

# CONCEPT OF GOD IN THE AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB (AAGS)

ARTICLE

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## INTRODUCTION

The Aad Guru Granth Sahib (often called *Aad Granth* – Aad/Adi means first or original) starts with Guru Nanak's composition, Mool Mantar (that defines characteristics of *Ek 'O'*, ੴ, the one God), followed by

*Jap Bani* (the morning prayer), *Rehras* (the evening prayer), and *Kirtan Sohila* (the night prayer). This introductory Gurbani, written mainly by Sikh Gurus, occupies the first thirteen pages of 1430 of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. The complete volume falls under three categories: (1) Introductory Gurbani-page 1-13, (2) Gurbani set to the Ragas-page 14-1353, (3) Miscellaneous Gurbani-page 1353-1430. It is written in Sant Bhasha, a language used by medieval Indian Saints throughout India. Besides various forms of Punjabi, it has hymns in Hindi, Marathi, Persian, Prakrit, and Sahaskrite.

The holy Aad Guru Granth Sahib is the eternal Guru, and there is no more human Guru in Sikhism. It's important to understand that the sacred book or its content, known as Gurbani/Bani/Sabd is the Guru that leads us to the realization of God.

## DISCUSSION

For Sikhs, Bani or the compound Gurbani (Guru's bani) in the AGGS is the revealed word. Revelation is defined as the way God discloses and communicates itself to humanity.

There are different views on how God communicates with humanity. The Hindu belief is that God

## ABSTRACT

*The message in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) leads us to the realization of God. The central theme of Gurbani in the AGGS is that there is only one God (Ek 'O' ੴ) pervading in every creation, who is not outside the world. It is pervading everywhere in all forms and formlessness (sargun as well as nirgun which is matter and energy in science).*

occasionally becomes incarnate as an avatar and thus communicates itself through his word and action while living on this Earth. For Muslims, the revelation consists of words in the form of direct messages from God through an angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad. Another belief is that God communicates not the state but the content of the words, i.e., knowledge, to man. A related view is that due to the mystic unity they achieve with the Universal Self, specific individuals under Divine inspiration arrive at truths that they impart to the world.

The Gurus did not subscribe to the incarnation theory of God "*The tongue be burnt that says that the Lord ever takes birth*" (ਸੇ ਮੁਖੁ ਜਲਉ ਜਿਤੁ ਕਹਹਿ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਜੇਨੀ ॥੩॥ so mukh jala-o jit kaheh thaakur jonee; AGGS, M 5, p 1136-4. (AGGS. 1983), nor did they acknowledge the existence of angels or intermediaries between God and man. Nevertheless, They were conscious of their divine mission and described the knowledge and wisdom in their hymns as God-given.

"As the Lord's word comes to me, O Lalo, so do I deliver it," says Guru Nanak (ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥ *jaisee mai aavai khasam kee banee taisrhaa karee gi-aan vay laalo* ; AGGS, M1, p

722.. Guru Arjan says: "I myself know not what to speak; all I speak is what the Lord commandeth" (ਹਉ

ਆਪਹੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਹੁਕਮਾਉ ਜੀਉ ॥੫) *ha-o aaphu bol na jaandaa mai kahi-aa sabh hukmaa-o jee-o*; AGGS, M 5, p 763-6. In this literal sense, Bani is a revelation for the Sikhs. The faithful consider it God's Word mediated through the Gurus or the Word on which the Gurus had put their seal. The Bani echoes the Divine Truth as said Guru Nanak (ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥ *Ad sach jugad sach*; AGGS, M 1, p 1. or the Formless Lord Himself, as said Guru Amar Das (ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ *vahu vahu bani nirankar hai tisujevadu avaru na koi*; AGGS, M3, p 515-17..

The content of the Bani is God's praise and the clue to God's realization (as explained later in "Concept of God in AGGS"). *Hukm*, or the Divine Laws of Nature, is the fundamental principle of God's activity. The Bani, which is Guru, brings this enlightenment to humans. It shows the way. Listening to, reciting, and becoming absorbed in Bani engenders merit and helps one to overcome *haumai*, i.e., finite ego or self-love, which hinders understanding and realization.

