

# Interfaith Understanding in Sikh Theology and History\*

## NANAK THE GURU & HIS PHILOSOPHY

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### ABSTRACT

*Critical analysis of available Sikh literature indicates that Guru Nanak and his philosophy have not been understood properly by the Sikh and non-Sikh theologians, scholars, researchers and historians. It is very important to understand Nanak as the Guru and his philosophy in its real perspective before entering into Interfaith Dialogues. In this article I have attempted to represent Nanak as the Guru as described by the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak'; and the originality and uniqueness of philosophy of Guru Nanak as is apparent in the discussion on 'Origin of Universe' and 'Hukm - The Laws of Nature/Universe.'*

### INTRODUCTION

The word 'Interfaith' means involving persons of different religious faiths. And 'Interfaith Dialogue' refers to dialogue between members of different religions for the goal of reducing conflicts between their religions and to achieve agreed upon mutually desirable goals. Interfaith dialogue is difficult if the partners adopt a position of caring only about the concerns of their own group, but is favored by the Universalists, who care for the concerns of others. Interfaith dialogue is only possible if a religion's adherents have some form of inclusiveness. However, believers with an exclusivist mindset may tend to proselytize the followers of other religions. Such an attitude will hinder to find an agreeable ground to live peacefully with each other.

The modern world is looking for peace for the survival of the humanity. It will make a world of difference if all the major religions can sit together and present their philosophy scientifically and logically to understand each other. This should be the first step toward establishment of peace on this Earth. Solution presented by Guru Nanak is as follows:

ਗੁਣਾ ਕਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਵਾਸੁਲਾ ਕਢਿ ਵਾਸਿ ਲਈਜੈ॥

ਜੇ ਗਣ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਸਾਜਨਾ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ॥

ਸਾਝ ਕਰੀਜੈ ਗੁਣਹ ਕੇਰੀ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਵਗਣ ਚਲੀਐ॥

*If you have a bag of wisdom/philosophy, open it, so that it can be shared by others.*

*If your friends have good philosophy, adopt it.*

*Only adopt good philosophy*

*Leave the others, which are not acceptable.*

AGGS, M 1, p 765 [1].

However, Guru Nanak is also advising that it is very important to evaluate the philosophy/ideas properly before adopting it:

ਪਹਿਲਾ<sup>1</sup> ਵਸਤੁ<sup>2</sup> ਸਿਵਾਣਿ<sup>3</sup> ਕੈ ਤਾ ਕੀਚੈ<sup>4</sup> ਵਾਪਾਰੁ<sup>5</sup> ॥

*It is advised that one must evaluate<sup>3</sup> the things / philosophy<sup>2</sup> first<sup>1</sup>, if convinced, then adopt/follow<sup>4,5</sup> it.*

AGGS, M 1, p 1410.

Today we are discussing, 'Interfaith Understanding in Sikh Theology and History'. I would like to discuss interfaith understanding in Sikh Theology only. Before I say anything it is important to understand what does 'Theology' mean? There are many definitions of theology but the following one appears to be most modern:

*The rational and systematic study of religion, its influences and of the nature of religious truth.*

(wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn )

### INTERFAITH UNDERSTANDING IN SIKH THEOLOGY

Guru 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> 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. The critical analysis of Methodology adopted by Guru Nanak to write his Bani (Word) clearly indicates that he conducted *rational and systematic* study of religions prevailing in the South Asia and Middle East during his time and thereafter promulgated his own philosophy.

When I looked deeply into Sikhism, as it is being preached, I found it is being promoted as a mystical, esoteric, enigmatic, and ritualistic religion. While on the other hand, everybody, especially all the Sikhs, believe that Guru Nanak is the founder of a new and modern religion; however, it has never been represented as modern religion in any of the Sikh writings. Instead I came across various principles of Sikhism being preached in total contradiction to the philosophy of Guru Nanak. The main fact is that Sikh and non-Sikh scholars failed to go into the depth of the thought process, to understand the philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani. For example, some of his Bani, e.g. JAP, Asa Di Vaar, Babar Bani, Siddh Gost, and Oankar Bani clearly indicate how *he conducted philosophical, scientific, and logical discourses with Siddhas, Pundits and Mullahs*. The irony is that the interpretations of these Bani by various theologians and scholars found in the Sikh literature are based on ancient and Vedantic philosophies. According to **Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha** [25], Sikh literature of the 18th and 19th centuries has been written according to the level of intelligence and beliefs of the writers. He has also emphasized that:

*“It is very regretful that there are very few intelligent researchers; however, there are many enemies of them.”* He further said:

*“The number of persons, who would declare the writers and speakers of truth as atheists, is too large.”*

This fact kept the sincere Sikh theologians and researchers away from writing the truth embodied in the Gurbani.

My critical research on literature on Sikhism clearly indicates that Sikhism cannot be understood in its real perspective until one comprehends the Bani of Guru Nanak in the light of today’s knowledge of Science and use of logic. Hence there is need to interpret the Bani of Guru Nanak scientifically and logically to portray his philosophy for the humanity of the Current Science Age.

My study of philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani clearly indicates that it is original and unique which has been further explained and strengthened by the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the ‘House of Nanak’, in their Bani which has been incorporated in the Aad Guru

Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] along with that of Guru Nanak. I have termed the philosophy of Guru Nanak as ‘*Nanakian Philosophy*’ [5].

### IS NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY VEDANTIC?

Dr Taran Singh [31], the then Head, Department of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala reported that the Sikh and non-Sikh writers of 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries had accepted that Gurus’ philosophy is based on Vedic philosophy:

*“ਵਿਆਖਿਆਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਯਤਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮੁੱਚੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਗੋਚਰ ਕਰਨ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਉਂ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਭਾਵੇਂ ਕਹਿਣ ਨੂੰ ਅਠ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਲੀਆਂ ਕੰਮ ਕਰ ਚੁਕੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਪਰ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਸੋਧਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਬੁਨਿਆਦੀ ਅੰਤਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਅਤੇ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਇਹਨਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੋਈ ਫਰਕ ਹੈ। ਗੁਰੂ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਜਾਂ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਫਿਲਾਸਫੀ ਦਾ ਨਿਰਣਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਚੋਟੀ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਯਤਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਯੋਜਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਰਿਹਾ। ਜਿਥੋਂ ਤੀਕ ਇਸ ਸਬੰਧ ਕੋਈ ਪਰਾਪਤੀ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦਾ ਨਿਰਣਾ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਭ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਲੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਗੁਰ-ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਵੈਦਿਕ ਹੀ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੀ ਫਿਲਾਸਫੀ ਆਮ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਜਾਂ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਫਿਲਾਸਫੀ ਤੋਂ ਭਿੰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ।”* [in Foreword].

Dr Taran Singh further confirmed that it appears that universities have taken good steps, although their research only established that the truth in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is not different than that of ancient India. And he had declared it as a *powerful achievement*:

*“ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਯਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਹਰ ਪੱਖ ਵਿਚ ਚੰਗੀਆਂ ਦੁਲਾਹਾਂ ਪੁੱਟੀਆਂ ਹਨ। ਭਾਵੇਂ ਸੋਧ ਇਹੋ ਸਥਾਪਿਤ ਕਰ ਸਕੀ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦਾ ਸੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਭਾਰਤੀ ਸੱਚ ਦੇ ਸੰਕਲਪ ਤੋਂ ਭਿੰਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਇਹ ਬੜੀ ਪ੍ਰਬਲ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤੀ ਹੈ।”* [In Foreword].

Dr Trilochan Singh [33, p-383] reported another concept which is contrary to that of Dr Taran Singh [31] that when Guru Nanak visited Medina he had long discussions with a number of members of pilgrims and divines which are recorded in *Makke di Gosht*:

*“These dialogues show two things. Firstly they reveal a very close affinity between monotheism and ethical and spiritual doctrines of Islam and Sikhism, a fact which has been clouded by unhappy political relations between the Sikhs and Muslims of Punjab for some time past, and seriously estrangement after partition of the country. Secondly they reveal Guru Nanak’s profound knowledge of the doctrine of Islam. He was able to establish that his religion was something quite distinct and different from the popular orthodox Hinduism. As it had a close affinity to Islam, they also felt he was reviving the original Spirit of Islam in his own way. These dialogues also show the immense spiritual power he exercised over the people of that period.”*

Here Dr Trilochan Singh is showing closeness of philosophy of Guru Nanak to Islam but quite distinct and

different from Hinduism. However, it appears from Reference # 27 in his book that he has not studied *Makke di Gosht* and he is also not sure if it is available anywhere. Therefore, he is just like the other Sikh theologians and scholars in accepting that Sikhism had a close affinity to Islam and Guru Nanak was reviving Islam in his own way. On the other hand there are some Sikh and Hindu scholars who are reporting that Guru Nanak was peaching Vedantic philosophy in his own style in the language (Punjabi) of the people rather than in Sanskrit.

What is the truth?

