

# The Felicitous & Enlightening ‘Mundavni’

SARJIT SINGH SANDHU, Ph.D\*

THE AMOUNT OF INTEREST shown in the meaning of slokas of *Mundavni* in **The Sikh Review** [1,2,3] is a good indicator of prevailing consciousness among Sikhs for the availability of correct interpretation of *gurbaani* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This is a healthy sign of awareness and concern amongst the educated Sikhs who are involved and interested in the religious education of their children and grand children in order to keep the flag of Sikhism flying in India and abroad. To broaden the scope of this discussion a slight digression might be useful for a better understanding and tackling of this problem in order to find a durable solution.

The study of any scripture is made easy and relatively accurate with the use of discipline of **Hermeneutics**. A few laws of this discipline are stated below which can be helpful in arriving at the correct meaning of slokas of *Mundavni* [ Mahla 3 and Mahla 5]. The first law states: that **Akaalpurkh** has sent the message for **mankind** through the messenger which is the **Guru** in Sikhism. At present Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the **Sabd Guru**. The recipient is the **Gurmukh** who has received this message from the **Guru**. In order to get at the correct meaning of any sloka in *gurbaani* the **Gurmukh** has to seek guidance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib by trying to find internal evidence for the correctness of meaning of the sloka.

The second law states that the meaning of the sloka are to be cross checked by the use of following three principles: (i) *unanimity*, (ii) *harmony* and (iii) *main focus*. Application of these three principles is illustrated during the course of finding correct meaning of various contentious issues, already discussed [1,3]. The slokas of *Mundavni* [M: 3 and M: 5] are given below:

ਥਾਲੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਤੈ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਹਰਿ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਧੈ ਮਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੀਐ ਪਾਈਐ ਮੋਖ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਇਹੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਅਲਭੁ ਹੈ ਸੰਤਹੁ ਲਭੈ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥੧

ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮ:੩ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੬੪੫

ਥਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੂ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ ॥ ੨

ਸਲੋਕ ਮ:੫ ਸ:ਗ:ਗੁ :ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੯

In Sloka I the words: ਤੈ, ਹਰਿ, ਭੋਜਨ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ, ਅਤੇ ਸਾਰ require a critical evaluation of their meaning in the context of this sloka, since some of these have been used in more than ONE meaning in SGGS.

The word ਹਰਿ ਭੋਜਨ is from Greek culture or religion. Historically speaking, all human beings moved out, to other countries and continents from **a central place**, thousands of years ago, with the cultural and religious heritage intact [4] which, nowadays, is called **Fertile Crescent** in literature [5,6 ]. The word *Amrit*, as food of gods, is recorded in English Dictionaries under *Ambrosia* which has been used in Greek culture as food of gods. Guru Amar Das has used it as a metaphor since **Akaalpurkh**, the God, does not need any food, according to Sikh scripture. However, the manifestation of **Akaalpurkh** in every thing of this universe has been recognized in Sikh religion which is evident from the sloka given below:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵੇਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਈ ॥ ੩

[ਜਪੁ ਜੀ ਪਉੜੀ ੫]

Let us keep in mind that word **Gurmukh** has more than one meaning in SGGS. In sloka 3 it is **Akaalpurkh** which is pervasive in the entire universe. The words qY Aqy swr have been profusely used in SGGS with myriad meanings; that is why these are discussed separately.

The word ਤੈ has been used in SGGS for 155 times with different meanings such as ਅਤੇ, ਉ‘ਤੇ, ਤੂੰ, ਤਿੰਨ {ਤੂੰ ਮੁਲਤਾਨੀ} ਆਦਿਕ. The word ਤੈ has been used in SGGS for 91 times. In *Mundavni* Mahla 3 the obvious choice in sloka 1 for acceptable meaning is *Three*. The word swr has been used in SGGS for 104 times with meanings such as *State of the soul, Essence of reality, Discriminating intelligence, Excellence, Care, etc.* In sloka 1 of *Mundavni* the *Discriminating intelligence* is the acceptable meaning. This is a God given gift to any individual. This is the most important and essential quality of human mind but quite rare and unique as well. It was available in abundance to all the Sikh Gurus who gave us this treasure trove of wisdom and knowledge in the form of SGGS. In the light of this elaborate discussion, the following meaning is assigned to the sloka of Guru Amardas:.

*“In the body of a person three qualities of human mind: Akaalpurkh, Amrit and Discriminating intelligence are present.”*

The word *Amrit* is present in the first stanza of *Mundavni* of Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjun. It has been used in SGGS in two spellings ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ (365) and ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ (352) which leads to its use for a total of 717 times. Besides, it has been used in other spellings also for 25 times. Thus word *Amrit* has been used for 742 times in all and in sixteen different meanings in SGGS [7]. The word *Amrit* or a similar word, in one or other form, has been used in most of the religions or cultures of the world. However, the use of word *Amrit* in Sikh philosophy is distinctly in a different context and is in quite a different meaning which is the **central fulcrum** of Sikh religion, upon and around which, every other concept rests. In order to illustrate this point a few slokas of *gurbaani* are given below for the information and understanding of readers.

ਮਨ ਰੇ ਬਿਰੁ ਰਹੁ ਮਤੁ ਕਤ ਜਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥

ਬਾਹਰਿ ਢੁਢਤ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ

ਘਰਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਘਟ ਮਾਹੀ ਜੀਉ ॥ਰਹਾਉ॥ ੧॥੯॥ ੪

ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮ: ੧ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੫੯੮

\* \* \* \* \*

ਘਰ ਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਭਰਪੂਰੁ ਹੈ ਮਨਮੁਖਾ ਸਾਦੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਜਿਉ ਕਸਤੂਰੀ ਮਿਰਗੁ ਨਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਕ੍ਰਮਦਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਭੁਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਤਜਿ ਬਿਖੁ ਸੰਗੁਹੈ ਕਰਤੈ ਆਪਿ ਖੁਆਇਆ ॥੨॥੫॥ ੫

\* \* \* \* \*

ਸੋਰਠਿ ਮ: ੩ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੬੪੪

ਮੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ਐਸਾ ਖੀਰੁ ਬਿਲੋਈਐ ॥

ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਨੁਆ ਅਸਥਿਰੁ ਰਾਖਹੁ  
 ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪੀਓਈਐ ॥੧॥ਰਹਉ॥੨॥੪੬॥ ੬  
 ਗਉੜੀ ਬੈਰਾਗਣਿਯ ਕਬੀਰ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੩੩੨

In all these slokas *Amrit* is talked about in a different diction and metaphor which, sometimes, leads some people astray if it is translated literally. Guru Nanak says *Amrit* is in the mind itself while Guru Amardass says it is present in the body itself. Bhagt Kabir says that *Amrit* is acquired by understanding and practising *gurmat* in daily life by a stable and steady mind. However, today some Sikhs believe that you take *Khande dee Pahul* [8,9] first and then follow the path to acquire *Amrit* of *gurbaani*. **This approach appears to be the reverse of entire process which was established by all the ten Sikh Gurus.**

In *Mundavni* of Guru ArjUn, in sloka 2, questions have been raised about two words[1,3]{ਤਿਨਿ ਜਾਂ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਅਤੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ}. The word ਤਿੰਨਿ has been used only once in SGGS and that, too, in *Mundavni* of Guru ArjUn. The other word in spelling ਤਿਨਿ has been used in SGGS for 176 times. This word has been used in meanings such as *Who, He, Which, Those* etc. Thus the argument appears to be holding ground for its meaning being not *three*[1]. Of course, it does not affect the meaning of stanza in *Mundavni* of Guru ArjUn where it has not been used at all.

In *gurbaani* of SGGS the words ਵੀਚਾਰ ਅਤੇ ਬੀਚਾਰ have been used in different spellings for more than Five hundred times. The word ਵੀਚਾਰੋ has been claimed to be a verb [1,3]. First of all it has to be ascertained whether it is a verb or a noun. Information from the Panjabi-English Dictionary{10} shows that word ਵੀਚਾਰ is a noun with meanings: *thought, idea, concept, view, opinion, reflection, imagination, feeling, contemplation, consideration, consultation, deliberation, feeling, meditation, superstition*. In the same Dictionary it is also given in two forms: ਵਿਚਾਰਨਾ ਅਤੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਕਰਨਾ as verbs with meanings: *to think, consider, deliberate, discuss, ponder, reflect, meditate, contemplate*. If these grammatical findings are accepted then the objection about it, being a verb, is ruled out. Thus, the Panjabi grammar supports the view that the word ਵੀਚਾਰ ਜਾਂ ਵਿਚਾਰੋ, irrespective of difference in spellings in old and new Panjabi, is a noun. There can be some concern as to the spellings containing change in the end. The next exercise is to remove any doubt about this point. Here again internal evidence from *gurbaani* is cited to support the view that it is a noun. The Panjabi word Bwr is without any doubt a noun. The following stanzas contain this word in the form Bwro and support the view that old Panjabi followed flexible rules in Spiritual poetry.

