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NISHAAN

NAGAARA

SPECIAL ISSUE
Chardi Kalaa Conference
at San Jose, California



The Fifth Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 19 August 2017 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley



Contents

SPECIAL ISSUE I/2018

2 Editorial Staying anchored, moving forward

Dr IJ Singh, Gurinder Pal Singh and Inder Mohan Singh



5 Hukam Rajaaee Chalnaa: living in alignment with Hukam

Dr. Inder Mohan Singh



12 Following the Guru's path From Human Love to Divine Love

Dr. Kanwaljeet Singh Anand



24 The Sikh Way of Life

Harnoor Kaur Panesar

27 Human Ideals of Guru Granth Sahib

Dr. Jaspal Kaur Kaang

34 HUKAM: What it is & What it Aint?

Dr IJ Singh



38 Sri Guru Granth Sahib Scripture of Global Concerns

Dr. Jaspal Singh



43 Interconnected Ethics Living as Warrior-Saints for the Freedom and Equality of all, across Centuries, Cultures, Religions and Continents

Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa



49 Sikh Way of Life as inspired by the Sikh Rehat Maryada

Sukhveer Singh Karicut

53 "By Walking the Walk with SGGS and our beloved Gurus, are Sikhs designed to be civic entrepreneurs, public ombudsmen, or future leaders?"

Harbir Kaur Bhatia



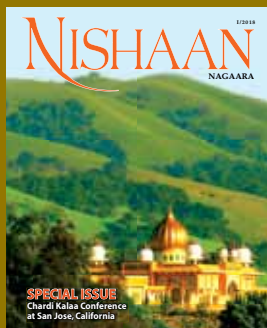
58 Some questions, and answers as inspired by Bhai Vir Singh's novel 'Satwant Kaur'

Geeta Kaur Karicut



62 The Mool Project

Sundeep Singh Bedi



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California

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The Timeless, Universal Message of Guru Granth Sahib

“Staying anchored, moving forward”



Around September every year, Sikhs worldwide celebrate Guru Granth Sahib as the Living Word. Its first compilation was in 1604 by Guru Arjan Dev ji and was finalised a hundred years later in 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh as the repository of Sikh spiritual heritage.

The Guru Granth Sahib is not a catalogue of sins committed or contemplated and prescriptions to atone for them. It is not a reference guide with steps numbered and outlined as in an encyclopedia to be crammed or copied. It is not even a detailed historical narrative of the colourful journey of the Sikh people. Such matters are not totally shunned but they are clearly not central to the message. Such detail would have limited the Guru Granth Sahib and Sikhi to a particular time, place, culture and geography – surely an ethnocentric existence.

Instead, the Guru Granth Sahib remains an unparalleled guide on how to *make a life* as opposed

to *making a living*. How to discover the universal connectivity that fashions communities and nations, and how to nurture a progressive relationship with the Creator that respects the creation in an inclusive fashion.

Naturally then, yearly celebrations of the compilation of Guru Granth are not uncommon across the world, wherever Sikh communities are found.

A few years ago, a handful of Sikhs from California's Silicon Valley took note of the obvious: The values of Sikhi as revealed by the Guru Granth are unique, universal, eternal (timeless), a thinking person's guide and most powerfully expressed in Guru Granth Sahib. What would be better than initiating a yearly Symposium to reconnect with these values where the focus will remain on contents and teachings of the Guru Granth? The first conclave was hosted by the California-based *Chardi Kalaa* Foundation and the majestic San Jose Gurdwara. This year (2017) was the

sixth. Two years ago, SikhNet, the largest Sikh portal on the Internet also joined as a sponsor.

The *Sikh Review* (Kolkata) published special issues on the first two Symposia. The New Delhi-based *Nishaan* took over this responsibility from 2014 onwards and brings you the proceedings of 2017 today. This Editorial provides a quick and brief summary of the day.

Our speakers remain an eclectic mix in age, geography, commitment to Sikhi and this year (2017) was even more of a captivating mix. For the past two years, a short segment by very young voices, usually early teens have opened the day. They bring us delightfully thoughtful voices about Sikhi; many have also mastered complex traditional instruments of classical Indian musicology. For about an hour and a half they connected us to Sikhi in a very sensitive rendering that is often touching. This also cuts across the barriers of age that seem to come between children and their parents when talking about Sikhi in gurdwaras and at homes. The second part of the day that highlighted oral presentations and conversation about them showcased Sikh speakers from across the United States as well those who are India-based.

It was a day of short speeches and often profound comments with sometimes strongly opinionated exchanges. The idea is to identify issues from our complex lives and then connect them to selected lines (and their meaning) from the Guru Granth. This connection is the main idea here. Clearly, the Guru Granth must speak to us today in New York, California, London, Rome, Bangladesh or wherever, as it did to countless Sikhs in the Punjab 10,000 miles away and centuries ago. The worldwide connections of Sikhi must be explored, clarified and nurtured.

The theme of the conference as in previous years remains:

“Applying the timeless, universal message of Guru Granth Sahib, across centuries, cultures, religions and continents - in today’s world.”

A galaxy of Sikh scholars presented their insights into the message of the Gurus and how to connect them

to our complex lives. The conference was a joint effort of the *Chardi Kalaa Foundation*, Sikh Gurdwara San Jose and SikhNet.

Thumbnail sketches of the proceedings follow: The programme opened in the morning with shabads rendered by two groups of students from Guru Nanak Khalsa School San Jose. True to the spirit of Guru Granth Sahib, the shabads were rendered in the Raags as prescribed in Gurbani. Students also used Sikh heritage instruments like the *Rabab*, *Dilruba* and *Taus*.

Kirtan was followed by three short talks by students from Guru Nanak Khalsa School who had received first positions in their respective age groups at the Sri Hemkunt International Youth Symposium held in Sacramento a month earlier in July 2017. Harnoor Kaur outlined the Sikh way of life as prescribed by Guru Nanak Dev. Geeta Kaur presented the Sikh Way of life as depicted in *Satwant Kaur*, the classic novel by Bhai Vir Singh, and Sukhveer Singh led us into the Sikh way of life as prescribed in the Sikh *Rehat Maryada* (The Sikh Code of Conduct).

