

ਤਾਰਾ ਚੜਿਆ ਲੰਮਾ ਕਿਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲਿਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

(p. 1110 Guru Granth Sahib Ji)

Tara charhiya lamma kiun nadri nihaliya Rama

(Pal Singh Purewal)

Guru Nanak Dev Ji had spent almost a quarter of a century traveling and spreading his word in the world. Since most of his travels were on foot, he must have spent countless summer nights in the lap of nature. He observed physical phenomena, and his *bani* reflects some of them. It is true that his aim was not to highlight the phenomena, but to impart true knowledge using them as vehicle, since people could relate to them. From amongst these, mention may be made of movement of the luminaries - the sun and the moon, stars, and the visitors from space - the comets.

He must have gone into ecstasy when he sang:

ਗਗਨਮੈ ਥਾਲਿ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੈ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥
ਧੂਪ ਮਲਿਆਣ ਨੋ ਪਵਣ ਚਵਰੋ ਕਰੈ ਸਗਲ ਬਨਰਾਇ ਫੁਲੰਤ ਜੋਤੀ ॥

(p. 13 GGS)

The sky is the platter, the moon and the sun are the lamps, and in that platter the constellations are the pearls. The breeze from the mountains is the incense, and all the vegetation is offering floral bouquets for the worship of the Light.

When a Sikh recites this *shabad* before retiring to bed, he feels and shares some of that ecstasy.

In this paper we shall examine one such phenomenon - the appearance of a comet; and its implications apart from the deeper spiritual and metaphysical meanings.

ਤੁਖਾਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ॥ ਤਾਰਾ ਚੜਿਆ ਲੰਮਾ ਕਿਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲਿਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

ਸੇਵਕ ਪੁਰ ਕਰੀਮਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਦਿਖਾਲਿਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

(p. 1110 GGS)

ਹੋ ਭਾਈ ! ਗੁਰੂ ਦੇ ਉਪਦੇਸ਼ ਦੀ ਬਰਕਤਿ ਨਾਲ ਉਸ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਰੱਬੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਪਰਗਟ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ (ਜੋ ਕੁਝ ਜਗਤ ਵਿਚ ਹੋ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਨੂੰ) ਉਹ ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਕੌਤਕ (ਜਣ ਕੇ) ਵੇਖਦਾ ਹੈ ॥¹

Brother! by the advice and blessing from the Guru Eternal Light is effulgent in the mind of man (whatever is happening in the world) he sees it as a spectacle of Lord.

In his interpretation Prof. Sahib Singh uses the word ਕੌਤਕ which is equivalent of spectacle, and a comet's sight is usually spectacular.

Tara charhiya lamma kiun nadri nihaliya Rama

(p. 1110 GGS)

The comet blazing trail of light is risen
How with the eyes may it be beheld?ⁱⁱ

Obviously *lamma tara*, here, means comet.

A few references about stars in *gurbani* would not be out of place.

ਡਿੱਨੀ ਰੈਨਤੀਐ ਚਮਕਨਿ ਤਾਰੇ ॥ ਜਗਹਿ ਸੰਤ ਜਨਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ਪਿਆਰੇ ॥ (p. 459 GGS)

Sweet is the night with scintillating stars
The saints - loved ones of God are awake (in His remembrance)

ਓਟਿ ਜੁ ਦੀਸਹਿ ਅੰਬਰਿ ਤਾਰੇ ॥ ਕਿਨਿ ਓਟਿ ਚੀਤੇ ਚੀਤਨਹਾਰੇ ॥ (p. 329 GGS)

Those stars that are visible in the firmament
Who is the Artist that painted them?

ਝਲਮਿਲਿ ਝਲਕੈ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਟਿ ਨ ਬਿਜੁਲਿ ਗੈਣਾਰਾ ॥ (p. 1033 GGS)

The moon was not shining, nor the stars scintillating
Neither rays of the sun in the sky, nor flashes of lightning

ਕਬੀਰ ਪਰਭਾਤੇ ਤਾਰੇ ਖਿਸਹਿ ਤਿਉ ਇਹੁ ਖਿਸੈ ਸਰੀਰੁ ॥ (p. 1373 GGS)

Says Kabir, as the stars fade away at dawn, so disappears the body.

All these lines refer to the actual stars in the sky. Similarly *lamma tara* means an actual comet which must have appeared in Guru Nanak Dev Ji's time.

Guru Ji was a great poet of Nature, as his *bani* Baramaha *Tukhari* amply demonstrates. How could he have let the opportunity of expressing himself on watching spectacular appearance of a comet go by? - it is impossible to think. The only question remains whether it was the comet of 1531 CEⁱⁱⁱ or any other that made appearance during the last eighteen years of Guru Ji's life at Kartarpur.

Comets appear in the sky from time to time^{iv}. Some are periodic and some make a single visit, never to come again. Some are visible through telescopes only, and some are naked eye objects, while a few put up a great show in the sky. When a comet approaches perihelion (closest to the sun), it develops a tail which points away from the sun.

