

**METHODS FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF SRI GURU
GRANTH SAHIB: A HERMENEUTICAL STUDY**

An Abstract

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Introduction

The religious texts are considered to be sacred and of central importance to their religious tradition. These texts are always part of a larger field of religious practices. The study of these texts requires that we examine not only the content of such texts, but also their context and use in our real life. The understanding of scriptural texts also requires looking at how readers create meanings, either as individuals or as members of 'interpretative communities'. That is, texts come to have particular meanings through being read, not only through being written. In the same context, the hermeneutics of a text works on different levels; it is concerned with how the text works, what the text says, and how the text transcends its hidden revealed message to the mankind. Thus, the study of religious texts requires understanding the spiritual activity not, the simple written words.

Hermeneutics: Meaning, Nature and Scope

There is a pressing need, for the introductory treatment of hermeneutics in the theological as well as non-theological context, to clarify the meaning, nature and scope of the term. It is not an easy task to give a relevant and universal definition of hermeneutics. Today, the definition of hermeneutics is the subject of vehement controversy. So, it is necessary to explain deeply the history, meaning and nature of hermeneutics.

The term *hermeneutics* finds its roots from Greek verb *hermeneuein* which means 'to interpret' and the noun *hermeneia* means 'interpretation'. Hermeneutics is a philosophical intellectual discipline which concerns with the nature and presuppositions of the interpretation of human expressions. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term *hermeneutics* means, "The branch of knowledge that deals with theories of

interpretation, especially of Scripture.”¹ It is a historical encounter which calls forth personal experience of being here in the world...It tries to hold together two areas of understanding theory: the question of what is involved in the event of understanding a text, and the question of what understanding itself is, in its most foundational and existential sense.²

“The Greek term has etymological association with the name of the Greek God Hermes, the messenger of the Gods and the deity of boundaries. Some have seen this association as reflecting the inherently triadic structure of the act of interpretation: (i) a sign, symbol, message, or a text from some source requires (ii) a mediator or interpreter (Hermes) to (iii) convey it to some audience. So considered, this deceptively simple triadic structure implicitly contains the major conceptual issues with which hermeneutics deals: (i) the nature of a text; (ii) what it means to understand a text; and (iii) how understanding and interpretation are determined by the presuppositions and beliefs (the horizon) of the audience to which the text is being interpreted. Serious reflection on any of these issues reveals why interpretation is itself a philosophical issue and a subject of interpretation.”³

Hermeneutics deals basically with the four issues: “(i) What is it to understand a text and what are the conditions of its possibilities? (ii) How are the cultural sciences distinct in their methods and forms from the natural sciences? (iii) What are the conditions that make any sort of human understanding possible? (iv) How can we resolve certain conceptual puzzles associated with concepts like understanding and meaning, and how might such a resolution help us to understand the task of interpretation?”⁴

¹ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002, p. 1231.

² Palmer, Richard E., *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, North Western University Press, Evanston, 1969, p. 10.

³ Eliade, Mircea (Editor-in-Chief), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol.VI, Collier Macmillan Publishers, London, pp. 279-280.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

Hermeneutics begins with the attempt to square the principle of interpretation with increasing awareness that the Scriptures are, after all, historical documents in which the textual truths and their meanings are internal to the time and place of their composition. In other words, hermeneutics plays a significant role in bringing togetherness of both the subjective and objective dimensions of the interpretation. Here interpretation is “a stylistic representation of a creative work... according to one’s understanding of the creator’s ideas.”⁵ The concepts like exegesis, exposition, explanation, and analysis are different in their nature and form. But somehow all are related with the interpretation and become the integral part of it. Or, these can also be said the types of interpretation. Hermeneutics is a science of interpretation; therefore, all these terms become a part of it. Hermeneutics focus on the deciphering process of interpretation in which more attention is given to understand the true meaning of a work. Understanding and interpretation are the two interlinked processes, which cannot be separated at any condition. Hermeneutics is not merely a theoretical discipline of the rules or methods of interpretation but it is a theoretical-cum-philosophical discipline in the modern world. It is the vast study of understanding especially the task of understanding texts.

The word and the more common verb *hermeneuein* and the noun *hermeneia* points back to the wing-footed messenger god—Hermes. This message-bringing process of understanding associated with the Hermes is implicit in all of the three basic directions of meaning of *hermeneuein* and *hermeneia* in ancient usage. These three directions, using the verb form *hermeneuein* for the purpose of example are (i) to say, (ii) to explain, and (iii) to translate. The first basic direction of the meaning suggests that the minister in bringing the Word is announcing and asserting something. His function is not merely to explain but to proclaim.

⁵ *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 1406.

Hermes brings fateful tidings from the divine and explains it to the present people with deep detail. In this way, Hermes becomes a 'go-between' from God to man. As compared to interpretation saying, asserting or proclaiming is an important act of interpretation. Second direction of meaning suggests the explanation is a basic act of interpretation. The interpretation that occurs even in the way one turns towards a text. The explanation relies on the tools of objective analysis but the selection of the tools is already an interpretation of the task of understanding. Analysis is also a form of interpretation; feeling the need for analysis is too an interpretation. Therefore, analysis is, in fact, not the primary interpretation but a derivative form. It has preliminarily set the stage with an essential and primary interpretation before it ever begins to work with the information or data. Another way of saying this is to state: that the explanatory interpretation makes us aware that explanation is contextual and horizontal. The significance of the third and last dimension of the meaning of *hermeneuein* is almost as suggestive to hermeneutics and theory of literary interpretation as the first two. In this case, one brings what is foreign, strange, or unintelligible into the medium of one's own language. Like the God Hermes, the translator mediates between one world and another. The act of translation is not a simple mechanical matter of synonym-finding, as the absurd products of translation machines make only too clear, for the translator is mediating between two different worlds. Translation makes us aware of the fact that language itself contains an overarching interpretation of the world to which the translator must be sensitive even as the translator individual expressions. This discussion of the origin of *hermeneuein* and *hermeneia* and the three directions of their meaning in ancient usage was undertaken in the context of hermeneutical problem in general.

The hermeneutics in its vast scope here sets the task of furnishing the theoretical justification for the determinacy of the object of

interpretation and of setting forth norms by which the determinate, changeless, self-identical meaning can be understood. Therefore, hermeneutics is not simply a science of interpretation but a method of arriving at correct interpretation.

Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib and its Nature

Guru Granth Sahib is the holy Scripture of the Sikhs and it is their Eternal Guru; that is, their authoritative religious and spiritual guide, their preceptor and enlightener for all times. The word Granth traditionally is used for the books containing primarily sacred knowledge. Its meaning in Sanskrit is a knot which binds the book and according to Bradley refers to the knot in the thong which held together a palm-leaf manuscript to form a crude book.⁶ Guru Granth Sahib has been called as Adi Granth before it was anointed as the Guru Eternal by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Adi means primordial and it came to be used after the Granth of the tenth master came into being. The term Guru came to be associated with the Granth after the year 1708 A.D. when the tenth Guru bestowed Guru-ship on the Granth⁷ and enjoined the Sikhs to regard Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru,⁸ which is primarily Sabad as held in Sikh religion from the time of Guru Nanak Dev. The term Sahib came to be associated as suffix refers to

⁶ D.G. Bradley, *A Guide to World Religions*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1963, p. 128.