Dr Inder Mohan Singh, Chairman of *Chardi Kalaa Foundation* then opened the scholarly adult presentations by one on ‘Living in Alignment with Hukam’. He emphasised that the universe was created with Waheguru’s Hukam and that all physical and spiritual laws are manifestation of Hukam. Whatever we do, happens due to his Hukam. Living in alignment with Hukam includes recognising and cheerfully accepting all that happens as His Hukam, and living in tune with His Hukam which is inscribed deep within us and is revealed to us through Gurbani.

Coincidentally, the last talk of the day by Dr IJ Singh, a professor of Anatomy at New York University was also on Hukam. He emphasised that Waheguru is not a micromanager. Waheguru has blessed us with intellect (some less, some more) to discern between good and evil and a degree of free will to make productive choices. In his view, while macro things happen with Waheguru’s Hukam, responsibility for our actions rests on us. The onus to create a better world is ours.

Dr. Jaspal Singh, ex-Vice Chancellor Punjabi University Patiala delighted the audience with a

powerful presentation. His thesis was that the concerns of Guru Granth Sahib are truly global. He quoted extensively from Guru Granth Sahib to emphasise that its message transcends all cultural, linguistic, and geographic bounds to remain universal and applies equally to dimensions of spirituality, space, time, gender, religion, race, economics, including political and social concerns.

Dr. Niranjin Khalsa, Professor of Jain and Sikh Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, focused on the message of universal brotherhood enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib in the context of the present world, where forces of hate and separatism are raising their heads. She outlined the courses on Sikhism at her University, as well as the importance of academic programmes on Sikhi in universities.

Dr. Jaspal Kaur Kaang, Academic Head of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies at Panjab University Chandigarh (India), could not attend. Her paper was presented in absentia by Dr. Gurinder Pal Singh. It echoed the messages of pluralism and universality contained in Guru Granth Sahib. Diversity of languages, social backgrounds, and religions abound in the Guru Granth Sahib; irrespective of religious label they make convincing argument for human dignity and respect, regardless of religion, gender, race, etc.

Ms. Harbir Bhatia, an engineer by education, is a community activist and social entrepreneur. She serves as commissioner on the Santa Clara County cultural commission and is a Board Member of the Chamber of Commerce. She emphasised the Sikh ethics of compassion for everyone, honest work, justice and liberty for all that make Sikhs uniquely qualified to be civic entrepreneurs and leaders. Citing examples from Guru Granth Sahib and the lives of our Gurus, she explored why the world today needs more Sikhs.

S. Sundeep Singh Bedi ('Bobby') has been working to connect Sikh Youth and non-Sikhs with the message of Gurbani through audio visual media. He was one of the content designers for the *Virasat e Khalsa* at Sri Anandpur Sahib. Presently he is engaged

in the *Mool Project* in New Delhi. He showed an audio-visual presentation of *Arti (Gagan mein thaal ravi....)* and of Sidh Gosht. Both compositions of Guru Nanak remain fantastic examples of interfaith dialogue in the 15th century.

Dr. Kanwaljeet Singh Anand, a professor of medical sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine, put everyone in a state of *anand* with his talk on 'Love' as a foundational value. Like the taste of honey, true love can be experienced but just cannot be conveyed through words. By raising our consciousness, we can intuitively realise more transcendent, subtle, and enduring meanings of Love. Love is the primal force that sustains Nature all around us, and holds the family, community and society together. By consistently applying the Guru's teachings in our lives, we will progress through the four stages of Love thereby transforming our lives from human to the divine state that our Gurus exemplified.

Over 200 people attended the conference. Their interest was intense as seen from the discussion and the Q&As that followed each talk. Two breaks for tea and a longer one for *langar* (lunch) provided ample opportunities for interaction; it transcended barriers of language, age and background, and reflected the dedication of the Sikh community.

We are in the process of exploring how to encourage more of such trans-generational communication. This is an area that mandates never-ending initiatives. Our community needs them; our future demands them. How best to make our conversations and conferences more interactive? Perhaps survey data from our widespread community would be helpful.

The Sikh Gurdwara San Jose, the *Chardi Kalaa Foundation* and *SikhNet* collaborated mightily and generously. They thank the participants and attendees. Many volunteers who wish to remain nameless worked tirelessly and cheerfully to make the conference a success.

**Dr IJ Singh, Gurinder Pal Singh and
Inder Mohan Singh**

Hukam Rajaaee Chalnaa:

Living in alignment with Hukam



In Japji Sahib, at the beginning, Guru Nanak Dev ji asks *Kiv sachiaara hoeeai*: “How can we achieve union with the Divine or the True One?”

And He gives us the answer *Hukam rajaaee chalnaa*, *Nanak likhia naal*: Walk in the *Hukam*, which is inscribed within us, within all creation.

Let us look at what is *Hukam*, and what does it mean to walk in alignment with the *Hukam*. How do we become *sachiaara*, or one with Truth? How do we achieve that state of union with the True One, with Waheguru, through *hukam rajaaee chalna*?

The word *hukam* means a command or edict. In the religious context it is often translated as Divine Will or Commandment. *Hukam* also refers to the System or Framework ordained by the Creator under which everything in the universe operates. Gurbani tells us

that everything is under His *Hukam* – nothing happens outside *Hukam*.

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ [SGGS Japji M1 p1]

Everything operates under His Hukam, nothing is outside of Hukam.

ਜਉ ਜਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤਵੈ ਤਉ ਹੋਵਣਾ ॥ [SGGS M5 p523]

As is Your Hukam, so will everything happen

ਸਗਲ ਸਮਗ੍ਰੀ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਸੂਤਰਿ ਧਾਰੀ ॥ [SGGS M5 p 268]
ਤੁਮ ਤੇ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਆਗਿਆਕਾਰੀ ॥

Everything in all of creation is strung on the thread of Your Hukam, and since it all comes from You, it is obedient to Your Hukam

We can try to describe *Hukam* and talk about it, as we are doing here, but ultimately *Hukam*

is beyond our ability to fully understand or describe. Like Waheguru Himself His Hukam is incomprehensible: *agam* and *agochar*.

