

# GURU NANAK AND ALBERT EINSTEIN ON ARDAAS (PRAYER)

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## ABSTRACT

*The faith in Ardaas (prayer) is so strong in human mind that majority of the people irrespective of their religion perform prayer for their well being, however, the Sikhs also pray for the well being of the whole humanity, everyday. In this article I have tried to discuss Ardaas according to the philosophy of Guru Nanak of 15<sup>th</sup> century and that of Albert Einstein, a Nobel Laureate, of 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

### A. GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

Ardaas has been discussed under the following topics according to Nanakian philosophy:

1. *Hukm* (Laws of Nature),
2. Accessibility of God, and
3. Type of *Ardaas* of Guru Nanak

#### 1. *Hukm* (Laws of Nature)

It is important to understand Guru Nanak's philosophy about '*Hukm*' (Laws of Nature/Universe) before discussing his philosophy on '*Ardaas*' (Prayer). *Hukm* has been discussed in detailed by Guru Nanak throughout his Bani. In fact it is so important topic for him that he had started to talk about it in *JAP* (The Essence of Nanakian Philosophy) [2] which is found right in the beginning of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1]. The Sikhs have been advised to obey the *Hukm* (Laws of Nature) of the Eternal Entity:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥  
ਹੁਕਮਿ<sup>1</sup> ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ<sup>2</sup> ਨਾਲਿ ॥ ੧ ॥

AGGS, Jap 1, p 1 [1].

Question:

*Then, how can one achieve purification (peace) of mind? And how can one break the vicious circle of lies (falsehood)?*

Answer:

Nanak says:

*Understanding and abiding the Laws of Nature<sup>1</sup>, ordained<sup>2</sup> by the Almighty can achieve purification and peace of mind.*

1. ਹੁਕਮਿ = The word '*Hukm*' used by Guru Nanak indicates Laws of the Eternal Entity, which are called the '*Laws of Nature*' or '*Laws of Universe*' by the scientists.

Guru Nanak further explains that every action and

reaction going on in this universe and all the living organism is governed under these laws (Laws of Nature) and nothing happens out of these laws:

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ੨ ॥

AGGS, Jap 2, p 1.

Nanak says:

*If one can understand the Laws of Nature then one will not boast about one's pride because every action and reaction is under these laws and nothing is out of these laws.*

In the above two stanzas Guru Nanak has very clearly mentioned that every action and reaction is going on according to the Laws of the Eternal Entity (God) or the Laws of Nature according to the scientists, therefore, one cannot boast about that one has power to change them. Therefore, nobody has any power to perform any miracle by changing the course of Laws of Nature.

#### 2. Accessibility of God

In Nanakian philosophy the God is *Agam* (Agm) meaning inaccessible, unapproachable, or inscrutable as explained in the following phrases:

bwbw Alhu Agm Apwru ]

AGGS, M 1, P 53.

*O Baba! "The Allah (God) is Inaccessible and Infinite."*

Agm Agocru AIKu hY gurmuiK hir jwxu ]11]

AGGS, M 1, P 789.

*God is inaccessible, unfathomable and unseen; Oh Guru-oriented! Understand this fact of the God.*

sMq ipAwry pwrBhM nwnk hir Agm Agwhu ]20]

AGGS, M 1, P 556.

Nanak says: "*Oh dear Saints of Infinite God! The God is*

*unapproachable and unfathomable.*

Guru Nanak explains in the following phrase that if God is inaccessible and unapproachable then which is that method to reach God?

iqqu Agm iqqu Agm pury khu ikqu ibiD jweIAY  
rwm ]  
AGGS, M 1, P 436.

*Tell me, with which method I can approach the unapproachable - the Inaccessible God.*

Guru Nanak explains in the following phrase that God provides us even without asking for:

AxmMigAw dwnu dyvsI vfw Agm Apwru ]34]  
AGGS, M 1, P 934.

*The Inaccessible and Infinite God will give (everything) without asking for.*

This means that God has already provided all resources on this earth needed by the humanity and other living beings.

Then Guru Nanak says: Should we pray to him to taking care of us?

Agm Agocr AIK Apwrw icMqw krhu hmwrI ]  
AGGS, M 1, P 795.