⁷ Kahan Singh Nabha, *Gurmat Martand*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Vol. I, Amritsar, 1978, p. 417.

⁸ "Agya bhai akal ki tabhi chalayo panth, Sabh sikhian kau hukam hai Guru manio granth, Guru Granth ko maniyo pargat Guran ke dehi, jo prabhu ko milibo chahai khoj shabad main leh." Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Prakash*, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1970, p. 353. Rahitnama Prahlad Singh, "Akal Purakh ke bachan sio pargat chalayo panth, Sabh sikhian ko bachan ih Guru manio granth." Piara Singh Padam (ed.), *Rahitnama*, Kala Mandir, Patiala, 1974, p. 55.

"The line of religious succession ended with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. The Master's word in the holy Guru Granth Sahib was henceforth to be the spiritual guide of the Sikh people who were to recognize in the joint personality of an assembly of five true baptized Singhs the spirit of the Guru." Ganda Singh, *A Brief Account of the Sikhs*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, n.d. p.15.

"The Tenth Guru Gobind Singh said that there would be no more Gurus and Granth should be regarded as the living voice of all the prophets; Guru Vani." Trilochan Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishan Singh, Khushwant Singh (Tr.), *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2000, Introduction by S. Radhakrishnan, p. 17.

the reverence and respect attached to the Granth. The term Sahib is from the Arabic root which means master.⁹

The original version of Guru Granth Sahib was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru in 1604. It includes not only the sacred writings of previous Gurus, but also those of many Bhagats, Saints, Sufis and some Guru-oriented persons associated with the Sikh Gurus. It comprises the Divine Sabad, indicating a spiritual union with God. It marks a watershed in the history of spiritual heritage of Indian sub-continent. The purpose of the present study is to understand the Divine Revelatory nature of the Word or Sabad in the Guru Granth Sahib in the context of hermeneutics.

The divine verses of Guru Granth Sahib represent many languages and dialects. The authors of these hymns especially the saints and Bhagats hailed from different parts of India. Thus, most of their hymns have a strong influence of their mother-tongue. Many saints and Bhagats preferred to compose their verses in Saint language, i.e., Sant-Bhasha a nationally understood language of that period. The structure of hymns contains six parts; (i) **Sabad**: A Sabad in Guru Granth Sahib may consist of 2, 6, 8, 16 sections/paras/parts called Padas, i.e., Ik-Tuke, Do-Tuke, Ti-Tuke, Chau-Tuke, etc; (ii) **Sloaka**: The Sloakas are short compositions of two or more verses, but in Guru Granth Sahib, there are Sloakas of twenty-six verses as well; (iii) **Pauri**: The dictionary meaning of the word Pauri is a rung of a ladder or steps. In Guru Granth Sahib, the word has been used to refer those Sabads which carry forward ideas from one stanza to another stanza; (iv) **Vaar**: A Vaar means a long poem in which the praises of a hero are sung. There are 22 Vaars in Guru Granth Sahib; (v) **Chhant**: In Guru Granth Sahib the word has been used to label Sabads of special praises, in the context of God. The Chhants are also known as Chhands, these are

⁹ Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1974, p. 177.

said to be the divine songs of praise. There are one hundred twenty-seven Chhants in Guru Granth Sahib; and (vi) **Swaya:** The Swayas have been composed with different arrangements of long and short syllables at the end of the verses. Most of the Swayas used in Guru Granth Sahib can be classified as: Malind, Saman, Dandkala, Madira and Chandarakala.

Ragas: All the compositions of Guru Granth Sahib are composed in poetic form and divided into different Ragas except Japu ji Sahib in the beginning and Swayas and Sloakas at the end. The hymns have been composed in thirty-one Ragas and seventeen Ghars (tunes). A Raga is a particular set of the seven Swars, or a selection of them. Their interrelationship and sequence is governed by strict rules.

Ghars (Thatts): The Ghar means rhythm or Tal; it also denotes the pitch and variations of the notes. It is a rhythmic cycle comprising a fixed number of time units (Matras) of equal value. In Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev has introduced seventeen Ghars.

Rahau (Pause): In Guru Granth Sahib, a special word Rahau denoting a verse has been used in almost all the Sabads composed in musical measures.

About the nature of Gurbani, Bhai Vir Singh explains that the essence of Gurbani is beyond space. It is from the Primal One, Guru is full of Nectar. Gurbani is the message of unapproachable and limitless Ultimate Being, that is why it itself is beyond limits. But a human being should try to understand the meaning and ideas of Gurbani with the help of Gurbani itself. In this way, it is an institution which provides knowledge, when one joins it as a student.¹⁰

¹⁰ “ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚ ਜੋ ਮੂਲ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਤਾਂ ਵਡੇ ਤੋਂ ਵਡੀ ਵਸਤੂ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਧਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਧਰੋਂ ਆਈ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਹੈ। ਅਗਮ ਅਗਾਧ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪ ਅਗਾਧ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਅਰਥ ਤੇ ਭਾਵ ਆਦਿਕ, ਜੋ ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖੇ ਗਏ ਹਨ, ਉਹ ਇਕ ਅਲਪੰਗ ਜੀਵ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਯਤਨ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਦਾ; ਤੇ ਜਿਥੋਂ ਤਕ ਇਸੇ ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਸਮਝ ਆ ਸਕੇ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਚਰਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠਕੇ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇ। ਇਸ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਹ ਇਕ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਰਣ ਲਿਆਂ ਵਿਦਯਾਰਥੀ ਵਾਂਞੂੰ ਮਿਲੀ ਹੈ, ਇਹ

The particular understanding of revelation is based upon the doctrine of the Sabad-Guru, enunciated by Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus. It is known as Dhur ki Bani and Khasam ki Bani i.e. revelation of God. The Gurbani is secular; unite in its ideology, immutable, revelation, spiritual, mystic, unambiguous, tranquil and didactic in its nature.

History and Main Features of Interpretation of Gurbani (1604-2004)

In its basic sense, hermeneutics is a systematic, procedural approach to the texts of our cultural past, and is a mode of interpretation or exegesis to understand the meanings of the text. In the Sikh perspective, the interpretation of Gurbani is called Gurbani Vichar or 'reflection upon the utterances of the Gurus'. In the history of Indian Scriptural tradition, there are four major techniques that are employed in Sikh exegetical methods, i.e., Shabadarath, Tika, Viakhia and Paramartha. Therefore, the interpretation begins at the discursive level of the consideration, at which one deals with the literal sense of Gurbani but goes deeper and deeper as one contemplates the divine mysteries by gradually penetrating into subtler levels of the meaning. Thus, every new encounter with the text of the Guru Granth Sahib provides a fresh experience of unfolding a divine mystery.

The primary concern is to introduce briefly the different approaches adopted by various schools of interpretation, especially in the context of Guru Granth Sahib. These major schools of interpretation in the context of Guru Granth Sahib include Sahaj Parnali, Bhai Parnali, Udasi Parnali, Nirmala Parnali, Giani Parnali, Singh Sabha Parnali and Academic School.

Sahaj Parnali (School): Sahaj Parnali is that school of interpretation, which sought to clarify and expound the meaning of certain words,

ਮੁਤਾਲਿਆ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ, ਤੇ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੀ ਅਲੱਖਤਾ ਦੇ ਕਾਰਣ ਕੋਈ ਅਭੁੱਲਤਾ ਦਾ ਦਾਵਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ” Bhai Vir Singh, *Santheya Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, New Delhi, 2007, p. 2.

concepts and themes contained in the Bani of their predecessors. The Bani of Guru Nanak was the main inspiration behind the Bani of the later Gurus; who were also responding to the needs of the growing Sikh community. In this context, Taran Singh, who made first attempt in this field, in his work titled ‘Gurbani Diyan Viakhyia Parnalyian’, cites certain passages from the compositions of Guru Nanak that were interpreted by Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev respectively in their own works. For instance, the exposition of Guru Nanak Bani can be seen in the compositions of Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev respectively.¹¹

¹¹ Taran Singh, *Gurbani Diyan Viakhyia Parnalyian*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1980, pp. 26-34.

ਸਲੋਕ ਮ:੧॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਵਣਿ ਜੇ ਵਸੈ ਚਹੁ ਓਮਾਹਾ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਨਾਗਾਂ ਮਿਰਗਾਂ ਰਸੀਆਂ ਘਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1279.
ਸਲੋਕ ਮ:੨ ॥ ਸਾਵਣੁ ਆਇਆ ਹੇ ਸਖੀ ਜਲਹਰੁ ਬਰਸਨਹਾਰੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਖਿ ਸਵਨੁ ਸੋਹਾਗਣੀ ਜਿਨੁ ਸਹ ਨਾਲਿ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ ॥ *Ibid.*, 1280.
ਮ:੩ ॥ ਉਂਨਵਿ ਉਂਨਵਿ ਆਇਆ ਵਰਸੈ ਨੀਰੁ ਨਿਪੰਗੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਲਾਗਾ ਤਿਨੁ ਕਾਮਣੀ ਜਿਨੁ ਕੰਤੈ ਸਿਉ ਮਨਿ ਭੰਗੁ ॥ ॥ *Ibid.*
ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਪਹਰੇ ਘਰੁ ੧ ॥
ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਰੈਣਿ ਕੈ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਪਇਆ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ॥
ਉਰਧ ਤਪੁ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਕਸਮ ਸੇਤੀ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥
ਖਸਮ ਸੇਤੀ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ਵਖਾਣੈ ਉਰਧ ਧਿਆਨਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗਾ ॥
ਨਾ ਮਿਰਜਾਦੁ ਆਇਆ ਕਲਿ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਬਾਹੁੜਿ ਜਾਸੀ ਨਾਗਾ ॥
ਜੈਸੀ ਕਲਮ ਵੁੜੀ ਹੈ ਮਸਤਕਿ ਤੈਸੀ ਜੀਅਏ ਪਾਸਿ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਪਇਆ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ॥ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.
ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੪ ॥ ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਰੈਣਿ ਕੈ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਉਦਰ ਮੰਝਾਰਿ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਉਚਰੈ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਰਿ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੇ ਆਰਾਧੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਅਗਨੀ ਹਰਿ ਜਪਿ ਜੀਵਿਆ ॥
ਬਾਹਰਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਭਇਆ ਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਗਾ ਸਰਸੇ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤ ਬੀਵਿਆ ॥
ਜਿਸ ਕੀ ਵਸਤੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਚੇਤਹੁ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਕਰਿ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਪਹਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੀਐ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 76.
ਸਿਰੀਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥ ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਰੈਣਿ ਕੈ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਧਰਿ ਪਾਇਤਾ ਉਦਰੈ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਦਸੀ ਮਾਸੀ ਮਾਨਸੁ ਕੀਆ ਵਣਜਾਰਿਆ ਮਿਤ੍ਰਾ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਦੀਨੀ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਣੈ ਜੈਸਾ ਲਿਖਤੁ ਧੁਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਭਾਈ ਸੁਤ ਬਨਿਤਾ ਤਿਨ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸੰਜੋਇਆ ॥
ਕਰਮ ਸੁਕਰਮ ਕਰਾਏ ਆਪੇ ਇਸੁ ਜੰਤੈ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਹਰੈ ਧਰਿ ਪਾਇਤਾ ਉਦਰੈ ਮਾਹਿ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
ਅਸੰਖ ਜਪ ਅਸੰਖ ਭਾਉ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਪੂਜਾ ਅਸੰਖ ਤਪ ਤਾਉ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਗਰੰਥ ਮੁਖਿ ਵੇਦ ਪਾਠ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਜੋਗ ਮਨਿ ਰਹਹਿ ਉਦਾਸ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਭਗਤ ਗੁਣ ਗਿਆਨ ਵੀਚਾਰ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਸਤੀ ਅਸੰਖ ਦਾਤਾਰ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਸੂਰ ਮੁਹ ਭਖ ਸਾਰ ॥
ਅਸੰਖ ਮੋਨਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ ਤਾਰ ॥ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

Bhai Parnali (School): The initiator of the second important tradition of Gurbani is Bhai Gurdas, a nephew of third Guru Amar Das. The authenticity of the work of Bhai Gurdas is accepted by the fifth Guru Arjan Dev by honouring it as the 'key to Guru Granth Sahib'. And for this reason his distinctive approach of interpretation is known as Bhai Parnali. The important features of interpretation of Bhai Gurdas can be classified under some categories as: interpretation in poetic form, unity in interpretation and formulation, creative interpretation, systematic interpretation, comparative interpretation, interpretation of mythical symbols, description of Sikh history, etc.

Udasi Parnali (School): The Udasi, an ascetical sect of the Sikhs, was founded by Baba Sri Chand (1494-1629), the elder son of Guru Nanak. Sri Chand preached Gurbani throughout his life and worked for the spread of Sikh religion but his preaching remained oral and we do not find any written record of his Gurbani interpretations. However, some of his writings which were written in praise of Guru Nanak are extant even today. These are Arta, Guru Nanak Sahansarnama and Gur Gyatri Mantra. It is noteworthy that Sri Chand used one thousand adjectives of Sanskrit language in his compositions.¹²

Nirmala Parnali (School): According to Kahan Singh Nabha, "Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth master, sent five Sikhs named, Ram Singh, Karam Singh, Ganda Singh, Vir Singh and Sobha Singh, to Kashi, Varanasi, in the dress of celibacy for the study of Sanskrit. These five are known to be Nirmalas in the Sikh history."¹³ Bhai Santokh Singh, Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, Bhai Dal Singh Giani, Bhai Gian Singh Giani, Pandit Gulab Singh, Sadhu Gurdit Singh, Sant Sampuran Singh and Sant Nirankar Singh, who were all interpreting Gurbani from the Nirmala's perspective in

¹² Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Sri Chand Ate Udasin Sampardaya*, Delhi Gate Bazar, Delhi, 1959, pp. 441-451.

¹³ Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, National Book Shop, Delhi, 2006, p. 712.

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴ Main features of their writings are the concept of renunciation, myth of Guru Nanak as an incarnation of Vishnu, style of interpretation in question-answer format, format of polysemous meanings and format of Vedantic interpretation of Gurbani.

Giani Parnali (School): The Giani is such a person who must adhere in every thought, word and deed to the truth and should remain detached from worldly temptations while still living in this world. The Gianis are traditional interpreters of the Guru Granth Sahib and that is why they are also called the Sampardai Gianis. The term Sampardai means follower of a class of teachers from the old tradition or a class which follows the preaching of their Gurus.¹⁵ The Giani or Sampardai is one of the major schools of Sikh theologians and expositors of the Sikh Scripture. Traditionally, this school of interpretation is associated with Bhai Mani Singh who is credited with having learned the exposition of Scriptures from Guru Gobind Singh at Damdama Sahib in Talwandi Sabo. Bhai Divan Singh, Bhai Gurdial Singh and Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh, Bhai Amar Singh, Bhai Surat Singh, Bhai Jassa Singh, Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Chanda Singh, Giani Hazara Singh, Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Bhagvan Singh, Giani Amir Singh, Bhai Fateh Chand, Sant Harnam Singh, Giani Kirpal Singh, Sant Sangat Singh, Sant Kartar Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Santokh Singh, etc. can be named as the eminent scholars of Giani or Sampardai Parnali. On the doctrinal level as compared to the other Parnalis of interpretation, the Gianis have kept their own course relying solely on the teachings of the Gurus and the Sikh tradition as it had autonomously evolved. For them the Vedas were not authority for Gurbani, nor the Guru's word accepted as an extension of, or interpretation of the Vedas. Likewise, the Guru for them was not an Avtar of Vishnu. Nor did

¹⁴ Ganesha Singh, *Bharat Mat Darpan*, Bhai Bur Singh Giani Manmohan Singh, Amritsar, 1927, pp. 138-88.

¹⁵ Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, p. 247.

they believe in the Hindu system of Varn-ashrama. The Gianis or Sampardai Parnali has been the most proficient exponents of the philosophy and ideology of the Guru Granth Sahib. Very valuable contribution in the field of Sikh religion came in early days from Bhai Mani Singh in the form of Gian Ratnavali and Sikhan Di Bhagatmala. In recent times, Giani Badan Singh (1924), and his colleagues of the Faridkot Tika Bhai Bishan Singh Giani (1936), Akali Nihal Singh (1938), Pandit Narain Singh Giani (1940), Bhai Vir Singh (1957), and Bhai Kirpal Singh (1964), all basically in the Giani line, have produced the complete commentaries of Guru Granth Sahib. In this way, the Giani or Sampardai School is the first among the traditional interpreters of Gurbani, who had completed the four Tikas of Guru Granth Sahib.

Singh Sabha Parnali (School): The new association which came into being in July, 1873 was given the name of Sri Guru Singh Sabha Amritsar. It may be hoped that like the other Indian reform movements of the period, the Singh Sabha did not owe its existence to one single individual. Because it was a joint endeavour of public spirited Sikhs, who wanted to save the community from drifting into schismatic sects.¹⁶ The scholars of Singh Sabha Parnali are Bhai Vir Singh, Principal Teja Singh, Professor Sahib Singh, Mohan Singh Diwana, Sher Singh, Professor Ganga Singh and Hazara Singh Sodhi. Besides a long list of literary writings, the following is the list of their writings which are concerned with the Sikh history and Gurbani exegesis, i.e., Sri Guru Nanak Chamatkar, Sri Kalgidhar Chamtkar, Sant Gatha, Asht Gur Chamtkar, Gur Balam Sakhian, Varan Bhai Gurdas Steek, Sikhan Di Bhagatmala, Prachin Panth Prakash, Sakhi Pothi, Guru Granth Kosh, Guru Partap Suraj Granth, Panj Granthi Steek and Santhiya Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The Singh Sabha Movement was a renaissance movement in the history of Sikhism. It is a noteworthy fact

¹⁶ Shamsheer Singh Ashok, *Punjab Diyan Lehran (1850-1910)*, Ashok Pustakmala, Patiala, 1974, pp. 84-88.

that the main aim of this movement was to reaffirm the Sikh values and Sikh identity in the Sikh society. Therefore, the exegetical works created by the scholars of this school clearly exhibit their attempt to bring out the original ideology of the Sikh principles. The Singh Sabha scholars adopted an approach which was primarily guided by the scientific and rationalistic influence of Western education. Through this process of reinterpretation of the Sikh tradition they were able to produce detailed commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib.

Academic School: The text of Guru Granth Sahib has an inexhaustible hermeneutic potential. In this relevant context each generation of scholars has tried to unfold its meaning from its particular angle. Except the above considered subjects, there are some other trends which recently sprouted in the field of interpretation. In today's post-modern revolutionary times where people become aware of their own identity, Sikh religion raises the serious issues of modernism, post-modernism, feminism, secularism, fundamentalism, orientalism, ecology, globalization, subaltern studies etc., amongst the Guru Granth Sahib studies can be placed in the line with recent trends. Some prominent Sikh scholars can be named in the above line: Jagbir Singh, Joginder Singh Kairon, Gurbhagat Singh, Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Kapur Singh, Balbir Singh, Pashaura Singh, Devinder Singh Chahal, Bhagat Singh Hira, Jodh Singh etc. In the Academic school of interpretation, we have included only the complete commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib. It is pertinent to note that these exegetical works have been made only on the academic levels. Therefore, these following exegetical works and scholars have been placed in line of academic school interpretation. The translations of Guru Granth Sahib made by Ernst Trumpp, Prof. Teja Singh (completed by Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi), Dr. Gopal Singh, Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib, S. Gurbachan Singh Makin, S. Pritam Singh Chahal, Dr. Darshan Singh, Advocate Manmohan Singh (English and Punjabi) and Dr. Kartar Singh Duggal are incorporated in the complete and

English exegetical works on Guru Granth Sahib. The commentaries of Pandit Narian Singh, Giani Bishan Singh, Prof. Teja Singh (Shabadarth only), Bhai Vir Singh, Prof. Sahib Singh, Giani Kirpal Singh, Giani Mani Singh, Giani Harbans Singh, Sh. Chela Ram and Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi on Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi language are the pioneer works in the field of interpretation. The exegetical works of Dr. Manmohan Sehgal, Sh. Chela Ram, Dr. Jodh Singh and Dr. Jagjit Kaur Salwan are classical in Hindi language.

The various disciplines and schools of Gurbani interpretation emerged partly because of the differences in the philosophical outlook of the scholars and affiliations of the interpreters to different sects. All the exegetical writings succeeded to a certain extent for the relevant purpose, though all have own limitations and shortcomings as well.

Understanding of Sri Guru Granth Sahib: A Hermeneutical Study

Hermeneutics can be considered as a search for true text, or a search for true meaning. For S.P. Dubey, “The art of interpreting a religious text either by me today or by a commentator of another day is said to be hermeneutics.”¹⁷ Hermeneutics is the training in the art of interpreting the Scripture by extracting its meaning for communication to others. It is the science which establishes rules, principles and methods of interpreting religion and its Scripture, and its relation to society. As such hermeneutics attempts to find the true meaning of a text with accuracy, and how a reader perceives and interprets the reality.

The definition of hermeneutics is followed by the discussion on its limitations. No research work is complete unless we discuss the subject in its comparative sense and also the role played by language in it. The philosophical vision in Sikh perspective has been studied in order to

¹⁷ S.P. Dubey, “Hermeneutics and Sankara” in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, July-December, 1982, Bishops College, Calcutta, pp. 166-167.

understand the various bases of faith in Sikh religion and the factors influencing them. Following a comparative approach, the present research work attempts to study the level of faith it works in Sikh religion and how it is applied.

Limitations of Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, has its own limitations which are detailed as under:

1. At the first instance, the specific form and content of scriptural books vary sharply from tradition to tradition and even within a single scriptural corpus. Ritual books, legal codes, myths and legends, historical accounts, divine revelations, apocalyptic visions, ecstatic poetry, the words of teachers and prophets, and hymns or prayers to deity have all served as a Scripture. Sometimes problems crop up during the fixation of a text then can any universal or common rules be formulated which can be applied to any religious text of the world.
2. Friedrich Schleiermacher has given the term 'special insight'¹⁸ which means the Divine Grace of the revealed word of Scripture. The understanding of the Eternal Reality is also known as special insight. It is noteworthy that the main reason of special insight or the Divine Grace is the intensity of experiencing the Eternal Reality. The special insight is also the reason of the ability of the interpreter for analysing a text. This special insight is essential for the understanding of a Scripture. So, can intellectual experiences be used for the analysis of revelation?
3. "With religions becoming more and more dynamic and their social and political involvements becoming more provoking and problematic, it is the task of every country to contextualize the message of its Scriptures and to seek their faithful meaning in and for its particular cultural, geographical

¹⁸ Roy J. Howard, *Three Faces of Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Current Theories of Understanding*, University of California Press, London, 1982, pp. 9-11.

and historical situation. Any hermeneutics that pretends first to discover general, 'time and space transcending interpretations' which are then to be adopted and applied to a particular situation, is not only deluding itself but is actually failing to fulfil precisely the task to which it is, in fact, called, and cannot possibly lead to any kind of real contextuality".¹⁹

4. A major obstacle to delimit the phenomenon of Scripture is its very medium of expression. Yet in most religious traditions, sacred texts were transmitted orally in the first place and written down only relatively later. For these reasons, a descriptive distinction between oral and written Scriptures may on occasion be necessary, even though etymologically 'oral Scripture' is a contradiction in terms. Here the question is how science of interpretation be applied to oral traditions prevalent in religions. What measures and bases can be adopted for the interpretation of such traditions?

5. Another problem in delimiting 'Scripture' is of distinguishing the primary sacred text of a religious tradition from other secondary sacred texts. Such distinction between a community's pre-eminent Scripture and the rest of its sacred texts is helpful in understanding many religious traditions, in some cases, the panoply of texts revered is so great and the relative distinctions of authority and sacrality among them so unimportant that all have some legitimate claim to the title of Scripture.²⁰ When the secondary Scriptures are as important as the primary ones then it should be considered whether the hermeneutics of the original and secondary text should be same or it should be different. Therefore, in the light of above limitations of hermeneutics, before studying a Scripture our vision can be

¹⁹ Joseph Pathrapankal, "Editorial" in *Journal of Dharma*, Dharmaram College, Bangalore, Vol. V, No. I, January-March, 1980, p. 2.

²⁰ 'In the Mahayana Buddhist tradition as a whole, the number of texts treated as sacred is so vast that it is not possible to single out some as more deserving of the title *scripture* than others, save in particular segments of the tradition where one sutra is given extraordinary status (e.g., Nichren Buddhist veneration of the Lotus Sutra in Japan). Even in a community with a scriptural book or canon that is clearly more sacred than other sacred texts, the decision to preserve the status of 'Scripture' only for the former can be a debatable one.'

categorized into three categories, which are as follows: philosophical, objective and comparative level.

Philosophical Aspect: The primary theoretical concept of Sikh religion is the doctrine of Sabad. The conceptual and spiritual world of Sikh religion is based on the Eternal Truth of Sabad. If the word Sabad is replaced with revelation then it is not a misconception. We cannot ignore the Sabad revelation because Sikh religion speaks of the basic understanding of Sabad then of its experience, and further adopting the concepts. Human being is an intellectual being and intellect is the only source to understand everything concerning him as well as beyond his intellect. In the present research, the approach to study the Guru Granth Sahib is according to our intellect but it does not mean that this approach is restrained to academic knowledge only rather it is further to experience the Eternal Reality because without Divine Order and Divine Grace His message cannot be understood. If the divine truth of Eternal Reality is not experienced then even the highest intellectual level is meaningless because the soul of a human being is to be redeemed by the Scripture Guru, Guru Granth Sahib.

*He, who by Guru's grace knows the Lord's will, comes
to realise the way of life of all the ages.²¹*

*This is the sign of union with the Lord. That in his mind
the man recognises only the True Lord's command.²²*

The present study may help in formulating a vision towards the text of Guru Granth Sahib, but a true scholar is that who experiences and understands the Sabad Guru. Another considerable aspect that comes forth is the applicability of Sabad based Sikh vision or approach in

²¹ ਗੁਰ ਕਰਪਾ ਤੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੈ ॥
ਜਗਹ ਜਗੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਬਿਧਿ ਜਾਣੈ ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1027.

²² ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਿਲਣੈ ਕੀ ਏਹ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ ॥
ਮਨਿ ਇਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੀ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

practical life. Up to what extent the above discussion on faith is relevant, how much the faith system can be applied? These questions can be answered by taking into consideration the three approaches, i.e., the approach of a Saint, a Scholar and a Soldier.

(i) **Saint:** For Saint, Gurbani has used the words Sant, Sadh, Bhagat, Jan, Sant Jan, Sadh Jan, etc. interchangeably. The word can be said a modified form of the word 'sat' which can simply mean 'Truth'. So, 'a person who makes up his mind on the path of truth' is said to be a Sant. A Sant is used to refer to a wise, knowledgeable and religious person with knowledge of God. The first duty of the Sikh is to be a Sant or to be a wise and knowledgeable person.

(ii) **Scholar:** The term 'Scholar' is derived from the Latin word *Schola* which means a school child, or a student. In Sikh perspective, the person who practices for the Eternal Word (Sabad) is said to be the disciple of Guru. Till one practices Sabad-Guru he is a disciple because the Eternal Reality or the Eternal Being is beyond the human intellect. As He is beyond our understanding, intellect, unseen and limitless; and one cannot describe Him in lives. So, a true Sikh is one who is always a disciple of His Guru. So, his approach should always be of a disciple, follower, a Sant or a researcher.

(iii) **Soldier:** In the context of Sikh religion, the term 'Sipahi' means warrior or a soldier of truth. Sikhism strongly advocates the concept of Miri-Piri and Sant-Sipahi. So, it can be said that these concepts are imbedded in Sikh religion and Sikhism cannot be imagined without these concepts. Faith always supports us, sometimes as Sant-Sipahi and sometimes as Scholar.

Objective Aspect: After having a discussion on the philosophical aspect the objective aspect has been undertaken for the study under the following two headings.

(i) **Philological Study:** A philological study demands the complete knowledge of language. The language of Scriptures and religious discourses is different from the general usage of language. In religious discourses, symbolic meaning is primary to lexicon meaning. But in semantic form, the esoteric meanings of the words should be more explanatory for the researchers. We come across many examples in Gurbani in which Gurus have explained their ideas in simple language by means of story-telling, as:

*Where I to be a she-fawn, live in a forest, and pick up
and eat fruits and tubers? ²³*

(ii) **Theological Study:** Theology, a branch of philosophy, undertakes the study of every aspect of religion. Theology has various important aspects to study. One is the study of revelatory experience of the Eternal Reality. And the second important subject is the study of Eternal Word and the experience of its power through which the divine experience of the Scripture flows through generations.

A Sabad is the foundation stone of Sikh religion; here Sabad does not mean a word but an Eternal Reality which is symbolic of the Divine presence in utter darkness.

*For countless ages, there was utter darkness.
There was no earth and no sky, but the Infinite Lord's
will alone was pervasive.
There was neither day, nor night, nor moon, nor sun,
but the Lord alone sat in profound trance.²⁴*

Comparative Aspect: Sabad is a Dhawani that gives us a clear picture of the form of any text but Sabad is justified when it gives the knowledge of Eternal Reality. The experiences of saints are considered as Sabad. In other words, Sabad is the sayings of reliable enlightened souls who have attained the Eternal knowledge. The meaning of Sabad can be of two types, i.e., concrete and abstract. The comparative aspect undertakes the study of

²³ ਹਰਨੀ ਹੋਵਾ ਬਨਿ ਬਸਾ ਕੰਦ ਮੂਲ ਚੁਣਿ ਖਾਉ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁴ ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਪ੍ਰੰਪੂਕਾਰਾ॥

ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ॥

ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1035.

Sabad with respect to (i) the principle of authentic Sabad in Guru Granth Sahib, (ii) Sabad as a source of cosmology, (iii) Indian tradition of Eternal Reality and acoustics in Sabad, (iv) the principle of Guru-Sabad in Guru Granth Sahib, (v) Sabad as the Ultimate Reality, (vi) Sabad as a primordial sound, (vii) Sabad in the form of ordain of Guru, etc. In other words, Sabad has been studied as a comparative tool with reference to its practicability in different religions.

Methods for the Understanding of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

The emphasis is laid on understanding the concept of research through the principles of research methodology. A question is generally raised when Gurbani is a subject of spiritual experience then why its research methodology is not based on the principles of Gurmat. Therefore, an attempt has been made to find the basis of this research and its forms related to Gurmat. The references within the Gurbani and the unexplored references of various scholars have been considered for the study.

Objectives of Research Tools related to Gurmat

Research methodology is a process of systematic investigation carried out for establishing new facts, finding solutions to the existing problems, and deriving general principles of acceptance.

1. The research studies and interpretations related to Gurmat need to be based on such research tools which are best suited to interpret the Gurbani. The Gurmat interpretation does not simply mean to prepare an exegesis or a commentary but it should be an attempt to interpret the explanatory Divine experience and the message of Ultimate Reality. Therefore, any research is considered to be systematic which has set its own limitations of research tools. For example, the grammar as a research tool has its own limitations and cannot go beyond the philology. So, on the basis of grammar only, it is very difficult for an interpreter as well as the reader to reach on the eternal meaning of text.

2. The interpretation is an art which has many dimensions, viz. linguistic, literary, and philosophical. Many other subjects are incorporated in it. While interpreting the Gurbani all these dimensions need to be considered for a positive and purposeful research. Apart from these, it is necessary that any research or interpretation of Gurbani should not overlook the Sikh ideology. The formation of new concepts related to Gurmat is permitted in the interpretation of Gurbani but these should be a part of Sikh ideology.
3. An ideal exegesis or interpretation brings forth not only the Divine message with all the possible dimensions like scriptural, mystic and esoteric but also provides the pictorial view of revealed experience.

After discussing the objectives of research tools related to Gurmat, the hermeneutical tools or Gurmat methodologies have been broadly divided into two main parts: (i) Hermeneutical tools within the Gurmat literature, and (ii) Hermeneutical tools within the Gurbani.

Hermeneutical Tools within the Gurmat Literature

In this section, an attempt has been made to study all those hermeneutical tools which are commonly used to interpret the Gurmat literature. These include historical, social and linguistic factors. Just as the references related to the understanding of Gurbani in Guru Granth Sahib cannot be ignored; similarly, many important facts of Sikh literature can also not be ignored. For some scholars, History is an important tool, while for others language is more important to understand a text. Due to the limitations of the present study it is not feasible to analyze all the available hermeneutical tools.

Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha says, “It is natural that when we come across the different views in reference to literature of our religion then mind is got confused and it’s not easy to decide which reference is true and appropriate to Gurmat but when we think logically; just as Christianity,

Hinduism, Islam have considered Bible, Vedas, Quran, etc. as primary Scriptures and approved their sayings; then in the same way, the rationalizing of references in the context of Gurbani dispels the difference of views and we find the direct way of understanding the Gurmat.”²⁵ Continuing this debate he further provides us more details.