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿਆਕਾਰ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥ [SGGS M1 p1]

By His Command, all beings are created; His Command cannot be described.

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਪੀ ਕੇਤੜਾ ਕਹਿਨ ਸਕੀਜੈ ਕਾਰ ॥ [SGGS M1 p18]

No one knows how great the Hukam of His Command is; no one can describe His actions.

His *Hukam* cannot be fully described in words, however the Guru shows us how to walk on the Gurmat path in alignment with His Will.

There is a common image of God as a human-like figure, a kind of puppeteer, who is directing and micromanaging everything in the Universe. I like to think of *Hukam* more as a framework or system under which everything in the universe operates. This includes the laws of nature, which scientists have been studying for a very long time, and which they are progressively understanding more and more. But beyond the laws of nature His *Hukam* is manifested through spiritual laws, which are the focus of Gurbani and other religious scriptures.

In Japji again Guru Nanak tells us:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੇ ਕਵਾਉ ॥ [SGGS M1 p3]
ਤਸਿ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

You created the vast expanse of the Universe with One Word! And hundreds of thousands of rivers began to flow.

We can think of the *Kavao* or Word as the Divine *Hukam* or the expression by God of these laws of nature and the spiritual laws. Everything flows from the one Word or *Hukam*.

Over the centuries, scientists have discovered that there are certain laws underlying all the different phenomena we see in nature. While we have progressively learnt more and more, we still understand just a tiny fraction of all the wonders of His creation. There is much more that science still cannot address or explain. It is important to remember that anything

that science does discover is a part of His *Hukam*, a reflection of His awesome glory and of the wonders of His creation.

All the myriad living beings including human beings are created by Him under His *Hukam*. But the way I understand it, He did not just command each one into existence, as the proponents of ‘Intelligent Design’ and others would have one believe; instead He produced this incredible world of myriad creatures through the laws of nature, through the fascinating process of evolution, along with the underlying processes of physics, biochemistry and genetics. Just consider the complexity and power of the eye, or the brain. All of these have been created through the basic laws of nature, including evolution. So there really is no contradiction between religion and evolution, or science in general.

If you look at the universe, not only is it incredible that there are all these galaxies, stars and planets, but the whole process through which they have been created starting with the big bang is awe-inspiring. There is so much beauty in how all this can happen from a few basic laws. You can almost feel spiritual reading about all the incredible discoveries that scientists have been making about the universe if you recognise that it is all a part of His creation, His *Hukam*.

ਕਰਤੇ ਕੁਦਰਤੀ ਮੁਸਤਾਬੁ ॥ [SGGS M 5 p 724]

O Creator, beholding your creation, I am filled with love for you.



Gurbani also tells us that Waheguru is the Master of countless universes (*kot brahmand ko thakur swami*), and that He constantly creates and destroys universes. Many physicists are now speculating about the multi-universe, and of bubble universes popping in and out of existence.

The laws of nature are only one part of His *Hukam* that we can see and talk about. There is a whole other universe of spiritual laws which are also a part of His *Hukam* and which are the subject of Gurbani. For example, Gurbani talks about the law of *dharma*, whereby each of us is judged and held accountable for our actions, and we reap the results of the actions that we sow. It also tells us about the path of *naam simran* and *bhakti* that we should follow.

Gurbani also describes how God takes care of his devotees or *bhagats* :

ਅਉਖੀ ਘੜੀ ਨ ਦੇਖਣ ਦੇਈ ਅਪਨਾ ਬਰਿਦੁ ਸਮਾਲੇ ॥
ਹਾਥ ਦੇਇ ਰਾਖੇ ਅਪਨੇ ਕਉ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਪ੍ਰਤਪਾਲੇ ॥੧॥
[SGGS M5 p662]

The word *birad* is often translated as His innate nature but we can think of it as His way, one of His spiritual laws. According to this spiritual law, He watches over those who reach a certain stage of *bhakti*. These are just a few examples of His spiritual laws given in Gurbani. Waheguru is the creator of these physical and spiritual laws, but He is not limited by them. He is beyond all limits and transcends these laws. He is not arbitrary or whimsical – He is just, kind and forgiving. If His Will appears to be unfair or mean, it is our limited understanding

ਪੂਰਾ ਨਿਆਉ ਕਰੇ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥ [SGGS M5 p 199]
The Creator administers true justice.

And

ਤੁਮ ਕਰਹੁ ਭਲਾ ਹਮ ਭਲੇ ਨ ਜਾਨਹੁ ਤੁਮ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਦਇਆਲਾ ॥
[SGGS M5 p 513]

What You do is always good, but we do not understand and appreciate it. You are always kind and compassionate.

What does it mean to live in alignment with *Hukam* or *hukam rajaii chalna*? There are two major aspects of *Hukam Rajaaee Chalna*: one is *Hukam manana* or

joyful acceptance of whatever happens as His *Hukam*, and the other is understanding and living our lives according to His *Hukam* or *Hukam kamaana*.

What do we mean by that? Guru Nanak Dev ji says *Hukam rajaaee chalna Nanak likhia naal*. What does the Guru mean by *likhia naal* ? The universal Divine *Hukam* is written deep within each one of us. However, we cannot understand it because we are separated from our true reality by our *haumai* – the strong sense of a separate identity, often translated as ego. As we progress spiritually, this universal Divine *Hukam* within ourselves is what we start to discover and to follow in our lives. Gurbani instructs us about this *Hukam* even when we are not yet at the stage where we can understand this Divine *Hukam* on our own. In other words, Gurbani is *Hukam*, in a form that is accessible to us. It tells how we should live our lives to achieve union with the Divine. So this aspect of *Hukam rajaaee chalna* is understanding and following the Divine *Hukam* as given to us by the Gurus in Gurbani: *Hukam bujhnaa* and *Hukam kamaana*.

Bhana mananaa

Let us take a closer look at the first aspect of *Hukam*: *bhana mananaa*. What that means is to realise that everything happens in His *Hukam* and to cheerfully accept whatever occurs as His Will.

ਜੇ ਤੁਧੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਾਈ ਭਲੀ ਕਾਰ ॥ [SGGS M1 p. 4]

Whatever pleases you is good,

and..

ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥ [SGGS M 5 p.394]

Whatever You cause to happen is sweet to me.



We do have to be fully engaged in life and do our best, but at the same time we have to accept whatever happens as His *Hukam*. Even in the face of misfortune, we have to keep our faith and remain in *Chardi Kalaa*. The most inspiring example of *bhaana manana* is that of Guru Arjan Dev ji who underwent the most horrific torture and still declared “*tera kiya meetha lagai*”.

An important part of living in *Hukam* is recognising that everything is His *Hukam* and celebrating it and accepting it joyously. This is part of expressing our devotion and love for Him.

ਸੋਈ ਕਰਣਾ ਜੀਆਪਿਕਰਾਏ ॥
ਜਥੈ ਰਖੈ ਸਾ ਭਲੀ ਜਾਏ ॥
ਸੋਈ ਸਾਖਿਆ ਸੇ ਪਤਵਿੰਤਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਲਗੈ ਜਸਿ ਮੀਠਾ ਜੀਉ ॥੧॥
[SGGS M 5 p 108]

The Gurmukh not only accepts the Divine Will, but considers it to be sweet: *Hukam lagai jis meetah jio*.

It is easy to talk about accepting His Will, but it can be really hard to actually do so in practice. As Guruji tells us ਤੇਰਾ ਮਹਲੁ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਬਖਿਸੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਹੈ ਭਾਣਾ ॥ [SGGS M5 p 1186] Your Mansion is imperceptible, O my Beloved; it is so difficult to accept Your Will.

Even when we are trying to do the right thing and putting in our best effort, things do not always work out the way we want.

ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰਣਾ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਾ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੧॥
[SGGS Rehras M1 p469]

He is doing what He wills; what I attempt may or may not work. But I have to try and then cheerfully accept the result. We must have faith that what happens in His *Hukam* is for the best

ਤੁਮ ਕਰਹੁ ਭਲਾ ਹਮ ਭਲੇ ਨ ਜਾਨਹੁ ਤੁਮ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਦਇਆਲਾ ॥
[SGGS M5 p 613]

We know Waheguru is compassionate, we know he is just. So whatever He does is for the best, even though we may not realise it. However, *bhaana manana* is not to be confused with resignation or fatalism. Gurbani tells us to do our *udam*, to make our best effort to do the right things. Looking at the lives of the Gurus, we see that they did not just accept injustice and tyranny as

His Will, they resisted and fought against it, often at great personal sacrifice.

When we talk about *bhaana manana*, accepting His Will, we usually refer to how to deal with misfortune, when things go wrong. But both bad and good things, *dukh* and *sukh*, happen in His Will.

ਸੁਖੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਦੁਇ ਦਰਕਿ ਪੜੇ ਪਹਰਿਹ ਜਾਇ ਮਨੁਖ ॥ [SGGS M1 p.149]
Pleasure and pain are the two garments given, to be worn in the Court of the Lord.
Sukh and Dukh, good and bad fortune, happiness and suffering are all His gifts

ਜੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਦੇਹਤਿ ਤੁਝਹਿ ਅਰਾਧੀ ਦੁਖਿ ਭੀ ਤੁਝੈ ਧਿਆਈ ॥੨॥
[SGGS M4 p 757]
ਜੇ ਭੁਖ ਦੇਹਤਿ ਇਤ ਹੀ ਰਾਜਾ ਦੁਖ ਵਚਿ ਸੁਖ ਮਨਾਈ ॥੩॥

If You will bless me with happiness, then I will worship and adore You. Even in pain, I will meditate on You. || 2 ||
Even if You give me hunger, I will still feel satisfied; I am joyful, even in the midst of sorrow. || 3 ||

We have to remember Him both in moments of pain, and of happiness.

Hukam is not just accepting misfortune, it is also celebrating when good things happen. When something bad happens, we say oh well, it is God's Will. We are effectively blaming Him but saying that we have no choice but to accept it, or perhaps to pray to Him. When good things happen, we often take the credit for them: we believe that it is the result of our hard work, or our smartness, etc. or else we just take them for granted. It is important to remember that good things also happen in His Will. They are an opportunity to celebrate all our blessings and to remember Him and practice gratitude. If we just pause and reflect on all our blessings, we realise there is so much to be grateful for.

Beyond *bhaana manana* or accepting the Divine Will, is *Hukam kamaana*, obeying or living according to *Hukam*. It is following the teachings of the Gurus and the Universal Divine *Hukam* deep within ourselves, and living our whole life according to this *Hukam*.

When the Guru asks *kiv sachiaara hoiai*, is it possible to become one with the True One, with Waheguru, just by acceptance alone? The Guru is talking about more

than *bhana manana*, or accepting His Will. He is talking about being in alignment with the Divine *Hukam*, about living the *Hukam*.



ਗੁਰਸਖਿ ਮੀਤ ਚਲਹੁ ਗੁਰ ਚਾਲੀ ॥ [SGGS M4 p667]
ਜੇ ਗੁਰੁ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਈ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕਥਾ ਨਰਿਾਲੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

*O Sikhs of the Guru, O friends, walk on the Guru's Path.
Do as the Guru tells you – His message is wonderful.*

The teachings of Gurbani can be said to cover two broad areas: one is spiritual or our relationship with the Divine — the path of *Naam*. The other is ethics or how we relate and act towards one another – our *achaar*.

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥ [SGGS M5 p266]
ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਰਿਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

*Of all religions, the best religion
Is to chant the Name of the Lord and maintain pure conduct.*

It is clear that both spirituality and ethics have to go hand in hand. The practice of *paath*, *kirtan* and *naam simran* helps to overcome our *haumai* and cleanses us of our evil tendencies. But if we go through the motions of chanting *Waheguru*, *Waheguru*, doing *kirtan* and *paath*, but continue to cheat, be mean to others, or act in pride and anger, we are not going to make any spiritual progress. Our spiritual life has to be reflected in our actions. Otherwise we are trying to fool *Waheguru*, or actually ourselves.

