

## UNDERSTANDING SABD AND GURU, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS\*

Prof Devinder Singh Chahal, PhD  
Institute for Understanding Sikhism  
4418 Martin-Plouffe, Laval, Quebec, Canada H7W 5L9

*sbdugrllsriq Din c] ॥ ] Guru Nanak*

### ABSTRACT

*'Sabd' and 'Guru' are two words on which the whole Nanakian Philosophy revolves. Although these words have been discussed in the ancient philosophy from time immemorial, they have special meanings and applications in the Nanakian Philosophy [3]. Although a lot has been written about this topic, there is still a need to understand the intrinsic values of 'Sabd' and 'Guru' and their implications to understand Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective and to construct integrated and comprehensive philosophy of Sikhism for the humanity of the Science Age.*

**S**abd and Guru are extensively used in eastern philosophy as well as in daily conversation in the east. These words have also been extensively used in the Nanakian Philosophy enshrined in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] but have special meanings depending upon in which context these words have been used. Dr Jodh Singh [7] has extensively discussed 'Sabd' as used in the AGGS in comparison to Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. On the other hand, Dr Cole [4] has done very comprehensive study of 'Guru' entirely keeping in view the Gurbani enshrined in the AGGS. One may find many more articles on this topic in the Sikh literature.

### SABD

There are about five different types of spellings of 'Sabd', when written in Roman alphabet, found in the literature. Most of the time all the five different forms of spellings are in the same article of the same author. The spelling of this word has been standardized as "SABD", which is based on the root word, sbd without any vowels, for *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM – The Research Journal* and this spelling is used consistently in this article as well as in all other articles published in it. Other forms of sbd found in Gurbani are – sbid, sbdɪ sbdɪ sbdɪh, sbdl, sbdɪ, sbdɪ sbdɪ sbdɪ It indicates that various vowels have been added to the basic word to convey the context in which they are used.

Let us examine what does Nanakian Philosophy, incorporated in the AGGS, says about 'Sabd' and 'Guru'. Although the Punjabi word 'SABD' simply means a word but in Gurbani it has many meanings as explained by Bhai Kahn Singh [8]:

- i) Word, sound, speech, conversations;
- ii) Religion, duty,
- iii) Message, advice,
- iv) Philosophy, and
- v) Guru.

In addition I have found a few more meanings:

- vi) Purifier,
- vii) Vehicle to Meet God,
- viii) Peace of Mind, and
- ix) Elixir of Life (Amrit).

### i) Word, Sound, Speech, Conversation

The Gurbani tells us that one's personality is discovered from one's Sabd (word):

*sbd0hl Bgq j ॥ pdyij nu kl bixl scl h0h ]  
ivchu ॥ p0gieA n1aumlhA ॥ sic iml ॥ v ॥ h0h ]*

AGGS, M 3, p 429 [1].

*"Through one's Sabd (word) the noble person (Bhagat/devotee) is discovered,*

*Bani (word) of whom, tells the truth.*

*When ego is eliminated and the Almighty is comprehended then one can realize the Almighty."*

---

\*Paper presented at the Second International Conference-2002: *Inner Dynamics of Guru Granth Sahib* at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, October 17-19, 2002; and to the Sikh intellectuals and professionals (including the university professors and staff of the Sikh Review), on November 24, 2002 at Kolkata. The author was introduced by S Saran Singh, Editor, *The Sikh Review*. S Khazan Singh of Sikh Forum, Kolkata honored the author with a plaque of the Sikh Forum. S Jagmohan Singh Gill, Secretary-General, arranged this lecture on behalf of the *Central Gurdwara Committee, West Bengal, Kolkata*.

**ii) Duty/Religion**

j g sbdlligAin sbdllbd sbdllq bllhmxh ]

Kbll sbdllsblR sbdllprw ikbth ]

srb sbdllq ek sbdllj okyj mis bju ]

nunk qw disuh'sel inrjln dju ]

AGGS, M 1, p 1353. (Also AGGS, M 2, p 469)

*“The duty of the Jogi is to attain knowledge,*

*And that of Brahmans to read Vedas.*

*The duty of the Kshatrya is to show bravery,*

*The duty to understand the One, the Almighty,*

*Is the duty of all.*

*Nanak is the servant of That (God), Who is without any blemishes.”*

(Note: Some may like to replace ‘Duty’ with ‘Religion’ in this interpretation.)

**iii) Advice, Message:**

nunk sbdll vlcwrlAYpuelAYgxll inDinu ]

AGGS, M 1, p 59.