*The Inaccessible, Unfathomable, Invisible and Infinite Entity takes care of us (under the Laws of Nature).*

If God takes care for us and provides everything without asking for then Guru Nanak pose a question. Should we praise the God?

ikAw swlwhI Agm ApwrY ]  
AGGS, M 1, P 1022.

*Should we praise the Inaccessible and Infinite God?*

### 3. Type of Ardaas of Guru Nanak

There is no demand in the Ardaas of Guru Nanak as is evident in the following phrases from his Bani:

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਏਕ ਕਹੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥  
ਜੀਉ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਸਭੁ ਤੇਰੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥੩॥

AGGS, M 1, p 25.

*Nanak says his prayer that Nanak surrenders his life and body completely to God.*

Guru Nanak is not demanding any material thing.  
ਜੀਅ ਜੰਤ ਸਭਿ ਸਰਣਿ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ਸਰਬ ਚਿੰਤ ਤੁਧੁ ਪਾਸੇ ॥

jo quDu BwvY soeI cMgw iek nwnk kI Ardwsy ]4]2]  
AGGS, M 1, p 795.

*Although all the living beings are already under Your*

*laws (Laws of Nature), and they understand that it is Your worry (to provide everything).*

*Nanak's prayer is that what is happening (under these Laws of Nature) is good since it is happening under Your laws (Laws of Nature) and that pleases You. 4.2.*

In the above two stanzas Guru Nanak has not said his prayer to demand anything for his personal use from God or wanted any power to enable him to perform any miracle to convince people that he is a great Guru or Prophet. He is repeating the same principle as mentioned in some of the earlier phrases.

Moreover, according to Nanakian philosophy God cannot be pleased:

ਸਾਚਾ<sup>੧</sup> ਸਾਹਿਬੁ<sup>੧</sup> ਸਾਚੁ<sup>੨</sup> ਨਾਇ<sup>੩</sup> ਭਾਖਿਆ<sup>੪</sup> ਭਾਉ<sup>੫</sup> ਅਪਾਰੁ ॥

ਆਖਹਿ ਮੰਗਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦਾਤਿ ਕਰੇ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ॥

ਫੇਰਿ ਕਿ ਅਗੈ ਰਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਦਿਸੈ ਦਰਬਾਰੁ ॥

ਮੁਹੈ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ<sup>੬</sup> ਵੇਲਾ<sup>੭</sup> ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਕਰਮੀ ਆਵੈ ਕਪੜਾ ਨਦਰੀ ਮੋਖੁ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਏਵੈ ਜਾਣੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਆਪੇ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ ॥੪॥

AGGS, Jap 4, p 2.

- *The Almighty<sup>1</sup> exists<sup>2</sup> forever<sup>2</sup> and so are Its Laws of Universe<sup>3</sup> and systems of communication<sup>4</sup> and love<sup>5</sup> for God are beyond any limit.*
- *Will the Almighty give me when requested, since (the Almighty) is bounteous?*
- *Since all the bounties are of the Almighty then what should be placed before the Almighty so that I could see Its court; and*
- *What words (of praise) shall I utter with my mouth that on listening of which the Almighty starts loving me?*

Answer:

- *During any time<sup>7</sup> of exalted state<sup>6</sup> (or feel-like) deliberate<sup>10</sup> on the philosophy<sup>11</sup> of Ever-Existing<sup>8</sup> Entity (Almighty).*
- *The robe of honor is bestowed only when good deeds are performed. Consequently, one reaches the gateway to salvation\*.*

Nanak says:

*Know it like this that the Almighty pervades everywhere.*

6 & 7 'Amrit vela' means any suitable time as discussed in Ref # 2.

The theme is that God exists forever and so are Its Laws of Universe. Neither any offering of any material article nor of any food nor by repeating of any particular word/s can please God. Only one's good deeds will help to reach to the gateway of salvation.

The above stanza clearly indicates the principle of 'Hukm' (Laws of Nature) are working everywhere as discussed previously. Guru Nanak says that all the living beings are already under the Laws of Nature and still they are seeking the protection from God. Guru Nanak further says that since every action and reaction is going on under these laws and it pleases him:

ਜੇਤੇ ਜੀਅ ਲਿਖੀ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਾਰ ॥ ਕਰਣੀ ਉਪਰਿ ਹੋਵਗਿ ਸਾਰ ॥  
ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਰਹਿ ਮੁਖ ਗਾਵਾਰ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੇ ਕੇ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰ ॥੪॥੩॥  
AGGS, M 1, p 1169.

