

CONCEPT OF GOD IN GURU NANAK'S HYMNS

ARTICLE

Dr. Devinder Pal Singh

Center for Understanding Sikhism
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5A 1Y7
c4usikhism@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The concept of God is complex and multifaceted. It has been the subject of much debate and speculation throughout history. In general, the term God refers to a supernatural or divine being who is the universe's creator and ruler and is often seen as the ultimate source of moral and spiritual authority.

Different cultures and religions have different beliefs and ideas about God. For some, God is seen as a personal deity actively involved in the world, while for others, God is more of an abstract concept or force present in all things. Some religions believe in multiple gods or goddesses, while others have a monotheistic belief in a single God.

In many religious traditions, God is seen as having specific attributes, such as being all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving. The concept of God is often linked to ideas of morality and justice, with many believing that God sets the standards for right and wrong behavior.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, described various names and attributes of God in his sacred compositions. Guru Nanak's compositions have been enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS), the sacred Sikh scripture [1-4]. Guru Nanak's hymns emphasize God's transcendental nature, which is described as formless, eternal, omnipresent, and beyond human comprehension. In the commencing verse [5] of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak describes some key attributes of God, as mentioned below:

ABSTRACT

God refers to a supernatural or divine being who is the universe's creator and ruler and is often seen as the ultimate source of moral and spiritual authority. Different cultures and religions have different beliefs and ideas about God. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, described various names and attributes of God, symbolized as "ੴ" (Ik Onkar) in his compositions. This article attempts to describe the concept of God as outlined in Guru Nanak's hymns. It is pointed out that Guru Nanak's hymns emphasize God's transcendental nature, which is described as formless, eternal, omnipresent, and beyond human comprehension. However, he focuses on a personal and accessible relationship with the Divine, where individuals can connect with God through devotion, meditation, and leading a virtuous life. A spiritual important aspect of Guru Nanak's concept of God is his description of the realization of God, often referred to as "union with the Divine" or "spiritual realization." By promoting the principles of equality, compassion, and service to humanity through his concept of an all-loving, compassionate God, Guru Nanak asserts that by following these values, individuals can experience a closer connection with God and ultimately achieve spiritual enlightenment.

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂ
ਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Ik^ooa'nkār saṭ nām kartā purakhḥ nirbhā^oo nirvair akāl
mūraṭ ajūnī saibhā'n gur parsād.

One Universal Creator God. The Name Is Truth. Creative Being Personified. No Fear. No Hatred. Image of the Undying, Beyond Birth, Self-Existent. By Guru's Grace.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 1.

ੴ (Ik Onkar): Guru Nanak's most fundamental concept

[6-8] of God is expressed in the term "*Ik Onkar*," which means "One Universal Creator" or "One God." It signifies the belief in the oneness and unity of God, who is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe.

ਸਤਿ (*Sat*): The primary and fundamental meaning of "ਸਤਿ" is "truth." It represents the eternal and unchanging reality (the Divine truth) underlying all creation. The concept of "sat" [9] conveys that the Divine is the ultimate truth, and aligning oneself with this truth is essential for spiritual growth and realization.

ਨਾਮੁ (*Naam*): The primary and fundamental meaning of "ਨਾਮੁ" is "name" or "Divine name." "Naam" represents the name or identity of the Divine. It signifies a direct connection with the Divine presence and consciousness. The recitation and meditation on the Divine name are considered powerful tools for spiritual awakening and communion with the Divine. "ਨਾਮੁ" (Naam) is not limited to a specific religion or culture. It signifies the universal essence that exists beyond religious boundaries, inviting all beings to connect with the Divine.

ਕਰਤਾ (*Karta*): God is described as the Creator and the ultimate Doer. Guru Nanak teaches that God is the master craftsman who designs and creates the intricate fabric of the universe. God's creative power is seen in the diversity and beauty of creation.

ਪੁਰਖੁ (*Purukh*): The term "*Purukh*" holds significant spiritual and philosophical importance in the context of the Sikh scripture, the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. The word "*Purukh*" is a combination of two Punjabi words: "*Pura*" and "*Akhey*," where "*Pura*" refers to the Divine, supreme, or transcendent, and "*Akhey*" means eternal or unchanging. Therefore, "*Purukh*" can be understood as the Eternal Divine.

ਨਿਰਭਉ (*Nirbhao*): God is described as *Nirbhao*, meaning without fear. Guru Nanak teaches that God is beyond fear and instills fearlessness in the hearts of devotees. Individuals can transcend their fears and experience a sense of security and courage through a connection with God.

ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ (*Nirvair*): God is described as *Nirvair*, meaning without enmity or animosity. Guru Nanak emphasizes that God does not hold grudges or harbor ill will toward anyone. God's nature is pure love and forgiveness, extending compassion to all beings.

ਅਕਾਲ (*Akal*): In Sikhism, the term "*Akal*" holds significant spiritual and philosophical meaning. "*Akal*" represents God's timeless and eternal nature, emphasizing that God is beyond the limitations of time and space. "*Akal*" is often used in conjunction with "*Akal Purakh*," which translates to "Timeless Being" or "Eternal One." It signifies that God transcends the boundaries of time and is beyond the cycle of birth and death. God is eternal and existed before the creation of the universe, is present now, and will continue to exist even after its dissolution.

ਮੂਰਤਿ (*Murat*): This term translates to "Image" or "Manifestation." While God in Sikhism is considered formless (*Nirankar*), Sikhs also believe that God can manifest or take on various forms or appearances to interact with the world. These manifestations are often called "*Sargun*" (with attributes) forms of God.

ਅਜੂਨੀ (*Ajooni*): God is described as *Ajooni*, meaning beyond birth or death. Guru Nanak teaches that God is not subject to the cycle of life and death like mortal beings. God is eternal and transcends the limitations of the physical world.

ਸੈਭੰ (*Self-Existent*): Self-existence is that unique attribute of God by which He has existed eternally and will always exist. Unlike all other things related to our existence, God does not owe His being to anything else. We owe our existence to our parents and all our ancestors. All events have causes. All creatures have been created except for God. God is the uncaused cause and the uncreated creator. God did not depend upon anything outside Himself for His existence, nor will He ever depend upon anyone for it.

ਗੁਰ (*Gur*): "*Gur*" refers to the divine guiding and illuminating force that leads individuals to a deeper understanding of God and spirituality. Guru Nanak asserts the importance of a spiritual teacher or guide in his hymns. In this context, '*Gur*' also means a spiritual guide (Guru), teacher, or mentor who leads individuals toward spiritual growth and enlightenment. Thus, Guru is seen as a beacon

of light who dispels ignorance and leads seekers toward a deeper understanding of the divine truths. Guru Nanak enunciates the eternal, universal aspect of the Guru as a True Guru. The True Guru is the divine wisdom and consciousness that flows through all enlightened beings.

ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ (*Prasad*): "*Prasad*" refers to the blessings or grace bestowed by the Divine. It symbolizes that spiritual realization and understanding are not solely achieved through personal efforts but are gifts from the Divine. This term emphasizes the concept of humility and acknowledges that all spiritual insights come through the benevolence of the Divine.

These attributes of God [10-11] described in Guru Nanak's Bani reflect the core principles of Nanakian philosophy and spiritual practice. The teachings emphasize the devotion, love, and understanding of God, leading to a deeper connection with the divine and realizing one's true nature.

NAMES OF GOD

God is known by many names and attributes in Nanakian Philosophy, each revealing a different aspect of its character and nature. Here are a few of the names of God as described in Guru Nanak's hymns:

ਪ੍ਰਭੁ (*Parbhu*): "*Prabhu*" is one of the many names and titles used to address and describe the divine presence in Guru Nanak's hymns, highlighting the idea of God as the ultimate master, creator, and provider. It is a term of reverence and devotion, indicating a deep connection and relationship with the divine.

ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰੁ ਸੋਹਣਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਹਿ ਮਾਣਕ ਲਾਲ ॥

Parabh harmandar sohṇā ṭis meh māṇak lāl.

The Palace of the Lord God is beautiful. Within it are flawless diamonds.

AGGS, M.1, p. 17.

ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰੁ (*Parmeshar*): In Guru Nanak's hymns, the term "*Parmeshar*" refers to the Supreme Being or the Divine. It is a reverence and devotion term, denoting God's all-pervading, transcendent nature. "*Parmeshar*" can be understood as the ultimate, all-encompassing reality and source of everything in the Sikh tradition. This term underscores the idea of God as the highest authority, the ultimate source of divine wisdom, and the one who governs and oversees the entire creation. "*Parmeshar*" is a term that signifies the omnipotence and all-

encompassing nature of the Divine in Sikh theology.

ਆਪੇ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰੁ ਕਰਮੀ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਾਈ ॥

Āpe parīṭ p̄rem p̄rmesur karmī milai vadāī.

