



ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥  
Ik oāṅkār sat̤ nām kartā purakh̄ nirbhā'o nirvair akāl mūrati ajūnī saibhā'n gur parsād̄.



## THE SIKH BULLETIN GURU NANAK AND HIS BANI

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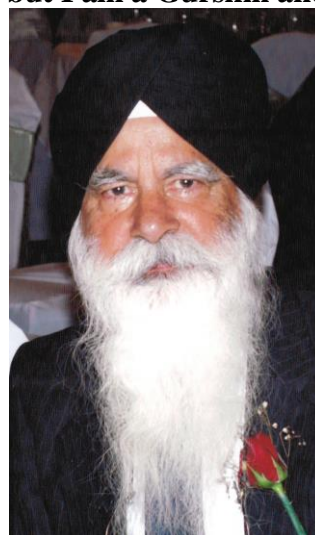
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### EDITORIAL

### SIKH AND GURSIKH

#### **I am not a Sikh but I am a Gursikh and a Free Thinker**



**Hardev Singh Shergill**

"ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ॥" *Sikhee sikhiaa gur veechaar. P.465*

Sikhi is the understanding and reflection of the Guru's thought processes and live by it.

\*

#### **I am a Sikh and a Gursikh**



**Dr. Harbans Lal**

Guru Nanak rejected all the man made religions and their Gods based on Faith. He was a Free Thinker who, like today's Scientists, used his 'bibek-budhi' to discover the truth and urged his followers to do the same and reject Faith based religions:

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਵਸਤੁ ਸਿਵਾਣਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਕੀਚੈ ਵਾਪਾਰੁ॥

*First evaluate the goods, then buy (first evaluate an idea or philosophy before accepting it). AGGS, M1, p.1410.*

A great disservice was done to his original and unique philosophy by confining it to 1430 pages of Adi Granth.

As a result today an attempt at publishing just **Guru Nanak's** writing in the Adi Granth is tantamount to dismembering a body in the eyes of the faithful who instead of reading, understanding and applying it to their daily lives worship it much the same way as Hindus worship stone statues and dress it like them and parade it in public exactly as the Hindus do to their stone deities, once a year.

He was third among the progressive thinkers of the world and first among Scientist Philosophers. I do not believe Confucius or Buddha touched on the subjects of origins of **Cosmos, Life, and Species, Death and Environment**. Contemporary of European Renaissance period Copernicus, who earned the wrath of Catholic Church for denying Biblical account of Earth as the center of the universe, Nanak proposed origin of cosmos similar to the 20th century theory of Big Bang 500 years earlier:

### Cosmos:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੈ ਕਵਾਉ ॥

ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰਿਆਉ ॥

*"The universe exploded from one source of energy (One - Singularity) and started to expand. Thereafter many things appeared. AGGS, Jap 16, p 3."*

### Origin of Life:

ਸਾਚੇ ਤੇ ਪਵਨਾ ਭਇਆ ਪਵਨੈ ਤੇ ਜਲੁ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਜਲ ਤੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣੁ ਸਾਜਿਆ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮੋਇ ॥

*The True One created the air; air produced water and it is water wherein evolved the world of life with Cosmic-consciousness (Universal - consciousness). AGGS, M 1, p. 19.*

Similarly Guru Nanak turned the Hindu concept of **Transmigration** into '**Origin of Species**' attributed to **Charles Darwin**, 400 years after **Guru Nanak**. *Homo sapiens* evolved through countless forms of life like other species - ants, worms, moths, fish, elephants, deer, snakes and domestic animals like horses and bullocks - starting from inanimate matter, the basic elements. Moreover, he goes on to say that basic elements were recycled as inanimate matter like rocks and mountains before the creation of the "building blocks of life" for the evolution of a living cell:

### Evolution of Species:

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਭਏ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ ॥

ਲਖ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਜੋਨਿ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਇਆ ॥

*Many births (different evolutionary stages of life) created worm and insect. Many births created elephant, fish and deer. Many births created bird and snake. Many births created ox and horse, which are yoked. Similarly, it took a very long time for the human body to evolve through many evolutionary stages of life. Now is your time to meet the Master of the universe, the Creator. Pause. The matter constituting the human body was recycled many times as rocks and mountains. Many births resulted in abortion (defective mutations resulting in death of the species). Many births produced plant life. It took innumerable births to produce a human body. AGGS, M 5, p. 176.*

Guru Nanak also postulated that there are other places with life in the cosmos:

ਜਲਿ ਥਲਿ ਜੀਆ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਲੋਆ ਆਕਾਰਾ ਆਕਾਰ॥

***There are living beings in water, on land and in the Cosmos. AGGS, M 1, p. 466.***

### **What is Death?**

**Referring to death Guru asks what has died. Then he answers his own question; nothing has died. Body has simply gone back to its elements. The breath mixes with air, body becomes dust and the spark of ENERGY merges with the ENERGY.**

**The following quotes are from Dr. Baldev Singh's manuscript 'Nankian Philosophy (Gurmat): The Path of Enlightenment that we published in Book form in 2015 and also published it in Special Issue of November-December 2015 Sikh Bulletin.**

ਦੇਹੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਬੋਲੈ ਪਉਣੁ॥  
ਬੁਝੁ ਰੇ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਮੂਆ ਹੈ ਕਉਣੁ॥  
ਮੁਈ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਬਾਦੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ॥  
ਓਹ ਨ ਮੂਆ ਜੋ ਦੇਖਣਹਾਰੁ॥

***The body is made of earth (various elements) and it is the air (breath) that keeps it alive. O wise one, then tell me who died because the body and the air it breathed are still here? It is consciousness that died along with disputes caused by egotistical pride, but the One (Creator) who takes care of all does not die. AGGS, M 1, p. 152.***

The meaning of the four pithy verses becomes abundantly clear when we consider that God is both manifest as Cosmos and un-manifest as omnipresent **Hukam**. Death of the body affects only the manifest form of God - the matter (elements) that constitutes the body. The matter goes back to earth and is recycled to create new life. The Omnipresent One (Hukam), which operates in all living beings and pervades everywhere is Everlasting. It is remarkable that **Guru Nanak defines death as the loss of consciousness,** which is similar to the modern understanding of death, medically speaking.

Cosmos is the manifest form of God, which is continuously changing, but it does not change in its total content.

### **Environmentalism:**

**ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਈ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥**

***Air is like a Guru, water like a father and the Earth like the great mother (which provides all types of resources and food).***

**AGGS, M 1, p. 8.**

The quote above is taken from the article 'EARTH DAY, ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ, EARTH, THE GREAT MOTHER' by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal.

**The positions of Guru, Father and Mother are the most highly regarded in Indian culture. By associating those with the three most essential life support elements Guru Nanak wants people to show the same consideration to these elements as they do to the three human relationships. In other words, do nothing that will pollute them.**

Had he come across Martin Luther, also his contemporary, he would have advised him not to waste effort reforming Catholic Church because for vast majority of people faith is much easier to follow because for reason based philosophy they have to use their *bibek-budhi* which is found to be hard exercise. Instead he would have asked him to join efforts to abolish man-made religions all together. If that accident of birth had happened the world would have neither Christianity nor Islam, two religions that have systematically destroyed cultures all over the world and each other. It is sad that almost all Sikh scholars are claiming Nanak's bani as **revealed** to him by God much the same way all the Semitic religions claim. **That shows disrespect on their part to Guru's original philosophy and denies his status as a child prodigy.**

**God did not reveal anything to Moses, Christ or Mohammed simply because there is no God like Semitic people or Hindus claim. Nor was Nanak a Prophet as those three religions claim.**

Nanak and they, and **Joseph Smith** for that matter, were no more divine than you or I. We do not even know if they themselves claimed divinity or it was proclaimed by their followers who really wrote on their behalf, none of them leaving their own writings other than **Joseph Smith** who claims to have copied what God gave him on gold plates just as God gave Moses Ten Commandment on slabs of rock. He claims to have witnesses who witnessed the event but they were his in-laws and close friends who witnessed nothing simply because the event did not occur.

In China it was **Kung Fu Tzu**, better known as **Confucius**, a Chinese philosopher of the **sixth century B.C.E.** There is no **god** in **Confucianism**, but rather a **force** called the **Tao**, also known as the **Great Ultimate**. **Confucius** has never been considered a **god** by his adherents. **Confucianism is a socio-philosophical movement aimed at bettering society, just as Nankian Philosophy.**

In India it was **Gautama Buddha** in **623 B.C.** His philosophy is more messed up. There are multiple Buddhist sects about Buddhists' belief in God or not. In my personal experience the only book on Buddhism that I have read was in a hotel room in Singapore in 1999. I had to stop reading it half way through when it changed from Nanakian Philosophy to Hindu Mythology.

The best explanation on Buddhism that I have come across is in **Buddha Dharma Education Association and BuddhaNet**. To the question '**Do Buddhists believe in a god?**' Their unequivocal answer is **NO**.

**See the excerpt below because it describes Nankian Philosophy in very concise words:**

*"No, we do not." "There are several reasons for this. The Buddha, like modern sociologists and*

*psychologists, believed that religious ideas and especially the god idea have their origins in fear."*

*"The Buddha says:*

*Gripped by fear people go to sacred mountains, sacred groves, sacred trees and shrines. Primitive humans found selves in a dangerous and hostile world, the fear of wild animals, of not being able to find enough food, of injury or disease, and of natural phenomena like thunder, lightning and volcanoes were constantly with them. Finding no security, they created the idea of gods in order to give them comfort in good times, courage in times of danger and consolation when things went wrong. To this day, you will notice that people become more religious at times of crises, you will hear them say that the belief in a god or gods gives them the strength they need to deal with life. You will hear them explain that they believe in a particular god because they prayed in time of need and their prayer was answered. All this seems to support the Buddha's teaching that the **god-idea is a response to fear and frustration**. The Buddha taught us to try to understand our fears, to lessen our desires and to calmly and courageously accept the things we cannot change. **He replaced fear, not with irrational belief but with rational understanding (Bibek-Budhi of Nankian Philosophy).***

*The second reason the Buddha did not believe in a god is because there does not seem to be any evidence to support this idea. There are numerous religions, all claiming that they alone have god's words preserved in their holy book, that they alone understand god's nature, that their god exists and that the gods of other religions do not. Some claim that god is masculine, some that she is feminine and others that it is neuter. They are all satisfied that there is ample evidence to prove the existence of their god but they laugh in disbelief at the evidence other religions use to prove the existence of another god. It is not surprising that with so many different religions spending so many centuries trying to prove the existence of their gods that still no real, concrete, substantial or*

*irrefutable evidence has been found. **Buddhists suspend judgement until such evidence is forthcoming.***

*The third reason the Buddha did not believe in a god is that the belief is not necessary. Some claim that the belief in a god is necessary in order to explain the origin of the universe. But this is not so. Science has very convincingly explained how the universe came into being without having to introduce the god-idea. Some claim that belief in god is necessary to have a happy, meaningful life. Again we can see that this is not so. There are millions of atheists and free-thinkers, not to mention many Buddhists, who live useful, happy and meaningful lives without belief in a god. Some claim that belief in god's power is necessary because humans, being weak, do not have the strength to help themselves. Once again, the evidence indicates the opposite. One often hears of people who have overcome great disabilities and handicaps, enormous odds and difficulties through their own inner resources, through their own efforts and without belief in a god. Some claim that god is necessary in order to give man salvation. But this argument only holds good if you accept the theological concept of salvation and Buddhists do not accept such a concept. Based on his own experience, the Buddha saw that each human being had the capacity to purify the mind, develop infinite love and compassion and perfect understanding. **He shifted attention from the heavens to the heart and encouraged us to find solutions to our problems through self-understanding.***

Nanak rejected both main religions of India, **Hinduism**, he was born into and **Islam** that ruled the Hindus.

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬੀ ਭੇਦੁ ਨਾ ਜਾਤਾ ॥

*Neither the Vedas [four Hindu texts] nor the four Katebas [Semitic texts: the Torah, the Zabur (Psalms), the Injil (Gospel) and the Quran] know the "Reality." AGGS, M 1, p. 1021.*

According to Sikh tradition Guru Nanak refused to wear a **Janeu** (sacred thread) which was a mandatory religious requirement for a boy from a Khatri caste. He asked, "Why wear a ritual thread that can break or burn or gets soiled or

worn out or lost?" Instead, he proposed an alternative universal lifelong thread:

ਦਇਆ ਕਪਾਹੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਸੂਤੁ ਜਤੁ ਗੰਢੀ ਸਤੁ ਵਟੁ॥

ਏਹੁ ਜਨੇਊ ਜੀਅ ਕਾ ਹਈ ਤ ਪਾਡੇ ਘਤੁ॥

*Make compassion the cotton, contentment the yarn, continence the knot and truth the twist. O pundit (priest), a thread of this type awakens the inner-self (conscience). If you have such a janaeu, then put it on me. AGGS, M 1, p. 471.*

ਸਾਲਗ੍ਰਾਮ ਬਿਪ ਪੂਜਿ ਮਨਾਵਹੁ ਸੁਕ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਤੁਲਸੀ ਮਾਲਾ ॥

ਰਾਮਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਬੋਤਾ ਬਾਂਧਹੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਰਹੁ ਦਇਆਲਾ ॥

ਕਾਹੇ ਕਲਰਾ ਸਿੰਚਹੁ ਜਨਮੁ ਗਵਾਵਹੁ ॥

ਕਾਚੀ ਢਹਗਿ ਦਿਵਾਲ ਕਾਹੇ ਗਚੁ ਲਾਵਹੁ ॥

*O Brahman, why do you worship a salgram (stone idol)? Make honest work your rosary of tulsi (an aromatic plant, Ocimum Sanctum venerated by Hindus). Make contemplation on God the boat to take you across the ocean of the corrupting influence of the world. Pray for mercy to the Merciful One. Why are you wasting your life irrigating alkaline (barren) land? Why are you plastering a mud wall which surely will fall? AGGS, M 1, p. 1170.*

He carried the same message to the **Muslim** audience. For example, he explained the true meaning of the **five prayers** and what is required to become a **true Muslim** (gurmukh):

ਪੰਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ, ਵਖਤ ਪੰਜਿ ਪੰਜਾ ਪੰਜੇ ਨਾਉ॥

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਦਇ ਤੀਜਾ ਖੈਰ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥

ਚਉਥੀ ਨੀਅਤ ਰਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਪੰਜਵੀ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਨਾਇ ॥

ਕਰਣੀ ਕਲਮਾ ਆਖਿ ਕੈ ਤਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਸਦਾਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇਤੇ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ਕੂੜੈ ਕੂੜੀ ਪਾਇ ॥

*The five prayers for the five different times during the day have five different names. Make truth the first prayer, honest living the second one, practice of charity the third one, cleansing the mind of evil thoughts the fourth one and contemplation on God's excellences the fifth one. And let good deeds become your kalma, the foundation of your faith. If one practices the*

*above, only then one is a true Muslim (gurmukh). Otherwise O Nanak, by practicing hypocrisy, one becomes false through and through. AGGS, M 1, p. 141.*

Here Guru Nanak rejects conventional/ritualistic prayers; instead he suggests universal human values as a way of life not only for a Muslim but for the entire humanity:

ਮਿਹਰ ਮਸੀਤਿ ਸਿਦਕੁ ਮੁਸਲਾ ਹਕ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਕੁਰਾਣੁ॥  
 ਸਰਮ ਸੁੰਨਤਿ ਸੀਲੁ ਰੋਜਾ ਹੋਹੁ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ॥  
 ਕਰਣੀ ਕਾਬਾ ਸਚੁ ਪੀਰ ਕਲਮਾ ਕਰਮ ਨਿਵਾਜ ॥  
 ਤਸਬੀ ਸਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵਸੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਖੇ ਲਾਜ:॥

*Let mercy be your mosque, faith be your prayer mat, honest living be your Quran, and fidelity to your wife be your circumcision and good conduct be your fast. This will make you a true Muslim. Make pious work your Kaaba, Truth your spiritual teacher, good deeds your prayer and recognize your rosary as God's Will. This conduct of yours will bring you honor in the court of God. AGGS, M 1, p. 140.*

**Yogis** (ascetics) looked down upon the householders though they lived on the charity of the latter. Guru Nanak admonished them:

ਮੁੰਦਾ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਸਰਮੁ ਪਤੁ ਝੋਲੀ ਧਿਆਨ ਕੀ ਕਰਹਿ ਬਿਭੂਤਿ ॥  
 ਖਿੰਝਾ ਕਾਲੁ ਕੁਆਰੀ ਕਾਇਆ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਡੰਡਾ ਪਰਤੀਤਿ ॥  
 ਆਈ ਪੰਥੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਮਾਤੀ ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ ॥  
 ਆਦੇਸੁ ਤਿਸੈ ਆਦੇਸੁ ॥  
 ਆਦਿ ਅਨੀਲੁ ਅਨਾਦਿ ਅਨਾਹਤਿ ਜੁਗੁ ਜੁਗੁ ਏਕੈ ਵੇਸੁ ॥

*O yogi, make contentment your earrings, begging bowl your modesty, meditation on God the ashes smeared on your body, thought of death your quilted robe, truthful living your way of life and faith in God your staff. Make universal brotherhood your Aee Panth (the highest order of yogis) and subdue your mind (haumai) to conquer the worldly temptations. Bow in reverence to the One Who is primordial, immaculate (pure/perfect), without beginning,*

*indestructible and changeless throughout the ages. AGGS, M 1, Jap 28, p. 6*

ਸੋ ਜੋਗੀ ਜੋ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਣੈ ॥  
 ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ॥  
 ਕਾਜੀ ਸੋ ਜੋ ਉਲਟੀ ਕਰੈ ॥  
 ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ॥  
 ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥  
 ਆਪਿ ਤਰੈ ਸਗਲੇ ਕੁਲ ਤਾਰੈ ॥

*A yogi is the one who recognizes the right way (Truth) and understands the One/God through enlightenment. A qaji (Muslim judge) is the one who remains unaffected by the corrupting worldly temptations and carries out justice in the light of Truth. A Brahman is the one who contemplates on the excellences of God. Such a Brahman enlightens himself and all his kin. AGGS, M 1, p. 662.*

**Nanak was a Humanist**

ਦੁਖੁ ਵਿਛੋੜਾ ਇਕੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਭੂਖ ॥  
 ਇਕੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਸਕਤਵਾਰ ਜਮਦੂਤ ॥

*The first pain is the separation from Creator (lack of morality), the second pain is the grinding poverty and the third pain is the tyranny of the ruler. AGGS, M 1, p. 1256.*

Nothing has changed since Guru Nanak uttered those words. These three pains still afflict all man kind. People who inherited Nanakian Philosophy have completely misunderstood it and the elite among them like other religions have turned this philosophy into a religion to snare gullible masses.

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ॥  
 ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ॥  
 ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਿਰ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ॥

*Nanak will stand by the lowest of the lowest, not with the elite. Societies that take care of the downtrodden have the blessing of God. AGGS, M 1, p. 15.*

In tune with the true revolutionary zeal, Guru Nanak gave a clarion call to the masses to join his

movement with an explicit warning that it would require supreme sacrifices:

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ॥  
ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ॥  
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ॥  
ਸਿਰ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ॥

*If you want to play the game of love (follow the righteous path/Truth) then follow me and be prepared to sacrifice your life. Once you step on this path, do not hesitate to offer your head. AGGS, M 1, p. 1412.*

Unfortunately that clarion call got lost among 1430 pages in Adi Granth that is being worshipped in Gurdwaras and people's homes just like Hindu stone gods, Christian Cross, Muslim Crescent Moon and Jewish Star of David.

Guru Nanak's universal message of peace, love, respect equality and justice brought more and more adherents (Hindus and Muslims) into the Sikh movement. With such continuing growth, almost a century after Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan (fifth Nanak) called for the establishment of kingdom of peace and justice for "all." This call was perceived as threat by **Emperor Jahangir** and the proponents of caste ideology. **Guru Arjan** was tortured on the orders of the Emperor by his Hindu and Muslim underlings and he died the death of a martyr on May 30, 1606 in Lahore. [1]

ਸਭੇ ਸਾਝੀਵਾਲ ਸਦਾਇਨਿ ਤੂੰ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਜੀਉ ॥  
*All are partners in Your (Kartar/Creator) commonwealth and You do not look at anyone as a stranger. AGGS, M 5, p. 97.*

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥  
*Neither we regard anyone as enemy nor stranger; living in harmony with all is our creed. AGGS, M 5, p. 1299*

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥

ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੈ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥

ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ ॥

*Now the Merciful has issued a Command that no one would be persecuted/harassed by anyone. All would live happily in peace under the benevolent rule of justice. AGGS, M 5, p. 74.*

Support for my thesis that Guru Nanak rejected all the man made religions and their Gods based on Faith, from the life of Guru Nanak and Adi Granth:

His **first** pronouncement to this effect came upon his return from across the **Vein River** that oral tradition quotes him uttering his first words as **"Na Ko Hindu Na Mussalman"; (there is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim),** meaning we are all members of one human family, undivided by man made religions.