*Every one is under the Laws of Nature (God), the one who thinks he can dictate God is an idiot. The Ever-Existing Entity (God) Is full of praises (attributes).*

In the following stanzas Guru Nanak quotes an example that prayers performed by many *Pirs* (Muslim religious persons) could not defend from the onslaught of Babur on Pathan rulers:

ਕੋਟੀ ਹੁ ਪੀਰ ਵਰਜਿ ਰਹਾਏ ਜਾ ਮੀਰੁ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਧਾਇਆ ॥  
ਬਾਨ ਮੁਕਾਮ ਜਲੇ ਬਿਜ ਮੰਦਰ ਮੁਛਿ ਮੁਛਿ ਕੁਇਰ ਰੁਲਾਇਆ ॥  
ਕੋਈ ਮੁਗਲੁ ਨ ਹੋਆ ਅੰਧਾ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਪਰਚਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥੪॥

.....  
ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਪਾਈਐ ॥੭॥੧੨॥  
AGGS, M 1, p 417-418.

*When the Pathan (Afghan) ruler heard that Babur (Mir - Mogul) is coming with heavy and strong attack then the Pathan ruler held many Pirs (religious persons) for performing prayers and counting on the Tasbis (maalas) to check the attack of Babur.*

*The strong holds, palaces and other buildings were burned down to ashes and the princes were cut into pieces by the army of Babur.*

*But there was no effect of performance of prayers by the Pirs and their prayers blinded not even a single Mogul...*

*Nanak says: Nothing happens by performance of prayers since every action and reaction is going on in this universe and in every living being according to the Laws of Nature as ordained by God and God is satisfied with this system.*

### What should be the Ardaas According to Nanakian Philosophy?

Keeping in view the Nanakian philosophy in the above stanzas of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan formulated *Ardaas* as follows:

ਤੁ ਨਾਕੁਰੁ<sup>1</sup> ਤੁਮ ਪਹਿ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ<sup>2</sup> ॥  
ਜੀਉ<sup>3</sup> ਪਿੰਡੁ<sup>4</sup> ਸਭੁ ਤੇਰੀ ਰਾਸਿ<sup>5</sup> ॥  
ਤੁਮ ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੇਰੇ ॥  
ਤੁਮਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਮਹਿ ਸੂਖ<sup>6</sup> ਘਨੇਰੇ ॥  
ਕੋਇ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਤੁਮਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ॥  
ਉਚੇ ਤੇ ਉਚਾ ਭਗਵੰਤ<sup>7</sup> ॥

ਸਗਲ<sup>8</sup> ਸਮਗ੍ਰੀ<sup>9</sup> ਤੁਮਰੈ ਸੂਤ੍ਰਿ<sup>10</sup> ਧਾਰੀ<sup>11</sup> ॥  
ਤੁਮ ਤੇ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ<sup>12</sup> ॥  
ਤੁਮਰੀ ਗਤਿ<sup>13</sup> ਮਿਤਿ<sup>14</sup> ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਜਾਨੀ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਸਦਾ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀ<sup>15</sup> ॥੮॥੪॥

AGGS, M 5, P 268 (*Sukhmani Sahib*).

The above verse is the perfect *ARDAAS*. I have divided it into two parts for its interpretation:

First part deals with the *Ardaas* (prayer) or Thanksgiving.

Since it is also important to understand the God to Whom we pray or thank, therefore, the second part describes the characteristics of that God.

The following interpretation is of my own. You will wonder that it is different than that given by other scholars. It is so because most of them are the literal translations but mine is the interpretation.