The Bani is all in the spiritual key. It is a poetry of pure devotion, love, and compassion. It is the ultimate guide to the spiritual and moral path pointed out by the Gurus. Its language and symbolism drawn from everyday life make it easier for a devotee to understand and follow its message. But in our Gurdwaras, bani in the holy book is worshipped more as an idol, neglecting its Message (Sabd Guru) altogether in our Life.

Preachers in our Gurdwaras and self-declared leaders in the congregation bring into the religion worst kind of religiosity and lack of understanding of Gurbani/sabd. They scare the congregations into modes of worshiping the Sabd in Guru Granth as a human deity. They invoke their deity with various foods, expensive clothing, and flashy mode of transportation in costly vehicles. Their anthropomorphic Guru needs heating and cooling of the room, expensive bedding, and restriction on access. Some ban the Aad Guru Granth Sahib from traveling overseas unless we arrange a private plane.

Some prescribe specific language to communicate, discuss, or analyze for better understanding.

To create and worship an anthropomorphic God was man's desire to appoint himself as God's agent and as his administrative authority. Further, this opened the way to create and deepen communal identities. Such religious practices had lost their legitimacy in the eyes of Guru Nanak. That's why he preferred neither to be identified with his religion of birth, Hindu, nor with the other main religion of his time, *Musalmaan*.

The worst of all, this anthropomorphic God kept us apart from the real Creator, the God that was manifested in all creations. Nanak in Gurbani called it Ek 'O' (ੴ)/ $E=mc^2$ . Gurbani does let us examine the question of God more logically.

#### CONCEPT OF GOD IN the AGGS

In various religions, God has different names, and God sends prophets to eradicate evil from this world. In Christianity, for example, it's God; in Islam, it's Allah. Jesus is the last prophet in Christianity and is considered God's beloved son. Similarly, Hazrat Mohammed is the last prophet of Islam. In the trinity concept of Hindu God, *Brahma* (creator), *Vishnu* (sustainer), and *Mahesh/Shiva* (destroyer) are carnations that came to earth. Sikhism does not believe in the concept of the incarnation of God. God does not come on earth in human incarnation as is thought to in other religions. There is no such thing as an anthropomorphic God that comes on earth in human form. Sikh Gurus made it very clear that they were not God or the image of God and should not be worshipped. Tenth Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, even put it in harsh words and said, "Those who call me God will fall into the pit of hell." The Sikh concept in the AGGS fiercely opposes any anthropomorphic conceptions of the Divine. For Guru Nanak, there is one and only one God (Ek "O" ੴ) who is limitless and in the creation, and we give him different names. He is described both as immanent and transcendent. He is the creator of all things, yet He does not remain apart from His creation. When we say that God is both Transcendent and immanent, it does not mean that there are two parts or phases of God. The Transcendent God is everywhere, in each heart, place, and particle. He is both *sargun* and *nirgun*, which is matter and energy in science. All matter is a form created from formless Energy ( $E=mc^2$ ).

Characteristics of God defined by Guru Nanak in the AGGS and by the concept of energy are more similar than different. The energy of the Universe is the Doer Force or Creator/ *karta purkh*, and self-creation is the law of nature. And according to the law of thermodynamics, this energy can neither be destroyed nor be created (eternal without birth and death/*ajooni*). This is also called the law of conservation of energy. So energy can convert into matter, and matter can convert into energy but the total energy stays the same and can neither be created nor be destroyed ( $E=mc^2$ ). We can refer to this Divine Power as He, Him, or His. He is the Universal God (The Energy of the Universe), the Supreme Being, or the Lord of the Universe.

He (Energy of the Universe) is everywhere in all forms and formlessness (*sargun* and *nirgun*). All matter and all space is Him (energy). He has been and will be there forever (*akal moorat*). He creates, maintains, and destroys everything. That is, all living things take birth, grow and die. He is Life. He is Self-Creating (*saebhang*).

