

THE CONCEPT OF REINCARNATION IN SIKHI AND SIKHISM ADVOCATED OR PRECLUDED?

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

There are five primary assertions within this essay. The first is that reincarnation is believed, accepted and advocated within the parameters of Sikhism – the term Sikhism is taken to mean the institutionalized religion that the Sikhs practice. All aspects of the religion of Sikhism – its beliefs, practices, and rituals – indulge in the notion of reincarnation as a reality of the afterlife. And all facets of the institution of Sikhism, namely the clergy that consists of *granthis*, *ragis*, *parcharaks*, and *kathavachaks*; the Gurdwaras as the central body of the practice of Sikhism; the majority establishments of the religion with which a vast majority of Sikhs associate themselves, particularly the *deras*, *taksals*, and *sampardayi* outfits; and writers, speakers, and content creators associated with or otherwise influence by these establishments – promote the notion of reincarnation as a truth of the afterlife that cannot be denied.

This first assertion is taken as a given within Sikhism. No attempts are made in this essay to establish this assertion other than stating it as a plain “on-the-ground” reality.

The second assertion is that the notion of reincarnation is rejected within the framework of Sikhi – the term Sikhi being taken to mean the philosophical foundations that Guru Nanak laid; the spiritual messages of Guru Nanak and 34 other composers of Gurbani that are contained within the Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS); and the body of enlightenment that is termed as the spirituality of *ੴ*.

ABSTRACT

Reincarnation is widely accepted as a reality of the afterlife amongst large sections of Sikhs. The concept, however, stands critiqued and rejected within Gurbani. The preclusion of reincarnation from the Sikhi of Guru Nanak becomes apparent once the notion of redefining pre-1469 concepts is considered. This redefining has primarily been left unexplored or ignored purposively by the early interpreters of Gurbani, who relied on Vedic and snatan interpretations of the concepts within Gurbani. This shortcoming is a defining characteristic of the Fareedkoti Teeka, which has remained the basic reference for modern-day translations. Guru Nanak deployed virtually all religious concepts in existence in the pre-1469 belief systems because they were ingrained within the religious canvas of his era and widely accepted by humanity then. For this reason, they are mentioned in his writings as contained within the Aad Guru Granth Sahib. But mention does not equate to acceptance or advocacy. Guru Nanak went beyond critiquing these concepts and beliefs. He redefined them to fit his spiritual canvas. Reincarnation needs to be understood within such a framework.

The third assertion is that while there exists a whole gamut of underlying causes for the divide of such starkness between Sikhism the religion and Sikhi the spirituality on the notion of reincarnation – the primary one being the need by the clergy and the establishment of religion to exert control over their followers through the twin instruments of fear and promise in the afterlife; the divide is sustained by the chasm in interpreting Gurbani. The proponents of reincarnation interpret Gurbani through Snatan and Vedic lenses, arguing that the *mention* of reincarnation within Gurbani is proof of its acceptance and advocacy. This influence comes primarily from the first exegesis of the

AGGS that a group of Benares-based Nirmlas undertook in the form of the *Fareedkoti Teeka*. The underlying hypothesis of this *Teeka* is that the AGGS is no more than a simplified presentation of the four Vedas. Consequently, all the concepts, beliefs, and practices that make up the body of knowledge within the four Vedas are accepted within the writings of the AGGS.

The fourth assertion is that Guru Nanak rejected all prevalent religious beliefs, practices, and institutions. He rejected the institution of clergy by identifying the then-prevalent ones (Brahmin, Kadee, Mullah, and Yogi) as the destroyers of spirituality within humanity. He rejected the instruments of fear and promise constructed on concocted notions of the afterlife. He rejected belief systems that were engrossed with the idea of the afterlife. In short, he rejected the notion of Religion. In place, he advocated spirituality, humanity, and the unity of both. He replaced the twin instruments of fear and promise with love and bliss (*Anand*). He critiqued religion's preoccupation with the afterlife and advocated a spirituality for the here and now. He achieved this by re-defining all the concepts in 1469 about death, after death, and the afterlife. Concepts such as the court of judgement *dargah*, heaven and hell, 8.4 million life-forms, *Jumdoots*, *Dharam Raj*, the account keepers of the afterlife *Chitergupt*, etc. were redefined to fit the parameters of his spirituality of the here and now. Such is also the case with the notion of reincarnation. In short, the *modus operandi* of Guru Nanak's – and by extension Sikhi's – exclusion of prevalent pre-1469 beliefs lay not in the *exclusion of mention* of these beliefs but by the novel and innovative re-defining of them all to fit his notions of spirituality of the here and now. The basic thesis about this fourth assertion is that *mere* mention of any pre-existing concept within Gurbani does *not* equal its acceptance. More often than not, mentioning this and any other pre-1469 concept allows for a stringent critique based on logic, reason, and justification.

The fifth and final assertion is that those individuals, groups, and establishments within Sikhism that promote the notion of reincarnation as a truth of the afterlife have either inadvertently missed grasping the principle of re-defining that runs as a common thread within the pages of the AGGS; or have

purposely neglected, ignored and rejected the principle altogether because it does not serve the objectives and designs of the religion of Sikhism that has come to exist today. So much of the self-preservation designs, livelihoods, and futures of these individuals, groups, and establishments are invested in the religion of Sikhism that the consideration of any view other than its perpetuation is unthinkable for them.

This state of affairs, however, cannot obliterate the fact that the notion of reincarnation is rejected within the framework of Sikhi, the philosophical foundations that were laid by Guru Nanak, within Gurbani, and within the considerations of enlightenment that is termed as the spirituality of *ੴ*. Gurbani makes it clear that reincarnation in the afterlife is a concocted notion, which, together with the entire gamut of related notions, runs the chariot of religion on the wheels of real fear and an unreal promise in the afterlife. It is thus worthy of critique and preclusion from Sikhi's spirituality.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the Notion of Redefining.

Even if "redefining" can be understood within the confines of lay and common language, the analogy pertaining to portrait painting will be used here to help explicate the notion.

