

Mool Mantra: A Philosophical Interpretation

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The Historical antecedents of Sikhism:

In the 15th century AD, the birth century of Guru Nanak, the Hindu and Muslim faiths, each in itself inspired, were the two dominant religions in India, though, at war with each other's philosophy. Nanak was born into a Hindu family of Kshatriya clan in the year 1469. God – 'The True Name – appeared to Guru Nanak in an original divine revelation, and so he professed that God is neither Hindu nor Muslim. According to him, the only religion and path was of that of God. Nanak's basic tenet –monotheism- genuinely coincided with Islamic conviction and Hinduism's *Sanatana* Dharma, or the eternal truth which, though it affirms the supremacy of a formless God, yet does not practice it as such, worshipping, instead, the Trinity and a host of other deities. Hindu temples all over India are dedicated to either Shiva or Vishnu and in blatant contradiction to the authority quoted in the great epic, Bhagvad Gita, which now belongs to the world, in CH. IX (20-21, 25), according to which:

(20) "The Veda-ritualizes, cleansing themselves of sins by the *soma* rite, worship Me by *yajna* (sacrifice), and thus win their desire of entry into heaven. There, in the sacred kingdom of the astral deities, devotees enjoy the subtle celestial pleasures.

(21) "But after delighting in the glorious higher regions, such beings, at the expiration of their good *karma*, return to earth. Thus adjudging by the scriptural regulations, desiring the enjoyments (the promised celestial rewards thereof), they travel the cyclic path (between heaven and earth).

(25) "Devotees of astral deities go to them; ancestor worshippers go to the manes; to the nature spirits go those who seek them; but My devotees come to Me".

In so far as Sikhism, like Islam, rejects the notion of *avatars*, but endorses the Hindu doctrine of reincarnation, critics erroneously regard Sikhism as an example of 'working syncretism'. However, even if it may appear so, it is among the few faiths that has proved viable and universally recognized as an independent, inspired religion currently ranking sixth among world religions.

Mool Mantra:

◊siq nwmuu krqw purKu inrBau invYru Akwl mUriq AjUnI sYBM gurpRswid]

Ik-Onkar Sat Naam Karta-Purukh Nirbhau Nirvair Akaal Moorat Ajuni Saibhang Gurprasad.

◁ - *Ik Oankaar* - its progression from Om-Kar.

There is no denying the fact that Guru Nanak recognized the veracity and sanctity of the age-old *Sabad*-Sound mystic symbol of 'OM' in endorsing it as the sole cause of creation of the world, in SGGS as below:

anm AKr suxhu bIcwru]

anm AKru iqRBvn swru]

Onam Akhar Sunahu Bichaar Onam Akhar Tribhuvan saar (930-1)

Listen thou to the *sabad*-sound of OM This sound is the essence and Cause of the three world.

In *Jaap Sahib*, Guru Gobind Singh has also stated the importance of OM as the primordial sound.

aAM Awid rupy] Anwid srUpY]

Oang aad roope Anandi saroope: Jaap Sahib – 128

OM is the primal form Thou are without beginning [Jaap Sahib-128]

The origin of the syllable OM is lost in antiquity. However, it is accepted that Om is the primal sound which emanated with the first creation as every action makes vibrations which produce sound. The three letters A. U and M make the word OM and are identified with many aspects; namely; Creation, sustenance and dissolution which are the functions of the Trinity of Godhead, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; Stand for *Akara*, *Ukara* and *Makara*, meaning *Srushti*, *Sthithi* and *Laya*; all vowel sounds are included in its pronunciation. You start pronouncing 'ahh' in the back of the mouth (at the throat) and in saying 'oo' you use only the tongue in the mouth and the sound 'mm' arises from the lips when you close the mouth. All words are thus fragments of AUM, just as all images are fragments of the Form of forms.

Edgar Cayce on OM: The late American psychic Edgar Cayce (1877-1945) in his trancestate could contact the universal consciousness as well as read the *Akashic* Records. God's consciousness that is the repository of everything that is, was or will be – can be extended into visible words, called Akashic Records-records written on the skein of time and space. Cayce, in a psychic reading, No.2823-3, to a 34-year old female on the subject of chants for meditation spoke as follows;

'As to the manner of meditation, then: Begin with that which is oriental in its nature- oriental incense. Let the mind become, as it was, attuned to such by the humming. Producing those sounds of the o-o-o-ah-ah-umm-o-o-o; not as to become monotonous, but "feel" the essence of the incense through the body forces in tits motion of body. This will open the *kundaline* forces of

the body. Then direct same to be a blessing to others. These arise from the creative center of the body itself, and as they go through the various centers direct same; else they may become greater disturbing than helpful. Surround self ever with that purpose, "Not my will, O God, but Thine be done, ever" – and the entity will gain vision, perception, and most of all judgment. 2823-3.'