#### 1. Ardaas (Prayer) or Thanksgiving:

*"Our prayer<sup>2</sup> is before You, Oh God<sup>1</sup>.  
Our lives<sup>3</sup> and bodies<sup>4</sup>, granted to us, are Your creations<sup>5</sup> (blessings).  
You are our Mother and Father and we are Your children.  
With Your blessings, we have numerous joys<sup>6</sup>."*

#### 2. Who is that God to Whom we pray or thank?

*"Nobody knows Your limits (You are infinite).  
You<sup>7</sup>, the God<sup>7</sup>, are the highest of the high.  
Everything<sup>9</sup> (matter and antimatter) in this universe<sup>8</sup>  
Is under Your Laws<sup>10,11</sup> (the Laws of Nature/Universe).  
Everything is happening under Your Laws<sup>12</sup> (the Laws of Nature/Universe).  
It is only You, Who knows Your State of Being<sup>13</sup> and Limits<sup>14</sup> (Infiniteness).  
Nanak, the servant, sacrifices<sup>15</sup> himself on You, the God."*

Guru Arjan has composed this *Ardaas* keeping in view all the basic principles of Nanakian philosophy discussed above. Here again it is very clear that Guru Arjan has not demanded any thing from God. The irony is that this *Ardaas* is sung while getting up and stretching the bodies before the *Ardaas* composed by the Sikh theologians during 1930s and 1940s. This *Ardaas* of SGPC is reproduced at pages 6-8. There is another irony that there is not even a single phrase in that *Ardaas* from the Gurbani, incorporated in the AGGS.

(Continued on page 8)

Now it is the prayer of the whole Khalsa, May the conscience of the whole Khalsa be informed by Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru and, in consequence of such remembrance, may total well-being obtain. Wherever there are communities of the Khalsa, may there be Divine protection and grace, the ascendance of the supply of needs and of the holy sword, Protection of the tradition of grace, victory of the panth, the succour of the holy sword, ascendance of the Khalsa. Say, O Khalsa, "Wondrous Destroyer of darkness."

Unto the Sikhs the gift of the Sikh faith, the gift of the untrimmed hair, the gift of the discipline of their faith, the gift of sense of discrimination, the gift of trust, the gift of confidence, above all, the gift of meditation on the Divine and bath in Amritsar (holy tank at Amritsar). May hymns-singing missionary parties, the flags, the hostels, abide from age to age. May righteousness reign supreme. Say, "Wondrous Destroyer of darkness."

May the Khalsa be imbued with humility and high wisdom! May Waheguru guard its understanding!

O Immortal Being, eternal helper of Thy panth, benevolent Lord, bestow on the Khalsa the beneficence of unobstructed visit to and free management of Nankana Sahib and other shrines and places of the Guru from which the Panth has been separated.

O Thou, the honour of the humble, the strength of the weak, aid unto those who have none to reply on, True Father, Wondrous Destroyer of darkness, we humbly render to you ..... (Mention here the name of the scriptural composition that has been recited or, in

appropriate terms, the object for which the congregation has been held.) Pardon any impermissible accretions, omissions, errors, mistakes. Fulfil the purposes of all.

Grant us the association of those dear ones, on meeting whom one is reminded of Your name. O Nanak, may the Nam (Holy) be ever in ascendance! in Thy will may the good of all prevail!

- b) On the conclusion of the Ardas, the entire congregation participating in the Ardas should respectfully genuflect before the revered Guru Granth, then stand up and call out, "The Khalsa is of the Wondrous Destroyer of darkness: victory also is His." The Congregation should, thereafter, raise the loud spirited chant of Sat Sri Akal (True is the timeless Being).
- c) While the Ardas is being performed, all men and women in congregation should stand with hands folded. The person in attendance of the Guru Granth should keep aving the whisk standing.
- d) The person who performs the Ardas should stand facing the Guru Granth with hands folded. If the Guru Granth is not there, the performing the Ardas facing any direction is acceptable.
- e) When any special Ardas for and on behalf of one or more persons is offered, it is not necessary for persons in the congregation other than that person or those persons to stand up.

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## **B. ALBERT EINSTEIN (1879-1955)**

*The following excerpts are taken from Albert Einstein - The Human Side, Selected and Edited by Helen Dukas and Banesh Hoffman, Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp 32 – 33.*

A child in the sixth grade in a Sunday School in New York City, with the encouragement of her teacher, wrote to Einstein in Princeton on 19 January 1936 asking him whether scientists pray, and if so what they pray for.

Einstein replied as follows on 24 January 1936:

I have tried to respond to your question as simply as I could. Here is my answer. Scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by laws of nature, and therefore this holds for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly

be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e. by a wish addressed to a supernatural Being.

**Is Einstein not saying the same thing about prayer as said by Guru Nanak about 467 years before him?**

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