### DOES NANAKIAN PHILOSOPHY LACK ORIGINALITY?

Now I would like to quote views of some non-Sikh scholars who are portraying the lack of originality in the philosophy of Guru Nanak:

**Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji**, President, Sahitya Akademi, has belittled Nanakian Philosophy in the 'Foreword' to the book *Guru Nanak: Founder of Sikhism* written by **Dr Trilochan Singh**, who is held in high esteem as a scholar and the book was published by Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Delhi [33]. This book was written on the eve of celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> Birthday (*Parkash Divas*) of Guru Nanak. It is ironic that Trilochan Singh failed to notice Chatterji's following statement belittling the Guru:

*"The people of the Punjab (and along with them those of the rest of India) became immediately conscious of the value of Guru Nanak's advent and his teachings after he began to preach to them; and Guru Nanak built up and organised during his life time a very important religious persuasion which was broad-based on the foundations of Vedantic Monotheistic Jnana and Puranic Bhakti. The faith preached by Guru Nanak was nothing new for India, it was basically the old monotheistic creed of the ancient Hindus as propounded in the Vedas and the Upanishads - the Vedanta with its insistence upon Jnana or Knowledge of the One Supreme Reality. And this monotheistic basis was fortified, so to say, to put the matter in a simple form by Bhakti or faith as inculcated in later Puranic Hinduism. The Sikh Panth was nothing but a reformed and simplified Sanatana Dharma of medieval times."*

The book, *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, is the part of the Indian Series of the Translations Collection of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [34]. It is published in accordance with an agreement between UNESCO and the Government of India, and for furthering mutual appreciation of the cultural values of East and West. This book was printed in 1973 just after the celebration of 500<sup>th</sup>

Birthday of Guru Nanak. The sacred writings of the Sikhs have been translated by the prominent Sikh theologians, scholars and historians like, Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkrishan Singh and Khushwant Singh. **Dr S Radhakrishnan** undermined the philosophy of Guru Nanak in INTRODUCTION to that book as follows:

*"At a time when men were conscious of failure, Nanak appeared to renovate the spirit of religion and the humanity. He did not found a new faith or organize a new community. That was done by his successor, notably the fifth Guru. Nanak tried to build a nation of self-respecting men and women, devoted to God and their leaders, filled with sense of equality and brotherhood for all.*

*The Gurus are the light-bearers to mankind. They are the messengers of the timeless. They do not claim to teach a new doctrine but only to renew the eternal wisdom. Nanak elaborated the views of Vaisnava saints."*

Most probably under the influence of INTRODUCTION given by Dr Radhakrishnan, **Arnold Toynbee** remarked about Guru Nanak in the UNESCO's book as follows [34]:

*"Perhaps Nanak himself would have modestly disclaimed the title of 'founder'. He might have preferred to say that he was merely bringing to light, and gathering, the cardinal religious truth and precepts that had been scattered, in explicit form or implicitly, through the religious legacies of a number of forerunners of his."*

Arnold Toynbee has gone a step further than Radhakrishnan by putting his words in the mouth of Guru Nanak to disclaim that he is not the founder of unique philosophy and he had explicated the philosophy of his forerunners.

**Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU)** was established at Amritsar, India on November 24, 1969 to commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> Birthday (*Parkash Divas*) of Guru Nanak. It is both residential and an affiliating University. In conceiving the future course of the University, the objectives enshrined in the Act 1969, emphasizes that the new university would make provision for imparting education and promoting research in the humanities, sciences, especially of applied nature and technology. **Studies and research on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak**, in addition to working towards the promotion of Punjabi language and spreading education among educationally backward classes and communities were the other commitments.

The University Grant Commission's sponsored first Seminar on 'Mool Mantra' was organized by the Department of Guru Nanak Studies in March 1973. The

proceedings of the Seminar were edited by Professor Pritam Singh, the then Professor and Head, Department of Guru Nanak Studies, GNDU, under the title, *The Ultimate Reality – As Guru Nanak Saw It*. But it took 12 years to publish the proceedings under a new title, *The Sikh Concept of the Divine*, in 1985 [28].

During this Seminar instead of looking into the originality and uniqueness of logo (ੴ) coined by Guru Nanak it has been confirmed by the stalwart Sikh and non-Sikh scholars that it is based on OM, the Trinity system of Vedantic philosophy [28].

In this Seminar **Parma Nand** [15] undermined the originality of the philosophy of Guru Nanak by declaring that ੴ (*Oankaar*) is not a new word coined by Guru Nanak but he borrowed it from Upanishads because 'Oankaar' or 'Omkaar' has been used in various Upanishads. The only thing Guru Nanak did was to add numeral '1' to confirm the 'Oneness' of God, which is also found in the Upanishads.

Keeping in view the above discussion I pose the following very serious question to the Sikh theologians:

**Is it not strange that Nanakian Philosophy has been equated to that of Vedantic instead of portraying it as original and unique having universal acceptability by the humanity during the 500<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Guru Nanak?**

### **Is Sikhism Combination of Hinduism and Islam?**

Now it has become well established that Sikhism is a syncretism – combination of Hinduism and Islam. For example: Bouquet [2] wrote that “*Sikhism is the fruit of hybridization between Islam and Hinduism.*” McLeod [14] had also declared that: “Sikhism is properly regarded as a blend of Hindu beliefs and Islam, by quoting Noss’s statement [16] - ‘an outstanding example of conscious religious syncretism’, a noble attempt to fuse in single system elements drawn from two separate and largely disparate religions.” McLeod further quoted Khushwant Singh [26] as another metaphor which evidently expresses the same interpretation: “*Sikhism was born out of wedlock between Hinduism and Islam.*”

McLeod continues to strengthen his assumption slightly differently than that said above:

“*Sikhism cannot be located wholly within the area of Hindu tradition, it cannot be regarded as sect of Islam, and we can hardly accept the claim that it was delivered by direct, unmediated inspiration from on high.*” [14].

After discussing Sikhism as hybridization of Hinduism and Islam McLeod [14] takes it towards the Sant tradition:

“*In contrast to this ‘mixture’ theory, we can postulate an ‘admixture’ theory, and it is this second interpretation which is advanced in this paper. It affirms a basically Hindu origin and holds that Muslim influence, although certainly evident, is nowhere of fundamental significance in the thought of Guru Nanak. The religion of Guru Nanak, and so of Sikhism as a whole, is firmly imbedded in the Sant Tradition of northern India, in the beliefs of the so-called Nirguna Sampradaya.*”

I sometimes wonder that the above observations about placing Guru Nanak in ‘Sant Tradition’ might be based on the writings of some scholars who emphatically prove that Bani of the Bhagats of Sant Tradition is exactly in the conformity of the Bani of Guru Nanak. If it is true then McLeod is right because some of the Bhagats have written their Bani before Guru Nanak did.

### **WHY DID IT HAPPEN?**

The reason given by **Prof Puran Singh** [29] during 1920s is 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.*”

Although the reasons for misinterpretation of Nanakian Philosophy was discussed by Prof Puran Singh during 1920s but very little work has been done since then to represent Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective.

**Dr Gopal Singh** [20] reported another reason that due to improper understanding of the Guru's Word, the Granth started to be worshipped more than read, uttered as a magical formula or a mantra for secular benefits:

“*The confusion of interpretation has occurred because the Sikhs themselves, for historical and other reasons, have never seriously attempted a scientific and cogent exposition of the doctrines of their faith, based on the Word of the GURU-GRANTH and related to the historical lives of the Gurus who uttered it. Without reference either to one or the other, casual attempts made at the interpretation of small portions of the Granth has resulted in such interpretations being incoherent, lop-sided, and therefore unreliable. During the present (now last) century, several attempts were made by the Sikhs to translate into Punjabi the Word of the Guru, but all such attempts ended in an all-too-literal translation, leaving the seeker as uninitiated to the Guru's Word as he was before. And the word of the GURU-GRANTH became as involved and distant for an*

average reader as the Word of the Vedas, and it started to be worshipped more than read, uttered as magic formula or a Mantram for secular benefit than as a disciple of spiritual life for the achievement of ideals higher and beyond the world of sense and for the integrity of mind and soul in the world of the living."

Now in almost all the Gurdwaras in the world, whether they are under the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar or any other organization, the AGGS is treated almost as an idol [18] although the idol worship is condemned by Guru Nanak. The practice of reciting of many *Akhand Paaths* of the AGGS under one roof or in many rooms has become an important feature of many Gurdwaras [3]. Deliberation on the *Sabd* (verse) is totally absent except that which is done by a few *parcharak* (preachers) or *Kirtanwalas* which is done without any critical study of Gurbani. So far as I understand that there is not any effort to interpret Gurbani scientifically and logically to discover the truth so that precise and comprehensive philosophy of Sikhism could be presented to the humanity.

Considering the various references discussed earlier it becomes rather obvious that Nanakian Philosophy has not only been misunderstood by the theologians, but, even the well educated scholars mentioned above have failed to comprehend and analyze Nanakian Philosophy in its originality.

