

# RENAISSANCE OF SIKHI

EDITORIAL

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Guru Nanak (1469-1539) laid the foundation of *Sikhi* (philosophy) during the *Period of Renaissance* (between 14<sup>th</sup> century and 17<sup>th</sup> century). It was the time, when many scientists were challenging some of the wrong axioms of the Church in Europe. At the same time, Guru Nanak was busy in opposing the ancient mythology and rituals, which were prevalent among the peoples of South Asia. These people were shackled by these outdated ideas for centuries. Thereby they were unable to express their free will in any way as their lives were controlled by their religious mentors. During this *Period of Renaissance*, in Europe, **Nicolaus Copernicus** (1473-1543), a contemporary of Guru Nanak, rejected the axioms of the Bible that Sun revolves around the Earth and the Earth is the center of the Universe. Based on his astronomical observations, he asserted that the Earth is not the center of the Universe, rather it revolves around the Sun. Thereafter, **Galileo Galilei** (1564–1642), on the basis of his experiments, proclaimed that it is the Earth that revolves around the Sun and it is not the center of the Universe.

In 1633, Galileo was imprisoned for life, for his challenging the axioms of the church that Earth is the center of the Universe and Sun revolves around the Earth. Since the truth is eternal, it cannot be kept concealed forever. Easterbrook [1] had reported that the church has finally accepted the truth of those persons. In 1758, Church lifted the ban on most works supporting Copernican theory, and by 1835 dropped its opposition to heliocentrism altogether. In 1992, Pope John Paul II expressed regret about how the Galileo affair was handled. Galileo's contribution to our understanding of

the universe was significant not only in his discoveries but in the methods he developed and the use of mathematics to prove them. He played a major role in the scientific revolution and, deservedly so, earned the moniker "The Father of Modern Science." [2, 3]

*Martin Luther (1483-1546), another contemporary of Guru Nanak, believed in anthropomorphism in Christianity. He was an important figure in the great rebellions against the Catholic Church of Rome. Over the centuries, the Church became corrupt and lived more like worldly kings than spiritual leaders. The most controversial fundraising technique of the Church was to sell certificates called "indulgences" to churchgoers, which would allegedly reduce the time that they or a loved one would have to spend repenting in purgatory before gaining entrance into heaven. Luther was fed up with corruption in the Roman Church. When he disseminated his 95 Theses throughout Europe, the Church ordered him to recant his position, but he refused. In January 1521, Martin Luther was officially excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. His followers are called "Protestant Christians". [4, 5]*

While in Europe, those who spoke the truth was either banned to publish it or were excommunicated, but fortunately, Guru Nanak, the greatest rebel of the South Asian and the Middle Eastern religions, was spared this fate. However, there is a folk tale that when he was about nine 9 years of age, a Brahman was called for janeu ceremony. When the Brahman wanted to put janeu on Nanak to initiate him into Hinduism, whereupon he becomes the disciple and Brahman becomes his Guru, and as per religious code, from that day Nanak has to consult Brahman to

initiate any task of his life. This system, which would lead him to be shackled in rituals of Hinduism, was not acceptable to Nanak. He was aware that it will never allow him to be a freethinker. Thereafter, he wrote verses (bani), against *Janeu* and in favor of SABD as his GURU. Nevertheless, when Nanak refused to wear *janeu*, Brahman was furious and so was his father and all relatives invited to the ceremony. His father was worried about his rebellious nature against Hinduism and he was punished by sending him to his sister at Sultanpur Lodhi, away from parents. At the age of about 15, he was helped by his brother-in-law, Jai Ram, to get a job at *Modikhana* (store of the Government). He performed his job efficiently, diligently and sincerely. It is not known that how much he learned from Muslim religious leaders while staying at Sultanpur Lodhi, the Center of Islamic Government. However, around 1499, he left for long voyages throughout India and the Middle East. After his return from the Middle East voyage, he settled with his family at Kartarpur in 1521, where he finalized his SIKHI (philosophy) and started preaching it. The bani (hymns, philosophy) of Guru Nanak is original, as it is independent of any other philosophy. It is unique as it is neither similar nor identical to any other philosophy. It is unparallel and incomparable to any other philosophy [6]. Guru Nanak discovered, during his dialogues with various religious leaders and while preaching to the gathering of the people, that people easily accepted *khota* (false/fake/lie/wrong) as *khara* (real/right) as is evident from his following stanza:

ਖੇਟੇ<sup>1</sup> ਕਉ ਖਰਾ<sup>2</sup> ਕਰੈ ਖਰੇ<sup>3</sup> ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ<sup>4</sup> ॥  
ਅੰਧੇ<sup>5</sup> ਕਾ ਨਾਉ ਪਾਰਖੂ<sup>6</sup> ਕਲੀ ਕਾਲ<sup>7</sup>  
ਵਿਡਾਣੈ<sup>8</sup> ॥੩॥

Khote ka<sup>o</sup> kharā kahai khare sār na jāṇai.

Andhe kā nā<sup>o</sup> pārkhū kalī kāl vidāṇai. ||3||

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 229.

*In general, people call fake<sup>1</sup> as truth<sup>2</sup> (lie) and do not try to understand<sup>4</sup> the truth<sup>3</sup>.*

*They call the ignorant<sup>5</sup> people as the appraiser<sup>6</sup>, who determines the authenticity in this Dark Age (Age of Ignorance)<sup>7</sup>, which is so strange<sup>8</sup>.*

AGGS, M 1, p 229.