Nanak says:

*“By contemplating/deliberating on the Advice/philosophy<sup>1</sup> (of the Guru)*

*One attains the treasure of wisdom.”*

j b l gusbid<sup>1</sup> n BplAYikaush'gr dAwir ]

AGGS, M 1, p 19.

*“Until the advice/philosophy<sup>1</sup> is not deliberated how can one be honored at the Gateway to the God?”*

**iv) Philosophy**

ekusbdll blcwrlAYj w qlqw ikAw hir ]1] rhwau ]

AGGS, M 1, p 17.

*Dwelling upon the Word (philosophy)<sup>1</sup> of the One (God) makes the One with me.*

*Then what else do I need? ||I||Pause||*

ekusbdll vlcwrlAYAvr iqAwgl'Aws ]

AGGS, M 1, p 18.

*Contemplate the Word (philosophy)<sup>1</sup> of the One (God), makes one to abandon hopes on others.*

Aml u kir Drql blj u sbdll kir sc kl Awb inq djh pwxl ]

AGGS, M 1, p 24.

*Make good deeds the soil, and let the Word (Guru's philosophy) be the seed;*

*Irrigate it continually with the water of Truth.*

Gr hl ivic mhl upwieAw gr sbdll vlcwrl ]

AGGS, M 3, p 30.

*By deliberating on the Word (philosophy) of the Guru the God was realized in my own body.*

**v) Guru (Discussed later)****vi) Purifier**

The Sabd is a great purifier when it is understood properly and becomes part and parcel of mind and body:

ibnusbdllml un aqrYmir j hih hie KAwru ]

AGGS, M 3, p 29.

*Without the Sabd (Word), pollution (of mind) is not washed off;*

*Otherwise, one suffers with misery (symbolic cycle of death and rebirth).*

gr kw sbdllmin vsYmnuqnuinrml uhie ]1] rhwau ]

AGGS, M 3, p 32.

*(When) The Word of the Guru abides within the mind,*

*Then the mind and body become pure. ||I||Pause||*

**vii) Vehicle to Realize God**

gr sbdll scupwieAw dK invwrxhwru ]

AGGS, M 3, p 36.

*Through the Word of the Guru one realizes the Truth (God), Who removes all troubles.*

nunk swcl n vlsrYmj ysbduApwr<sup>2</sup> ]

AGGS, M 1, p 61.

Nanak says: *Do not forget the God<sup>1</sup>; it is realized through the Word of the Infinite<sup>2</sup> (God).*

**viii) Peace of Mind**

myymn gr sbdll sKuhie ]

AGGS, M 5, p 46.

*Peace of mind is attained through Words (Guru's advice/philosophy).*

**ix) Elixir of Life**

gr kw sbdll Alh<sup>2</sup> h'ij quplq<sup>3</sup> iqK j wie ]

AGGS, M 3, p 35.

*The Word<sup>1</sup> of the Guru is the elixir of life<sup>2</sup>;*

*Thirst (for wisdom) is quenched after understanding<sup>3</sup> it.*

**How can We Imply the Intrinsic Values Of Sabd?**

We will take a couple of following meanings of Sabd to prove that it will be necessary to know the intrinsic values of Sabd given in other verses. For example,

**a) Reveals one's personality**

sbdllhl Bgq j wpyij nukl bwxl scl hih ]

ivchuwApugieA nwaumllhAw sic iml wv hih ]

AGGS, M 3, p 429.

*“Through one's Sabd (word) are discovered the noble people (Bhagats/devotees), Bani (word) of whom tells the truth.*

*When ego is eliminated and the Almighty is comprehended then one can realize the Almighty.”*

**b) Elixir of Life**

gr kī sbdī Allmīq<sup>2</sup> hīij quplq<sup>3</sup> iqK jīie ]

AGGS, M 3, p 35.

*The Word<sup>1</sup> of the Guru is the elixir of life<sup>2</sup>; Thirst (for it<sup>2</sup>) is quenched after understanding<sup>3</sup> the Word<sup>1</sup>*

Now the theme in the following verse would be easily understood that how to coin a Sabd (word) and prepare the Amrit which will make a person noble. The method is found in the following stanza:

j qupihīw Dīrj usinAuru ] Ahrix miq vduhQIAuru ]

BauKI w Agin qp qīau ] Bīfw BīauAllmīquiqquFīil ]

GVIAsbduscl tksīl ] ij n kaundir krmūiqn kwr

nīnk ndrī ndrī inhīl ] 38 ] AGGS, Jap 38, p 8.