## What are the Reasons that it happened so?

### 1. Lack of Comprehension of Gurbani

Lack of comprehension of philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani in its real perspective by the earlier writers and scholars could be the main cause of misinterpretation of Gurbani. In this respect following remarks of Guru Nanak are worth considering:

ਬਾਣੀ ਬਿਰਲੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਸੀ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 935.

*Only rare Guru-oriented<sup>2</sup> will deliberate and contemplate on the word<sup>1</sup> (philosophy). This is the word<sup>1</sup> (philosophy) of the pre-eminent preceptor that is to be imbibed in one's own mind.*

On the other hand there is an inherited tendency in humans to accept falseness easily. It is true that many people will readily accept any wrong concept without verifying the facts even during the Current Science Age. A similar observation has been recorded in the Gurbani about this human behaviour by Guru Arjan:

ਬੁਠੀ ਬਾਤ ਸਾ ਸਚੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਤੀ ॥ ਸਤਿ ਹੋਵਨੁ ਮਨਿ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਰਾਤੀ ॥  
ਬਾਵੈ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਟੇਢਾ ਚਲਨਾ ॥ ਸੀਧਾ ਛੋਡਿ ਅਪੁਠਾ ਬੁਨਾ ॥  
ਦੁਹਾ ਸਿਰਿਆ ਕਾ ਖਸਮੁ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸੋਈ ॥  
ਜਿਸੁ ਮੇਲੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਹੋਈ ॥ ੪ ॥

*One takes<sup>4</sup> it to be true<sup>3</sup> what is false<sup>1,2</sup>,*

*What is truth<sup>4</sup> is not<sup>7</sup> imbibed in one's mind<sup>6</sup>.*

*One (usually) takes the forbidden<sup>8</sup> and crooked<sup>10</sup> path<sup>9</sup>.*

*One abandons the right<sup>11</sup> method but weaves<sup>13</sup> the wrong<sup>12</sup> pattern.*

Nanak Says:

*Although the both ways<sup>14</sup> (right and wrong) are happening under the Laws of Nature<sup>15,16</sup>.*

*Only those who are introduced<sup>17</sup> to the right path are liberated<sup>18</sup>.*

AGGS, M 5, p 185.

Due to this inherent weakness of human as explained above the Sikhs at large take information given in the early writings of Sikh theologians and historians as true. Moreover, discontented and depressed people in general are more inclined to believe in mythical works coated with various allurements. And there was no dearth of such people then and even now. The following quotes are most appropriate on this issue:

*"The public will believe anything, so long as it is not founded on truth."*

Edith Sitwell (1887-1964)

and

*"A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."*

Mark Twain (1835 - 1910)

Is it not the same message which Guru Arjan gave around 1600, about three hundred years before Sitwell and Twain. This is what is happening in Sikhism these days that the Sikhs will believe anything said by *Sants*, *Babas* (so-called sages), Sikh preachers, and *Kathakaars* (interpreters) in Gurdwaras without any critical analysis.

## WHAT IS SIKHI (SIKHISM)?

Sikhism is derived from the Punjabi word 'ਸਿਖੀ' (Sikhi).

This word, **Sikhi**, has been anglicized as **Sikhism** by adding suffix (-ism) after 'Sikhi' but not after 'Sikh', which means disciple in Sanskrit. 'Sikhi' in Punjabi means 'Teachings' as described by Guru Nanak in the following two stanzas:

ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 465.

*Sikhi<sup>1</sup> is the teachings<sup>2</sup> of the Guru's philosophy<sup>3</sup>.*

And

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਮੁੰਦੁ ਨਦੀ ਸਭਿ ਸਿਖੀ ਨਾਤੇ ਜਿਤੁ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇ ਸਿਰਖੁਥੇ ਨਾਵਨਿ ਤਾ ਸਤ ਚਟੇ ਸਿਰਿ ਛਾਈ ॥

AGGS, M 1, p 150

“Guru is like a sea and all the rivers are the philosophy (Sikhi) of the Guru.

(Means if you follow Guru’s philosophy, the river, you will meet the Guru, the sea.)

*The skinheads\*, who will not bathe (not follow the Sikhi) in it will get seven handful of ash in their heads.”*

(Means who don’t follow Sikhi will not achieve any wisdom.)

\* Skinhead; the cult people who pluck hair from the head and live on alms of others and lead life without any goal.

Here ‘SIKHI’ means Guru’s philosophy (Sikhism).

Now a question arises. Who is the Guru in the above phrase? The word ‘Guru’ has been extensively used by Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus in their Bani but in various contexts. Here Guru Nanak has explained that ‘Sabd’ (Word) is the ‘Guru’:

ਸਬਦੁ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੁਰੂ<sup>੨</sup> ਸੁਰਤਿ<sup>੩</sup> ਧੁਨਿ<sup>੪</sup> ਚੇਲਾ<sup>੫</sup> ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 943.

The word, ਸਬਦੁ (Sabd), in the above phrase has many meanings in the Gurbani. According to Bhai Kahn Singh [24] it means: sound, **Word**, speech, conversation, religion, duty, message, advice, philosophy, and Guru. To this list I have added some more meanings according to Gurbani: purifier, vehicle to meet God, peace of mind, and elixir of life (Amrit) [7].

I interpret ‘ਸਬਦੁ’ (Sabd) into English as ‘The Word’ and according to Webster’s Dictionary ‘**The Word**’ is ‘**Logos**’, which means : *Gr. Philos. reason, thought of as constituting the controlling principle of the universe and as being manifested by speech* [36].

The most appropriate meaning of ‘ਸਬਦੁ’ is ‘The Word’ (Logos) in the above phrase of Guru Nanak. Therefore, ‘*reason, thought of as constituting the controlling principle of the universe and as being manifested by speech*’ is the GURU of Nanak. Accordingly the above phrase is interpreted as follows:

*The Word<sup>1</sup> is the Guru<sup>2</sup>, consciousness<sup>3</sup> and intention<sup>4</sup> toward it make one its disciple (Sikh)<sup>5</sup>.*

AGGS, M 1, p 943.

It means the Guru of Nanak is ‘The Word’. This was the answer to the question (Who is your Guru?) posed by the Siddhas during discussions with them. ‘Sabd Guru’ has been discussed in detail in Ref # 7.

The above phrase also defines who is the Sikh?

**The Sikh is a person who follows the ‘Sabd’, The Word (Logos), as described above.**

Now the next question is:

**Who revealed this ‘Sabd’?**

The answer is: Nanak is the Guru described as follows:

## Nanak as the Guru

Chahal [5, 7] and Baldev Singh [19] in their research articles have traced out that Nanak was declared as Guru first by Guru Angad and then by Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas in their Bani. Finally, Guru Arjan also confirmed in his Bani that Nanak is the Guru:

### i) Guru Angad:

ਆਖਿ ਬੁਝਾਇਆ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਸਚਿ ਸਮੇਉ<sup>੧</sup> ॥

ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੈਸੀਐ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ<sup>੨</sup> ॥

*They, to whom the instructions (of Nanak) has taught and put on the right path, remain imbued<sup>1</sup> to praise and to know God.*

*What instructions<sup>2</sup> can be imparted to them, who have Guru Nanak as their Guru<sup>3</sup>?*

AGGS, M 2, p 150.

### ii) Guru Amardas:

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨੁ ਕਉ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਿਨੁ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਨਿਬੜਿਆ ॥

*Those to whom Nanak, the True Guru, has imparted his philosophy their deeds have been accounted for.*

AGGS, M 3, p 435.

### iii) Guru Ramdas:

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੂ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੁਰੂ<sup>੨</sup> ਹੈ ਪੂਰਾ<sup>੩</sup> ਮਿਲਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ<sup>੪</sup> ਨਾਮ<sup>੫</sup> ਧਿਆਇਆ<sup>੬</sup> ॥

*Nanak is the Guru<sup>1</sup> of Gurus<sup>2</sup>\*, is the Complete<sup>3</sup> and True Guru<sup>4</sup> by meeting him one can realize/comprehend<sup>6</sup> God<sup>5</sup>.*

AGGS, M 4, p 882.

\* ਗੁਰੂ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੁਰੂ<sup>੨</sup> ‘Guru Guru’ means ‘Guru of the Gurus’ according to Bhai Kahn Singh [24].

In the following verse Guru Ramdas is explaining that Nanak is the True Guru and his philosophy will help anybody, may be belonging to any caste or class, to across the sea of life. ‘Sea of life’ is a metaphor in Punjabi for ‘mundane life full of struggles’:

ਜਿਉ ਕਾਸਟ ਸੰਗਿ ਲੇਹਾ ਬਹੁ ਤਰਤਾ ਤਿਉ ਪਾਪੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਤਰੇ ਸਾਧ

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਤੀ ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰ ਸਾਧੇ ॥

ਚਾਰਿ ਬਰਨ ਚਾਰਿ ਆਸ੍ਰਮ ਹੈ ਕੋਈ ਮਿਲੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇ ਆਪਿ

ਤਰੈ ਕੁਲ ਸਗਲ ਤਰਾਧੇ ॥੨॥੫॥੧੧॥

AGGS, M 4, p 1297.

*As the iron can be carried across on the wooden raft so the sinner is carried across (the sea of life) in the company of nobles (Sadhs), and that of the True Guru and Holy Guru.*

Now the question is: Who is the True Guru/Holy Guru?

It is explained in the next phrase by Guru Ramdas as follows:

*Any person, whether belonging to any of the four castes or to any of four classes or is at any of the four stages of*

life, will be carried across, *ਭਵਜਲ/ਭਵਸਾਗਰ* – the sea of life (mundane life,) by meeting the Guru, Guru Nanak. And he will also help whole humanity including his own generations to cross the sea of life (mundane life). AGGS, M 4, p 1297.

#### iv) Guru Arjan

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਪੇਖਿਆ  
ਸੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ਨ ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ ॥

*Those, who have heard<sup>1</sup> and evaluated<sup>2</sup> the philosophy of Guru Nanak, do not fall into the abyss of ignorance<sup>3</sup>.*  
AGGS, M 5, p 612.

The following verse of Guru Arjan explains that he is asking Guru Nanak to impart his wisdom/knowledge (philosophy):

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਭ੍ਰਮੁ ਜਾਲੇ ॥੧॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਝੂਠ ਪਸਾਰੇ ॥੨॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਹਰਿ ਲਦੇ ਖੋਪ ਸਵਲੀ ॥੩॥  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਕਰਿ ਸੰਤਾ ਸੰਗਿ ਨਿਵਾਸੇ ॥੪॥  
ਨਾਨਕ\* ਸਿਖ ਸੰਤ ਸਨਝਾਈ ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਮਨੁ ਲੀਨਾ ॥੫॥

The part, “ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ”, is common in all the four phrases.

Prof Sahib Singh [30] interpreted, ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ, as ਨਾਨਕ (ਤੈਨੂੰ) ਸਿਖਿਆ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ (Nanak advises you).

Giani Harbans Singh [22] also interpreted, ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਿਖ ਦੇਇ, as ਨਾਨਕ (ਤੈਨੂੰ) ਸਿਖਿਆ ਦਿੰਦਾ ਹੈ (Nanak advises you).

The above part is followed by “ਮਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ” means “dear to my mind”.

Therefore, the logical interpretation is:

Guru Arjan says:

Guru Nanak, dear to my mind, has imparted me that:

1. *The company of noble people will eliminate superstitions/doubts.*
2. *Except God all others are falsehood (perishable expansion).*
3. *Gather only the beneficial/profitable business of understanding God.*
4. *Live in the company of noble people.*

Now Guru Arjan says:

*The wisdom of Sant (Guru Nanak) makes us understand how to devote ourselves towards the love for God\*\*.*

AGGS, M 5, p 787-79.

\*In the 5<sup>th</sup> phrase ‘Nanak’ (ਨਾਨਕ\*) is without *onkar* to *kaka*, therefore, here ‘Nanak’ is pen name of Guru Arjan.  
\*\*In Nanakian Philosophy ‘Love for God’ is ‘Love for humanity’.

vi) **Swayiay of Guru Arjan** explains that Nanak is the Guru and his Bani (The Word) is a lamp of wisdom (enlightener) for the whole humanity:

ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧੂਰਾ ਮਹਿ ਸਭ ਕਲਿ<sup>੩</sup> ਉਧਰੀ<sup>੪</sup> ਇਕ ਨਾਮ<sup>੫</sup> ਧਰਮ<sup>੬</sup> ॥  
ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ<sup>੭</sup> ਸਗਲ<sup>੮</sup> ਹਰਿ ਭਵਨ<sup>੯</sup> ਮਹਿ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ<sup>੧੦</sup> ॥

*Nanak person, the Guru, and an image of Infinite God<sup>10</sup>, has appeared<sup>7</sup> in the world<sup>8</sup> as a light<sup>1</sup> to dispel<sup>4</sup> darkness (ignorance)<sup>2</sup> for the whole world<sup>3</sup> under one religion of righteousness<sup>6</sup> of God<sup>5</sup>.*

AGGS, M 5, p 1387.

#### vi) Satta Doom

Besides the Sikh Gurus Satta Doom, who was a *Kirtania* (hymn singer) in the Darbar of Guru Arjan, declared that Guru Nanak has promulgated a new philosophy and challenged many wrong religious beliefs, which has been symbolized as ‘Changing the course of Ganges’ in his following verse in the AGGS:

ਹੋਰਿਓ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੰਗਾ ਵਹਾਈਐ<sup>੨</sup> ਦੁਨਿਆਈ ਆਖੈ ਕਿ ਕਿਓਨੁ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਈਸਰਿ<sup>੩</sup> ਜਗਨਾਥਿ<sup>੪</sup> ਉਚਹਦੀ<sup>੫</sup> ਵੈਣ ਵਿਰਿਕਿਓਨੁ<sup>੬</sup> ॥

*The people of the world say that Nanak, the Controller<sup>4</sup> (Nath) of the world<sup>4</sup> has promulgated a philosophy<sup>6</sup> of highest order<sup>5</sup> that is like changing<sup>1</sup> the course<sup>3</sup> of Ganges<sup>2</sup>.\**

AGGS, Satta Doom, p 967.

\* ਹੋਰਿਓ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੰਗਾ = ‘Changed the course of Ganges’\* is an allegoric expression for entirely changing the prevailing philosophy into a new philosophy of highest order. Satta Doom has also addressed Guru Nanak metaphorically as **ਜਗਨਾਥਿ<sup>੪</sup>** (the Controller of World) in praise.

**The above verses clearly indicate that Nanak has realized a new philosophy and he is accepted as the Guru by the other Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the ‘House of Nanak’.**

Now is the time to pose an intellectual question to the Sikh theologians, philosophers, scientists and historians:

### **Is Sikhism based on Islamic and Vedantic philosophy or based on the original and unique philosophy of Guru Nanak?**

Although Nanakian Philosophy was formulated during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it so scientific and logical that it has universal acceptability and applicability even during the 21<sup>st</sup> century of the Current Science Age. The length of this paper does not allow me to discuss whole philosophy of Guru Nanak; however, I have tried to discuss at least two topics:

1. Origin of Universe and
2. *Hukm* – The Laws of Universe/Nature.

Albert Einstein, a Nobel Laureate, said that scientific knowledge would help a lot to find out the true message of religion:

**“After religious teachers accomplish the refining process indicated, they will surely recognize with joy that true religion has been ennobled and made more profound by scientific knowledge.”**

Therefore, the above two topics have been discussed scientifically and logically to reveal Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective. The discussion of these two topics will also indicate that Nanakian Philosophy has no connection with Hinduism or Islam.

### 1. ORIGIN OF UNIVERSE

I would like to quote the following statement of Carl Sagan before describing the origin of universe according to Nanakian philosophy:

**A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the universe as revealed by modern science, might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths. Sooner or later, such a religion will emerge.**

Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot* (1995) [17]

I was wonder-struck when I came across the above statement of Carl Sagan. I immediately went back to the 15th century, when the science was just emerging as a powerful tool to find the truth; Guru Nanak was describing the origin of Universe, which appears to be very close to scientific version of today. And he laid the foundation of a new religion, Sikhi (Sikhism), which is now being envisioned by Carl Sagan as above.

There are many theories about the origin of the Universe but so far The ‘Big Bang Theory’ is widely accepted by many scientists. According to the standard theory, our Universe sprang into existence from a **single point** around 13.7 billion years ago (some say about 15 billion). Our Universe is thought to have begun from an infinitesimally small, infinitely hot, and infinitely dense single point. Is this single point called something like ‘Singularity’ or ‘Nothingness’?

### Origin of Universe According to Nanakian Philosophy

I will not discuss the origin or creation of Universe in other religions since I am not an expert in those religions and will not be able to do full justification to their thoughts/concepts. Here I will be confining myself on the origin of Universe strictly according to Nanakian Philosophy embodied in the Bani of Guru Nanak, incorporated in the AGGS and would be comparing with the present day’s knowledge of science.

#### i) Sound / Bang

Guru Nanak has very clearly mentioned that Universe came into existence with one bang as follows:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

This phrase has been interpreted very literally by many scholars. But if we keep in view the present day science and the Methodology of Guru Nanak used by him to express his philosophy allegorically, metaphorically and symbolically then its interpretation would be quite different than that of all the above writers. Thus its interpretation is as follows:

*The Universe exploded with one sound<sup>2</sup> (bang) and started to expand<sup>1</sup>, hereafter appeared many things<sup>3</sup>*  
AGGS, Jap 16, p 3.

#### Note:

1. ਪਸਾਉ (*Pasao*) means to expand. 2. ਕਵਾਉ (*Kavao*) means ‘sound’ not ‘word’ or ‘note’. ਕਵਾਉ is from ਕਵਾ which means strength, force, Energy [24]. In that case ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ can be interpreted as: *The Universe expanded from one source of energy.*

3. ਦਰੀਆਉ (*Daryao*) has been literally interpreted as rivers by many scholars. Keeping in view the methodology used by Guru Nanak to express his philosophy ‘ਦਰੀਆਉ’ has been used as a metaphor for ‘things’. What are those things? Scientifically what appeared after the ‘Big Bang’ was a large number of galaxies each composed of a large number of stars (suns) and their planets? Therefore, the ‘ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ’ has been used to represent ‘many things’ because of limited vocabulary available at that time. However, one must understand that no water was formed immediately after the Big Bang. It took billions of years to form water on the Earth. Therefore, ‘ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ’ (rivers) is a metaphoric expression of ‘many things’ (that means starting from elementary particles to particles to nucleosynthesis to nuclear to atoms which give rise to many galaxies.

The concept of ‘ਦਰੀਆਉ’ (*Daryao*) in Nanakian Philosophy as ‘things’ has been strengthened and explained by Guru Arjan so that the metaphor, ‘ਦਰੀਆਉ’ (*Daryao*), may not literally be misunderstood as ‘Rivers’ as has been done by some scholars in the above phrase of Guru Nanak:

ਏਕ ਕਵਾਵੈ ਤੇ ਸਭਿ ਹੋਆ ॥

*With one source of energy (sound - bang) everything originated.*

AGGS, M 5, p 1003.

**Note:** ‘ਏਕ ਕਵਾਵੈ’ in the above phrase is same as ‘ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ’ of Guru Nanak’s previous phrase.

It means Guru Nanak’s concept of origin of Universe of 15th century is almost similar to that which has been theorized by scientists of the 20th century as ‘Big Bang’. Although similar information of formation of Universe with one ‘word’ is available in other religious scriptures, Guru Nanak has gone quite further in explaining the



origin of Universe, which is comparable to the scientific information available today.

## ii) Infiniteness of Universe

The Universe is still expanding since the Big Bang occurred. And no limit has been established according to the present day knowledge of science. Guru Nanak explains infiniteness of Universe as follows:

ਪਾਤਾਲਾ ਪਾਤਾਲ ਲਖ ਆਗਾਸਾ ਆਗਾਸ ॥  
ਓੜਕ ਓੜਕ ਭਾਲਿ ਥਕੇ ਵੇਦ ਕਹਨਿ ਇਕ ਵਾਤ ॥  
ਸਹਸ ਅਠਾਰਹਤ ਕਹਨਿ ਕਤੇਬਾ ਅਸੁਲੁ ਇਕੁ ਧਾਤੁਖ ॥  
ਲੇਖਾਪ ਹੋਇ ਤ ਲਿਖੀਐ ਲੇਖੈ ਹੋਇ ਵਿਣਾਸੁ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਵਡਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਆਪੇਂ ਜਾਣੈ ਆਪੁ ॥੨੨॥

*There are hundreds of thousands of nether worlds, and hundreds of thousands of skies.*

*After great research the Vedas have said it definitely as above.*

*The Semitic books say that there are eighteen thousand worlds and that is the fact.*

However, Nanak says:

*It cannot be possible to count (number of the celestial bodies in the Universe) because the accounting person may reach the end of his life during counting, it will still be incomplete.*

Guru Nanak further says:

*That God is the Great, who knows the account (of the celestial bodies in the Universe).*<sup>22</sup>

AGGS, Jap 22, p 5.

In this stanza Guru Nanak is referring to that the Vedas say that there are hundreds of thousands of *Patal* (nether worlds) and hundreds of thousands of skies and on the other hand Semitic books say that there are 18,000 worlds. This is the information of Vedas and Semitic books but not the views of Guru Nanak. However, some scholars and preachers erroneously interpret that it is Guru Nanak who says that there are *lacs* (hundreds of thousands) of *Patal* (nether worlds) and *lacs* of skies. Scientifically there is no such thing like 'nether world'. It is an ancient myth. Similarly, there is no sky. The blue color we see is the color due to the depth of the air around the Earth through which the sunlight passes before coming to us. In fact, it is a void or space. And space is not counted in numbers.

After quoting the information available or the accepted concept at that time, Guru Nanak gives his own observations. He says that the cosmos (Universe) contains countless number of celestial bodies. The real number would be known only to the God. According to the present scientific information available there are billions of galaxies and each galaxy is composed of billions of stars and their planets and moons. Our sun, having nine planets revolving around it, is one of the billions of stars of our galaxy, Milky Way.

## iii) Time of Origin

What is the time of origin of the Universe? As already discussed, the time of origin of Universe is approximately 13-15 billion years ago. But Guru Nanak says that it is difficult to estimate the time of origin of Universe in his following stanza:

ਕਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਵਖਤੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਕਵਣ ਬਿਤਿ ਕਵਣੁ ਵਾਰੁ ॥  
ਕਵਣਿ ਸਿ ਰੁਤੀ ਮਾਹੁ ਕਵਣੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਹੋਆ ਆਕਾਰੁ ॥

Guru Nanak first poses a question:

*What was that time; and what was that time/ moment; What was that month; and what was that day; What was that season; and what was that month; when the Universe was created?*

AGGS, Jap 21, p 4.

Then he answers as follows:

ਵੇਲਾ ਨ ਪਾਈਆ ਪੰਡਤੀ ਜਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਲੇਖੁ ਪੁਰਾਣੁ ॥  
ਵਖਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਓ ਕਾਦੀਆ ਜਿ ਲਿਖਨਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਕੁਰਾਣੁ ॥  
ਬਿਤਿਤ ਵਾਰੁਖ ਨਾ ਜੋਗੀ ਜਾਣੈ ਰੁਤਿਪ ਮਾਹੁੳ ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ॥

*The Pundits could not find that time, whether it were written in the Puranas.*

*That time/moment is not known to the Qazis either, whether it were written in the Koran.*

*Nor the month nor the day nor the season nor the month is known to the Yogis.* [4]

AGGS, Jap 21, p 4.

Then who knows this?

Guru Nanak answers it as follows:

ਜਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਸਿਰਠੀ ਕਉ ਸਾਜੇ ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਈ ॥

*Only the Creator, Who created the Universe, knows it (the time of creation).* [4]

AGGS, Jap 21, p 4.

## iv) Origin of Our Solar System

It has been discussed earlier that the origin of Universe was not known to Pundits, Kazis, and Jogis. Guru Nanak says it is only known to God. However, in the following verse Guru Nanak explains the formation of our solar system, and the date of formation goes as back as more than a billion years

ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੁੰਧੂਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥  
ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥੧॥...  
ਜਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਣਾ ਤਾ ਜਗਤੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥...੧੪॥

*More than a billion years ago,*

*There was only a mass of gases.*

*There was no Earth or sky, but only the laws of the Infinite<sup>6</sup> (God).*

*There were no day, no night, no moon, no sun, but Nothingness<sup>8</sup> by itself.<sup>1</sup>...*

After long description of the primordial state Guru Nanak says:

*According to the Laws of Nature<sup>9</sup> the mass of gases formed<sup>10</sup> the world<sup>11</sup> (solar system with the Earth as our world.)...<sup>14</sup>.*

AGGS, M 1, p 1035.

**Note:** ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦਾ (*Arbad narbad*): ‘*Arbad*’ (a colloquial word for ‘*arb*’) means one billion and ‘*Narbad*’ means which cannot be counted in ‘*Arbad*’, therefore, *Arbad narbad*, means more than one billion, may be a period in tens of billions of years. The present estimation of origin of Universe is 13-15 billion years and that of solar system is about 4.6 billion years.

ਸੁੰਨ (Sunn): Here *Sunn* means the elemental state of ‘Nothingness’.

In the above verse Guru Nanak is explaining the primordial state of our solar system as a mass of gases but it is interpreted erroneously by some theologians to explain the primordial state of Universe. Actually the Universe originated with Big Bang from ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn* / Nothingness / Singularity) whereas our Solar System originated from a mass of gasses in our galaxy, The Milky Way. ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) has been interpreted as ‘Nothingness’ or ‘Singularity’, which has been explained as follows.

#### v) Sunn (ਸੁੰਨ) – Is It Nothingness?

LaFee [13] says: “The meaning of ‘Nothingness’ is a persistent philosophical conundrum, but it is also a matter of intense, if somewhat unrequited, scientific inquiry on both the largest and smallest of scales.” He further says: “More than 99 percent of atoms are empty space. The vast majority of the Universe appears to consist of something best described as nothing. It is space containing absolutely no recognizable matter: nothing solid, liquid or gas. Yet numerous astronomical studies indicate that something is out there, something unseen that exerts force and influence on a cosmic and quantum scale, binding both atoms and galaxies together.”

Then Kaup [11] defines ‘Nothingness’ as follows: “Nothingness Theory defines nonexistence as being the absence of existence, the absence of nothingness, and the absence of absence. It is what is not being referred-to under any circumstances. Nonexistence by definition is that which cannot be referred-to, named, or defined. So referring – to it in any way violates its strict definition. But this fundamental paradox is at the basis of Nothingness Theory and must be referred-to anyway. Despite it’s not being, absolute nonexistence exerts a detectable force. We have proven through simple logic that the Universe has and always will exist. Therefore, the Universe must have existed before the “Big Bang” and will exist forever. This also means that the state of nothingness from which the Universe burst into existence must have existed relative to absolute nonexistence given that absolute nonexistence is not achievable. So space/time – matter/energy can attain relative nonexistence by collapsing into infinite density, which is a uniform state of static equilibrium. Examples of

this state of relative nonexistence can be seen throughout the Universe in the form of ‘black holes’.”

‘Nothingness’ does not mean ‘without anything’. In fact the thing is there but it is in a so small volume that it appears to be ‘Nothingness’. **This ‘Nothingness’ as described by Kaup [11] actually is the pinnacle of perfectly symmetrical uniformity of matter, space, energy and time.** According to the ‘Big Bang Theory’ the energy was in such a small volume that has been termed as ‘Nothingness’ by some and as ‘Singularity’ by others.

**This ‘Nothingness’ was already termed as ਸੁੰਨ (*sunn*) by Guru Nanak during 15th century. It is also termed as ‘*Jyot*’ (highly condensed energy) by Guru Nanak.** The following discussion will further strengthen it.

#### vi) ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) in Nanakian Philosophy

According to Bhai Kahn Singh [24] ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) means empty, void, without consciousness. And Punjabi-English Dictionary [10] says: ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) means Nothingness, non-existence, emptiness, absolute silence, without thought and feeling. And ਸੁੰਨ ਮਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn masunn*) means dismal, desolate (solitary, lonely), deserted, uninhabited, eerie (causing a feeling of mystery). But I think that ਸੁੰਨ ਮਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn masunn*) is as the highest state of ‘Nothingness’.

Although the word ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) was known in the ancient philosophy, it was Guru Nanak who had explained ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) very logically. For example, during the discourse between Guru Nanak and the Siddhas, the Siddhas posed a number of questions about ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) to Guru Nanak (for details consult Siddh Gost in AGGS pp 938-946). A few questions posed by the Siddhas to Guru Nanak about ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) are as follows:

ਆਦਿ ਕਉ ਕਵਨੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਕਥੀਅਲੇ ਸੁੰਨ ਕਹਾ ਘਰ ਵਾਸੇ ॥

The Siddhas posed the question about ਆਦਿ (*Aad*) and ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn* – Nothingness) to Guru Nanak as follows:

*What do you think and say about Aad and where does the nothingness exist?*

AGGS, M 1, p 940.

Guru Nanak replied as follows:

ਆਦਿ ਕਉ ਬਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਕਥੀਅਲੇ ਸੁੰਨ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ ਲੀਆ ॥

*One can think and talk only in term of wonders about Aad. During this state of Aad the Nothingness was completely dwelling in Nothingness.*

AGGS, M 1, p 940.

ਆਦਿ (*Aad*) means the period before the time and space appeared after the Big Bang.

Now in the following verses Guru Nanak is talking that the ਸੁੰਨ (Sunn) is the Name (ਨਾਮ -Naam) of God, who is Flawless:

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੁੰਨ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਸੁੰਨ ਤਿਭਵਣ ਸੁੰਨ ਮਸੁੰਨੇ ॥  
ਚਉਥੇ ਸੁੰਨੇ ਜੋ ਨਹੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਤਾ ਕਉ ਪਾਪੁ ਨ ਪੁੰਨੇ ॥  
ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਸੁੰਨ ਕਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਭੋਉ ॥  
ਆਦਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦੇਉ ॥  
ਜੋ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਰਾਤਾ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋਈ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਬਿਧਾਤਾ ॥੫੧॥

*The Nothingness (God) is within and outside (means everywhere) and everywhere throughout the so-called mythical three worlds (Means everywhere); in short there is Nothingness (God) but only Nothingness (God). One, who knows the fourth dimension (time) of Nothingness (God), is not subject to virtue or vice. Everybody knows that Nothingness (God) is without flaws.*

*The One, who existed before the time and space appeared, is the Flawless.*

*They, who have understood that Nothingness is the Name of the Flawless (God); understand that One (God) is the Bounteous.*

AGGS, M 1, p 943.

### vii) Origin of ਸੁੰਨ (Sunn)

Now in the following verse Guru Nanak is talking about the origin of ਸੁੰਨ (Sunn):

ਸੁੰਨੇ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਅਨਹਤ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਕਹਾ ਤੇ ਹੋਈ ॥  
ਅਨਹਤ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਰਤੇ ਸੇ ਕੈਸੇ ॥  
ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੇ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਜੈਸੇ ॥  
ਓਇ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਮਰਹਿ ਨ ਆਵਹਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮਨੁ ਸਮਝਾਹਿ ॥੫੨॥

In the first four phrases Guru Nanak is saying that everyone talks about Sunn. But where did Sunn come from?

*Everyone speaks about the Nothingness.*

*How did Infinite Nothingness originated?*

*How can one understand the Infinite Nothingness?*

Then Guru Nanak answers it as follows:

*From which that (Nothingness) originated it becomes like that (Nothingness) again.*

Now in the last two phrases Guru Nanak is indicating that this Nothingness is God for him, Who does not take birth or dies as follows:

*That It (God) neither takes birth nor dies nor come into cycle of lives*

Finally, Guru Nanak advises that try to understand this God of Nanak:

*Oh Guru-oriented! Orientate your mind so you understand the above fact. 51.*

AGGS, M 1, p 943.

In the following phrase of the above Verse Guru Nanak is explaining that when Nothingness became the Universe after the Big Bang then it will go back to Nothingness again:

ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੇ ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਜੈਸੇ ॥

*From which that (Nothingness) originated it becomes like that (Nothingness) again.*

There is evidence that black hole is appearing in the center of our galaxy and possibly in other galaxies and these Black Holes will lead to the formation of Nothingness again.

In Raga Maru Sohlay Guru Nanak has explained that everything (elements, galaxies, stars, planets, moons, etc) in this Universe originated from ਸੁੰਨ (Sunn):

ਸੁੰਨ ਕਲਾ ਅਪਰੰਪਰਿ ਧਾਰੀ ॥

ਆਪਿ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰੀ ॥

ਆਪੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਉਪਾਇਦਾ ॥੧॥...

ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਚੰਦੁ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਗੈਣਾਰੇ ॥

ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਤਿਭਵਣ ਸਾਰੇ ॥

ਸੁੰਨੇ ਅਲਖ ਅਪਾਰ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਸੁੰਨੇ ਤਾੜੀ ਲਾਇਦਾ ॥੫॥...

ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁ ਸੁੰਨਹੁ ਪਰਗਾਸਾ ॥...੧੪॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: ੧, ਪੰਨੇ ੧੦੩੭-੧੦੩੮.

*The Nothingness (God) is the state beyond which there is nothing.*

*The Nothingness (God) is flawless and beyond which there is nothing.*

*The God is Nature and see that it originated from Nothingness.1...*

*The stars, planet, moons originated from Nothingness.*

*The Energy of that (God) pervades in the whole Universe (mythical three worlds)*

*The Ineffable, Infinite, without any flaw (God) originated from the Nothingness and is imbibed in the same Nothingness.5...*

*The five (all) elements have originated from Nothingness...14.*

AGGS, M 1, p 1037-1038.

### viii) God Originated by Itself

Guru Nanak now explains that God originated by Itself – the unique characteristic of God of Guru Nanak:

ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ ਸਾਜਿਓ ਆਪੀਨੈ ਰਚਿਓ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਦੁਯੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੋ ਚਾਉ ॥

ਦਾਤਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਤੂੰ ਤੁਸਿ ਦੇਵਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਪਸਾਉ ॥

*God came into existence by Itself (from Nothingness). And assumed Its own attributes by Itself.*

*Secondly, That God created Nature (Universe) and pervades in the Nature/Universe and pleases Itself by watching it.*

*Oh God! You Yourself are responsible for expansion and You are the Bounteous (Giver).*

AGGS, M 1, p 463.

The above translation is a little bit improved one of that is usually accepted by many Sikh theologians. However, it needs to be interpreted in the light of ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) described by Guru Nanak and scientists. Therefore, it means the God, the Nature (Universe), originated from *Sunn* (Nothingness) by Itself. It also means that ‘Nothingness’ is responsible for origin of everything. Therefore, this Nothingness (God) is bounteous since everything originated from it.

This phrase also explain the meanings of ਸੈਭੰ (*sebhang*) used by Guru Nanak to explain an attribute of origin of God by Itself in the Commencing Verse of the AGGS.

Guru Arjan has further strengthened the above philosophy of Guru Nanak that from Nothingness to Universe to Nothingness again and also about ‘Singularity’ as follows:

ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਰਿਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥

ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਇਕੁ ਏਕੰਕਾਰ ॥

*The Universe came into existence many times but that God is always as One and Only.*

*(Meaning Singularity to Universe and back to Singularity).*

AGGS, M 5, p 276.

The above discussion clearly indicates that the ‘Nothingness’ of scientist is ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn*) and the Logo, ੴ of Guru Nanak is ‘Singularity’ of scientists from which everything originated including the Laws of Universe/Nature. The Logo, ੴ, designed by Guru Nanak, is a representation of ‘Singularity’ which means ‘One and only’ with “Infinite amount of Energy”. For details consult Chapter 9 in Ref # 6.)

## 2. HUKM The laws of nature

The word ‘HUKM’ (ਹੁਕਮ = the basic word as spelled in *Gurmukhi Lipi*) has been used very extensively in the Gurbani, incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. ‘Hukm’ is an Arabic word [8], which means *command, edict, allow/permission*. According to Punjabi-English Dictionary [10], Bhai Kahn Singh [24], and Dr Gurcharan Singh [21] ‘Hukm’ means *order, command, decree, judgment, decision, sanction, God’s Will, and Divine Law*. And ‘Hukmi’ (ਹੁਕਮੀ) is also an Arabic word [8], which means *the one who orders*. In Punjabi it also means *the one in authority to issue ‘Hukm’(order or to allow permission*. Beside there is another word, ਰਜਾਈ, (*Rajayi*) very similar to ‘Hukm’. According to Bhai Kahn Singh [24] and Dr Gurcharan Singh [21] it means: *God, Will of God, One in authority to issue orders, satisfied, contented, furlough, and quilt*.

## ‘Hukm’ in Nanakian Philosophy

This word, ‘Hukm’ starts appearing on the very first page of the AGGS in the first stanza of JAP and it continues to appear again and again throughout the AGGS. It appears on the first page of the AGGS as follows:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

This phrase is in the form of two questions posed by Guru Nanak based on the subject discussed in stanza # 1 of JAP. These questions are:

- How to become ਸਚਿਆਰਾ (truthful)? And
- How to break the line (series) of lies (ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ)?

The answer to these questions has been given in the next phrase:

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

The above phrases have been interpreted by Principal Teja Singh [32] as follows:

ਫਿਰ ਸੱਚ ਵਾਲਾ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਹੋਈਏ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਅਤੇ ਰੱਬ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਕਾਰ ਜੋ ਝੂਠ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਟੁੱਟੇ ? ਇਸਦਾ ਸਾਧਨ ਕੇਵਲ ਇਹ ਹੈ : ਉਸ ਰਜਾ ਦੇ ਸਾਈਂ ਦੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਉਤੇ ਟੁਰਨਾ । ਹੇ ਨਾਨਕ ! ਉਹ ਹੁਕਮ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਹੀ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਹੈ ।

Its literal translation is as follows:

*“Then how can (we) be truthful and how can the wall of falsehood between us and God be broken? The method for this is only as follows: To walk on (follow) the Will of God. Hay Nanak! That order is written with us.”*

Almost same interpretation is found in many other translations (Sodhi Meharbaan, Dr Mohan Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Pandit Kartar Singh Dakha, Bhai Gulshan Rai, Giani Harbans Singh, and Vinoba Bhave) as reported by Dr Joginder Singh [23]. The word ਸਚਿਆਰਾ (*sachiara*) has been translated by them including Dr Joginder Singh [23] as ‘truthful’ and ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ (*kiv kuray tutay pal*) has been translated as ‘how to break the wall of falsehood between God and a person’. If we look into this phrase carefully there is no mention of ‘wall’; there is no mention of ‘between a person and God’; and there is no mention that ‘the order is written with us or on us’.

However, Prof Sahib Singh [30] interpreted it differently by keeping in view the critical analysis of the first phrase of this stanza where ਸੋਚੈ (*sochay*) has been interpreted as ‘cleansing of body’ to receive the order of God. Nevertheless, many scholars have interpreted ‘sochay’ as ‘thinking’ which does not connect to the reply to that question posed by Guru Nanak. Since ‘sochay’ means cleansing of body, Prof Sahib Singh interpreted the above phrase as follows:

(ਤਾਂ ਫਿਰ) ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦਾ ਪਰਕਾਸ਼ ਹੋਣ ਲਈ ਯੋਗ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਬਣ ਸਕੀਦਾ ਹੈ (ਅਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਦਾ) ਕੂੜ ਦਾ ਪਰਦਾ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਟੁੱਟ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ? ਰਜਾ ਦੇ

ਮਾਲਕ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਵਿਚ ਤੁਰਨਾ-(ਇਹੀ ਇਕ ਵਿਧੀ ਹੈ) । ਹੇ ਨਾਨਕ ! (ਇਹ ਵਿਧੀ) ਧੁਰ ਤੋਂ ਹੀ ਜਦ ਤੋਂ ਜਗਤ ਬਣਿਆ ਹੈ, ਲਿਖੀ ਚਲੀ ਆ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ॥੧॥

English Translation:

*(Then how) can one cleanse one's body to receive the enlightenment of God?*

*And how can (our inside veil) of lies/falsehood can be broken (removed).*

*To follow Order according to the Will of God is the only procedure.*

Hay Nanak!

*(This procedure) has been written right from the beginning when the universe was created.*

The above interpretation of Prof Sahib Singh is quite different from that of Principal Teja Singh and others. Then what is the right interpretation? Most appropriate interpretation can be achieved only if we can interpret the following phrase of stanza # 1 correctly:

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥

The word (*sochay*) has been interpreted as 'Thinking' by many scholars [20, 22, 23, 32, 34]. One has to be very careful to interpret this word, 'sochay' because this word has its direct bearing on the word 'sachiara'. If 'sochay' is taken as 'thinking' then 'sachiara' has no connection with the first part of stanza # 1 whether 'sachiara' means 'truthful' or 'purification of body/mind'. In this phrase 'sochay' has been taken as 'purifying oneself or one's mind': ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ॥

*One cannot purify oneself or one's mind or attain peace of mind by physical cleansing of body or by performing various rituals even if one cleans the body for hundreds of thousands of times.*

Linking the above theme, therefore, I have interpreted the last part of stanza # 1 as follows:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

Question:

*How can one achieve purification of body and of mind (achieve peace of mind)?*

*And how can one break through the line (series) of lies (the vicious circle)?*

Guru Nanak answers:

*Purification and peace of mind can be achieved and vicious circle can be broken by understanding and following the Laws of Nature, ordained right in the beginning of Universe.*

AGGS, Jap 1, p 1.

In the first stanza of JAP Guru Nanak is talking about the purification of mind, which is full of illusions and delusions built up by a series (line - ਪਾਲ) of lie after lie.

Once one understands the *Hukm* (Laws of Nature) then one can find the way to break the vicious circle (of

illusions and delusions) built on lie after lie. This is the method, which has been recommended by Guru Nanak to achieve purification of mind and to attain peace of mind.

#### a. Hukm as Laws of Nature

The word '*hukm*' used in the first Stanza of JAP has further been explained as Laws of Nature/Universe by Guru Nanak in the second stanza of JAP as follows:

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਆਕਾਰ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਜੀਅ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਉਤਮੁ ਨੀਚੁ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਦੁਖ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਈਅਹਿ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ਇਕਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਦਾ ਭਵਾਈਅਹਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥

*Everything is created according to the Laws of Nature, which cannot be said, how.*

*The life is created according to these laws and one gets respects (one's inherited characters) according to these laws.*

*According to one's inherited characteristics one becomes a good or evil person; and pains (problems) and pleasures are happening according to these laws.*

*According to these laws one is free from troubles with one's good actions; and one is entrapped into the vicious circle with one's wrong actions.*

Nanak says:

*Everything is in interiority of the Laws of Nature,*

*Nothing is in exteriority of the laws of Nature.*

*If one can realize the above fact of Laws of Nature,*

*Then one can get rid of egoism/egotism.*

AGGS, Jap 2, p 1.

In this stanza of JAP Guru Nanak has confirmed that '*Hukm*' is the order/law (Laws of Nature). He further emphasizes that every action and reaction (process) or anything that is happening in this universe and in all the living beings are governed under the Laws of Nature. Consequently, nothing can happen outside of these laws. Therefore, '*Hukm*' means 'Laws of Nature' (also called 'Laws of Universe').

It is generally accepted that our universe came into existence according to the Big Bang theory. Immediately after the Big Bang the laws of Nature/Universe originated. Now every action in the whole Universe is going on under these laws. Guru Nanak has explained this phenomenon very simply in the following verse:

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਵਣੁ ਵਹੈ ਸਦਵਾਉ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਕਢੈ ਵੇਗਾਰਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਦਬੀ ਭਾਰਿ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਇੰਦੁ ਫਿਰੈ ਸਿਰ ਭਾਰਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਾਜਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚੰਦੁ ॥ ਕੋਹ ਕਰੋੜੀ ਚਲਤ ਨ ਅੰਤੁ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਿਧ ਬੁਧ ਸੁਰ ਨਾਥ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਡਾਣੇ ਆਕਾਸੁ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੋਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵਹਿ ਜਾਵਹਿ ਪੂਰ ॥

ਸਗਲਿਆ ਭਉ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਸਿਰਿ ਲੇਖੁ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਸਚੁ ਏਕੁ ॥੧॥

**Note:**

‘ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ’ has been interpreted as ‘in fear of God’ by the following prominent theologians:

Dr Sant Singh Khalsa: in the fear of God...

Dr Manmohan Singh: in Lord’s fear...

Dr Gopal Singh: in (Lord’s Fear)...

