

SABD GURU TO GRANTH GURU

Part I. SABD GURU

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Holy Scripture of the Sikhs is the most respected Granth of the Sikhs. Dr. Gopal Singh (1987) indicated that due to an improper understanding of 'Sabd' (Word), the Granth was worshipped more than read, uttered as a magical formula or a Mantram for secular benefits. In almost all the Gurdwaras in the world, the Holy Scripture is treated almost as an idol, whether under the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar, or any other organization. However, idol worship is condemned in Nanakian philosophy. Therefore, in the series of four parts about "Sabd Guru to Granth Guru," an integrated and in-depth study about the intrinsic values of 'Sabd,' 'Guru,' and 'Sabd Guru' has been discussed in Part I.

WHO IS THE GURU OF NANAK

During the discussion of Nanak with the Siddhas, Siddhas posed a question to Nanak.

What age are we passing through, and who is your Guru?

ਕਵਣ ਮੂਲੁ¹ ਕਵਣ ਮਤਿ² ਵੇਲਾ³ ॥

ਤੇਰਾ ਕਵਣ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਤੂ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Question a:

*What is the source of beginning¹, and which type of wisdom² is of this Age³? **

Who is that Guru, and to whom are you, his disciples?

Note: *The Ages: The Stone Age, the Copper Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, or the Middle Age (1066 - 1485).

ABSTRACT

The subject, *Sabd Guru to Granth Guru*, is an advanced and modified version of my book. (Chahal, 2004). This subject is discussed in four Parts. The Sikhs accept their Holy Scripture as their Guru worldwide.

Part I contains discussion about 'Sabd' as the 'Guru' declared by Guru Nanak (1469-1539).

Nanak Answers:

ਪਵਨ¹ ਅਰੰਭੁ² ਸਤਿ³ ਗੁਰ⁴ ਮਤਿ⁵ ਵੇਲਾ⁶ ॥

ਸਬਦੁ⁷ ਗੁਰੂ⁸ ਸੁਰਤਿ⁹ ਧੁਨਿ¹⁰ ਚੇਲਾ¹¹ ॥

The air¹ is the beginning of every life, and this is the Age⁶ of ever-lasting³ enlightening⁴ philosophy⁵ (Like the Renaissance from the 14th to 17th century in Europe).

The Sabd⁷ is my Guru⁸ (enlightener), and my keen¹⁰ consciousness⁹ is its disciple¹¹.

AGGS, M 1. p 943.

What are the meanings of 'sabd' here? Guru Nanak has explained in Stanza # 38 of JAP Bani how to construct 'Sabd' (philosophy) and then follow it to be a noble person:

ਜਤੁ ਪਾਹਾਰਾ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਸੁਨਿਆਰੁ ॥

ਅਹਰਣਿ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਦੁ ਹਥੀਆਰੁ ॥

ਭਉ ਖਲਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਤਪ ਤਾਉ ॥

ਭਾਂਡਾ ਭਾਉ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਤਿਤੁ ਢਾਲਿ ॥

ਘੜੀਐ ਸਬਦੁ ਸਚੀ ਟਕਸਾਲ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥੩੮॥

Self-control should be the furnace and patience of a goldsmith.

Wisdom should be the anvil, and knowledge be the tools.

Love for God should be the bellows to blow air into the fire to make it super-hot.

The body is a melting pot where self-control, patience, wisdom, and knowledge merge to mold (prepare) Amrit (elixir).

By this method, the Sabd is constructed in this mint of truth.

Nanak says:

God has blessed everybody with these qualities; those who work to achieve them are blessed by God.

AGGS, Jap # 38, p 8.

The theme in the above stanza # 38 of JAP Bani of Guru Nanak explains how to construct a 'Sabd' (word/philosophy) and prepare the *Amrit* (elixir), following which will make a person noble. From this stanza, it can be assumed that 'Sabd' in the phrase, ਸਬਦੁ⁷ ਗੁਰੂ⁸ ਸੁਰਤਿ⁹ ਧੁਨਿ¹⁰ ਚੇਲਾ¹¹ || constructed by self-control, being patient, and using knowledge and wisdom became the 'Guru.'

Guru Amar Das has explained without such 'Sabd' of Guru Nanak, one cannot attain wisdom as follows:

ਬਾਝੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਬਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਬੁਝ ਨ ਪਾਇ ||

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

AGGS, M 4, p 45.

Now, the question is:

Who is GURU?

'Guru' (ਗੁਰੂ) is a broad term covering many aspects.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 'Guru' means as follows: (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/guru>)

- 1: A personal religious teacher and spiritual guide in Hinduism.
- 2: a. A teacher and especially intellectual guide in matters of fundamental concern.
B. One who is an acknowledged leader or chief proponent.

On the other hand, Bhai Kahn Singh says that the word 'Guru' originated from 'Gri', meaning 'engulfs and enlightens', i.e., the one who engulfs the darkness (ignorance) and enlightens (makes to understand). (K. Singh, 1981) According to him, 'Guru' in Gurbani is spelled as ਗੁਰ, ਗੁਰੁ, and ਗੁਰੂ. In addition to these spellings, it is

also spelled as ਗੁਰਿ. Despite different spellings, all the forms are pronounced as ਗੁਰੂ (Guru) and mean, as explained above.

Bhai Kahn Singh, in *Gurmat Martand*, again explains 'Guru' as follows: (K. Singh, 1996) One who dispels ignorance and teaches the truth, affection, interest, and benefit (human rights). According to him, Nanak is the Guru sent by God to dispel ignorance and preach the truth and human rights.