When Guru Nanak wanted to create a portrait of Sikhi in 1469, the primary challenge was that the spiritual canvas on which he intended to create that image of Godly spirituality was neither clean nor blank. The human mind's spiritual canvas was already painted on with images of heaven and hell, 8.4 million life forms to be lived after death, soldiers of death, angels of death, and the cycle of births and deaths *Ava Gaun* and reincarnation. The existing canvas had images of salvation after death, judgment by *Dharam Raj*, and all-encompassing reports of our deeds to *Dharam Raj* by *Chitar Gupat*. The canvas also had images of punishment, of accounting of our deeds after death, and of our deceased ancestors. The existing canvas further had images of pre-ordained stuff carried over from our past lives and unfinished activities carried into our afterlives.

How does one paint over a canvas that is already painted and contains a thousand images? But the challenge for Guru Nanak did not end there. There was something else. The existing canvas had a definite focus - a focus on death. It was a canvas that had an obsession with life after death. It has a fixation with the afterlife. The existing canvas had a

preoccupation with securing a good and comfortable afterlife. A life that no one had seen. A life that no one had experienced. A life that no one really knew anything about. A life that no one knew if it even existed in the first place.

The portrait that Guru Nanak intended to paint was different. It was starkly different. It was one whose focus was *not* on death but on life and on living. It was one whose emphasis was on the here and the now. Not on life after death.

Guru Nanak establishes this primary principle as follows:

ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ॥

ਸੁਣਿ ਮਨ ਮਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਪਿਆਰਿਆ ਮਿਲੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਹੈ ਇਹ ॥

ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਜੋਬਨਿ ਸਾਸੁ ਹੈ ਤਬ ਲਗੁ ਇਹੁ ਤਨੁ ਦੇਹ ॥

Sri Rag Mehla 1.

Sunn Man Miter Piareya Mil Veyla Hai Eh.

Jab Lag Joban Saas Hai Tab Lag Eh Tan Deh.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 20.

Guru Nanak is saying: O beloved mind, ਮਨ ਮਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਪਿਆਰਿਆ

Man Miter Piareya, listen ਸੁਣਿ *Sunn*. The time to realize

the Creator is the here and now - ਮਿਲੁ ਵੇਲਾ ਹੈ ਇਹ *Mil Veyla*

Hai Eh. Divinity must be acquired and lived *now* while

there is life and breath in me - ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਜੋਬਨਿ ਸਾਸੁ ਹੈ *Jab*

Lag Joban Saas Hai. The translation of the above verses is

thus:

O beloved mind, listen! The time to realize the Creator within is the here and now.

Divinity must be acquired and lived now while life and breath are in me.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 20.

It's clear that the spirituality of Guru Nanak is for the here and now. Bhai Gurdas puts it this way.

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਪੰਥ ਚਲਾਇਆ ॥

Nanak Nirmal Panth Chlaeya.

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1, Pauri 45 -4.

The spirituality of Guru Nanak was *Nirmal*. It was pure. It was *Nirmal* because it did not have the contaminants of the existing beliefs. It was *Nirmal* because it was free from the impurities of the old canvas. Free from the *focus* of the old canvas, which was the afterlife. Above all, it was *Nirmal* because it presented a spirituality to be lived – not for some unknown and unknowable *future* – but

lived in the *present* – lived in the Here and Now.

Bhai Gurdas further writes of the spirituality of Sikhi.

ਵਰਤਮਾਨ ਵਿਚ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਹੋਵਣਹਾਰ ਸੇਈ ਪਰਵਾਣਾ ॥

ਕਾਰਣ ਕਰਤਾ ਜੋ ਕਰੈ ਸਿਰ ਧਰ ਮੰਨ ਕਰੈ ਸੁਕਰਾਣਾ ॥

Vartman Vich Vartda, Hovanhar Soyee Parvanna.

Karann Karta Jo Kraiy Ser Dhar Man Kraiy Shukranna.

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 18-21- Pauri 3 & 4.

The word ਵਰਤਮਾਨ *Vartman* means the present. The

phrase ਵਿਚ ਵਰਤਦਾ *Vich Vartda* means living and

existing in the here and now. The word *Parvaan* means

– Accepted. The phrase ਸਿਰ ਧਰ ਮੰਨ *Ser Dhar Man*

means willingly accepts; ਕਰੈ ਸੁਕਰਾਣਾ *Kraiy Shukranna*

means with gratitude, and ਕਰਤਾ ਜੋ ਕਰੈ *Karta Jo Kraiy*

means the Creator's doing, the Creator's Will. The

Meaning of the above verse is therefore:

The accepted Sikh of Guru Nanak lives in the present.

He accepts whatever happens in the here and now with gratitude as the creator's will.

Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 18-21- Pauri 3 & 4.

So this living in the present and in the here and now

was the uniqueness of Sikhi. This was the *Nirmalta* of Sikhi.

In doing so, Guru Nanak turned the entire foundation

of spirituality on its head. This required an entirely new

canvas. There was a need for new concepts. There was

a need to discard the concepts of the old canvas.

Why, then, one may ask, are all the concepts of the old

canvas mentioned in the AGGS? The related question

is: if the old canvas had been painted over by Guru

Nanak, why is the old portrait still visible within the

pages of the AGGS? It needs to be noted that the

canvas we are talking about is a *mental* canvas. It's a

canvas that exists in our minds. It's a canvas that sits as

our mindset.

Believe it or not, even though Guru Nanak's Sikhi has

been with us for more than five and a half centuries - a

large percentage of Sikhs still walk around with that old

canvas within our spiritual psyches. A vast majority of

our *granthis*, *ragis*, *parcharaks*, clergy, thinkers,

intellectuals, and writers are holding on to the old

canvas, subscribing to it, and believing and accepting it.

A vast majority of Sikhs are Sikhs on the exterior.

Unique in our looks. But our *mindsets* are framed by the canvas that Guru Nanak rejected.

The manner of painting over it that Guru Nanak employed is novel, innovative, and marvelous. It's a manner that speaks of Guru Nanak's spiritual genius, his inner wisdom, and his devotional enlightenment. It's called redefining. Guru Nanak painted over the pre-1469 old canvas by *redefining* everything on it. It was *revolutionary* redefining.