Now, *Hukam* and *Naam* are closely related. Both words often refer to the all-pervading Divine presence or jot that underlies everything.

ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥੫॥

The One Name is the Lord's Command; O Nanak, the True Guru has given me this understanding. || 5 ||

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਜਨਿ ਨੇ ਮਨਾਇਆ ॥ [SGGS M1 p 72]

ਤਨਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਸਾਇਆ ॥

Those, whom God causes to abide by His Will, Have the Shabad of His Word abiding deep within.

In other words, living in *Hukam* is to be in tune with *Naam*. Recognising *Hukam* and living in alignment with *Hukam* helps to overcome *Haumai*, which is the biggest obstacle to *Naam*

ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਰਿਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਇ ॥
[SGGS M3 p 560]

Haumai and Naam are essentially opposites. We cannot achieve Naam without overcoming our Haumai. At the same time, living in Hukam is the way to conquer Haumai.

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥ [SGGS M1 p1]

O Nanak, one who understands His Hukam, does not speak in haumai. || 2 ||

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੰਨਹਿ ਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਮਲਿ ਤਾ ਵਰਿਹੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
[SGGS M3 p 560]

If you submit to the Hukam of the Lord's Command, then you shall meet with the Lord; only then will your ego depart from within.

The ethical message of Gurbani includes overcoming our *haumai* and our evil tendencies: *kaam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh* and *ahankar* (lust, anger, greed, unhealthy attachment and pride) and all the other evil tendencies that come out of them: hatred, violence, cruelty and dishonesty. Additionally, there are the positive qualities or *guns* that we have to inculcate including *Sat* (truth), *Santokh* (contentment), *Daya* (compassion), *Dharam* (doing one's duty), *Parupkar* (altruism) and *Khima* (forgiveness).

An important point to note is that the Gurbani gives us a set of key ethical values, not a list of dos and don'ts such as the ten commandments of Christianity, the sharia law of Islam, or the karma kand of Hinduism. Such core ethical values are universal and timeless, while the dos and don'ts of morality are often driven by cultural and historic context and they tend to be specific to a time and place. What people think of as morality differs from one group to another and this

often leads to conflict and confusion. One group says “We cannot do this because my religion says so” and another group says “but my religion says this instead”. Most people can, on the other hand, essentially agree on the core values advocated by Gurbani.

As we discussed earlier, ethics and spirituality are intimately connected. One key guiding principle of our *achaar* or how we treat others is to recognise the Divine Light in all. We must treat everyone with respect and kindness because each one is a child of the same Creator.

ਨਾ ਕੇ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਗਿਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿਆਈ ॥੧॥

[SGGS M5 p.1299]

ਸਭ ਮਹਾਰਵਿਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਗਿਸਾਈ ॥੩॥੮॥

Guru Arjan Dev Ji says I do not see any enemy or stranger, and he goes on to add that he sees the same Divine Light pervading all.

Similarly in this shabad, Bhagat Kabir ji sees everything originating in the One Divine Light, so we should not judge any one as good or bad:

ਅਵਲਿਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਕਿ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

[SGGS Kabir p 1349]

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥੧॥

First, Allah created the Light; then, by His Creative Power, He made all mortal beings. From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad?

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ਸੁ ਏਕੇ ਜਾਨੈ ਬੰਦਾ ਕਰੀਐ ਸੇਈ ॥੩॥

The last line emphasises that realising the Divine Hukam we see the One in everyone, which is, again, the basis of how we should treat each other.

Free Will and Choice

One question that frequently comes up in the context of *Hukam* is the age old issue of determinism versus free will and choice. According to Gurbani, everything is under His Hukam, we have no power on our own.

ਮੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਕਛੂ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਕਰਿ ਹੈ ਰਾਮੁ ਹੋਇ ਹੈ ਸੇਇ ॥੪॥ [SGGS Kabir p 1165]

ਤੂੰ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰਣਾ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਾ ਹਉ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥੧॥

[SGGS M1 p 469]



You are the Creator Lord; I can do nothing. Even if I try, nothing happens.

ਕੀਤਾ ਕਰਣਾ ਸਰਬ ਰਜਾਈ ਕਛਿ ਕੀਚੈ ਜੇ ਕਰਿ ਸਕੀਐ ॥
ਆਪਣਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਕਛਿ ਨ ਹੋਵੈ ਜਾਇ ਹਰਿ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਉ ਰਖੀਐ ॥੧॥
ਮੇਰੇ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਸਿ ॥
ਅਸਾ ਜੇਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਜੇ ਕਛਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਸਾਕਹ ਜਾਇ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਵਿ ਬਖਸਿ ॥੧॥
ਰਹਾਉ ॥ [SGGS M4 p.736]

All that happens, and all that will happen, is by His Will. If we could do something by ourselves, we would. By ourselves, we cannot do anything at all.

At the same time, Gurbani repeatedly tells us to make the right choices.

We are enjoined to walk on the path shown by the Guru. We have to do our *paath* and *naam simran*. As discussed earlier we must overcome our *haumai*, avoid evil and control *kaam*, *krodh* etc. and practice good *achaar*, exercise compassion, do *parupkaar* and *seva* and so on.

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ਤੂੰ ਕਮਾਵਦਿਆ ਸੁਖ ਭੁੰਦੁ ॥
ਧਿਆਇਦਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਮਲਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਉਤਰੀ ਚਤਿ ॥੧॥
[SGGS Guru Arjan p. 15]

We have to make an effort to practice the teachings of Gurbani, perform *naam simran*, and we will achieve union with God and all our anxieties and worries will be removed.

We are also told that we are held accountable for our actions, that we reap the results of what we sow through our actions both good and bad.