OM is one of the most chanted sounds among the Hindu faith in India and in the Buddhist tradition. There being no belief in a Godhead among the Buddhists, they only use the sound of OM as a chant. There is no worship of an Absolute God, professed by Hindus as Par-Brahma, per se. They simply chant OM in every prayer while invoking its various Gods, Goddesses and other deities, as Om Namaha Shivaya, Hari Om or Om Shanti.

aAMkwir bRhmw auqpiq]

aAMkwr kIAw ijin iciq]

aAMkwr sYl jug Bey]

aAMkwr byd inrmey]

Oankaar Brahma utpat Oankaar kiya jin chit

Oankaar sail jug bhae Oankaar bed nirmae

(SGGS)[929-18]

Brahma was created through the sound of *Omkaara*, Brahma cherished the one Lord in his mind
It is through the sound of *Omkaara* that mountains and ages emanated
It is this sound which created the Vedas.

aAMkwr Awid] kQnI Anwid]

Oankaar aad Kathni anaad [Jaap Sahib-167] *Omkaar is the primal spirit He is known as beginnigless [Jaap Sahib-167]*

It is also evident from the following quote from the Guru Granth Sahib that Guru Nanak Dev Ji recognized the age-old wisdom contained in the Vedas, but rejected its ritualistic and sacrificial practices and its pantheistic beliefs:

jqu pwhwrw DIrju suinAwru]

Ahrix miq vydu hQIAwru]

Jat paahaara dheeraj suniyar Ahran mat ved hathiyar [8-8] *Make continence thy furnace, patience thy goldsmith Understanding thy anvil, Vedic knowledge thy tool*

<> - **Ik-Oankaar**

"Truth is ONE. People call it by different names". – Rig Veda

By adding *Ik* before *Omkar*, Guru Nanak Dev Ji proclaimed that there is only one Reality, One God, who is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim nor a Christian or a Jew. People quarrel among themselves by saying: our Allah, our Christ, our Buddha or Krishna, etc. It was to remove this sense of separateness and distinction that Guru Nanak Dev Ji added the word *Ik* before the *Mool Mantra*.

hir ismir eykMkwru swcw

sBu jgqu ijin aupwieAw]

paxu pwxI Agin bwDy

guir Kylu jgiq idKwieAw]

Har simar ekankaar saacha sabh jagat jin upaaya

Paon paani agan baadhe gur khel jagat dikhaaya [1113-1]

Meditate thou on the one true Lord who created the whole universe

He has kept within bounds the air, water and fire and has displayed the world play [1113-1]

siq nwmu - Sat Naam

God consciousness is generally described as *Sat Chit Ananda*. *Sat* means that which is true, real, exists for all times and is eternal. *Chit* means, consciousness. *Ananda* means, bliss.

The concept of *Sat-Asat*: Real vs Unreal

Story of Raja Janak and the Sage Astavakra: In a dream, Raja Janak found himself a beggar, hungry and begging for food. As long as he was dreaming, the hunger and accompanying suffering seemed REAL. However, when he awoke, the reality of being a raja was also real. Upon this, he asked the sage as to what was real! The sage replied that 'Neither was real'. The real or truth is that which remained unchanged – *Sat* and quoted the following Slok from *Astavakra Gita*.

"Know that which has form to be false and the Formless to be changeless. Through this spiritual instruction you shall escape the possibility fo rebirths. [*Astavakra Gita* (1-18)]

A similar story is mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib

nrpiq eyku isMGwsin soieAw

supny BieAw iBKwrI]

Narpat ek singhaasan soya supne bhaya bhikhaari (657-19) *It is like a king falling asleep, sitting on the throne*

rwj BuieAMg pRsMg jYsy hih

Ab ikCu mrmu jnwieAw]

Raaj bhuiang prasang jaise hah ab kachh maram janaaya *As is the sotry of a rope and serpent, I have, now, had some secret explained to me*

Aink ktk jYsy BUil pry

Ab khqy khnu n AwieAw]

Anik katak jaisi bhoor pare ab kahte kahan na aaya [658-1] *Deeming the several bangles as different from gold I realize now that I was wrong*