His **second** pronouncement came during his visit to Mecca during his dialogue with Qazi Ruknuddin when Guru Nanak was found sleeping with his feet towards **Kaaba. Khwaja Jainul Abidin**, the author of *Tarikhe Arab*, wrote the first-person account of Guru Nanak's Arabian journey. In his Arabic book, he writes, "I was with Guru Nanak when Guru met *Qazi* (an Islamic religious judge) **Rukn-ud-din.**" As they came face-to-face, Rukn-ud-din offered his Salam, and the Guru replied, "*Sat Shri Akal, Gurbar Akal*" (The Lord immortal is the sole truth; the all-powerful timeless Creator). Rukn-ud-din asked, "*Fala Alla Mazahbu,*" meaning "which religion do you belong to?" The response was, "*Abdulla Allah La Mazahabu,*" meaning **"I am creator's servant; I have no religion."**

The **third** pronouncement is by **Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan**, on p.1136 of Adi Granth, **"Na Ham Hindu Na Mussalman' (We are neither Hindus nor Muslims).** He is using plural 'WE' because by this time the number of people believing in teachings of Guru Nanak had become substantial and distinct enough group to be reckoned by the state.

Note that he does not say 'We the Sikhs'.

**However, Guru Nanak was not the first person to reject religion as an institution.**

**Aristotle 384-322 BC:** rejected man-made religions and their Gods. **“According to the book of Genesis, God created man in his own image, but according to Aristotle, men create gods after their own image.”**

But he believed that there must be some eternal and imperishable substance, otherwise all substance would be perishable, and then everything in the world would be perishable. *“But the world and time are not perishable...This eternal actual substance must be a single **prime mover**, which, while the source of all process and change, is not itself subject to process or change.”* (Chapters 6 to 10 of book 12 of the *Metaphysics*)

**Rumi (1207-1273)**, a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic who inherited and expanded a centre for Sufism in **Konya in Turkey** wrote: *“I’m not from the East or the West. I’m not Christian or Jew or Muslim. I’m not Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi or Zen. I don’t belong to any established religion or any cultural system. I’m neither body nor soul, for I belong to the Soul of my beloved.”*

Born into a ‘*khande di pahul dhari*’ family I rejected Sikhism by age eleven, Hinduism by age twelve and all religions before my teenage years when India’s division resulted in Hindu, Muslim, Sikh carnage. At age 62, due to strange set of circumstances, I came in possession of a Gurdwara building through court order. With the encouragement of some concerned Sikhs I was persuaded to operate it like no other Gurdwara. In the process **I learned that Guru Nanak’s philosophy is so unique and so 21<sup>st</sup> century that it should be spread throughout the world but not as a religion.**

**Authentic and correct interpretation of Adi Granth is so rare that I ascribe my knowledge about it to only three people. I myself did not**

**know literary Panjabi nor did I understand any of the many languages in which Adi Granth is written.**

**First person** to interpret Adi Granth to me was **S. Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana** whom I went to visit in Seattle, Washington. Between 1998 and 2005, when we were forced to close the Gurdwara for lack of sangat, we spent many days and hours together listening, taping and publishing many of his books and organizing conferences.

Learning in English came only from late **Dr. Baldev Singh** and **Dr. Davinder Singh Chahal**, whose articles I first started reading in the **World Sikh News, published from Stockton, California** after 1984 Ghalughara (Indian Govt. pogroms against Sikhs) and now adorn pages of many issues of the Sikh Bulletin.

I would urge the readers to please read an expanded article **Nanak My Discovery**.  
<http://sikhbulletin.com/Files/NanakMyDiscoveryMarApr2015.pdf>

Hardev Singh Shergill

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## ABOUT THIS EDITORIAL

Inspiration for this editorial came to me from Guru Nanak’s unique methodology. At Hardwar instead of lecturing the Brahman that his water cannot reach his ancestors in another world he started offering his water towards the setting sun. That was the teaching moment he created, *‘If my water cannot reach my fields in Panjab which is on this earth then how can yours reach another world?’* He used the same methodology in Mecca by sleeping with his feet pointed toward the Kaaba, *‘please do point my feet towards where there is no Allah.’*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, century of enlightenment, the custodians of Guru Nanak’s philosophy have so distorted his message that Sikhi has been reduced

to mere appearance, not the character of its practitioners. Even the successive Indian governments, whether Congress or BJP, have become a party to this atrocity. In case of denial of admission to a Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Medical College to a young Sikh girl on the excuse that she plucked her eye brows, when the Court appointed committee could not find any evidence in the Adi Granth for uncut, or un-plucked hair the clever attorneys, and Judges, found an excuse in the Ardas, the traditional Sikh prayer in Gurdwaras. There is a Sikh Ardas in the Adi Granth, which neither describes the appearance of a Sikh, nor does it demand anything from the Creator but simply thanks it for the bountiful provisions provided to all life on earth.

The traditional Sikh Ardas is actually very un-Sikh. It goes completely against the teachings enshrined in the Adi Granth. But it does say, ***‘Sikhi Kesan Swasan sangh nabhao’***, meaning ***practice Sikhi with uncut hair***. This was the excuse to deny Gurleen Kaur admission to the Medical College. Apparently this rule did not apply to the lady President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

C.W.P No.14859 of 2008:1: In the High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh.

Gurleen Kaur and others. Petitioners Versus State of Punjab and others

Date of Decision: 30.05.2009

“...the tenets of the Sikh religion which have been prescribed in the “Sikh rehatmaryada” (the Sikh code of conduct and conventions), the “Sikh ardas” and the views expressed by scholars of Sikhism, we have already recorded our conclusion above, that retaining hair unshorn is an important and essential tenet of the Sikh religion.”

Irony is that Guru Nanak’s first two Sikhs were both Muslims, Rai Bular, employer of his father, and a minstrel named Mardana who became his lifelong companion from childhood until the day he died, spending his entire life as Guru’s companion.

From my appearance I meet the legally required definition of a Sikh, but I had stopped identifying myself as a Sikh by my eleventh year. I did not

know it then but I was exercising my ***‘bibek budhi’ (discerning mind)*** that Guru Nanak so stressed. My parents had left me alone to develop my own views about religion.

On the other hand **Dr. Harbans Lal** does not meet India’s legal definition for a Sikh but he is one, a practicing one. His Sikh mother married into a Hindu family took him regularly to the Gurdwara. Something with you since childhood has a lasting effect. That is why as a rule children born to parents of a faith end up believing in that faith.

It is all very crystal clear if you can find time to read his Bio, which he is too bashful to write himself, so he sent me what **Dr. Harpal Singh Buttar** wrote and all the articles in this issue authored by him. **He is a true Sikh of Guru Nanak.**

I myself was confused about the appearance part when I first started the operation of the Gurdwara. I had cut my hair back in 1960 when I arrived in this country but I was a Sikh by birth, so I mistakenly thought still am. As is his practice to stay in touch with all Gurdwaras, **Dr. Harbans Lal’s** name is 6<sup>th</sup> in the list of recipients of the Sikh Bulletin that now totals 2249 just in USA with many more worldwide plus those receiving forwarded to them by the recipients. So when I heard someone tell me that in college days in Panjab he was President of the All India Sikh Students Federation I immediately called my uncle, Principal Gurbax Singh Shergill, first person in our family to go to school and university and whose footsteps I faithfully followed and who too was President of that Federation one year, to verify. He was Principal of Sikh National College, Banga, founding Principal of SGGN (Khalsa) Chandigarh and Principal of Khalsa College Amritsar during its tortuous years in the Seventies and Eighties. His response was, ***‘yes and he was the best Sikh of the bunch at that time.’*** That was enough for me to consider Harbans Lal a Sikh, now I know he is one.

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## I AM A SIKH &amp; A GURSIKH



Dr. Harbans Lal

**DR. Bhai Harbans Lal**  
*A Portrait of Scholarship and Faith*  
 By  
**Harpal Singh Buttar, Ph.D.**

Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal, PhD, D.Litt. (hons) is known, and admired by scientists, interfaith organizations, and his Sikh community around the world.

As an academician, Dr. Lal retired in the year 2000 as Professor and Chairman, Department of Pharmacology and Neuroscience, University of North Texas Health Science Center. In academic circles, he was known for his research in the areas of behavioral medicine, substance abuse, and on prolongation of healthy life span through nutritional interventions. He has served on many US and international science advisory boards, including study sections of National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and Food & Drug Administration. For 14 years he served as the Editor-in-Chief of a monthly journal, *Drug Development Research*. In 2005, a two hour television interview with Dr. Lal on his discoveries in medical sciences was featured in the Archives of the American College of

Neuropsychopharmacology. His discoveries in medicine were recognized by inclusion in archives of medical discoveries and in International Network for the History of Neuropsychopharmacology.

During his academic career, Dr. Lal trained 55 doctoral and pre-doctoral trainees, published over 319 research papers and 289 research presentations, 19 books, several research reviews and 56 chapters in medical books. University of North Texas Health Science Center established a pre-doctoral fellowship award in his name. The Society of Neuroscience recognized him at the International Symposium held in his honor in 1999. The Scientists of Indian Origin recognized his leadership by electing him their President and recognized his academic accomplishments with Award of Outstanding Senior Neuroscientist. He was among the top 10 Behavioral Neuroscientists in a survey conducted for a doctoral thesis research.

Affectionately known as "Bhai Sahib", Dr. Harbans Lal holds many distinguished positions in Sikh institutions and Sikh organizations. Major Sikh organizations honored him with "Bhai Sahib" title in recognition of his *Sehaj-dhari* affiliation and scholarly accomplishments. **The title was formerly awarded by the All India Sikh Students Federation in 1947 and later on by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in 1963 and 1974.**

Since his school days, Bhai Harbans Lal has been active in promotion of Sikh interests. In 1946, he was appointed as a Circle Organizer and then inducted in the Executive Committee of the All India Sikh Students Federation, the organization that elected him as its national President in 1954. He was the Founder President of the All India Sehaj-dhari Sikh Organization inaugurated in 1952 by Indian Parliament Deputy Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh. The same year Master Tara Singh honored him with presentation of a ceremonial sword and asked him to serve as an advisor to

Sikhs' major political party, The Shiromani Akali Dal.

Bhai Harbans Lal was recognized by robes of honor (*Siropa*) by the *Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, the Akal Takhat, Takhat Sri Hazuri Sahib at Patna, Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee, the Chief Khalsa Diwan, the Sikh Educational Conference, Sikh Dharma International, Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbadhaik Committee and the Sikh Social and Educational Society of Canada*. In 1995, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, awarded him the Degree of Doctor of Literature (*honoris causa*) in recognition of his scholarly contributions in Sikh Studies. On April 14, 1999, the Anandpur Sahib Foundation awarded him the *Order of Nishan-e-Khalsa* for "his superb accomplishments in promoting the glory and pride of the "Khalsa Panth."

Presently, Dr. Lal's interests lie in promoting Sikh Studies and Sikh interests in North America. His writings on Sikh subjects have appeared in many books and in journals such as *Sikh Sansar, Sikh Review, Sikh Bulletin, Sikh Courier International, Spokesman, Sikh Marg, Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion, From Both Sides of the Ocean, Miri Piri, Gurbani Is Jag Meh Chanan, Sach Khand Patra, Sikh Virsa, Atam Science, Understanding Sikhism: the Research Journal, The Global Sikh Daily, International Journal of Sikh Spiritualism, Amrit Kirtan, SAABT, Sikh Spectrum, EMGONLINE, Abstract of Sikh Studies, Sikh News Network, Sikhchick.com, [Sikh & Punjabi Language Studies](#) Sikh Foundation, the Tribune, Times of India, and Dallas Morning News. He contributes columns in the religious section of the *Dallas Morning News* and serves on the editorial boards of *the Sikh Review, International Journal of Sikh Spiritualism, Studies in Sikhism and Comparative Religion, and Understanding Sikhism: the Research Journal*.*

Dr. Lal represented Sikh spiritual thoughts at the Parliament of the World's Religions, the United

Nation's Summit of the World Religious Leaders, and National Network of Interfaith Organizations. Islamic Association of North Texas recognized him as Distinguished Friend of Faiths, and the Inter-religious & International Federation for World Peace recognized him as Ambassador of Peace. Masjad Imam W. Deen Muhammad awarded him "The Ummah Award" in recognition of lifelong contributions to foster interfaith understanding and by Unity Day USA representing 14 faiths recognized him with Life Achievement Award for promoting unity among faiths in America.

Currently, Dr. Lal serves on many religious and humanitarian organizations. He has been serving as the Ambassador of the Parliament of World Religion since 2009 and as a member of the Interfaith Council of the Center for World Thanksgiving since 1983. In addition, he served advisor to the American Project on Religion and the News Media, advisors-at-large to THE SIKH TIMES, and to the Sikh Foundation. He is a founding trustee of Bhai Nand Lal Foundation and Founder Executive Vice-President of the Sri Nankana Sahib Foundation. Dr. Lal also serves as the Founder President of the Academy of Guru Granth Studies established for the promotion of scholarly works on Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

As Founder President of the Academy of Guru Granth Studies, Bhai Sahib has brought worldwide attention to the Quad-Centennial Celebration of the First Compilation of Adi Granth and the Tercentennial Celebration of its Ordination as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs. In the centennial celebrations, he saw opportunity to disseminate the universal teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He wrote numerous articles and promoted Guru Granth teachings throughout the world by giving talks at seminars and conferences. By his relentless efforts, he brought Guru Granth's message to the attention of inter-faith and multi-faith organizations all over the world.

Harbans Lal was born in Haripur, North Western

Frontier Province of Pakistan, on January 8, 1931 to his mother Ramkali Devi and father Dr. Beli Ram. He ascribes his birth to the prayer of his parents at the historic Sikh shrine of Sri Panja Sahib in Hasan Abdal. He was given religious education by two women clergy at his home town Gurdwara.

Dr. Harbans Lal did matriculation from Lakshmi Dass Khalsa High School in Haripur. He was honored for being the first student admitted in the newly established Gandhi Memorial National College in Ambala, and subsequently graduated in Pharmaceutical Sciences from the Punjab University. He received a Master's degree from the University of Kansas in 1958 and a Doctoral degree in Pharmacology from the University of Chicago in 1962.

Dr. Harbans Lal migrated from his birth place in Pakistan to India in 1946, and then to USA in 1956. He married Amrita K. Lal in 1964 and the couple presently resides at 6415 Amicable Drive, Arlington, TX 76016.  
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### **OUTWITTING THE STARS: A TESTAMENT OF COMMITMENT**

Dr. Harbans Lal  
(Reprint from *Harbans Lal, Outwitting the Stars: A Testament of Faith, Sikh Review, 59: (8), 27-31, 2011*)

Name of a person is integral as well as elemental beginning for every member of a civil society. In religious communities, it is a first social recognition of the child's commitment to a path towards spiritual identity. Besides, through a

child's name, parents assign their child an ethnic identity.

Among Sikhs, naming a child is the first confirmation of the child's religious individuality. It is determined under the guidance of either a local *granthi* or another elder of gurdwara congregation.

This is in contrast to the Khalsa Initiation Ceremony that is performed only after the child reaches adulthood, and explicitly makes an informed determination.

Naming a baby is considered sacred among most people of Indian subcontinent. Therefore, on this occasion, the family, usually led by grandparents, invites relatives and friends in the presence of a religious congregation. Naming ritual or ceremony itself differs from one religion to another.

**Who was Mohan Lal?** My parents originally gave me a Hindu name as per the advice from the city *Purohit*, a family priest of a Hindu family. *Purohit* is synonymous with '*Pandit*' to mean a religiously wise man.

The Hindu naming ceremony is usually held after the first 10 days of a baby's delivery. These 10 post-natal days are considered to be inauspicious as the mother and child are considered yet to be tainted or impure on account of the child delivery process. After those 10 days, the house is cleansed and sanctified for the ceremony.

The mother and child are bathed and are prepared for the ceremony. The child is dressed in new clothes and the mother wets the head of the baby with a bit of water as a symbol of purifying the child. The baby is then handed over to the paternal grandmother or the father who sits near the priest during the ritual. The sacred fire is lit and the priest chants hymns to invoke the gods in the heaven to bless the child.

Names may be chosen from a Hindu holy book or

after a search of the child's horoscope according to the date and time of birth of the child. I was not told as to what was the source of my name chosen according to the Hindu ceremony. However, the Hindu ceremony was performed and I was named Mohan Lal.

After the name is given to the child and accepted by the parents, it is written in Sanskrit fonts in a tray of uncooked rice with bright red colorings. Thus my name was colorfully inscribed in the center of a tray artistically decorated.

#### Heaven Not Pleased

Not even a day passed after the Hindu ritual of naming me, when the festivities began to turn sour. After the guest had left and the Purohit departed with the fee and gifts, I was seized with fever. At the first sight, the family took it as an ordinary stress caused by festivities and began to apply their home remedies.

In my family the popular treatment for a fever was a tummy rub with wet towel given by my grandfather who recited selected verses from Gurubani. A couple of days of this treatment were usually sufficient. However it was not going to be so easy this time; fever continued. The town doctor was called and all other frantic measures taken to cure me of the fever.

When several days went by without any sign of the fever going down, the town doctor was pressed for answer. He finally alerted my parents that the child might not survive. The news of my probable death would not be taken lightly by my parents who went through so much to have a child. They consulted other doctors in the area. They also called the *Purohit* to chant *mantras*. None was of any avail.

#### From Desperation A New Clue

In my previous paper published in the Sikh Review (For details see H. Lal, 2011), I told in great detail the story of my birth.

Briefly, my parents being frustrated over failure to have a child were led to the woman *Granthi* s, Behen (Sister) Narain Ji and Bhen Dhanwanti Ji at *Isatari Sat Sang Sabha*, a gurdwara for women in Haripur Hazara. There, they were told that, since all efforts were visibly failing, they should accept the divine schema of no child written in their *karma*.

The woman *granthis* then suggested that my parents consider an alternate to seeking their own child, they could strive for borrowing a child from the family of Guru Nanak. It would be a gift assigned to them for care and associated enjoyment. It was like an adoption proposal with conditions of custody, without any ownership claim.

On the surface the advice sounded a fairy tale but my parents had accepted the proposal and had followed the advice *verbatim*. I was born after they pledged the above in humility and prayer at Gurdwara Panja Sahib.

I was a healthy child until the first naming ceremony when I acquired what seemed to be a fatal disease.

Exhausting all other means to control my illness, it suddenly dawned on my parents that they might have committed a sin of cosmic proportion in my naming ritual which had angered the heavens and must require guidance from spiritually enlightened persons.

#### Prayer of Repentance and Restitution

My parents immediately rushed to the same local gurdwara, *Isatari Sat Sang Sabha (Sikh Congregation for Women)*, with folded hands and asked the same *granthi* women to pray for my recovery. A congregation for *ardas* was held. Bhen Narain ji lead the prayer in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Then, a hymn from a randomly opened page was recited.

The pious soul *granthis* listened to the hymn carefully and were inspired to this conclusion. An

apology was due to the Guru who had lent a child to my parents for safe keep and to love. The sole understanding entailed that the child was custody from the house of Nanak, on loan, to be nourished and cuddled, but certainly not for claiming ownership.

According to the *granthi* my parents had failed to keep up their promise to the Guru when they called the *Purohit* and invoked the Hindu deities to name me. This way they treated me as their own child that contradicted their prayer at Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib.

My parents submitted instantly and asked for forgiveness. When the *granthis* saw them realizing their error, they advised them to immediately travel to the House of Nanak at the Gurdwara Panja Sahib for repentance, and to take another pledge never to cross the Guru. My parents accepted the advice with folded hands and proceeded on to Sri Panja Sahib.

At Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib, my parents requested the *granthi* there to hold a prayer ceremony at the next morning congregation in which he would represent my parents in a plea for forgiveness. He would also seek wisdom in the future that the Guru's dictate would be never questioned or violated. Hence forth, they would commit to never take the child as their own progeny. Instead, the child would be raised as a gift from the Guru for the mission that the Guru might have in mind for him.

#### Name for Life

At Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib, I was given my real name, Harbans Lal. The earlier name, Mohan Lal was erased from all memories. To accomplish this, the woman *granthis*, my parents, grandparents, relatives, and friends, all gathered at the feet of my Guru at the Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib.

At the Gurdwara Panja Sahib the naming of a child was a daily routine. Families from far and near were always reaching there to name their

children. Always there was more than one family who sought to name his/her child.

There is usually a custom of the 48 hours continuous reading of the Holy Scripture from A to Z. This is followed by sacred kirtan and *katha*, exegesis. The families offer donations, *Karah Parsad* and a *Rumala* which consisted of four pieces of cloth of measured lengths suitable for covering the Guru Granth Sahib. Prayers are offered asking for a special blessing of good health, good education, long life, and the strength to walk the Sikh way of life, *Gursikhi*, for the child.

After reciting Ardas, Guru Granth Sahib is opened at random and a hymn is recited. The first letter of the first word of the hymn on the page is announced as the first letter of the child's name.

The given name is common for either gender. When there is more than one child to be named, second letter and subsequent letters from the beginning of the hymn might be used. Parents of the children are also given a choice of choosing the first letter of the second and third and subsequent words of the hymn of the day.

The hymn that bestowed my name upon me that day was as below. The randomly opened page turned out to be page 629. The hymn was composed by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan as below.

ਸੇਰਨਿ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥

ਹਰਿ ਮਨਿ ਤਨਿ ਵਸਿਆ ਸੇਈ ॥

ਜੈ ਜੈ ਕਾਰੁ ਕਰੇ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਕਹੀ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥੧॥

ਹਉ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੁ ਜਾਈ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਵੈ ॥

ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਬਖਸਿ ਲੈਹਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸੇ ਜਸੁ

ਤੇਰਾ ਗਾਵੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਤੂੰ ਭਾਰੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਮੇਰਾ ॥

ਸੰਤਾਂ ਭਰਵਾਸਾ ਤੇਰਾ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸਰਣਾਈ ॥

ਮੁਖਿ ਨਿੰਦਕ ਕੈ ਛਾਈ ॥੨॥੨੨॥੮੬॥

*The Creator would abide in my mind and body. Everyone congratulates me on my triumph. Such is the glorious greatness of the Perfect Guru; its worth is beyond description. ||1|| I am a sacrifice to your Name; only those who are bestowed upon the comprehension of your greatness under your vision may be grateful to you; you are the greatest and my principal. You are the support of the Saints and holy souls. Says Nanak; the seeker has entered God's Sanctuary. The faces of the slanderers are blackened with ashes (the slanderers were put to shame.*

The first letter of the first word in the hymn was “h” and the second word in the hymn was “M”. My father could use the choice of selecting “M” for my first name and name me again as Mohan Lal, the name earlier given by Purohit. Certainly, that was not the case, he accepted “H” for my name.

Apparently, that was an unusual day as I was the only child to be named. Secondly, my parents were visibly alarmed that they might not be caught with another sin of going back from their sacred oath should they chose “M” for my name. So they surrendered their right to the woman *granthis* and asked them to name me, and relay their decision to the *granthi* of Sri Panja Sahib. They did exactly the same and my name, Harbans Lal, was announced to the congregation. The woman *granthis* told my parents that the Guru had suggested it through the “order of the day” that the name must begin with word “har” meaning God. Further, since I was considered coming from the family of Guru Nanak, “har” should be follow by word “bans” meaning progeny to indicate the divine posterity.

Sikhs at the time lived mostly in northern areas of the Indian sub-continent. Thus the names came from the local linguistic vocabulary of the area. Often they were chosen for a deep spiritual meaning.

Bhen Narain ji determined that I was from the divine kinfolk of Guru Nanak. Similar was the sentiment of my parents and the accompanying community. Thus a name which reflected that understanding In Punjabi lexis was chosen to be the most suitable name; Harbans means “from the divine progeny”, and Lal means a jewel.

When the name was selected by the family and announced by the Panja Sahib *granthi*, the congregation gave approval by a collective *Jaikara* (or cheer): 'Jo Bolay So Nihal! Sat Sri Akal!'

The ceremony ended with the distribution of *Karah Prasad*, and the placing of Rumala over Guru Granth Sahib. *Karah Prasad* and sweets were distributed followed by Langar from the Guru's kitchen served to all.

Mind you that Lal was not the last name of my father and is not used by my siblings today. Harbans Lal expressed the sentiments of the village *granthis* who reflected on the child coming from the family of Guru Nanak. Further, they asked my parents to take an oath that the name thus given would never change. It was so committed in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

In my heart I dream Panja Sahib Gurdwara as my birth place, and my name given by the Guru never to be traded with another name ever or until it becomes again a wish of Guru Nanak.

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Let us compare the translations and/or interpretation of the following phrase (*sloka*) by some well-known theologians in Sikhism:

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## HOW DO WE INTERPRET GURBANI?

ਦੁਖ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ...

Dukh dārū sukh rog bhāiā ...  
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The translation of phrases and sabds in Gurbani are primarily literal; the use of allegories, metaphors and similes to communicate the main message is usually ignored. Moreover, the question-answer format of Gurbani is rarely considered, and it is often difficult to differentiate the question from the answer. Like the words of other languages, many Punjabi words have multiple meanings. For proper interpretation, the selection of the most appropriate meaning of each word depends on the context [1] (Chapter 6). The real message in a phrase or sabd can be discovered only by keeping the above points and some basic principles of philosophy of Guru Nanak in mind [1]. This system of interpretation has been named *Nanakian Methodology* [1] (Chapter 6).

The first complete interpretation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) was done in 1883 by Nirmalas educated at Banaras (Varanasi) [2]. This interpretation is inclined towards Vedantic philosophy [3]. Since then, this *teeka* (exegesis) became a prototype for other interpretations. Sahib Singh [4], Manmohan Singh [5] and many others followed this style without trying to discover the real message in the Gurbani. Advancements in science and social structure have created a dire need for exegeses of the AGGS in its real perspective for the generation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

ਦੁਖ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

Dukh dārū sukh rog bhāiā jā sukh tām na hoī.  
ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰਣਾ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਾ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੧॥

Tūn kartā karṇā mai nāhī jā hao karī na hoī. ||1||  
AGGS, M 1, p 469 [6].

### Faridkot Vala Teeka [7]:

ਵਿਖੇ ਸੁਖ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੂਆ ਹੈ ਐ ਜਪ ਤਪ ਕਾ ਦੁਖ ਐਖਧੀ  
ਭਇਆ ਹੈ। ਜਾਂ ਵਿਸਯ ਸੁਖ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ ਤਬ ਭਗਵਤ ਪਾਵਣੇ  
ਭਾਵ ਜਪ ਤਪ ਕਰਨੇ ਕੀ (ਤਾਮਿ) ਇਛਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਤੀ।  
ਭਾਵ ਜੇ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਕਾ ਦੁਖ ਹੈ ਏਹੀ ਭਯਾ ਰੋਗੁ ਅਰ  
ਤਿਸ ਕੇ ਦੂਰ ਕਰਨੇ ਕੇ ਸੁਖ ਰੂਪ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ੁਰ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਏਹੀ  
ਭਯਾ ਦਾਰੂ। ਜਬ ਸੁਖ ਰੂਪ ਨਾਮ ਦਾਰੂ ਜੀਵ ਕੇ ਮਿਲੇ ਤਉ  
ਆਮੇ ਰੋਗੁ ਕੈਨ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਰੂਪ ਦੁਖ ਸੇ ਪੁਨਾ ਪੁਰਸ਼ ਕੇ  
ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਤਾ ਹੈ॥ ਤੂੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਸਰੂਪ ਕਰਤਾ ਹੈਂ ਮੈਂ ਕੁਛ  
ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰ ਸਕਤਾ ਜੇ ਮੈਂ ਕੁਛ ਕੀਆ ਭੀ ਚਾਹੂੰ ਤੇ ਪਰਤੰਤ੍ਰ  
ਹੋਨੇ ਕਰਕੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਤਾ॥੧॥

### Sahib Singh [4]:

(ਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ! ਤੇਰੀ ਅਜਬ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਹੈ ਕਿ) ਬਿਪਤਾ (ਜੀਵਾਂ ਦੇ  
ਰੋਗਾਂ ਦਾ) ਇਲਾਜ (ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੀ) ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਸੁਖ (ਉਹਨਾਂ  
ਲਈ) ਦੁੱਖ ਦਾ (ਕਾਰਨ) ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ। ਪਰ ਜੇ (ਅਸਲੀ  
ਆਤਮਕ) ਸੁਖ (ਜੀਵ ਨੂੰ) ਮਿਲ ਜਾਏ, ਤਾਂ (ਦੁੱਖ) ਨਹੀਂ  
ਰਹਿੰਦਾ। ਹੇ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ! ਤੂੰ ਕਰਨਹਾਰ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਹੈਂ (ਤੂੰ ਆਪ ਹੀ  
ਇਹਨਾਂ ਭੇਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਦਾ ਹੈਂ), ਮੇਰੀ ਸਮਰਥਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੈ (ਕਿ  
ਮੈਂ ਸਮਝ ਸਕਾਂ)। ਜੇ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਕੁਝ ਸਮਝ ਲਵਾਂ  
(ਭਾਵ, ਜੇ ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਖਿਆਲ ਕਰਨ ਲੱਗ ਪਵਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਤੇਰੇ  
ਭੇਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝ ਸਕਦਾ ਹਾਂ) ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਫਬਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ

॥੧॥

**The main message given in Faridkot Wala Teeka in old Punjabi** has been put in simple Punjabi by **Sahib Singh**. It has been summarized as follows:

*Trouble or disease becomes the remedy, and the pleasurable and sedentary life becomes trouble or disease. But if one can attain Divine pleasure, then no trouble or disease can happen.*

*You (God) are the Creator and I am nothing. If I want to do something, even then I cannot do anything.*

**Manmohan Singh (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) [5]:**

*Pain is the medicine and pleasure the malady, and where there is pleasure, there is no desire for God. Thou art the Doer, I can do nothing; if I want to do, even then I cannot do since I cannot find Your secrets.*

**Sant Singh Khalsa [7]:**

*Suffering is the medicine and pleasure the disease, because where there is pleasure, there is no desire for God. You are the Creator Lord; I can do nothing. Even if I try, nothing happens. ||1|*

**Gurmat Learning Zone:** Recently this sloka was also discussed on *Gurmat Learning Zone* by some members as follows:

**Sohan Singh (UK), GLZ # 135671:**

I am not a psychologist, but have an enduring interest in the discipline. Here is my humble attempt to define:

Dukh daaroo sukh rog bha-ei-aa jaa sukh taam na ho-ee SGGS 1-469.

*Pain becomes the remedy and pleasure the disease when there is no yearning for God.*

He further explains:

When we are overly cheerful (in comfort), we tend to neglect important threats and dangers. It is not too big a stretch to suggest that being excessively

happy can kill you. You might engage in riskier behaviour like drinking too much (the typical Punjabi hackneyed words - *chuck dae*, *chuck dae* – empty your glasses comes to mind) or binge eat and become obese.

**Rawel Singh (India), GLZ # 135752:**

(Slok M: 1) Prologue\* by the first Guru. Comfort (*sukh-u*) becomes (*bhaiaa*) the disease (*rog-u*) - of forgetting the Master because one remains engrossed in the enjoyment of comforts; but pain/suffering (*dukh-u*) becomes the remedy (*daaroo*) – because then one remembers the Creator and seeks Divine help; if (*ja*) comfort (*sukh-u*) continues, then (*taam-i*) it does not happen (*hoi*), i.e. the Almighty is not remembered - that is *Maaiaa*.

O Almighty, You (*too-n*), not I (*mai*), are the doer (*karta*) of what happens (*karna* = to be done); if (*ja*) I try (*hau*) to do (*kar-i*) a thing on my own, it does not happen (*hoi*)- cannot be done by myself.

\*The word, *sloka*, has been translated as “prologue” by Rawel Singh; however, it means “an introductory section”. This *sloka* appears in a *Vaar* of Guru Nanak where there are many slokas added by Guru Arjan. According to Sahib Singh [4], the original *Vaar* composed by Guru Nanak was without slokas; therefore, sloka cannot mean “prologue” in this case (p 612 Vol 3). It is important to interpret words according to the context. All the slokas added in this *Vaar* are independent of the theme of the *Vaar*, but none of them indicate introduction to any of the *pauri* (stanza) of this *Vaar*.

**Parmider Jolly (UK), GLZ # 135756:**

Guru Nanak is asking if worldly *sukh*, which all people want to seek, is the cause of *dukh* (i.e. worldly *sukh*=*dukh*= *atmik sukh*). I do not understand the mysteries of these laws you have created, and I have no power of my own to understand except through your blessings.

All the above interpretations follow the same

inclination toward Vedantic philosophy established in 1883 (*Faridkot Wala Teeka*) in which people forget to praise and repeat the name of God when they are leading a pleasurable life. But when they are in trouble or catch a disease, then they start to praise and repeat the name of God.

Let us interpret this sloka, keeping in mind the appropriate meanings of words according to etymological study:

ਦੁਖੁ<sup>1</sup> ਦਾਰੁ<sup>2</sup> ਸੁਖੁ<sup>3</sup> ਰੋਗੁ<sup>4</sup> ਭਇਆ<sup>5</sup> ਜਾ<sup>6</sup> ਸੁਖੁ<sup>7</sup> ਤਾਮਿ<sup>8</sup> ਨ<sup>9</sup> ਹੋਈ<sup>10</sup> ॥  
Dukh dārū sukh rog bhāiā jā sukh tām na hoī.

#### Meanings of each word:

Disease/trouble/problem<sup>1</sup>, medicine/remedy<sup>2</sup>, pleasure/sedentary life<sup>3</sup>, disease/trouble/problem<sup>4</sup>, happened<sup>5</sup>, or<sup>6</sup>, pleasure/sedentary life<sup>7</sup>, ਤਾਮਿ<sup>8</sup> - a combination of ਤ and ਆਮਿ: ਤ (ਤਬ - then) and ਆਮਿ (ਆਮਯ - ਦੁਖ/ disease/trouble/problem), no<sup>9</sup>, happen<sup>10</sup>.

In the above phrase, ਜਾ<sup>6</sup> ਸੁਖੁ<sup>7</sup> ਤਾਮਿ<sup>8</sup> ਨ<sup>9</sup> ਹੋਈ<sup>10</sup> has been misinterpreted by many theologians as “When there is pleasure there is no desire to remember God.” But there is no such indication, since ਤਾਮਿ<sup>8</sup> does not mean ‘desire’ according to the above etymological meanings.

#### Interpretation:

*Disease/trouble/problem<sup>1</sup> is a medicine/remedy<sup>2</sup>, pleasure/sedentary life<sup>3</sup> begets diseases/trouble/problem<sup>4</sup> or<sup>6</sup> however, when pleasure/sedentary life<sup>7</sup> is attained by maintain physical and mental health through proper workouts, then disease does not<sup>9</sup> happen<sup>10</sup> again.*

#### Thematic interpretation:

*When somebody is living pleasurable and sedentary life\*, one becomes prone to a number of diseases/troubles/problems. However, those who exert (take pain/trouble) in workouts (structured*

*regime of physical exercise) are resistant to these issues. The workouts become the medicine/remedy to prevent all such diseases/troubles/problems; or (in other words), once a pleasurable and healthy life is achieved through proper workouts, then no such diseases can occur.*

**\*Note:** A pleasurable and sedentary lifestyle is the source of all sorts of problems and diseases: increased risk of colon and breast cancer, type 2 diabetes, dementia, heart attack, stroke, loss of lean muscle tissue, depression, weight gain, weakened immune system, etc.

ਤੂੰ<sup>11</sup> ਕਰਤਾ<sup>12</sup> ਕਰਣਾ<sup>13</sup> ਮੈ<sup>14</sup> ਨਾਹੀ<sup>15</sup> ਜਾ<sup>16</sup> ਹਉ<sup>17</sup> ਕਰੀ<sup>18</sup> ਨ<sup>19</sup>  
ਹੋਈ<sup>20</sup> ॥੧॥

Fū'n kartā karṇā mai nāhī jā hao karī na hoī. ||1||

#### Meanings of each word:

You<sup>11</sup> creator<sup>12</sup> do<sup>13</sup> I<sup>14</sup> not<sup>15</sup> or<sup>16</sup> I<sup>17</sup> can<sup>18</sup> not<sup>19</sup> do<sup>20</sup>

#### Thematic Interpretation:

*God (that Entity)<sup>11</sup>, the Creative Energy<sup>12</sup>, does<sup>13</sup> everything, but I<sup>14</sup> cannot<sup>15</sup> or<sup>16</sup> I<sup>17</sup> cannot<sup>19, 20</sup> do anything.* AGGS, M 1, p 469.

#### Overall theme:

Diseases are serious medical problems, and there are many hospitals specializing in the treatment of certain diseases. Most of these diseases need an interdisciplinary approach to ease suffering and improve the quality of life in humans.

One should also keep in mind that every action and reaction occurs according to the Laws of Nature/the Universe. God does not interfere in these laws; however, doctors use these laws to control various diseases.

#### CONCLUSIONS

It becomes very clear from the above study that proper interpretation of Gurbani by the application of ‘Nanakian Methodology’ could reveal the real theme intended by the author.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## GOD'S GIFT TO HUMANITY

By Dr. Harbans Lal

A while ago, I had an enlightening experience while visiting the Golden Temple, the holiest Sikh shrine. I visit Amritsar often and visit the Temple complex every time. The experience is always

rejuvenating. No wonder the city is known as the abode of bliss and blessings.

The Golden Temple, conventionally known as *Harimander* (abode of the Divine) among devotees, was founded on December 28, 1588. Its founder, Guru Arjan Dev, the Sikhs' Fifth Guru, asked his contemporary, Saint Mian Meer, a Muslim holy man with a large following and a spiritual adviser to the Mogul kingdom, to lay the foundation stone. History tells us that the land for building the town of Amritsar was a gift to Guru Arjan's mother from Emperor Akbar. Akbar had visited the Sikh Center where he shared a meal with the third Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Amar Das, and gifted the land to the young daughter of the Guru at that time.

Further, the Granth's author invited 34 holy men from different religions to the temple to contribute works to the Guru Granth, the scripture by which the Sikhs live and by which the millions of others feel inspired.

By founding the temple, development of the surrounding city, and installation of the holy book in the temple, the **Fifth Guru laid the foundation for an interfaith place of pilgrimage for people of all nations of the world**. He gave birth to the traditions of a **universal spiritual consciousness**: the consciousness to overcome the conflict among religions, between heaven and earth, the sacred and the secular, and the human and the Divine. The presence of spiritual understanding in the Golden Temple was meant to pervade the whole humankind.

Since its founding, the Temple has been invaded and desecrated three times by Afghan invaders (in 1757, 1762, and 1764). In modern times, it was assaulted by the armed forces of India in 1984. Astonishingly, it has been rebuilt each time with increased grandeur by thousands of devotees from various faiths and nations.

Today the holy city of Amritsar enjoys a beauty and harmony that are reminiscent of the Garden of

Eden. In the heart of the city, surrounding the Golden Temple, is “the spring of the water of life,” bright as crystal and producing ripples that seem to flow through the hearts of everyone who visits here.

From the Golden Temple (so called because it is covered with gold) where the sacred Guru Granth scripture is read continuously, there emanate constant vibrations for the healing of people and their hearts – people of all races, colors, and dispositions. The singing of spiritual hymns in classical ragas (musical tunes from the ancient Indian subcontinent) is central to Sikh worship; the sounds of this singing around the clock are a spiritual feast for visitors. Even those who do not understand the language describe the experience as emotionally and spiritually uplifting.



The Temple has four doorways facing each of the four directions: north, south, east and west. Strength in diversity becomes evident when you discover these entries from all four directions and hear the hymn on page 853 of the Guru Granth, saying,

ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੇ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥

*“Accept and save them, O Creator of the Universe, from whichever door people might enter.”*

When you hear this, you know that the clergy of the Sikh religion have surrendered any claims of exclusivity at the feet of the Divine.

On one occasion, I visited the Golden Temple as a guide for a group of interfaith delegates. They were followers of six different world religions, and came from nine different countries. They had come to participate in the International Conference on the Guru Granth, which was held in Amritsar at the Guru Nanak Dev University to deliberate the Sikh scripture’s interfaith wisdom.

The conference was being held at a time when the need for faith, wisdom, love, and compassion was felt greater than ever before. People were hungry for a vision and liberating truth, the participants felt, and our world desperately needed healing and renewal.

The scholars at the conference affirmed that, in this generation, the fundamental task of religious and educational leadership would be to discover “the spring of the water of life” and to help make it flow through the middle of our villages, towns, and cities. I felt that all of us were called to make it flow so that all people might be equitably nourished, and that the whole community life be purified and sustained. Building spiritual societies locally and a faith civilization globally will be aided by making “this water of life” flow through each of our own hearts and each of our communities.



The hymns being sung in the Temple stressed the

universal wisdom of world faiths. We stopped and prayed there for peace within and without. We prayed for the higher understanding of the faith through which each one of us would experience divinity and avow spiritual consciousness. A review of the history of the Golden Temple and the compilation of the Scripture residing in it taught us that, among religions, there were shared values and a universal foundation. They were of greater significance than the differences that historically divide people and the religions they follow.

I heard one last verse:

ਪਰਥਾਇ ਸਾਖੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਸਾਝੀ ਸਗਲ ਜਹਾਨੇ

॥ SGGS, p. 647

*“Wise men speak to individuals and to specific historical events, but their wisdom is God’s gift to all humanity for all the times.”*

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## THOU SHALT NOT HIDE THE LIGHT

By Dr. Harbans Lal



Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Panjab, Guru Granth Sahib Procession

A debate has recently sprung up on the imposition of restrictions on the Guru’s travels abroad. One recent write up was about the unpleasant experience of Col Anand, who attempted to bring a copy of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) from India to Canada. Letters following an article by the Sikh scholar and activist Dr. Inderjit Singh in the Sikh Review highlighted the deep anguish the Sikh community is experiencing on this issue. No one knows the reason for this sudden clamping down of limits on the Guru’s unrestricted availability outside the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib Complex in Amritsar, India.

Clearly this is not about the respect that is due the Guru Granth Sahib. There is no disagreement that utmost respect is appropriate. The issue is that the current policy diminishes the ability of Sikhs and their friends worldwide to develop and cement a relationship with the Guru Granth Sahib. Only recently, I described the inspiring tradition of [A Leap of Faith](#), the *Gur-Charni\_lago* event, that is celebrated among the Sikhs, and urged that it be revived across all the oceans. How will our youth celebrate their Oath if free access to the Guru Granth Sahib is denied to them. I therefore wish to argue against the practice of restricting open

access to the *Jagat* Guru, Sri Guru Granth Sahib.



Sikh Soldiers carrying the Sri Guru Granth Sahib during World War 1



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### TABOO OF TRAVELLING OVERSEAS IS NOT NEW

In the year 2000, religious leaders from around the world, on special invitation, graced the land of the United States to celebrate the Millennium year. I had the pleasure of being personally involved with the events held at the United Nations campus in New York and at the World Center for Thanksgiving in Dallas, Texas. Meeting and mingling with world religious leaders gave me, among other things, a real appreciation and understanding of how diverse the celebration of religiosity among world's religions was. One particular observation is relevant to this essay.

Some denominations of Hinduism sent lower level leadership, while some other denominations completely shunned travel to participate in international gatherings. We were told that their top religious leadership was forbidden to cross waters over the continents. On further exploration, I found that travelling overseas was forbidden in those sects on religious grounds.

There is a belief in Hindu mythology that crossing over an ocean is a religious sacrilege punishable with wrath from fierce demons and monsters. Both *Manu Smriti* and the *Baudhayana Dharma Sutra* specifically advised against sea travels with severe penalties and penances.

Some who have incurred religious wrath in recent times for crossing the seas are notables like Tagore, Gandhi, Vivekananda, and Ramanujan, though they totally disregarded any religious judgment against them. Further, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the English suffered in their attempts to get Hindu labor across to Africa and

West Indies due to this reason. The crossing of the seas was termed crossing the dark waters or *Kaalaa Paani*. The British finally took large vessels full of water from the Ganges on board to keep these men contented.

A Brahmin explained the taboo as follows: This is because one cannot perform his daily 'pujas', the three-time 'sandyavandans' because the sun and moon were "in the wrong place at the wrong time". Moreover, if one goes out, he would have to compromise on those religious practices, 'touch' many unclean people and eat food prepared by "mlecchas (non- Aryan or non-Vedic follower)". Another reason was that India was a "Punjabhoomi (Holy land)" and the rest of the world was "karmabhoomi (Land of duty)". Furthermore, such a departure from this land entailed the end of the reincarnation cycle, as the traveler was cut off from the regenerating waters of the Ganges (thus the English solution of carrying Ganges water on ships).

[Vishnunarayanan Namboothiri](#), a noted poet who served as a priest at the [Sreevallabha Temple](#), was not allowed to enter the temple after he returned from an overseas trip to London. The temple authorities, led by the chief priest, asked him to go a thorough cleansing, penance, and *punaravrodha* (reinstallation) before he would be allowed in again. Namboothiri was asked to purify himself by reciting the [Gayatri Mantra](#) 1008 times.

It is heartening that as Hindus became more educated they began to reform. Now-a-days, most educated Hindus reject the above described restrictions on overseas travel, considering it a taboo of the past and an outdated belief, although there are many Hindu sects still hanging on to this taboo. Actually this is what Hindus would say of their religion – that Hinduism is not monolithic, nor centralized or uniform and that it has evolved over the centuries and still continues to change. So, should we wonder if the above described Hindu taboo has started seeping into the Sikh

customs to freshly invent restrictions on travels of our eternal Guru.

### NEITHER SIKH TEACHINGS NOR SIKH CUSTOM

Hearing all the description of travel restrictions only as Brahmanwad, similar restrictions on the travels of the Guru Granth should be foreign to us and very disturbing.

I am relieved to realize that our Guru's teachings, Gurmat, actually liberated us from such shackles – that **we would never be restricted in the Brahman way**. We envision our scholars, clergy, and gurus traveling all over the world to spread the message of universality and love. Further our SABD Guru had guaranteed us its presence wherever a Sikh would reside. We must trust the prediction of the scholars of Guru Arjan's court.

Bhai Gurdas described the whole schema of Guru Arjan in creating the volume of SGGS in Vaar 41, Pauri 21, as below.

ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਪੰਚਮ ਠਹਰਾਇਓ॥ ਜਿਨ ਸਬਦ ਸੁਧਾਰ ਗਰੰਥ ਬਣਾਇਓ॥ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਬਣਾਇ ਉਚਾਰ ਸੁਨਾਇਓ॥ ਤਬ ਸਰਬ ਜਗਤ ਮੈ ਪਾਠ ਰਚਾਇਓ॥ ਕਰਿ ਪਾਠ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜਗਤ ਸਭ ਤਰਿਓ॥ ਜਿਹ ਨਿਸ ਬਾਸੁਰ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਉਚਰਿਓ॥

*The Fifth Guru, Guru Arjun, edited the hymns to compose the Granth. Then he recited it to the congregation and prescribed its recitations for the whole world. The whole world would receive salvation through mindful recitation of the Granth.*

The scholars in the Guru Arjan's congregation made this prediction:

ਉਗਵਣਹੁ ਤੈ ਆਬਵਣਹੁ ਚਹੁ ਚਕੀ ਕੀਅਨੁ ਲੋਆ ॥ Balvand and Sata (SGGS, p. 968)

*Your good self (Guru SABD) and your teachings are the source of light which may shine from the East and the West and spread to enlighten all continents.*

## BRAHAMANWAD NOT ANTICIPATED AMONG SIKHS

**Little did we knew that our expectations of the Guru's presence travelling all over the world would be sabotaged by our own Sikh clergy in our own life time, and that the Brahmanwad as described above in the case of Hinduism would seize us Sikhs too.** And, to our dismay, this is happening at a time when even the orthodox Hindu organizations are themselves seriously considering backing away from this outdated philosophy.

For your reference, I am using the terms Brahmanism or Brahmanwad as a generic term, meaning the clergy-imposed religiosity, experienced virtually in every religion. So the Brahman as a generic term includes pundits, bhahes, mullahs, rabbis, and others who claim a special authority over management of their religions. Unfortunately, Brahmanwad engulfs every religion, soon after the Founder leaves for heavenly abode, but it is highly disturbing to see its occurrence in modern times. Our founding gurus spent ten lives in getting rid of such Brahmanwad.

### THE LATEST EXPERIENCE

Now, I want to tell you in brief what really happened to an active member of a Canadian Sikh congregation, or rather what transpired during his visit to India. You may find, though, that the story of Col. Anand is only a repetition of the similar experiences many others have undergone in a similar quest. So I leave out the specific details, but will gladly share them with those interested.

In essence, our priestly heads of important religious organizations in Punjab and Delhi take the one seeking the volume of SGGS around the bushes for several days until the seeker loses the patients and gives up. Their demands include hiring of five initiated Sikhs to ceremonially carrying the Guru in especially prepared automobile and then special seats for the party

carrying the Granth in the airplane, involving no stay in any hotel on the way. When direct demands of clergy become awkward, the seeker is distracted with one excuse or the other to his/her utter disappointment and exhaustion.

The seekers are told in so many ways that the SADB Guru could not fly overseas with only any individual. This disappoints countless visitors from abroad who go to Amritsar or Delhi with deep desires to have the Guru Granth volume to install the Guru in their homes for daily obeisance, recitation and *vichaar* of Guru's hymns.

The current restrictions rule out completely any access to SGGS volume for Sikhs living outside India, be it Europe, UK, North America, Africa, Middle East, or South East Asia. Even within India, it will be very expensive to have five initiated Sikhs travel in a specially prepared van to deliver the volume of the Granth, say, in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, or Bangalore by road.

It is not my purpose to criticize any particular person or organization, but rather to blame the system that our clergy have instituted to invoke restrictions. They make it very difficult, if not impossible, for any wisdom seeker to take home a copy of our sacred scripture particularly when flying overseas.

It is this very fanaticism that resulted in removing the copies of the Guru Granth from Indian Embassies and university libraries throughout North America. This deprives access to millions of people to the Guru Granth for reading or research. All this has been done in the name of "Satkar (reverence) for SGGS."

According to reports I receive from seekers of the Guru Granth, there appears to be a well-thought out sinister move under way to sabotage direct access of individuals to the Guru. Why else would Sikhs living outside Punjab, particularly outside India, be denied the opportunity to have SGGS at their residence – the opportunity to be able to recite SGGS themselves (do Sehaj Path), to

initiate the children to the Guru, and to take into their heart the divine wisdom contained therein (GuruMat).

### WAS RESTRICTING GURU EVER A TRADITION?

To the contrary, the compiler and composer of SGGS, Guru Arjun, advised that the *Guru's Word or composition may abide with every soul everywhere*.

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਬਚਨੁ ਬਸੈ ਜੀਅ ਨਾਲੇ ॥ SGGS, p. 679

Then the scribe of the Granth, Bhai Gurdas, predicted that the *home after home would serve as the abode for the Guru Granth*.

ਘਰ ਘਰ ਅੰਦਰ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ਹੋਵੈ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਸਦਾ ਵਿਸੇਆ॥

ਬਾਬੇ ਤਾਰੇ ਚਾਰ ਚਕ ਨੇ ਖੰਡ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਸਚਾ ਢੋਆ॥ Gurdas,

Var 1, Pauri 26.

### DO SIKHS EVER IGNORE THEIR GURU'S INSTRUCTIONS?

Of course, not! The Guru Granth volume was first installed as Pothi Sahib in 1604 and it was canonized as SGGS in 1708. Since then the sacred volumes have been transported by whatever means available to the various parts of the Indian subcontinent. No one ever reported any sacrilege being committed anywhere in those days. One is at a loss why the *Satkar* (reverence) is being made an issue now.

We should refresh our memory of the days when the sacred volume of SGGS was carried in a leather holder slung from the saddle of a horse during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many of us are both well past our seventh decade and have seen during our lifetimes SGGS volume packed in a suitcase being transported on a Tonga (horse buggy), bus, train or horseback, all in the lap of the faithful.

It is not even a couple of decades ago that the restriction on the Guru's travel was first heard.

Before then, the SABD Guru was transported and distributed freely among the Sikh congregations and the homes of individual wisdom seekers.

### GURMAT AND SIKHISM ENTERING THE WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS WITH SGGS'S UNRESTRICTED ACCESS

Let me illustrate with the case history of Christian minister, Rev. Dr. H. L. Bradshaw, of Oklahoma City. He developed a fascination with Sikhism through some Sikh students he met at the University of Oklahoma. He began to write articles on Sikhism that were published in Sikh media including the Sikh Review. He then made a pilgrimage to Amritsar where SGPC met with him and gave him books on Sikhism to take back. He was also given a copy of the Guru Granth to carry in his suitcase in order to establish a Sikh congregation in Oklahoma, which he did.

Soon after his Amritsar visit and publicity of his starting a Sikh congregation, I heard from SGPC, asking me to visit Dr. Bradshaw to help him where needed. If my memory is correct, I visited Dr. Bradshaw in 1959 and spent a night at his home.

I found that Dr. Bradshaw could not establish a Sikh congregation so he asked me to take his copy of the Guru Granth with me. He could not read Punjabi, and the students who had kindled the spark of Sikhism in him had already left the town. Thus, I transported the sacred volume to Chicago with me in my car. We had formed the Sikh Study Circle there to meet weekly and held small congregations at the University of Chicago in the Guru's presence.

### HOW COULD I MAKE THE GURU ACCESSIBLE

In due time, Sikh students studying in universities all over the Midwest USA found out that I was honored with a copy of the Guru Granth for the benefit of various Sikh congregations. They began to ask me to lend them the SABD Guru for their

Sikh functions. I traveled with the Guru to Madison, Milwaukee, several nearby towns in Indiana, Illinois, and a couple of times to Ohio where late Dr. Kharag Singh of Sikh Research Institute, Dr. Gurbaksh Singh of Punjab Agriculture University, and their colleagues were studying at Ohio University. They invited me with my Guru for Sikh celebrations. They were very appreciative and supportive of the Guru's visits to various campuses.

A few years later, around 1975, late Sardar Phulel Singh of Takht Sri Patna Sahib had moved to Toronto. One of his missions, he told me, was to provide the Guru to where ever requested. Besides his distributing the Granth mostly directly, I recall taking the volumes of the Guru Granth from him to deliver to various sangats in a number of places in North America. All felt very blessed on the availability of the Guru in the foreign lands. They were all very thankful for this service undertaken by Sirdar Phulel Singh. Sirdar Sahib told me that he imported container loads of the sacred volumes of SGGS for distribution in North America.

Sikhism was really coming to the age of its being without borders with SGGS freely available.

Is it not a pity that the son of the same Sardar Phulel Singh was recently denied permission to take the Guru Granth volume to his home in Toronto.

#### **BHAI KAHN SINGH TO MR. MACAULIFFE**

Bhai Kahn Singh personally gave a copy of the Guru Granth to late Max A. MacCauliffe, asking him to pack it in his suitcase and take it to UK for his personal use. Giani MacCauliffe's Muslim servant, who travelled with him must have packaged his luggage.

Let me ask our SABD Guru for instructions on its being taken from place to place to make it freely available to all.

#### **CLOUD BURST OF GURBANI**

There is a beautiful story from the times of Guru Ram Das reported by Sikh historian, Bhai Santokh Singh.

A delegation of Hindu religious scholars under the leadership of Pundit Mohan Lal came to visit the Guru. The members were well known Pundits or leaders of Brahmanic tradition. Their mission was to express their concern regarding the language and mode of propagation the Guru was using to freely spread Gurmat message among people.

They loudly articulated their concern and attempted to persuade the Guru to use the language of the religious elite, Sanskrit, in order to impart Guru Nanak's doctrines. Further, the same elite should be given charge to further impart the sacred knowledge; the hymns of Guru should not be distributed unrestricted.

They were disappointed that the Guru rejected the suggestion and used the metaphor of rain to make his point forcefully. Bhai Santokh described it as follows:

ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਕੁਪ ਜਲ ਜੈਸੇ। ਬਰੇਸਾਇ ਕੇ ਕਿਤੀ ਜੈਸੇ

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਬਾਣੀ ਮੇਘ ਸਮਾਨ। ਬਰਸੈ ਚਹੂੰ ਦਿਸਿ ਬਿਖੈ ਜਗਾਨ ॥

*The divine message, the Guru said, was like water to a thirsty person or to a germinating plant. Divine knowledge in Sanskrit or Arabic is like the water kept in deep wells. It takes effort to draw it. It can quench the thirst only of those persons only, or water only their crops, who possess the means of drawing water in this manner. No sharing was possible as the quantity thus drawn was sufficient only to satisfy the needs of the holder of the bucket.*

In contrast, the Guru's Wisdom, Gurmat, was manifested in Gurbani (repository of Guru's wisdom) in a language and mode which served like a cloudburst. It showered everywhere without restriction. It turned the crops of everyone, in every field, green; it reached mountains and valleys alike, birds and mammals alike, animals and human alike, educated and uneducated alike, poor and rich alike. (See Santokh Singh, Sri Gur

*Partap Suraj Granth, Raas 1, Part 46, p. 1518.  
Reprinted Amritsar, Khalsa Samachar, 1954.)*

## STERN CONDEMNATION OF CONSTRAINING THE GURU

The Guru Granth sternly condemned those who hide their Guru behind walls of restrictions. For example, Guru Ram Das condemned those who hide their Guru behind rituals and restrictions.

**ਜੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਪੇ ਆਪਣਾ ਸੁ ਭਲਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਪੰਚਹੁ ਓਨਿ ਲਾਹਾ ਮੂਲੁ  
ਸਭੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥ SGGS, p.304.**

*O chosen people, O self-elect, one who hides the  
Guru from others is not a good person. Such a  
person will lose every advantage that he and  
others could take from the Guru's teachings.*

**ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਪਿਆ ਆਪਣਾ ਸੇ ਲੈਦੇ ਢਹਾ ਫਿਰਾਹੀ ॥SGG  
S, p. 308**

*Those who hide the Guru are wandering around  
aimlessly, moaning and groaning.*

**ਜਿਨਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੋਪਿਆ ਆਪਣਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਠਉਰ ਨ ਠਾਉ ॥ SGG  
S, p. 314**

*Those who hide their Guru shall have no home  
or place of rest.*

## CONCLUSION

There are reports of unprecedented restrictions imposed on the transportation of SGGS Volume from Amritsar or Delhi, where alone it is available (printing copies elsewhere are forbidden). These restrictions are going to cause damage to the practice of Sikhi in the long run. The effect is already being felt by the Sikhs living across the oceans. We call upon the Sikh Nation to find a solution.

The priestly class has not yet pronounced that the average Sikh cannot read Sri Guru Granth Sahib himself/herself so that a priest must be hired to read scripture for them. But these restrictions, in

time, could take us to that conclusion. The results of this will be quite unsavory to Sikhi, Sikhism, and Sikh Nation.

The Guru never restricted Guru's movements across the oceans so it be read by people everywhere. Restrictions have only existed among religions under Brahmanic management.

Surprisingly, the restrictions being imposed are under the garb of promoting reverence to the Guru. However, any look into the Guru's hymns or writings of Bhai Gurdas will readily reveal that the reverence lies in reading to understand the message of the sacred hymns. Any mode of reverence that restricts access to the Guru will only be a practice of Brahmanic religiosity. It will do serious harm to the future of global Sikhi. In conclusion, let me quote our Guru directly on the issue under discussion.

**ਭਾਈ ਰੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੂਝੈ ਕੇਇ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੈ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਵਣੈ  
ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਖੇਇ ॥SGGS, p.33.**

*O Siblings of Destiny, there are only a few  
wisdom-oriented ones who would cognize and  
comprehend the Guru Granth verses; any ritual  
or deed done devoid of understanding the sacred  
hymns will waste any precious opportunity of  
one's life.*

**ਸੇ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਜੋ ਸਬਦ ਨ ਪਛਾਨਹਿ ॥ SGGS, p. 1054**

*Those who do not comprehend the message of  
the Guru SABD are following their humanoid  
mind instead of being Guru oriented.*

**The real Satkar of SGGS lies in reading,  
reciting, and singing the sacred hymns  
oneself, vicharna, understanding them,  
contemplating them, believing in their  
guidance, and sincerely living life as per  
Guru's instructions. The most awful disrespect  
for SGGS is either to ignore it, or to hire others  
to recite it on your behalf when you are not  
even present.**

*Send all communications to the author:*

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## DO I HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SCIENCE VS RELIGION?

By Dr. Harbans Lal

**Science, Religion and Culture are three forces that greatly affect our world.**

It is no exaggeration to say that the course of human history will depend on the relationship between these disciplines, and the impact and influence each area has on society. Intellectuals, for example, will be attracted to religions that are mainly dynamic, progressive, and at peace with science.

**Science has succeeded remarkably in learning about the workings of the human brain and the earth and universe around us. It is unlocking the code of life by mapping human DNA, tracing the history of the known universe, and disclosing virtually all physical and biological phenomena in impressive detail.**

And until recently, science and religion co-mingled well in Sikh society. Sikh clergy simply

ignored science, as their educational handicaps did not permit the implications.

There were exceptions, such as Dr. Raghbir Singh Bir, Professor Puran Singh, and Professor Hardev Singh Virk. Bir fathered a movement still remembered as Atam Science, the science of the soul. It publishes a monthly newsletter from Chandigarh. Dr. Hardev Singh Virk gathered the views of a number of Sikh intellectuals for a book on the subject of Science and Religion.

Yet this is still the bare minimum compared to the debates seen in many other cultures – and most Sikh scientists remain humble before the Guru Granth and refrain from speaking out. It is only recently that limited conflict has begun to disrupt our peaceful society.

Some academics are beginning to feel that religion is an outdated institution in the face of science. They do not observe the dynamism in religion that they see in other areas of life. To many, religion belongs in a history museum.

In fact, Science and Religion are usually discussed under titles such as Science vs. God, Science vs. Religion. Can Religion Stand Up to the Progress of Science, and so on? They are drawn mostly from the long-standing debate between Christianity, particularly the Book of Genesis, and scientists like Darwin and a century's old line of physicists, astronomers, and biologists.

Several books on the subject frequently reach the bestsellers list and their many polemicists who attest for interest in the subject (see Raman, 2009). Ideally, the objectives of Science and Religion should be complementary. And they are, as far as present Sikh society is concerned. The methodology and levels of sophistication may be different; however, they share the same goal of understanding reality.

## THE DEBATE

When we consider Sikhee or Gurmat (the wisdom

of the Guru Granth), the phrase, Science versus Religion may be worrisome (For discussion, see Singh 2009). Such phrases are derived from long-standing debates in Christianity about Science and Religion. It always seems that there is a conflict between the two disciplines and their derivatives.

According to their tradition, science and religion say different and contradictory things about the same domain. For example, in the view of certain conservative Christians, the biblical view of creation differs from scientific theories of cosmology. They think that evolution is both bad religion and bad science, while religion is thought to be a good science. Their anthropomorphic God has the powers of a super human being. When we consider Sikhism however, there is little conflict on these or similar issues. **In fact, science might be the one important asset of the Sikhism.** Let me explain.

Soon after partition of Indian subcontinent, I joined Punjab University for the degree program in Pharmaceutical Sciences (1949-52). The school was located in the Glancy Medical College in Amritsar. We started to hold informal and formal study circles where Sikh students and teaching staff of the medical college would gather to talk about issues in Sikhism. I recall one gathering where the late **Dr. Harbhajan Singh of Pathology Department suddenly asked me a question. "Which section of the civil society would be more amenable to appreciate Gurmat", he asked. I recalled responding; the scientists of course.** Scientists are rational in seeking the truth, so is the Guru's Wisdom, Gurmat, as it is manifested in the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib. They will be at home with each other.

I remember this discussion because the next day I saw it reported in the Punjab press. It was unusual for the Punjab press to report a study circle but it must be due to the attractiveness of the topic. Of course, the attendees of the Study Circle asked me for an explanation, which took the rest of the

evening that became worth reporting by the Sikh press. Indeed this was the subject of interest then, and is an important subject today.

## NATURE AND ITS STUDY

**Science is popularly defined as a systematic study of nature and its laws. The term science comes from the Latin "scientia" meaning knowledge. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, the definition of science is "knowledge attained through study or practice," or "knowledge covering general truths of the operation of general laws, especially as obtained and tested through scientific method..." What does that really mean?**

Science refers to a system of acquiring knowledge of nature and its creations. This system uses observations and experimentations to describe and explain natural phenomena. What is the purpose of science? Perhaps the most general purpose of science is to produce constructive and pragmatic models of reality in nature.