*Self-control should be the furnace, and patience of goldsmith. Wisdom should be the anvil, and knowledge be the tools. Love for God should be the bellows to blow air into fire to make it super-hot. The body is the melting pot where self-control, patience, wisdom and knowledge to be melted together to mold (prepare) Amrit and coin the Sabd in this mint of truth.*

Nanak says: *God has blessed everybody with these qualities, the one, who works for it, is blessed by God to achieve it.*

**BANI**

‘Sabd’ and ‘Bani’ are interchangeable in the Nanakian Philosophy as explained in the following stanzas:

scīl bīxl scūsbdūhīj w sic<sup>2</sup> DryipAuru ]

AGGS, M 3, p 33.

*Put your love (faith in) the Truth<sup>2</sup> (God), since the Bani is the truth<sup>1</sup> and the Sabd is the truth<sup>1</sup>.*

**Bani Is Equated to God**

Previously since Sabd was equated to God in the same way Bani is equated to God:

vīhuvīhūbīxl inrīkūr hīiqsūj yfūAvrūn kēl ]

AGGS, M 3, p 515.

*"Wondrous is the Bani of the Formless and is worth laudation as nothing equals it."*

**Bani → @ Guru**

‘Guru’ and ‘Bani’ are equated with each other:

bīxl<sup>1</sup> grī<sup>2</sup> grīhīy bīxl ivic bīxl Allmīqūsurī ]

AGGS, M 4, p 982.

*"Bani (Sabd)<sup>1</sup> is Guru<sup>2</sup> and Guru is the Bani and it contains all types of elixirs of life."*

**Who says Bani?**

grū<sup>3</sup> bīxl khīsykū<sup>4</sup> j nū<sup>5</sup> mīnī<sup>6</sup> prqīk<sup>7</sup>

grīlīnsqūry<sup>8</sup> ] 5 ]

AGGS, M 4, p 982.

*"Guru<sup>3</sup> says Bani and the servant (Sikh)<sup>4,5</sup> accepts<sup>6</sup>*

*and practices<sup>6</sup> it.*

*Obviously<sup>7</sup>, this is the Guru who helps to get salvation<sup>8</sup>."*

{2 & 3 gr, grū grī and grī means grī according to Bhai Kahn Singh's Mahan Kosh [8]}

**Who is the Guru that says Bani?**

Nanak is the Guru who says the Bani as is explained in the following phrases:

j nūnīnkūbīl YAllmīq bīxl<sup>1</sup> ]

grīskw kīmin ipAurīl Bīxl ]

apdsīl krī<sup>2</sup> grī<sup>3</sup> siqgrī<sup>4</sup> pīhī<sup>5</sup> grī<sup>6</sup> siqgrī<sup>7</sup>

prapkrīlAurī<sup>8</sup> j lau ]

AGGS, M 4, p 96.

*Nanak\* Person speaks Bani, the Elixir of Life<sup>1</sup>. It is dear and pleasing to the minds of the Gur Sikhs. The Guru<sup>3</sup>, the True Guru<sup>4</sup> (Nanak), preaches<sup>2</sup> the teachings<sup>1</sup> of the God, The Perfect<sup>5</sup> Guru<sup>6</sup>, The True Guru<sup>7</sup>, is Generous<sup>8</sup> to all.*

j nūnīnkūbīl ygk bīxl grī bīxl hīr nīm smīeAurī ]

AGGS, M 4, p 494.

*"Nanak\* person (jann) speaks the good qualities of Bani, that the God is realized through the Bani.*

(\* Here Nanak is Nanak himself, since Kaka is with Onkar in the above two stanzas.)

**Where to get the Sabd/Bani?**

It can be obtained from the Perfect Guru:

pīhī siqgrī<sup>1</sup> j yīmīl YpīeIAVsbduīnDīnū ]

AGGS, M 5, p 46.

*If we meet the Perfect True Guru<sup>1</sup>, then we can obtain the Treasure of the Sabd.*

pīhīgrī kī sicīl bīxl<sup>2</sup> ]

sK mn Allīr shīj smīxl ]

AGGS, M 3, p 663.

*"Through the true words<sup>2</sup> of the Perfect Guru one gets easily all the comforts (peace) of mind."*

grī pīhī<sup>1</sup> kī bīxl j ip Andukrhūīnq pīxl ]

AGGS, M 5, p 616.

*"Contemplate/deliberate on the Bani of the complete Guru<sup>1</sup> and attain the bliss everyday."*

vīhuvīhūpīhīgrī<sup>1</sup> kī bīxl<sup>2</sup> ]

pīhīgrī qyapjī sic smīxl ] rhīau ]

AGGS, M 3, p 754.