The comet of 1531 CE that was recorded to have been observed in many parts of the world has been identified as Halley's comet. This comet is a periodic comet and makes its return after about every 75 / 76 years. It is named after Edmond Halley (1656-1742), who computed its period and made a prediction on the basis of his calculations for its reappearance in 1758 CE. Of course, his prediction proved right. A book^v was published in 1531 CE as a result of interest created by the comet that year, because it had been a great spectacle in the sky. Also Peter Apian's drawing^{vi} of the comet with large tail shows it passing close to the constellation Ursa Major (*Sapat Rishi*). The dates of observations as recorded in the drawing are from August 13 to August 18, 1531 CE.

Of all other comets that made visitations during the period of 1521 CE to 1539 CE, there are three more which must be mentioned - the ones in 1532 CE^{vii}, 1533 CE^{viii} and, 1539 CE^{ix}. The *shabad* in *Tukhari raga* most likely would have been inspired by the appearance of Halley's comet in 1531 CE, and not by any of the other three, because, first

Halley's comet was the most spectacular of them all^x, and second Guruji would have been inspired at the very first appearance of a comet and not waited for later appearances! This fixes the date of revelation of the *shabad* as August / September , 1531 CE.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's *bani* in *Tukhari raga* is generally considered to be his last revelation on the basis of its entry as the last *raga* in Harsahai Pothi, and reference in *Puratan Janam Sakhi* to a *shabad* from *Tukhari Raga* as being the last revelation^{xi}. The appearance of Halley's comet in 1531 CE and mention of comet in *Tukhari raga shabad* cast doubt on this contention. The reported entry of *bani* in this *raga* as the last section of the *pothi*, does not necessarily make it the last revelation of the Guru Ji.

As a matter of interest it may be pointed out that the last Sura in Quran was not the last revealed to Prophet Mohammed.^{xii}

If there is any *shabad* which may be deemed to have been the final revelation, on the basis of spiritual connotation, it is *Raga Gaorhi Deepki Mehla 1 -- Jai ghar keerat aakheeci Kartay kaa hoye beecharo*. The following lines in this *shabad* are very significant in this regard:

ਸੰਬੰਤ ਸਚਾ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਮਿਲਿ ਕਰਿ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਤੇਲੁ ॥ ਦੇਹੁ ਸਜਣ ਅਸੀਸਤੀਆ ਜਿਉ ਹੋਵੈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿਉ ਮੇਲੁ ॥
ਅੰਤਿ ਅੰਤਿ ਏਹੋ ਪਾਚੁਰਾ ਸਦੜੇ ਨਿਤ ਪਵੰਨਿ ॥ ਸਦਣਹਾਰਾ ਸਿਮਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇ ਦਿਹ ਆਵੰਨਿ ॥ (p. 12 GGS)

The year and the date of wedding (of soul to the Supreme Soul) has been pre-recorded, Come ye! my friends, pour oil and give me blessings so that I may meet my Master! The message comes to every home; the calls come daily, Let us meditate upon the Caller, since that day is coming closer.

The intensity of emotion in this *shabad*, the anticipation of merging with the Lord, asking the friends to pour oil, the seeking of blessing from them for the marriage of the soul with the Soul, the mention of the preordination of the date of wedding, and of 'that day coming closer'; all these make it a prime candidate as the final revelation. Perhaps this is why this *shabad* is the first in the *Sohila* which is recited before retiring at night.

In summing up, based on astronomical evidence, it can be said, with very high probability of its being closer to truth, that Guru Nanak Dev Ji had the revelation of the *Tukhari raga shabad* while watching the spectacle of Halley's comet which appeared in August 1531 CE; and therefore, *bani* in *Tukhari Raga* was not the last revelation, since otherwise it would have meant that Guru Ji had no revelation in the last eight years of his life.

(Pal Singh Purewal)

ⁱ Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan (Punjabi), Prof. Sahib Singh
(ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਰਪਣ - ਪ੍ਰੋ: ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿੰਘ)

ⁱⁱ p. 2259. Sri Guru Granth Sahib English Translation, Vol IV,
Translation by Gurbachan Singh Talib, Punjabi University, Patiala

ⁱⁱⁱ p. 411 Comets , Donald K. Yeomans, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York.