ਦੈ ਦੇਸੁ ਨ ਦੇਉ ਕਸਿ ਦੇਸੁ ਕਰਮਾ ਆਪਣਿਆ ॥
ਜੇ ਮੈ ਕੀਆ ਸੇ ਮੈ ਪਾਇਆ ਦੇਸੁ ਨ ਦੀਜੈ ਅਵਰ ਜਨਾ ॥
(SGGS M1 p. 433).

Clearly, Gurbani asks us to make the right choices and to do the *udam* or take the initiative and make a serious effort to follow through on the Guru's teachings.

If God is directing everything and we do not have any real control over our actions, then why should we even bother to try? How do we address this conundrum?

We have to realise that in any case, our choices are highly constrained. We have no control over our

DNA which determines much of our personality and plays a big role in how we act in a given situation. We do not choose our parents or how the DNA from the mother and father is combined to generate our DNA. Furthermore, the environment in which we grow up also impacts who we are. The actions we can take are also limited by the external situations we face as we make our choices.

Nevertheless, it is my understanding that I do have to make the right choices and take responsibility for my actions and try to follow the Guru's teachings. At the same time, I must see it all as a part of His Hukam. My ability to do anything, including acting according to the Guru's teachings, is through His blessing and I should be grateful.

If things don't work out as I intend, I also have to accept that as His Hukam.

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Dr. Kanwaljeet Singh Anand on

Following the Guru's path

"From Human Love to Divine Love"



What is love? Scientists argue that “reducing love to its component parts helps us to understand human sexuality”. Love is not a mental state that leads to physical bonding, but is the highest of all human emotions. Throughout civilisation, human beings have experienced and expressed love for each other; some have described the attributes of love through eulogies, poetry, drama, or fiction. Like the taste of honey, true love can be experienced but cannot be conveyed through words. By raising our level of consciousness, all of us will intuitively realise the transcendent, subtle, and enduring meanings of Love. We will realise that love is an ingredient in cosmic creation, the primal force that sustains Nature all around us, the glue that holds family, community and society together. By consistently applying the Guru's teachings to our lives, we will progress through the four stages of love thereby transforming our lives from human to Divine Love that the Gurus exemplified.

An article in the scientific journal ‘Nature’, argues that “reducing love to its component parts helps us to understand human sexuality”. What a travesty of Love! To think that the highest human emotion can be “reduced” to a physical interactions of bodies in the act of procreation is like labeling poison as the *amrit* (the elixir of immortality). Once a deeper understanding of Love is attained, nothing can be farther from the truth. Love is not just a mental state that leads to physical bonding; to assert that “*biologists may soon be able to reduce certain mental states associated with love to a biochemical chain of events*” is both myopic and misleading.

Current events and the media constantly bombard our intellect with images and examples of hatred, death and destruction. Often, we hear about road rage accidents, hijacked planes, mass shootings, or other

catastrophes. When hatred becomes more apparent, in communal clashes, internecine struggles, or full-scale wars, we try to protect our own through any means. Hate becomes a soul-searing experience when a loved one is attacked or killed. The death of unknown people can be impersonal but the death of a loved one leaves a searing hole in the fabric of our lives, and forces us to seriously choose between hatred *versus* love.

Viewed from anger or cynicism, hatred appears powerful and permanent, whereas love appears weak and transitory. Deep down, however, below the chattering of the mind or arguments of the intellect, our heart refuses to accept that Love is weak or transient, it longs for deeper meanings of Love. If animal instincts are overcome, all human beings will intuitively seek more sublime, subtle, and enduring meanings of Love. If solely driven by self-interest or sense-gratification, we may find little or no purpose in these meanings, but those inspired to explore the spiritual realms by the Guru's Word may feel the burning desire to undertake this journey.

Since the dawn of civilisation, human beings have experienced and expressed Love for each other; gifted beings described the attributes of Love through eulogies, poetry, drama, or fiction; based on feelings or fantasy, or fable or folklore. Poets, philosophers, and scientists have pondered the question "What is Love?" but they could come up only with reductionist or simplistic answers that were unsatisfactory even to themselves. Like honey, Love can be experienced, but cannot be described. No amount of knowledge about honey will create that indelible experience gained from a drop placed on the tongue. Love, as experienced by human beings, has the same result – no amount of talk about can supplant the beauty, inner joy, the fulfilling aspects of that experience, one that has inspired the greatest achievements of mankind.

Though all of creation can experience Love, only human beings can understand the essence of Love, realise the deepest meaning of Love, or access the inner, inexhaustible bounty of Divine Love. Let us all approach an understanding of Love from the spiritual, the mental, and the practical aspects of human experience. The first proves that our universe

cannot be created without Love, the second reveals Love as a powerful force in Nature, and the third shows how Love holds the fabric of human society together, yet one must be consciously aware that all these are simply the aspects of one entity, Love. Just as a statue photographed from different angles remains one, similarly, a description of the different aspects of Love will not alter what it is.

Love as an ingredient in Cosmic Construction

During his lifetime, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) realised the apparent existence of the universe, also eloquently stated by another great physicist, Sir James Jeans, who wrote: *"The stream of knowledge is heading toward a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought (rather) than like a great machine. Mind no longer appears to be an accidental intruder into the realm of matter . . . it is the creator and governor of the realm of matter"*.

Guru Nanak said that Maya is a product of the mind, investigating it with the tools of the mind – like reason, or logic, or deduction, proposing or rejecting hypotheses, like a fish (or a shoal of fish) trying to map the extent of the ocean! What a futile and foolish endeavour. The human mind, which exists within and functions through the facility of consciousness, can never fathom the extent of consciousness and beyond. Whereas scholars and intellectuals, scientists and philosophers have had partial success, the saints and seers made greater headway through intuition and revelations about the nature of the manifest universe. They realised and proclaimed an Absolute Reality, that one that exists eternally, without undergoing any change or modification, which remains beyond time and space. The human mind, using the five organs of sense and capable of recognising sound, touch, sight, taste and smell, can only comprehend the properties of this reality, not the substance of absolute reality itself! Einstein referred to this "perceived reality" as an illusion, but remained silent about the nature of the Absolute Reality.

So, to examine spiritual aspects of Love, we must understand the process of Creation, how the Uncaused Cause, the *Anhad Shabd* behind all this kaleidoscopic reality created the manifested universe. From popular science, the 'Big Bang Theory' is a commonly accepted



cosmological model of the universe, one that is best supported by most of the available scientific evidence. 'Big Bang' generally refers to the idea that the universe initially existed as a primordial, extremely hot and extremely dense nucleus at a finite time in the past (around 13.73 ± 0.12 billion years ago), and that it continues to expand to this day. Georges Lemaître (1894-1966), a Belgian mathematician and Catholic priest, first propounded the theory of the Big Bang, although he called it the "hypothesis of the primeval atom". This cosmological model was built on Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, but to gain acceptance it needed Edwin Hubble's discovery in 1929, showing that galaxies were moving away at high speeds. Almost 6 years after it was proposed, Einstein finally accepted Lemaître's theory after a series of seminars in January 1933, saying, "This is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened."

Without any evidence for the earliest instant of the expansion, however, the 'Big Bang' theory does not

provide any explanation for such an initial condition, though it may explain the general evolution of the universe after the 'Big Bang' and onwards where did that dense, primordial nucleus come from? Or, what triggered the initial rapid expansion and cooling of the universe? From the Big Bang theory have emerged other Inflationary Universe Theories, perhaps starting with Alan Guth in the late 1990s (*The Inflationary Universe: The Quest for a New Theory of Cosmic Origins*). Since then, the scientific community has proposed 50 different variants, but all the current theories have serious flaws and cannot explain the mysterious origins of our universe.

To develop an understanding of Creation, physics or astronomy are worthless, the mind and the intellect are powerless, space exploration or technology cannot help, thereby forcing us to look at metaphysical explanations of the universe, using the tools of spirituality like intuition or revelation. Few scientists realise that these same tools have given us most of the greatest discoveries in science.

Before the Universe comes into creation, nothing exists – there is no Time or Space, no galaxies, no Milky Way, no light, no sound, no matter exists – not even the ‘dense matter’ that made up Lemaître’s ‘primeval atom’. Yet, there is an Absolute Reality, a Divine and Blissful Awareness, the *Akaal Purakh*, who remains absorbed in the self as Pure Being. To know itself, this Divine Awareness creates a primordial energy – the *Aadi Shakti*. The innate and inherent nature of energy is propulsive, so it starts expanding in all directions. But the intrinsic nature of the Pure Being is Love, which attracts, which brings close to itself, which abhors separation or any centrifugal forces. Between this expansion and contraction, a vibration is set up, which became the source of all Creation. The Source of this vibration is only One, the *Ik Onkaar* prescribed by Guru Nanak.

This primal vibration has been described in the scriptures of various religions. Christian texts described it as the Word of God, or Amen:

- ✧ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” – *St. John I: 1-3*
- ✧ “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;” – *Revelation 3:14*
- ✧ “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth but the Word of God shall stand forever.” – *Isaiah 40: 8*
- ✧ Ancient Hindu texts identify the Word of God by various different names, such as *AUM* or *Nad Bind* or *Akash Bani* or *Shabd Brahman*
- ✧ “...the Sound principle AUM becomes manifest as *prakrithi* or Nature” – *Hatha Yoga Pradipaka*
- ✧ “He hath taken the support of the Word, the melodious tune.” – *Chandogya Upanishad*
- ✧ “Let the Yogi sit on Sish Asan and while practicing the Vaishnavi mudra, he should

hear the sound AUM through his right ear.”
– *Nad Bind Upanishad*

- ✧ “By communion with the Word he will become deaf to the external sounds, and will attain the Turiya Pad or a state of equipoise within a fortnight.”
– *Nad Bind Upanishad*
- ✧ Islamic texts speak of *Kalma*, the Word of God, and exalt this vibration as *Amin*, calling it the *Sultan-ul-Azkar* (the king of prayers) or *Saut-i-Sarmadi* (the divine song) or *Nida-i-Asmani* (sound from Heaven) and describe its role in Creation:
- ✧ “The fourteen regions were made by the *Kalma*.”
– *the Holy Qu’ran*
- ✧ “Take the stopcock from thy ears, and hear thou the voice of emancipation, coming to thee. Attach not to material world, the elixir of life is showering from above.” – *Khawaja Hafiz*
- ✧ “Grow not sceptical, but attune thyself to the sound coming down from the Heavens. Thy soul shall have revelations from afar. What are these but glimpses of the Unrevealed; were I to speak of these sweet melodies, even the dead shall rise from their graves.” – *Maulana Rumi*
- ✧ “...the Voice of God comes unto my ears as any other sounds.” – *Prophet Mohammed*

The Sikh scriptures speak of *Omkaar* (the Word) or *Shabd Gurmata* (the divine counsel) or *Gurbani* as the Word of God and describe it as immanent in all of creation:

“The Word is both earth and ether. These had their being through the Word. This Word expressed itself in other aspects as well. The whole creation sprang up after the Word... O Nanak, that endless Word is reverberating in each heart.”
– *Guru Nanak*

“The all-pervading Word has attracted my entire mind. What else have I to think of? Communion of the soul with the Word creates everlasting Bliss.”
– *Guru Nanak*

Semantic differences exist between religions, but it is clearly evident that the entity they talk about is the same: a Primal Vibration at the beginning of Creation. Whether we call it Amen, or *AUM*, or *Amin*, or *Omkaar*, the name does not change the true essence of what it is: an eternal, invisible vibration from which *countless streams* of creation sprang up, still reverberating as source of the manifest universe.

Within this vibration, which is eternal and essentially changeless, the Divine Being inserted the idea of change. Out of this idea, being nothing but a figment of imagination or a conceptual notion, the powerful construct of ‘Time’ was born. Thus, Time is measured by change and change is linked inexorably with Time. Without this facility of Time, the human mind is incapable of comprehending the manifest Universe. Because all of Creation happens in one glorious moment, all of the past and all the future (*ad infinitum* in both directions) occur in the present moment of Now, the feeble human mind cannot make sense of this and therefore needs the conceptual assistance of Time in order to experience or interact with all of Creation. No wonder, then, that Time stands still when the mind is quiescent, or slows down when we are suffering, or speeds up when we are with a loved one. All these experiences show that Time is just an imaginary concept, a mere idea, *it exists only in the mind*, like a moving mental frame that allows us to make sense of reality.

