

THE CONCEPT OF SABD GURU IN THE SIKH RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

The holy scripture of the Sikh faith, called the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) is the repository of the Divine Word called Sabd or Nam. In the history of world religions, the concept of Sabd is the cardinal principle. In Greek literature, it is known as Logos and in Bible, as Word. In Islam, it is called Kalam and in Hindu religion as Oum. Guru Nanak has used 'Sabd' extensively in his Bani.

There are many broad similarities in the use of this concept in different religions. Indian rishis (seers) used Oum as the primeval sound for meditation. It is believed that it represents God. The whole of creation in the Universe is due to utterance of this Sabd. In the holy Quran, it is written that Allah pronounced 'Qun' and the Universe was created. We have an echo of this concept in Jap of Guru Nanak. The holy Bible also propagates an identical idea about creation in the book of James (New Testament): "Through faith we understand that worlds were framed by the 'Word' of God." In the book of Jeremiah (Old Testament) we find its echo: "When He uttereth His voice, there is multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth vapors to ascend".

The AGGS is not looked upon by the Sikhs as a book or scripture, but as the embodiment in the visible form of the essence of the Person of the holy Gurus. This essence is not the physical body of the Guru but his Bani or Sabd. Like Nam, Sabd is the form that the formless creator or God assumes. To this Sabd (Divine Word), which may be the holy word or the esoteric sound heard in Sunya-Samadhi, our worship is due. In the Siddh-Gosht, Guru Nanak clarifies the concept of Sabd from the Sikh viewpoint during the debate held with the Siddhas at Achal-Batala. In stanza 43, Siddhas ask Guru Nanak, "Of which Guru are you a disciple?" Guru Nanak answers: "Sabd Guru surat dhun chela (The holy Word is my Master; concentrated meditation its disciple)." Guru Arjan in Sorath Ashtpadi (page 635, AGGS) assigns a similar meaning to Sabd: Sabd Guru pira gahir gambhira; Bin shabadai jag baurana. (The holy Word is the Guru, the deeply mystical Preceptor; Deprived of the Word is the world distracted).

Professor Puran Singh describes in 'Spirit of the Sikh': "The greatest act of genius of Guru Gobind Singh was to install the Sabd Guru as the permanent Guru of the Sikhs. The last commandments issued from Nander sum up as follows: Puja Akal Di, Parcha sabd da, Didar Khalse da.

Editorial Note 1: If this phrase, *Puja Akal Di, Parcha sabd da, Didar Khalse da.*, of Guru Gobind Singh is translated into English it means: Praise the Almighty, understand the Sabd, have the vision of the Khalsa. Here Guru Gobind Singh is emphasizing the importance of understanding Sabd and there is no mention of Granth as Guru, generally understood by many Sikh scholars.

Editorial Note 2: The author was unable to complete his paper by the publishing date of this journal. He may do so in the future.
