

DISTORTION OF GURBANI – MISLEADING INTERPRETATION OF GURBANI AND DISTORTION OF HISTORY PART 1

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29-Jan-2017

This article is important. Please study it carefully and ask questions on FB if you need clarification.

Gur Sikh Jio. Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

ABSTRACT

There is an extreme paranoia in applying SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING based thought to learning Gurbani. There are quarters going around preaching this methodology to learning Gurbani in a rather big way.

In this article we analyse the application of this so called “modern methodology”, used in understanding Gurbani, by one of the exponents of this methodology.

We analyse an article written by this exponent of SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING. We show that this methodology of SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING leads to misleading and distortion of **the** teaching of Gurbani.

INTRODUCTION

This article provides an overview of how misguided elements misinterpret and distort Gurbani as well as our history for ill intentions. There is usually a motive behind an interpretation by such elements.

We first present a primer followed by outlining cases where there is such misinterpretation and distortion is evident. First an actual example where this has been done by an author is examined in detail. We then show our interpretation of the misinterpret verse and point out the misgivings and the motive of the author who misinterpret the verse.

In future parts of this article we will present and discuss further cases where misinterpretation and distortion is evident.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Before commencing on the analysis we highlight a few key points.

Firstly, in the study of Gurbani, one extremely important point to remember is that the teaching of Gurbani is meant for our MIND which is a part of our INNER-SELF. Gurbani teaches us through the Shabad, and uses broadly “our interaction with the creation” as illustration to explain what is required of us. This means episodes from human normal living as well of other members (flora and fauna) of the creation, which we UNDERSTAND very well and CAN RELATE TO, are copiously used METAPHORICALLY to make us understand the concepts and hence the virtuous actions required of our MIND. Essentially Gurbani teaches us, to control our MIND to be virtuous, using examples we generally experience in our daily interaction with the world at large.

Secondly it is important to appreciate that when analysing a shabad from first principles, i.e. without reference to available credible translations, it is necessary to analyse the complete shabad and first get the “big picture” message from Gurbani. **The reason is to ensure that we do not**

miss the core concept when interpreting single verses. However it is **acceptable to interpret one verse if we source the meaning from available credible translations.** This is because the authors whose translations we are using have already studied the entire shabad to prepare their translation.

Thirdly long standing accepted historical accounts (e.g. Sakhian ਸਾਖੀਆਂ) of our history are available from acceptable as well as credible sources; for example the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism edited by Harbans Singh, published by Punjabi University, Patiala, Vaaran Bhai Gurdas and the various Puratan Sakhian. We have been using these resources both as narrative of events as well as for discourse (ਗੋਸ਼ਟ, ਚਰਚਾ) in the process of teaching the principles in Gurbani. For the many hundred years these resources have positively aided our quest to learning Gurbani.

One more point which we feel is very important to appreciate is the **question of miracles.** Bhai Gurdas in Vaar 1 Paurdis 41 and 42 outlines the miracles performed by the Siddhis. In Paurdi 42 Guru Nanak says that he may do miraculous acts but these are only momentary and non-beneficial without the true Name NAAM. **So clearly Guru Nanak did not reject miracles, but pointed out that these are non-beneficial for God Realisation** (the following SGGS 51 M:1 Sri Rag, SGG504 M:1 Goojri, SGGS M:5 Bihargda, SGGS 678 M:5 Dhanasaree, SGGS 968 Sata Balwand Ramkalee, SGGS 1106 Ravidas Maroo, refer). Just because our Gurus did not generally subscribe to performing miracles (though there is indication that inexplicable events did occur) does not mean miracles cannot occur. Yes, of course if one uses SCIENTIFIC REASON/LOGIC and CRITICAL THINKING, then they definitely cannot occur.

Though our Gurus did not generally subscribe to performing miracles, there is indication that inexplicable events did occur. We should not question the inexplicable actions or inexplicable known events experienced by our Gurus or Great Martyrs who were spiritually elevated souls. We are not in a position to SCIENTIFICALLY or LOGICALLY REASON or using CRITICAL THINKING rationalise what happened. Miracles do and will happen, if we believe in God.

Let us face it; THE CREATION OF THE WORLD is ONE BIG MIRACLE.

Great scientists like Einstein and Stephen Hawkings who tried to understand the beginning of the universe ended up saying “the universe had a beginning and the laws of science break down at this point” meaning that they cannot scientifically explain the beginning of the universe. But we know, that the fact we are here, there was a beginning of the Universe. Now **“that is a miracle”** and SCIENCE, REASON AND/OR LOGIC OR CRITICAL THINKING was not, is not and we believe will never be, able to explain this.

Therefore God’s intervention did and can occur in events and miracles and we are not in a position to understand this using science, reason and/or logic and/or critical thinking.

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ACTUAL MISLEADING INTERPRETATION

Misleading and distorted interpretation

An article, by Devinder Singh Chahal, which misinterprets a verse in Gurbani is listed below.

The article is “How do we interpret Gurbani?” by Prof Devinder Singh Chahal PhD, on page 16 of Sikh Bulletin, Volume 18 Number 7 & 8, July-August 2016 available at

<http://sikhbulletin.com/Bulletins/SikhBulletinJulAug2016.pdf>

Note: Dr D S Chahal is the one who wants to change EK OANGKAR to EK OH BEANT (more on this in future)

Dr Chahal reveals the **motive behind his interpretation** when he states that the translations by Manamohan Singh, Prof Sahib Singh and others are influenced by Vedantic philosophy and do not give the real message. **The motive appears to be discrediting all the references that we use in our quest to understand the message of Gurbani. In this way he is able to say that his interpretation is correct.**

Therefore we would expect him to show that his interpretation is correct as compared to the interpretation in the references. All he says in the article is that they are wrong because they “follow inclination towards Vedantic philosophy”. This is a lame evidence for his claim.

In his article Dr Chahal explains the meaning of the verse

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

He uses **his** “Nanakian Methodology” which is hinged on SCIENTIFIC REASON/LOGIC and CRITICAL THINKING to make his interpretation.

Dr Chahal’s interpretation of the verse is as follows.

When somebody is living pleasurable and sedentary life, one becomes prone to a number of diseases/troubles/problems. However, those who exert (take pain/trouble) in workouts (structured regime of physical exercise) are resistant to these issues. The workouts become the medicine/remedy to prevent all such diseases/troubles/problems; or (in other words), once a pleasurable and healthy life is achieved through proper workouts, then no such diseases can occur.

He uses **his** “Nanakian Methodology”, which proves to be a flawed methodology, hinged on REASON/LOGIC and CRITICAL THINKING. This is evident because, powered by IGNORANCE driven by cult-like INDOCTRINATION of SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING of his “Nanakian Methodology”, Dr Chahal has relegated the teachings of Gurbani to a bunch of exercises.

Though the translation by the Dr Chahal appears SCIENTIFIC and LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING laden, it does not give the message of Gurbani, in fact it is misleading, implying that Gurbani is teaching us to exercise. A book on exercise would provide more details on method, benefits and outcomes.

In the primer we had highlighted that Gurbani is meant for our MIND. Where is the message for our MIND in the translation by Dr Chahal?

Dr Chahal CLAIMS that the translations by Manamohan Singh, Prof Sahib Singh and others are not GIVING THE REAL MESSAGE, because they are influenced by Vedantic Philosophy. He thinks that HIS is the real message of Gurbani BUT does not realise that his SHALLOW and paranoiac SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING based thought, hinged on his “Nanakian Methodology”, results in a translation that is misguiding and misleading.

Our interpretation of the Shabad

Let's analyse the Shabad and first get the "big picture" message of Gurbani from the Shabad. The reason is to ensure that we do not miss the core concept when interpreting the verse. This is important when we are deriving the meaning from first principles. Then we will compare this with interpretations given in available credible sources. The Shabad is

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ SGGS 469 M:1 Slok

Suffering is the medicine, and pleasure the disease, because where there is pleasure, there is no desire for God.

ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰਣਾ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਾ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੧॥

You are the Creator Lord; I can do nothing. Even if I try, nothing happens. ||1||

ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਸਿਆ ॥ ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

I am a sacrifice to Your almighty creative power which is pervading everywhere. Your limits cannot be known. ||1||Pause||

ਜਾਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਜਾਤਾ ਅਕਲ ਕਲਾ ਭਰਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ॥

Your Light is in Your creatures, and Your creatures are in Your Light; Your almighty power is pervading everywhere.

ਤੂੰ ਸਚਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸੁਆਲਿਉ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਤੀ ਸੋ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਇਆ

You are the True Lord and Master; Your Praise is so beautiful. One who sings it, is carried across.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੀਆ ਬਾਤਾ ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਣਾ ਸੁ ਕਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ॥੨॥

Nanak speaks the stories of the Creator Lord; whatever He is to do, He does. ||2||

Note: the English translation under the Gurbani verse is by Sant Singh Khalsa

The **summary of the Shabad** from our study is outlined as follows.

God pervades the whole creation and God's limit cannot be known. Suffering reminds me of God and pleasures distract me from God. Remembering God one realises that God is within (inside) and without (outside) the creation and Praising God (through Naam which is the word from God – the all-powerful doer) one attains salvation.

Having understood the whole Shabad, then the one verse can be analysed.

Note that we have interpreted the meaning of the shabad, from first principles, using the Mahan Kosh and University Patiala Punjabi-English dictionary meaning of the words, with contextual and thematic consideration as used in the shabad.

Our interpretation of the Verse

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

Suffering is the medicine, and pleasure the disease, because where there is pleasure, there is no desire for God.

Suffering and pleasures are attributed to MAYA. We do not like suffering but we do like pleasures. When we are suffering (illness, pain etc) we go to the doctor to get medicine. We do not go to the doctor when we don't have pain. So suffering and pleasures are used metaphorically

to allude to our MAN ਮਨ. Suffering reminds us of God. Sant Singh Khalsa's English translation (below the verse) is very apt.

Going scientific, the problem is we allow our MAN ਮਨ to be controlled by the five evils (in the process of getting pleasure through MAYA). This usually leads us to external physical situations which invariably affects our mind and thoughts (internal) and creates stress. Stress, as you know, is the causative agent for almost all the illness one can be subject to. By remembering God we can control the five evils and gain the five treasures. This state does not create stress and hence we are not subject to illness, or illness will have minimal effect on us, due to our state of mind which has attained the five treasures.

Professor Sahib Singh's translation gives a similar explanation of the Shabad. The meanings in Manmohan Singh's and Sant Singh's translations of the SGGS likewise imply this meaning.

Therefore Dr Chahal's CLAIM, that these references influenced by Vedantic thought, do not give the real message, IS ABSOLUTELY FALSE. We must impress upon the reader that all our Gurus had studied concepts of other faiths (e.g. Vedantic) which Dr Chahal has conveniently forgotten. In fact we can state that it is his SHALLOW and paranoiac SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING based thought, hinged on his "Nanakian Methodology", that is misguiding and misleading.

COMMENTS ON DR CHAHAL'S INTERPRETATION

There are a number of misgivings by Dr Chahal.

Firstly we note that Dr Chahal has analysed only the one verse and ignored the message in the whole Shabad. It is a folly to just analyse one verse to make a judgement. It is like looking at the tyre of a car and making a decision that the car is black and soft and round without even looking at the car.

Secondly Dr Chahal is ignorant of the fact that in Gurbani metaphors are liberally used to illustrate concepts. He completely ignored that suffering and pleasures are used metaphorically in the Shabad.

Thirdly Dr Chahal has not realised that the core message of the teaching of Gurbani is meant for our MIND. Examples we experience in our daily interaction with the world at large are merely used to make us understand the core message; they are a means to an end not the end itself.

Fourthly Dr Chahal is very liberal in criticising the works of Professor Sahib Singh, Manmohan Singh and others not realising his own shallow knowledge and that his claim is FALSE. Note that both Professor Sahib Singh and Manmohan Singh had spent a major part of their lives studying and practicing Gurbani. Their references in interpretation of Gurbani are classics referred to by Gurbani learners worldwide.

Powered by IGNORANCE driven by the cult-like INDOCTRINATION of SCIENTIFIC LOGIC/REASONING and CRITICAL THINKING of HIS "Nanakian Methodology" which is flawed (note that **Guru Nanak never mentioned such a philosophy**), Dr Chahal seems to be relegating the teaching of Gurbani to a bunch of exercises, sort of like a formula type solution; very mechanical amounting to ritualism. This is the ritualistic "bibek budhi" or "scientific thought – logic/reasoning" and "critical thinking" Dr Chahal is using in his interpretation. This is the very thing Gurbani warns us against by the following verses.

Asa Ki Var SGGS 467 states in particular about jog ਜੋਗ (yogic exercises) in a verse in a stanza listed below.

ਲਖ ਤਪ ਉਪਰਿ ਤੀਰਥਾਂ ਸਹਜ ਜੋਗ ਬੇਬਾਣ ॥

Hundreds of thousands of penances at sacred shrines, and the practice of Sehj Yoga in the wilderness,

At the conclusion of the stanza Gurbani goes on to explain that such PRACTICES are USELESS.

We add further that

ਸਹਜ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ ॥ Japji Sahib

Gurbani says our smartness; scientific and critical thinking etc is not the solution.

There is more to Gurbani than a bunch of exercises, a bunch of numbers or a bunch of formulae. Rabindranath Tagore aptly points

The man, whose acquaintance with the world does not lead him deeper than science leads him, will never understand what it is that the man with the spiritual vision finds in these natural phenomena. The water does not merely cleanse his limbs, but it purifies his heart; for it touches his soul. The earth does not merely hold his body, but it gladdens his mind; for its contact is more than a physical contact - it is a living presence. (Sadhana: The Realization of Life – Rabindranath Tagore)

Dr Chahal, in his paranoia of scientific logic/reasoning and critical thinking, seems to be devoid of this quality of the “living presence” in his knowledge and interpretation of Gurbani. This living presence is “the divine wisdom from God”.

THIS IS ALSO THE REASON THAT THOSE ALIGNED TO THIS METHODOLOGY CONSIDER SGGS JI AS A METAPHOR, NOT A “LIVING GURU”.

CONCLUSION

Dr Chahal has analysed the verse ignoring the message in the whole Shabad and further exhibits ignorance of the fact that Gurbani uses metaphors liberally to illustrate concepts. This is further exacerbated by the fact that he does not refer to credible reliable classical references in his interpretation.

His interpretation is shown to be wrong and is bordering on ritualism, the very thing Gurbani is warning us against. He seems to be driven solely by his paranoia of scientific logic/reasoning and critical thinking based thought, his “Nanakian Methodology”.

Dr Chahal is devoid of the quality of “living presence” (as Rabindranath Tagore explained) in his knowledge and interpretation of Gurbani. It is a folly to interpret Gurbani without this quality (divine inspiration) and therefore has misinterpreted the verse.

Dr Chahal’s claim, that exponents of Gurbani like Professor Sahib Singh and others are wrong, is UTTERLY FALSE.

This completely decimates his motive as well as his own “so called correct interpretation of Gurbani” based on his Methodology.

Dr Chahal’s interpretation or rather **misinterpretation** of Gurbani will definitely mislead the reader.

We will present and discuss further cases where misinterpretation and distortion is evident in future parts of this article.

SO MUCH FOR LOGIC/REASONING AS WELL AS

CRITICAL THINKING IN INTERPRETATION OF GURBANI
WE HAVE TO BE AWARE AND BEWARE

Thank You for listening and reading. ਗਲਤੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਖਿਮਾ.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.