

## Betrayal of Guru Granth Sahib by Sikhs

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### ABSTRACT

Sikhs claim that Guru Granth Sahib is the unique scripture of the world capable of providing peace and harmony to the entire humanity. And there is no doubt about it. But Sikhs who are the custodian of Guru Granth Sahib have no peace or harmony among themselves. Why? Paper tries to examine the causes. In spite of ever more recitations (through *laries* of Akhand Paths) of Guru Granth Sahib, many more Kirtan Darbars and flood of Katha Kars, Sikhs have not been able to demonstrate to the rest of the world what they claim. The paper presents how Sikhs have focused more on worshipping Guru Granth Sahib than following it. The paper further pints out how Sikhs are fundamentally flawed, in certain aspects, in understanding the Sikh philosophy/doctrine as enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib and thus have betrayed their own Guru.

Three aspects have been examined. One is the existence of middleman, so called the priest class, an institution which was neither created by Guru nor is appreciated in the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib. The paper explains how this has kept an ordinary Sikh from a direct contact with Guru and has allowed all kinds of meaningless rituals to creep in Sikh worship. Secondly, the paper shows how the ever increasing practice of ritualistic routines and ever bigger celebrations have led the Sikhs to believe that the understanding of Gurbani is not that necessary. All one has to do is to participate in these routines for a few days to be known as a good and respectable Sikh. The paper, however, will try to prove that it is Guru's Hukam (command) to a Sikh to understand Gurbani and without an understanding of Gurbani one cannot even begin to become a Sikh. Finally, a deeper look has been thrown into the meaning of a Guru as opposed to a teacher or a preacher, and that is where lies the fundamental flaw in the way Sikhs have failed to recognize the importance of Guru Granth Sahib. The paper will elaborate more on it and the dire need to understand Gurbani.

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There has always been a gap between what is practiced and what is the doctrinal message of a religion. Most every religion has some form of rituals as part of its practice. Often too much of ritualistic practices can mask/overshadow the real message. As a Sikh, I have been observing that Sikhs, in recent times, have focused more on worshipping Guru Granth Sahib than following it. Perhaps this has been the cause of failure of Sikhs in the last 50 years or so. There can be other causes too. But the paper will focus entirely on the causes related to the relationships of Sikhs with their guru Guru Granth Sahib.

Over some time I have carefully examined our religious practices. I have also tried to understand the Sikh philosophy/Sikh doctrine as it is propounded in Guru Granth Sahib in a

critical way. Let me humbly submit that I am an engineering academician by profession and can be entirely wrong in understanding the theological or philosophical complexities of a religion. But what encouraged me was the thought that Guru wrote Guru Granth Sahib in the simplest language of the time and has explained any given doctrine/principle in many ways using different words with similar meanings and have repeatedly but beautifully and refreshingly explained it over and over again. Guru did not feel the need of a middleman and hence did not establish any priestly class. All this means that even an ordinary person with a sincere desire and patience should have no difficulty in understanding Gurbani. Except that one may put on hold or skip the understanding of difficult parts and move on to understand the easier parts first and then can, with the help of a learned person (not necessarily a priest) understand the difficult parts. But emphasis must be on the comprehension of Gurbani and self reading. ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਰਟਣ ਦੀ ਬਜਾਏ ਸਮਝਣ ਤੇ ਜ਼ੋਰ ਦਿਤਾ ਜਾਵੇ।

Because it is Guru's command to read and comprehend (ਬੁਝਣ) Gurbani, Guru has equated those who do not understand (ਬਿਨੁ ਬੁਝੇ ਪਸੂ ਕੀ ਨਿਆਈ ਭ੍ਰਮਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਬਿਆਪਿਓ ਮਾਇਆ ॥ SGGGS page 1300) Gurbani to animals. ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਰਾਖਹੁ ਰਖਵਾਲੇ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਬੁਝੇ ਪਸੂ ਭਏ ਬੋਤਾਲੇ ॥੬॥ (GGS Page 224).

But unfortunately, we do not feel the necessity to understanding Gurbani. All we believe what one writer once put it in Punjabi ਅਸੀਂ ਸਮਝਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੱਥਾ ਟੇਕ ਕੇ, ਪ੍ਰਕਰਮਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ, ਪਾਠ ਪੜ੍ਹ-ਪੜ੍ਹਾ ਕੇ, ਕੀਰਤਨ ਸੁਣ-ਸੁਣਾ ਕੇ, ਮਸਿਆ ਪੁਨਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਰੋਵਰ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸਨਾਨਾ ਕਰ-ਕਰਾ ਕੇ, ਅਸੀਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਬਣ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਾਂ; ਤੇ ਬਸ।

But this is nowhere close to what Guru has really commanded us to do. Guru puts far more importance to the "real understanding" (ਬੁਝਣ) of Gurbani than on mere ritualistic paths (mechanical recitation).

ਪੜ੍ਹਹਿ ਗੁਣਹਿ ਤੂੰ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਪੁਕਾਰਹਿ ਵਿਣੁ ਬੁਝੇ ਤੂੰ ਡੂਬਿ ਮੁਆ ॥੮॥ (GGS Page 435)

ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਦੇਸਿ ਦਿਸੰਤਰਿ ਭਵਿਐ ਜੋਗੁ ਨ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਈਐ ॥ (GGS Page 730)

ਬੇਦ ਪਾਠ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੀ ਕਾਰ ॥ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਬੁਝੇ ਸਭ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰ ॥ (GGS Page 791)

This brings us to one of the most significant aspects of Guru Granth Sahib and that is where lies the fundamental flaw on the part of many of us Sikhs. There are two parts to Gurbani's understanding; one is the literal meaning and the other one is the profound meaning.

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਤੇ ਬੁਝਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਹੁਤ ਫਰਕ ਹੈ।

Guru has used the word "ਬੁਝਣ" over and over, again and again to emphasize its importance. Because Guru is not just an instructor but a guide far beyond that. ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇਵਲ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਦਾਤਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਇਹ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਅਗੇ ਹੈ, ਪਰੇ ਤੋਂ ਪਰੇ।

There are teachers, preachers, reformers and guides in the world to give guidance or knowledge to us. But Guru's level is much higher than any one of them. True learning is not merely knowing but being. It is only Guru who is capable of converting knowledge into 'being'. For example, one may embark upon doing good by reading a good book which tells that in so doing one gets recognition in the world, and it is a good thing to do that. And one does it for years.

Since most of such actions are for individual glory or are often ego motivated, one may find at the end a strange kind of emptiness because one was not really enjoying it, and it was burdensome to carry out the good to feed the ego. But Guru claims goodness can only be delivered if you are connected to the very source of goodness. Then it is a spontaneity. One blooms and there is an outflow of good. It is only Guru who is capable of connecting one to that source.

ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਦੁਹਰੂ ਮਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਆਏ ॥ ਜੀਅ ਦਾਨੁ ਦੇ ਭਗਤੀ ਲਾਇਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਲੈਨਿ ਮਿਲਾਏ ॥੨॥  
(GGS page 749).

I wish to respect that, it is only the Guru Granth Sahib, being the guru, who has the power to convert your knowledge into the being. Therefore, in utter reverence and with complete surrender, sit with Guru Granth Sahib and request Him to bless you with “ਜੀਅਦਾ ਨੂੰ” (i.e. with being). Hence, it is important to sit oneself with the Guru and humbly seek His blessings for the read understanding. It is only through such direct relationship that understanding (ਬੁਝਣ) will be achieved. Therefore, a Sikh must do recitation of Guru Granth Sahib him/herself. Even if one does only one Shabad or one page at a time, it must be done by oneself. You will find that as time progresses, the same line may touch you more deeply and the inspiration grows to follow Guru’s teaching. Do not separate yourself from your Guru by putting middlemen in the middle. Otherwise, no matter how much worship, discourses or lectures a Sikh may do on Guru Granth Sahib, a Sikh may be betraying his Guru’s command.

A bit about Gurbani and Naam. In Guru Granth Sahib, the relationships between Gurbani and Naam is given as follows:

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਰਤੀ ਜਗ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਇਸੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥੩॥ (GGS page 1066).

Meaning thereby that without an understanding of Gurbani, one cannot achieve Naam. Clearly the meaning of Naam is not the same as had been understood till then for thousands of years. The entire Guru Granth Sahib is the manifestation of Naam. Gurbani infuses in a Sikh the recognition of that most exalted love of which one’s soul is a part.

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥ (GGS page 441).

And then in aching remembrance (ਸਿਮਰਨ) a Sikh is in constant touch. So mere mechanical repetition without love for God and without the understanding of Gurbani is not what Guru intended. Remember in Japji, Guru says

Finally, how Sikhs treat each other and the rest of the world is just the opposite of what Guru Granth sahib has put forward as a central message. Guru has repeatedly emphasized that it is all but one who manifests in everybody and everything

ਤੂੰ ਘਟ ਘਟ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਜੀ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੋ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸਮਾਣਾ ॥ (GGS page 11).

Further that is only by completely dissolving one’s ego that one can truly understand that One and can be with the One

ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰੈ ਬੁਝੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸੋਇ ॥ (GGS page 741).

However, the use of different uniforms with different styles of turbans by a given group of Sikhs following a given Sikh religious leader may point to a display of ego. With as many of such groups, there can be as many of different opinions and the potential for as many of conflicts is always there. Hence, no unity among Sikhs. But if we follow only Guru Granth Sahib, then there can only be one opinion and no room for conflict. Therefore, unity would naturally emerge among Sikhs.

In summary, instead of spending too much energy on worships, celebrations and wasteful rituals, a Sikh must find time to sit with his/her guru Guru Granth Sahib to read and to seek His blessings for a true understanding of Gurbani.

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