All the existing concepts are redefined. Each one of them is given a new meaning. They are *mentioned* by Guru Nanak and in Gurbani because people identified spirituality with those concepts. Removing them from the canvas was not an option. These concepts had been ingrained within the deepest recesses of the human mind. They have been carved within the deepest portions of the spiritual psyche. They had settled within the inner depths of the human conscience and soul.

Redefining was the way. The appropriate and correct manner. This was the only way to provide people with a new mindset. Guru Nanak re-defined them all. He gave new meanings to everything that existed on the old canvas. The new definitions were meant to fit his canvas of life and the here and the now.

If the question is: where exactly are the redefined meanings of these concepts recorded, the answer is "within the pages of the AGGS." It's a voluminous text. Massive by any standards. It is a wholesome text. A complete text. Any and every concept that is used in the text is defined *within* the text. Any concepts that are borrowed from the pre-existing canvas are re-defined.

So, the question is plain. When we want to understand Gurbani, to interpret it or translate it, then do we resort to the pre-1469 dictionary that Guru Nanak discarded, or use that dictionary that is embedded within the pages of the AGGS itself? It may seem like a rhetorical question. But the reason it has to be asked is simple. Virtually all our translations and *weeks* use the pre-1469 old and discarded dictionary to explain the concepts of Gurbani as used within the SGGS.

The outcome is that, by and large, Sikhs have

reverted Sikhi to the old canvas. So the question then is: why are Sikhs living the discarded canvas? Why are Sikhs living the old canvas and accepting the old canvas as Sikhi? Why have we reverted to it? Why has this pre-1469 discarded canvas become our spiritual canvas? There can be three reasons for this first, is that we are unaware of the re-defining. The second reason could be that we are aware but have chosen, consciously or otherwise - to ignore the redefining. The third possible reason is that we choose to reject the redefining for purposes that are clear. Those who reject it are those who desire to take the Sikhi of Guru Nanak back into the clutches of the old canvas. These people aim to prove that Sikhs belong to the pre-1469 canvas. That Sikhi is not unique and not *nirmal*. But that Sikhi is merely an offshoot of the old canvas. That Sikhi is simply a branch of the big old tree, the old canvas.

There are, of course dire consequences of such a state of affairs. One glaring one is that while all of us Sikhs are living physically in the 21st century, most of us live in 1468 in the spiritual sense. In other words, for a vast majority of us, Guru Nanak has yet to be born into our lives. For a vast majority of us, Guru Nanak's portrait of Sikhi has *not* been painted over our old canvas. We are still living the old canvas and thinking (wrongly, of course) that the old canvas is what Guru Nanak's Sikhi really is.

How do we know if we are living the old canvas? Well, we can ask ourselves if the Sikhi we practice is one of fear: fear of God, fear of Guru, fear of pain, fear of sorrow, and fear of all things negative. We can ask if our spirituality is one of making deals with God or Guru – that we will make so many offerings, langars, and *Akhand path* recitals *if* and *after* our demands are met. We can ask if our spirituality is one of begging, of constantly asking for this and that, of rubbing our noses to plead to be given this and that. We can ask ourselves if our spirituality is a spirituality on behalf, where we ask our clergy to do our *ardas* asking for this and that, the *pathis* to do our *paths* for us upon payment. We can ask if concerns of life drive our spirituality after death, of heaven and hell, of 8.4 million life forms, and of reincarnation. We can ask if our spirituality is one of rituals. We can ask if our spirituality is one in which we expect and wait for miracles to take place. If the answer to any of the above questions is yes, we need to know that these are the pillars of the discarded canvas. These are the foundation blocks of the pre-1469 canvas. A vast majority of the practices in our Gurdwaras, a good deal of Sikhism that is preached in our Gurdwaras by our clergy, and a good deal of the discourses about beliefs and

practices of Sikhism that are available on the social media and our published literature are based on the pre-1469 and discarded canvas.

The pillars of Guru Nanak's canvas are starkly different. The spirituality of joy, bliss, and love replaces the spirituality of fear. Gurbani calls it *Sohela*, *Vigas* or *Anand*. The spirituality of contentment replaces the spirituality of making deals with God and Guru. Gurbani calls it *Santokh*. The spirituality of getting clergy to do it on our behalf is replaced by the spirituality of *Kiret* and the spirituality of our effort.

ਆਪਣ ਹਥੀ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕਾਜੁ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ॥

Apan Hathee Aapna Apat Hee Kaaj Swareaiy.
I myself resolve my affairs. AGGS, M. 1, p. 474.
and

ਆਪੇ ਬੀਜਿ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਖਾਹੁ ॥

Apey Beej Apey Hi Khah.

The self sows what the self reaps. AGGS, M. 1, p. 4.

The spirituality of outsourcing to the clergy is thus replaced by the spirituality of the self, by the self, for the self. Guru Nanak forbade us from having a clergy class.

The spirituality is driven by concerns of life after the spirituality of here and now replaces death. The spirituality of rituals is from the pre-1469 canvas. In Guru Nanak's canvas, it is replaced by the spirituality of enlightenment. The spirituality of expecting miracles of the old canvas is discarded. In its place, Guru Nanak puts the spirituality of *Hukm* – of abiding in His will.

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Hukm Rajayi Chalna Nanak Likhiya Naal.

(The way to Realize the Creator within is to) Remain within the confines and abide in His Hukm, as contained within us.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 1.

Guru Nanak's spirituality tells us to stop waiting for miracles to happen. And to *become* the miracle we seek, in the here and now. Sikhi is the spirituality of *becoming* and becoming divine.

The question arises here: How did Sikhi revert to the discarded canvas? Especially when it comes to understanding Gurbani within the AGGS. The answer is straightforward: the canvas of Sikhi that Guru Nanak gave us got lost in translation. These translations and *teekas* of the AGGS – because they are largely referenced from the

Fareedkoti Teeka have unfortunately fallen back on the concepts within the discarded canvas and inserted them right back into Gurbani – *through* the translations.

