

Understanding Jap - 4 Jarnail Singh

In the first stanza of Jap Guru Nanak told us about and how to break open the cocoon of falsehood around us and see the light of truth. To be successful in this, it is imperative to eradicate the very rasion d'etre of this cocoon. This cocoon comes into existence as and when we surrender to the wishes of our mind. The only way to avoid this is to subjugate our mind to the wisdom of Guru or in other words to understand and accept the Hukam of God. In the second stanza Guru gave us his concept of Hukam and in this third stanza he continues to expatiate on this concept. The third stanza reads like this.

ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਤਾਣੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਕਿਸੈ ਤਾਣੁ ॥ ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਦਾਤਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਨੀਸਾਣੁ ॥
ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਗੁਣ ਵਡਿਆਈਆ ਚਾਰ ॥ ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਵਿਖਮੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥
ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਸਾਜਿ ਕਰੇ ਤਨੁ ਖੇਹ ॥ ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਜੀਅ ਲੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਦੇਹ ॥
ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਜਾਪੈ ਦਿਸੈ ਦੂਰਿ ॥ ਗਾਵੈ ਕੋ ਵੇਖੈ ਹਾਦਰਾ ਹਦੂਰਿ ॥
ਕਥਨਾ ਕਥੀ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਤੋਟਿ ॥ ਕਥਿ ਕਥਿ ਕਥੀ ਕੋਟੀ ਕੋਟਿ ਕੋਟਿ ॥
ਦੇਦਾ ਦੇ ਲੈਦੇ ਥਕਿ ਪਾਹਿ ॥ ਜੁਗਾ ਜੁਗੰਤਰਿ ਖਾਹੀ ਖਾਹਿ ॥
ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਚਲਾਏ ਰਾਹੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ ॥ ੩ ॥

Some are lyrical about your prowess
Wondering who else can match your prowess
Some are lyrical about your bounties
And see them as signature of your presence
Some are lyrical about your glories galore and virtues great
Some are lyrical about how hard and far and deep one delves to know you
Some are lyrical about how you create and destroy life
Some are lyrical about how you suck out and then breathe in life
Some are lyrical about your distance
Some are lyrical about your immanent presence
One may go on and on and on to describe you without an end
Millions have tried and tried but gave up at the end
The ever generous Lord keeps on giving to the point of satiation
Since ages and ages all are surviving on this generosity
O Nanak, the blithe God is carrying on this operation through his Hukam in blissful joy.

From day one, mankind is trying to capture God into some kind of theory. All religions and other schools of philosophical thought are, to say it in simple words, the products of this activity. Human psychology runs something like this. Whenever we come across something new, first of all we try to measure up its strength. If it is weak, we try to use it and if necessary don't even hesitate to kill it; if it is strong and powerful, then we start thinking about its usefulness and how and what we can get something out of it. If it is very useful and

powerful, then we start singing its praises and even deify it. We try to know more and more about it. This results in various theories that try to understand this new power.

Unfortunately, often those who chisel out these theories keep their own vested interests in mind. This is what has happened to God. As soon as mankind realized the existence of some power that operates this universe, it did not take it long to find that it is very powerful. Various theories about God mushroomed around the world; however as we see, more often than not, these theories do protect the vested interests of those who devised them or those who preached them across the globe.

In the first eight lines of this stanza Guru has mentioned these various theories about God. There is a very fine but extremely important difference between the way God has been described in these first eight lines and the way Guru has described God. And in the last six lines Guru gives his own view. In the first line Guru tells us that there are people who sing praise of God's unmatched powers. It is interesting to note that though various religions describe God as omnipotent or superpower, but when we go into the details of that religion or theory, we find that these powers are only superficial. In reality all the executive powers have been snatched by the priestly class and God in fact has been reduced to their subordinate. Another thing to note here that Sikhism does not describe God as a Superpower or as an Omnipotent entity, as this description inherently assumes that God does have some, though weak, opposition. God of Sikhism[1] does not have any opposition at all.

