Chapter-III

Interpretation of Gurbani: Its History and Features (1604-2004)

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. It is also said to be the Sabad Vichar or reflection upon the Word. In the history of Indian scriptural tradition, there are four major techniques that are employed in Sikh exegetical methods. The very first is Sabadarath, literally means meaning of the words, which includes synonyms as well as the meanings of difficult words in a particular hymn. The second technique is Tika, exactly means commentary, which provides the meaning of a particular hymn and included additional comments in simple language. The third mode of interpretation is Viakhiya, factually means exegesis, which traces the detailed exegesis and extended commentary on a particular hymn or verse from a particular point of view. The very last method of interpretation is the Parmartha, literally means sublime meaning, which clarifies the spiritual meaning of a hymn. 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.

Guru Nanak himself placed great emphasis on the understanding of the meaning of Bani as the fundamental characteristic of the life of a person who has turned towards the Guru, i.e., Gurmukh. Guru Nanak emphasizes the point that a vast majority of the people usually do not care to understand the full richness and depth of meaning contained in the Bani. He adds that those rare ones who care to do so will certainly have their reward in achieving their true spiritual status.

_Rare is the gnostic, who understands this by meeting with the True Satguru._
_The glories are in the hand of the Lord._
_Him alone He blesses with them, whom He likes._
_Some rare one, if he becomes resigned to Guru’s will, reflects over the Guru’s word._\(^{105}\)

Guru Ramdas compares the meaning of Gurbani with an unbounded ocean of jewels. Those individuals who dive in the deep into that ocean through meditation, find within themselves a treasure of jewels, and realize their true spiritual status. Others who remain on the surface level of that ocean may be dealing only with the literal sense of Gurbani, without having any deeper understanding of its meaning. In the

\(^{105}\) _Guru Granth Sahib, p. 935._
same context, Bhai Gurdas echoes a similar understanding of the depth of richness of the meaning of Gurbani:

*Just as treasures of pearls and diamonds are found in the sea, but only a seasoned evaluator of these precious stones who can dive deep into the bottom of the sea can surely enjoy the pleasure of picking them up from there.*

*Just as mountains have diamonds, rubies and philosopherstones-those can purify metals into gold, but only an adopt excavator can bring them out before the world.*

*Just as a jungle has many aromatic trees like sandalwood, camphor etc., but only a perfumery expert can bring their fragrance out.*

Similarly Gurbani has all the precious items but whosoever would search and research them, he would be rewarded with those items that he so fondly desires. The Sikh Gurus have continuously emphasized that the potentiality of the meaning contained in Gurbani is inexhaustible. No matter how much one studies and interprets it, infinity of meaning remains yet to be fathomed. In this context Guru Ramdas says:

*The great ocean is full of the wealth of jewels, upon jewels. They who are attached with Divine word, the Gurbani, obtain it.*

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107 Guru Granth Sahib, p. 442.
Major Schools of Interpretation

The different approaches are 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 (School), Bhai Parnali (School), Udasi Parnali (School), Nirmala Parnali (School), Giani Parnali (School), and Singh Sabha Parnali (School) and Academic School.

Sahaj Parnali (School)

The infallible rule of interpretation of a Scripture is the Scripture itself. The history of the Sikh exegetical literature also starts from the time of Gurus themselves and it has been continuous in one form or the other till today. We find different theological dimensions of various concepts explained in Guru Granth Sahib. The compositions of Guru Nanak offer the basic theological orientation of the Guru Granth Sahib. These basic ideas have been enlarged and reaffirmed by the next succeeding Gurus. Thus, the first and the most reliable tradition of Gurbani interpretation is found in the Guru Granth Sahib itself. This special mode of spontaneous interpretation is attributed to the Gurus themselves and known as the Sahaj Parnali. Here, the traditional Sikh school of interpretation is referred to as Parnali or technique of learning.

The Sahaj Parnali is that school of interpretation, which sought to clarify and expound the meaning of certain words, concepts
and themes contained in the Bani of their predecessors. As already mentioned above that 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 Viakhiya Parnalian’, cites certain passages from the compositions of Guru Nanak that were interpreted by Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ramdas 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 Amar Das, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev respectively.\textsuperscript{108}

\begin{quote}
\textit{Ist Guru}
\textit{The Vedas proclaim that virtue and vice are the seed of heaven and hell.}
\textit{Whatever man sows that alone grows. The soul realizes it, when it eats the fruit of his deeds.}
\textit{Deeming Divine knowledge great, whosoever praises it he becomes truthful, uttering the True Name.}
\textit{Sowing truthfulness, truthfulness wells up in man and he finds a seat in the Lord’s Court.}
\textit{The Veda is but a trader.}
\textit{The soul’s capital-stock is only the Lord’s comprehension, which is obtained through the Lord’s grace.}
\textit{Nanak, without this capital-stock none has ever departed laden with the profit of the Lord’s Name.}\textsuperscript{109}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{109} Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1243.
Slok 2nd Guru

The Vedas have brought legends and tales and they expound vice and virtue.
What man give gratis they receive and what receive gratis they give.
According to their deeds, they are born in hell or heaven.
Reading them the world wanders in the doubt of high and low castes and classes.
The embrosial Gurbani speaks of the Real Thing and has been revealed unto the Guru in the state of Divine Knowledge and meditation.
The Guru-wards utter it, the Guru-wards realize it and by God’s grace, the divines ponder over it.
Creating the world in this will, the Lord keeps it in His will and in His will He beholds it.
If before he dies, man’s ego is stilled, O Nanak, then becomes he acceptable in God’s court.110

Slok 1st Guru

Nanak, if it rains in the month of Sawan, the four things feel great joy.
The serpent, the deer, the fish and the revellers, who have wealth in their home.111

2nd Guru

The month of Sawan has come, O my friend.
The clouds have burst forth.
Nanak, the loved brides, who love their groom, sleep in peace.112

3rd Guru

Descending low, very low, the cloud has come and the pure water falls.
Nanak, the bride whose mind is torn from her groom suffers pain.113

There is but one God. By the true Guru’s grace He is obtained.
Sri Rag, First Guru.
In the first watch of night O’ my merchant friend! By Lord’s order, Thou were cast into the womb.
With body reversed Thou performed penance within and prayed to thy Master, O’ my merchant friend!
Upside down Thou said prayers unto the Lord with fixed attention and affection.
Thou came against manner (naked) in the darkage (world) and again shall depart naked.
Such cargo shall be with the mortal, as God’s pen has recorded on his brow.
Says Nanak, in the first watch, Soul descends into the womb by Lord’s will.114

Sri Rag, Fourth Guru.
In the first watch of the night, O’ my merchant friend! God put the mortal into the womb.
He meditates on God, utters His Name, and on the Name of Lord God he reflects upon, O’ merchant friend!
Lord God’s Name he repeats and ponders on and in womb’s fire he sustains life by thinking of God. He emerges out and is born. The father and mother become delighted to see his face.
Remember Him, O’ mortal! To whom the thing (child) belongs. By Guru’s grace embrace God’s meditation in thy heart.
Says Nanak, in the first watch (of night) meditate on God and He will take pity on thee, O’ Man!115

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113 म:३।। दुःखदेव दुःखदेव नामिना दुःखदेव तोतु निःपंजः।
तरंग सूच लच्छ रुप रुपभी मिति लंके मिति माति संगः।
Ibid., p. 1280.

114 प्रियसिंह नान्दलाल। जिनसिंह सत्सम भारवः ।
पति भाते चैते है विद्वानिष्ठा निदुरु गुप्ति भिषि नाथकामि।
Ibid., pp. 74-75.

115 मिनीसिंह भारव। पति भाते चैते है विद्वानिष्ठा निदुरु गुप्ति भिषि नाथकामि।
Ibid., p. 76.
Sri Rag, Fifth Guru.

In the first watch of the night, O, my merchant friend! God placed the soul in the belly. In ten months it was made a human being and was given appointed time to practice virtuous deeds. He was allowed respite to do meritorious deeds, as was the primal writ for him. The mother, father, brother, son and wife, amongst them the Lord united him. God Himself causes mortal to do evil deeds and good ones. In the power of this being lies nothing. Says Nanak, in the first watch, O’ mortal! God cast him in the belly.\footnote{Ibid., p. 77.}

Countless are Thine meditations and countless (those who meditate on Thee with) love. Countless are (Thine) worships and countless they who practice penance. Countless are the scriptures and extempore recites of Vedas. Countless are the yogis, in mind, who remain detached (from the world). Countless are the votaries who reflect over (the Lord’s) excellences and theology. Countless are the men of piety and countless the men of bounty. Countless are the warriors who eat with their mouth steel (bear on their face the brunt). Countless are the silent sages who centre their love and attention on the Lord.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 3-4.}

Many millions are His worshippers. Many millions are the performers of religious and worldly deeds.
Many millions have become dwellers at places of pilgrimage.
Many millions wander as anchorites in the forest.
Many millions are the listeners of Vedas.
Many millions become penitents.
Many millions enshrine Lord’s meditation in their heart.
Many millions meditate on His ever new names.
Even then, O Nanak, they find not the Creator’s limit.¹¹⁸

Sahaj Parnali is based upon the well-known principle of interpretation of Scripture by means of Scripture itself. As per the principles mentioned above, the Scripture is regarded as a self-interpreting text, which is based on the ordinary philological principle it includes that what is explained in one place can be used to clarify what is obscure in another. It would mean to apply to the text the words of the text itself, means using one verse as commentary upon another. Similarly, Luther’s formulation of the great reform principle of Sola Scriptura was based on the following assertion: ‘Scripture is in itself the most certain, most easily understood and most explained, as its own interpreter.’¹¹⁹ In the same vein, one can cite the Quranic principle of interpretation that ‘the meaning of the Quran is understood through the

¹¹⁸ Kashi vanti che che bujada
dari hanti che che bujada
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
dari hanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Kashi vanti che che vishvau
Ibid., p. 275.

Quran itself.”\textsuperscript{120} There are thus, striking parallels between the Western and the Indian discussions about the interpretation of a Scripture by means of Scripture.