There is no denying that Sikhs – in the last 300 years especially - have lost the ability to understand Gurbani independently. All of us need translations. Given the infiltration of the *Fareedkoti Teeka* into virtually all existing translations, our understanding of Gurbani has been permeated with the old pre-1469 discarded canvas. The concepts of the discarded canvas adulterate our understanding.

Then we have dozens of writings that we call "classical texts," primarily *sakhis* or stories about the lives of our Gurus that help ingrain the concepts from the rejected canvas. Texts include *Gurbilas Patshahi 6*, *Suraj Parkash*, and the six main *Janam Sakhis*. In these classical texts, we have what are essentially tall tales disguised as *sakhis* about our Gurus acting and living very much in accordance with the old canvas. For example, fake *sakhis* of Gurus constructing a well with 84 steps to represent the 8.4 million life forms, concocted *sakhis* of Gurus talking to wolves which were reincarnated Sikhs, and feel-good *sakhis* of Gurus pulling out Sikhs from the fires of hell by their long hair – suggesting that the Guru would not be able to pull out those without it.

Such corruption - conducted, condoned, accepted, and preached over long periods- has had this effect. The canvas of Guru Nanak and the canvas of the Sikhi of Guru Nanak got discarded. The re-painted canvas was the one that got discarded. In its place, the old canvas has become re-established within the psyche of the Sikh. The old canvas has become our Sikhi of today. The redefining that was the core and essence of the uniqueness, *nirmalta* and revolutionary re-writing of spirituality got lost.

A vast majority of Sikhs make claims that Sikhs believe in heaven and hell, believe in reincarnation, believe in 8.4 million life forms in the afterlife, believe in judgement day, believe in *Dhram Raj*, etc. – all of which are from the old canvas. Our clergy, *granthis*, *ragis*, *kathakars*, preachers, and writers do not just hold on to the old canvas; they preach the old canvas because it is *mentioned* in the AGGS. Mention is equated to acceptance without understanding the context. And

without understanding the critique and the redefining.

The outcome is stark indeed. What we have done is that we have brought ourselves to the same crossroads that Guru Nanak stood in 1469. And we have chosen to travel the road he decided not to take. We are traveling the road; he told us not to travel. We are traveling the road he discarded. What's worse, we are traveling the discarded road, claiming that he – Guru Nanak – told us to travel this discarded road because he *mentioned* it in Gurbani. We have reverted, regressed, and lapsed into the discarded canvas. This is because we have ignored the fact that all the existing concepts in the discarded canvas are *redefined*. We ignored that Guru Nanak gave them new meanings – to fit his canvas of life and the here and the now.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF REINCARNATION IN SIKHI AND SIKHISM

It is necessary to begin with Reincarnation, as advocated by the pre-1469 canvas. The primary claim is that after traveling for one *baras*, or one year, the departed soul arrives for judgment before an entity named *Dharam Raj*, who listens to a full accounting of the soul's deeds from Chitergupt - the reporter cum accountant who is said to sit on our shoulders and earnestly record all our deeds while we are alive. The claim then is that *Dharam Raj* orders the soul to either go to heaven or hell or to take on a new physical form – meaning to reincarnate – in a specific life form as determined by the outcome of the judgment of *Dharam Raj*. And the soul thus begins the cycle of 8.4 million life forms. The best souls are reborn straightaway as human beings. Lesser souls go through a shorter cycle to be born again as humans, and bad souls go through a longer cycle. The worst ones go through the entire cycle of 8.4 million.

It is worth pondering over the fact that more than 100 billion people have lived and died until this writing, and not a single one of them has come back to file a report on any of these happenings. Yet, this cycle's chilling and scary details are presented as a religious fact and religious truth. Reincarnation is presented as a reality of life and and believed and accepted by millions.

What is most chilling is that this narrative of

reincarnation – drawn from the pre-1469 canvas - is the one that is presented by our clergy – our *granthis*, *ragis*, *kirtanias*, and our *parcharaks* in our Gurdwaras - as Sikhi beliefs, as Gurbani advocated concepts.

The outcome is that - the narrative held within the psyche of a vast majority of Sikhs is not the narrative of Gurbani but that of the discarded canvas. And this enormous majority of Sikhs mistakenly accept and believe that reincarnation is the narrative of Gurbani.

Nothing can be further than the truth.

So what is the narrative of Reincarnation or *Ava Gaun* within Gurbani? We can develop the fundamental principles by examining some verses that discourse the concept.

Debunking Reincarnation

The first thing Gurbani does is to debunk the notion that Reincarnation of the soul is the *outcome* of a judgment of deeds of the soul after death. This AGGS verse shreds this concocted theory of reincarnation and throws it out of the spiritual window.

ਸੂਰੀ ਮਚਲਾ 5 ॥

ਜਬ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸੀਓ ਤਬ ਕਿਆ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਵਨ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਿ ਆਇਆ ॥

ਅਪਨਾ ਖੇਲੁ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੈ ਠਾਕੁਰਿ ਰਚਨੁ ਰਚਾਇਆ ॥ 1 ॥

Suhee Mehla 5.

Jab Kach Na Sio Tab Kya Karta Kavan Karam Kar Aiya.

Apna Kheyl Aap Kar Daykhaiy Thakur Rachan Rachayea.

When nothing existed, what deeds were being done then? And what deeds were the criteria for a human being to come into existence? Creation is by the Creator; he Himself oversees it all.

AGGS, M. 5, p. 748.

Guru Arjun is asking:

When the entirety of species was created for the *first time*, made in its original form *for the first time* – ਜਬ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸੀਓ

Jab Kach Na Sio what judgment or what criteria of deeds and actions was used to decide which soul takes what form? ਕਵਨ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਿ ਆਇਆ *Kavan Karam Kar Aiya*. And

obviously, there was no one around to do any deeds. ਤਬ ਕਿਆ ਕਰਤਾ *Tab Kya Karta*.

So, since there were no deeds being performed, what did

this so-called Chiter Gupt record? What deeds did he have to report about?

Logic has a force of its own. And this is very powerful logic being presented by Guru Arjun. Suppose a Sikh of Gurbani thinks for himself or herself. In that case, this one couplet alone is sufficient to debunk the whole concocted theory of judgment, of 8.4 Million life forms of *Ava Gaun* and reincarnation. That is how powerful Gurbani is. One verse is enough to debunk an entire theory.