*"Wondrous is the word<sup>2</sup> of the perfect Guru<sup>1</sup>,*

*That was revealed by the perfect Guru, and that helps to realize the Almighty (Naam)."*

grī pīhīkī bīxl ] pīrībīhm mīn Bīxl ]

nīnk\* dīīs vKūxl ] inrml AkQ khīxl ]

AGGS, M 5, p 629.

"The Bani of the Perfect Guru is pleasing to the mind of the Transcendent.

Nanak, the servant of the Almighty, utters the Bani that is immaculate but not easy to explain."

(\* Here again Nanak is Nanak himself, although *Kaka* is without *Onkar*. It indicates that one has to be very careful to interpret Nanak as a person himself or Nanak as a pen name.)

## GURU

'Guru' is a very wide term that covers many aspects. Guru in English dictionary is:

1. Personal religious teacher and spiritual guide, esp. in Hinduism.
2. A teacher and especially intellectual guide in matters of fundamental concern.
3. One, who is an acknowledged leader or chief proponent.

Cole [4] has given a very good and critical account of 'Guru' in the *Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*. He describes the Guru as follows:

"In Sikhism the word *Guru* is used only for the ten spiritual prophets - *Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, and for none other. Now this office of Guru is fulfilled by the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sacred Book, which was so apotheosized by Guru Gobind Singh. Various connotations of guru have been given based on different etymological interpretations. One generally accepted in Sikhism is that derived from the syllable gu standing for darkness and ru for its removal. Thus, guru is he who banishes the darkness of ignorance. According to Sikh belief, guidance of the guru is essential for one's spiritual enlightenment.*"

Cole [4] has also discussed various aspects of 'Guru' according to the Gurbani where Guru means, *Gurudev* (the Almighty), father, mother, brother, friend, relative, *paras* (philosopher's stone), *Sabd Guru* (word/philosophy of Guru), *Sat Guru* (True Guru), etc.

According to Bhai Kahn Singh [8] the word 'Guru' originated from 'Gri' meaning that engulf and to enlighten, i.e., the one that engulfs the darkness (ignorance) and enlightens (makes to understand). According to him [8] 'Guru' in Gurbani is spelled as: *gr*, *gru* and *gru*. In addition to these spelling, it is also spelled as *gir*. In spite of different spellings, all the forms are pronounced as 'Guru' and mean as explained above [8].

Bhai Kahn Singh in *Gurmat Martand* again explains 'Guru' as follows [9]: One that dispels ignorance and teaches the truth, affection, interest, and benefit (human rights). According to him Nanak is the Guru sent by the Almighty for dispelling the ignorance and preaching the

truth and the human rights.

## GURU AND GURBANI

A critical analysis of Gurbani indicates that 'Guru' has been used very specifically for specific objectives as follows:

### 1. Guru is God

Aprbr prrbhmuprmsrunnk grumil Aw sel j iau ]

AGGS, M 1, p 599.

"The One, Who is Infinite, Transcendent, and Supreme, is the Guru realized (by Nanak)."

### 2. Sat Guru is also God

siq grumru sdw sdw nu Aw/nw j iwe ]

Eh<sup>1</sup> Aibnwl<sup>2</sup> prK<sup>3</sup> h'lsB mih rihAw smwie ]

AGGS, M 4, p 759.

"My True Guru is that Who exists forever and neither takes birth or dies.

Oh<sup>1</sup>, Entity/God<sup>3</sup>, is imperishable<sup>2</sup> and pervades everywhere."

### 3. Nanak as Guru

The following verses of the Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, indicate that Nanak is Guru and True Guru (Sat Guru). Nevertheless, many scholars will interpret that Nanak is pen name. Let us examine if Nanak can be interpreted as Guru and True Guru in the following phrases from Gurbani:

dliKAw Awik bwlwAw isPql sic smjau ]

iqn kawikAw apdlsIA'ij n grunink djal ]

AGGS, M 2, p 150

"They, to whom the instructions (of Nanak) has taught and put on the right path, remain imbibed in the praises of the Almighty.

What instructions can be imparted to them, who have Guru Nanak as their Guru<sup>1</sup>."

gruninku ij n sixAw pjKAw syiPir grBwis n pirAw ry ]

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

The following interpretation of different scholars indicate that Nanak is the Guru:

1. "Those who have heard of, or seen Guru Nanak, do not fall into womb again."

Dr Sahib Singh [12].

2. "They who have heard of, or seen Nanak, the Guru, they are cast not into the womb again."

Dr Gopal Singh [5].