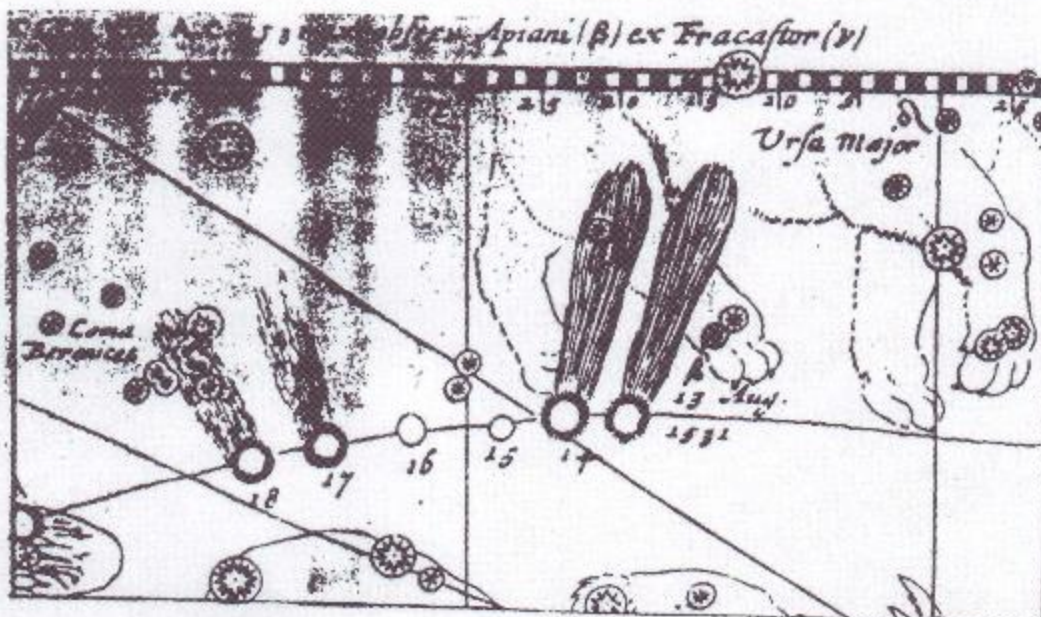
1531 August 5; (P = August 26.2, d = 0.44 on August 14) China, Japan, Korea, Europe. Comet Halley. A broom star comet appeared in Gemini measuring over 1 degree. Its rays increased in length, and when it reached Crater it measured over 10 degrees and swept central Gemini at the northeast. It swept across Coma Berenices and, to the southeast, brushed a region near Spica in Virgo. It gradually diminished in size and went out of sight after 34 days. Japanese sources note the comet appeared in the northeast between 5:00 and 7:00 A.M. on August 9. It measured 7 degrees and was bluish-white. Later it was seen in the northwest. Korean sources note the comet on August 10 as being white in color and 15 degrees in length. Halley (1752) notes the comet was observed from August 13 to 23 by Peter Apian at Ingolstadt. Pingr'e suggests the first European sightings were in late July or early August.

^v Comet Hale-Bopp will appear in early 1997 CE. It will be seen best from mid March to mid April, in the northwest after sunset. - The World Almanac 1997.

^v p.28 Comets , Donald K. Yeomans, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York.

Regiomontanus' major work on comets was first published by Schoner at Nurnberg in 1531 to take advantage of the interest generated by the comet (Halley), which appeared in that year. An English translation of the Latin title would read "Sixteen problems on the magnitude, longitude and true location of comets by the German Regiomontanus, the most learned among men".

^v Peter Apian's observation of Halley's comet of 1531 CE (Bulletin de la societe Astronomique de France, 1910) shows the comet passing by the constellation Ursa Major - Sapat Rishi.



^{vi} ibid. p. 412. Comets , Donald K. Yeomans, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. New York.

1532 September 2; (p = October 18, d=0.67 on September 21) China, Japan, Korea, Europe. a broom star comet measuring about 1 degree appeared in Southern Gemini. It then gradually increased to over 15 degrees and swept a region near the star Spica in Virgo. It appeared until December 21. It was observed by Peter Apian, Girolamo Fracastoro, and Johannes Vogelin.

^{viii} ibid.

1533 June 27; (p = June 15, d = 0.42 on August 2) China, Japan, Korea, Europe. On July 1 a broom star comet measuring over 7 degrees appeared in Auriga with its tail sweeping into western Perseus. Its length gradually increased to over 15 degrees, then it trespassed against western Cassiopeia. On September 16 it went out of sight. European observers included Copernicus, Peter Apian, Gemma Frisius, and Girolamo Fracastoro.

^{ix} ibid. p.413

1539 April 30; (P = May 12, d = 0.2 on May 31) China, Korea, Japan, Europe. A broom star comet was seen in Leo. Its rays pointed southeast and measured about 4 degrees. After 10 days it went out of sight. Its tail was white and 7 to 9 degrees long. In Europe it was observed by Gemma Frisius and Peter Apian.

(This comet, smaller than the apparitions of 1531, 1532, and 1533 CE had appeared a few months before the passing away of Guru Nank Dev Ji on September 7, 1539 CE.)

^x p.169. Comets Vagabonds of Space, David A. Scargent, Doubleday & Company Inc., New York
Halley's Comet-The Most Famous Of Them All

In 1378 the comet was rather less impressive, but it was described as "terrible, of extraordinary magnitude" at the following appearance in 1456. In 1531 it was observed by Peter Apian, in 1607 by Kepler, and ----- by Halley in 1682.

----- Comets Vagabonds of Space, David A. Scargent, Doubleday & Company Inc., New York, 1982

^{xi} p. 49. The Making of Sikh Scripture, Gurinder Singh Mann, Columbia University, 1993.

^{xii} There are 114 Suras in the Holy Quran. About Sura 110 Abdullah Yusuf Ali writes "This beautiful Sura was the last of the Suras to be revealed as a whole, ----- contains probably the last words of the Quran to be revealed. --- The date of this Sura was only a few months before the passing away of the holy Prophet from this world, Rabi I, A.H. 1 "

---- p. 1801 The Holy Quran, Text, - Translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali