

ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC SEARCH AND INTERPRETATION IN GURBANI

Avtar S. Dhaliwal

ABSTRACT

To comprehend the Truth in Gurbani written and promulgated by Guru Nanak, one has to compare the results of preconceived opinions of the 'Unknown' by historical interpreters based on Theology against the scientific approach appreciated and adapted by Guru Nanak himself and the succeeding Guru Sahiban. They applied all evidence including religious literatures and praxis in search of the truth and realized that ultimate explanation of reality lies in accepting the freedom of natural phenomena and living by abiding it. This article is an attempt to comprehend role of scientific search and interpretation in the Gurbani.

INTRODUCTION

Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhi(sm) (1469-1539 CE), was divinely inspired, well educated, extensively travelled person that had realized 'TRUTH' in the Creator and the natural phenomena at very young age. From his writings (incorporated in Aad Guru Granth Sahib-AGGS[1] the Holy Scripture, it becomes obvious that through discourses, discussions and observation of praxis in various religions, he discovered religious mentors deluged with EGO (*haumae* ਹਉਮੈ), promulgating nothing more than chaos by indulging in self serving gains. He critically reviewed the available literature and religious praxis of Indic origin, as well as Islam injected into India and established by Islamic invaders from the Middle East; and, found that there was lack of Truth in understanding ultimate Reality.

THE GOD

The humanity in India searching the truth was kept in the dark by misguided religious mentors having their belief in miraculous stories about the human forms of the God known as 'doer all, judgmental, punisher, vengeful, and benevolent to favorite devotees, mostly belonging to the preaching class'. Knowing that the

humanity, in general has the capacity to be deceived or deceives itself by believing in anything but the truth; most religious authorities with their clever, but often abstruse meanings have been shielding ancient interpretations of the Reality from the humanity. They have been promulgating presence of fearful and judgmental God in the very midst of human ignorance, doubts, fears, and sinfulness; in other words, many of the superfluous and superstitious beliefs that Guru Nanak and the succeeding Sikh Gurus did not approve. That is why Gurbani recommends application of scientific critical analysis (*Bibek Budhi*) in evaluating "historical theology" and false promulgation of religious ethos. *The Gurbani written by Guru Nanak promulgates the GOD-ONE IN ALL; truthful, loving and caring that is beyond time and space, fearless, inimical, unborn, and never anthropomorphic.*

The human realities of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) are surely essential for our ability to identify with and own, the faith that it embodies. As promoted by the Gurus, the Gurbani has essential clues for us to learn how we might discover God's presence in the midst of our own fears and foolishness. Guru Nanak wrote:

Avtar S. Dhaliwal, MD. 14 Points West Dr., Asheville, NC 28804, Email: guravtarji@yahoo.com

ਏਕਮ¹ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ² ਨਿਰਾਲਾ³ ॥

ਅਮਰੁ⁴ ਅਜੇਨੀ⁵ ਜਾਤਿ⁶ ਨ ਜਾਲਾ ॥

ਅਗਮ⁷ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ⁸ ਰੂਪੁ⁹ ਨ ਰੇਖਿਆ¹⁰ ॥

ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਤ¹¹ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ¹² ਦੇਖਿਆ¹³ ॥

ਜੇ ਦੇਖਿ ਦਿਖਾਵੈ¹⁴ ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਬਲਿ¹⁵ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦਿ¹⁶ ਪਰਮ¹⁷ ਪਦੁ¹⁸ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 838.

First of ALL¹, The One Universal Creator² is unique³, Immortal⁴, unborn⁵, beyond social class⁶ or involvement;

He is inaccessible⁷ and unfathomable⁸, with no form⁹ or feature¹⁰

Searching¹¹, critically¹¹, I have realized¹² the God in each and every aspect¹³ of creation.

I am a sacrifice¹⁵ to one who realizes¹⁴ and inspires others to do the same.

By Guru's Grace¹⁶, I have obtained the supreme¹⁷ bliss¹⁸. ॥1॥

AGGS, M 1, p 838.

From the foregoing quotation, Guru Nanak is clearly promulgating pervasiveness of the God in all aspects of the nature and natural phenomena and that includes humanity as well. The spiritual influence and teaching of AGGS is of crucial importance with respect to the role it plays in our learning of the discoveries of science and how it relates to the challenges of truthful living.

Guru Nanak, comprehending vagaries prevailing among the religious praxis of his time, and felt need for logical and scientific analytical methods and searchers for realization of the Ultimate Realty, he wrote:

ਸਾਚੀ^੧ ਸੁਰਤਿ^੨ ਨਾਮਿ^੩ ਨਹੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੋ^੪ ਰਉਮੈ^੫ ਕਰਤ ਗਵਾਇਆ^੬ ॥

ਪਰ^੭ ਧਨ^੮ ਪਰ ਨਾਰੀ^੯ ਰਤੁ ਨਿੰਦਾ^{੧੦} ਬਿਖੁ^{੧੧} ਖਾਈ^{੧੨} ਦੁਖੁ^{੧੩}

ਪਾਇਆ^{੧੪} ॥

ਸੇਵਾ^{੧੫} ਸੁਰਤਿ^{੧੬} ਰਹਸਿ^{੧੭} ਗੁਣ^{੧੮} ਗਵਾ^{੧੯} ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ^{੨੦} ਗਿਆਨੁ^{੨੧}

ਬੀਚਾਰਾ^{੨੨} ॥

ਖੋਜੀ^{੨੩} ਉਪਜੈ^{੨੪} ਬਾਦੀ^{੨੫} ਬਿਨਸੈ^{੨੬} ਰਉ^{੨੭} ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ^{੨੮} ਗੁਰ

ਕਰਤਾਰਾ^{੨੯} ॥

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1255

They are not satisfied⁴ by the truthful¹ realization³ of Naam;

although, they pretend to understand the Truth; and, waste⁶ their lives in egotism⁵.

By indulging in slander¹⁰ and attachment to the wealth⁸ and women⁹ of others⁷,

they are involved¹² in wrongful¹¹ deeds and suffer¹⁴ in

pain¹³.

By critical analysis and contemplating in spiritual wisdom²¹, a Gurmukh²⁰, focuses¹⁷ awareness on selfless¹⁵ service, and joyfully reflects¹⁹ on attributes¹⁸ of the God.

The researcher²³ '(ਖੋਜੀ)' comes forth²⁴, and the debater²⁵ (argumentative statements of Vedas and Vedantic praxis) dies²⁶ down;

I, ²⁷ sacrificing²⁸ myself, admire the graceful blessings of the GOD²⁹.

AGGS, M 1, p 1255.

The significant word applied here is 'ਖੋਜੀ - khoji' the 'researcher' that is appreciated and learns the ultimate truth. Because, the researcher holding faith in the teaching of Guru Nanak applies "Bibek Budhi" discriminative intellect to critically and closely analyze each word in AGGS, describing scientific and logical ways of the natural phenomena and application to the humanity. Exposing falsity of iniquitous religious praxis and the leaders/mentors of the time, Guru Nanak wrote:

ਕੁਤੁ¹ ਬੋਲਿ² ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ³ ਖਾਇ⁴ ॥

ਅਵਰੀ⁵ ਨੇ ਸਮਝਾਵਣਿ⁶ ਜਾਇ⁷ ॥

ਮੁਠਾ⁸ ਆਪਿ⁹ ਮੁਹਾਏ¹⁰ ਸਾਥੈ¹¹ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਐਸਾ¹² ਆਗੂ¹³ ਜਾਪੈ¹⁴ ॥੧॥

ਅਗਰਾਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 139-140

While telling² lies¹, and eating⁴ others³ share, (ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ^੩ ਹਰਾਮ, ਪਰਾਇਆ ਹੱਕ).

And yet, they go⁷ out to preach⁶ others⁵.

Themselves⁹, living in deception⁸, they deceive¹⁰ their adherents¹¹ as well.

Nanak says:

Such¹² seem¹⁴ to be the religious leaders/mentors¹³. ॥1॥

AGGS, M 1, p 139-140

It can be clearly understood that in the Gurbani narrated and written, there are very sound statements relating to the TRUTH about the God and ITS creation. The Ultimate Reality, according to Guru Nanak, is to be understood without any mythological miraculous stories created by humans.

PREVAILING BRAHMANISM INDIA (15TH-16TH CENTURY)

To maintain authoritative supremacy over the lower castes, the upper class Brahmins were actively engaged in controlling their powers in learning, knowledge, purity, forbearance, status, and piety; they applied severe social controls in ethical traits to isolate themselves from the lower castes [2]. According to Sloka 30/1st [2]. "As at the change of the seasons each season of its own accord assumes its distinctive marks, even so corporeal beings (resume in new births) their (appointed) course of

action. 31. But for the sake of prosperity of the worlds He caused the Brahmans, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and from his feet. 32. Dividing his own body, the Lord became half male and half female; with that female he produced Virag. Calling upon the supernatural phenomena, the Brahmans took advantage of developing all kinds of Vedic and Vedantic philosophical laws to impress upon gullible people of India that their births in low castes are pre-ordained. 98. The very birth of a Brahman is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he is born to (fulfill) the sacred law and becomes one with Brahman. 99. A Brahman coming into existence, is born as the highest on earth, the Lord of all created beings, for the protection of the treasury of the law. 100. Whatever exists in the world is, the property of the Brahman; on account of the excellence of his origin The Brahman is, indeed entitled to all. 101. The Brahman eats but his own food, wears but his own apparel. Bestows but his own in alms; other mortals subsist through the benevolence of the Brahmans."

Challenging Brahmanic Practices

The Slokas of Manu Simiritis (30-32, 98-101) mentioned in the earlier description prompted Bhagat Kabir to express logical and scientific reasoning in challenging the supermacy promulgated by the Vedantic philosophy of high caste Brahmans, when he wrote:

ਗਉੜੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀ ॥

ਗਰਭਾ ਵਾਸਾ ਮਹਿ ਕੁਲੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਤੀ ॥

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਉਤਪਾਤੀ ॥੧॥

ਕਰੁ ਰੇ ਪੰਡਿਤਾ ਬਾਮਨਾ ਕਬਾ ਕੇ ਹੋਏ ॥

ਬਾਮਨ ਕਹਿ ਕਹਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਮਤ ਖੋਏ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਜੋ ਤੂੰ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਣੀ ਜਾਇਆ ॥

ਤਉ ਆਨ ਬਾਟ ਕਾਰੇ ਨਹੀ ਆਇਆ ॥੨॥

ਤੁਮ ਕਤ ਕਤ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣ ਹਮ ਕਤ ਸੂਦ ॥੩॥

ਹਮ ਕਤ ਲੇਹੁ ਤੁਮ ਕਤ ਦੂਧ ॥੩॥

ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥

ਸੇ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਕਹੀਅਤੁ ਹੈ ਹਮਾਰੈ ॥੪॥੧॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਕਬੀਰ, ਪੰਨਾ 324.

In the dwelling² of the womb¹, there is no ancestry³ or caste system⁴.

All⁵ have originated⁸ in the natural phenomena from Seed⁶ of the God⁵. ||1||

Tell⁹ me, O Pandit¹⁰, (practicing Brahman): since when¹² have you been¹³ a Bahmin¹¹?

(Considering Brahmanic claim of Manu Simiriti 1, 99-100).

Don't¹⁶ waste¹⁷ your life¹⁵ by continually claiming¹⁴ to be a Bahmin. ||1||Pause||

If¹⁸ you¹⁹ claim to be Brahmin because of being delivered by Brahmini mother²⁰, then²², why²⁵ didn't you come²⁶ by some²³ other way²⁴ than the normal anatomic route? ||2|| How²⁸ is it that you²⁷ are a Brahmin, and I²⁹ am of a low caste Shuder³⁰ (untouchables)? How is it that I am formed of blood³¹, and you are made of milk³²? ||3||

Says³³ Kabir:

One who contemplates³⁵ upon God³⁴, is said³⁶ to be a Brahmin among us. ||4||7||

AGGS, Kabir, p 324

There is no mythical, mystical, or revelatory element in the foregoing Sabd of Bhagat Kabir; instead, he applied logical and scientific approach in challenging Brahmanic/Vedic and Vedantic supermacy and expressed nature, natural phenomena, and equality in every human being born on this earth. Because of such realistic and logical philosophy aligned with the Guru Nanak's philosophy; his writings were considered worthy of incorporation in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

There are several Sabds written by Guru Nanak regarding superstitious traits promulgated and practiced by Brahmans. For example, the moral trait of keeping everything in its pure form by practicing puritanical approach; he analyzed the popular 'polluting-trait-' practices promoted by Vedantic philosophy, by writing the following:

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਰਾਗੀ ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਵੇਦੀ ॥

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਚੰਦ ਸੂਰਜ ਕੀ ਭੇਦੀ ॥

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਅੰਨੀ ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਨਾਈ ॥

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਮੀਹੁ ਵਰਿਐ ਸਭ ਥਾਈ ॥

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਧਰਤੀ ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

ਜੂਠਿ ਨ ਪਉਣੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਸਮਾਈ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਗੁਰਿਆ ਗੁਣ ਨਾਚੀ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਮੁਹਿ ਫੇਰਿ ਮੁਹੁ ਜੂਠਾ ਹੋਇ ॥੧॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ ੧੨੪੦.

Music² cannot be polluted¹; knowledge³ cannot be polluted either.

The mystery⁶ (natural phenomena) of Sun⁵ and Moon⁴ cannot be polluted.

(By mere touching), food⁷ cannot be polluted; impurity does not come from ritual⁸ cleansing baths.

Impurity does not come from the rain⁹, which falls¹⁰ every¹¹ where¹².

Impurity does not come from the Earth¹³; impurity does not come from the water¹⁴.

Impurity does not come from the air¹⁵ which is diffused¹⁶ everywhere.

Nanak says:

The one without¹⁷ the Guru, has no¹⁹ redeeming virtues¹⁸ at all²⁰.

Impurity²⁵ comes from turning²² one's face²¹ away from God. ||1||

AGGS, M 1, p 1240.

GOD AND GOD'S WORD

It all depends upon the concept and interpretation of the God and the nature/creation that the "WORDS" are conceived and applied by humans to designate God with their desired attributes. None other than the human claims the 'word' originated from/with the God; thus the 'word' is God, a popular belief being promulgated by almost every religious and non-religious mentor. **It does not matter how high or how deep religious authorities wish to heap admiration upon the God for "The Word and divinity"; when critically analyzed, it all comes to originate from human mind.** Guru Nanak, in the following Sabd explicates the concept of God when he wrote:

ਤੂ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ¹ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ² ਜੋਨਿ³ ਨ ਆਵਹੀ⁴ ॥

ਤੂ ਹੁਕਮੀ⁵ ਸਾਜਰਿ⁶ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ⁷ ਸਾਜਿ⁸ ਸਮਾਵਹੀ⁹ ॥

ਤੇਰਾ¹⁰ ਰੂਪੁ¹¹ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ¹² ਕਿਉ ਤੁਝਹਿ¹³ ਧਿਆਵਹੀ ॥

ਤੂ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ¹⁴ ਵਰਤਹਿ¹⁵ ਆਪਿ¹⁶ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ¹⁷ ਦੇਖਾਵਹੀ¹⁸ ॥

ਤੇਰੀ¹⁹ ਭਗਤਿ²⁰ ਭਰੋ²¹ ਭੰਡਾਰ²² ਤੇਰਿ²³ ਨ ਆਵਹੀ ॥

ਏਹਿ ਰਤਨ²⁴ ਜਵੇਹਰ²⁵ ਲਾਲ²⁶ ਕੀਮ²⁷ ਨ ਪਾਵਹੀ²⁸ ॥

ਜਿਸੁ ਹੋਵਹਿ²⁹ ਆਪਿ³⁰ ਦਇਆਲੁ³¹ ਤਿਸੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ³² ਸੇਵ³³

ਲਾਵਹੀ³⁴ ॥

ਤਿਸੁ³⁵ ਕਦੇ³⁶ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਤੇਰਿ³⁷ ਜੇ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਹੀ³⁸ ॥੩॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 5, ਪੰਨਾ 1095.

*O Supreme¹ Akal Purakh², being Transcendent, **You do not take⁴ birth³.***

By the Hukam⁵ (universal laws), the Universe/ Earths⁷ are formed⁶;

by forming⁸ these, You merge⁹ into them.

Your¹⁰ Form¹¹ cannot be known¹²; how can one contemplate¹³ on you?

You¹⁶ are pervading¹⁴ and permeating¹⁵ all nature¹⁷;

You Yourself reveal¹⁸ Your creative potency¹⁷ through the nature.

Your¹⁹ treasures²² of devotional²⁰ worship are overflowing²¹; they never decrease²³.

These gems²⁴, jewels²⁵ and diamonds²⁶ - their value²⁷ cannot be estimated²⁸.

The blessed²⁹ one with your³⁰ mercy³¹ is linked³⁴ to the service³³ of the True Guru³².

One who sings³⁷ the Glorious Praises of the Akal Purakh,

one³⁴ never³⁵ suffers any deficiency³⁶. ||3||

AGGS, M 5, p 1095.

It becomes clear from the forgoing Sabd that concept of the God according to Gurbani is not the same as the traditional religions promote. Since, the God is an unknown, indescribable, unfathomable Entity that is permeated throughout the nature; IT can only be realized through the natural phenomena. Even though the Earth is a miniscule blue dot in the Milky Way Galaxy and humanity is known to exist here; it has abundance of everything for human sustenance, so long as Hukam (the universal laws ministering natural phenomena) is accepted and obeyed. The sad reality in religious history is that humans employ their own ideologies, desires, needs, and fears in evolving the concept of a God that is an angry, vengeful, judgmental, discriminative, self serving, seeking self admiration and praise for everything created in the natural phenomena; and, want to use God as an ALL-DOER.

WAS GURU NANAK, A SCIENTIST?

In the literal human understanding, the answer to this question is NO; Guru Nanak was not a scientist. He was well educated, experienced, effective creative thinker, a natural philosopher that had divine inspiration to promulgate the Truth of the Creator, Nature and natural phenomena. Contrary to popular belief, miraculous stories linked to his biography are neither true nor he believed in any such happenings. From his narratives, it becomes obvious that he analyzed human mind, soul and nature with scientific principles, not only with objective point of view but subjective aspect as well, to understand true nature of the ultimate reality. The logical and critical analysis will reveal that every religion, scientific explorations, and metaphysical systems have originated from human mind.

Guru Nanak's teaching reflects not only the knowledge of earthly existence of humanity but also the nature of Cosmos and the Universe. Guru Nanak wrote:

ਜੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡਿ¹ ਖੰਡਿ² ਸੇ ਜਾਣਹੁ³ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ⁴ ਬੁਝਹੁ⁵ ਸਬਦਿ⁶ ਪਛਾਣਹੁ⁷ ॥

ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ⁸ ਭੇਰੇ⁹ ਭੇਗਣਹਾਰ¹⁰ ਰਹੈ ਅਤੀਤੁ¹¹ ਸਬਾਇਆ¹² ॥੧੪॥

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 1041.

Know⁴ the One¹ who pervades all the realms³ of the Universe².

As Gurmukh⁵, understand⁶ and realize⁸ the Sabd⁷.

The Enjoyer¹¹ enjoys¹⁰ each and every aspect⁹, and yet He remains detached¹² from all¹³. ||14||

AGGS, M 1, p 1041.

According to Guru Nanak and the succeeding Sikh Guru Sahiban, human is provided the opportunity to explore, understand, introspect-internalize, and realize the knowledge about itself and its relation with the Nature. In 1962, Pearl S. Buck of Pennsylvania, a noble laureate

in literature was presented with an English translation of Aad Guru Granth Sahib done by Dr Gopal Singh [4]. She studied 4 volumes of the Holy Scripture like a gemologist, and in her communiqué with Dr Gopal Singh, she wrote:

"They (the Holy Scripture AGGS-translated volumes) speak for the human heart and searching mind. One wonders what might have been produced if the ten founders of the Sikh religion had been acquainted with the findings of modern science. Where would their quest for knowledge have led them had science been their means instead of religion?"

CONCLUSION

To comprehend the true nature of gems, a gemologist not only performs analysis of cut gemstones rather scientifically understands the atomic structure and identifies its origin as it is a major factor in valuing natural and cut stones[3]. The Gurbani written by Guru Nanak and others incorporated in AGGS demands an urgent need for logical and scientific search for interpretation, to help educated masses comprehend the real Truth. Most of Guru Nanak's Bani, deals with an inquiry into prevalent concepts of the God, nature, and the natural phenomena; provides logical and scientific explanation, and resolve to the Ultimate Reality. Such rational and honest inquiry makes his Bani, a philosophic examination of basic concepts of Truth and existence within phenomenal nature.

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