3. "Whoever to Nanak has listened or beheld his sight - nevermore into transmigration falls."

Dr Gurbachan Singh Talib [13].

4. "They, who have heard, and seen Guru Nanak, fall not, again, into the womb."

Manmohan Singh [11].

5. "Those who have seen and heard Guru Nanak do not fall in to the womb." Harbans Singh [6]. (But he emphasizes that it is not only seeing and hearing his philosophy it is by practicing his philosophy one is liberated.)

If the above interpretations are considered as correct then it becomes clear that Nanak is the Guru.

If 'Nanak' in the above phrase is taken as pen name as is the case in almost all the verses of the Gurus and the 'Guru' is taken as the Almighty then its interpretation would be:

Nanak says: "Those who have heard and analyzed the philosophy of the Guru (the Almighty), do not fall into the womb again."

As the philosophy was revealed by Guru Nanak, therefore, it comes to the same interpretation as given by the above scholars. Thus, by keeping allegories, metaphors and similes in view the interpretation of *gru nwnku ij n sixA|| pjKA|| sy iPir grBwis n pirA|| ry ]* could be as follows:

"Those, who have heard and analyzed the philosophy of Guru Nanak do not fall into the womb again (are liberated)."

The following two verses will support the above interpretation. These verses indicate that God gave the treasure of wisdom to Guru Nanak for further distribution and liberation of people from bad deeds:

*Bgiq Bfir<sup>1</sup> gir nwnk kau sapy iPir I K<sup>2</sup> mll n l ieA|| ]*

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

"The Almighty entrusted Guru Nanak with treasure of philosophy<sup>1</sup> (for dissemination) then (Almighty) never took any account<sup>2</sup> of this treasure."

The following verse indicated that consequently Guru Nanak gave this wisdom to people who were liberated from their bad deeds:

*nwnk ij nllkausiq gruimil A|| iqnlk|| I K|| inbiVA|| ]*

AGGS, M 3, p 435.

"Those to whom Nanak, the True Guru, has imparted his philosophy their deeds have been accounted for."

*Dnu Dhu gurInwnkusmdrsl ij in inllw asqiq qurI qrlwq ]*

AGGS, M 4, p 1264.

"Blessed is Guru Nanak, who treats everybody equal\*, and has himself crossed and helps the others to cross the stream (instinct) of slander and praise."

\*Without any discrimination of caste, creed, sex, social status, etc.

#### 4. Nanak as Sat Guru and Complete Guru

*nwnk gurI gurI hI pth<sup>3</sup> imil siqgr<sup>4</sup> nwn<sup>5</sup> iDAwieA<sup>6</sup> ]*

AGGS, M 4, p 882.

Guru Nanak is the Guru<sup>1</sup> of Gurus<sup>2\*</sup>, is the Complete<sup>3</sup> and True Guru<sup>4</sup> by meeting him one can realize/comprehend<sup>5</sup> the Almighty<sup>6</sup>."

\* *gurI gurI* 'Guru Guru' means Guru of the Gurus according to Bhai Kahn Singh [8].

*hir hir<sup>1</sup> ikrp|| krhuj gj lvn<sup>2</sup> mYsrDw<sup>3</sup> nwn<sup>4</sup> I gwvG<sup>5</sup> ]*

*nwnk gurIgur<sup>6</sup> siq gurI mYsiq gurI srin iml wvG<sup>7</sup> ]*

AGGS, M 4, p 1310.

It is very difficult to interpret the above couplet because of the presence 'Guru' and 'Sat Guru' two times each. 'Guru' and 'Sat Guru' can be rightly interpreted in the context of the main theme of the verse given in the Rahaoo of this verse. Let us look into the Rahaoo first:

*mnuhir rllg ruq|| gwvG<sup>8</sup> ]*

*BYB<sup>9</sup>qts BeyhInrml grmiq I wig I gwvG<sup>10</sup> ] rhwau ]*

AGGS, M 4, p 1310.

"The mind imbibed in love sings, praises (comprehends) the Almighty.

All the fears and dreads are cleansed/washed out by applying the starter of the Guru's philosophy."

Now let us look into interpretation of the above couplet in discussion. In the first phrase a person expresses the desire to get the association of the Almighty. In the second phrase Guru Ramdas explains that to meet the Almighty one has to follow the philosophy of Nanak, the Guru:

"Hey the Almighty<sup>1</sup>! The Life-giver of the humanity<sup>2</sup>, grant me my desire<sup>3</sup> of association<sup>5</sup> with the Almighty<sup>4</sup>. Guru Nanak is the Guru of Gurus<sup>6</sup>, is the True Guru<sup>7</sup> who has helped me to be associated<sup>9</sup> with the True Guru<sup>8</sup>, the Almighty (through his philosophy)."