There is a great tradition of interpretation, which is continuously going on within Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib is like a unit, whose every word lends strength to the next single word. The process of illuminating shows the Divine enlightenment in the Guru Granth Sahib. Taran Singh says that the Sahaj Parnali is the highest mode of interpretation. The explanation of the Sahaj Parnali includes irrefutable feature in its possession. Mostly, the medium of this mode of interpretation is in poetic form. Although, the poetic form of a Scripture is unique in its nature but sometimes it creates major problems in its understanding as well as in explanation. In the end, he declares that except Sahaj Parnali, there is none other authentic interpretation in this context.\textsuperscript{121}

\textbf{Bhai Parnali (School)}

The initiator of the second important tradition of interpretation of Gurbani is Bhai Gurdas, a nephew of third Guru, Amar Das. The authenticity of the work of Bhai Gurdas is even accepted by the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev by honouring it as the ‘key to Guru Granth Sahib’. And

\textsuperscript{120} Taran Singh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Ibid}, pp. 23-26.
for this reason his typical approach of interpretation is known as Bhai Parnali. The compositions of Bhai Gurdas can be classified as under:

**Sanskrit Slokas:** As per Bhai Santokh Singh’s *Gur Partap Suraj Granth*, these are six in numbers. The word Vaheguru as the name of Akal Purakh finds symbolic references from Puranic texts; like V for Vishnu, H for Hari, G for Govind and R for Ram. This denotes to the all pervasiveness for the Divine Reality through the ages and names used for God.

*In Satyug Visnu in the form of Vasudev is said to have incarnated and (V) of Vahiguru reminds of Visnu. The true Guru of dvapar is said to be Harikrsna and (h) of Vahiguru reminds of Hari. In the treat was Ram and (r) of Vahiguru tells that remembering Ram will produce joy and happiness. In kaliyug, Gobind is in the form of Nanak and (g) of Vahiguru gets Gobind recited. The recitation of all the four ages subsume in Panchayan i.e. in the soul of the common man. When joining four letters Vahiguru is remembered, the jiv merges again in its origin.*

**Kabitt-Swayye:** Kabitt-Swayye is another type of composition, which was written in Braj language.

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**Vars**: The Vars are the most favourable compositions of Bhai Gurdas. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar published these Vars which are 40 in numbers and for the 41st Var, an extra footnote is given.124

**Significant Features of Exegetical Works of Bhai Gurdas**

**Interpretation in Poetic Form**: There is no doubt that the interpretation in poetic form is not a suitable method for the explanation but Bhai Gurdas made his exegetical work smoother and easiest in its form by using the different modes of poetry like descriptive analysis, phrases, verses, symbolic languages, comparative approaches, etc. In fact, the usage of these modes of interpretation proves his immense knowledge in interpretation. It is pertinent to note that the compositions made by Bhai Gurdas were not in musical measures (Ragas). The whole compositions are in accordance with the prosodic form of the folk poetry.

The compositions of Guru Granth Sahib are mystic in its nature; Bhai Gurdas used descriptive, analytical as well as comparative methods for interpreting the Gurbani. He emphasized his exegetical work is more practical and clear with the use of symbols. Rather than the

124 ‘बंगली ब्रह धातुमातिरतसे जी ५०। बेठोटा कृत्तम कले ले। दिन धुतांटि देख फिर घर दिन कह रूप ४० बांके के आवंदह जिवं बंगली कृत्तम कले ले बेठोटा। अच्छी रचना देख दिन अवंदह जिवं बेठोटा बंगली कृत्तम ती से।’ लिखिता भिकसर है। इत्यादि जिवं बेठोटा देख दिन देख दिन ती बुधाने ते संकेत है दिन जिवं बंगली कृत्तम ती से हों, तस्य जिवं बंगली कृत्तम ती से हों। ऐसा— कृत्तम सिंह पुरुष लिंगि मी ५० भूख धूख पुरुष। मैं खिजल की में देख दिन जिवं बेठोटा देख दिन देख दिन ती बुधाने ते संकेत है। है। प्रवेंद की फिर जिवं बेठोटा देख दिन देख दिन जिवं बेठोटा बंगली कृत्तम ती से हों, तस्य जिवं बंगली कृत्तम ती से हों। प्रवेंद की देख दिन देख दिन लिखिता पुरुष मी ५०। भूख धूख पुरुष। वरान Bhai Gurdas Ji, p.iii.
excessive description of concepts, he used examples in the context of Sikh tradition for the explanation of particular concepts. And by exemplifying the concepts, he made not only his approach more practical but near to the academic.125 For example his description of word Waheguru is a marvellous model of his exegetical talent.

The formless Lord has been beholden in the form of the light (in Guru Nanak and other Gurus). The Gurus recited Word-Guru as Vaheguru who is beyond the Vedas and the Katebas (the semitic scriptures). Therefore all the four varnas and all four semitic religions have sought the shelter of the lotus feet of the Guru. When the Gurus in the form of philosophier’s stone touched them, that alloy of eight metal changed into one metal (gold in the form of Sikhism). The Gurus giving them place at their feet removed their incurable malady of ego. For gurmukhs they cleared the highway of Gos’s will. The perfect (Guru) made the perfect arrangements.126

**Unity in Interpretation and Formulation:** This is another significant feature of Bhai Gurdas’s compositions. Bhai Gurdas not only interpreted Gurbani but also made an influential interpretation of Gurmat ideology. The conjugation is another feature of his mode of interpretation and this feature made his compositions effectual in itself. Perhaps, this was the primary reason in those times that Bhai Mani Singh had to interpret the

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compositions of Bhai Gurdas. He exemplified the ideology of Sikh Gurus with number of illustrations. The use of Pauri or Kabitt makes his compositions more beautiful. The summary of the whole composition can be seen in the last lines of Pauris or Kabitts.\(^{127}\) The following example presents a specimen of his illustrative sense:

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The \text{Lord resembles to an instrumentalist who holding the instrument in his hand plays all the different measures on it. Listening to the tunes played he remains immersed in them and eulogises the Supreme. Merging his consciousness in the Word he becomes elated and makes others also delighted. Lord is the speaker as well as the listener immersed in super consciousness. Himself all bliss He permeated one and all. This mystery that the Lord is omnipresent, is only understood by a gurmukh, the Guru-oriented one.}^{128}
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**Creative Interpretation:** It can be realised from the above discussion that the exegetical work made by Bhai Gurdas has a creative power. He has the same ideology behind his compositions as followed by the Sikh Gurus but he tried to sprout a new soul in his compositions. This unique feature of his exegetical work speaks about his creative power of interpretation and deep conviction of his faith.

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The \text{formless Lord assuming the form of ekankar created myriad names and forms out of Oankar. In His each trichome He has kept the expanse of crores}
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\(^{128}\) [Varan Bhai Gurdas Ji, Var 2, Pauri 2, P. 26; Jodh Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 81.]
of universes. None knows far how many yugs, ages, there was imperceptible and impenetrable mist. For many ages continued the activities of many an incarnation (of God). The same God, for the sake of his love for the devotees, has appeared in Kalijug (in the form of Guru). Being like warp and weft and the lover and the beloved one He, controlled by the holy congregation, resides there in. Only gurmukh possesses the knowledge of that creator Lord.\textsuperscript{129}

**Systematic Interpretation:** The exegetical work of Bhai Gurdas cannot be called a systematic theology but it can be said a systematic interpretation in itself. The first Var of Bhai Gurdas carries a number of examples proving his interpretation to be systematic. In it, he made an exact interpretation from the times of Guru Nanak to sixth Guru Hargobind.

**Comparative Interpretation:** In his exegetical works, Bhai Gurdas has a detailed discussion on various concepts of Guru Granth Sahib. He suggests the guidelines for a Gurmukh that how he should spend his livelihood. He also makes the reference of other religions in this regard. This significant feature of his compositions is unique in itself and distinguishes him from all other contemporaries of his time.

**Description of Sikh History:** Bhai Gurdas, in his compositions, quite frequently describes the Sikh history. He also gives examples from the

life of Sikh Gurus, wherever necessary. This description shows his deep attachment and respect towards the Sikh Gurus.

The first five Gurus held the hands of the people and the sixth Guru Hargobind is incomparable God-Guru. He is the king of spirituality as well as temporality and is in fact irremovable emperor of all the kings. Assimilating the unbearable knowledge of the earlier five cups (Gurus) in the inner core of his mind he remains merry and wise mediator for humanity. In spite of the six philosophies spread around, he reaching the turiya (highest stage of meditation) has attained the supreme reality. He has strung all the six philosophies and their sects in the strung of one philosophy. He has churned the essence of the lives of celebate ascetics, the followers of truth, contended people, the siddhs and naths (yogis) and the (so called) incarnations of God. All the eleven Rudrs remain in the ocean but those (divers) who seek life in death get the invaluable jewels. All the twelve zodiac signs of sun, sixteen phases of moon and numerous constellations have provided a beautiful swing for him. This Guru is omniscient yet he possesses a childlike innocence.130

**Udasi Parnali (School)**

The Udasi, an ascetical sect of the Sikhs was founded by Baba Sri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak. The word ‘Udasi’ has its origin in the Sanskrit word ‘Udasin’, which means one who is indifferent

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130 अदासीवीर रुद्री पूजा धार्मिक दिवस कुलु उडी ओविर अवेल।
दोषे सूती र धार्मिक दिवस ओविर ओविर अवेल।
उडी विनाशे अनुवर सत्ते वृणे भन्दे शुभ र सुभद्र विचेल।
उदासी छाडि निष्कृत दुःखतु दिवस छाडि तेले लेल।
दिवस दुःखतु दिवस धीरीयसंह दिवस दुःखतु असहस्व जीवल।
अभू नाती नातीकी निप दुःख अभू दिवल।
वियान्तु छाडि मुतु विनी भवि सीडी डियु जुह आसेल।
यावह एसो तेले जति दीवीय छाडि तेले जीवल।
to or disregardful of worldly attachments or a mendicant. In the Sikh tradition, the term ‘Udasi’ has also been used for each of the four preaching tours of Guru Nanak. So, in this sense, the term means a prolonged absence from home. The Mantra, the sacred composition, attributed to the Udasi saint, Balu Hasna, records that Baba Sri Chand received enlightenment from his father, Guru Nanak and after the passing away of him, Baba Sri Chand latter started his own sect named Udasi sect.

Baba Sri Chand was a devoted Sikh as a saintly person. His object in establishing the order of the Udasi was to propagate the mission of his father, Guru Nanak. There was never a conflict between Baba Sri Chand and the successors of Guru Nanak. They rather lived amicably. These Udasi Sadhus set up new hearths, i.e., Dhuan each at his seat and thus came into existence the four Dhuans or hearths, which later on became the active centres of Udasi preaching. It is pertinent to note that each hearth came to be known after the name of its principal preacher. The Udasi hearths popularized the teachings of Guru Nanak not only in Punjab but also all over the country.

