

BOOK REVIEW

1. Essence of Sikhism: Guru Nanak's Japji – A Rendering in English Verse

By Jaswinder Singh Chadha, London, UK.

2. Jap Ji Sahib

By Sukhchain Singh, Patiala, Punjab.

3. Japji Sahib

By Dr Kulwant Singh Khokhar, USA

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JAP is the first Bani incorporated in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) by Guru Arjan. It has been translated and interpreted by hundreds of scholars by now. So much so that Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Ranjeesh (Osho) have also entered in this field. Recently it has also been translated in Turkish language. It has been translated into French by Dr Jarnail Singh of Ottawa, Canada in his French Translation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) and now it is being translated in German by him. The Institute for Understanding Sikhism has received following three recent translations of JAP:

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Recently Khushwant Singh [2] has reviewed the recent translation of JAP by Kartar Singh Duggal. He has taken the Commencing Verse and the Slok of the Jap for comparison with his own translation of Jap. I take this opportunity to put forward my views about the translations and interpretations of JAP, the most important Bani in the AGGS.

Original Verse in Punjabi:

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siq nmu krq pirkuinr Bai inrvr Akil mfriq Aj thl sBl
gr plwid]

[j p]

Amid scuj gwid scuj hYBI scunink hsl BI scuj

Kartar Singh Duggal's Interpretation as reported by Khushwant Singh [2]:

There is but one God.

Truth is His name. He is the Master-Creator. He is unafraid. He disdains none. His is the Image-Eternal. He is beyond incarnation. He is self-existent.

He is realised through the grace of the True Guru.

He was here in the beginning and before the beginning. He is here today, He will be here hereafter.

Khushwant Singh's Interpretation [2]:

There is one God.

He is the supreme truth. He, the Creator. Is without fear and without hate. He, the Omnipresent, Pervades the universe. He is not born, Nor does he die to be born again.

By His grace Shalt thou worship Him.

Before time itself there was truth. When time began to run its course He was the truth. Even now, He is the truth and evermore shall truth prevail.

Jaswant Singh Chadha's Interpretation:

There is one, only one

With true identity Who does it all He has no fear Or enmity Free from rebirths He is self-existent luminary. Attainable through The grace of the Guru.

Meditate on Him.

He is true from eternity Was true in the past Is true in the present Nanak, He shall be true In future ages too.

The above example clearly shows that the current translations or interpretations of JAP including that of Sukhchain Singh and of Dr. Khokhar are very similar to that presented before by hundreds of translators and interpreters. The most prominent misinterpretation is that the Almighty has always been addressed as “**He**” or “**She**” It appears that most of the translators have not kept in mind the deep philosophy of Guru Nanak (**Nanakian Philosophy**) that the Almighty is ineffable. One who is ineffable cannot be addressed as “**He**”. Guru Nanak has addressed the Almighty as “**E**” - “**Oh**”, although he has also used other names as metaphors or similes to make the people to understand that Nanak is talking about the Ineffable to whom they call with various names.

Thus, in my new scientific and logical interpretation (given below) I have not assigned any specific name for the Almighty. The Almighty has been addressed as “**Oh**” as Guru Nanak did, i.e. “**E**”.

Similarly, “*gr pswid*” (*Gur Parsad*) is mostly interpreted as “*He is attained by the Grace of the Guru or God*”.

Since the Commencing Verse is a definition of the Almighty, therefore, all the words in it are the attributes of the Almighty. Thus, “**GUR**” is interpreted as GURU = “**Enlightener**” that removes ignorance; and “**PARSAD**” is interpreted as “**Bounteous**”.

For detailed explanation of Commencing Verse of the AGGS please read my previous article [1].

My scientific and logical interpretation is given as follows [1]:

*The One and Only, Oh, the Infinite;
Exists; Creator; Without fear (Not governed by any*

other); Without enmity; Timeless (Without effect of time and space); Neither takes birth nor dies; Created by Itself; Enlightener; and Bounteous.

Jap

Was in existence before the beginning of the time and space; Was in existence in the past; Is in existence in the present ; Will remain in existence forever (in the future)."

The above scientific and logical analysis of the Commencing Verse of the AGGS clearly indicates that it is not a mantra or Mool Mantra as is accepted widely by many Sikh scholars. but a precise and concise definition of the **Transcendent (Abstruse / Abstract) Entity**. Although the God of Guru Nanak is Transcendent still It **exists (satt / sach)** hence the word '**Entity**' has been used. Again It is a unique Entity and there is no other like It, therefore, It is designated as '**1**' (**One and Only**) by Guru Nanak. Since there is no descriptive or specific name for the God of Guru Nanak, therefore, It is addressed as '**It**' or '**Oh**' in all of my writings.

From the above reviews it becomes clear to me that there is a dire need of scientific and logical interpretation of the JAP, the most important Bani from the AGGS, for the Sikhs and rest of the humanity of Science Age (Information Age, Computer Age, Space Age, Biotechnology Age).

REFERENCES

1. Chahal, DS. 2000. The Commencing Verse of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 2 (1):8-19.
2. Singh, Khushwant. 2000. Translating the Japji Sahib. The Tribune, Chandigarh Online. October 7, 2000.