The quote refers to the experience of seeing, deluded by *Maya*, a snake where actually there is only a rope. The snake is not real. Rope, the substratum, is real, on which the mind superimposes a snake. Similarly, gold is the substratum where as the jewelry made out of it under different names and forms is unreal for when melted, it again takes the shape of gold. Likewise the world seems real but is actually a dream, a delusion created by God Himself.

eykm eykY Awp aupwieAw]

duibDw dujw iqRibiD mwieAw]

Ekam ekai aap upayia Dubhidhaa dooja tribidh maaya [113-7] *Firstly the one Lord created His ownself. Secondly, the sense of duality and, thirdly, three-phased mammon*

Seeing the Invisible: "For the things which are seen are temporary, but things which are not seen are eternal. [Ref: The Inspirational Study Bible by Max Lucado (2 Corinthinas-4)]

Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar: These three forms, comprising the Trinity, are not permanent. They are not permanent because they have taken form. Anything which has a form cannot be permanent. Whatever number of births we may take and however long we may go on worshipping these three forms, we will never be able to free ourselves from the cycle of birth and death. If one wants to get rid of birth forever, one has to worship the Nirguna Nirankara, the formless and attributeless principle, which is represented by Omkara. (Ref: *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. XVIII-Page 27/28)

jo dIsY so sgl ibnwsy

ijau bwdr ki CweI]

Jo deesai so sagal binaasai jio badal ki chhaae [219-7] Whatever is seen that all shall vanish like the shadow of a cloud

nwnk khq jgq sB imiQAw

ijau supnw rYnweI]

Nanak kehat jagat sabh mithya jio supna rainaai [1231-12] Nanak says, the whole world is unreal like the dream during the night [1231-12]

Since only God is real, hence the attribute *Sat (Sat Naam)*. Since He exists for all times, hence the attribute –

Aid scu jugwid scu]

hY BI scu nwnk hosI BI scu]

Aad Sach, Jugaad Sach, Hai Bhi Sach, Nanak Hosi Bhi Sach.

mukwmu iqsno AwKIAy

ijsu isis n hovI lyKu]

Asmwn DrqI clsI

mukwmu ahI eyku]

Mukaam tis no aakheeai jis sis na hovee lekh. Asmaan dhartee chalsee mukaam ohee ek [64-10]

Only He will be called permanent, whose head does not have the writ of destiny, the death. The sky and earth will pass away. Ever stable is He alone.

krqw purKu - Karta Purukh

Question: Who created the universe?

Answer: *Karta Purukh* is the answer to the above question. God is all in all and the sole Doer. He creates and destroys at His will.

In the beginning, God existed all by Himself.

Awpxw Awpu aupwieanu

qdhu horu n koeI]

mqw msUriq Awip kry

jo kry su hoeI]

Aapanaa aap upaayon tadoh hor na koi Mata masoorat aap kare jo kare so hoi [509-2] When the Lord created Himself, then there was no one else He took counsel and advice with Himself and what ever He did came to pass.

For many ages, God was absorbed in Himself:

kyqy jug vrqy gubwrY]

qwVI lweI Apr ApwrY]

Kete jug varte gubaare Tadi laaee apar apaare [1026-14] For numerous ages there was utter darkness. Then the The infinite Lord sat in a trance.

jug CqIh kIa gubwrw]

qU Awpy jwixih isrjxhwrw]

Jug chhati kiyo gubaara Too aape jaaneh sirjanhaara [1068-15] For thirty-six ages Thou caused pitch darkness O creator Lord, Thou thyself knowest that state

Guru Arjun Dev Ji, in Slok No.21 and in its *Ashtpadi* in *Sukhmani Sahib*, has beautifully explained the phenomenon of His Play and Doership at His sweet Will. First six *Pauris* describe God as existing by Himself. The last two *Pauris* describe the creation as willed by HIM.

Question: Why was the world created?

Answer: The world is His play. This world is a drama being enacted by the Lord for His amusement. There is no difference between a drama being enacted on a stage, and the activities we engage in during our lifetime on this planet. The following quote from *Asa di Var* bears witness to God's omnipotence and drama:

bwjIgr fMk bjweI]

sB Klk qmwsY AweI]

bwjIgr s@Wg skylw]

Apny rMg rvY Akylw]

Baajigar dank bajaai, Sabh khalak tamaase aae. Bajigar swaang sakelaa, Apne rang ravai akelaa [655-3]

When the magician beats his drum, all the people come to see his show
When the magician winds up his play, then he enjoys by himself.

quDu sMswru aupwieAw]

isry isir DMdy lwieAw]

vyKih kIqw Awpxw kir

kudriq psw Fwil jIau]

tudh sansaar upaaya, Sir sir dhande laaya. Vakheh keeta aapna kar kudrat paasa dhaal jio
[71-17] You created the world and assigned every one to his task You see your creation and by your omnipotence you cast this game of dice [71-17]

AwpInY Awpu swija

AwpInY rica nwau]

duXI kudriq swjIAY

kir Awsxu ifTO cwau]

Aapeenai aap saajio aapeenai rachio naao Duyee kudrat saajeeai kar aasan dhitho chaao
[463-4] The Lord created Himself and His omnipotence. Secondly, having created the universe and seated on His *Asan*, He looks at His creation with joy.

Then, installing Himself in the His *Prakriti* of three *Gunas*, He set the Law of Karma:

jh Awip rica prpMc Akwr]

iqhu gux mih kIno ibsQwru]

pwpu puMnu qh BeI khwvq]

koaU nrk koaU surg bMCwvq]

Jah aap rachio parpanch aakaar Tah gun mah keeno bisthaar. Paap pun tah bhaye kahaavat Kou nark kou surg banchaavat [291-19] When the Lord Himself created the Universe, then He pervaded it as three *Gunas*, Then acts of sin and virtue were caused Accordingly, some went to hell and some to heaven.

inrBau - Nirbhau

Question: God being '*Karta Purukh*' does He fear no one?

Answer: Fear is usually from another person or source/thing. God is without fear because there is no one other than Him. He being the creator is the boss and all in all. Animate or inanimate, He resides in His creation. It is well known that human body is the temple of God. Actually, God resides in men as 'Hirdays', also called the spiritual heart.

so AMqir so bwhir AnMq]

Git Git ibAwip rihAw BgvMq]

Drn mwih Awkws pieAwl]

srb lok pUrn pRiqpwl]

So antar so baahar anant Ghat ghat byaap rahya bhagwant. Dharn maahe aakaas pyal Sarb lok pooran pritpal [293-18] Lord resides both within and without He dwells in every heart He is in earth, sky and He fully cherishes all the worlds.

Fear is mostly from an unknown source. But God is all knowing.

inrvYru - Nirvair

Question: Does God bear no grudge with any one and has no enemies?

Answer: God is without enmity as all belong to Him and He, dwelling in all, is not separate from any one. How could He harm His own creation?

n s`qRY] n im`qRY]

n BrmM] n iB`qRY]

Na satre Na mitre Na Bharman Na Bhitre [Jaap Sahib-99] He has no friends He has no enemies He has no delusion. He fears no one

Akwl mUriq - Akal Moorat

Question: Is God not afraid of death?

Answer: The greatest fear known to mankind is that of death. But He, being (Sat) eternal, is beyond time. He is the 'Seer to Time'.

Akwl mUriq AjUnI sMBM

mn ismrq TMfw QIvW jIau]

Akaal moorat ajoonee sanbhon man simrat thandhaa theevan jeeo [99-6]
Thou are eternal, Unborn, self-illuminated, contemplating on Whom one's mind achieves peace.

AkwI muriq AjunI sMBau

kil AMDkwr dIpweI]

Akaal moorat ajooni sanbhav kal andhkaar dipaae [916-3] Thou are eternal, immortal being, self illuminated. Thou illuminate the pitch dark kali-age.

This attribute has been mentioned in Jaap Sahib nine times at Lines; 2, 23, 37, 66, 84,177, 178, 179 and 192.

nmsqM Akwly] nmsqM ikRpwly]ò]

nmsqM Abrny] nmsqM Amrny]òó]

Namastan akaale Namastan kirpaale [2]

Namastan abarne Namastan amarne [23]

Salutation to the Immortal, Salutation to the merciful. Salutation to the casteless and classless. Salutation to the Immortal Lord.

AjUnI - Ajuni

Question: Who were God's parents? Who gave birth to God?

Answer: Since God is self-created, self-existent, He has no parents (mother or father). Since God does not take birth through a womb, He has no birthday. This attribute is repeated at the head of every *Raag* and three more times in Guru Granth Sahib:

sMkt nhI prY jUn nhI AwvY

nwim inrMjn jwko rih]

Sankat nahi parae joon nahi aavae naam niranjan jaa ko rae [339-1] He is free from misfortune, and He does not take birth; His Name is the immaculate Lord. Kabir's God is such a Lord and Master, who has no mother or father.

