONS

Sabd Guru envisions a new way of life that treats all humans, as children of God, and worthy of equal dignity. It brings rationality to our belief systems for common good. Sikhism originated in Punjab and mostly remained there because Gurmukhi was not much understood outside. Now that Sikhs are present in most countries and are becoming familiar with other world languages as well, the tenets of their religion can be presented to a wider world. Sikhism was born at the dawn of science and is the youngest among the major religions. It reflects modern scientific thinking. Sikhs' appearance on the world stage coincided with the birth of newer technologies of computers, video and the internet. These technologies have significantly brought down the cost of education and communication. Rich media content is available around the clock. They can all be used for the common good of mankind if properly grounded in the tenets of Sabd Guru.

REFERENCES

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, but M is replaced with the name of Sufi or Bhagat, p = Page of the AGGS).

(Continued from page 34)

Brahminical rituals carried on in daily practice of Sikh faith. Brahminical practice has all this time influenced these traditions, there by superstitiously coloring the Sikh way of life. Sikh hierarchy over time either deliberately or unconsciously made decisions as to what should be emphasized or ignored. The only way to learn is by understanding the message given by the Guru:

ਮਨ ਬਚ ਕ੍ਰਮ ਜਿਹ ਆਪਿ ਜਨਾਈ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਹ ਮਤਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੀ ਆਈ ॥

Those whom the Lord Itself instructs in thought, word and deed - O Nanak, their intellect are enlightened.
AGGS, M 5, p 259.

ਜਿਸਰਿ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਤਿਹ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਬੁਝਿ ॥

One who is made to understand - O Nanak, that Gurmukh obtains immaculate understanding.
AGGS, M 5, p 252.

Emphasis has to be placed on earning spiritual knowledge as a prerequisite to spiritual elevation through understanding the message contained in Sabd Guru and following it honestly, truthfully by selfless service of the humanity. There will always be some tension between those committed to finding the truth in a reasonably understanding scholarly way and those with inherited wrong understanding, who wants to preserve their blind religious way. This challenge has to be dealt with human maturity in a constructive and creative way.

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