*sB qvfv<sup>1</sup> siq gurInwnku ij in kl ruKI mrl ]*

AGGS, M 5, p 750.

Dr Gopal Singh [5], Dr Talib [13], Dr Sahib Singh [12] and many others have interpreted it as follows:

"Guru Nanak is greatest of all who protected my honor."

The 'kaka' of Nanak is with 'ounkar' it is generally considered Nanak as a Person, Guru, or Sat Guru but not as the pen name. However, in some verses *kaka* is without *onkar* still Nanak is interpreted as a person not as a pen name.

Some scholars consider that Sat Guru is the Almighty and interpret it as follows:

Nanak says: "The True Guru (Sat Guru), the Almighty,

is greatest of all who protected my honor."

Since It could only be the Sat Guru, the Almighty, who could be greatest of all.

But here Guru Arjan is saying that: "Guru Nanak is greatest of all (other so-called Sat Gurus) who has protected his honor".

### 5. Nanak as the Image of God

Some Sikh scholars have interpreted Guru Nanak as the light, image or manifestation of the God because of the presence of the word 'Guru' before and 'Dev' (dy) after 'Nanak' in the following phrase:

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਿਯੁ ਗਿਵੰਤਿ ਰੀਭੁ ॥ AGGS, M 5, p 1192.

"Guru Nanak is embodiment of the light of God"

Anonymous [2].

"So will I too Dwell on Nanak, the Guru, who is the very manifestation of God"

Dr Gopal Singh [5].

"Guru Nanak Dev is the very image of the Lord."

Dr Talib [13].

"Guru Nanak Dev is the very embodiment of the Master of the Universe."

Manmohan Singh [11].

Dr Sahib Singh [12] who has given different interpretation than those given above:

ਹਿਨਾਨਕ: ਗੁਰੁਪਰਮਿਕਮੁ ਦਿਯੁ ਰੀਭੁ ॥

Hey Nanak! "Guru is the image of the Almighty."

Harbans Singh [6] interpret it differently:

"Gurdev is the image of Gobind." So you should also recite His name considering Him as Guru. (A very confusing interpretation.)

### Now question is who is the Guru here?

The word 'dy' (Dev) has been interpreted as the last name with Guru Nanak by Dr Talib and Manmohan Singh, while others have omitted its interpretation. In all the above interpretations, if Nanak is taken as the embodiment of the Almighty then it defies the Nanakian Philosophy since the Almighty is not incarnated into human form.

If Nanak is the author of this stanza as is the practice in the Gurbani, although the author of this stanza is Guru Arjan then Nanak is not that Guru who has been equated with the Almighty. Then who is the Guru in this stanza?

To interpret the above phrase properly it is important to analyze the whole verse of Guru Arjan starting from "Six ਸਿਖਿ ਮਨੁ ਜਿਪਿ ਪਾਠੁ ॥" ending with the above

verse. The analysis of the whole verse shows that:

Guru Arjun says that according to the stories (mythology and ancient philosophy) Ajaamal, Balmik, Dhru, Ginka, Haathi (elephant), Sudhana Brahmin, a hunter who wanted to kill Krishan with an arrow, Bidar, and Prahlad and Droopthy the others who asked for protection they got it from the Almighty. Then Guru Arjun quoted the examples of some Bhagats that: Dhanna, Trilochan, Baini, Jaidev, Sain, Kabir, Naam Dev, and Ravidas realized the Almighty. Then Guru Arjun says ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਿਯੁ ਗਿਵੰਤਿ ਰੀਭੁ ॥ at the end of this verse.

Let us first consider what are the meanings of 'Guru' in Nanakian Philosophy? To understand meaning of 'Guru' in its real perspective would be necessary to understand what is Sikhi (Sikhism) and who is a Sikh?

The following verse indicates that Guru Nanak in his philosophy has declared Sabd as Guru:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਚਿੰਤਿ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 943.

"Sabd is Guru, consciousness and intention toward it make one its disciple (Sikh)."

Dr Jodh Singh [Ref 7- p 64] says that " Sabad" has been clearly accepted as Guru." based on the Sidh Gost of Guru Nanak. He further says that "This conception of Shabada as God and Guru by Guru Nanak is consistent also with the Indian religious tradition, in which Shabda-brahman principle has been widely accepted."