**Compositions of Baba Sri Chand:** Baba Sri Chand preached Gurbani throughout his life and worked for the spread of Sikhism but his preachings 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 as follows:
Arta: During the tours of Guru Nanak once Baba Sri Chand saw him on meditation. With respect, love and devotion he composed the hymn called Arta, in praise of his father Guru Nanak.\textsuperscript{131}

Guru Nanak Sahansarnama: It is said that a lengthy collection of Slokas composed by Baba Sri Chand. It includes the writings of one hundred and twenty-five Slokas. The Guru Nanak Sahansarnama is a well-known composition of Baba Sri Chand written in the praise of Guru Nanak. It is noteworthy that Baba Sri Chand used one thousand adjectives in his composition.\textsuperscript{132} He gave a copy of Gur Gayatri Mantra and Guru Nanak Sahansarnama to Mehar Chand, Guru Nanak’s grandson towards the end of his life and asked him to recite the Pothi daily and paid due respect to Guru Nanak.\textsuperscript{133}

Gur Gayatri Mantra: This is another composition composed by Baba Sri Chand in Sahaskriti language. In this Mantra, the names and adjectives of God written by Guru Nanak in the Mul Mantra have been saluted again and again.\textsuperscript{134}

Compositions of Anandghan: Anandghan was an Udasi Sadhu known for his commentaries. He wrote on some of the Sikh scriptural texts. Not much biographical detail is available about him, but references in his

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{131} Ishar Singh Nara, \textit{Itihas Baba Sri Chand Ate Udasin Sampardai}, Delhi Gate Bazar, Delhi, 1959, pp. 120-122.
\textsuperscript{132} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 441-451.
\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 436.
\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 437-39.
\end{footnotesize}
own works indicate that he was a disciple of Baba Ram Dayal, an Udasi ascetic. Also that he was born in the family of Guru Nanak, tenth descent from him. Since his first commentary on the Japuji, was completed in 1852 Bk/AD 1795, it may be presumed that he was born around the middle of the eighteenth century. He spent the early years of his life at Dera Baba Nanak, where he was believed to be born. From there he went to Kanshi or Kashi, Varanasi where he studied Sanskrit and discussed Scriptures with the scholars of that time. In fact, these discussions inspired him to write exegesis of Gurbani. He had written the exegesis of six compositions of Gurbani, i.e. Japuji, Aarti, Onkar, Asa ki Var, Siddha Gosti, and Anand. According to Max Arthur Macauliffe, Anandghan had also written the life of Guru Nanak and it contains an apotheosis of Baba Sri Chand and states that he was an incarnation of God, and the only true successor of Guru Nanak.

There is a controversy about the dates in which Anandghan wrote the different exegeses. Rattan Singh Jaggi taking clue from the

135 Taran Singh, op. cit., p. 93; Harbans Singh (Editor-in-Chief), The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1997, pp.119-120.
136 'Of his works, a manuscript containing commentaries on Japuji, Aarti, Siddha Gosti and Anand is preserved in the Punjab State Archives, Patiala, under no. M/691. The manuscript is divided into two parts—the first comprising 228 folios contains commentaries on Japu and Aarti and the second comprising 112 folios contains commentaries on Siddha Gosti and Anand. Another manuscript copy of these four Tikas is also available in the Languages Department Punjab, Patiala. These four commentaries were, according to internal evidence, written at Kashi between 1795 A.D. and 1802 A.D. Anandghan’s Tika or commentary on Asa ki Var, references to which occur in his commentaries on Siddha Gosti (1857 Bk/AD 1800) and Anand (1859 Bk/AD 1802), was held at the Dr. Balbir Singh Sahitya Kendra at Dehradun, and has recently been published (1990) by Punjabi University, Patiala. The only known manuscript copy of his sixth commentary Onkar was available at the Sikh Reference Library, Amritsar, until the collection perished in the army attack on Golden Temple premises in 1984.' Ibid., p. 120.
couplets written towards the end of each exegesis by Anandghan himself has given the dates, which are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Composition</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japuji</td>
<td>Samvat 1852/ 1795 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aarti</td>
<td>Samvat 1853/ 1796 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onkar</td>
<td>Samvat 1854/ 1797 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asa ki Var</td>
<td>Samvat 1854-1856/1797-1800 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siddha Gosti</td>
<td>Samvat 1857/ 1800 A.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Samvat 1859/ 1802 A.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Taran Singh, the date of completing the exegetical work by Anandghan is as 1825 A.D. Govindnath Rajguru writes in his work that Anandghan finished the writing of exegetical literature in 1750 A.D. He provides the details as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Composition</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aarti</td>
<td>Samvat 1853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japuji</td>
<td>Samvat 1854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anand</td>
<td>Samvat 1857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siddha Gosti</td>
<td>Samvat 1859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, he has given two dates of Anandghan’s completing his work of exegesis which is 1750 A.D. and 1802 A.D. Anandghan was a great scholar of Advaita Vedanta and well versed in Puranic literature. He made exegesis of Gurbani under the influence of Advaita philosophy. He frequently used the texts of Agamas and the Tantras to support his

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139 Taran Singh, op. cit., p. 93.
viewpoint. Rattan Singh Jaggi gives a list of forty-five Scriptures for which Anandghan gave references in the course of exegetising for Gurbani compositions.\textsuperscript{141} Mostly, he used the examples from the Hindu Scriptures like Puranas, Upanishads, Gita, etc. In his ideology, he stressed upon the point that the Gurbani and the Vedas are not different from each other, they are ideologically similar. He used Sadh-Bhasha and mostly adopted oral style of exegesis in which dialogue, question-raising forms, etc., was used to make clear the meanings of difficult words. He gave a new idea that Japuji concludes at the twenty-fifth stanza and the remaining portion is its summary.\textsuperscript{142}

**Basic Principles of Anandghan’s Ideology**

**Nature of God**: God is above the three Gunas, i.e., Sattava, Rajas and Tamas. He has no form, shape and colour. God is truth and His Divine Name is also truth. Anandghan says that all the other worldly names are false but the only Name of Divine Lord is true. The recitation of any of His Names and His various incarnations are helpful in the attainment of emancipation.\textsuperscript{143

\textsuperscript{141}“अर्थात् उने दी तीकाकरणें दें दूर्दृष्टियों के दिया अधिकार उनका चल संक्षेप है। हृदय मेहमद मिलकरे दें जीवन किरण योग नहीं है। उनके अतिरिक्त उनकी श्रद्धा उनके भक्ति से। आजम के उन्हें दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के श्रद्धा उनके भक्तियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टि जीने में है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टियों के दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर्दृष्टि है। हृदय में आजम के उनके दूर
d

\textsuperscript{142} Taran Singh, op. cit., p. 114.

\textsuperscript{143} Rattan Singh Jaggi, op. cit., p. 105.
Realization of God: According to Anandghan, there are three ways to realize God. The first way is the knowledge about the individual soul that internal soul is not different from the sacred soul. The second way is to feel God in every part of the world; in other words the omnipotence of God. The third and last way is the duty of desire-less actions. Means one should do his duty honestly and the rest part depends on God only. It is in the hands of God whether He gives the desired result or not.144 Anandghan says that our materialistic desires and doubts regarding the Will of God are the primary hindrances in our way to God realization. He further says that after the realization of the Ultimate Reality all materialistic desires are destroyed and ultimately the man becomes altered with God.

Jiva and Brahmn: Regarding the relation of Jiva with Brahmn, Anandghan had adopted the theory of Advaita Vedanta. He says Brahmn is Satt, Chitt, and Anand is Nirguna and Sarguna also. He is one, Satnam, Karta-Purakh, Nirbhao, Nirvair, Akal Muratt, Ajuni, Sayi Bhang. But on the other hand the reality of Jiva is not true as far as its originality is concerned. In this illusion of ignorance, the Guru played an important role. In fact, the Guru is the only medium by which one can enlighten his path of life.145

144 Ibid., pp. 113-122.
145 Taran Singh, op. cit., p. 103.
**Guru and Gurbani:** According to Anandghan Veda is the Eternal Sabad and the Gurbani is also Eternal form of Sabad. The Vedas are the true utterances of God Himself but Sabad is not our Guru. In fact, at various places Anandghan stressed that without the Guru the attempt to understand the Sabad is a cardinal sin. This is the main reason that is why Anandghan emphasized the need of human Guru.\(^{146}\)

**Law of Karma:** Anandghan’s law of Karma says that we are rewarded for our good deeds and punished for our evil deeds. Our present deeds decide our future events, whatever we do is because of our past actions. Only our good deeds and desire-less actions can attain us the path of salvation.\(^{147}\)

**Will of God:** Will of God, Hukam, is identified with the wisdom and Word of God. The Will of God is in fact the Divine Law which regulates the destiny of the whole creation and the created beings and is also responsible for their very existence.\(^{148}\)

To sum up, it can be said that the technique of Anandghan’s writing commentary is like a symposium in itself. Wherever an important point has to be explained, he follows the question-answer format. He was well conversant with the tools of exposition, and writes with conviction. The commentary on Japuji made by Anandghan is considered to be his

\(^{146}\) Ibid., p. 105.  
\(^{147}\) Ibid., p. 107.  
\(^{148}\) Ibid., p. 109.
masterpiece and a representation work of the Udasi School. His exegetical works reveal his vast learning and knowledge and he owns an important place in the history of Sikh exegetical literature.

**Nirmala Parnali (School)**

The word ‘Nirmala’ is derived from the Sanskrit term ‘Nirmal’, which means spotless, unsullied, pure, bright, etc.\(^{149}\); and the term ‘Nirmala’ is the name of a sect of Sikhs, primarily engaged in religious study and preaching. The members of the sect called Nirmala Sikhs or simply Nirmalas.\(^{150}\) 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 a celibacy for the study of Sanskrit. These five are known to be Nirmalas in the Sikh history.’\(^{151}\)

Giani Gian Singh discussed in the ‘Nirmal Panth Pradeepka’ that the disciples of Guru Nanak who had led the lives of householders, following his teachings, were known as Sikhs or Gurmukh; and on the other side those who discarded the householder’s life and remained detached from the worldly affairs, were called Nirmalas. Giani Gian Singh further says that when the tenth Guru, originated the Khalsa Panth, the three groups of people were originated under the influence of predominant Gunas, i.e. Rajas, Tamas and Sattava.


\(^{150}\) Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

\(^{151}\) Kahan Singh Nabha, *op. cit.*
(a) Those Sikhs in whom Sattava Gunas predominated were called Nirmalas;

(b) Those Sikhs in whom Rajas Gunas predominated were householders; and

(c) Those in whom Tamas Gunas predominated became Nihangs.¹⁵²

According to Mahant Ganesha Singh, majority of the scholars quote those lines where the term ‘Nirmala’ or ‘Nirmal’ occurs in the Guru Granth Sahib as well as in the compositions of Bhai Gurdas, Gurbilas Patshahi Chevai, Janam Sakhis, Suraj Parkash, Guru Panth Parkash, Sarbhloh Parkash, etc. Some examples of these verses are as follows:

\[
\text{Day and night keep thou me fresh and immaculate and allow me not ever to be soiled with sins.} \quad ¹⁵³
\]

\[
\text{Tinctural with Lord’s love in the saints guild, O Nanak, he becomes pure.} \quad ¹⁵⁴
\]

\[
\text{Stainless are they, who are imbued with God’s Name. I am ever a sacrifice unto them.} \quad ¹⁵⁵
\]

**Important Features of Exegetical Works of Nirmalas**

**Style of Interpretation in Question-Answer Format:** This style of interpretation was used by the Udasi sect of the Sikhs. The Nirmalas also followed the same style of interpretation. In fact, at the end of their interpretation, they themselves raised questions and in order to remove

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the doubts they gave answers to those questions. They narrated the
Sakhis, sacred stories, and relevant passages in the interpretation of
Gurbani.

**Format of Polysemous Meanings:** The usage of polysemous meanings
in their interpretation is the common format followed by the Nirmalas.
The Nirmalas preferred to give more than one meaning of the simple
words as well as for the difficult words. The appliance of the polysemous
meanings in their format of interpretation is considered to be the sign of
erudition. The Nirmalas employed Sadh-Bhasha, the language of the
saints, in their exegetical works.

**Format of Vedantic Interpretation of Gurbani:** Like the Udasis, the
Nirmala scholars were equally inclined towards the Vedantic
interpretation of Gurbani. They maintained that the Gurbani was
essentially an expression of the Vedic teachings in the current vernacular
language. As an example, Vedantic influence can be seen in the
commentary of Japuji Sahib by Santokh Singh, an eminent scholar of
Nirmalas. He frequently employed the Puranic myths and examples from
the Vedas to make a point. The interpretation of Karta Purakh from the
Mul Mantra can be seen for an example.

The scholars like Bhai Santokh Singh, Pandit Tara Singh
Narotam, Bhai Dal Singh Giani, Giani Gian Singh, Pandit Gulab Singh,
Sadhu Gurdit Singh, Sant Sampuran Singh and Sant Nirankar Singh, all
were interpreting Gurbani from the perspective of Nirmalas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. But in the present study considers the exegetical works of only two prominent scholar of Nirmalas, viz. Pandit Tara Singh Narotam and Bhai Santokh Singh.

**Salient Features of Pandit Tara Singh Narotam’s Exegetical Works**

Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, a renowned scholar of the Nirmala School, was born in the village of Kalma, near Qadian, in Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Sant Gulab Singh initiated him into the Nirmala order and taught him the Sikh texts. For further studies, Tara Singh first went to Amritsar and then to Kashi (Varanasi). There he learned Sanskrit and Vedic literature. He wrote continuously for about thirty years from 1861 to 1891 A.D. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, lists his following writings along with their dates of publications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Composition</th>
<th>Year (Bk/AD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mokhpanth da Tika</td>
<td>1922/1865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sartaru Kosh</td>
<td>1923/1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurmat Nirnay Sagar</td>
<td>1934/1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akalmurat Pradarshan</td>
<td>1935/1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guru Vanshter Darpan</td>
<td>1935/1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tika of Japuji, Rehras, Sohila and Sabad Hazare</td>
<td>1936/1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagat Bani Tika</td>
<td>1939/1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gur Tirath Sangrhai</td>
<td>1940/1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Raga Tika</td>
<td>1942/1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gur Girarath Kosh</td>
<td>1946/1889</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Rattan Singh Jaggi gives the number of his writings as thirteen;\textsuperscript{158} Mahant Gurdip Singh gives his published works as nineteen, besides a few unpublished ones.\textsuperscript{159} Shamsher Singh Ashok numbers his compositions as twenty-one.\textsuperscript{160} It is also said that he wrote a commentary on the entire Guru Granth Sahib which seems to have been lost.\textsuperscript{161}

The works of Pandit Tara Singh Narotam can be divided into four categories—exegetical, lexicographical, theological and doctrinal. In his exegetical and doctrinal writings, he conforms to the Nirmala School of interpretation, presenting Sikh thought from his Vedantic orientation. The exegetical portion of his writings includes the various exegeses like Mokhpanth Da Tika, Bhagat Bani Tika and Sri Raga Tika. It is said that he was the first scholar of his times, who desired to make a complete exegesis of Guru Granth Sahib but it was not gained till now. The lexicographical portion includes Gur Girarath Kosh and Surtaru Kosh. The theological section includes Guru Vanshtar Darpan and Gur Tirath Sangrahi and the last doctrinal section includes Gurmat Nirnay Sagar.

**Unitary Forms of Exegesis:** Narotam stresses on the unitary forms of exegesis. Its example can be seen in his definition of Tika. Tika means

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 22.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 35.
\textsuperscript{161} Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 315.
explanation of the original text in such a way that the whole of text may appear as a united whole and its parts are linked with one another.\textsuperscript{162} He further says that a Tika is of two types; Pinjka and Apinjka.

**Modern Intellectual Consciousness:** The modern intellectual consciousness is explicit in his style of exegesis of Gurbani. In his explanations of Japuji Sahib, he explained each and every line of the text in relation to the central idea of the composition.\textsuperscript{163}

**Influence of Vedic Philosophy:** The influence of Vedic philosophy can be seen commonly in his entire exegetical works. In his Tikas, Narotam quotes various examples from the Vedas, the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the other Hindu Scriptures to prove his point of view.\textsuperscript{164}

**Dissimilarities with Sikhism:** Pandit Tara Singh Narotam was an eminent scholar of the Nirmala School of interpretation but on the other hand he gives some non-acceptable ideas, which are contrary to Sikh ideology. In Bani Bhagatan Satik, he says that while editing the Guru


\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., pp. 2-16.
Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev himself composed it. At another place he describes Guru Nanak as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. In Gurmat Nirnay Sagar, Narotam writes that the learned people can correct Bani wherever the word Sudh-Kichai (सुध कीचाई) is written in the Guru Granth Sahib.

**Format of Question-Answer Style:** Like other Nirmala scholars, Narotam also used the technique of question-answer format. The best example of his style can be seen in the Tika Sri Rag, in which he considers the interpretation of the Gurbani as his first responsibility towards God. In his question-answer format he raises various questions to clarify doubts concerning the nature of Gurmat. He says that a learned interpreter of Gurbani can attach several meanings to a single line in the course of his explanation.

To sum up, it can be said that “Tara Singh Narotam was a great scholar of spiritual and cultural heritage of India. A point which negates his contribution in the modern period is that he used difficult diction for which a common man is unable to make use of it but his

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166 “भव हरा श्रेष्ठ बुध है जिस में भगवान गुरु है तथा जिसके जिस रूप में भगवान बुध है जिस के जिसके जिस में भगवान बुध है।” Ibid.
168 “सुध: सुध रथ में जिस में भगवान बुध आज्ञा, तथा जिसका जिस रूप में भगवान बुध है जिस के जिसके जिस में भगवान बुध है।” Ibid.
works are of great scholarly merit and will continue to encourage the coming generations of the scholars to work honestly in this field.”

**Salient Features of Bhai Santokh Singh’s Exegetical Works**

Bhai Santokh Singh, a poet and a historian, was born on October 8, 1787 in village Nurdin, also known as Sarai Nurdin, Seven kilometers northwest of Tarn Taran in Punjab. His father sent him to Amritsar where he became a disciple of Giani Sant Singh, a renowned man of letters and custodian of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. He studied the languages of Sanskrit, Hindi, Punjabi and Vedanta under the guidance of Giani Sant Singh and became a great scholar of the ancient Indian literature. According to Piara Singh Padam and Taran Singh, he was sent to Amritsar as well as Kashi (Varanasi), where he completed his education in the field of Sanskrit, history, poetics, philosophy and mythology. According to Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha and Piara Singh Padam his writings are seven in numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Composition</th>
<th>Year (A.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namkosh or Amarkosh</td>
<td>1821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Gur Nanak Parkash</td>
<td>1823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbh Ganjini Tika</td>
<td>1829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmiki Ramayan</td>
<td>1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aatam Purana Tika</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Status of Guru: According to Bhai Santokh Singh, the person who destroys the darkness of illusion and shows you the right path is the true Guru. He adopts the Indian tradition the Word Guru is a term derived from two words Gu and Ru; the word Gu denotes the darkness of illusion and the word Ru designates the enlightenment. He says that Guru is the Eternal truth; the Divine utterance in the form of Bani is his medium of speech. He designates the status of Guru to Guru Nanak. He believes that the creator of Vedas is Guru Nanak.

Producer of Humanist Social Values: Bhai Santokh Singh was a producer of humanist social moral values. He never stressed on caste system. Even he adopted the theory of universal brotherhood, and universal humanitarian system. During his period of exegetical works he

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172 “धूप मैं मूरी स्तर लग कर, इंद्र निपे तकची मूरी स्तर। उस चपेटे पर शुरु स्निजें, स्तर तथे दिने दिन दिन खुशिपूल।” धूप मैं रात कर दिन दिन दिन। भिड़ भिड़ कर दिन। स्तर तथे दिने दिन दिन खुशिपूल।


175 (ii) “सरिता शीर्षी में सच्चाई भो, कवि जी जी सच्चा बेद जी मुदी जी जी भवय भागये।” *Ibid.*, Pauri 7, p. 54.


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had never discussed the racialism or sectarianism. This proves his transparency towards his work.\textsuperscript{176}

**Influence of Advaitvada:** Like Anandghan, Bhai Santokh Singh was also influenced by Advaitvada. He describes Guru Nanak as an incarnation of God. According to him, Satnam is the best way to attain salvation; and the true form of salvation means liberation from transmigration.\textsuperscript{177}

**Concern for the Right Interpretation:** He was quite dissimilar as compared to Anandghan. It is a well-known fact that he pointed out to some grammatical errors in the commentary of Japuji made by Anandghan. According to Taran Singh, this is believed to be the most authentic reason for the creation of Garbh Ganjini Tika. While expressing his protest against him for using wrong interpretation of particular words of Bani, he snubs Anandghan very authoritatively.\textsuperscript{178}

**Tried to Reach on Final Meanings of the Terms:** Bhai Santokh Singh says that his purpose of exegesis is to manifest the ideology of Guru Nanak. In his exegetical works, he is trying to reach on final meanings of

\textsuperscript{176} Piara Singh Padam, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{177} ‘ने अपने संपादन में भाई संतोख सिंह उनके लिए निषेध किया था, फिर उन के भव्य भाषणों का उपयोग किया था। भाई संतोख सिंह, *Sri Japu Sahib Steek Garbh Ganjini Tika*, Pauri 24; Taran Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

the terms.\textsuperscript{179} For the consideration of his views he used questions and while clarifying those questions he resolves the problems.