Instead, Sikhism has described God as Karta. Some people translate it as Doer or Creator. It is very difficult to translate this Punjabi word into English without losing some of its nuances. When ever we say creator or doer it implies some one who designs or makes something with material provided to him. However God does not rely on anyone to provide him with material, nor does he chisel something out of something. God causes everything to happen through Its Hukam. God does not design a rose flower with petals meticulously made in a factory, but causes the rose plant to bloom into flowers.

In the second line Guru tells us that there are people who relate God to the gifts they get from It. People start worshipping these gifts as souvenirs of God. This results in unnecessary attachment to the gift and detachment from God. Guru has warned us about this pitfall. Gurbani reiterates times and again that we should always keep in mind the God who provides for all that we have in this world. We will be failing in our duty if instead of God we start singing the praises of gifts we receive from God. Our love of these gifts should lead us to appreciate and praise God. There are two things that distinguish Sikhism from this approach. First, Sikhism declares unequivocally that all gifts come from

God. He is only giver. Secondly our love of the gift should not lead us to worship the gift; instead it should fill our heart with love for the giver.

ਦੇਸੀ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਬਾਹਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਉਪਾਈ ਮੇਦਨੀ ॥ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਆਪਿ ਧਣੀ ॥ ੧੦ ॥ GGS- Page 755, M 3
The one and only Giver is God who provides for every thing at this earth.

ਸਾਚੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਨਹੀ ਭਾਵੈ ਡੀਠਾ ॥ ਝੂਠ ਧੋਹ ਸਿਉ ਰਚਿਓ ਮੀਠਾ ॥

ਦਾਤਿ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਵਿਸਰਿਆ ਦਾਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਜਾਣੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਮਰਣੁ ਵਿਚਾਰਾ ॥ ੨ ॥ GGS- Page 676, M 5

Man does not like truth and feasts on falsehood, totally oblivious of his death; he adores the gift of worldly possessions so intensely that he has forgotten about the God who provided for all these gifts.

ਕੀਤਾ ਕਿਆ ਸਾਲਾਹੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਸੋਈ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨ ਪਵੈ ਜੇ ਲੋਚੈ ਕੋਈ ॥ GGS- Page 767, M 1

There is no point in singing praises of the things that God provides us with, appreciate God whose praises are limitless.

In the third line, Guru tells us that there are many who keep in singing praises of God enumerating its various virtues. This may look like the view of Sikhism. But we must remember that as per Sikhism it is impossible to count the virtues of God. In fact all virtues in this cosmos belong to God. Sikhism enjoins upon its followers to inculcate those virtues in their lives. Kabeer says it very beautifully

ਹਰਿ ਜਨੁ ਐਸਾ ਚਾਹੀਐ ਜੈਸਾ ਹਰਿ ਹੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ (GGS- Page 1372, Kabeer)

It is imperative that the servant of God be a replica of God.

In Sikhism, to inculcate the virtues of God is the only way to worship God. In Sikhism, the worship of God is not any kind of ritual to be performed in a temple, church, mosque or a gurdwara. To worship God is to cultivate the virtues of God in our life. Guru says later in Jap.

ਸਭਿ ਗੁਣ ਤੇਰੇ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਬਿਰ ਵਿਣੁ ਗੁਣ ਕੀਤੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

All virtues belongs to you, unless and until I cultivate those virtues in my mind, I can not be your devotee.

So, in Sikhism it is not enough to sing about the virtues of God, it is imperative that these virtues should become our way of life. This is the real worship of God.

In the fourth line, Guru tells us that there many out and about in this world who proclaim that concept of God is something extremely difficult to understand. They claim it to be very unintelligible, imperceptible and indiscernible; something that is beyond the reach of common man; something that we better leave for the special class of people to deal with. Guru has totally rejected this view in his writings. While God has been described as Agamm and Agaad, but God of Sikhism is still easily accessible and approachable. God is not an

intricate question of philosophy and life; It is some one who gently holds you by your finger and takes you out of the intricate problems of your life. God is like some one very deep and profound who befriends people from all walks of life and talks to them at their level with perfect ease about their problems. God has been described as a close friend at many places.

ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸਖਾ ਮੀਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੋ ਹੋਇ ਸਖਾਈ ॥ ੩ ॥ (GGS- Page 32, M 3)

God is my friend indeed and in need who helps me when I need help.

Sikhism says it in very unequivocal terms that it is not at all possible to know the infinite God in its entirety. That is why God has been called Aggamm and Aggaad. But that does not make God unapproachable or an intricate or convoluted problem of philosophy.

In the fifth and sixth line Guru tells us about people who praise God the way It creates and destroys life. God is the sole creator in this world. And all creations and destructions are carried out as per the eternal Hukam of God. Guru has explained the concept of Hukan in stanza 2 of Jap. God of Sikhism is not sitting somewhere in the skies or at any other place sending souls to this earth and then calling them back as per its wishes. All creation and destruction in this cosmos is happening as per the operation of Hukam of God. The birth and death of human beings is only a tiny part of this operation.

In the seventh and eighth line, Guru tells us that there are many who say that God is living very far away up above in the skies. And there are many who say that God lives very close to them, so much so that they can feel Its presence. There are many who claim to have seen God in person or claim that God visits them as and when they want God to do so. Guru brands these claims as nonsense.

ਕੋਈ ਬੋਲੈ ਨਿਰਵਾ ਕੋਈ ਬੋਲੈ ਦੂਰਿ ॥ ਜਲ ਕੀ ਮਾਛਲੀ ਚਰੈ ਖਜੂਰਿ ॥ ੧ ॥

ਕਾਂਇ ਰੇ ਬਕਸ਼ਾਦੁ ਲਾਇਓ॥ਜਿਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਓ ਤਿਨਹਿ ਛੁਪਾਇਓ ॥ ੧ ॥ (GGS – Page 718, Namdev)

Some claim that God is very far, others say God is very close. This is all nonsense. Truth is even those who have realized God, are unable to describe God.

It is important to note here that Sikhism describes God as

ਭਰਪੂਰਿ (Bharpuur). Once again it is very difficult to translate this word. It conveys the sense that the entire cosmos is filled up with God's presence.

ਤੂ ਭਰਪੂਰਿ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਮੈ ਦੂਰਿ ॥ (GGS- Page 25, M 1)

O God the whole universe is filled with your presence, I could not notice it.

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਜਲਿ ਥਲਿ ਭਰਪੂਰੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾਇ ॥ (GGS- Page 515 , M 3)

Wow! Everything is filled to the brim with your presence, one can know this only by following the Guru.

ਜਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਮਹੀਅਲਿ ਪੇਖੈ ਭਰਪੂਰਿ ॥ (GGS- Page 1340, M 5)

Every place in this universe is overflowing with God's presence.

In the last six lines of this stanza Guru gives his own opinion. Millions have tried to capture God into some sort of theory or explanation but gave up at the end. It is not at all possible to describe God in its totality. It is important to note here that there are people who have given accounts of God in very minute detail. In the preceding eight lines Guru refers to those people. We find extremely fine details of God in scriptures of other religions. There are details of Heaven and Hell. There are details about how and when God created this universe. There are details of what happens after death. There are details about the path and the difficulties on this path the dead person takes to reach God, heaven or hell. There are people who have devised tools to predict the next birth a person takes after death. There is a kind of hypocrisy in this exercise. On the one hand these people declare that God is a superpower, omniscient and omnipresent and on the other they claim to know everything about the way God works which means they are more powerful than God. That is the reason our Guru says that all this is useless exercise. All that we got to remember is that God has been operating this cosmos for millions of years through Its Hukam. Everything in this cosmos is surviving on Its generosity. God is never tired of this, and does this all in blissful joy and carefree way.

Notes

[1] When I say God of Sikhism, I do not mean that we have different Gods. All I mean is that the way Sikhism defines God is different from other religions.