**In the Sikh vocabulary, nature and creation are based on God's 'Hukam' (meaning command, order, decree, etc.), which created and sustains the universe. To see God in Creation is the root of the mental picture we make about nature. We Sikhs practice this as a meditation on daily basis.**

**In Sikhee, nature and its creations are termed *kudrat*, the Creative Power of the Universe.** Guru Nanak described the relationship between *kudrat* and the Creator as:

**ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਕੈ ਵਸਿਆ ਸੋਇ**

Guru Arjan Dev, SGGS, p. 1096.

*God created kudrat, the Creative Power of the Universe, and then chose to dwell within it.*

**Kabir**, another contributor of the Guru Granth, corroborated it this way.

**ਲੇਗਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਨ ਭੂਲਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥**

**ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ**

**ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸੁਬ ਠਾਂਝੀ ॥**

Kabir, SGGS, p. 1096.

*O people, O Siblings of Destiny, do not wander deluded by doubt. The Creation is in the Creator, and the Creator is in the Creation, totally pervading and permeating all places.*

**To Guru Nanak, the Creator and all Creations were the same, as the Creator is manifested in Creation.** He symbolized this relationship in the commencing symbol inscribed in Sikh scripture, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, as **ੴ** Ek-Onkaar meaning the One Reality manifested, as well as expressed, in creation (For detail, read Lal, 2009). Guru Nanak goes on to say that, the Creator continuously watches over the *kudrat, the Creative Power of the Universe*, and casts all dices.

**ਵੇਖਹਿ ਕੀਤਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਕਰਿ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਪਾਸਾ ਢਾਲਿ ਜੀਉ**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 71

*The Creator watches over His own Creation, and through His All-powerful Creative Potency casts the dice.*

With respect to the realization of God, Guru Nanak said that God's presence and identity may be made out best through the reality of *kudrat*, the Creative Power of the Universe.

**ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ਸਿਨਾਖਤੁ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 141.

*Says Nanak, the Reality and the Giver of the Reality, are revealed through the kudrat, His All-powerful Creative Nature.*

The scientists, intellectuals and spiritual people alike pursue the study of nature or in religious terms, *kudrat, the Creative Power of the Universe*. This results in their becoming ecstatic; they fall in love with it. Guru Arjun expresses this phenomenon in his hymn as follows.

**ਕਰਤੇ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਮੁਸਤਾਕੁ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 724.

*O Creator, through Your kudrat, the Creative Power of the Universe, I fall in love with you.*

Guru Nanak continues further and claims that the Creator, after manifesting creation then contemplates the same.

**ਆਪੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜਿ ਕੈ ਆਪੇ ਕਰੇ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 143.

*He Himself created and adorned the Laws of Nature, and He Himself envisages it.*

That is, in a nutshell, the Sri Guru Granth view of nature and the study of its reality as a religious goal. There is no distinction made between a scientist and a theologian. With required educational training, a scientist may also become a theologian and vice a versa. They both seek reality in their own ways and there is an affirmative relationship between them. **This may be the strongest Sikh statement on the relationship between science and religion.**

## RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Religion is an organized approach to human spirituality. It usually encompasses a set of narratives, symbols, beliefs and practices, often with a supernatural or transcendent quality. They give meaning to the practitioner's experiences of life through reference to a higher power: God, Gods, or ultimate truth.

For many, religion is spiritual or in some cases supernatural; and science is about the physical aspects of natural. This comparison, though attractive, is problematic because it proposes a duality towards reality. It is more productive to say that religion and science are about the same domain, namely, how humans experience Truth (natural or super natural).

**To search for truth by every means is the gist of the religion according to Guru Nanak,**

**ਏਕੇ ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ ॥**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 1188.

*To grasp the Truth is the only religion or a Dharma.*

**The universe was not created to be partitioned into distinct parts; instead, it must be regarded as an indivisible unit in which separate parts appear as valid approximations.**

Sikhism describes a single reality as Ekoankaar, ੴ, (EK) expressed in universal manifestation as Ounkaar ੴ (Onkaar), that is worshiped as Ek-Onkaar or infinite wisdom (*vahaguru*). The same reality vitalizes the universe as a whole. In reality, no separate or individual things exist on their own. The only such entity may be the self that is the one, which we have concordat or thought up; nothing in reality is so patterned.

The trouble between religion and science begins when religion is packaged in mythical stories and discourses. The language of religion is derived from those stories. They are symbolic discourses about the symbolic world. Then the construction of religious characters is derived from taking these stories literally, rather than symbolically or metaphorically.

To take the stories literally leads us into problematical assertions as they render the Creator into an anthropomorphic god. For example, all the biblical narratives, including the Gospels, or, of Quranic narratives, are anthropomorphic narratives of an invisible god,

In the ancient worlds, before the advent of Guru Nanak, mythic conscious prevailed and supernaturalism was an over powering, anthropomorphic tradition. As a result religion had become only a play to quiet down the child-like mind.

ਲੇਗਨ ਰਾਮੁ ਖਿਲਉਨਾ ਜਾਨਾਂ ॥

Kabir, SGGS, p. 1158

*Some people know God as a toy to pacify the restless mind.*

This is the foundation of some of the conflicts between religion and science. The Sikh scripture, the Sri Guru Granth, considers it contrary to the true spirit of religion to undermine any genuine human endeavor; especially science.

In contrast, science is not dogmatic and it is constantly revised and updated. It is public and universal. The community of scientists is not bound to a specific mythical idiosyncrasy. Instead, it seeks to escape the idiosyncrasies of local cultures. The Sikh vision supports this.

### INTERDEPENDENT AND COMPLEMENTARY

**Sikh teaching as recorded in the Sri Guru Granth, not only recognized a relationship between religion, science, logic and culture, it describes them as interdependent.** It recognizes the fact that interactions among these domains are the strongest forces that influence human history. It further makes it obligatory to recognize that we must distinguish genuine science from pseudoscience, the politics of selfish designs from doing good to humanity, and informed religion or spirituality vs. empty rituals and superstitions. It further concludes that the pursuit of learning about the cosmos by science or religion is not confrontational but complementary. Both approaches are valid in their own right and discipline.

ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੈ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥

Guru Amar Das, SGGS, p. 853.

*A seeker of Reality will be realized through whichever discipline one seeks.*

It is heartening to observe that the Western world is coming around the Sikh viewpoint in his regard. There are many pointers towards this.

In 1992, Sir John Templeton introduced a new

publication, entitled *Who's Who in Theology and Science*. He said he hoped that his publication would provide a stimulus for communication between individuals and organizations, and between scientific and theological communities. Most (but not all) of those included *see science and theology as related, complementary avenues of truth, and seek in some sense an integration of the ideas and concepts of these two spheres of research*, often recognizing that the God of Creation is the source of both the natural and the spiritual.

**Templeton seemed to be paraphrasing thoughts similar to those echoed by Guru Nanak nearly six centuries earlier. We are pleased that the contemporary consensus seems to be moving to this view. Guru Arjun wrote:**

ਸਰਗੁਣ ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਥਾਪੈ ਨਾਉ

॥ ਦੁਹ ਮਿਲਿ ਏਕੈ ਕੀਨੇ ਠਾਉ ॥

Guru Arjan, SGGS, Page, 387.

*The learned people call the Creator, with attributes as well as Unseen, without attributes. Both of these features coalesce in the formation of the Cosmos.*

For many scientists and theologians, the two disciplines are beginning to look similar; to others they are at the least complementary. They are talking about the same Truth, some with complementary views, others with different aspects of the same truth which in its full nature cannot be described adequately by either alone.

In October of 1999, a conference was held at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics by the new Templeton Commission on the Future of Planetary Cosmology. What was new in such a gathering of scientists was “the emphasis on extra-solar astronomy, with an eye to its ultimate significance as a spiritual quest (see Progress in Theology). It is of special interest that leaders of many prestigious science institutions were beginning to open up to the deeper significance of

scientific discovery, inviting lectures of “God and Science” at formerly closed institutions and universities.

Upon close perusal, a view is emerging that there are two versions of the complementary opinion, as it relates to the relationship between science and religion. There is a weaker version, according to which non-conflicting cooperation between scientists and religionists may prevail. However, the level of cooperation may not be powerful. The more powerful and stronger version will promote complementary observations, the alteration or absence of one of the observations would necessitate a change in the other, as MacKay proposed (MacKay, 1974). Science and religion are allies that must cooperate at a fundamental level. MacKay used an interesting analogy. To him science and religion are like the front and side projections of the plan of a building. One would need both to reconstruct the building, though because the projections are orthogonal, they are “blind,” to each other.

Acceptance of a complementary relationship permits close observation of the relationship between science and religion and insures integrity and enhanced productivity. As Sir John Templeton described in one of his essays: “they are talking about the same things, with complementary accounts, presenting different aspects of the same event which in its full nature cannot be described by either alone”.

Sometimes, when it is said that science and religion do not conflict, it may mean that they are about different domains: the natural and supernatural. The Guru Granth, in contrast, will support the notion that there is one domain, which is human experience under the guidance of divine knowledge and spiritual intellect. Science and religion may operate with different methodology, or in separate languages, but this is only to facilitate the search and not to divide the scientists and the theologians.

Religion has been plagued by reification, whereby derivatives have been treated as fundamental. Beings are considered substances and their relations considered accidents, and reality belongs to substances. This may be based on the influence of Aristotle who based his philosophy on the subject-object structure of the Greek idiom. This remains the basis of the modern debate among philosophers about the nature of relations.

As Dr. Virk and his colleagues emphasize, Guru Nanak spoke for science and religion. To Nanak, science and religion converge on the infinite creation without any conflict (Virk, 2009). Similarly, Bhaumik (2006) discussed advances in quantum physics to describe the basic units of living creation. Our discussion should on how to promote a spirit of understanding between scientists and theologians.

### FISH IN THE OCEAN

The search by a spiritually oriented seeker for the secrets of reality can be described by a metaphor of a fish in the ocean. Guru Nanak puts it this way in one of his hymns.

ਤੂ ਦਰੀਆਉ ਦਾਨਾ ਬੀਨਾ ਮੈ ਮਛਲੀ ਕੈਸੇ ਅੰਤੁ ਲਹਾ ॥

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 25.

*You are the River, All-knowing and All-seeing. I am just a fish-how can I find your extent?*

Fish, living inside the ocean, are unable to comprehend even an iota of the ocean. Similarly, humanity stand facing a vast, uncertain ocean of reality about which it may seek the knowledge. How old is this ocean? How vast is this ocean? How far might its exploration take those who will live in the future, and for whom what we know now may seem quaint?

Clearly, a panorama remains undiscovered. Knowledge about billions of galaxies around us, and trillions of biological units with a living body seems only a beginning. Whatever little we know should certainly humble those who explore. It does humble many scientists and spiritualists

alike. **Sir Isaac Newton** was one such great scientist. Near the end of a remarkably productive and inventive life (1642 – 1727) of extraordinary scientific accomplishments, he wrote that to himself he had seemed only **“like a boy, playing on the sea-shore, and delivering myself, in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”**

In the words of Templeton, indeed Newton was correct scientifically. Compared to his time, his insights can now be mastered by high-school students. Physics at the cutting edge has come a long way from his day into our contemporary age of quantum physics, curved space-time, supernova explosions, high temperature superconductivity, and ten-dimensional superstrings. There are many reasons to take great pride in what humanity has learned since Newton. However, we have also learned that human knowledge constantly expands and accelerates. So what the future is likely to bring over time surely will make even the most knowledgeable among us seem like children collecting pebbles on the seashore.

Five centuries ago, Guru Arjun further expressed his epistemology as:

ਬਿਸਮੁ ਭਏ ਬਿਸਮਾਦ ਦੇਖਿ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੇਰੀਆ ॥

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 521.

*I am wonderstruck beholding the marvel of Your Almighty Creative Power.*

### HUMAN INTELLIGENCE CREATED TO SEEK REALITY

Over millions of years of evolution, humans have acquired unique intellectual abilities and can comprehend many things on our planet. Out of all of God's creation, we know that currently only human beings are able to do this. That is, to tease out and to comprehend life and sometime, even to create it.

In this process of human evolution there occurred

an awesome mystery: human evolution worked for millions of years towards creating beings who possess the intellectual ability to think about their own creator, even to the extent that they conceived themselves as engineered in the image of God.

As far as we know, only humans among all life forms on earth have this ability to imagine God. This was engineered as human superiority over all life form known. The Guru Granth points to this awesome prospect through the following verses.

**ਅਵਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ**

**॥ ਇਸੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਕਦਾਰੀ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 374

*You are the person in charge on this earth;  
all other forms of life are in your obedience.*

The Sikh theologian of the Gurus' time, Bhai Gurdas, echoed the same belief.

**ਲਖ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਜੇਨ ਵਿਚ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮ ਦੁਲੰਭ ਉਪਾਯਾ॥**

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 8, Pauri 6.

*Among the hundreds of thousands of life forms, the human life is the most prized one*

**ਲਖ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਜੂਨਿ ਵਿਚ ਉਤਮ ਜੂਨਿ ਸੁ ਮਾਣਸ ਦੇਹੀ॥**

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 15, Pauri 3.

*Among the hundreds of thousands of birth forms, the supreme birth is that of a human.*

When Homo Sapiens developed the power to seek the Creator, they began to devise approaches to investigate and learn both physical and metaphysical world around them. At the same time, spiritual awaken also began to take birth. The objective was to reach a significant level of awareness about the Creator and His creation.

Human consciousness, combined with intelligence and the extensive capacity of the brain for learning and memory provides us with the impetus of knowledge of the unknown. We therefore live in communities of seekers and participate in shared knowledge and activities. This urge is manifested in our prayers.

**ਤੁਮਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਤੇ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹ ਪਾਈ ਹੈ**

**ਦੇਹੁ ਦਰਸੁ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਇਆ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 207

*It is through your Grace that I am given the human life. Now, it is my prayer that You bestow Your presence in my consciousness, O' God.*

**Sikhs consider it a matter of great privilege for humans to be so wonderfully created that they have minds that allow them to sense and participate in the rich reality that surrounds humanity.**

To impress this pride, Guru Arjan witnessed this evolutionary talent of human minds and took this opportunity to alert the human family so they do not neglect this gift of a superior faculty of mind.

**ਕਾਚੇ ਭਾਡੇ ਸਾਜਿ ਨਿਵਾਜੇ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮਾਈ ॥**

**ਜੈਸਾ ਲਿਖਤੁ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਧੁਰਿ ਕਰਤੇ ਹਮ ਤੈਸੀ ਕਿਰਤਿ ਕਮਾਈ॥੨॥**

**ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਥਾਪਿ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਅਪਨਾ ਏਹੋ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣਾ**

**॥ ਜਿਨਿ ਦੀਆ ਸੇ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਮੋਹਿ ਅੰਧੁ ਲਪਟਾਣਾ॥੩॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 882.

*God created and adorned the earthen vessels (human bodies) and infused His Light within them. As are the imprints made by the Creator, so are the deeds we do. The human began to believe that the mind and body were all his own; this became the cause of his births and rebirths. Certain humans may not think of the One who gave them these boons; they are blind, as they are being entangled in emotional blindness.*

Thus as human beings, we are endowed with a highly developed mind, spirit, and purpose. We can think, imagine and dream. Through these gifts, we are urged to search for future concepts in a rich expanding diversity of human thought and the creations around it. We may realize that in some ways we are created by infinite wisdom for an accelerating adventure of creativity into the

Infinity.

### NARCISSISM IS A STUMBLING BLOCK

One of the lessons we learn from modern metaphysics is that, both in the East and the West, accomplishments in learning promote narcissism (self-worth or Ego). Therefore, we must be warned so that we don't lose the proper perspective. Empty debates to inflate ego are counterproductive; they derail any productive understanding of Reality.

Guru Nanak addressed this question many times.

ਵਾਦਿ ਅਹੰਕਾਰਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮੇਲਾ ॥

ਮਨੁ ਦੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸੁਹੇਲਾ ॥

ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਦੁਹੇਲਾ ॥

Guru Nanak, SGGS, Page, 226

*Union with the Creator or God is not obtained if one is engaged in debates that boost narcissism. Only by dedicating the mind to seek wisdom, one may gain knowledge of the divine identity. On the contrary, the pursuit of duality is ignorance that may lead you to suffering.*

Scientists are trained in the mindset of inquiring about truth, and they are rewarded in the process of pursuing of truth. The condition is that they must be true scientists, and not just there to inflate their ego. This is not a trivial point. In reality, the ego of scientists is often seen as an obstacle, which leads to a closed-minded attitudes and the belief that scientists might know it all.

On the converse, our religious clergy are trained with a mindset of privileged communication with divine, and this may not allow them to be free of the same obstacle of ego. The narcissism of "they may know it all because they are holy and science is only a blind man's crutch" is equally hindering. The Sikh scripture talks about this situation. For example,

ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਮਹਾ ਅਹੰਕਾਰਾ ॥

ਪੂਜਾ ਕਰਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਬਿਸਥਾਰਾ ॥

Guru Arjan, SGGS, P, 1348.

*Often when worship and exegeses are performed with various modes of myths and rituals, they actually exhibit anger and massive ego dwelling in the mind of the clergy.*

ਪੰਡਿਤ ਪੜਹਿ ਪੜਿ ਵਾਦੁ ਵਖਾਣਹਿ ਤਿੰਨਾ ਬੂਝ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥

-Guru Amar Das, SGGS, p 18.

*If the religious scholars and theologians research and study to prepare for argumentation, they would seldom understand the essence.*

Both Eastern and Western scholars are indeed recognizing the obstacle of narcissism. As, late Sir John Templeton used to say, narcissism to him was not so much a personal flaw but rather a habit of the mind which inhibited the learning process necessary for appreciating others' views or disciplines. He desired that religious institutions be at par with the centers for scientific discoveries.

It is certain that we are endowed with innate urge to discover and we are given mind and spirit as well as natural resources to do so. We can think, imagine, dream and devise ways to discover as scientists as well as theologians.

However, many seem to be blinded to obstacles that we are constantly erecting. We talked about the narcissism of science in a prior section. Unfortunately, our religious leadership represented by clergy class is not immune to the same stumbling block either. Our clergy and spiritual leaders are often not inspired to hope that the spiritual future could, or should, be beyond what they have learnt from their equally egoistic leadership. They do not envision that progress in religion is possible by appreciating ways that sciences have learned to be creative.

For so many clergy, the practice of religion is nothing beyond the preservation of ancient traditions. Many of them do not want to consider the possibility of progressively unfolding spiritual discoveries.

**Instead, Guru Nanak and his successors led us to the appreciation of a unique intellectual faculty he called *Surat*: being devoid of narcissism so that one can truly understand the reality of human life.**

**ਹਉਮੈ ਛੇਡਿ ਭਈ ਬੈਰਾਗਨਿ ਤਬ ਸਾਚੀ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਮਾਨੀ ॥**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 1197.

*Abandoning narcissism, I have become detached.  
And only then, I engross the true intuitive  
understanding.*

What will be profitable is to accept the notion that religion holds new possibilities in the future as it clearly does for the future of science. If we keep our mind open, the adventure of science can both inspire and lend a hand to religion towards exploring a rich future of “boundless possibilities” in marching closer to the Reality.

According to the scripture, the human race, even after thousands of years of historical development, is still at the dawn of new creation. This offers an opportunity that should humble our clergy as it does our scientists.

**ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥**

**ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥**

Guru Arjan, SGGS, p. 12.

*You are gifted with human faculty and resources  
as a unique opportunity to meet up with the  
sustaining power of the creator.*

When we are humble in our attitude and we welcome new ideas about the spirit, just as we welcome new scientific and technological ideas, we may readily discover solutions to human agony.

The humility that our Gurus labored to inculcate will diminish parochialism in religion. Humility may make an impact on us that our concepts of god, the inner as well as the outer universes are very limiting. We are reminded all the time by our

saints that we are all too self-centered. We overestimate the small amount of knowledge we possess. Guru Baani asks us to admit the infinity of creation and the boundless possibilities within it. These teachings apply to scientists as they relate to people focused on religion.

A productive way to cultivate a spirit of humility is to open up to the possibility of our existence within a divine reality that dwarfs our personal reality.

**ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥**

**ਬਨਿ ਮੂਏ ਕਿਉ ਪੂਰਾ ਹੋਇ ॥**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 152

*One, who dies in humility before the divine  
wisdom, shall never again have to die. Without  
such a death, how can one obtain fulfillment?*

The question naturally arises, can science or religion, or both, or neither, gives us truth. I must agree with Sir John Templeton who cautiously speaks of science and religion as “complementary avenues of truth.” This is a more contemporary assessment of science and religion. This is much better than the older view that either science or religion speaks truth, but not both. Perhaps we should approach this weighty question by first considering science and religion in series, then together.

Scientists labor in the service of truth as do the religious seekers, all in the interest of a better understanding of the physical and spiritual worlds. As regards religion and truth, we must avoid the appearance of the superiority of one religion over another. Guru Nanak was a sacrifice to as many identities of God; he then respected all people.

**ਸਿਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਲੋਕਾ ਪਾਵੈ ਹੈ ॥**

**ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਜਾਉ ਜੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਵੈ ਹੈ –**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 1168.

*Nanak places his head at the feet of all people and  
is a sacrifice to as many identities ascribed to You,  
O’ God.*

The total relationship of things in the universe may constitute the Truth, because things are insofar as they are in relation to one another. However, this relation is not a private relation between a subject and an object. It is a universal relationship so that it is not for any private individual or group to exhaust any relationship. Truth is relational, thus relational to me. However, it is never private. The highest ideal is reached when scientific understanding and religious truth are found in the same person.