\textbf{Usage of Prosodic Ornaments:} Bhai Santokh Singh made a distinction by using a variety of prosodic forms and words in his exegetical works. In fact, by using the prosodic forms of poetry, he conveyed his message more successfully.\textsuperscript{180}

\textbf{Arrangement of Different Patterns in Interpretation:} In his interpretation, he gives every possible meaning of the words. We find him giving two, three and sometimes four and even five meanings of the word and line. In the case of the word ‘Nirbhau’ in the Mul Mantra, he gives two meanings: (i) fearless, who is not afraid of anyone; (ii) one who is beyond birth and death. As the word ‘Bhau’ in Nirbhau denotes this world of birth and death. Sometimes, he tells that both the meanings are equally correct, but sometimes he maintains that although the word has two meanings, yet one meaning is better than the other.

It can be said that Bhai Santokh Singh was a great scholar of Sikhism having spiritual and mystical insight. He was a well-known scholar of prosodies, as well as of Sanskrit and Braj languages. His compositions and commentaries are said to be the milestone for the coming generations.

\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., p. 124.

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., pp. 124-129.
Giani Parnali (School)

The term ‘Gian’ is derived from the Sanskrit term Jnana which means knowledge, understanding or consciousness. The nature has not only provided man with a qualitatively superior brain but has also endowed human mind with a dynamic inner stimulus called Jagiysa (जगियसा)—desire to know and inquisitiveness. Similarly, the Punjabi word ‘Giani’ is derived from the ‘Gian’, i.e., knowledge or spiritual understanding. A Giani is one who is fully enlightened, i.e., who has deep spiritual knowledge. In the Guru Granth Sahib, the Gianis and Brahmgianis are accorded high praise. The ‘Giani’ is such a person who always stands for truth and remains detached from worldly temptations while still living in this world.

*The divine scholars know nothing but truth; as they obtain true understanding.*

*Led astray by another, they go not astray.*

*They know the True Lord.*\(^{181}\)

*He who is a divine is on the alert. The agnostic acts blindly.*\(^{182}\)

*Within the mind of the God-conscious beings is enshrined the Guru’s word and they ever, and always bloom in their Lord’s love.*\(^{183}\)

The Gianis are traditional interpreters of the Guru Granth Sahib and are also called the Sampardai Gianis. The term ‘Sampardai’

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\(^{181}\) *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 425.


means the follower of a class of teachers from the old tradition or a class which follows the preachings of their Gurus. 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. According to Kirpal Singh, in 1708, before leaving Damdama Sahib for the south, Guru Gobind Singh appointed Baba Deep Singh at Damdama Sahib and Bhai Mani Singh at Amritsar to continue the tradition of teaching Gurbani meanings in daily congregation. At Amritsar, Bhai Mani Singh made a practice of performing Katha, i.e., discussion on the Sikh teaching expounding a given Sabad with illustration from the lives of the Gurus and their disciples. This style became, in course of time, an established form for religious interpretation of the sacred text.

The followers of Baba Deep Singh and Bhai Mani Singh have carried the tradition of exegetising the Gurbani on the same line as described by Guru Gobind Singh. Bhai Mani Singh was survived by three exceptionally brilliant disciples, named as, Bhai Diwan Singh, Bhai Gurdial Singh and Bhai Gurbaksh Singh, who carried on the scholarly tradition, he had established. They had their own pupils who in turn

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trained their own disciples like 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 Bhagwan 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. Through this chain of pupils, the Giani or Sampardai has lasted to this day.

**The Characteristics of Interpretation of Giani or Sampardai Parnali**

On the doctrinal level as compared to the other Parnalis’ 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 they believe in the Hindu system of Varna Ashrama.

The Gianis (Sampardai Parnali) have been the most proficient exponents of the philosophy and ideology of the Guru Granth Sahib. Very valuable contribution in the field of Sikhism 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), Pandit
Narain Singh Giani (1940), Akali Nihal Singh (1938), Bhai Vir Singh (1957), and Bhai Kirpal Singh (1976), 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. But the present study takes up only the exegetical works of Bhai Mani Singh for consideration.

**Salient Features of Bhai Mani Singh’s Exegetical Works**

Bhai Mani Singh was a great scholar and martyr of the eighteenth century in the history of Sikhism. There are so many views regarding the birth place, caste and the details of his martyrdom. According to Taran Singh, Bhai Mani Singh was born in 1701. He came in contact with Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru, in 1714, when his father came at Kiratpur Sahib to see the Guru. Bhai Mani Singh accompanied seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth Guru with his true devotion and service. Bhai Mani Singh was also known as second Bhai Gurdas. At the age of thirty-five he was very much interested in writing scripts as well as literary manuscripts. This was his creative thrust which made him expert in copying the manuscripts of Guru Granth Sahib. He was counted among the fifty-two learned scholars at the court of tenth

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187 Bhai Vir Singh (ed.), *Sikhan Di Bhagatmala*, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1955, p. 3.
Guru.\textsuperscript{189} In the Sikh tradition, Bhai Mani Singh gained the place of an influential active leader. The secret of his influence with the Sikhs in a generation which had great faith in Guru Gobind Singh was his close association with the Guru, which sanctified his interpretation of the Master’s mission.\textsuperscript{190} All his writing works comprised the Pothis of Guru Granth Sahib, compilation and editing of Dasam Granth. His writings which are popularly associated with his name are Gian Ratnavali, Gur Bilas Patshahi Chhevin, Sikhan Di Bhagatmala and Sri Guru Sabad Siddhi.

**Art of Exegesis:** Bhai Mani Singh was considered an authority in the field of interpretation. His commentary on Japuji is believed to be the excellent work in hermeneutics. The simplicity, conciseness, unambiguousness, firmness, awareness, etc. are some of the salient features of his art of exegesis. The Tika of Japuji laid down by him was a commentary as per the guidelines made by Guru Arjan Dev. In the tradition of Giani or Sampardai School, no one can make such type of commentaries till today.\textsuperscript{191}

**Provided Solution to Controversies:** Bhai Mani Singh also makes clarification where Gurbani may seem contradictory. For example, a few Sikhs came to Guru Arjan Dev and requested him that it is written in Gurbani that man cannot do anything rather God alone is the doer and


\textsuperscript{191} Taran Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
at other places it is written that a man reaps the fruits of his own deeds. Through the medium of Sakhis Bhai Mani Singh solves such controversial problems in his commentaries.192

**Descriptive Mode of Exegesis:** The commentary titled ‘Sikhan Di Bhagatmala’ is the independent exegesis of Bhai Gurdas’ eleventh Var. Through the medium of Sakhis, the various contemporary Sikhs of the Gurus are discussed in this commentary. The usage of descriptive modes for exegesis can be seen among the Sakhis. The main purpose behind the descriptive mode in the Sakhis is not only to describe the historical aspect of the contemporary Sikhs but also to elaborate the ideology of the Gurus as being interpreted in the real lives of the Sikhs.193

**Creative Mode of Exegesis:** Another significant characteristic of his commentaries is that he uses his creative energy in such a way that the reader feels the reality of the events. Bhai Mani Singh used the tools in his exegetical works as if he is psychologically trying to convince the reader. The mixture of descriptive and elaborative tools with dramatic modes creates the scene as it is original and real.194

**Mixture of Various Languages and Dialects:** Bhai Mani Singh used various languages such Punjabi, Braj, Persian and dialects of Persian words in his works. Except the dialects of Persian language, the mixture

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192 Bhai Vir Singh (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.
of Punjabi language with Lehndi Punjabi, Gurmukhi, and Sadh Bhasha can be seen in his exegetical works.195

Use of Elaborative Techniques: His interpretation is unique in itself because of the use of elaborative techniques. His main purpose is to explain the difficulties of mystic words in their easiest form. Probably, the tradition of elaboration of mystic words had started from the time of Gurbani revelation.196

Lexicon of Metaphysical Knowledge: Parmarthas and Tikas are two major techniques of interpretation in Punjabi language. In the words of Rattan Singh Jaggi, ‘...in these Parmarthas and Tikas, the feature of metaphysics, scholarly study and unambiguousness are almost finished’. But these features can also be easily seen in the exegetical works of Bhai Mani Singh. Thus, the exegetical works of Bhai Mani Singh can be said the lexicon of metaphysical knowledge.197

Bhai Mani Singh gave us a systematic exposition of Sikh principles through the medium of Sakhis. As the originator of the Giani or Sampardai School of Gurbani he continued his style of Gurbani exegesis which was taught by Guru Gobind Singh himself.

Singh Sabha Parnali (School)

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195 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
197 Ibid., pp. 80-81.
In the second-half of the nineteenth century the Indian society was in a state of flux. The influx of Christian missionaries and the spread of Western culture and education posed a serious challenge to the age-old customs, beliefs and traditions. In fact, they attacked the socio-religious institutions of the Indians and condemned them as false and primitive.\textsuperscript{198} Not only this that they denounced the heathen Scriptures; like Quran, Shastras and Adi Granth Sahib rather they condemned those as false guides in morals and religious pursuits. They also condemned the Bhagats, Sufis, Sadhus and Mahants.\textsuperscript{199}

The ferment of Western ideas was fully at work and most of the Indian communities, including Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were gradually coming under its influence. It was essential for the Sikhs to understand and solve their problems in the light of the changed social reality. A new association which came into being in July, 1873 was given the name of Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Amritsar. 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.\textsuperscript{200}

Without going in deep details, it can be said that the Singh Sabha leaders aimed at providing such education to the Sikhs as it would not

\textsuperscript{199} Johan Clark Archer, \textit{The Sikhs}, Princeton, 1946, p. 266.
only make them better fitted for the struggle of life but by infusing the religious spirit of the Khalsa, would also make them better Sikhs.\textsuperscript{201} The propagation current knowledge, Punjabi as a medium of education, magazines and newspapers, editing and publishing historical and religious books is some of the important objectives of the Singh Sabha Movement. Bhai Vir Singh, Principal Teja Singh, Professor Sahib Singh, Mohan Singh Diwana, Sher Singh, Professor Ganga Singh and Hazara Singh Sodhi are important scholars of Singh Sabha Movement.