The Transcendent Lord Himself showers His Love and Affection; by His Grace, He bestows glorious greatness.

AGGS, M.1, p. 1330.

ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ (*Parbrahm*): The term "*ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ*" is often used in Guru Nanak's hymns to describe the Supreme Being or the Transcendent God. It signifies the highest and most profound understanding of the divine. "*ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ*" emphasizes the ultimate, formless, and eternal nature of God. It is a term used to convey the idea of God's absolute, formless, and infinite nature, emphasizing the oneness and universality of the divine.

ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੋਈ ਜੀਉ ॥

Aprampar pābarahm p̄rmesar Nānak gur miliā soī jīo.

The Infinite Transcendent Lord, the Supreme Lord God - Nanak has met with Him, the Guru. AGGS, M.1, p. 599.

ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰੇ (*Parvadgaaro*): The term "*ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰੇ*" is used in Guru Nanak's hymns to address God as the Provider, Sustainer, and Caretaker of all creation. This term conveys the idea of God's role as the ultimate source of sustenance, nourishment, and support for every living being. When Guru Nanak uses the term "*ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰੇ*," he is highlighting the understanding that God is not distant or detached from creation but actively involved in sustaining and caring for it. This concept reflects a compassionate and nurturing Divine presence that continuously provides for all life forms' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

ਸਚੁ ਸਿਰੰਦਾ ਸਚਾ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਸਚੜਾ ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰੇ ॥

Sach sirandā sachā jāṇīai sachṛā parvadgāro.

The True Creator Lord is True - know this well; He is the True Sustainer.

AGGS, M.1, p. 580.

ਨਾਰਾਇਣੁ (*Narayan*): In Guru Nanak's hymns, the term "*Narayan*" is used to describe the formless, all-pervading, and transcendent aspect of God. Guru Nanak believed in the oneness of God, and "*Narayan*" is one of the names through which the divine is addressed in his hymns. It emphasizes the idea of God as the ultimate source and sustainer of all creation.

ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੁ ਗਰਬ ਪ੍ਰਹਾਰੀ ॥

Parabh̄ nārāṅgarab parḥārī.

God, the Lord of all, is the Destroyer of pride.

AGGS, M.1, p. 224.

ਕਰਤਾ (Karta): God is referred to as Karta, meaning the Creator. Guru Nanak emphasizes that God is the ultimate creator of everything in the universe. God is the source of all life and is responsible for the cosmos' creation, sustenance, and dissolution.

ਸਭ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਾਦਿਰੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪਾਕੀ ਨਾਈ ਪਾਕੁ ॥

Sabh̄ ṭerī kuḍraṭṭūṅh̄ kāḍir karṭā pākī nāī pāk.

Everything is in Your Power, Lord; You are the all-powerful Creator. Your Name is the Holiest of the Holy. AGGS,

AGGS, M.1, p. 464)

ਧਰਣੀਧਰਾ (Sustainer): In Guru Nanak's hymns, the term "ਧਰਣੀਧਰਾ" (*Dharanidhara*) is a compound word composed of two parts: "ਧਰਣੀ" (*Dharani*) and "ਧਰਾ" (*Dhara*). (i) "ਧਰਣੀ" (*Dharani*): This term typically refers to the Earth or the world. It's used to signify the physical realm, the ground we walk upon, and our environment. (ii) "ਧਰਾ" (*Dhara*): This term can be translated as "support" or "sustainer." It refers to the one who holds, supports or sustains something. So, when combined as "ਧਰਣੀਧਰਾ" (*Dharanidhara*), it is used to refer to the entity or force that supports and sustains the Earth or the world. In a spiritual context, it can represent the divine force or power that upholds the universe and everything within it. This term can be found in various hymns and verses within the Aad Guru Granth Sahib, where it is used to express reverence and awe for the Creator who sustains the world.

ਹਉ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਸਦਾ ਜਾਚਉ ਦੇਹੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਧਰਣੀਧਰਾ ॥

Haṅo nām har kā saḍā jāchāṅo deh parabh̄

ḍharnīḍhārā.

I constantly beg for the Name of the Lord; grant it to me, O God, Sustainer of the world.

AGGS, M.1, p. 687.

ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ (Sustainer): The term "ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ" is used in Guru Nanak's hymns in the context of describing

God's role as the Protector, Nurturer, and Sustainer of all creation. This term conveys the idea of God's care and guardianship over the universe and all living beings. In his hymns, Guru Nanak emphasizes the concept of God as the ultimate source of all creation and the sustainer of life. The term "ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ" captures this aspect of God's nature, highlighting God's role as the One who watches over and nurtures everything in existence.