Nature and spirit are not two completely different kinds of reality. The distinction between them results from different ways of looking at the same reality. Anyone who deeply comprehends nature discerns a spiritual unity at its base. Moreover, complete, true spirit is united with nature; only one reality exists in the universe.

Towards, the creator and his creation, evolution need no longer travel taking only its previous slow path. Possibly, it was the creator's plan that one day his children could serve as useful tools for his creative purposes by endlessly advancing forward.

**ਆਗਾਹਾ ਕੂ ਤ੍ਰਾਪਿ ਪਿਛਾ ਫੇਰਿ ਨ ਮੁਹਤੜਾ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 1096.

*Keep moving forward; do not turn your face backwards.*

## CONCLUSIONS

The case is made that science is in harmony with Sikhism. Sikh philosophy is able to articulate and elucidate the relational character of what we might understand as "reality", in both religious and scientific contexts. Religion and science work together in understanding reality according to such a relational paradigm. Sikhee, the Guru's path, accepts the implications of a thoroughly relational thinking even when such thinking implies that, in its pursuit, one may never fully interpret reality in human language.

**ਜੇ ਹਉ ਜਾਣਾ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹਣਾ ਕਥਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 1096.

*Should I know the Reality, I may not be able to*

*describe it in human in language. The Creator may rarely be described in words.*

Guru Nanak sought truth itself; truth grounded in a reality that would stand beyond all interpretation. It is outside all contexts.

Most scientists learn to avoid the stagnation that comes from accepting a fixed perspective. The Sikh scientists that I know are similarly epistemological open-minded, always seeking to discover new insights and new perspectives. To a Sikh scientist, the expanse and the wonders of the creation brings humility, as well as a challenge for creativity all in the partnership with the Creator as it is often quoted in the Guru Granth hymns.

**ਪਿਤਾ ਹਮਾਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੇ ਮਾਝ ॥ ਪਿਤਾ ਪੂਤ ਰਲਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਸਾਂਝ ॥**

Guru Arjun, SGGS, p. 1096.

*My Father, the Creator, has revealed Himself within me. This way Father and son have joined together in partnership of the creativity.*

I once asked my friend, Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany, a scientist of worldwide recognition, to tell me which hymn from Guru Granth Sahib he remembered to hum in the past few days. He right away came up with a hymn of Guru Nanak recorded on page 14 in Sri Guru Granth Sahib,

**ਪੰਖੀ ਹੋਇ ਕੈ ਜੇ ਭਵਾ ਸੈ ਅਸਮਾਨੀ ਜਾਉ ॥**

**ਨਦਰੀ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਆਵਉ ਨਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੀਆ ਨ ਖਾਉ ॥**

**ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਉ ॥**

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 14

*Were I a bird, soaring and flying through hundreds of heavens, or if I could become invisible, reaching a super human state where I could live without eating or drinking anything.*

*Even so, I could not still even guess Your magnanimity. How can I then describe your indescribable identity?*

All of us have favorite hymns that reveal our state of mind based upon our life attitudes. A scientist and theologian will both venture into the

magnanimity of Creation but may describe different versions of the pathways.

Science can both inspire and assist religion to explore a rich future of boundless possibilities. Education in science at the same time when we are learning the Guru Granth can also make us realize that the Sikh religion is much beyond the preservation of ancient traditions that are often stressed by many clergy if they are not well versed in science.

**To be an enviable Sikh society, what is true of the scientists had to be true of the religious scholars and Sikh clergy as well. The Guru Granth teaches them all to be humble in front of indescribable expanses of nature and the laws of creation.**

In humility, clergy must accept challenges to older assumptions and let the religious rites and meditations not remain stuck on ritualistic traditions. Instead, they must unveil the Creator through the connectivity with the Creation that our religious practices may offer. To me that is what a meditation on Ek-Onkaar or Vahaguru (Infinite Wisdom) means and that is what Gurmat Symbol of ੴ (One Reality expressed through the Vast Creations) means. Being a scientist by profession and a Sikh by faith, I can appreciate the relationship very well.

In conclusion, Sikhee supports a positive relationship between science and religion. It considers any weakening of this relationship to be damaging to the civil society. It further stresses that the key in accepting positive cooperation between science and religion is to cultivate a spirit of humility among scientists and theologians, faith practitioners, in front of the Infinite Wisdom. This may be accomplished simply by accepting openness to the opportunity of our worldly existence to be within the divine reality. The life of a scientist as well as of a theologian then may become a juncture that progressively climbs

scientific and spiritual heights to the fulfillment of human life.

## References and Notes

Note: The translations of the Guru Granth hymns are not literal but given as the central idea in the context of the discussion.

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## THE LIGHT OF GURU GRANTH IN A PLURALISTIC WORLD

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### Abstract

Guru Nanak anticipated the new ecological age to consist of a worldwide community of an increasingly close-knit global village. Here cultures and religions, which were once isolated from one another, would live as close neighbors. At the same time, new ideas and insights from science and technology will season the interaction between and among faiths, and between faith and culture of the faith people. Guru Nanak visited major religious centers and promoted Interfaith Dialogues.

**Guru Arjan followed and compiled the first world scripture, the Guru Granth, where he invited multiple coauthors. He employed a language which allowed for diversity, and which enjoyed wide currency in whole of Southeast Asia and Mid-East. He employed metaphors to encourage continual interpretation for new world cultures.** Guru Granth compilation created a philosophical system based on "unity in diversity" that celebrates the unique merits of each particular approach to the Divine energy, yet it also

provides a way to weld each into a cohesive common agenda.

From the Guru Granth, we learn that each faith is inspired by a unique vision of the Divine and many faiths had developed distinct ethnic identities. Each perceives the Divine as the source of unity but each feels compelled to preserve its religious and cultural uniqueness in a way that may some day cause divisive sectarianism. The multiple coauthors of the Granth promote appreciation of diversity and enunciate the spiritual philosophy of the One Spirit One World where each individual longs for divine attributes within each person with gratitude.

The Granth gives highest allegiance to the power and the grace of the Truth and its healing energy that operates through every one and through all ages. The Guru challenged the religious people of the world to realize spirituality in their own faiths and work constructively with members of other faith traditions towards realization of the Truth. We learn that a vision of the healing light of spirituality overcomes the social and ideological issues that underlie much of the conflict between religions and the exploitation by illusionary materialism.

*(Presented at the McGill University Conference on Interfaith Perspective on Universality and Justice to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the compilation of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, on September 19-20, 2004).*

### Pluralistic World means Diversity in Human Ecology

It is well known that plants and animals diverse to survive. If any possibility of diversification in plants and animals is eliminated, they will perish. Then why not this applies to the institutions of religions? Pluralistic world originates out of the human ecology of diversity. Diversity is a law of nature. The creator shaped us all equal though

not the same. God has provided a distinct composition in all of the cosmos from a tiniest quantum particle to a mightiest galaxy, and given each its own orbit, its own energy and its own life cycle. This was the cosmic vision (*Hukam*) of the Infinite Wisdom (*Vaheguru*). Therefore, we cannot expect uniformity in this universe. We are all distinct individuals; even children born of the same parents and even identical twins are distinct individuals. Guru described this diversity in creation as.

ਵੇਕੀ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਉਪਾਈਅਨੁ ਸਭ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਇ ਸਮਾਹੀ ॥

*The Creator created the world with its diversity; by his design the **creators come and grand merge into the grand schema.***

Guru Amar Das, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 947.

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਅਨਿਕ ਰੰਗ ਪਰਕਾਰ ॥

*By His Schema, there are so many colors and forms in this world.*

Guru Arjan, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 277.

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਨਾਨਾ ਵਡਾ ਥੀਵੈ ॥

*By His Schema, the creatures become tiny or gigantic.*

Guru Arjan, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 962.

Similar to the diversity in our physical world, distinct are our religions, our cultures, our social systems, our orbits, and our traditions. They are all there to gather strength in diversity and serve as invaluable components within the Creator's order. It is the creator who permitted people to devise diverse identities of even divine. Guru Granth recognized these identities when it quoted Guru Nanak in the following verse.

ਸਿਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਲੋਕਾ ਪਾਵ ਹੈ ॥

ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਜਾਉ ਜੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਵ ਹੈ ॥

*Nanak places his head at the feet of all people and is a sacrifice to as many identities ascribed to You, O' God.*

Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1168.

### One Purpose Many Scenarios

History of the pluralistic world lies in the history of religion itself. Religions came into being for one purpose to answer the call of people on this

earth. The call originated from the creation itself. Among the four innate tendencies (H. Lal, 1996) of human beings the first is to conform to a worldly discipline. The most-prevailing such discipline has been the religion since the beginning of history. Religion here means a human construct to relate to the Divine through cultural practices. It is discovered by a founder and promoted by followers who often encrust it with diverse rituals and rules over time, and which periodically needs to be "cleaned up" often leading to the birth of a new religion or a new variety of the same religion.

In the beginning, religions were evolved to promote the spirituality meaning a practical understanding and practice of a relationship between the human being and the Creative Soul, *Karta Purakh*. For example, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib refers to the central thrust of seeking a religious education is to learn the relationship between human soul and the Creator.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮਨੁ ਸਮਝਾਈਐ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

*Those who are oriented to understanding of divine teachers, their minds were tutored for the discourses on understanding of the Cosmic Soul.*

Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 18.

ਕਾਇਆ ਮਹਲੁ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਘਰੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ

ਤਿਸੁ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਖੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਅਪਾਰ ॥

*The body is a mansion, a temple, the home of the Creative Soul, the Karta Purakh, who has infused His Infinite Light into it.*

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 1256

The second purpose of a religion was to rescue the human mind (For discussion see Lal, 1998) from Maya and images of Pseudo-Self (For discussion see Lal, 1996) formed under its influence. *Maya* is the materialism that is deceptive and illusory and that lures human souls away from the Divine reality. Under its influence the Creator is forgotten, worldly attachments take root and the duality becomes the object of interest. The Guru Granth defines it as:

ਏਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਵਿਸਰੈ

ਮੋਹੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭਾਉ ਦੁਜਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

*This is Maya, by which the Karta Purakh is forgotten; emotional attachments and love of duality sprouts up.*

Guru Amar Das, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 921.

With emerging technologies and the resulting materialistic abundance, our experience with the culture of illusions is increasing. In every moment of the waking hours, we witness the make-believe world of the mega accomplishments of modern materialism. At the tantalizing prime-times of television, the illusory benefits of materialistic mirage dance in front of us like shadows on the wall of Plato's cave. Further, this mass-media culture is market-driven that makes us forget real purpose of our human life. Here it has become so easy to forget who we are and where we are heading. The fabricated image of an illusionary person mesmerizes us. Instead of the search for reality, we look in the mirror at our designer clothes and our celebrity turbans to define ourselves. The environments of the unreal images of materialistic immense easily distract us.

**The second purpose of the religion was to help us take off the distorting glasses that we have grown accustomed to wearing, and look at what is happening from a spiritual perspective**

Objective of the founder of every world religion throughout the history of humankind has been to take people out of the illusions of Maya and imprisonment of ego by teaching spirituality of connecting to the cosmic soul. Spirituality was defined as the knowledge of oneself and one's relationship to the cosmic soul manifested in creation. Only what was varied from time to time was the mode of transmittal to the faithful. This was another origin of the diversity in religion. The religious ways were varied to suite specific communities; these ways were termed as religions, one religion being different from other for this very reason.

The variation in religious practices was imperative to make a religion suitable for the people of different periods of the earth's history. Guru Gobind Singh supported this hypothesis by saying that,

ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ

*All human being are one and the same although there is a deception of differences (due to multitude of environments and societies).*

Guru Gobind Singh, Akal Ustat, Chhand 86. 1. 2.

Guru Gobind Singh further emphasized that the religious and cultural diversities as well as all the mythology that are observed are only the imprints of geographical diversifications.

ਦੇਵਤਾ ਅਦੇਵ ਜੱਥ ਗੰਧੂਬ ਤੁਰਕ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨਿਆਰੇ

ਨਿਆਰੈ ਦੇਸਨ ਕੇ ਭੇਸ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਉ ਹੈ

*Many are gods or demon, or celestial musicians. There are heavenly tribes and the learned people or the artists. They may be seen as Muslims (citizens of Islamic nations) or Hindus (natives of Indian subcontinent). They all look and act differently, but their apparent differences are due to the influences from their countries and cultures, or in the clothes they wear.*

Guru Gobind Singh, Akal Ustat, Chhand 86. 1. 3.

Scenarios are the same even for the very origin of a mythology. In the beginning, it was customary to evolve the mythical stories in order to explain every religion. It became traditional to answer questions by the best stories a wise man could invent in an effort to give order to their religious system. Thus, the mythical stories of all religions deal with the life issues of a period, and they often arrive at the logical conclusion that there must be a God responsible for the order. But this god was seen differently in different scenarios. In the primitive times, only this type of logic given by clergy laid foundations to mythologies that made sense as is illustrated by a Hungarian story re-phrased below:

Peasants living in the tiny hamlets of the Hungarian plains were proud to tell visitors:

*"Did you know that our village is the center of the world? You can check it out for yourself asily enough. All you have to do is go to the square in the middle of the village. In the middle of the square is the church. If you climb its tower, you can see the fields and forests spreading out in a circle all around, with our church in the center."*

The fact that the neighboring villages also thought they were at the hub of the world didn't matter--after all, what did foreigners living on the periphery of the universe know? Such delusions were taken seriously. These traditional peasants based their views on perfectly sensible bits of information: When they were looking down from the church spire, the village did in fact look as if it stood at the center of the world. All traditions based on these observations they learned in infancy from their elders. Thus, they held a stronger truth-value than anything they learned later. From their isolated vantage point, the reality they knew made perfectly good sense

Unfortunately, every ethnic or regional religion propagated by their wise men must teach the same locally plausible yet ultimately erroneous hypothesis. This did not change over time except the vernacular of stories and their promises evolved to suite the new age. Don't we hear every day from our churches that their scriptures were much more originated from the lips of the God than any one else's? "After all," they say for a proof, "everyone knows that their prophet was sent by the one God Himself assigning a special position higher than any other prophet. It does no good to point out to them that in such a case every one in this world would have heard the same exclusive commandment from one God. It only confuses them and makes them irritated so that they are led to invoke ex-communications and *jehads*.

The scenarios may vary from one to the other but the claims are the same. Every human group or ethnicity not only is being led to believe itself to be at the center of the universe, but also that it has

unique virtues that make it somehow superior to any other ethnic group. Every religion narrowly organized based on ethnicity instills a similar prejudice in its members. Over time when populations expanded to different lands and there was a breakdown in communication due primarily to great distances that separated people, local or ethnic religions grew in number. They utilized their own vernaculars and histories to evolve the mythical stories of their own. The purpose was to develop their own rules for living that allowed people to lead a coherent existence in their own limited environment. In time, these rules became religions and ingrained in the respective societies. They were adopted as the foundation of many ancient cultures and many new religions. Thereafter, culture that humankind invented became the underlying bases of religious practices, and they began to look different.

To illustrate the occurrence of diversity among religions but with a common underlying goal, the authors of the Guru Granth described the practices of each religion as such. We may mention some of those sayings about the practices of both Semitic and oriental religions as illustration given below.

ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨਾ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਰੀਅਤਿ ਪਤਿ ਪਤਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਬੰਦੇ ਸੇ ਜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਬੰਦੀ ਵੇਖਣ ਕਉ ਦੀਦਾਰੁ ॥

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਸਾਲਾਹੀ ਸਾਲਾਹਨਿ ਦਰਸਨਿ ਰੂਪਿ ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥

ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਵਹਿ ਅਰਚਾ ਪੂਜਾ ਅਗਰ ਵਾਸੁ ਬਹਕਾਰੁ ॥

ਜੋਗੀ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਧਿਆਵਨਿ ਜੇਤੇ ਅਲਖ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥

ਸੂਖਮ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਕਾਇਆ ਕਾ ਆਕਾਰੁ ॥

*The Muslims praise the Islamic law; they read and reflect upon it. They consider the followers as those who come into the discipline to envision God. The Hindus praise the Praiseworthy God through His countless forms. They bathe at sacred shrines of pilgrimage, making offerings of flowers, and burning incense before idols of those forms. The adherents of the Yogi sect meditate on the absolute through uncountable names of the same Creator. The Divine is the subtle image within and His nomenon is immaculate whom they apply the forms of a body.* Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 466.

## When Prophets are replaced By Cleric Caretakers

We are grateful for many prophets who appeared and promoted religions to teach us spirituality. However, history takes its own toll on every blessing. In religions, it is the development of a cleric or priestly class that must be installed as caretakers once the prophet leaves the scene. There, often the original purpose of the religion is lost. The original purpose was to protect and promote the culture of religion that propagated spirituality. However, our experience with the caretaker clergy is in the contrary.

Whereas founders of the most religions meant to connect human beings to the Universal Divine on a cosmic basis, many caretakers of the religious treasures considered religion as a commodity of commerce or a trade for profit. Further, they found it profitable to prescribe ethnic rules that promoted exclusivity and thus were divisive. Often the clergy would ill define a unique deity to worship and to elevate themselves as the exclusive interpreters of the message. There are several examples from many religions throughout the world to support such schemes of clerics.

To inculcate our faith we are thrown at the mercy of those women and men who, in their attire, look like our prophets and, in their speech of ignorance, claim to speak the prophets' language even though many of them hardly invested any time to acquire any scholarship or skills to manage any intellectual matter. In the absence of any modern education, they must propagate a religion to a level of breeding ethnocentrism, which takes us away from the truth of the reality.

Often our priests condition us to derive self-esteem from those who are professional preachers as opposed to the enlightened souls who have achieved the contentment and not looking for new converts to build their wealth. We are taught that we must pay heed to the instructions transmitted through the clergy in order to progress

in our religious practices. This is from where we should learn how to dress, read, and even think.

We are taught, first to desire the worldly fulfillments as a solution to happiness, and then to go to the institutions of our religion operated by the clergy to obtain the fulfillment. They include needs of our daily life, our sense of both social and religious belonging and recognition, our sense of prominence or our invincibility, and our place after this life on earth. To make a convincing argument in their favor, these misguided clergy will even twist the scripture (**For examples see Note 1**).

No matter how naïve or how illusory their promises may be our clergy make it most convincing nevertheless that one should go to them for fulfillment of our erroneously perceived and acquired desires. Who would not be elated with the promises of every worldly desire fulfilled by a touch of some one's hand or by eating the left over from a cleric? Who would not feel good to be at the center of the universe or belong to a world religion most suitable to this age? Who would not feel good to be a member of the nation of the chosen people or reborn into the nation of the pure? **Don't the people from India forget their numerous faults of political corruption and disgusting violations of human rights simply on account of the deep sensitivity of their souls for belonging to the land of Buddha and Nanak, and the culture of non-violence and religious tolerance?** I admit that this and other examples are only stereotyped generalizations, but then much of religious behavior is ruled by stereotypes that are founded by clergy who are always the identity constructionist based on ethnicity or region in every religion.

## Religious Fanaticism is Divisive

In the process of its promise of saving us from the evil and death we are urged to become religious pseudo-fundamentalists. Through this ploy, an ethnic religion begins to make its own heavy claims on the members of our society. **Just as**

genes use the body as a vehicle for their own reproduction, the misguided clergies also use individuals as vehicles for their survival and propagation. They make people as agents of their survival. This is done by inventing and inducing memes of religious viruses to infect our psyche in a way to bring human forces under blind controls.

**We are taught erroneously that a good religious person is someone who is willing to sacrifice even his or her life for the cause of his ethnicity in the name of his religion and in the name the land where adherents of his religion were born. A religious person is someone who intuitively knows that the hills and waters around his places of pilgrimage are more beautiful, the sanctified food more fulfilling, the songs from his books more melodious, and ideas of his ascetics more wise. He/she knows that the language of his/her scripture is perfect and “other” languages are barbaric; the mode of his worship most logical and those of others as long outmoded; his/her rituals most rational but habits of the followers of other religions are ridiculous or repulsive. Through inculcation of these beliefs, the blind clergy traps the adherents in the psyche of the specific pseudo-religious traditions irrevocably. Further, the psyche and traps of traditions and rituals once born never die because the religious adherents so defined give up their wisdom and senses to protect and propagate them. They are told that they are the one chosen to keep traditions alive; without them, their faith would be in a state of constant danger and they would soon lose their well-deserved identity, and losing this identity would be not less than a death.**

In the promotion of further perpetuation, the fanatic religious loyalties are taught to convince others of their superiority and recruit them to swell their ranks. Often they are pushed to acts which disregard value for life or the freedom to worshipping the sacred, or even to gain any benefit to their own society.

**It is difficult to see how the continuing saga of mutual animosity between Serbs and Croats of Yugoslavia, between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, between Hindus and Sikhs in India, between Hindus and Muslims every where, between West and the Mid East, or the various warring factions of South Africa either fulfill any purpose of any religion or even benefits the involved parties.**

A perusal of the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadure will bring us home to not only to take a stand against the religious fanaticism but also the significance of fighting against it even to the level of sacrificing one's life. **When the fanaticism was in full force to convert any one by the use of force,** Guru Teg Bhadure fought for the rights of all to practice their faith with immunity. He gave his life in fighting for the rights of others to practice their religious beliefs according to their own traditions. Finally he died for opposing the misguided clergy of Islam.

### **Response from Guru Granth**

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the most recent collection of the revealed scriptures. It responded to the need of pluralistic societies with of multifold approaches. Its composers felt strongly that multifold responses were necessary to meet the need of the new future.