Energy is creator, and matter created from energy is creation, including humans. Therefore, creator/creation or energy/matter is inter-convertible. The AGGS says the same that the creator is in the creation and creation is in the creator (ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ॥ khaalik khalak khalak meh khaalik. AGGS, Kabir, p1350-1.

So we are created out of universal energy or Ek “O” ਓ of Guru Nanak in the AGGS and now become part of universal energy at the time of death. In other words, we are recycled. Guru Arjun in the AGGS says the same when life is imagined as recycled -- created from the universal energy and going back into it, for example, air merging into the air, light merging into light, dust settling into dust (ਪਵਨੈ ਮਹਿ ਪਵਨੁ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥ *pavnai meh pavan samaa*

*-i-aa*, ਜੋਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲਿ ਜਾਇਆ ॥ *jotee meh jot ral jaa-i-aa*,

ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਹੋਈ ਏਕ ॥ *maatee maatee hoee ayk*, AGGS, M5, p885-12. We are created out of this environment and end in this environment. Viewed this way, reincarnation is a fancy name for recycling. All living organisms get recycled. That's the law of nature, and no one can avoid it.

God is not a theoretical concept in Sikhism. We should

be able to experience God within us.

Sikh scripture (the AGGS) holds that all humans can achieve union with God while still alive by realizing the Divine within. That's how a man can become one with God and experience it.

The Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) – Sikh Holy Scripture points towards self-realization to attain a spiritual state of mind. In the AGGS, the Commencing Verse, which is commonly called Mool-Mantra (*Manglacharan*), describes attributes of God, who is addressed as the one and only infinite, ultimate truth, the creator/creation (*Ek 'O'ਓ, Satnam, Karta Purakh*). If we accept God as a spirit in every person, it describes attributes of the spiritual state of mind/soul/self. “That state of mind is without fear (*Nirbhau*), without enmity (*Nirvair*), immortal without the fear of death or birth (*Ajooni*), complete within itself (*Saebhang*)-- timeless, ageless, and formless (*Akal Murat*).” A few blessed ones realize that state of mind (ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ

ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ *Nirbhau, Nirvair, Akal Murat, Ajuni Saebhang, Gur Parsad!* Mool-Mantra or Basic Principle in Jap, AGGS, M1, p 1-1. Nanakian philosophy expects human beings to comprehend and practice these attributes of God in their life so that they can become God-oriented (*Gurmukh*). We know that only the physical body ages; the spirit is not affected by time, age, birth, or death. Sikh scriptures hold that all humans are capable of achieving union with God while still alive by realizing the Divine within. That's how a man can become one with God.

*“Man is the goal of creation. He has come into this world to display those Attributes of God that are reflected within himself.”*

Sufi Giyani Jallaluddin Rumi [from Dhillon # 2]

## CONCLUSIONS

Gurbani/Bani/Sabd is Guru right from the time of Guru Nanak, much before Guru Gobind Singh declared the *Aad Granth* as the Guru. The essence of the Gurbani message starts with *Mool Mantar* (root or basic principle), which is the expression of *Jap* in as few words as possible and summarizes attributes/characteristics of God. The philosophy of our founding Guru Nanak is expressed in *Mool Mantar* and *Jap*, which is extended into the entire 1430 pages of Gurbani in the AGGS. There is no prophet in Sikhism.

The central theme of Gurbani is that there is only one God (*Ek 'O'* / ੴ) manifested in all creations, *Who* is not outside the world. It pervades everywhere in all forms and formlessness (*sargun* and *nirgun*, which are matter and energy in science).

God is not a theoretical concept in Sikhism. We should be able to experience God within us. All humans, irrespective of their faith, can achieve union with God while still alive by realizing the Divine within. Gurbani points towards self-realization to attain a spiritual state of mind and see God in all. It is this God of love and spirituality that Gurbani/Bani/Sabd teaches us and can save those who follow blind faith and start wars in the name of religion.

#### REFERENCES

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