ਤੂੰ ਆਦਿ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਾ ॥

Tū āḍ jugāḍ karahi parṭipālā.

You cherish and sustain Your beings from the very

beginning of time and throughout the ages. AGGS, M.1, p. 1031)

ਦਾਤਾਰੁ (Great Giver): In Guru Nanak's hymns, the term "ਦਾਤਾਰੁ" is used to describe God as the Great Giver, the One who bestows blessings, gifts, and provisions upon all of creation. This term conveys the idea of God's benevolence, generosity, and abundance. When Guru Nanak uses the term "ਦਾਤਾਰੁ," he is emphasizing that God's generosity extends to all beings without discrimination. This concept reflects the idea of a loving and compassionate Divine presence that provides for the needs of every living being, regardless of their background or status.

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ਸਿਨਾਖਤੁ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ॥

Nānak sach̄ ḍāṭār sinākḥaṭṭ kuḍraṭī.

O Nanak, the True One is the Giver of all; He is revealed through His All-powerful Creative Nature.

AGGS, M.1, p. 141.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Some of the attributes of God [6-8], as described by Guru Nanak in his hymns, are as follows:

ਅਗੰਮੁ (Indescribable): It refers to something that is beyond ordinary perception, understanding, or reach. It implies that the Divine, its qualities, and its ways are beyond the scope of human senses and intellect. The Divine is considered ineffable and cannot be fully grasped by mere intellectual or sensory means. It suggests that while humans can gain glimpses and insights into the divine realm, the full extent of its majesty and intricacy remains a mystery that surpasses human comprehension.

ਅਲਾਹੁ ਅਲਖੁ ਅਗੰਮੁ ਕਾਦਰੁ ਕਰਣਹਾਰੁ ਕਰੀਮੁ ॥

Alāhu alakḥ agamm kāḍar karanhār karīm.

He is Allah, the Unknowable, the Inaccessible, All-powerful and Merciful Creator.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 64).

ਜੇ ਹਉ ਜਾਣਾ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹਣਾ ਕਥਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥

Je ha^o jāṇā ākhā nāhī kahṇā kathan na jāī.
Even knowing God, I cannot describe Him; He cannot be described in words.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 2.

Omnipotence: Omnipotence means that God possesses absolute and unlimited power. God is not subject to any restrictions, limitations, or weaknesses. This belief holds that God can do anything logically possible and consistent with His nature. God's omnipotence is often associated with the idea that God is the creator and sustainer of the universe. God's power brought everything into existence and continues to govern and maintain the world.

ਆਪੇ ਜੋੜਿ ਵਿਛੋੜਿਐ ਆਪੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਦੇਇ ਦਿਖਾਇ ॥

Āpe joṛ vichḥoṛī^{ai} āpe kudrat^{de}e dikhā^e.
You Yourself unite and separate; You display Your Creative Omnipotence.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 1281)

Omnipresence: Omnipresence means that God is not limited by time, space, or physical boundaries. Instead, God's presence permeates all of creation. This concept suggests that God is simultaneously fully present in every corner of the universe, regardless of distance or location. God's omnipresence does not mean that God has a physical body or form that occupies space. Instead, it conveys the idea of a spiritual or divine presence that is not constrained by the limitations of the material world. Moreover, God's omnipresence extends beyond mere existence to include active awareness and engagement with all aspects of creation.

ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਉਪਾਇ ਰਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਛਾਜੈ ॥

Sarisat upā^e rahe parabh^{ch}hājai.
Creating the Universe, God remains diffused throughout it.
AGGS, M.1, AGGS, p. 1028.

Transcendence: The transcendence of God refers to the idea that God exists beyond and outside the limitations of the physical world, time, space, and human comprehension. It implies that God is greater, superior, and beyond the created universe and everything within it. ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਜੋਤਿ ਧਰੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰਿ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ਭਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Faribḥavaṇ joṭ ḍharī pamesar avar na dūjā bhāī he.
The Light of the Transcendent Lord pervades the three worlds; there is no other at all, O Siblings of Destiny.
AGGS, M. 1, p 1024)

Immanence: The immanence of God signifies the belief that God is present and active within the created world and intimately involved in its functioning. Despite his transcendence, God is also present and active within the world and is involved in the lives of his people. The immanence of God can lead to an appreciation of the sacredness of the natural world.

ਭਰਪੁਰਿ ਧਾਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਨਿਹਕੇਵਲੁ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ ਸਭ ਠਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Bḥarpur ḍhār rahi^ā nihkeval gupaṭ pargat sabh ṭhāī he.
The Immaculate Lord is all-pervading, permeating everywhere, both hidden and manifest.
AGGS, M. 1, p 102.

ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਅਗੰਮੁ ਹੈ ਰਵਿਆ ਸਭ ਠਾਈ ॥

Fū kartā purakh^{agamm} hai ravi^ā sabh ṭhāī.
You are the Creator, the Inaccessible Primal Lord God; You are all-pervading everywhere.
AGGS, M. 1, p 1291)

Omniscience: The attribute of omniscience signifies the belief that God possesses complete and infinite knowledge. In theological terms, it means that God has perfect and comprehensive awareness of all things, including past, present, future events, and all beings' thoughts, intentions, and actions.

ਆਪੇ ਦਾਨਾ ਆਪੇ ਬੀਨਾ ਪੂਰੈ ਭਾਗਿ ਸਮਾਏ ॥

Āpe dānā āpe bīnā pūrai bhāg samā^e.
He is all-knowing and all-seeing. By perfect destiny, we merge in Him.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 944.

ਮੇਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਜਾਣਦਾ ॥

Merā parabh^{sabh} kichḥ jāṇdā.
My God knows everything.
AGGS, M. 1, p. 72.

ਅਜਰਾਵਰੁ (Eternal): God's eternity means that God is not subject to the passage of time. Unlike the created universe and everything within it, God does not experience past, present, or future moments sequentially. Instead, God exists in an eternal "now,"

transcending time altogether. God is believed to have no origin or point of creation. God is not preceded by anything, and there was never a time when God did not exist. This concept contrasts with the temporal nature of all created things.

ਤੂੰ ਅਜਰਾਵਰੁ ਅਮਰੁ ਤੂੰ ਸਭ ਚਾਲਣਹਾਰੀ ॥

Ṭū ajrāvar amar ṭū sabh chālāṇhārī.

You are eternal; You do not grow old. All others pass away.

AGGS, M. 1, p 1008.

ਹਮ ਜੇਰ ਜਿਮੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਪੀਰਾ ਮਸਾਇਕਾ ਰਾਇਆ ॥ ਮੇ ਰਵਦਿ

ਬਾਦਿਸਾਹਾ ਅਫਜੂ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥

Ham jer jimī dūnīā pīrā masāikā rāiā. Me ravadī bādīsāhā afjū khudāi.

All the spiritual teachers, their disciples and the rulers of the world shall be buried under the ground. The emperors shall also pass away; God alone is Eternal.

AGGS, M. 1, p 143)

ਪਾਕੁ (Holy): The term "ਪਾਕੁ" is used to describe something that is considered sacred and pure. According to Guru Nanak, God is entirely pure and perfect in every way and is separate from sin and evil.

ਸਭ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਾਦਿਕੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪਾਕੀ ਨਾਈ ਪਾਕੁ ॥

Sabh ṭerī kudratī ṭūn kādir kartā pākī nāī pāk.

Everything is in Your Power, Lord; You are the all-powerful Creator. Your Name is the Holiest of the Holy.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 464)

ਨਿਆਉ (Justice): ਨਿਆਉ refers to the fair and equitable treatment of individuals or groups in society. It involves giving each person their due, whether regarding rights, rewards, or punishments. Guru Nanak emphasizes that God is perfectly just and fair and holds all beings accountable for their actions.

ਸਚਾ ਸੇ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਚੁ ਤਪਾਵਸੁ ਸਚੜਾ ਨਿਆਉ ਕਰੇਗੁ ਮਸੇਲਾ ॥

Sachā so sāhib sach ṭapāvas sachṛā niāo kareg masolā.

The Lord and Master is True, and True is His justice. He issues His Commands according to His judgment.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 723.

ਨਦਰਿ (Grace): In Guru Nanak's hymns, ਨਦਰਿ refers to the unmerited and undeserved favor, mercy, and

benevolence of God. He emphasizes that God's grace cannot be achieved through human effort, good deeds, or personal merit. Instead, it is a gift freely given by God to humanity.

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥

Nānak nadrī nadar nihāl.

O Nanak, the Merciful Lord, by His Grace, uplifts and exalts them.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 8)

ਅਲਖ (Invisible): The term "ਅਲਖ" refers to something that cannot be seen with the naked eye or detected by the human senses, particularly the sense of sight. Although God's existence is believed to be evident from his creation, Guru Nanak asserts that God is unseen and cannot be fully comprehended by human beings.

ਓਹੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਅਲਖ ਅਭੇਵਾ ॥

Oh abhināsī alakh abhevā.

That Lord is Imperishable, Invisible, and Inscrutable.

AGGS, M. 1, p 227.

ਨਿਰਾਲਾ (Unique): It conveys the belief that God possesses qualities or attributes that make Him distinct, unparalleled, and one-of-a-kind. His attributes, qualities, and power are so extraordinary that they are beyond human comprehension. This incomparability sets God apart from all other beings. Guru Nanak proclaims that God is unique and incomparable, with no one and nothing else resembling Him in any way.

ਏਕਮ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਰਾਲਾ ॥

Ēkam ekankār nirālā.

The First Day: The One Universal Creator is unique.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 838.

ਅਵਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖਣਹਾਰੇ ॥

Avar nāhī kar dekhaṇhāro.

There is no other Creator except the All-seeing Lord God.

AGGS, M. 1, p 1342)

ਪਰਮ ਤੰਤ (Ultimate Reality): The concept of God as the ਪਰਮ ਤੰਤ posits that God is the supreme, transcendent, and unchanging reality that underlies and encompasses all of existence. God is also described as the universe's creator, sustainer, and ruler, making Him the ultimate source of all things. Guru Nanak articulates that God is the ultimate reality, and everything else in the universe is transient and

ultimately insignificant compared to him.

ਪਰਮ ਤੰਤ ਮਹਿ ਰੇਖ ਨ ਰੂਪੁ ॥

Param tant meh rekḥ na rūp.

The supreme essence of reality has no shape or form.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 952.

Divine Will: "Divine Will" refers to the belief in a supreme, transcendent force or consciousness that governs the universe and determines the course of events and outcomes in accordance with a divine plan. Guru Nanak emphasizes that God has a Divine Will, which is expressed through the laws of nature and the order of the universe. This divine will guides individuals toward the path of righteousness and spiritual fulfillment.

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੇ ਥੀਐ ਇਨਾ ਜੰਤਾ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

Nānak jo tis bhāvai so thīai inā jantā vas kichḥ nāhi.

O Nanak, whatever pleases His Will comes to pass.

Nothing is in the hands of these beings.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 55.

ਜਿਵ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਿਵੈ ਚਲਾਵੈ ਜਿਵ ਹੋਵੈ ਫੁਰਮਾਣੁ ॥

Jiv tis bhāvai tivai chālāvai jiv hovai furmāṇ.

He makes things happen according to the Pleasure of His Will. Such is His Celestial Order.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 7)

ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ (Nirankar): The word "ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ" is of Punjabi origin and is made up of two components: "Nir," which means "without" or "beyond," and "ankar," which means "form" or "shape." Therefore, "Nirankar" can be translated to mean "without form" or "formless." In Guru Nanak's hymns, the concept of "Nirankar" reflects the belief in the formlessness and transcendence of God. He asserts that God cannot be confined to any specific form, image, or representation, as God is beyond human comprehension and transcends all worldly attributes.

ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਮੁ ॥

Nirbhāo nirankār sach nām.

The Lord is fearless and formless; His Name is True.

AGGS, M.1, p. 465)

ਦਇਆਲੁ (Dayal): God is often referred to as *Dayal*, which means compassionate or merciful. Guru Nanak emphasizes that God is infinitely loving and compassionate towards all creation. God's mercy is available to everyone, and it is through God's grace that one can attain spiritual liberation.

ਦਇਆ ਦਾਨੁ ਦਇਆਲੁ ਤੂ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

Daiaā dān daiaāl tū kar kar dekḥaṇhār.

O Merciful Lord, You are the embodiment of compassion; creating the Creation, You behold it.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 934.

ਆਪੇ ਮਿਹਰ ਦਇਆਪਤਿ ਦਾਤਾ ਨਾ ਕਿਸੈ ਕੇ ਬੈਰਾਈ ਹੇ ॥

Āpe mihar daiaāpat dātā nā kisai ko bairāī he.

He is the Giver of Grace, compassion, and honor; He is no one's enemy.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 1022.

ਜੋਤਿ (Divine Light): "ਜੋਤਿ" refers to the divine light, which is considered the eternal and unchanging essence of God. This divine light is believed to be present in all living beings and is the spark of the divine within everyone. Guru Nanak teaches that God's essence is radiant and luminous, symbolizing enlightenment and spiritual illumination. It signifies that by connecting with God, one can experience inner enlightenment and the awakening of the divine light within.

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

Sabh meh jot jot hai soe.

The Divine Light is within everyone; You are that Light.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 663.

ਸਰਬ ਜੋਤਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Sarab jot pūran bhagvān. ||1|| rahāo.

The Divine Light of the Lord God is perfectly pervading.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 352)

ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ (Guni Nidhan): The term "ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ" is used to refer to the qualities or attributes of the divine. "Guni" can be translated as "virtuous" or "possessing qualities," while "Nidhan" refers to a treasury or repository. So, in Guru Nanak's hymns, "Guni Nidhan" generally refers to the treasure or repository of divine virtues, qualities, and attributes. It emphasizes the idea that the divine is a source of limitless virtues and qualities worth exploring, understanding, and emulating. This term highlights the divine nature and the qualities that individuals can strive to embody in their lives.

ਸਾਧੂ ਸਤਗੁਰੁ ਜੇ ਮਿਲੈ ਤਾ ਪਾਈਐ ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥

Sādhū satgur je milai tā pāīai guṇī nidhān.

One who meets with the Holy True Guru finds the Treasure of Virtues.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 21.

ਨਿਰਮਲੁ (Pure, immaculate): The term "ਨਿਰਮਲੁ" is derived from the Punjabi language and holds a significant spiritual connotation within Nanakian philosophy. "ਨਿਰਮਲੁ" is typically translated as "pure," "immaculate," "unblemished," or "stainless" in English. When Guru Nanak uses the term "ਨਿਰਮਲੁ" to refer to God, he is emphasizing the Divine's pure and untainted nature. The concept underscores the idea that the Divine is beyond any impurities, flaws, or limitations inherent to the material world. It signifies the transcendence of worldly attributes and a perfect state of being. Guru Nanak's use of "ਨਿਰਮਲੁ" serves to convey this idea of divine purity, emphasizing that God is free from any stain of ego, desire, and imperfection. This attribute of purity also implies an ethical and spiritual aspiration for human beings to cleanse themselves from ego, selfishness, and negativity to align with the Divine.

ਆਪੇ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਏਕੁ ਤੂੰ ਹੋਰ ਬੰਧੀ ਧੰਧੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

Āpe nirmal ek tūn hor bandhī dḥandḥai pāe.

Only You, Lord, are Immaculate and Pure. All others are bound up in worldly pursuits.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 54)

ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੁ (Nirahar): The term "ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੁ" is typically translated as "beyond sustenance," "without nourishment," or "self-sustaining" in English. In Guru Nanak's hymns, the term "ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੁ" highlights the concept of God's self-sustaining nature, emphasizing the Divine's independence from physical sustenance and its role as the ultimate provider of all forms of nourishment and sustenance. When Guru Nanak uses the term "ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੁ" to refer to God, he is emphasizing the concept that the Divine is self-sustaining and independent, beyond the need for physical sustenance or nourishment. This idea is rooted in the belief that God is beyond the limitations of the material world and is self-existent and self-sufficient.

ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਨਿਰਾਹਾਰੁ ਨਿਰਕੇਵਲੁ ॥

Nirmal nirāhār nihkeval.

The Lord is immaculate, self-sustaining, and

unattached.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 840.

ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ (Niranjan): The term "ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ" is commonly translated as "stainless," "immaculate," "without blemish," or "unblemished" in English. When Guru Nanak uses the term "ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ" to refer to God, he is emphasizing the Divine's unblemished and pure nature. This term highlights the idea that the Divine is beyond impurity, contamination, or flaw. It signifies that God exists in absolute perfection and is free from any limitations, illusions, or negative qualities characteristic of the material world.

ਆਪੇ ਆਪਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਸੋਇ ॥

Āpe āp niranjan soe.

He is Immaculate and Pure.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 2)

These attributes highlight God's role as the creator, sustainer, and compassionate guide for all creation. Thus, they deepen our understanding of God's nature. It is pertinent to add that this is not the exhaustive list of God's attributes as Guru Nanak described in his hymns. However, understanding the Concept of God, as outlined in Guru Nanak's hymns, helps us to comprehend the importance of recognizing God's presence in all aspects of life, surrendering to God's will, and seeking spiritual growth and union with the divine.

Realization of God

Guru Nanak's description of the realization of God, often referred to as "union with the Divine" or "spiritual realization," is a central concept in his teachings [9]. While Guru Nanak's teachings are primarily conveyed through poetry and hymns, they emphasize the following aspects of God-realization:

Oneness with God: Guru Nanak teaches that the ultimate purpose of life is to realize the oneness with God [12], often referred to as "*Ik Onkar*," the one universal Creator. This realization involves transcending the ego and recognizing that the individual soul (Atma) is essentially the same as the universal soul (Paramatma).

Annihilation of Ego (Haumai): Guru Nanak emphasizes the need to overcome the ego, which separates individuals from God. The ego is considered the primary barrier to spiritual realization. One can gradually dissolve the ego and experience the Divine within through humility, selflessness,

and self-awareness.

Divine Grace: Guru Nanak acknowledges that merging with God is not solely the result of human effort; it also involves divine grace. Devotees are encouraged to seek the grace of God and surrender to the Divine Will (*Hukam*).

Meditation and Devotion: Guru Nanak advocates meditation, contemplation, and a life of devotion to God to achieve spiritual union. By continuously meditating on the Divine name (*Naam Simran*), individuals can draw closer to God.

Loving Relationship with God: Guru Nanak describes the ideal relationship with God as filled with love, affection, and devotion. This love and longing for God are central to the process of merging. Devotees are encouraged to nurture this deep and loving connection.

Transcendence of Dualities: Guru Nanak teaches that for God's realization, one must transcend the dualities and illusions of the material world. It involves rising above attachments, desires, and the distractions of the physical realm.

Living a Life of Virtue and Service: Living a life of honesty, integrity, and selfless service to humanity purifies the soul and makes it receptive to the Divine presence. Virtuous conduct is essential in the process of merging.

Satsang (Company of the Holy): Associating with spiritually evolved individuals and congregational worship (*Satsang*) is encouraged. Being in the company of those who have already realized the Divine can inspire and guide devotees on their spiritual journeys.

Thus, Guru Nanak's teachings stress that union with God [12] is not a distant or unattainable goal; it is achievable by anyone who sincerely follows the path of devotion, selflessness, and inner transformation. The process involves recognizing one's divine nature, shedding the ego, and ultimately experiencing eternal unity with God. This spiritual realization is considered the highest form of liberation in Sikhism, often referred to as "*Jivan Mukti*" or "*Mukti*" (liberation from the cycle of birth and death).

CONCLUSION

Guru Nanak emphasized the idea of an all-loving and compassionate God in his teachings. His concept of God, often called "*Ik Onkar*," tells us that God is merciful and

does not seek revenge or punishment. Guru Nanak's teachings focus on a personal and accessible relationship with the divine, where individuals can connect with God through devotion, meditation, and leading a virtuous life. Guru Nanak promotes the principles of equality, compassion, and service to humanity through his concept of an all-loving, compassionate God. He teaches that by following these values, individuals can experience a closer connection with God and ultimately achieve spiritual enlightenment.

REFERENCES

- AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Guru Nanak, P = Page of the AGGS).
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib, (SGGS), 1983 (Reprint), S.G.P.C., Amritsar, India
- Khalsa, S. S. (n.d.). (English translation of SGGS www.srigranth.org/servlet/gurbani.gurbani?S=y)
- Singh, S. (n.d.). Guru Granth Darpan, <http://www.gurugranthdarpan.net/darpan.html>
- Chahal, D. S. 2000. The Commencing Verse of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 2 (1): 8-19,29.
- Chahal, D. S. (2011) ਴: The Unique Logo *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.*, p. 18. <http://www.iuscanada.com/journal/archives/2011/j1312p18.pdf>
- Chahal, D. S. 2002. A Unique Concept of God in Nanakian Philosophy. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 4 (2): 5-15.
- Chahal, D. S. (2005) Oankaar or Omkaar: The Misunderstood Word - Annotation by Guru Nanak, *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.*, 7 (2), p 17.
- Singh, D.P. (2023). Concept of Truth in Guru Nanak's Hymns: in *A Path to Truthful Living*. Pub. By Singh Brothers, Amritsar. India. 53-55.
- Chahal, D. S. 2003. JAP: The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy. Institute for Understanding Sikhism, QC, Canada. Pub. By Singh Brothers, Amritsar.
- Kaur, R. 1999. God in Sikhism. S.G.P.C., Amritsar, India.
- Singh, D.P. 2018. Sunn Samadhi: The Way to Perceive Ultimate Reality: in *Science and Sikhism - Conflict or Coherence*. Pub. By Singh Brothers, Amritsar. India. 69.