‘Bhai Mani Singh wrote in *Bhagat Ratnavali* that a Sikh should follow the sayings of the Sikh Gurus. A Sikh should do those things which are ordered by his Guru and should listen to those which his Guru has asked him to listen. It means that the sayings of the Sikh Gurus confirm the Sikh principles.’²⁶ Guru Arjan Dev says:

*He alone is redeemed from the great noose, who, within his mind, has the Guru’s word.*²⁷

*From the Primal One, has emanated the Gurbani, and it has effaced all the anxiety.*²⁸

*Sing thou the Guru’s word, O brother.
That is ever fruitful and peace-giving.*²⁹

Bhai Vir Singh explains that the essence of Gurbani is beyond space. It is from the Primal One; the Guru is full of Nectar. The Gurbani is the message of unapproachable and limitless Ultimate Being. So, the Gurbani itself is beyond the limits. In this way, Gurbani is as an institute of Divine knowledge which provides the Divine experience of Almighty. Therefore, an ideal interpreter or an exegete should try to understand the

²⁵ ‘ਇਹ ਸੂਭਾਵਿਕ ਗੱਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਦ ਅਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਤ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵਿਰੋਧ ਦੇਖਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਤਾਂ ਮਨ ਕੁਮ-ਚਕ ਵਿਚ ਪੈ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਨਿਰਣਾ ਕਰਨਾ ਔਖਾ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਗੁਰਮਤ ਦੀ ਸੱਚੀ ਉਪਦੇਸ਼ਕ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਹੈ, ਕਿਹੜਾ ਪਾਠ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਜਦੋਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਵਿਚਾਰ-ਸ਼ਕਤੀ ਤੋਂ ਕੰਮ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਜਿਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਈਸਾਈ, ਹਿੰਦੂ, ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਆਦਿਕਾਂ ਨੇ ਅੰਜੀਲ, ਕੁਰਾਨ, ਵੇਦ ਆਦਿਕ ਧਰਮ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੇ ਮਤ ਵਿਚ ਸ਼ੇਮਣੀ ਜਾਣ ਕੇ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਵਚਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਵਚਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅਪ੍ਰਮਾਣ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਹੈ, ਉਸੇ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਦੀ ਸ਼੍ਰੀ ਮੁਖਵਾਕ ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਕਸੌਟੀ ਨਾਲ ਸਭ ਸਿੱਖ ਮਤ ਦੇ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ ਦੀ ਪਰੀਖਿਆ ਕਰਕੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਨਿਯਮਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਰੁੱਧ ਵਚਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਤਿਆਗ ਅਤੇ ਅਨੁਕੂਲ ਵਚਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਗ੍ਰਹਿਣ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ, ਤਾਂ ਸਾਰੀਆਂ ਕਠਿਨਾਈਆਂ ਛਿਨ ਵਿਚ ਮਿਟ ਜਾਂਦੀਆਂ ਹਨ, ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਗੁਰਮਤ ਦਾ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਰਸਤਾ ਲੱਭ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਾਂ’। Kahan Singh Nabha, *Gurmat Martand*, p. ii.

²⁶ ‘ਭਾਈ ਮਨੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ‘ਭਗਤ ਰਤਨਾਵਲੀ’ ਵਿਚ ਲਿਖਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਵਚਨ ਸਿੱਖ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਦੇ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਹੋਣ, ਉਹੀ ਸੁਣੇ, ਉਹੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ। ਭਾਵ ਇਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਨੂੰ ਉਹੀ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਹੇ, ਉਹੀ ਸੁਣਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਉਸਦਾ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਸੁਣਨ ਨੂੰ ਕਹੇ, ਭਾਵ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਬਚਨ ਸਦਾ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਿਧਾਂਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਤ੍ਰ ਕਰਵਾਉਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ’। *Ibid.*, p. iii.

²⁷ ਸੋ ਛੂਟੈ ਮਹਾ ਜਾਲ ਤੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 397.

²⁸ ਧੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਆਈ॥

ਤਿਨਿ ਸਗਲੀ ਚਿੰਤ ਮਿਟਾਈ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 628.

²⁹ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵਹ ਭਾਈ॥

ਓਹ ਸਫਲ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖਦਾਈ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 629.

meaning of Gurbani with the help of Gurbani itself.³⁰ Every attempt of an interpreter can have logical mistakes but the Gurbani is the only single universal authority which is perfect and beyond omissions. As Guru Nanak says in Sri Rag:

*All are apt to commit an error.
The Guru and the Creator alone are infallible.
He who has chastened his mind through Guru's
instruction comes to embrace Lord's love.³¹*

Hermeneutical Tools within the Gurbani

These tools are those references which are searched from the Guru Granth Sahib to get the methodology for the understanding of Gurbani. The meaning of Eternal Reality can be understood in a more appropriate way through these tools. For example, Guru Arjan Dev tells us the way to contemplate through the concentration. He says that any effort is fruitful only if it includes concentration of mind.

Sing the praise of the Lord, O friendly saints, with alertness and single-mindedness.³²

Without the Name, the bride becomes not pure, even though she may make many decorations. She knows not the worth of her spouse and is attached to another's love. Nanak, she is impure, she is of ill-conduct and, amongst women, an evil woman.³³

To read scriptures, to reflect upon grammar and to say prayers three times a day, avail not. Without Guru's word, where is emancipation, O mortal? Without the Lord's Name, one is entangled to death.³⁴

³⁰ “ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚ ਜੋ ਮੂਲ ਹੈ ਉਹ ਤਾਂ ਵਡੇ ਤੇ ਵਡੀ ਵਸਤੂ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਧੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਧੁਰੋਂ ਆਈ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਹੈ। ਅਗਮ ਅਗਾਧ ਦੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੋਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਆਪ ਅਗਾਧ ਹੈ,ਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਇਸ ਦੀ ਵੱਧ ਤੋਂ ਵੱਧ ਸਮਝ ਆ ਸਕੇ ਉਹ ਇਸ ਦੇ ਚਰਨਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਬੈਠਕੇ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾਵੇ।” Bhai Vir Singh, *Santhya Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Vol. I, Bhai Vir Singh Sahit Sadan, New Delhi, 2007, p. ii.

³¹ ਭੁਲਣ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਅਭੁਲੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ॥
ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਨੁ ਸਮਝਾਇਆ ਲਾਗਾ ਤਿਸੈ ਪਿਆਰੁ॥ *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 61.

³² ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਸੰਤ ਮੀਤ॥
ਸਾਵਧਾਨ ਏਕਾਗਰ ਚੀਤ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³³ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਸੁਧੁ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਕਰੈ ਸੀਗਾਰ॥
ਪਿਰ ਕੀ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣਈ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ਪਿਆਰੁ॥
ਸਾ ਕ੍ਰਮੁਧ ਸਾ ਕੁਲਖਣੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਰੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਕੁਨਾਰਿ॥ *Ibid.*, pp. 651-52

³⁴ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਪਾਠ ਬਿਆਕਰਣ ਵਖਾਣੈ ਸੰਧਿਆ ਕਰਮ ਤਿਕਾਲ ਕਰੈ॥
ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕਹਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨੁ ਉਰਝਿ ਮਰੈ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 1127.

Music as a Research Tool

He whose tongue ever utters God's Name, enjoys plenteous food, raiment and music.³⁵

Historical References

The Hindu comes to the house of Hindu. Chanting the sermon, he puts on the yarn-sacred thread on the boy's neck. Putting on the thread, he commits sins. For his ablutions and washings, he is approved not.³⁶

Related to Interpreter

In the mind are gems, jewels and rubies, provided thou hearken to (and act upon) one instruction of the Guru.³⁷

Limitations and Qualities of an Interpreter

1) The multi-dimensional knowledge of an interpreter holds great significance in the interpretation of a Scripture. The ideal interpretation not only demands the knowledge about the discipline to which it is concerned but also demands the inter-disciplinary approach of an interpreter. An ideal exegete should himself have direct and apparent experience of the Eternal Word incorporated in the Scripture. In theological as well as spiritual field, the disciplines like Tasawwuf, Vedanta, Gurmat, Yoga, etc. become even more important. For example the personal experience of yoga proves itself as supporter in justice of yoga. In the same way, to define the revealed text, it is mandatory to experience it before.³⁸

³⁵ ਬਹੁ ਭੋਜਨ ਕਾਪਰ ਸੰਗੀਤ ॥
ਰਸਨਾ ਜਪਤੀ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨੀਤ ॥
ਭਲੀ ਸੁ ਕਰਨੀ ਸੋਭਾ ਧਨਵੰਤ ॥
ਹਿਰਦੈ ਬਸੈ ਪੂਰਨ ਗੁਰ ਮੰਤ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

³⁶ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਆਵੈ ॥
ਸੂਤੁ ਜਨੇਊ ਪੜਿ ਗਲਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥
ਸੂਤੁ ਪਾਇ ਕਰੇ ਬੁਰਿਆਈ ॥
ਨਾਤਾ ਧੋਤਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 951.

³⁷ ਮਤਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਤਨ ਜਵਾਹਰ ਮਾਣਿਕ ਜੇ ਇਕ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸਿਖ ਸੁਣੀ ॥ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁸ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰਜ ਬਾਰੇ ਕੀਤੀ ਉਪਰਲੀ ਚਰਚਾ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਰੱਖੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਸੂਝ-ਬੂਝ ਦੀ ਆਸ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਮਾਨ ਲਾਉਣ ਵਿੱਚ ਸਹਾਈ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਬਹੁਪੱਖੀ ਗਿਆਨ ਦੀ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਨਾ ਕੇਵਲ ਉਸ ਅਨੁਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਦਾ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਗਿਆਨ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਅਧੀਨ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਰਖਦੀ ਹੈ, ਸਗੋਂ ਉਸ ਅਨੁਸ਼ਾਸਨ ਨਾਲ

- 2) The ideal interpretation of the Scripture is a difficult task for an exegete. It includes the individual revealed experience of the interpreter and the special skills for the creation of a new literary work. The concentration of the interpreter should be focused on the Revealed Word of the Scripture rather than the commentaries. The experience of the Revealed Word is the most important factor for understanding the Scripture in its original sense. In the words of Harold Coward, "It opened the way to a recovery of the kind of direct and transforming experience of the word."³⁹ But in case of any complexity of words or esoteric terms, the interpreter can consult the existed commentaries, exegesis, etc.

Conclusion and Possibilities

Hermeneutics provides us tools, skills and guidance to pursue right vision and perspective. It not only provides us techniques and process to perceive meaning and reality but also sharpens our vision and understanding of the meaning with new and more possible dimensions and thereby improves our perception of reality. The major task of hermeneutics is to interpret the text in the context of contemporary situation, to make the text or message of the Scripture relevant and meaningful to today's reader. Some people believe that hermeneutics is a western discipline, so it cannot be used as a research tool for the study of Guru Granth Sahib. Here, it should be remembered that if the positive elements of another culture can be used for the understanding of some text, for example, hermeneutics, then why should not we accept it? Therefore, we need to make efforts for initiating a discipline of 'Sikh Hermeneutics' or Gurmat

ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਇਲਮਾਂ ਦੀ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਵੀ ਤਕਾਜ਼ਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਲਈ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਸੂਸਥ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ ਸਿੱਧ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜਿਸ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ ਮੂਲ ਲੇਖਕ ਕਰ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦਾ ਟੀਕਾਕਾਰ ਨੂੰ ਆਪ ਸਿੱਧਾ ਤੇ ਅਪੋਰਖ ਅਨੁਭਵ ਹੋਵੇ।...ਇਹ ਸ਼ਰਤ ਅਧਿਆਤਮਿਕ ਖੇਤਰ ਦੇ ਅਨੁਸ਼ਾਸਨਾਂ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਤਸਵੱਫ, ਵੇਦਾਂਤ, ਗੁਰਮਤਿ, ਯੋਗ ਆਦਿ ਦੀ ਹਾਲਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋਰ ਵੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ। ਯੋਗ ਨਾਲ ਇਨਸਾਫ ਕਰ ਸਕਣ ਲਈ ਯੋਗ ਅਭਿਆਸ ਦਾ ਅਮਲੀ ਤਜਰਬਾ ਬਹੁਤ ਸਹਾਇਕ ਹੋਣ ਦਾ ਦਮ ਭਰਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਵੈਦਿਕੀ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦਾ ਟੀਕਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਵੈਦ ਹੋਣਾ ਜ਼ਰੂਰੀ ਦਿਸਦਾ ਹੈ'। Piar Singh, 'Tikakari: Sidhantak Vishleshan' in *Tikakari, Itihaskari Te Patarkari: Kujh Drishtikon* (Punjabi), Third Punjabi Development Conference, Punjabi University, Patiala, 7-9 December, 1984, pp. 103-104.

³⁹ Harold Coward, *Scripture in the World Religions: A Short Introduction*, One World Oxford, London, 2000, p. xi.

Mimamsa based on the interpretation of Gurbani. The Sikh hermeneutics or Gurmat Mimamsa can be justified as a subject only if equal importance is given to the message and diction of Gurbani.

A Scripture includes the Divine Revelation manifested through the medium of words. Sabad in its form and concept can be identified separately but they cannot be separated therefore, both are important. It is important to understand the divine truth implicit in the Scripture so as to understand the Scripture itself. The Scriptures cannot be interpreted at the finalized level. Therefore, their interpretation will continue even in the times to come.