**Features of Bhai Vir Singh’s Exegetical Works**

Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), a poet, scholar and exegete, was a prominent figure in the Sikh renaissance and in the movement for the revival and renewal of Punjabi literary tradition. His identification with all the important concerns of modern Sikhism was so complete that he came to be canonized as Bhai, the Brother of the Sikh order, very early in his career. For his pioneering work in its several different genres, he is acknowledged as the creator of modern Punjabi literature.\textsuperscript{202} Born in December, 1872, in Amritsar, Bhai Vir Singh was the eldest of Dr. Charan Singh’s three sons. Dr. Charan Singh was a man of letters, the author of two dozen books. He was a scholar of Sanskrit, Braj, English and Persian languages. He was an active member of the Singh Sabha, a socio-religious organization created to spread education and

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enlightenment among the Sikhs, and arranged poetic symposiums in Amritsar.

Bhai Vir Singh grew up in this atmosphere, charged with religious fervour and a desire for learning. Bhai Vir Singh received his early education in Sikh Scriptures from his maternal grandfather, Bhai Hazara Singh. Bhai Vir Singh, while still at school used to help Bhai Hazara Singh in the translation of books into Punjabi. Bhai Vir Singh passed his matriculation examination in 1891 from Church Mission School, Amritsar. His early education in a Christian school left its stamp on him. After turning down the offer of a government job, Bhai Vir Singh got busy with the establishment of a printing press, and thus the Wazir-e-Hind Press, Amritsar came into being. He plunged into his writing work and started a series of religious tracts in 1893. In the following year, he established the Khalsa Trust Society, under whose auspices 1300 issues of Nirguniara have been published. As his work was not enough to satisfy his zeal for the spread of education and enlightenment among the Sikh community, he started a weekly, the Khalsa Samachar in 1899. By this time, he had also published his first two novels, i.e., Sundari and Bijay Singh, was busy in writing the third, Satwant Kaur. With his own

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printing press, he had no problem in maintaining a regular flow of tracts, special articles, poems, novels, and exegetic essays.\textsuperscript{204}

Besides a long list of literary writings, the following is the list of his writings which are concerned with the Sikh history and Gurbani exegesis i.e. Sri Guru Nanak Chamatkar, Sri Kalgidhar Chamatkar, Sant Gatha, Asht Gur Chamatkar, Varan Bhai Gurdas Steek, Sikhan Di Bhagatmala, Prachin Panth Parkash, Puratan Janam Sakhi, Sakhi Pothi, Guru Granth Kosh, Guru Partap Suraj Granth, Panj Granthi Steek and Santhiya Sri Guru Granth Sahib in 7 volumes.\textsuperscript{205}

**New Style, New Metres and Fresh Themes:** The credit of cleaning the ground for the appearance of the new poetry in Punjabi goes to Bhai Vir Singh, who dominated Punjabi literature for about half a century. The conventional metres in vogue were Dohira, Kabitt, Baint, and Deodh. It was he who experimented on new metres.

**Source of his Poetic Inspiration:** The mystic tradition of poetry is preserved by Bhai Vir Singh. In a mood of transcendent self-annihilation he realizes that it is his Divine Master who is the source of his poetic inspiration. God is the Eternal objective of his quest and he proves his love for Him in his writings.

**Deep and Divine Philosophy:** The word ‘Santhiya’ means surrender to God for the realization of Gurbani. But he adds additional meaning in

\textsuperscript{204} J.S. Guleria, *Bhai Vir Singh: A Literary Portrait*, National Book Shop, Delhi, 1985, pp. 3-20.

\textsuperscript{205} Harbans Singh, *Bhai Vir Singh*, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, 1972, p. 101.
the concept of Santhiya. He says that after leaving behind all the pre-doctrines, pre-biases one can also come in the shelter of the Eternal truth.\textsuperscript{206} His love for deep and Divine philosophy towards Sikhism can be seen in his explanation of the concept of Santhiya.

**Style of Exegesis:** About his style of exegesis, Bhai Vir Singh himself writes, ‘I have not gone after other exegetes and have followed Gurbani honestly. I have written only that which appealed to my mind, as the Guru’s own intent. Whenever I feel any difficulty I pray to God to show me the path.’\textsuperscript{207}

He explains the meanings of Gurbani in its whole context. He uses the method of interpreting the complete Sabad rather than the explanation of a single line. He brings so many correlated meanings in his commentaries for understanding the relevant meaning of Gurbani.\textsuperscript{208}

**Intuition of the Sabad:** Before the understanding of a Sabad in its eternal form; it is necessary to realize the intuition of the Sabad. Bhai Vir Singh says that the intellectual intelligence is not sufficient for the intuition of Sabad. In fact, proper meditation, i.e., Simran, innermost consciousness, self-realization and the foremost factor is the grace, i.e., Nadar of God is necessary for the intuition of Sabad.\textsuperscript{209}

**Meaning of Exegesis:** In his most popular exegetical work Santhiya Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he explains the meaning of exegesis. He says, ‘the exegesis is not an attempt to interpret the Gurbani; in fact, it is a form of


\textsuperscript{207} Bhai Vir Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

\textsuperscript{208} Taran Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

Bhashya, Parmartha, Parayaya, Kosh, Dharmartha also.’ He further defines his Santhiya as lessons, in fact, the lessons of learning. He gave the final form to the definition of exegesis by defining in such a scholarly way.\textsuperscript{210}

It can be concluded that the contribution and achievement of Bhai Vir Singh cannot be described in words only. He was not only an eminent poet and scholar but a great humanitarian. His exegetical works and novels played an important part in influencing and shaping the lives of many.

**Salient Features of Sahib Singh’s Exegetical Works**

Professor Sahib Singh (1892-1977) was born on February 16, 1892 in a Hindu family of village Tharpal\textsuperscript{211} in district Sialkot of undivided India. He was an exceptional grammarian, author and theologian. He took part in the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the twenties of the century. He was appointed as a joint secretary of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in 1921. Professor Sahib Singh was known for his wisdom and diligent pursuit of scholarship. Nearly fifty of his works were published between 1927 and 1977. These included exposition of several of the Sikh sacred texts and his monumental 10 volume commentary on Sikh Scripture, ‘Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan’, published during 1962-64. His most original and earlier work was Gurbani Viakaran, a textual grammar of the Guru Granth Sahib. No exegetical work since the publication of this book in

\textsuperscript{210} Taran Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-298.
\textsuperscript{211} Taran Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 349.
1932 has been possible without resort to the fundamental principles enunciated in it, especially those concerning the interpretation of vowel endings in inflexions of nouns and verbs. Sahib Singh made a notable contribution to Punjabi prose through his essays on moral and spiritual themes, religious philosophy and issues in history.

Sahib Singh wrote extensively in Punjabi, but most of his works have now been translated into English, Hindi and other prominent world languages. His published works are Sri Guru Granth Darpan, Nitnem Steek, Sukhmani Steek, Gurbani Viakaran, Jaap Sahib, Japu Ji Sahib Steek, Asa Ki Vaar Steek, Meri Jeevan Kahani, Bhagat Bani Steek, Slok Kabir Ji Steek, Slok Te Sabad Farid Ji Steek, Satte Balwand Di Var Steek, Siddh Gost Steek, Slok Guru Angad Sahib Steek, Bani Mahila 9 Steek, Life History of all Sikh Gurus, Bhattan de Savaiye Steek, Baramaha, Babania Kahania, Adi Bir Bare, Sikh Sidak Na Hare, Dharam Te Sadachar, Gurbani Te Itihaas Bare, Burayi Da Takra, Sarbat Da Bhala, Simran Diyan Barkatan and Sad Steek.

Concept of Rahau (Pause): According to Sahib Singh the Rahau contains the central idea which is widespread throughout whole of the Sabad. He has annotated whole of the Guru Granth Sahib under this assumption and has given the literal meaning thereof. He has placed the literal meaning of the line containing Pause or Rahau in the beginning though in the text it is in the end.\(^{212}\)

\(^{212}\) ‘अं हैं पूर्वांत नामीिक सिन्ध स्त्री हैं असे ‘रहाईट’ दिख ‘रहाईट’ हैं जी जेंचल विकाल मंशु वे सबको धे भलब बोधि तह। इंद्र हैं वहाँ दिक्का हुआ/जुआ भे अलक ती परिषों इंद्र मिशु तह जबेहे विद तुआ भान के परिलों जिपे जे असे गुंगाव तह।’ Taran Singh, op. cit., p. 354.
**Single Meaning for a Single Word:** Most of the exegetes give more than one meaning of a word or a line of Gurbani but Sahib Singh does not agree with these scholars. He established that one meaning can be approved for a single word or a single line and he did the same. He further says that the discovery of grammatical rules of Gurbani came to be recognized that more than one meaning cannot be credited to a word or a line.

**Pronunciation of Words:** Sahib Singh adopted the traditional pronunciation approach for the terms used within the Gurbani. He clearly mentioned the meaning and pronunciation of the difficult words of Gurbani. He says that the traditional pronunciation of the word ‘Mahla’ (महल) should not be considered as ‘Mahalla’ (महलल)’. Along with

213 ‘...ें, खदन ‘महल’ र ने ‘महलल’ दुर्घटना संस्कृत किया है, दिन र भगवान मार्वल दिया सप्ताह दी तिथि स्वत: स्वतः ‘महल’ की सिद्धिमल्य निर्देशन दी है; ते, अर्थ, महत्त्वपूर्ण दे संबंध दु: उद चेती नाटक र ही है। ते वे मह रं हरि, नदी महल गोता र हो दिया उद र वृंद दी तेन में दिया।

परिवार के महल दो वर्ग 4.। देखा समाहृत छुक्ति समाहरणी तरह ...