The sabd (word) revealed by Guru Nanak is also the Guru in the following phrases:

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਿਯੁ ਗਿਵੰਤਿ ਰੀਭੁ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 1192.

Ultimately, the interpretation of this phrase would be as follows:

"Guru Nanak is the Guru<sup>1</sup> who represents the image/sabd/philosophy<sup>3</sup> of the Almighty<sup>3</sup>."

(Note: 'Dev' means Guru, Devta (Deity), and God according to Bhai Kahn Singh [8]. Therefore, in this interpretation Guru Nanak is not the incarnation or image of the Almighty but is the Guru (Dev) who represents the philosophy of the Almighty revealed to him. It also does not mean that 'Dev' is the last name of Nanak as has been indicated by Manmohan Singh [11] and Talib [13] above.

Guru Amardas also emphasized that although Guru is important, however, it is the Sabd of the Guru that makes one to understand the philosophy of the Guru:

ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਹੀ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਨ ਪਾਇ ॥

AGGS, M 4, p 45.

"(Although) Without Guru it is all darkness but without his Sabd (philosophy) one cannot attain any wisdom."

**Swayiae (laudation) Sri Mukh Baak Mahla 5**

Similarly, Nanak person (*jann*) has been addressed as Guru and as the image of the Almighty in *Swayiae* (laudation) *Sri Mukh Baak Mahla 5* on page 1386 in the AGGS. For example,

ihr gurunankuij n prisXai is j nm mrn dh QyrihE ]5]  
ihr gurunankuij nIprisXE pqntIsB kI kIE aDriU ]6]  
ihr gurunankuij nIprisXE qybhiv iPir j in n AweY ]7]  
ihr gurunankuij nIprisXE qyieq aq sdw mikqy ]8]

AGGS, M 5, p 1386.

In these stanzas the word prisXE means comprehended/understood.

*Guru Arjan says in these stanzas that who have comprehended/understood the philosophy of Nanak, the Guru and the image of the Almighty will not fall into the cycle of birth and death (5); his family is liberated (6); does not fall into so-called cycle of birth and death (7); and is liberated here and hereafter in other world (8).*

(Note: Here Harbans Singh [6] accepts Nanak as the image of the Almighty but refused to accept him so in the above stanza at AGGS p 1192. Such inconsistencies are found in the work of many Sikh scholars.)

**6. Who can be Pura (Complete) Guru, and Sat Guru?**

Previously it has already been established that Nanak is Guru, Sat Guru, and *Pura* (Complete) Guru, however, here Guru Nanak has also mentioned that the one who has realized the Ever-existing Entity is also Sat Guru:

siq<sup>1</sup> prK<sup>1</sup> ij in j inA<sup>1</sup> siqgr<sup>2</sup> iqs k<sup>1</sup> n<sup>1</sup>au ]  
iqs k<sup>1</sup>stlg isKuaDrYn<sup>1</sup>nk hir<sup>3</sup> gin g<sup>1</sup>au ]

AGGS, M 1, p 286.

*"The one who has realized the Ever-existing Entity<sup>1</sup> is named as the True Guru<sup>2</sup>.*

*And whose association saves the Sikh.*

*Nanak says: Sing the attributes of Ever-Existing Entity<sup>3</sup>."*

Guru Arjan says in the following verse that it was Guru Nanak who had realized that Ever-existing Entity and accepted him as Guru:

BieE Ang<sup>1</sup>h<sup>1</sup>l prs<sup>1</sup>id<sup>2</sup> s<sup>1</sup>tn<sup>3</sup> k<sup>1</sup>Yhir<sup>4</sup> n<sup>1</sup>m<sup>5</sup> h<sup>1</sup>YmIT<sup>1</sup> ]  
j n<sup>6</sup> n<sup>1</sup>nk kau gir<sup>7</sup> ikrp<sup>8</sup> Dwrl sB<sup>1</sup> Ak<sup>1</sup>l<sup>9</sup> inr<sup>1</sup>J<sup>1</sup>nl<sup>10</sup>  
fIT<sup>11</sup> ]

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

*"On whom is kindness<sup>1</sup> and grace<sup>2</sup> of the Almighty<sup>3</sup>, that obtained the sweat Entity<sup>5</sup> of the Almighty<sup>4</sup>. When the Almighty<sup>7</sup> was gracious<sup>8</sup> onto the Nanak person<sup>6</sup>, Then, Nanak has realized<sup>11</sup> the Casteless<sup>9</sup> and Immaculate<sup>10</sup> Almighty in everybody."*