ਲਬੁ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੁਚੁ ਕੂੜੁ ਕਮਾਵਹਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਉਠਾਵਹਿ ਭਾਰੋ॥੧॥੧੩॥ ੭  
 ਗਉੜੀ ਚੇਤੀ ਮ: ੧ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੫੪  
 \* \* \* \* \*

ਇਬ ਕੇ ਰਾਹੇ ਜੰਮਨਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਪਛੁਤਾਣੇ ਸਿਰਿ ਭਾਰੋ ॥੩॥੪॥ ੮  
 ਵਡਹੰਸੁ ਮ: ੧ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੫੮੧

Almost every ancient language enjoyed a great deal of voracity during versification in order to alter word-ending for the sake of rhyming. There are numerous examples in the *gurbaani* of SGGS. This information, along with the

available evidence, leads to the meaning of commencing stanza of *Mundavni* of Guru ArjUn in sloka 2 as under:

***In the body of a person, three qualities of human mind; truth, contentment and contemplation, are present.***

In the study of *gurbaani*, the most important point to be kept in mind is the application of basic principles of ***Hermeneutics***. To a certain extent, it can eliminate any contribution of pre- understanding or prejudicial thinking from human mind during translation or understanding of *gurbaani*. Undoubtedly, human beings are product of culture, community and climate in which they have been brought up. A summarized sentence from Alvin Toffler [11] will not be out of place here for the information and understanding of all the Sikhs, around the world:

*The illiterates of 21<sup>st</sup> century are not those who cannot read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.*

Though the word *Vichaar* [1,3] has been discussed in a very casual manner, an humble opinion, given below, is presented for consideration and amplification of implications of its use in SGGGS. This Word, in two spellings; *blcwr Aqy vlcwr*, has been used in SGGGS. The use of this word alone has already been discussed. However, this word, in conjunction with another word of *gurbaani*, *ibbyk*, leads to a very interesting information which is important for Sikhs in the understanding of *gurbaani*.

ਗਾਵਹੁ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਕਾਮਣੀ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ਹਮਰੈ ਘਰਿ ਆਇਆ ਜਗਜੀਵਨੁ ਭਤਾਰੁ ॥੧॥ਰਹਾਉ॥ ੯

ਆਸਾ ਮ: ੧ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੩੫੧

ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵੈ ਲਗਿਆ ਭਉਜਲੁ ਤਰੈ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥

ਮਨ ਚਿੰਦਿਆ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਇਸੀ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ੧੦

ਸੋਲੋਕ ਮ: ੪ ਸ:ਗ:ਗ:ਸ: ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੨

In these slokas the word *ibbyk* means discriminating and it is an adjective. The meaning of the compound word **ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੀਚਾਰ** is discriminating meditation or discriminating contemplation. To say that word *vlcwr jW blcwr* is not important in *gurbaani* is completely untrue. Human beings are different from other species because they have analytical mind and superior faculties for judgment. This is the reason *gurbaani* talks about supremacy of human beings over other species and assigns responsibility for looking after the interests of all the species present in the universe. This discriminating intelligence or intellect is the unique and most uncommon faculty of human mind which, *homo sapiens*, the present species has acquired through the process of evolution of human brain, over a period of about two million years<sup>12</sup>.

□

## References

1. Dimpay G. Singh, The Sikh Review, **52**(11) November 2004, p 6.
2. Shivcharan Singh Dhesi, *ibid*, **53**(4) April 2005, p 84.
3. Hardit Singh, *ibid*, **53**(9), September 2005, p 70.
4. George W. Cox, *Mythology of Aryan Nations*, Kegan Paul and Trench Co., London, 1887, p 47.

5. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1999; p98.
6. Idem, *National Geographic*, September, 2005
7. Kahn Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, National Book Shop, Delhi; 2000.
8. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Gur-Panth Parkash*. Ed. Balwant Singh Dhillon, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 2004.
9. Piara Singh Padam, *Rehatname*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1995.
10. *Punjabi-English Dictionary*, Panjabi University, Patiala, 1995.
11. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Bantam, New York, Reissue edition, 1984; p 414.
- 11.12. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York; 1999. p 36.