दुहिं निद्ध-रेखा ई दिन किसी ही बहीयी तुक हो आयण समझने तुक हे पद्धति आशी माली माने दी सिद्ध-रेखा दें दिति अद्वत वह सवार दो-सही नीं दे सवार हो दी सवार दे ‘उद’ दिया ज्ञात्य है तिन दी परिवारी धुत है ‘देखा समाहुत दुहिं समाहरणी तरह’। दिन र दो ‘पात्र 4’ है, ते ज्ञाती सी दो सवार की ‘पात्र 4’ दिति दी ज्ञात्य है। दुहिं-निद्ध महत्व दे माने दिया महल निर्देश है दिन दिया ‘उद’ का संवर ‘कार्पित’ तरह है, दिया ‘भलल’ तरह तरह। ... निर्णय जन दिति दुकुत सत्ता जिन्दा दे सत्ता हो; 6 वटे दो दी सिद्ध-रेखा हिंदू कर्म है–सिची नति महल 7 (खबर ‘महल’ दे मानी दिति ( ...))। दे खबर ‘महल’ हूँ ‘महल’ पहुँच तुम्हे दे खबर ‘मलल’ हूँ ‘महलल’ भुआत ती ही: प्रति, दिन उठा ‘मलल’ है ‘महलल’ हो दंड कंड ती ही साथीणे तुम्हे महल-दितिव देन सर, महल-दुःख का सिची बही भवन दितिव देने तो। हे। ‘भलल’ दे दुर्घटना ‘भलल’ तरह है, ते वे दिन दे बेती का संवेद खबर ‘भलल’ तरह तरह है। उद दिया, दिन दिया हुँ दिति ‘दुर्घटना’ है? खबर ‘महल’ निद्धा सिद्ध-रेखा दिति दी तरह है, बसी दिति की बही भवन दितिवहूँ है; निर्णयः–

1. बहीण ‘भलल’ दिया महल दिति नाके दवा भवनिया उदक।
2. ‘भलल’ मंत्रित वेदिका, अभि बाधादि न भलिति उदक।
3. बहा मु भल र भल ‘भलल’ दवा म भवन भवन।
4. ‘भलल’ धुननी भवनिया दवा भवन भुम।
5. ‘भलल’ मंत्रित निद्धा संदर्भ भवनिया।
6. भवनी ‘भरिक’ राजिये, ने दुष्कुँ लै देवी।
7. भवनु ‘भलल’ न ल भवनियें।

टेक्स्ट सबती घटी हड़न ‘भलल’ सं ‘भलल’ हुँ ‘दुःख’ उठा हड़न दे दे, निचे बैठ-सिजी झुक दिया खबर ‘भलल’ हुँ:-
these pronunciations he also elaborated the musical terms used in the Gurbani, e.g. meaning of Ghar, Chant etc.

**Usage of traditional punctuation:** Sahib Singh used the technique of traditional punctuation in his exegetics of Guru Granth Sahib. Some schools of interpretation used the pattern of traditional punctuation in their commentaries. Sahib Singh also follows the same method and gives commas, full-stops, etc., in his commentary. Sahib Singh makes the readers more illuminate by using the technique of punctuations. In fact, the convention of punctuations makes the interpretation more comprehensible and accurate.\(^{214}\)

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\(^{214}\) '... परिचित भं (गहुटी, लड़म, विलुट, भुटु भुटु भुटु) उपरिया दिख उं विद्वं विद्वं मानं, प्रतियां भं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दृवं दूर्देश्यें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें देशें
**Approach of a Grammarian:** It is a well-known fact he himself discovered the grammatical rules of Gurbani and in his exegesis he strictly follows these rules. He was convinced that like the rules of nature the language of Gurbani also follows the rules of grammar as any other
language of any time does. For the ease of readers he solves the grammatical problems along with the interpretation of a text.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 242-243.}

It can be said that the Singh Sabha Movement was a renaissance movement in the history of Sikhism. The exegetical works created by the scholars of this school clearly exhibit their attempt to bring out the original ideology of the Sikh principles. Singh Sabha scholars adopted an approach which was primarily guided by the scientific and rationalistic influence of Western education. Through this process of re-interpretation of the Sikh tradition they were able to produce detailed commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib from a purely Sikh perspective.

\textbf{Academic School}

“Sikhism is a religion with a message of hope and optimism. It does not regard this world as a place of suffering, and human birth as a punishment. Rather it is an opportunity given by God in His infinite mercy to practice righteousness and to realize one’s real identity with
Sikhism is the youngest and the most modern of the world religions. Being a practical religion having the whole humanity in view for its welfare and amelioration, it has been acclaimed by Bradshaw as the ‘Faith of the new Age’ and sumnum bonum for the modern man. It has made valuable contribution towards the uplift of man and society in almost all spheres.  

Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred religious Scripture of the Sikh tradition; along with the medieval valuable social and cultural text of India. Guru Granth Sahib is the Eternal source of ethics, moral and spiritual values. On the other hand, it gives a revolutionary effect by creating the revolutionary elucidation within the Gurbani. The ideology of Guru Granth Sahib supports those people suffered with the course of religious discrimination, economic exploitation, and social injustice.

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, Sikhism raises the serious issues of modernism, post-modernism, feminism, fundamentalism, orientalism, ecology, globalization,
secularism, subaltern studies, etc., amongst the Guru Granth Sahib Studies can be placed in line with the recent trends.

In the Academic School of interpretation the complete commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib can be placed. It is pertinent to note that these exegetical works have been made only on the academic level. Therefore, the following exegetical works and scholars can be placed in line of Academic School of interpretation. The translations of Guru Granth Sahib made by Ernest 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 can be named in complete and English exegetical works on Guru Granth Sahib. The commentaries on Guru Granth Sahib in Punjabi prepared by Pandit Narain Singh, Giani Bishan Singh, Prof. Teja Singh (Sabarath only), Bhai Vir Singh, Prof. Sahib Singh, Giani Kirpal Singh, Giani Mani Singh, Giani Harbans Singh, Sh. Chela Ram and Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi can be classified as 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.

**Traits of Gopal Singh’s Exposition**

Gopal Singh (1917-1990) an eminent Punjabi writer, poet, historian, journalist and critic, was born on November 29, 1917 in
Amritsar to a respected Sikh family of tradesmen. He did his M.A. in English at Khalsa College, Amritsar and for some time edited the weekly magazine ‘Mauji’. While working as a lecturer in D.A.V. and Khalsa Colleges at Rawalpindi, he began to take interest in politics and founded an English weekly paper ‘Liberator’. He was nominated by the Government of India to the India’s Parliament and India’s Ambassador abroad in Eastern Europe and South America.

Gopal Singh contributed to the Gurbani interpretation and Sikh history abundantly. In this field, his writings are Sri Guru Granth Sahib (English Translation) into 4 volumes, Thus Spake the Tenth Master, The Religion of the Sikhs and The History of the Sikhs. Gopal Singh was first Sikh annotator to complete the translation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib into English in 1960. It is believed that initially it was published in 2 volumes although the present publications are published in a four volume set. As the first English translation, it was eagerly welcomed both by the Sikhs and non-Punjabi readers, and received a wide distribution.

**Original Essence of Text:** Gopal Singh’s translation of Guru Granth Sahib is undoubtedly of high standard, as it preserves the essence and appeal of the original text. In his exegetical work, he explains the basic concepts of Sikhism in comparison with other Indian religions. Along with a successful translator he is also a profound interpreter. His marvellous command over the language can be seen from the following couplet:
The mighty sing of his might.
And the blessed of his light.
Some sing the maketh, given the sack.
He taketh life and giveth it back.\textsuperscript{218}

**Detailed Interpretation of Words:** Gopal Singh uses the elaborated method to interpret the Gurbani in his exposition, as can be seen of the word Onkar, Nam, Purakh, etc. He defines these words by giving the history of their meanings in other Indian religious systems and by elaborating their characteristic emphasis in the context of Gurbani.\textsuperscript{219}

**Comparative Approach:** In his interpretation Gopal Singh also follows the comparative approach in great detail to explain the meaning of the words as well as the fundamental concepts of Gurbani in footnotes as references. He has presented and explained Sikh religion in comparison


\textsuperscript{219} “Onkar” is the original word in the text. According to Swami Vivekananda, “Onkar is the most holy word of the Vedas”. A symbolic word meaning the Supreme Being, the Ocean of Knowledge and Bliss Absolute\textsuperscript{(Raja Yoga)}. A fuller definition of this word is given in Mandukopanishad: \textsuperscript{4}JksfeR:\textit{sn[k}ifen \textit{w}; Lo\textit{Za} r\textit{Lk}si\textit{O}:\textit{k}ua \textit{Hkwra Hko}\textit{E}nfo*:\textit{fnfr} Lo\textit{Zek}si\textit{K}j, o\textit{AA} ;PpkUJ=FD=kdykrhrna n\textit{Lk}si\textit{K}j, o AA ek, MW\textit{Dk}u\textit{k}n=AA “That which was, is, will be, is all Onkar. And that which triple time transcends is Onkar too.” (Verse 1); “Onkar” has also been used by the Sikh divine, Bhai Gurdas, in the meaning of Creator-Lord, which is that aspect of Godhead when He evolves out of His Absolute Self (Nirankar or the Formless aspect) to become a Creative Being:  \textit{S lrj?k}sj (Var 4). The figure ‘one’ appended to ‘Onkar’ does not merely signify God’s unity as against trinity, but also affirms His being a personality and not merely a Shunya (\textit{kwU};) or void. “Transcendent (\textit{F}, =izksa) Immanent(-\textit{Jwr, dk})”, suggests Kapur Singh; “The word in the text is Nam. Literally rendered, it would mean ‘The Name’ or spirit as opposed to Rup (Form). A full definition of the word can be found only in the Sikh Scripture itself, for its concept differs from the Vedic. It cannot be rendered merely as ‘logos’ (or the Word, the second person of Christian Trinity). Guru Nanak himself explains this term in the JAPU: ‘Jeta Keeta Teta Naon’, i.e., “as much He hath created that much is His Name”. The term has also been used to denote God, Word and the discriminating spirit (within). Etymologically, the word has a striking resemblance with the Greek ‘neumena’ or the Bright Essence as opposed to phenomena”; “Purkhu (lit. male person). In the Sankhya system of Hindu philosophy, Purusha (the Universal spirit), eternal, indestructible, all-pervasive, is without activity or attribute, and it is left to Prakriti (primal nature), itself an uncaused cause, and an ultimate principle, to bring the phenomenal world into being. But the Sikh doctrine, making use of word, emphasises Purusha being Himself the only Creator. As in the Sufi and Vaishnavic lore, He is the only He, His creatures being females longing to go out and Unite with Him”. Gopal Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Vol. I, Gur Das Kapur & Sons Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1960, p. 1.
with the Semitic and Indian religions. He quotes references from all the religions such examples can be seen in his commentary.\footnote{Cf. Al Quran: “When He decreeth a thing He saith unto it only: Be, and it is.” (Surah II, 117) Bhai Mani Singh interprets the phrase ‘Eko Kavao, as, One Onkar’. See also the Bible (St. John, IJ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. The meaning, therefore, is that the creation came into being through God’s Will (Word), p. 5; ‘Karma’ of the original text is the principle of causality in moral experience. Cf. “As fruit of good deeds done, promising men much profit in new births for works of faith.” (Bhagwad Gita), p. 2; “They who make their practice to consist of nothing else but sacrifice and public charity, win only for themselves the lunar world; these then return again.” (Prashanopanishad, I, 9). \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.}

**Formation of Words:** He had a mastery over the English language and was well-versed in western literature. He adopted free English verse style in his work of translation. At some places he explains the formation of English as well as Punjabi words grammatically.\footnote{सुपुरुष = सुपर+अतिर: also, the nectar (सुधा) word (सुधा), p. 253; सुपुरुष = सुधा+अति I.e. has learnt by rote (or heart), \textit{Ibid.}, p. 64.} This proves his sincere regard and deep scholarly interest towards his work.

