

SABD GURU TO GRANTH GURU

Part II. SABD TO BANI TO POTHI TO GURU GRANTH

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

Part II is a continuation of Part I. Sabd Guru. Part II discusses how 'sabd' is erroneously spelled as 'shabad' in Sikh literature, whereas it is spelled as 'sabd' (ਸਬਦ)

in the Sikh Holy Scripture and as 'sabd' (शब्द) in Sanskrit. This chapter discusses 'sabd' and how it has been converted to 'Granth Guru.'

SABD

The word 'sabd' is spelled as शब्द in Sanskrit. But in the literature of Hinduism and Sikhism, it is erroneously spelled as "shabad". However, in the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs, 'sabd' (ਸਬਦ) is spelled as follows: ਸਬਦ, ਸਬਦਿ, ਸਬਦੁ. ਸਬਦੰ, ਸਬਦੀ, ਸਬਦੀਂ, ਸਬਦੇ, ਸਬਦੈ, ਸਬਦੇ, and ਸਬਦੇ with different prepositions. The word 'sabd' has many meanings: (K. Singh, 1981)

- i) Sound, Word, Speech, Conversations,
- ii) Religion, duty,
- iii) Message, advice,
- iv) Philosophy, and

In addition, I have found a few more meanings from the Gurbani:

- v) Purifier,
- vi) Vehicle to Meet God,
- vii) Peace of Mind, and
- viii) Elixir of Life (*Amrit*).

- i) Sound, Word, Speech, Conversation

In general, 'Sabd' is taken as 'sound.' Here, Guru Nanak uses it as an 'unstuck sound/music' to describe the beauty and praise of nature.

ABSTRACT

The 'Sabd' used in the Sikh Holy Scriptures has many meanings. Then the 'sabd' was changed to 'Bani' of Gurus. Afterward, Guru Arjun compiled the Bani of Guru Nanak and the four Gurus who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak' into a pothi (book). Besides, he also compiled the Bani of Bhagats and the Bhattas and declared it the Pothi Parmesar ka Thaan

(ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ2 ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁਤੁ ॥).

This pothi became the only source for preaching Sikhism for 104 years till Guru Gobind Singh declared it as 'Granth Guru' in 1708 after adding the Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur.

ਅਨਹਤਾ ਸਬਦ ਵਾਜੰਤ ਭੇਰੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

As if the Unstruck Sound (sabd) is coming out from a drum. 1. Pause.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 13.

The Gurbani tells us that one's personality is discovered from one's 'sabd' (word/speech/conversation):

ਸਬਦੇ ਹੀ ਭਗਤ ਜਾਪਦੇ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਚੀ ਹੋਇ ॥

Through one's 'sabd' (words), the noble persons (Bhagats/devotees) are discovered, whose bani (hymns) tell the truth.

AGGS, M. 3, p. 429.

- ii) Duty/Religion

ਜੇਗ ਸਬਦੰ ਗਿਆਨ ਸਬਦੰ ਬੇਦ ਸਬਦੰ ਤ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ॥

ਖਜੜੀ ਸਬਦੰ ਸੂਰ ਸਬਦੰ ਸੂਦੁ ਸਬਦੰ ਪਰਾ ਕ੍ਰਿਤੁਰ ॥

ਸਰਬ ਸਬਦੰ ਤ ਏਕ ਸਬਦੰ ਜੇ ਕੇ ਜਾਨਸਿ ਭੇਉ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਾ ਕੇ ਦਾਸੁ ਹੈ ਸੇਈ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਦੇਉ ॥੩॥

*The duty of the Jogi is to attain knowledge,
And that of Brahmins is to read Vedas.
The duty of the Kshatriya is to show bravery.
Understanding the One, God, is everyone's duty.
Nanak is the servant of That (God), Who is without any
blemishes."*

AGGS, M. 1, p. 1353 and AGGS, M. 2, p. 469.
Some interpreters replace 'Duty' with 'Religion.'

iii) Advice, Message

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਪਾਈਐ ਗੁਣੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥੮॥੧੦॥

Nanak says:

*One attains the treasure of wisdom by contemplating/
deliberating on the Advice/philosophy (of the Guru).*

AGGS, M. 1, p. 59.

iv) Philosophy

ਏਕੇ ਸਬਦੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੀਐ ਅਵਰ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਆਸ ॥

*Contemplating only on the Word (philosophy) of the One
(God) makes one abandon hope in others.*

AGGS, M. 1, p. 18.

ਅਮਲੁ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਬੀਜੁ ਸਬਦੇ ਕਰਿ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਆਬ ਨਿਤ ਦੇਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

*Make good deeds as the soil and put the Word (Guru's
philosophy) in it as the seed.*

Irrigate it continually with the water of Truth.

AGGS, M. 1, p. 24.

v) Purifier

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਉਤਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ

*Without the sabd (Word), pollution (of mind) is not
washed off; otherwise, one suffers misery (symbolic cycle
of death and rebirth).*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 29.

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

*(When) The Word of the Guru abides within the mind,
and then the mind and body become pure. 1. Pause*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 32.

vi) Vehicle to Realize God

ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਸਚੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਦੁਖ ਨਿਵਾਰਣਗਾਰੁ ॥

*Through the sabd (word) of the Guru, one realizes the
Truth (God) That removes all troubles.*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 36.

vii) Peace of Mind

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

*Peace of mind is attained through Guru's sabd (advice/
philosophy).*

AGGS, M. 5, p. 46.

viii) Elixir of Life

ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ¹ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ² ਹੈ ਜਿਤੁ ਪੀਤੈ³ ਤਿਖ ਜਾਇ ॥

*The elixir of life² is obtained through understanding³
the sabd (word)¹ means quenching the thirst for
wisdom.*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 35.

BANI (HYMN)

'Sabd' is Equated to 'Bani'

After Guru Nanak, 'Sabd' has been equated to 'Bani' by
Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das as follows:

ਸਚੁ¹ ਬਾਣੀ² ਸਚੁ³ ਸਬਦੁ⁴ ਹੈ ਜਾ ਸਚਿ⁵ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੁ⁶ ॥

*Put your love (faith)⁶ in the Truth⁵ (God), since the
bani² (hymn) is the truth³ and the sabd⁴ (hymn) is the
truth³.*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 33.

Bani is Equated to 'God' by Guru Amar Das:

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

*Wondrous is the bani (hymn) of the Formless and is
worth laudation as nothing equals it.*

AGGS, M. 3, p. 515.

Now the 'Bani' is equated to 'Guru' by Guru Ram Das:

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥

*The Bani is Guru, and Guru is Bani, which has all types
of elixirs of life.*

AGGS, M.4, p. 982.

Now, the question is? Who says Bani?

Guru Ram Das has resolved this issue in the following
phrase that it is the Guru who says bani:

ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਰੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥੫॥

*The Guru says Bani, and the humble follower believes
in that Bani; thus, the Guru emancipates him.*

AGGS, M. 4, p. 982.

But who is that Guru who says Bani?

Guru Ram Das made it very clear that 'Nanak' is the
Guru who says the bani (hymn) as is explained in the
following phrases:

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ* ਬੇਲੇ ਗੁਣ ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ ॥੪॥੫॥

Nanak person speaks the Bani of good qualities; this enlightening bani is imbibed through the Naam of Hari (God).*

AGGS, M. 4, p. 494.

and

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ* ਬੋਲੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾਂ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਭਾਣੀ ॥

ਉਪਦੇਸੁ¹ ਕਰੇ² ਗੁਰੁ³ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ⁴ ਪੂਰਾ⁵ ਗੁਰੁ⁶ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ⁷

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀਆ⁸ ਜੀਉ ॥੪॥੧॥

Nanak speaks Bani (hymn), the Elixir of Life¹.*

It is dear and pleasing to the minds of the Guru-oriented Sikhs.

The Guru³, the True Guru⁴ (Nanak), preaches² his teachings¹ of The Perfect⁵ Guru⁶. The True Guru⁷, who is Generous⁸ to all.*

AGGS, M. 4, p. 96.

Note: * Nanak here is a person, not a pen name, since Kaka is with Ounkar in the above two stanzas.

Where can one get the Sabd/Bani?

Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjun have answered this question. It can be obtained from the True Guru/ Perfect Guru:

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ¹ ਕੀ ਸਾਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ² ॥

ਸੁਖ³ ਮਨ⁴ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਹਜਿ⁵ ਸਮਾਈ⁶ ॥੨॥

The true Bani² is obtained through the Perfect Guru¹. Through that Bani, one can easily⁵ attain peace of mind⁶.

AGGS, M. 3, p. 663.

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ¹ ਪੂਰੇ² ਗੁਰ³ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

ਪੂਰੇ ਗੁਰ⁵ ਤੇ ਉਪਜੀ⁶ ਸਾਚਿ⁷ ਸਮਾਈ⁸ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

"Wondrous¹ is the Bani of the perfect² Guru³, That was revealed⁶ by the perfect⁴ Guru⁵, and that helps to understand⁸ God (ਸਾਚਿ)⁷."

AGGS, M. 3, p. 754.

ਪੂਰਾ¹ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ² ਜੇ ਮਿਲੈ³ ਪਾਈ⁴ ਸਬਦੁ⁵ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ⁶ ॥

If we meet³ the Perfect¹ True Guru², we can obtain⁴ the Treasure⁶ of the sabd⁵.

AGGS, M. 5, p. 46.

ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਜਪਿ ਅਨਦੁ ਕਰਹੁ ਨਿਤ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ॥੧॥

Contemplate/deliberate on the bani of the complete

Guru¹ and attain bliss every day.

AGGS, M. 5, p. 616.

ਗੁਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਣੀ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸਿ ਵਖਾਣੀ ॥

ਨਿਰਮਲ ਅਕਥ ਕਹਾਣੀ ॥੨॥੧੮॥੮੨॥

"The Bani of the Perfect Guru is pleasing to the mind of the Transcendent.

Nanak, the servant of God, utters the bani that is immaculate but not easy to explain."

AGGS, M. 5, p. 629.

Note: * Nanak is himself, not a pen name, although Kaka is without Ounkar. It indicates that one must be very careful when interpreting Nanak as himself or as a pen name used by other Gurus to interpret Gurbani correctly.)

ਬਾਝੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਬਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਬੁਝ ਨ ਪਾਇ ॥

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

AGGS, M. 1, p. 15.

BANI COMPILED INTO A POTH (NOTEBOOK)

According to Prof Sahib Singh(1987), Guru Nanak, at the time of his demise, handed over a Pothi containing his Bani to Guru Angad, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak.' Guru Angad added his Bani to it and handed over this Pothi to the next Guru, Amar Das, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak.' This system of preserving the Bani of Guru Nanak in its original form continued till it reached Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak.' When Guru Arjun opened and examined this Pothi (inherited treasure), he exclaimed it in astonishment as follows:

ਪੀਊ ਦਾਦੇ ਕਾ ਖੇਲਿ ਡਿਠਾ ਖਜਾਨਾ ॥

ਤਾ ਮੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਭਇਆ ਨਿਧਾਨਾ ॥੧॥

ਰਤਨ ਲਾਲ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਮੇਲੁ ॥

ਭਰੇ ਭੰਡਾਰ ਅਖੁਟ ਅਤੋਲ ॥੨॥

ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥

ਤੇਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥੩॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਸਤਕਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ॥

ਸੁ ਏਤੁ ਖਜਾਨੈ ਲਇਆ ਰਲਾਇ ॥੪॥੩੧॥੧੦੦॥ follows:

When I opened and viewed the inherited treasure

(Gurbani) of our ancestors (Gurus), my mind was illumined with Treasure (Bani).

Compared to this treasure, the jewels and rubies have no value.

The chest is full of inexhaustible and immeasurable treasure (Bani).

Oh, Brothers, let us utilize it together and dispense (disseminate) it amongst others.

The Treasure (Gurbani) will not be exhausted but will multiply manifold.

Nanak says whoever has the grace of God will be a shareholder in this treasure (Bani).

AGGS, M. 5, p. 186.

It appears from this phrase, *ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਤੇਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥੩॥* in 1604 Guru Arjun thought to bind this inherited treasure, the Bani of Guru Nanak and that of other Sikh Gurus who succeeded to the 'House of Nanak' along with the other contemporary Bani of Bhagats and Swiayae (eulogy of Sikh Gurus) by Bhattas into a Pothi (Granth) so that this Granth is made available to everybody for dissemination of Bani to the humanity. Although 'Sabd' was declared 'Guru' by Nanak, however, Guru Arjun equated this Pothi to 'Parmesar' (the Highest God) as follows:

ਪੇਬੀ¹ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ² ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ³ ॥

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ⁴ ਗਾਵਹਿ⁵ ਗੁਣ⁶ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ⁷ ਪੂਰਨ⁸ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ⁹ ਗਿਆਨੁ¹⁰ ॥੧॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥

AGGS, M. 5, p. 1226.

The pothi¹ is equated² to the Highest God².

From this Pothi, the noble people⁴ discuss (sing)⁵ God's⁷ attributes⁶ and deliberate on complete⁸ wisdom (philosophy)¹⁰ of God⁹

From Prof Sahib Singh's book, *Aad Bir Baray*, it is evident that Guru Arjun allowed some devout Sikhs to make copies of this *Pothi* while it was being compiled so that as many Sikhs as possible read it. (S. Singh, 1987)

DECLARATION OF POTHIAS GRANTH GURU

It means that on the day in 1604, the *Pothi* was compiled and equated to the Highest God (*Parmesar*) (ਪੇਬੀ¹ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ² ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ³ ॥u); since then, Guru Arjun and all other Gurus carried on the preaching of

'Sabd' (Sabd Guru) from this *Pothi*. Therefore, the Granth was already 'Guru' ipso facto 'Sabd Guru' was enshrined for the last 104 years. Guru Gobind Singh confirmed this title as 'Granth Guru' after adding the Bani of his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1708.

CONCLUSIONS

'Sabd' has many meanings depending on the context in which it has been used. First, Guru Nanak declared the 'sabd' as his 'Guru,' then Guru Amar Das declared 'sabd' as 'Bani,' and afterward, Guru Ram Das declared "Bani" as 'Guru.' In 1604, Guru Arjun compiled the 'Bani' of five Gurus, plus that of Bhagats and Bhattas, in a *pothi*. He declared this *pothi* as *Parmesar ka Thaan* (Highest God). After 104 years, Guru Gobind Singh declared the same *pothi* as 'Granth Guru' after adding the 'Bani' of his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, in 1708.

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