Guru Nanak has this verse regarding reincarnation within the AGGS.

ਆਵਾ ਗਉਣੁ ਬਜਾਰੀਆ ਬਾਜਾਰੁ ਜਿਨੀ ਰਚਾਇਆ ॥

ਇਕੁ ਬਿਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਸਾਲਾਹਣਾ ਜਿਨ ਮਨਿ ਸਚਾ ਭਾਇਆ ॥ ੨੫ ॥

Ava Gaunn Bjariya Bajar Jini Rachayea.

Ek Thir Scha Salahanna Jin Man Scha Bhaya.

The notion of Ava Gaun is the creation of those for whom God is a trade. (But) Those in whose minds the One Creator is realized are in eternal praise of Him.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 1290.

Guru Nanak is saying the notion of reincarnation or *Ava Gaun* – as it exists - has been created or concocted ਰਚਾਇਆ *Rachayea* by those who have turned spirituality into a trade ਬਾਜਾਰੁ ਜਿਨੀ ਰਚਾਇਆ *Bajar Jini Rachayea*.

Guru Nanak is straightforward in his critique. ਆਵਾ ਗਉਣੁ ਬਜਾਰੀਆ *Ava Gaunn Bjariya* means this notion is of those who made spirituality into a means of earning their living. Again, this couplet alone is sufficient for the Gurbani-believing Sikh to discard the concocted notion of the *Ava Gaun* of 8.4 million life forms or reincarnation.

This is a good verse for those who parrot the claim that Guru Nanak believed in and accepted *Ava Gaun* or reincarnation because he *mentions* it in his Bani. Well, he *says* it in this verse above. But it is clear that Guru Nanak is mentioning it to critique, debunk, and discard it. He mentions it to tell us that this notion is of those who made spirituality into a means of earning their living.

The second thing that Gurbani does is to make clear that the life that we have in the here and now is the one and only Life that we have and we will have. Gurbani makes it absolutely clear that this life is *all* we have. Such is made clear within this verse of the AGGS.

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਦੁਲੰਭੁ ਹੈ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ ॥

ਜਿਉ ਬਨ ਫਲ ਪਾਕੇ ਭੁਇ ਗਿਰਹਿ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਲਾਗਹਿ ਡਾਰ ॥ ੩੦ ॥

Kabeer Manus Janam Dulambh Hai Hoey Na Barey Baar.

Jion Bunn Fal Pakey Bhoey Girey Bahur Na Laghey Daar.

AGGS, Kabir, p. 1366.

Kabeer is saying that human life ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮੁ *Manus Janam* is priceless ਦੁਲੰਭੁ ਹੈ *Dulambh Hai*. Why is human life priceless? The answer as provided by Kabir is: ਹੋਇ ਨ ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ *Hoey Na Barey Baar*. The words ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ *Barey Baar* mean - ਬਾਰ ਬਾਰ *Baar Baar*, ਬਾਰੀ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਫਿਰ ਬਾਰੀ *Baari to(n) Fir Baari*, ਇਕ ਬਾਰੀ ਤੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਬਾਰੀ *Ek Baari to(n) Dujee Baari*, or ਦੁਬਾਰਾ *Dubara*. Meaning: A second time, second opportunity, or a second chance. So, human life is priceless *because* It does *not* occur a *second* time. To make the point clear, Gurbani provides a definite example. ਜਿਉ ਬਨ ਫਲ ਪਾਕੇ ਭੁਇ ਗਿਰਹਿ *Jion Bunn Fal Pakey Bhoey Girey* just like a fruit that drops to the ground when it ripens, it does not ever go back to the branch again ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਲਾਗਹਿ ਡਾਰ *Bahur Na Laghey Daar*.

The meaning of the verse is thus:

Kabeer human life is priceless and does not occur a second time. Just like a fruit that drops to the ground when it ripens, it never returns to the branch again.

AGGS, Kabir, p. 1366.

This single verse destroys completely and destructs fully – the notion of reincarnation. There is no second life ਹੋਇ ਨ ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ *Hoey Na Barey Baar*. This one single verse also destroys entirely and destroys completely the idea of going through 8.4 million life forms to come back in the human form again.

Then there is this verse within the AGGS.

ਇਹੀ ਤੇਰਾ ਅਉਸਰੁ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਾਰ ॥ ਘਟ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਤੂ ਦੇਖੁ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ॥

Ehee Tera Ausar. Eh Teri Baar. Ghat Bheetar Tu Dekh Bichar.

This is your one and only opportunity. Contemplate within to realize it.

AGGS, Kabir, p. 1159.

The word ਇਹੀ *Ehee* means only this, this, and only this. The phrase ਤੇਰਾ ਅਉਸਰੁ *Tera Ausar* means your opportunity. And the words ਤੇਰੀ ਬਾਰ *Teri Baar* mean your chance. ਇਹੀ ਤੇਰਾ ਅਉਸਰੁ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਾਰ *Ehee Tera Ausar. Eh, Teri Baar* means this is your one and only opportunity, Your one and only chance. The phrase ਘਟ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਤੂ ਦੇਖੁ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ *Ghat Bheetar Tu Dekh Bichar* means contemplate within and you will realize. Contemplate within, listen to your conscience, and you will know the truth. Listen to your conscience, and it will tell you you are not coming back again. Listen to your rationale conscience, and it will ask you to stop feeding yourself with a delusion.

The message within this verse is clear. It is an unequivocal call – a clarion call - to discard the concocted narrative of reincarnation and *Ava Gaun*, to abandon the tale of going through the 8.4 million life forms to come back in the human form again, and to dispose of the clergy-created fabrication that we will come back a second time to finish our unfinished business.

Here, just one word ਇਹੀ *Ehee* and just one phrase ਇਹੀ ਤੇਰਾ ਅਉਸਰੁ *Ehee Tera Ausar* is sufficient to destroy entirely and destruct completely the notion of going through 8.4 mill life forms to come back in the human form again.

The call of Gurbani is ਘਟ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਤੂ ਦੇਖੁ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ *Ghat Bheetar Tu Dekh Bichar* - contemplate deep within your conscience, and you will realize the reality of your life. And what is that reality? It is in the first part of the couplet: ਇਹੀ ਤੇਰਾ ਅਉਸਰੁ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਾਰ *Ehee Tera Ausar. Eh, Teri Baar* – this human life is your only opportunity. One and Only Chance. There is no return, re-run, repeat, second chance, or coming back. No Reincarnation.

Guided by the verses mentioned above, the choice is hence ours to make – to contemplate deep within our conscience - directed by Gurbani – and to realize the reality or to believe the concocted tales that have been created by those who have turned spirituality into a trade and a market place and into a means of earning their living ਆਵਾ ਗਉਣੁ ਬਜਾਰੀਆ ਬਾਜਾਰੁ ਜਿਨੀ ਰਚਾਇਆ *Ava Gaunn Bjariya Bajar Jini Rachayea*.

Yet another verse within the AGGS establishes the notion that there is simply no coming back in any form whatsoever.

ਬਹੁਰਿ ਹਮ ਕਾਰੇ ਆਵਹਿਗੇ ॥

ਆਵਨ ਜਾਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤਿਸੈ ਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਬੁਝਿ ਸਮਾਵਹਿਗੇ ॥ 1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Bahur Hum Kahey Avehgyay.

Avan Jana Hukm Tisey Ka Hukmeiy Bhujh Smavehgyay. Rahao.

Why would I come again? Coming and going is within His Hukm; I have merged into Him.

AGGS, Kabir, p. 1103.

Merging is the antithesis of coming back. Merging is the antonym, the opposite of reincarnation. When one *merges* ਹੁਕਮੈ ਬੁਝਿ ਸਮਾਵਹਿਗੇ *Hukmeiy Bhujh Smavehgyay* in the here and now – there is no coming back or going anywhere.

The point is clear. The *Hukm* of the Creator is that there is no coming back. ਬਹੁਰਿ ਹਮ ਕਾਰੇ ਆਵਹਿਗੇ *Bahur Hum Kahey Avehgyay*. Living in the *Hukm* is to discard the concocted narrative of reincarnation and *Ava Gaun* and dispose of the clergy-created fabrication that we will come back a second time with or without going through the 8.4 million.

Reincarnation Redefined in Gurbani.

Before understanding how the notion of Reincarnation or *Ava Gaun* is defined or redefined in Gurbani, it is worth noting that the notion of death itself is redefined within the AGGS.

Physical death in Gurbani is defined as the return of elements to the source. It is the return of our life, our *gyot*, our spirit, our soul, our light, our *atma* – or whatever one may wish to call it – to the source too. The following verses provide such a reality.

ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਮਚਲਾ ਪ ॥

ਪਵਨੈ ਮਹਿ ਪਵਨੁ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥

ਜੋਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲਿ ਜਾਇਆ ॥

ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਹੋਈ ਏਕ ॥

ਰੇਵਨਹਾਰੇ ਕੀ ਕਵਨ ਟੇਕ ॥ ੧ ॥

Ramkli Mehla 5.

Pavney Meh Pavan Smaya.

Jyotee Mey Jyot Ral Jaya.

Matee Matee Hoe Eyk.

Rovenharey Kee Kavan Teik.

Air merges into air. Consciousness merges into the Supreme Consciousness. The dust returns to dust. Why lament in grief, then?

AGGS, M 5, p 885.

The *sabd* is all about all the elements constituting the human being returning to its source. When things return to their source, root, or origins, they don't come back.

Here is another set of verses within the AGGS that speak of the return of the elements of life to their source.

ਪਾਂਚ ਤਤ ਕੇ ਤਨੁ ਰਚਿਓ ਜਾਨਹੁ ਚਤੁਰ ਸੁਜਾਨ ॥

ਜਿਹ ਤੇ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਲੀਨ ਤਾਹਿ ਮੈ ਮਾਨੁ ॥ ੧੧ ॥

Panch Tutt Ko Tan Racheyo Janho Chatur Sujaan.

Jeh Te Upjeyo Nanaka Leen Tahe Meh Maan.

The enlightened are aware that the physical body is composed of basic elements. Nanak will merge into the same elements from which I originated.

AGGS, M 9, p 1427.

Death in Gurbani is redefined as *spiritual* death. This is the death that concerns Gurbani and our spirituality because we can do something about it – avoid it and not let it happen. If death as a root concept of the afterlife is redefined, then the afterlife, too gets redefined as what happens after spiritual death. Consequently, reincarnation, or *Ava Gaun*, or cycle of life and death, is redefined as the cycle of *spiritual* life and *spiritual* death. Spiritual life is on account of our acquiring divine virtues, and spiritual death is on account of indulging in human vices. Our spirituality is thus cyclic. It is now you see it, now you don't. One moment, I am spiritual; the next moment, I have lapsed. This is the cycle of concern to Gurbani. It is the cycle that matters. This is the cycle we can do something about. This is the *redefined* cycle.

The idea is to break free from this cycle to be permanently in spiritual Life. The objective is to *become Ajooni* – free of the cycle of spiritual life and death.

This Gurbani definition of *Ava Gaun* or reincarnation is clear from these verses within the AGGS. On page 971 of the SGGS.

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਹਮ ਐਸੇ ਅਪਰਾਧੀ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਜੀਉ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਥਾ ਦੀਆ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਭਾਉ ਭਗਤਿ ਨਹੀ ਸਾਧੀ ॥ 1 ॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥

ਪਰ ਧਨ ਪਰ ਤਨ ਪਰ ਤੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਪਰ ਅਪਬਾਦੁ ਨ ਛੁਟੈ ॥

ਆਵਾ ਗਵਨੁ ਹੇਤੁ ਹੈ ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ ਇਹੁ ਪਰਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਝੂਟੈ ॥

Gobind Hum Aisey Apradhi.

Jin Prabh Jio Pind Tha Deea Tis Kee Bhao Bhagat Nahin Sadhi. Rahao.