**Explanation of Difficult Words:** In his translation of Guru Granth Sahib he explains the difficult or obscure words to enable the reader to understand the basic ideas enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib.\footnote{‘Sur-nar’ and ‘Muni-jan’ literally mean angelic men and sages (or men of silence) respectively. ‘Nara’ in Vishnu Purana is a creature with limbs of a horse and human body; ‘Dharmaraja’ or the lord of moral law, who awards punishment according to a human’s deeds recorded by his two angels- Chitra (or Chit, conscious), and Gupta (unconscious), \textit{Ibid.}, p. 8.} He explains the difficult words at the bottom of the page. Unlike Manmohan Singh he does not give the original Punjabi version along with the translation.

**Usage of Glossary:** At the end of each volume of his translation he mentioned a glossary for the understanding of technical terms used in
the Guru Granth Sahib. At some places he included brief historical reference\textsuperscript{223} for the proper understanding of a difficult term. The original page numbers of the Guru Granth Sahib have also been given in the translation.

**Basic Knowledge of Sikhism:** In the first volume of his translation, a detailed essay on Sikh philosophy follows the preface. It includes the concepts of Sikhism and the life of ten Gurus in an explanatory form.\textsuperscript{224}

**Fundamental Traits of Manmohan Singh’s Exposition**

Manmohan Singh (1896-1969), an advocate by profession, was born on June 1, 1896 in a middle class Jat Sikh family of village Mohie in District Ludhiana of Punjab.\textsuperscript{225} Manmohan Singh, a mystic, a man of vast, varied and deep learning, was eminent for his erudition. He attempted the exposition of Guru Granth Sahib for the first time both in Punjabi and English languages. Gurbani originally is composed in a poetical form. To translate poetical compositions in another language is not at all an easy job. Manmohan Singh’s work occupies a unique position among the work devoted to Gurbani exegesis.

**Translation-cum-Exegetical Work:** Manmohan Singh’s translation is the only exegetical work which gives Gurbani along with its English

\textsuperscript{223} The reference here is to Sulhi Khan’s beard. He, Akbar’s General, had sworn on his beard to dethrone Guru Arjun, the writer of this verse, and put in his place his elder brother, Prithi Chand (who swore greater allegiance to the king and was a rival claimant of the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak). Sulhi, however, got burnt by accident in a brickkiln and thus was his design on the Guru frustrated by God. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 191.

\textsuperscript{224} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. XXX-XLVIII.

translation and its exegesis in Punjabi language. He divided his each page of translation into three sections. He gives the original version of Gurbani into first section; in the second, translation of Gurbani into English language; and in the third and last section, Gurbani’s exegesis into Punjabi.226

**Direct and Devotional Style:** He has attempted the annotation and explication of Gurbani with great devotion and deep reverence. In his own words, “I have not adhered to the interpretation in conformity with the grammatical rules, or the principles enunciated in Sabadarath but have taken the simpler view in harmony with Sikh faith and tenets. It is a single-handed effort and attempt with no extraneous financial or scholarly help from any quarter.”227 He performed Ardas to invoke the blessings of God before commencing the printing of the first volume.

**Numbers for Difficult Words:** He has given the numbers almost on every difficult word and the literal meaning in both the languages carry the same number in the translation.228 Being a literal meaning of the word followed by spiritual sense it gives sufficient scope to the reader for understanding and to attempt his own interpretation without any external help like dictionary, encyclopaedia and any other commentary.

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226 ਲਾਲਾ ਹੀਰਾ ਮੇਰੈ ਸੇਵਕਰਪੁ || O Nanak! the carefree Master makes merry. \( \text{i.e.} \) ਲਾਲਾ ਭੀਰਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਭੀਰਾ ਹੀਰਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਭੀਰਾ \( \text{i.e.} \) \( \text{Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 3.} \)

227 \( \text{Ibid., p. II.} \)

228 ਲੇਖਣੀਲੀਲੀ ਲੇਖਨੀਲੀਲੀ \( \text{Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 4305.} \)

With thy eyes\( ^{32} \), see thou the vision\( ^{33} \) of the saints.

\( \text{ਅਧਿਕਾਰੀਵੇਂ ਲੇਖਣੀਲੀਲੀ ਸਰ, ਨੂੰ ਮੋਡੇ ਦਾ ਟੰਕਰੀਲੀ ਕੇਥੀ।} \) \( \text{Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 4305.} \)
**Glossary for Technical Terms:** Manmohan Singh appends the index with detailed discussion about the language and vocabulary used in the Guru Granth Sahib and other miscellaneous information in the form of glossary in the eighth and the last volume of his exegesis. In the first section, he provides the information about the philosophical, historical, geographical and cultural terms of contemporary Indian civilization. In the second section, he refers a source in the form of ‘Gur Sabad Rattan Parkash’ to locate any particular hymn or verse of Gurbani. The Raga-wise table of contents is also included in the last volume.

**Features of Gurbachan Singh Talib’s Exegesis of Guru Granth Sahib**

G. S. Talib (1911-1986) was an eminent Sikh scholar born in Munak, District Sangrur of Punjab. He had a brilliant academic and professional career. He has written or edited 8 books in Punjabi and 24 in English, besides producing a large number of research papers, articles and radio talks. His works are mainly concerned with the interpretation of Gurbani. Some of his books are Muslim League Attack on the Sikhs

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According to his own words, the task of compiling a new translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib was assigned to him in 1977 by Punjabi University, Patiala. He does include many useful footnotes, shedding some light on the teachings of Gurus.

**Rhythmic Structure:** G.S. Talib has made an attempt to render closely the original text in detail, taking into account the verbal nuances, the vision enshrined in it and the sensitive poetic features. Along with the features just mentioned, an unobtrusive rhythmic structure has been adopted for the translated text, to aid an emotional and imaginative

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235 “The present English translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib was called forth by a reiterated desire voiced over the years in the Syndicate of the Punjabi University that the University, equipped with a department devoted to the study of the holy Granth Sahib, its philosophy and other aspects related to the elucidation of its message, also undertake a new English translation of the sacred Volume. Such a translation was intended to serve as a definitive version for further renderings of the holy Book, complete or in parts, in other languages, Indian and foreign. It was felt that despite the existence of several English renderings from the Book, there was scope for a fresh attempt at presenting the volume in English, keeping the translation close to the original text in minute detail, of accuracy and as far as possible, of felicity. It was in this background that this undertaking was assigned early in 1977 to the present writer.” G.S. Talib, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (English Translation), Punjabi University, Patiala, 1984, Preface, p. xv.
approach to the original, which is meant to inspire and arouse the self to attempt to live the spiritual experience.

**Conceptual and Philosophical Terms:** In finding parallels for concepts and philosophical terms their signification in relevant philosophical systems is kept in view by G.S. Talib. He draws the terms from the Hindu, Yogic and other systems are given their corresponding parallels, which when necessary, are clarified in the footnotes. The footnotes touch upon the philosophical and linguistic issues involved, and make for greater clarity of understanding.

**Terms used for the God:** G.S. Talib uses the word Lord for the Supreme Being according to the context in his exegetical work. Original forms of the attributive names of God, whether from the Indian background or the Perso-Arabian are indicated and explicated in the footnotes wherever required by the context. The same is true of concepts. For the Guru and its synonyms Master, Preceptor and less often, Enlightener is used. His grasp over the Sikh teachings is very deep and penetrating and presentation retains the fervour and warmth of the original.

**Usage of Diacritical Marks:** His knowledge of Sanskrit, Punjabi, Hindi, Arabic and Persian is vast and deep. While making translation of Guru Granth Sahib, G. S. Talib wrote down the proper classical names and concepts. The system prevalent in Indian scholarship is partly adopted. Certain names like Rama, Krishna and Shiva are familiar to the scholars
of Indian religious thought. To omit their end-vowel would only create confusion. There is no fear of these names being pronounced as Ramā, Krishnā and Shivā. For the elongated ‘āh’ sound the diacritical sign as indicated here, is provided where necessary.

**Disapproval of Question-Answer Style:** The most prevalent style of interpreting the Gurbani was predominantly question-answer style. But Talib did not approve of it and says that it misses the essence of the problem; and instead only imposes a framework for which there is no warrant in the test as it stands in the Holy Granth.\(^{236}\)

**Disagrees with Intellectual Approach:** The revealed Word of Scripture cannot be fully understood intellectually. Like other scholars G. S. Talib agrees with this idea. He writes in the commentary of Japuji, “While the discursive intellect may attempt some idea of these in concepts, the symbolical language employed by the Guru is the only one in which they may be suggested and enter, though imperfectly, into the consciousness of the person trying to have some approach them.”\(^{237}\)

The purpose of every religious text is to explain the revealed Word to the common people. Various disciplines and schools of Gurbani interpretation emerged partly because of the differences in the philosophical outlook of the scholars, and partly because of the

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affiliations of the interpreters to different sects. However, all the exegetical writings succeeded to a certain extent for the relevant purpose, though all have own limitations and shortcomings as well.

Apart from the names of scholars mentioned above, the contribution made by Jagbir Singh, Joginder Singh Kairon, Gurbhagat Singh, Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Kapur Singh, Balbir Singh, Pashaura Singh, Devinder Singh Chahal, Bhagat Singh Hira, Jodh Singh, Manmohan Singh, Puran Singh, Rattan Singh Jaggi, Wazir Singh, Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Teja Singh, S. S. Kohli, Mohan Singh Diwana, Sahib Singh, Jodh Singh (Bhai), Taran Singh, Sohan Singh, Sher Singh, Joginder Singh and Khazan Singh through their works in context of Gurbani is no less important. Some prominent Sikh scholars like Gurbhagat Singh, Joginder Singh Talwara, Gulzar Singh Kang, Onkar Singh, and Vikram Singh are working continuously on the exegesis of Guru Granth Sahib. The scholars from every religion have applied their skills to understand the Eternal meaning of Gurbani. In fact, a number of interpretations have remained a part and parcel of Sikh tradition throughout its history. A search for the true meaning of Guru Granth Sahib would continue even in the times to come. The true meaning of a Scripture is the solid historical reality of the continuum of actual meanings over centuries to actual people. Thus, the real meaning of Gurbani is not any one meaning but it is a dynamic process of meanings in variegated and unending flow.