Since the philosophy in his bani was quite different and unique than that found in other religions, therefore, he was called ghost and demon as is evident from his following stanza:

ਕੇਈ<sup>1</sup> ਆਖੈ<sup>2</sup> ਭੂਤਨਾ<sup>3</sup> ਕੋ<sup>4</sup> ਕਰੈ ਬੋਤਾਲਾ<sup>5</sup> ॥  
ਕੇਈ<sup>6</sup> ਆਖੈ<sup>7</sup> ਆਦਮੀ<sup>8</sup> ਨਾਨਕੁ  
ਵੇਚਾਰਾ<sup>9</sup> ॥੧॥

Ko<sup>i</sup> ākhai bhūtṇā ko kahai betālā.

Ko<sup>i</sup> ākhai ādmī Nānak vechārā. ||1||

*Some<sup>1</sup> call<sup>2</sup> him (Nanak) a ghost<sup>3</sup> while the others<sup>4</sup> say he is a demon<sup>5</sup>. However, some<sup>6</sup> call<sup>7</sup> him that Nanak is a humble<sup>9</sup> man<sup>8</sup>.*

But he says that he is crazy to understand the Eternal Entity (*Shah/ God*):

ਭਇਆ ਦਿਵਾਨਾ<sup>9</sup> ਸਾਰਾ<sup>10</sup> ਕਾ ਨਾਨਕੁ  
ਬਉਰਾਨਾ<sup>11</sup> ॥ ਹਉ<sup>12</sup> ਹਰਿ<sup>13</sup> ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ<sup>14</sup>  
ਨ ਜਾਨਾ<sup>15</sup> ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Bhā<sup>i</sup>ā divānā sārā kā Nānak ba<sup>o</sup>urānā.

Ha<sup>o</sup> har bin avar na jānā. ||1|| rahā<sup>o</sup>.

ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 991.

*Crazy<sup>9</sup> Nanak has gone insane<sup>11</sup>, to understand the Eternal Entity (shah/ King/God)<sup>10</sup>.*

*I<sup>12</sup> know<sup>15</sup> of none other<sup>14</sup> than Har(i) – the Eternal Entity (God)<sup>13</sup>.*

||1||Pause||

AGGS, M 1, p 991.

He further noticed that his bani was not easily understood by the religious leaders and the public. It is evident from his following stanza of from his bani:

ਬਾਣੀ<sup>1</sup> ਬਿਰਲਉ<sup>2</sup> ਬੀਚਾਰਸੀ<sup>3</sup> ਜੇ<sup>4</sup> ਕੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ  
ਰੋਇ<sup>5</sup> ॥ ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ<sup>6</sup> ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ<sup>7</sup> ਕੀ ਨਿਜ  
ਘਰਿ<sup>8</sup> ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥੪੦॥

Baṇī bira<sup>o</sup> bīchārsī je ko gurmukh ho<sup>e</sup>. Iḥ baṇī mahā purakh kī nij ghar vāsā ho<sup>e</sup>. ||40|| ਅਗਗਸ, ਮ: 1, ਪੰਨਾ 935.

*Only those<sup>4</sup> rare<sup>2</sup>, enlightened persons<sup>5</sup>, would contemplate<sup>3</sup> the Word (bani/sabd)<sup>1</sup>.*

*This Word (bani/sabd)<sup>6</sup> is of the pre-eminent preceptor<sup>7</sup>, which is imbibed<sup>8</sup> only in particular/special receptive minds.*

AGGS, M 1, p 935 (*Oankaar Bani*)

Although Guru Nanak was spared the punishment or excommunication for going against established religious concepts, his bani was interpolated, and misrepresented to undermine the originality and uniqueness of his Sikhi (Philosophy), under the influence of Vedas and Vedanta philosophies. [7]

During 2019, we have celebrated the 550<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Guru Nanak on a much wider scale. Both, the Government of India and Pakistan, have spent millions of dollars to build a **PEACE CORRIDOR** between the two countries, to meet at the **House of Nanak** at Kartarpur, to learn about his SIKHI. The Prime Ministers of both countries have declared NANAK IS THE GURU AND PIR not only for the Sikhs but for the whole of humanity. This is a great achievement and dedication to Nanak.

On the other hand, during this celebration millions of dollars have been spent to hold hundreds of conferences all over the globe, thousands of papers have been presented, tens of books have been published, thousands of *Akhaad Paaths* were recited, and hundreds of *Nagar Kirtans* were taken out on the streets, where free food (*langar*) was served to watching public.

**Now, here are some questions to the Sikh intelligentsia to ponder over:**

1. Has the Sikh intelligentsia been successful to portray SIKHI founded by Guru Nanak in its real perspective?
2. Is SIKHI still deeply rooted in Vedas and Vedanta philosophies, which started to happen just after the demise of Guru Nanak (1539)?

3. While the Sikh intelligentsia resolves the above questions, the Institute for Understanding Sikhism (IUS) is already working on the Renaissance of Sikhi, founded by Guru Nanak, since 1999. Besides, the year 2020 is particularly dedicated to writing research articles for RENAISSANCE OF SIKHI. Some of the papers highlighting the aspect of Renaissance of Sikhi already published are as follows:

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4. Feiser, J. (2012) The History of Philosophy: A Short Survey, Chapter 6: Renaissance and Early Modern Philosophy. [www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/110](http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/110).
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7. Chahal, D. S. (2018) Where does Sikhi stand 550 years after Guru Nanak, *Understanding Sikhism Res, J*, 20 (1), p 3. <http://iuscanada.com/journal/archives/2018/j2001p03.pdf>.

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