### **Abolition of Clerics**

The authors of Sri Guru Granth Sahib foresaw the complete reversal of the methods of religious connections and disseminations in the new world. The culture of wireless communication and Internet media will put all of us in the backyard of each other and our religious claims will become fully transparent. Obviously, they will push us in the age of freedom and choice of values, choice of religion and choice in styles of daily living. There will be a little role of corrupt clergy in the new age. The Guru Granth responded centuries ago by taking away the religious managements from the hands of clerics and the clergy.

The Guru Granth said,

ਹਮਰਾ ਝਗਰਾ ਰਹਾ ਨ ਕੋਊ ॥ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਛਾਡੇ ਦੇਊ ॥

*There is no quarrel left with anyone. I have abandoned the Pandits, the Hindu religious clergy, and the Mullahs, the Muslim priests. Kabir, SGGS, p. 1159.*

Similarly, Kabir rejected the path of the priestly class who advocated any sort of *karam dharma*.

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਿਹ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਗਏ ਪਾਛੈ ਪਰੀ ਬਹੀਰ ॥

ਇਕ ਅਵਘਟ ਘਾਟੀ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਤਿਹ ਚੜਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਕਬੀਰ ॥

*Crowds of people are following the path that is laid down by the clergy and religious scholars. However, Kabir selected a unique path that directly leads to the Divine.*

**Kabir, SGGS, p. 1373.**

The authors of the Guru Granth founded and prepared grass root congregations to pick up these responsibilities. In the twenty-first century, we are entering the new age of technology and economic prosperity. They transferred role of defining the religious values to people at large than to be left in the hands of a few clergies. It simply abolished the school of clergies. It asked the congregation of house holders to take over the management of a religion and spread the divine message.

Since our clergy who are often too naïve and are not accustomed to foresee such a freedom, they will exhibit anxiety and offer a strong resistance. This will be a challenge to all new age religions or those ancient religions who are attempting to accommodate to the new age. The new age leaders of a religion must be prepared to understand this responsibility.

**The Guru Granth made accommodation for the new age in a variety of ways; abolition of clergism was one such solution. There are others some of those are illustrated here.**

**The Interfaith Scripture**

**The Guru Granth Sahib was compiled first time by Guru Arjan in 1604; it was then**

**completed by Guru Gobind Singh. It contains 5894 hymns. The interfaith nature of this scripture is evident from the fact that Guru Arjan contributed only one third of the hymns (2216). There are hymns from other Gurus composed over a period of two centuries and also the hymn of nineteen other religions leaders of several centuries plus eleven poet laureates of the Guru's court totaling in all 36 authors.**

A record of this many authors for a scripture of a world's major religion is still to be matched by any one. **Here the Hindus, the Muslims, the scholars and the untouchable peasants, were invited to meet in the same congregation of holy souls.** The selection of language for principal use was selected to be the language of the holy men evolved during the medieval period. This language allowed for diversity, and still enjoyed wide currency in whole of Southeast Asia and Mid-East. Based upon the local dialects, it was leavened with expressions from **Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Bengali and Marathi etc.**

Guru Granth's language policy was meant to demolish the claim of any human language to be the language of gods. The spiritual language of the Granth meant to communicate with every segment of the society at its own turf and in its own mother tongue. Therefore **at least ten linguistic systems of Indian sub-continent, South East Asia, China, and Middle East were employed. To meet the need of inscribing the multi-linguistic scripture the Guru had to design the gurmukhi font especially for this purpose.** The newly created font permitted preservation of multi-linguistic hymns in one volume in phonetically correct format.

Obviously, the idea of Guru Arjan Dev was to celebrate the diversity in all religions and mystic experiences, and, at the same time, establish the fundamental unity of spirituality and faith through the scripture of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In this scripture he founded an integral congress of all

minds and souls operating on the same spiritual vibration. He elevated the songs of the saints, the Sufis and the bards to the elevation of the logos to salute the power of the Word whatever form it might take to reveal the glory of the One Reality.

### Spirituality without Threatening Ethnicity

The civilization we are entering in the next century will inhabit much greater religious, political, and diversity than in the time of Jesus, Mohammad, or Nanak. For example, a wide variety of Christians, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Janis, Native tribes, and all of the various combinations thereof will inhabit the next world.

Each group will have ethnic components to its practices and will emphasize its own needs and its own point of view about the function of a religion in a pluralistic society. Such an emphasis may be misplaced sometime and lead to destructive divisions as a result. The world today is already plagued by religious violence all over. With the collapse of communism and the real needs of people in poverty, the danger in the rise of religious triumphs may become much more serious.

Today, fanatic clergy are confusing the laudable principles of religious diversity with narrow definition of ethnicity. They continue to promote ancient traditions of sectarian religions and make prevailing religious practices as partisan.

Many times, there is a complete failure of religious leadership to transcend biological and ethnic differences. Instead, they regularly manifest the tunnel vision of ethnicity in all forms. First, they exhibit the adversarial relationship with other world religions. They enthusiastically glorify those who advocate supremacy of their religion over others. They give religious sanctions to redemptive violence against innocents. They bestow glorification on struggles between social classes and religious groups.

Selfish motives can be found underlying most of ethnic struggles that they launch. There are

numerous expressions of divisiveness in religious organizations that have been progressively consolidated in our social life. As a result, **the way in which most of the religious institutions carry out their day-to-day activity presents a fundamental challenge to the concept of inculcating unity and spirituality into our culture.** The spirituality is getting entrapped in the walls of ethnic religiosity. Often they ignore to inculcate any faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature.

**Guru Nanak emphasized the futility of ethnic approaches when he gave examples of ethnic strives among the major religions and said.**

ਕਲਹਿ ਬੁਰੀ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ਵਾਦੇ ਖਪੀਐ ॥  
ਵਿਣੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਵੇਕਾਰਿ ਭਰਮੇ ਪਚੀਐ ॥  
ਰਾਹ ਦੋਵੈ ਇਕੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਈ ਸਿਝਸੀ ॥  
ਕੁਫਰ ਗੋਅ ਕੁਫਰਾਣੈ ਪਇਆ ਦਝਸੀ ॥  
ਸਭ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੁਬਹਾਨੁ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਈਐ ॥  
ਸਿਝੈ ਦਰਿ ਦੀਵਾਨਿ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਈਐ ॥

*The strife of this world is evil; these struggles are consuming it. Without the Lord's Name, life is worthless. Through doubt, the people are being destroyed. One who recognizes that all spiritual paths lead to the One shall be emancipated. One who speaks lies shall fall into hell and burn. In the entire world, the most blessed and sanctified are those who remain absorbed in Truth. One who eliminates selfishness and conceit is redeemed in the Court of the Lord.* Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 142.

ਏਕੁ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਦੁਇ ਰਾਹ ਵਾਦ ਵਧੰਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ॥  
*There is only the One Lord and Master, but there are two paths, by which conflict increases.*  
Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 688.

In light of the above verses, the objective of the faith people will have to be that they bring in spirituality that does not threaten ethnicity or diversity. Rather the presence of diversity in religion strengthens the religious cooperation and

faith in the spiritual values that will govern the new society. The spirituality that is foreordained to form the soul of religious cooperation is distinct from religious ethnicity. This spirituality transcends all boundaries of ethnic religions. If prevailing religious thoughts continue to be divisive, it is our failure of translating our expressed faith in the spiritual dimensions of human nature. That dimension is only to seek Truth. Guru Nanak Said in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

ਏਕੋ ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜੈ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਈ ॥

*There is only one law of religion;  
everyone must imbibe the Truth.*  
Gur Nanak, SGGS, p.1188

The interfaith spirit of the Guru Granth calls for the destruction of the divisive boundaries. It calls for creation of cultures, rituals, laws and institutions that incorporate diversity in faith and still does not lose sight of the one reality behind everything. We should listen to the vision that Guru Ram Das provided centuries ago.

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਦੂਜਾ ਭਾਉ ਧੜੇ ਬਹਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਛਿਦ੍ਰੁ ਅਟਕਲੈ  
ਆਪਣਾ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੁ ਵਧਾਵੈ ॥ ਜੈਸਾ ਬੀਜੈ ਤੈਸਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ  
ਕਾ ਹਰਿ ਧੜਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਸਭ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਜਿਣਿ ਆਵੈ ॥

*People form alliances in the false love of duality. They indulge in downgrading others for their faults, while their own self-conceit only increases. As they plant, so shall they harvest? Nanak has joined the Creator's alliance of spirituality which system shall triumph everywhere.*

Guru Ram Das, SGGS, p. 366.

The Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, echoed what the author of Sri Guru Granth Sahib would say about the relationship with the neighboring religions. It is first to appreciate other paths, and then to wish them the best.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪੰਥ ਸੁਖ ਚਾਹਤ ਸਕਲ ਪੰਥ

*The path of the Guru-oriented people would wish well of all paths.*

Bhai Gurdas, Kabit 58, line 1

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### Discouraging to Profile and Label

Presently we profile people as tribes, cultures, casts, religions, images, economic or social classes, genders, ages, politico-territorial nations, ethnic groups or family lineage. The profiling, labeling or defining “others” in contrast to “us” is a mother of adversary. It permits religious fanaticism to take hold of innocent followers of the faith. Fanatics can then refract the world’s scriptural lights through prisms of their own designs. They can first claim and then practice exclusivity of their faith and consider conversions of others to their side as their religious fervor. Finally, the fanaticism begins to serve as enemy of peace and basis of wars between nations, peoples and families. It results in destruction of human spirit and human body.

**Through the scripture of Guru Granth, Guru Nanak made his followers sensitive to the harms the fanatics may inflict on one another by looking at this world as “us” and “others.”** He promoted the theology of non-duality to bring humankind together when he began the scripture with sacred words of Ek Onkar meaning “**One Spirit One World.**”

The Guru Granth begins with the symbolic letter ੴ or EK meaning the Undivided Virtual Reality, the ONE that permeates through all creation and may be understood as ONE SPIRIT. The letter EK is followed by the symbol ONKAR meaning the manifestation in creation to include all worlds and all humanity, and all human being with one soul residing within them. **The Soul here is defined as the manifestive extension of the ONE.** Thus, whole creation is considered as ONE.

Not only Guru Nanak gave this mantra of **ONE SPIRIT ONE WORLD** the first place on the first page of his revealed scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he and his nine successors repeated this profound symbolic WORD 568 times in their writings in the Holy Scripture.

Further, Guru Nanak promoted attitude of

gratitude for God-given bounties and for wisdom of non-duality by composing the following.

ਮੈ ਉਪਰਿ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੀ ਪਿਰਿ ਸਾਚੈ ॥

ਮੈ ਛੋਡਿਅਤਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਤੇਰਾ ॥

*I tender my gratitude to the Eternal Wisdom that granted me the gift of inner understanding towards abandoning every distinction between mine and others.*

Guru Ram GGS, p. 461

Guru Granth further says that you profile people into good and bad only when you do not realize the same soul that each one carries.

ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੁ ਹੈ ਦੂਜਾ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਤਿਤੁ ਘਟਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੫॥

ਸਭੁ ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਹੈ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਵਸੈ ਸਭ ਥਾਇ ॥

ਮੰਦਾ ਕਿਸ ਨੇ ਆਖੀਐ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੇਖਹੁ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ॥੬॥

ਬੁਰਾ ਭਲਾ ਤਿਚਰੁ ਆਖਦਾ ਜਿਚਰੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਹੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਏਕੋ ਬੁਝਿਆ ਏਕਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

***There is One God of all; there is no other at all.*** By Guru's Grace, the Lord comes to abide in the mind; in the heart of such a one, He is revealed. God is the Inner-knower of all hearts; God dwells in every place. So who should we call evil? Behold the Word of the Sabad, and lovingly dwell upon it. The Gurmukh understands the One and Only Lord; He is absorbed in the One Lord.

Guru Ram Das, SGGS, p. 757.

Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, was very explicit when he described those who follow the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Mentioning by name the followers of two major religions of the time, he said that **the faithful stays away from profiling people as Hindus or Muslims.** Rather they become humble when confronted with such questions. He said,

ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਸਾਧ ਕੈ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਸਬਾਏ ॥

ਪੈਰੀਂ ਪੈ ਪੈਖਾਕ ਸਦਾਏ ॥

*Going beyond praise and slander, they (Sikhs) have become admirers of the Hindus as well as Muslims. They bow before all and consider themselves as humble as dust.*

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 7, Pauri 2.

### Model of Guru's Life Style

In their life spans, the Gurus made every effort to demolish the walls that were erected between people of different faiths. First of all Guru Nanak was the first profit who founded the tradition of Interfaith dialogue in South East Asia. He did so by dialoguing with his playmates, village administrators, schoolteachers, and leaders of all religions and their denominations. They are recorded as dialogues or *goshats* as we call them in our vernacular. Further, all Gurus themselves maintained a fluid personal identity. It will be too long to describe the case of all of Gurus here except to take example from the life of only the founder of our faith here.

The image of Guru Nanak is recorded as always transforming and he was seen mixing with people of all identities. **He was born of a Hindu mother but was raised by a Muslim midwife.** In one account during his sacred journeys, he is represented as an ascetic who lives on sand (a gurdwara built to immortalize this style is called “*roori sahib*” meaning Guru's bed of pebbles). In another identity, he becomes a householder who toils for a living, as is evident from his life in the town of Kartarpur that he founded and where he lived for the last 18 years of his mortal life. Yet, in another mode he was a spiritual savant discoursing with religious elites of all religions like *Sidhas*, *yogis*, and *mullahs*.

One time, Guru Nanak is described undertaking pilgrimage to Mecca in the **garb of a Muslim haaji**. During his Mecca visit, the Guru conducted daily dialogues with clergy of that land and pilgrims of other lands. **It is in one of those dialogues that he was asked which of the existing religions was better and more suitable for humanity.** His response was recoded by Bhai Gurdas and was typically that of an interfaith activist.

ਪੁਛਨ ਗਲ ਈਮਾਨ ਦੀ ਕਾਜੀ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਸਾਂਗ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ਲਖ ਨ ਸਕੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੋਈ ॥

ਪੁਛਣ ਖੋਲ ਕਿਤਾਬ ਨੂੰ ਵਡਾ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋਈ ॥

ਬਾਬਾ ਆਖੇ ਹਾਜ਼ੀਆਂ ਸੁਭ ਅਮਲਾਂ ਬਾਝੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਰੋਈ॥  
 ਹਿੰਦੂ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਦੋਇ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਅੰਦਰ ਲੈਣ ਨ ਢੋਈ॥  
 ਕਚਾ ਰੰਗ ਕੁਸੰਭ ਕਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਧੋਤੈ ਥਿਰ ਨ ਰਹੋਈ॥  
 ਕਰਨ ਬਖੀਲੀ ਆਪ ਵਿਚ ਰਾਮ ਰਹੀਮ ਕੁਥਾਇ ਖਲੋਈ॥  
 ਰਾਹ ਸੈਤਾਨੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਗੋਈ॥

*Muslim scholars, the Qazi and the maulvi congregated around Guru Nanak and began to inquire on matter of faith and religious commitment. They said to the Guru that he had created a great mystery with his external attire and the deep knowledge of all religions. Could you open your book and search for the answer whether a Hindu or a Muslim is superior or distinguished? Baba Nanak responded to the pilgrims and their leaders that without good deeds both would be made to repent. One is not accepted in the court of the Creator by only claiming to be a member of a religion whether it is Hinduism or Islam. As the color of safflower is transient and is easily washed away in water, likewise the color of religiosity is only momentary. By denouncing deity of your opponent's religion you are engaging in the worst kind of mud slinging. In the process, you are engaging the whole world in the ways of Satan.* Bhai.Gurdas, Vaar 1, Pauri 33

The Guru is then seen giving discourses at Hindu holy places such as **Haridwar wearing external appearance of a Hindu ascetic**. There too he dialogued with various sects of Hindu religions. His dialogues with *Sidhas* and *Yogis* have been made part of the scripture.

**Nanak is described as a saint who took delight in wearing clothes in styles of Muslim *pirs* and Hindu ascetics.** He chose companions and disciples whose castes and religions did not match; **his first Sikh was a Muslim, Rai Bullaar, and the second too was a Muslim, Bhai Mardana.** His life long companion was a Hindu Bhai Bala. In his social transactions he paid no heed to spatial or dietary religious taboos. It was not without reason that historians, besides calling him Guru, identify him as *shah* or king, *pir*, *sadh*, *bhagat*,

*faqir* and *darves*. The underlying logic of these varied terms of salute was to convey the overtly non-conforming personality of Nanak.

It was also not a coincidence that after years of preaching a revealed spiritual mission, establishing numerous religious centers and attracting large followings, when Guru Nanak left his human body for heavenly abode; his followers were unable to decide on Nanak's religion. They needed this decision to conform the ritual of his last rite to one or the other major religion of the time. Hindus would create the body while Muslims would bury it.

This indecision was witnessed in the town of *Kartarpur* where Guru Nanak spent last 18 years of his life. There he held daily congregations, spread his message, and appointed his successor. Is it not amazing that it is here that people should not be able to name his religion and no one thought of this event so unusual? Even his successor, Guru Angad, who was present at the scene, would choose not to come to their help in resolving the dilemma.

**Was it not because the universe of Guru Nanak was free of rigid religious identities and no one thought of this event so unusual?**

Till this day (author visited this site in November of year 2000), the town of *Kartarpur*, worships the mausoleum on Guru Nanak's grave and the site of his cemetery at the same time.

### Real Spirituality Distinctions

Besides his compellingly clear practices, Guru Nanak spoke equally persuasively to distinguish between religions defined by their rituals in contrast to the religions that are sources of spirituality. The former he referred in his scripture as *karam -dharam* in contrast to *sach -dharam* meaning an eternal religion. *Karam -dharam* consists of a mixture of the prescribed duties and the moral or cultural codes. They are not the fundamentals of a religion, only the successors

and the supporting clergy often formulate them so. The later usually ignore the Divine Reality or ineffable Cosmic Consciousness that prevails in all humanity. Guru Nanak called it a parenthesis that puts limits around people's consciousness.

ਬੰਧਨ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਹਉ ਕੀਆ॥

*All the deeds I perform according to the religion of the rituals imprison me.*

Guru Nanak, SGGS, p. 416.

He considered *karam -dharam* a prison of ego. Guru Nanak condemned *karam dharm* distracting people from the knowledge of the Creator.

ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਬਹੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰਣੈਹਾਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ॥

*One performs all sorts of religious rituals and sanctified actions, but actually, one is distracted from the real path of knowing the Creator Lord, the Doer of all.*

Guru Arjan, SGGS, p. 380.

The Guru Granth scripture discourages spread of religion by ill-educated clergy who promote religions as ceremonial splendors to insure ownership of the Divine Light within the narrowly defined community and its religious warlords.

### Metaphor of Orchard

In the new world of science and technology with an unprecedented freedom to choose one's belief and faith practices, Sri Guru Granth Sahib promotes recognition of faith communities into mutually dependent symbiotic relationships. In such a world, the Guru Granth theology will be there to sprout orchards of faith people who long to listen to the creator within creation and within each human being. It will encourage a multi-cultural style of living that establishes peace and justice in this world.

**The Guru challenged the religious people of the world to realize spirituality in their own faiths and work constructively with members of other faith traditions towards realization of the Truth. In the world of Guru Granth, every major religion will teach compassion, respect,**

**honesty, generosity, kindness, and goodness. There will be a common spirit pervasive in all major religions.**

Guru Granth uses a beautiful metaphor in describing the world of diversity in faith and culture. It says,

ਏਕੁ ਬਗੀਚਾ ਪੇਡ ਘਨ ਕਰਿਆ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਤਹਾ ਮਹਿ ਫਲਿਆ ॥੧॥

ਐਸਾ ਕਰਹੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਗਿਆਨੀ ॥

ਜਾ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪਦੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਨੀ ॥

ਆਸਿ ਪਾਸਿ ਬਿਖੁਆ ਕੇ ਕੁੰਟਾ ਬੀਚਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਰੇ ॥੧॥

ਰਾਹਾਉ॥

ਸਿੰਚਨਹਾਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਮਾਲੀ ।

ਖਬਰਿ ਕਰਤੁ ਹੈ ਪਾਤ ਪਤ ਡਾਲੀ ॥੨॥

ਸਗਲ ਬਨਸਪਤਿ ਆਣਿ ਜੜਾਈ ਸਗਲੀ ਫੂਲੀ ਨਿਫਲ ਨ ਕਾਈ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਫਲੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਤਰੀ ਤਿਨਿ ਮਾਇਆ॥

*This world is an orchard in which a variety of vegetation has grown. There is only one gardener who tends it. He brings numerous sorts of vegetation and then plants them there. He takes care of every leaf and branch. They bear fruit - none is without fruit. They bear fruits of eternal divinity without any wastage. There may also be found in polluted ponds but within every growth there is life-giving nectar. Says Nanak, one who receives the eternal faith of divine understanding from the teaching of the Guru, such a humble- one succeeds in crossing over the ocean of life's illusions. Dwell on this understanding and you will attain blissful life.*

Guru Arjan Dev, SGGS, p. 385

Guru Granth describes even each tree in this orchard as having a great variety of branches, leaves and flowers. They are different but they are all filled with god given nectar.

ਤਰਵਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਅਨੰਤ ਡਾਰ ਸਾਖਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਪਤ੍ਰ ਰਸ ਭਰੀਆ ॥

*You may observe a single tree in an orchard.*

*That too will have countless branches and twigs; its flowers and leaves may be filled with its life giving nectars.*

Kabir, SGGS, p. 970.

Guru Gobind Singh is said to echo this voice further by saying,

ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਆਗ ਤੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਕੋਟਿ ਆਗ ਉਠੇ,  
ਨਿਆਰੇ ਹੁਏ ਕੈ ਫਿਰ ਆਗ ਮੈਂ ਮਿਲਾਹਿਗੇ।  
ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਧੂਰਿ ਤੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਧੂਰਿ ਪੂਰਤ ਹੈ,  
ਧੂਰਕੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਫਿਰ ਧੂਰ ਹੀ ਸਮਾਹਿਗੇ ॥  
ਜੈਸੇ ਏਕ ਨਦ ਤੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਕੋਟ ਉਪਜਤ ਹੈ,  
ਪਾਨ ਕੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਸਭ ਪਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਹਾਹਿਗੇ॥  
ਤੈਸੇ ਬਿਸਵ ਰੂਪ ਤੇ ਅਭੂਤ ਭੂਤ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੋਇ,  
ਤਾਹੀਂ ਤੇ ਉਪਜਿ ਸਬੈ ਤਾਹੀ ਮੈ ਸਮਾਹਿਗੇ ॥

*As out of a single fire arise millions of sparks; but all of them merge back into the same fire. As out of same dust arise millions of dust particles; but all of them merge back into the same dust. As out of a single ocean arise millions of waves; but all of them merge into water. So, from God's form emerge all creations, animate and inanimate; and all of them will return to the Creator.*

Guru Gobind Singh., *Akal Ustat, Chhand 87.*

**The light of Guru Granth argues that all those living on this planet are inter-related and interdependent.** They are related to each other because they inherit a common thread of the Divine within. They are illuminated by Divine light which runs through every one as a single thread.

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ॥  
ਤਿਸ ਕੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ

*Every heart contains the same Divine Light.  
It is the Light of the Divine that brightens all hearts.* Guru Nanak Dev, SGGS, p. 663

The orchard model of the Guru Granth's new world is not for a mere tolerance of others. It provides blue-prints of constructive and active engagement with those who are "different," recognizing that diversity can enrich each others.

## Conclusions

**The attack of September 11, 2001, showed us all that divisive sectarianism promoted by misguided clergy poses what is perhaps the greatest challenge that world religions have ever encountered.** The people of faith must answer an array of questions. While preferring my own tradition should I reject the others as false? Or do they all point to truth, each in a different way that is better understood by the culture of its adherents? Are the teachings of my religion specific injunctions or they are metaphors left by the founder to be interpreted by newer generations? Could new scientific ideas and insights persuade many religious traditions as metaphors? Can I seek the truth from a religious tradition without adherence to its ethnics or rituals requirements? Can I combine elements from many traditions in my own unique way, or must I simply accept one tradition, and close myself to all others?

The centennial celebrations of Sri Guru Granth Sahib may be the most appropriate opportunity to launch the making of new history of One Spirit One Word (*Ek Onkar*), the slogan with which the authors of Guru Granth start their first page. The centennials will be opportunities for the Sikhs to fulfill their Guru's prophesy of this world being and Orchard of God.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib gives highest allegiance to the power and grace of the Truth and its healing energy that operates through every one and through all ages. **The Guru Granth created a philosophical system based on "unity in diversity"** that celebrates the unique merits of each particular approach to the Divine energy, yet also provides a way that each of these approaches can be welded into a cohesive common framework.

**The Guru challenged the religious and spiritual people of the world four centuries ago as the Interfaith Dialogues are doing today.** It is to realize spirituality in their own highest ideals,

fully unfold the spiritual potential of their unique traditions, and work constructively with members of other faith traditions towards realization of the Truth in their objectives.

**To listen to Sri Guru Granth Sahib first with our own mind and heart and then disseminate its message to our neighbors with a love for our fellow beings will be the greatest tribute to our centennial celebrations.**

How many examples from our traditions can we find through which we can see our tracks of first claiming and then hiding the Light? As a matter of fact, our scholars told us again and again that the guru given gift of the Light is meant to be spread to every one and in every corner of the world. Should we do not do that we will earn guru's displeasure. As is affirmed Sikh scholars of Guru Arjun's time as below.

ਉਗਵਣਹੁ ਤੈ ਆਬਵਣਹੁ ਚਹੁ ਚਕੀ ਕੀਅਨੁ ਲੋਆ ॥  
ਜਨੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨ ਸੇਵਿਓ ਮਨਮੁਖਾ ਪਇਆ ਮੋਆ ॥  
ਦੂਣੀ ਚਉਣੀ ਕਰਾਮਾਤਿ ਸਚੇ ਕਾ ਸਚਾ ਢੋਆ ॥

*Guru meant to spread the Light from the direction of sunrise to sunset in all continents. Those who do not serve the cause of the Guru in this way are selfish and they may die in shame. It is a miracle of God that the Light will increase many folds when it is spread.*

Balvand and Sata, SGGS, p. 968.

ਲੰਗਰੁ ਚਲੈ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਹਰਿ ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੀ ਖਟੀਐ ॥  
ਖਰਚੇ ਦਿਤਿ ਖਸੰਮ ਦੀ ਆਪ ਖਹਦੀ ਖੈਰਿ ਦਬਟੀਐ ॥

*Langer, the free kitchen of the Guru's teaching, is always open and its supplies never run out. Langar - the Kitchen of the Guru's Shabad has been opened, and its supplies never run short. Its supplies were given by the Creator to be shared and they would never run out.*

Balvand and Sata, SGGS, p. 967.

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## GURU NANAK

(1469-1539)

An Article by a Muslim on 542nd Birthday of Nanak.

A Thought-Provoking Analysis Indeed  
By **Tarak Fateh**

**From The Huffington Post.**

Contributed by Dr. Karminder Singh Dhillon,  
Malaysia

[First published in the Sikh Bulletin in July-August 2013]

This week millions of Sikhs and their friends around the world are celebrating Gurpurab, but few outside India know the significance of this day or its history.

It's the 542nd birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith and **one of the greatest symbols of pluralism and tolerance in the world.**

Mahatma Gandhi may epitomize India in the West, but he is just one of the many towering figures of history that have shaped the land, its culture and its religions. Poets such as Tagore and Iqbal immortalized India in verse while emperors like Asoka and Akbar ruled over dazzling domains that stunned the visitor.

Among the great philosophers and thinkers that India gifted to the world are two men who tower above the rest- **Buddha** and **Guru Nanak**, the founders of Buddhism and Sikhism. While Buddha is well known in the West as a result of his creed and followers, **Guru Nanak, whose birthday we celebrate today is yet to be discovered.**

Let this Muslim introduce you to the man who founded the world's youngest religion, Sikhism and who had a profound role in shaping my Punjabi heritage, alas, one that was torn to shreds by the bloody partition of India in August 1947.

**Today, the place where Guru Nanak was born in 1469 is a city that was ethnically cleansed of its entire Sikh population during the bloodbath of 1947. Nankana Sahib, a place where the Guru spent his childhood with Muslim and Hindu friends, is a Bethlehem without Christians; a Medina without Muslims. For a few days the town will bustle with Sikh pilgrims from all over the world, but soon they will depart and nary a turban will be seen until the Sikhs return next year.**

The city of Nankana Sahib lies near Lahore, my maternal ancestral home, where my mother and father were born. My mother told me how she as a Muslim girl grew up with Sikh neighbors and how she was part of the Sikh family's celebrations at the time of Gurburab and how she would travel with her friend to Nankana Sahib. Decades later she would still recall her lost friend who left Pakistan to seek refuge across the border. Today Nankana Sahib celebrates, but there are no Muslim girls accompanying their Sikh friends. **None; it is sad.**

Sad, because **Sikhism and Guru Nanak were intertwined with Islam and Muslims. The Guru's closest companion was a Muslim by the name of Bhai Mardana. It is said when Mardana was dying, the Guru asked him, how would you like to die? As a Muslim? To which the ailing companion replied, "As a human being."**

Five hundred years later, a border divides Muslim and Sikh Punjabis. A border where two nuclear armies and a million men face each other. **As a Muslim Punjabi I feel the British in dividing Punjab separated my soul from my body and left the two to survive on their own.** Muslim Punjabis lost their neighbours and family friends

of generations. Most of all they lost their language that today languishes as a second-class tongue in its own home. **We kept Nankana Sahib, but lost the Guru.**

**However, the tragedy that befell the Sikhs was far more ominous and deserves special mention. For Sikhs, the Punjabi cities of Lahore and Gujranwala, Nankana Sahib and Rawalpindi were their hometowns and had shared a history with their Gurus. With the 1947 Partition, not only was Punjab divided, but the Sikhs were ethnically cleansed from Pakistan's Punjab.**

As a result of the creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan, the Sikhs lost absolute access to the following holy sites: Gurdwara Janam Asthan, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, in Nankana Sahib; Gurdwara Punja Sahib in Hasan Abdal; Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore, where the Fifth Guru, Arjan, was martyred; Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib in Kartarpur, where Guru Nanak died; and, of course, the Memorial to Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Emperor of Punjab, in Lahore.

**When the killings and cleansing of 1947 ended, not a single Sikh was visible in Lahore. Of course, Muslims too were chased out of the eastern parts of Punjab, but they were not losing their holy places of Mecca or Medina.**

**Even though we Muslims despair the occupation of Jerusalem, we still have the comfort of knowing that Muslims still live in and around the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. **But what about the Sikhs?****

To feel their pain, Muslims need to imagine how outraged we would feel if, God forbid, Mecca and Medina were cleansed of all Muslims and fell under the occupation of, say, Ethiopia. How can we Muslims ask for the liberation of Muslim lands while we institutionalize the exclusion and ethnic cleansing of all Sikhs from their holy sites inside an Islamic state? Muslims who cannot empathize

with the loss of the Sikhs need to ask themselves why they don't.

**Before 1947, Punjabi Muslims did not consider Sikhism as an adversarial faith. After all, from the Muslim perspective, Sikhism was the combination of the teachings of Sufism, which was rooted in Islamic thought and the Bhakti movement, an organic link to Hindu philosophy.**

It is true that Moghul emperors had been particularly vicious and cruel to the leaders of the Sikh faith, but **these Moghuls were not acting as representatives of Islam.** Not only that, the Moghuls inflicted even harsher punishments on their fellow Muslims.

With the creation of Pakistan, the Sikhs lost something even more precious than their holy places: diverse sub cultural streams. One such stream flourishing in Thal region (Sind Sagar Doab) in what is now Pakistan, near Punjab's border with Sind and Baluchistan, was known as the **"Sewa Panthis."**

The Sewa Panthi tradition flourished in southwest Punjab for nearly 12 generations until 1947. This sect (variously known as Sewa Panthis, Sewa Dassiey, and Addan Shahis), is best symbolized by **Bhai Ghanniyya** who, though himself a Sikh, aided wounded Sikh and Muslim soldiers alike during the Tenth Sikh Guru's wars with the Moghuls. Sewa Panthis wore distinctive white robes.

They introduced a new dimension to the sub continental religious philosophies. They believed that **sewa (helping the needy) was the highest form of spiritual meditation** - higher than singing hymns or reciting holy books. The creation of Pakistan dealt a devastating blow to the Sewa Panthis and they never got truly transplanted in the new "East" Punjab.

The organic relationship between philosophies and land, indeed, requires native soil for ideas to bloom. Other such sects and deras (groups) that made up the composite Sikh faith of the 19th and early 20th centuries included Namdharis, Nirankaris, Radha Soamis, Nirmaley, and Sidhs - all were pushed to the margins, or even out of Sikhism, after the partition.

The tragedy of the division of Punjab is best captured in a moving poem by the first prominent woman Sikh/Punjabi poet, novelist, and essayist **Amrita Pritam**, ***"Ujj akhaan Waris Shah noo"*** (An Ode to Waris Shah), which she is said to have written while escaping in a train with her family from Pakistan to India.

**Pritam wrote:**

*ujj aakhaN Waris Shah nuuN,  
kithoN kabraaN vichchoN bol,  
tay ujj kitab-e ishq daa koi aglaa varkaa phol  
ik roii sii dhii punjaab dii,  
tuuN likh likh maare vaen,  
ujj lakhaaN dhiiiaaN rondiaN,  
tainuN WarisShah nuN kahen  
uTh dardmandaaN diaa dardiaa,  
uth takk apnaa Punjab  
aaj bele lashaaN bichhiaaN  
te lahu dii bharii Chenab*

***(Today, I beckon you Waris Shah, Speak from inside your grave. And to your book of love, add the next page. Once when a single daughter of Punjab wept, you wrote a wailing saga. Today, a million daughters cry to you, Waris Shah. Rise, O friend of the grieving; rise and see your own Punjab, Today, fields lined with corpses, and the Chenab flowing with blood.)***

**As I celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak I read some profound words of wisdom he left for his Muslim friends.**

**He wrote:**

**Make mercy your Mosque,  
Faith your Prayer Mat,  
what is just and lawful your Qu'ran,  
Modesty your Circumcision,  
and civility your fast.  
So shall you be a Muslim.  
Make right conduct your Ka'aba,  
Truth your Pir,  
and good deeds your Kalma and prayers.**

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### **PURPOSE OF LIFE**

Dr Sarjeet Singh Sidhu  
Ipoh, Malaysia

The May-June 2016 issue of the SB was devoted to a discussion on 'The Purpose of Life'. What exactly do we mean when we ask "What is the purpose or the meaning of life"? Having been privy to the fact that this issue was going to deal with the subject, I confess that I actually expected something quite different. S. Shergill focussed mainly on his personal experience, whilst Parminder Singh Parmar was content on talking about "Purpose of My Life". I.J. Singh comes close to what I expected when he states "If the purpose of life is to meet god..." Asking if there is a heaven or hell does not address the key question of whether there is a purpose to life. He then says **"...leave the world a bit better -- even an iota of progress matters. This then becomes the purpose of life, simplified"**. This effectively means that that is what he thinks should be the purpose of life.

These are laudable goals, but I'm not sure that this is what most people mean when they ask: "What is the purpose/meaning of life?" That is, if they even ever ask themselves the question,

To try and get a feel of what ordinary people mean by this I did my usual 'survey' by asking family and friends the question. Not surprisingly most had not even applied their minds to the question. The commonest answer, in one form or another,

appeared to be: 'To have fun'. Further probing as to what are we doing here simply confirmed the common-sense answer that we work to provide for our family and have as much fun as we can whilst doing so.

As best as he can the ordinary person just lives, reproduces and provides for his family, having as much fun as he can whilst doing this, and accepting whatever suffering that comes his way, whether as a part of aging or some unexpected disease, as part of life. And that is, simplistically putting, what goes on in the animal kingdom with which we humans share a common ancestor. Why should it be any different?

From the point of view of science, evolutionary biology specifically, human life is no more than a random event that happened in the course of evolution. That in any case is how we view all animal life. If that is so, and there is no cogent evidence to suggest otherwise, then there can be no 'higher' purpose to life than to live it as explained in the preceding paragraph.

This means that man is not quite different from animals, and this evidently makes man uncomfortable. What he really seeks to know is: 'What is the meaning to life?' Surely no animal pauses to ask itself the same question. The animal itself does not pause to think about it but the purpose of life to an animal is to find food, save itself from predators and to reproduce; that much is observable. Man on the other hand seeks to ascribe a meaning to his life. There is a fine distinction intended between the words 'purpose' and 'meaning' here. For the most part, however, the words are used interchangeably.

When man had progressed sufficiently along the evolutionary path he must have, at some point thought: I am master of all that I see. I have dominion over all living things. Surely I cannot be 'no more than an animal'. We know, or have been told by historians and archaeologists, every civilisation had a creation story. This means that

from the earliest of times mankind has believed that this universe and everything in it, including man, has been created by some superior being or power, which we call the Creator. This Creator, in all its variations, is itself actually a creation of man. That by creating this Creator mankind would forever be put in the difficult position of proving the existence and nature of the Creator was not something this early man would have spent worrying about.

The Creator put mankind in his creation as a superior being with a special purpose, sometimes referred to as a 'higher purpose'. This would subscribe to the view of the 'Intelligent Design' group that we were intentionally designed by the Creator for a specific purpose.

Early man, in the process of drawing these conclusions, must have, at least for a brief moment, reflected upon the question of whether other animals had a meaning or purpose to their life, and then brushed that aside with a firm 'no'. To do otherwise would have entailed more problems. If we get past the question of whether there is a Creator by simply asserting that he exists (faith is enough) we are still left with the question of "What is the purpose/meaning of Life".

This ascribing of a higher purpose or meaning to human life must surely have been the brainchild of religion. It served a useful purpose. With the ruling classes, even in tribal societies, keeping the masses subservient to their interests, the ordinary man must have suffered a lot. The thought of justice must have crossed his mind. To keep some degree of stabilisation within the society the ruling classes colluded with the clergy. The clergy assured the masses that ultimately justice would be served, if not in this life then in the hereafter or in the next life. And so were created heaven and hell; the former as reward for the good people and the latter as punishment for the wicked. As a species we seem to need some form of reassurance that the downtrodden will ultimately get justice, that there is life after death, that life cannot just end in the

present; we seek some sort of continuation and find it in the creation of the soul, the doctrine of karma and similar beliefs: all without a scintilla of tangible, irrefutable evidence.

With a belief in these concepts man believes there is a meaning to his life, a purpose gifted by the Creator. But that purpose/meaning is never satisfactorily explained. When man suffers he questions this purpose of life and questions the very existence of a god. He soon finds that religion has provided the Creator with a host of escape clauses: his ways are not our ways, only he knows the reason, it's all part of his grand design, etc.

What if we took away this Creator and his intended purpose of life? Would that diminish us? Would we revert to our old savage ways? Let us explore.

From solitary or family units the early man would have found it safer to be part of a group leading ultimately to a tribe, and then on towards a nation. At every juncture it would have meant giving up some personal preferences and liberties and making concessions to stay within the group. At every stage rules would have been put in place. Humans as a society were 'evolving'. We not only accepted these self-imposed limitations but began to think in the abstract. Our concept of god became more abstract. From protecting our own interests we graduated to protecting the interests of the group, and ultimately to protecting and saving others because it was the right thing to do. We began to become altruists, even if the numbers are still truly small.

Does this mean that without god and religion man cannot know 'good' from 'bad' and remains incapable of giving meaning to his life that is beyond mere existence? The bottom line in finding the meaning of life is that man tends to seek pleasure; he tends to satisfy his desires. Whatever satisfies his senses has meaning. Even in his altruistic activities he undertakes them because

they give him a sense of satisfaction and joy because he has done the right thing. This self-gratification is the ultimate meaning of his life, even if in its pursuit he loses his life.

We have evolved far enough to ask questions like 'Where do we come from?' or 'What is the meaning of life?' Our ability to think in the abstract (conjuring concepts for which we have no evidence) is evidence enough that we can actually do good or bad without having some external 'power' assigning the task to us; and as a whole we have managed to have more of us do good than bad. We have to accept that whatever good we do is a matter of the 'right' neurons firing in our brains and causing us to do the good. It will all end upon death. But our ideas can live on in others whom we influence.

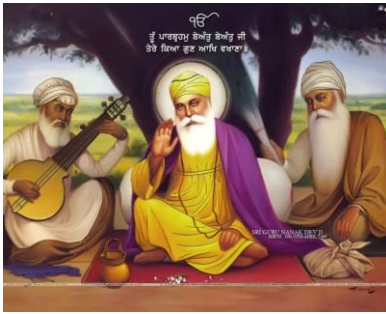
### **Conclusion:**

There is no higher purpose or meaning to life for mankind any more than there is for animals. It has been our own endeavour at being good that has allowed us to progress. In the end *we* ascribe a meaning to life, and it's here that I.J. Singh's words, "...leave the world a bit better -- even an iota of progress matters. This then becomes the purpose of life, simplified", begin to make sense; that should be our endeavour.

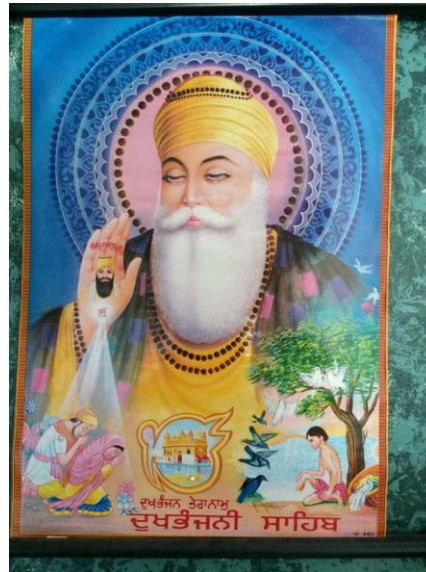
**A 'higher' purpose of life in the sense that religions would have us believe does not exist;** the concept is untenable without positing a god into the equation.

**God cannot provide the purpose of life because god does not exist.**

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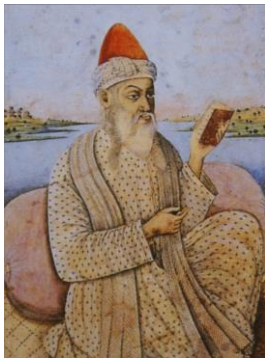
Guru Nanak, Bala and Mardana.  
Companionship of Bala is disputed.



Hindu Nanak



Sikh Nanak by Sobha Singh



Sufi Nanak

Background landscape is very similar  
to Istanbul, Turkey



ONE CREATOR



Istanbul, Turkey today



Muslim Memorial to Guru Nanak at  
Kartar Pur



Sikh Memorial to Guru Nanak at  
Kartar Pur



Hindu Memorial to Guru Nanak at  
Kartar Pur