Par Dhan Par Tan Par Tee Ninda Par Apbaad Na Chutey. Ava Gavan Hot Hai Fun Fun Eh Parsang Na Tutey.

O Creator, such is my vice-filled life. I have failed to be in the devotion of the One who Created my being and gave me life. Rahao. The vices of desire towards material, vilification, and disparagement of others do not leave me. This cycle does not break and occurs in the blink of an eye.

AGGS, Kabir, p. 971.

The final verse contains the concept of *Ava Gaun* and defines it in the Gurbani sense.

ਆਵਾ ਗਵਨੁ ਹੇਤੁ ਹੈ ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ *Ava Gavan Hot Hai Fun Fun* means: the cycle is taking place within me – in my life – at every split second. *Fun Fun* is the time taken to blink our eyes.

The 8.4 million cycle and reincarnation of the old pre-1469 canvas talk about a process that presumably takes place somewhere. And out there, every life form has its life span, none of which has a life span of the blink of an eye.

In the verses above, the reincarnation or *Ava Gaun* of Gurbani is a cycle that takes place *within* me. Within my mind. Within my conscience. It takes place in the blink of an eye. The phrase ਇਹੁ ਪਰਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਝੂਟੈ *Eh Parsang Na Tutey* means this narrative; this cycle does not end, does not break, keeps happening. And that is the problem.

But what is the cycle? The cycle is clarified in the verse immediately preceding. ਪਰ ਧਨ ਪਰ ਤਨ ਪਰ ਤੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਪਰ ਅਪਬਾਦੁ ਨ ਛੁਟੈ *Par Dhan Par Tan Par Tee Ninda Par Apbaad Na Chutey*. This is a list of human mindsets filled with human vices – desire for things that are not supposed to be mine. The word ਪਰ *Par* comes from ਪਰਾਇਆ *Praeya*, meaning foreign.

The phrases ਪਰ ਤੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ *Par Tee Ninda* and ਪਰ ਅਪਬਾਦੁ *Par Apbaad*, too are denoting mindsets filled with

vices. These mindsets are supposed to be foreign to me. These vice-filled mindsets are not supposed to be mine, not supposed to be within me. Yet they are.

The first verse makes this point: ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਹਮ ਐਸੇ ਅਪਰਾਧੀ. *Gobind Hum Aisey Apradhi Apradh* is vice.

Meaning: O Creator Such is my Vice Filled Life.

So the *Ava Gaun*, or the cycle oscillates between mindsets of divine virtues and human vices. This oscillation happens in a ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ *Fun Fun* manner – in the blink of an eye. Our attitudes change in the blink of an eye.

The *redefined* Reincarnation of Gurbani is the process by which I keep being born again and again ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ *Fun Fun* into mindsets that are dictated by human vices.

The *Ava Gaun* of Gurbani is a cycle that swings like a pendulum between *spiritual*/life on account of virtues and *spiritual* death on account of vices. And this cycle happens in a ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ *Fun Fun* manner. Only this kind of *Ava Gaun* can occur in a ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ manner.

Here is another verse from the AGGS that reinforces this point.

ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਮੂਠੇ ਸਦਾ ਆਵਾ ਗਵਣ ॥

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਗੁਪਾਲ ਸਿਮਰਣ ਮਿਟਤ ਜੋਨੀ ਭਵਣ ॥ ੩ ॥

Kam Krodh Lobh Moh Muthey Sda Ava Gavan.

Prabh Prem Bhagat Gopal Simrann Mitet Joni Bhavan. *The vices of desire, anger, greed, and attachment deprive me (of my divinity), and the cycle remains in perpetuity. This cycle of mindsets is eliminated through devotion and love of the Creator Lord.*

AGGS, M 5, p. 502.

Here, Guru Arjun is outlining – in the clearest of language – what *Ava Gaun*, or reincarnation of Gurbani, is. It is the swinging of the pendulum between vices and virtues. Guru is saying human vices ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਮੂਠੇ *Kam Krodh Lobh Moh Muthey* rob us of our divinity to ensure we are perpetually in the cycle - ਸਦਾ ਆਵਾ ਗਵਣ *Sda Ava Gavan*. And Guru Ji says in the next verse – this cycle

of reincarnation in the here and now can be eliminated ਮਿਟਤ ਜੋਨੀ ਭਵਣ *Mitet Joni Bhavan* by acquiring divine virtues and realization of the Creator within ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਗੁਪਾਲ ਸਿਮਰਣ *Prabh Prem Bhagat Gopal Simrann*.

Guru Nanak has this verse within the AGGS that forms the basis of the above verse of Guru Arjun Ji.

ਭਰਮੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਭਉ ਕਬਹੁ ਨ ਛੂਟਸਿ ਆਵਤ ਜਾਤ ਨ ਜਾਨੀ ॥

ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਵਸਿ ਡੂਬਿ ਮੁਏ ਬਿਨੁ ਪਾਨੀ ॥

Bhrm Bheyd Bhou Kabho Na Chutes Avat Jaat Na Jani.

Bin Har Nam Ko Mukt Na Pavas Doob Moey Bin Pani.

Illusion, separation, and fear do not leave me; this cycle does not dissipate. None get emancipated (from this cycle) except by realizing divine virtues; other ways are self-destructing.

AGGS, M 1, p 1127.

The three words ਭਰਮੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਭਉ *Bhrm Bheyd Bhou*, namely illusion, separation, and fear, are all negative mindsets that are experienced in the here and now. Then Guru Nanak says mindsets do not leave me for good ਕਬਹੁ ਨ ਛੂਟਸਿ *Kabho Na Chutes*, which means they come and go in a cyclic nature. Then Guru Nanak says ਆਵਤ ਜਾਤ ਨ ਜਾਨੀ *Avat Jaat Na Jani* which means this is my *Ava Gaun*. This is my reincarnation again and again. This is my cycle. This is my reincarnation, my *Ava Gaun*.

The next verse provides the panacea. ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ

ਨ ਪਾਵਸਿ *Bin Har Nam Ko Mukt Na Pavas*. The word ਮੁਕਤਿ *Mukt* means to be emancipated, to be free. Guru Nanak is saying that the way to be free from this cycle and end this cycle is through the becoming of divine virtues. The word ਕੋ *Ko* makes evident that there is no other way for anyone.

ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਪਾਵਸਿ *Bin Har Nam Ko Mukt Na Pavas*

Guru Arjun ji consolidates this view of the Gurbani meaning of *Avan Jaan, Ava Gaun* in his verses as follows:

ਮਾਰੂ ਮਚਲਾ 5 ॥

ਫੂਟੇ ਆਂਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਕਾ ਮਨਹਿ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਸੁ ॥

ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ ॥ 1 ॥

ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਓ ॥

Maru Mehla 5.

Futou Aanda Bharm Ka Mneh Bhayeo Pargas.

Katee Beyri Pgeh Tay Gur Kini Band Khlaas.

Avan Jaan Raheyo.

My mind has been enlightened within; my illusions and delusions have been shattered. I uprooted these mindsets, and my Guru liberated me (from them). My Ava Gaun cycle is eliminated.

AGGS, M 5, p 1002.

The phrase ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਓ *Avan Jaan Raheyo* means my cycle of *Ava Gaun* has been eliminated. This claim is about the here and the now.

Two things are being articulated within these verses: One, what was the cycle all about, and two, how has it been eliminated? ਫੁਟੇ ਆਂਡਾ ਭਰਮ ਕਾ *Futou Aanda Bharm Ka* means: I broke out of the eggshell of illusion and delusion. ਮਨਹਿ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਸੁ *Mneh Bhayeo Pargas* means: I am now enlightened.

So, the cycle was the oscillation between enlightenment and illusion. The termination of the cycle is in the phrase ਕਾਟੀ ਬੇਰੀ ਪਗਹ ਤੇ *Katee Beyri Pgeh Tay*, meaning: I cut the roots of the growing creeper of delusion and illusion. ਗੁਰਿ ਕੀਨੀ ਬੰਦਿ ਖਲਾਸੁ *Gur Kini Band Khlaas* means the Guru helped me free myself, liberate myself from ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਓ *Avan Jaan Raheyo* from the cycle.

Guru Nanak has this verse within the AGGS, which sheds light on understanding the issues under discussion.

ਭਾਗੀਨ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਇਆ ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਗਰਭ ਜੂਨੀ ਨਿਤਿ ਪਉਦਾ ਜੀਉ ॥ 3 ॥

Bhaghean Satgur Nhi Paya. Manmukh Garbh Jooni Nit Paunda Jio.

Not realizing the Satguru is unfortunate, the Manmukh puts himself in daily life cycle.

AGGS, M 1, p 95.

The phrase ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਗਰਭ ਜੂਨੀ ਨਿਤਿ ਪਉਦਾ ਜੀਉ *Manmukh Garbh Jooni Nit Paunda Jio* is of significance. It means the *Manmukh* puts himself or herself in the cycle of *Joons* ਗਰਭ ਜੂਨੀ *Garbh Jooni* on a daily basis, ਨਿਤਿ ਪਉਦਾ ਜੀਉ *Nit Paunda Jio* on an everyday basis, and on a ਫੁਨਿ ਫੁਨਿ *Fun Fun* basis as alluded to by Bhagat Kabir in his verse

above.

This is a narrative of the here and the now. The reincarnation of Gurbani, the *Ava Gaun* of Guru Nanak, happens to us in *this* life, not the after-life. And *we* decide for ourselves - if we want to put ourselves into the cycle ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਗਰਭ ਜੂਨੀ ਨਿਤਿ ਪਉਦਾ ਜੀਉ *Manmukh Garbh Jooni Nit Paunda Jio* or remain out of it ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਓ *Avan Jaan Raheyo*.

The choice is ours. The choice is in the here and now because the cycle is in the here and now.

In essence, then, what Gurbani within the AGGS has done is to *redefine* death and everything that follows death - *Joons*, 8.4 million life forms, the cycle, and Reincarnation. And the reason has to do with the basic and foundational principle of Guru Nanak's canvas of Sikhi, which is that the spirituality of Sikhi is for the here and now. Essentially, the reason for the redefining is to ground the notions of 8.4 million, *Joons*, reincarnation, *Ava Gaun*, etc., into our one and only life.

This, then is what is meant by revolutionary and innovative re-defining.

CONCLUSIONS

Understood within the parameters of the redefining as expounded above, the concept of reincarnation as advocated within the pre-1469 belief systems is rejected within the framework of Sikhi – the term Sikhi being taken to mean the philosophical foundations that Guru Nanak laid; the spiritual messages of Guru Nanak and 34 other composers of Gurbani that are contained within the AGGS; and the body of enlightenment that is termed as the spirituality of ਿਓ.

Those individuals, groups, and establishments within Sikhism that promote the notion of reincarnation as a truth of the afterlife have either inadvertently missed grasping the principle of redefining that runs as a common thread within the pages of the AGGS, or have purposively neglected, ignored and rejected the principle altogether because it does not serve the objectives and designs of the religion of Sikhism (as opposed to the spirituality of Sikhi) that has come to exist as the mainstream belief amongst present day Sikhs.

A perpetuation of this (wrong) belief about reincarnation, as is advocated by these individuals, groups, and establishments, is expected, given that many of their self-preservation designs, livelihoods, and futures are invested in such perpetuation. The plain truth is that reincarnation in the afterlife (together with the entire gamut of related notions) runs the chariot of religion on the wheels of genuine fear and fake promise in the afterlife. It acts as a powerful, effective, and potent tool for the clergy to control the minds of the follower masses. Such fear and promise kept the faithful but unenlightened Sikhs chained to the dictates of the clergy and accountable to the institutions that the clergy dominated.

This state of affairs, however, cannot obliterate the fact that the notion of reincarnation is rejected within the framework of Sikhi, the philosophical foundations that Guru Nanak and Gurbani laid, and within the considerations of enlightenment that are termed as the spirituality of *ੴ*. The relevant

contents of the AGGS make such a stance clear by providing a critique if it, precluding it from the spirituality that is Sikhi, and redefining it to fit the canvas of the spirituality and philosophy of Guru Nanak.

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