A critical analysis of Gurbani indicates that 'Guru' has been explicitly used for the Eternal Entity as follows:

i) Guru is God

Nanak says God is the Guru:

ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੇਈ ਜੀਉ
||੫||੧੧||

AGGS, M 1, p 599.

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

ii) Sat Guru is also God

But Guru Ram Das says the God is 'Sat Guru' as follows:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਨਾ ਆਵੈ ਨਾ ਜਾਇ ||

ਉਚੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਇ ||੧੩||

AGGS, M 4, p 759.

My True Guru is that Who exists forever and neither takes birth nor dies.

Oh¹ (That) is imperishable² Entity³ and pervades everywhere.

NANAK is GURU

On the other hand, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjun say that Nanak is the 'Guru' and 'Sat Guru' (True Guru):

Guru Angad:

ਦੀਖਿਆ ਆਖਿ ਬੁਝਾਇਆ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਸਚਿ ਸਮੇਉ ||

ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੇਸੀਐ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ ||੧||

What teachings can be imparted to those who have Nanak as their Guru (enlightened teacher)?

AGGS, M 2, p 150.

Guru Amar Das:

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਉ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਨਿਬੜਿਆ
||੧੮||੧||੨||

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

AGGS, M 3, p 435.

Guru Ram Das:

ਧਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ* ਜਿਨਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਤਰੀ ਤਰਾਂਤਿ

॥੪॥੫॥

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

AGGS, M 4, p 1264.

Note: *Without discrimination of caste, creed, sex, social status, etc.

Finally, Guru Arjun confirms that Nanak is the Guru:

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਪੇਖਿਆ ਸੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ਨ ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ

॥੪॥੨॥੧੩॥

"Those who have heard and analyzed the philosophy of Guru Nanak are liberated."

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

In the following phrase, Guru Arjun supports the theme of his above phrase that God entrusted Guru Nanak with the treasure of wisdom/philosophy for dissemination:

ਭਗਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰ ਗੁਰਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਉ ਸਉਪੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਲੇਖਾ ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਲਇਆ

॥੪॥੩॥੧੪॥

God entrusted Guru Nanak with the treasure of wisdom/philosophy¹ (for dissemination), then (God) never took any account² of this treasure.

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

Nanak as 'Complete Guru' / 'Sat Guru'

The following verses indicate that Nanak is also 'Sat Guru':

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੂ¹ ਗੁਰੂ²* ਹੈ ਪੂਰਾ³ ਮਿਲਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ⁴ ਨਾਮੁ⁵ ਧਿਆਇਆ⁶

॥੪॥੫॥

AGGS, M 4, p 882.

Nanak is the Guru¹ of Gurus², is the Complete³ and True Guru⁴ by meeting him (Sat Guru) one can realize/comprehend⁵ God⁶."*

Note: *ਗੁਰੂ¹ ਗੁਰੂ² (Guru Guru) means 'Guru' of the 'Gurus,' according to Bhai Kahn Singh. (K. Singh, 1981)

ਸਭ ਤੇ ਵਡਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਲ ਰਾਖੀ ਮੇਰੀ ॥੪॥੧੦॥੫੭॥

Guru Nanak is the greatest of all other so-called Sat Gurus who protected my honor.

AGGS, M 5, p 750.

When 'kaka' of Nanak is with 'ounkar', it is generally considered Nanak as a person, Guru, or Sat Guru but not as a pen name. However, in some verses, *kaka* is without *ounkar*; still, Nanak is interpreted as a person, not a pen name. However, it is not a standard law of the Grammar of Gurbani; therefore, one must be careful when interpreting the name 'Nanak,' keeping in view the theme of the verse. But some scholars consider that 'Sat Guru' is God interpreted as follows:

Nanak says: "*The God is greatest of all who protected my honor.*"

However, logical and scientific interpretation is as follows:

Guru Nanak is the greatest of all other so-called Sat Gurus who protected my honor.

Nanak as the 'Representative of God'

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

ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਰੂਪ ॥੮॥੧॥

Guru Nanak is the embodiment of the image of God (Gobind).

AGGS, M 5, p 1192.

Who else can be Sat Guru?

It has already been established that Nanak is Guru, Sat Guru, and Pura (Complete) Guru; however, here Guru Nanak has also been mentioned that the one (anyone) who has realized the Ever-Existing Entity is also Sat Guru:

ਸਤਿ¹ ਪੁਰਖੁ¹ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ² ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਤਿਸ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਿਖੁ ਉਧਰੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ³ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਉ ॥੧॥

The one who has realized the Ever-Existing Entity¹ is named the True Guru².

And whose association saves the Sikh.

Nanak says: *Sing the attributes of Ever-Existing Entity³.*

AGGS, M 5, p 286.

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:

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਹੈ ਏਕੇ ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ¹ ਚਲਾਏ ॥

ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਦੇਵੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਲਣੁ ਸੁਭਾਏ ॥੮॥੨॥੯॥

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 teachings¹ in their hearts, and such Guru/ Sikh is met by chance.

AGGS, M 4, p 444.

CONCLUSIONS

Nanak says his Guru is 'Sabd' and advised the Sikhs how to construct the 'Sabd.' The meanings of 'Sabd' are discussed in Part II. Generally, 'Guru' means teacher, religious teacher, and enlightener. The Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak' have declared Nanak as 'Guru' and 'Sat Guru', and he is the 'Sat Guru' greatest of all. Guru Arjun has also declared Nanak as the 'Image of God.' On the other hand, Guru Ram Das has also said that there is no difference between 'Guru' and 'Sikh' when both are practicing and preaching the same philosophy (Nanakian Philosophy).

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