Talib: in fear of the Lord...

Faridkoti Teeka = in Fear of Akal Purakh...

Prof Sahib Singh = in fear of Rabb...

Giani Harbans Singh = in fear of Akal Purakh...

However, keeping in view the main theme of this verse and the previous verse ‘ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ’ has been interpreted as the metaphor for ‘Laws of Nature/Universe’.

“Under the Laws of Nature/Universe, air always blows; hundreds of thousands rivers flow; the energy performs different works; earth moves; clouds move; and the so-called Dharm Raaj (birth and death) is under the laws; sun and moon (planets) are moving tens of millions of miles; Sidd, Budh, Sur Naath; the sky; the soldiers and strongest warriors; groups; appear and disappear. Everybody and everything (the whole world) is under the Laws of Universe.”

Nanak says:

“Only the One, That is without any form, is not under anybody’s control (nirbhaou) and exists forever.

AGGS, M 1, p 464.

In the following verse Guru Amardas summarizes the origin of Universe according to Nanakian Philosophy under the Laws of Nature/ Universe as follows:

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਹਜੇ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਉਪਾਈ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਅਪਣੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਆਪੇ ਕਰੇ ਕਰਾਏ ਆਪੇ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਈ ਹੇ ॥੧॥

*It (the God) created easily the Universe according to Its laws (Laws of the Nature).*

*It creates and then watches Its own power of creation.*

*It works by Itself and makes the others to work under these laws,*

*And It pervades in Its Own laws (Laws of Nature).*

AGGS, M 3, p 1043.

ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਾਏ ਕਰੇ ਆਪਿ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਵਾਰਣਹਾਰਾ ॥੨॥

Nanak Says:

*God Itself acts, and causes others to act according to these Laws of Nature to improve oneself to be exalted.*

AGGS, M 1, p 141.

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਆਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਆਗੈ ਪਾਛੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥੨॥

*Everything appears and disappears according to the Laws of Nature.*

*These laws prevailed in the past and will prevail in the Future.*

AGGS, M 1, p 151.

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਪਾਈਐ ॥੨॥

*The Authority on laws, the God, is pleased to find that the Laws of Nature work as have been ordained.*

AGGS, M 1, p 418.

ਢਾਹੇ ਢਾਹਿ ਉਸਾਰੇ ਆਪੇ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਵਾਰਣਹਾਰੇ ॥

*(God) destroys, and having destroyed, creates according to the Laws of Nature.*

AGGS, M 1, p 579.

ਆਪਿ ਅਲੇਖੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਸੋਈ ਜੀਉ ॥

*Only God is Infinite, the Nature; and watches that Laws of Nature prevail everywhere.*

AGGS, M 1, p 598.

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਆਇਆ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਵਾਰਣਹਾਰਾ ॥

*One came into this world according to the Laws of Nature but does not try to understand that one is developing and progressing according to these laws.*

AGGS, M 1, p 688.

**b. Hukm Rajayi (ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ)**

When ‘Hukm’ and ‘Rajayi’ appear together that means “to follow the Laws of Nature”:

ਚਾਲਹਿ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ॥

*The Guru-oriented follows the Laws of Nature.*

AGGS, M 1, p 227.

ਤਾ ਕਉ ਬਿਘਨੁ ਨ ਲਾਗਈ ਚਲੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ॥੩॥

*No misfortune troubles the one, who follows the Laws of Nature.*

AGGS, M 1, p 421.

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਜੋ ਚਲੈ ਸੋ ਪਵੈ ਖਜਾਨੈ ॥

*The one who follows the Laws of Nature will be accepted in the treasury of God (means accepted as a good person).*

AGGS, M 1, p 421.

The most important message of Guru Nanak, to be noted in our above discussion, is that whatever is required to be done is done only under these Laws of Nature. Therefore, there is no chance of performance of any miracle by anybody on this earth since what has to be done is to be done under these laws. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of readers the realization of Robert Nola [37]:

*“...even though people can break moral and legal laws, it is not open to nature to break the laws of nature.*

***There seems to be a kind of necessity to the laws of nature that prevents nature from breaking its own laws.”***

Carl Sagan has equated Laws of the Universe as God:  
 “... if by ‘God’ one means the set of physical laws that govern the Universe, then clearly there is such God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying... it does not make much sense to pray the law of gravity.”  
 (Dawkin, Richard. 2006. The God Delusion. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, p 19.)

It means even the Nature (the God) cannot break its own laws. In this respect, Walter Isaacson [9] reported the views of Einstein that science could not accept a deity who could meddle at whim in the events of his creation. Einstein says:  
***“The main source of the present-day conflict between the spheres of religion and of science lies in this concept of a personal God.”***

Isaacson [9] further reported that:  
*“For some people, miracles serve as the evidence of God’s existence. For Einstein it was absence of miracle that reflected divine providence. The fact that the world was comprehensible, that it followed laws, was worthy of awe.”*

Einstein writes about scientists [9]:  
***“Scientists aim to uncover the immutable laws that govern reality, and in doing so they must reject the notion that divine will, or for that matter human will, plays a role that would violate this cosmic causality.”***

I would ask readers to visualize the above discussion. Is it not that what Einstein (1879-1955) and other scientists are saying has been said by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) more than 410 years before Einstein in his Bani. The irony is that it is difficult for some Sikh theologians, who are under heavy burden of ancient and Vedantic philosophy and constrained by its parameters, to accept this fact that the nature cannot break its own laws to perform miracles for any god or deity or spiritual person. Any so-called miracle is the delusion of the mind, i.e. ignorance fostered by dust of accumulated falsehood, distorting reality. Guru Nanak explains more about *Hukm* as follows:

### **c. God is *Hukm* (Law)**

According to Nanakian Philosophy God Itself is *Hukm* (Law):

ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇਓ ਜੀਉ ॥੫॥

*The One, God, is the Law (Laws of Nature), the True Guru has given me this understanding.*

AGGS, M 1, p 72.

Here Guru Nanak has equated the Laws of Nature as ‘God’ - ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ

### **d. God’s Subject (ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬੰਦਾ)**

Finally, I would like to conclude with the following remarks of Guru Amardas and Guru Arjan that a person who tries to understand and follows the Laws of Nature is called God’s subject (*Hukmi Banda*):

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬੰਦਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਕਢਦਾ ਸਾਹਾ ਹੇ ॥

Guru Amardas says:

*The one who understands and abides by the Laws of Nature is the God’s subject.*

AGGS, M 3, p 1054.

ਪਿਰਿ ਕਰਿਆ ਹਉ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬੰਦਾ ॥

Guru Arjan says:

*I am a God’s subject to understand and follow the Laws of Nature as ordained by God.*

AGGS, M 5, p 1073.

As explained above by the Gurus a scientist can be considered as a “*Hukmi Banda*” (God’s subject), who discovers the Laws of Nature/Universe (Orderliness) and uses them for the welfare of humanity as quoted by Einstein:

***Scientists were rated as great heretics by the church, but they were truly religious men because of their faith in the orderliness of the universe.***

In another statement Einstein says about the universal orderliness and his belief in it as follows:


***If something is in me, which can be called religious, then it is the unbounded admiration for the structure of the world so far as our science can reveal it.***

It appears from the above discussion on *Hukm* – The Laws of Nature/Universe - has been equated to God by Guru Nanak and scientists. Previously God has been equated to ਸੁੰਨ (*Sunn* – Nothingness) and ੴ as ‘One and Only Infinite’ – Singularity – Infinite amount of Energy highly concentrated into a single invisible point. And the man and the scientist who study Laws of Nature/Universe and obey these laws is called ‘*Hukmi Banda*’

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- The critical analysis of Sikh literature indicates that the philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani has not been understood in its real perspective even after 540 years.
- Most of the available Sikh literature leads us to believe that Nanakian Philosophy is not different than that of Vedantic philosophy. However, the current study indicates that Nanakian Philosophy is original and unique and has nothing to do with other religions.
- Nanak is the Guru as accepted by the Sikh Gurus who

succeeded to the ‘House of Nanak’.

- The critical analysis of philosophy of Guru Nanak embodied in his Bani about ‘Origin of Universe’ indicates that it is very close to that of current scientific theories.
- The ਸੁੰਨ (SUNN) of Guru Nanak is very similar to that of ‘Nothingness’ and/or ‘Singularity’ of scientists. Guru Nanak equates God to SUNN, ‘Nothingness’ as described by scientists; and God as  (One and Only Infinite) to ‘Singularity’ as described by scientists.
- ਹੁਕਮ (Hukm) has been equated to Laws of Nature/ Universe by Guru Nanak.
- Every action and reaction in this Universe and in every living being is going on according to these *Hukms*.
- Nobody can change these *Hukms*.
- God has been equated to *Hukm*.
- A man or a scientist who obeys *Hukm* – the Laws of Nature/Universe is called as ‘*Hukmi Banda*’ in Nanakian Philosophy.
- Finally, it can be concluded that Nanakian Philosophy is quite original and unique as is evident from discussion on two topics: Origin of Universe and *Hukm* – The Laws of Nature/Universe.

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