{More on Sat Guru on pp 20-22) in this issue under (i) *Sri Gur Sobha*}

**7. Guru Sikh – Sikh Guru**

There is also a stage where Guru is a Sikh and Sikh a Guru and there is no difference between them since both practice and preach the same philosophy:

grllisKuisKugr<sup>1</sup>h<sup>1</sup>ek<sup>1</sup>gr apds<sup>1</sup>ucl<sup>1</sup>wey ]

r<sup>1</sup>m n<sup>1</sup>m ml<sup>1</sup>qu<sup>1</sup> i<sup>1</sup>hrd<sup>1</sup> dy<sup>1</sup>l n<sup>1</sup>nk iml<sup>1</sup>xu  
sB<sup>1</sup>wey ] 8 ] 2 ] 9 ]

AGGS, M 4, p 444.

*The Guru is the Sikh and the Sikh is the Guru since both disseminate the same teachings of the Guru. Nanak says: Both keep the teachings<sup>1</sup> in their hearts and easily merge with God.*

**GURBANI – DEFINED**

**Keeping in view the intrinsic values of Sabd and Guru I feel the necessity to define Gurbani here since this term is also misunderstood by many Sikh Scholars. Accordingly Bhai Kahn Singh [9] has defined Gurbani as: The Bani (Sabd) uttered by the mouth of Guru Nanak and his successor (to the House of Nanak) Sat Gurus under the intuition of the Almighty is called Gurbani.**

Bhai Kahn Singh further emphasized that although Bhai Gurdas uses this term to the Bani of all other *Atam Gianis*, however, this term is reserved especially for the Bani of our Sat Gurus.

**CONCLUSIONS**

'Sabd' has many meanings depending on the context in which it has been used. For example, word, sound, speech, conversation, duty/religion, advice/message, philosophy, purifier, vehicle to realize God, peace of mind, elixir of life (Amrit) and it also means Guru. 'Sabd' and 'Bani' are interchangeable words meaning the same as the 'Sabd'. Therefore 'Bani' is 'Guru' and 'Guru' is 'Bani', and it is the 'Guru' who says the 'Bani'. Consequently, Sabd is the Guru.

In general 'Guru' means teacher, religious teacher, and enlightener. In Nanakian Philosophy 'Guru' and 'Sat Guru' are as God. On the other hand the Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the House of Nanak have also declared Nanak as Guru as well as Sat Guru and he is the Sat Guru greatest of all other Gurus and Sat Gurus. Guru Arjan has also declared Nanak as the image of God. However Nanak himself has declared that the Guru is the Sikh and the Sikh is the Guru when both disseminate the teachings of the Guru (of Nanak).

Gurbani is defined as: *The Bani (Sabd) uttered by the mouth of Guru Nanak and his successor (to the House of Nanak) Sat Gurus under the intuition of the Almighty is called Gurbani.*

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 17)

**The present study indicates that it is necessary to understand the intrinsic values of ‘Sabd’ and ‘Guru’ before their meanings are implied to interpret the Nanakian Philosophy in its real perspective.**

#### REFERENCES

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Nanak, p = Page of the AGGS).
  2. Anonymous. 1990. Sikh Religion. Sikh Missionary Center, Detroit, Michigan.
  3. Chahal, D. S. 2002. Nanakian Philosophy – The Term Defined. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 4 (2): 17-22.
  4. Cole, W. O. 1996. Guru. *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol II*, Punjabi University, Patiala.
  5. Singh, Gopal (Dr). 1987. Sri Guru Granth Sahib (English Version). Vols. 4. World Sikh Centre Inc. New Delhi, London, New York.
  6. Singh, Giani Harbans. 1988. *Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Darshan Nirney Steek* (Punjabi). Gurbani Seva Parkashan, Patiala.
  7. Singh, Jodh. 1990. A Few Sikh Doctrines Reconsidered. National Book Shop, Delhi.
  8. Singh, Kahn (Bhai). 1981. *Mahan Kosh* (Punjabi). Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, Patiala.
  9. Singh, Kahn (Bhai). 1996. *Gurmat Martand* (Punjabi). Language Department Punjab, Patiala.
  10. Singh, Kasmir. 2000. Aad Guru Granth Sahib: A Juristic Person. *Understanding Sikhism Res. J.* 2 (2): 24-28.
  11. Singh, Manmohan. 1972. Hymns of Guru Nanak. Language department Punjab, Patiala.
  12. Singh, Sahib (Dr). 1972. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan*. (in Punjabi). Vols 10. Raj Publishers (Reg.), Jalandhar.
  13. Talib, Gurbachan Singh. 1988. Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Vols. 4. Punjabi University, Patiala.
-