In *Jaap Sahib*, this attribute of God, out of a total of 199 has been mentioned eleven times at Lines; 3, 21, 29, 34, 40, 79, 80, 82, 85, 100, 149, 177, 179 and 194.

nmsqM Akwey] nmsqM Ajwey]ó]

nmsqM Ajnmy] nmsqM subnmy]òñ]

Namastan akaaye Namastan ajaaai [3]

Namastan ajanme namasatan so banme [21]

Salutation to the Bodiless, Salutation to the Unborn Salutation to the unborn, Salutation to the self-Created.

sYBM - Saibhang

Question: Who created God?

Answer: Guru Nanak says that God created Himself at His own will. He is self existing and self illuminating.

In *Jaap Sahib*, this attribute is described in the following verses.

AlIk hYN] inRsrIk hYN]

inRIMB hYN] AsMB hYN]

Aleek hain Nirsireek hain Nirlanbh hain Asanbh hain [39] Thou are enlightened and without arrival Thou are self-existent and unborn [39].

suXMBv suBM srbdw srb jugqy ***suvaynbhav subhan sarabda sarab jugte [199]*** Thou O Lord, are Self existent, abiding in glory and pervading in four quarters.

gurpRswid - Gur Prasad

Question: How do we realize God?

Answer: God is realized through a Guru. A guru, or teacher, is one who removes darkness – of ignorance. By Guru, Guru Nanak means the God-Guru. God Himself as Guru. Now, Guru Granth Sahib. Guru is said to be indispensable in gaining spiritual enlightenment and is given a very high status in almost all eastern faiths.

Je so chanda ugvai suraj chare hazaar Ete chaanan hundiaan Gur bin ghor andhaar

If a hundred moons were to arise and a thousand suns appear, with all this illumination, without the Guru, there would be pitch darkness.

gurdyv mwqw gurdyv ipqw

gurdyv suAwml prmysurw]

Gurdev maata gurdev pita gurdev suammee pamesuraa [250-2] Guru is my mother, guru is my father and the divine guru is my Lord and Supreme God.

Bin gur daate koi na paae Lakh koti ji karam kamaae. Gur kirpa te ghat antar vassya sabde sach saalaaha hey. [1057-9]

Without the beneficent Guru, no one attains the Lord, though he may perform millions of rituals. It is by the grace of God that He abides in man's heart and he sings Him praises by the holy word.

gur pauVI byVI gurU

guru qulhw hir nwau]

guru sru swgru boihQo

guru qIrQu drIAwau]

Guru pauri bedi guru gur tulha har naao

Gur sar saagar bohitho gur teerath daryao [17-13]

Guru is the ladder, Guru the boat and Guru the raft for reaching God's name

To cross the world ocean, Guru is my ship, Guru is the place of pilgrimage and the sacred river.

Sab dharti kaagaz karo, lekhan sab ban rai. Saat samundra ki masi karo, Gur gun likheeya na jaye [Kabir]

Conclusion:

Just as *OM* is the essence and the *mool mantra* of the Vedas, like wise *Ik-Onkaar sat Naam Kartaa-Purukh Nirbhau Nirvair Akaal Moorat Ajuni Saibhang Gurprasad* is the *Mool Mantra* of the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. The *Japuji Sahib* which immediately follows the *Mool Mantra* in essence reveals the truth enshrined in the *Mantra* above. Similarly, the entire *Guru Granth Sahib* which follows the *Japuji Sahib* is an elaboration of the *Japuji Sahib*.

Every word in the string of *Mool Mantra* is charged with spiritual sound vibrations. If one finds that repeating the entire *Mantra* is a mechanical tedium, individual words in the *mantra* can be used to remember and glorify God. Some people can automatically say *Wahe Guru* with every thought or act. If one thinks of God as the only creator reality without a second, which is pervading the entire universe of names and forms, he can remember Him as *Ik Oankaar*. Those who want to still their ego every time they achieve something can say '*Karta Purukh*', giving credit to the almighty God. Thought of fear from some thing should evoke '*Nirbhai*'. Similarly, facing thoughts of enmity and hatred, one could remember Almighty as '*Nirvair*'. The idea is to select any word from the *Mantra* with which you can associate for the situation or feel comfortable and repeat it.