Within this vibration, which is eternal, continuous, and essentially indivisible, the Divine Being inserted the idea of division. Out of this idea, again, which is nothing but an imaginary concept, the powerful notion of ‘Space’ was born. This Space is filled with primordial energy, which is why the universe continues to expand at an accelerating rate (deduced from the *Type Ia Supernovae* in 1998, later corroborated by measurements of the cosmic microwave background, gravitational lensing, measurements of redshift change, large scale structures). To scientists, it is amazing that the universe continues to expand even after 14 billion years and that the massive gravitational forces postulated within black holes have not swallowed it up! But to students of spirituality, the primordial energy creating this universe is infinite and inexhaustible, so it will continue to expand infinitely until the Divine Being contracts it back into nothingness again.

These four entities (*Being, Energy, Time, Space*) acted on the cosmic vibration to make it appear as if it was particulate, like a ray of light illuminating an object appears as discrete photons hitting that object. Divine Awareness is contained in each one of these particles as consciousness: creating, for each particle, an illusion that it was somehow ‘separate’ from the rest, from the Whole. This illusion is so persistent and widespread, that it becomes the source of *Haumai* or Ego. To overcome the powerful Ego, we must realize – as deeply as our Being allows – that Love is the **only** antidote to the disease of ego and that Love and Energy are the only two ingredients that created the *Onkaar* – so they are very source and essence of the manifest Universe.

Love is, therefore, *at the core of all Creation*; it occupies a position even greater than the Word of God! Love is the very essence of the Divinity that supports Creation in the entire universe! Just as a flame has two aspects – heat and light that cannot be separated from it, similarly Divinity has two aspects – Truth and Love – that cannot be separated from God. Truth is the static aspect of God, Love is the dynamic aspect of God.

From this perspective, the entire universe is simply an expression of Love, all its myriad forms are suffused with this Love; even our being is filled with Love – actually, in essence, each of us is a manifestation of Love walking on two feet! Just live with this thought for a while, and Creation around us will start revealing the innumerable ways in which it is loving us and receiving our love.

Love as the Primal Force in Nature

Having realised that Love and Energy are the primary ingredients used to create the universe, we may start to realise the importance of **Love**, or perhaps start looking for an answer to *Einstein’s dilemma*. Albert Einstein was baffled as to why every nucleus, which contains positively charged protons in extremely close proximity, does not fall apart simply because of the intense repulsive forces that would be generated between similarly charged particles. Even at the end of his life, Einstein was puzzled by this seeming anomaly. Since there were no gravitational forces within the nucleus, it seemed miraculous that protons in every atom could stay in such close proximity without repelling each other.

Given our knowledge from the previous section, it is easy to see why the only force holding the nucleus of every atom together is Love. Atoms come together to form molecules, their chemical bonds are strands of Love, physically manifested as a sharing of electrons or ions, and dancing in unison with all of Creation. Fritjof Capra, an Austrian-born American physicist, who performed ground-breaking research on subatomic particles and systems theory, describes this experience in a preface to his book, *The Tao of Physics*: “I was sitting by the ocean one late summer afternoon, watching the waves rolling in and feeling the rhythm of my breathing, when I suddenly became aware of my whole environment as being engaged in a gigantic cosmic dance..... As I sat on that beach my former experiences came to life; I “saw” cascades of energy coming down from outer space, in which particles were created and destroyed in rhythmic pulses; I “saw” the atoms of the elements and those of my body participating in this cosmic dance of energy; I felt its rhythm and I ‘heard’ its sound.....”

All of Nature is engaged in a loving play between creation and consciousness.... The sunlight lovingly

warms our fingers and toes, the moonlight soothes and lights our way playing hide ‘n seek in the clouds, the stars twinkle loving messages in a Morse code entirely their own, the birds and the bees, the flowers and the trees, the rainbow and the raindrops – all of these exist simply for the sake of sharing their love with the rest of creation. Nature behaves in myriad ways to clearly proclaim the ingredient of love...

- ✧ Love always expands – and so does Nature, overcoming all obstacles through the power of love;
- ✧ Love is selfless – and therefore Nature provides her bounty for all beings to share, never holding back anything for herself;
- ✧ Love is forgiving – human beings may exploit Nature for their personal benefit, but all the damage perpetrated by selfish beings can be repaired quickly if we treat Nature with love and respect...

Love expands constantly and so does *Prakriti* or Nature. Not only is the manifest physical universe expanding, but all around us, Nature is constantly





expanding as well. As a tree grows it expands from within, as a flower opens – nothing forces it to blossom – it just expands from within, as a leaf grows it expands from within – nothing is added to it from the outside, but all the change comes from within. Life is expressed through expansion, using the power of Love from within. This is also the underlying principle behind evolution and survival of the fittest. When forces within Nature are aligned such that they create an obstacle for the expansion of life forms, these life forms will lovingly adapt, thus allowing the species to expand beyond every obstacle. The expansive power of Love caused the earliest proto-organisms to escape the confines of oceanic life and evolve into air-loving plants, or snails, or reptiles; the expansive power of love taught the dinosaurs to fly or the nightingales to sing; it is expansive love that drove chimpanzees to start walking on two legs or humans to transcend the frontiers of space and time. Again, it is the expansive power of Love that drives each one of us to aim for the best, to excel in what we do, to touch as many lives as we can, to break down barriers or overcome difficulties that are insurmountable.

Love is selfless and so is *Prakriti* or Nature. Does a tree ever bear fruit for its own consumption? Do the

bees consume the honey they collect? Do the rivers or clouds hoard water for themselves? Out of love, each aspect of Nature is giving its bounty and sacrificing itself to support higher and higher forms of creation. Plants offer themselves to insects or herbivores or man, worms sacrifice themselves for birds, birds and fish offer themselves (or their eggs) to sustain mammals, lower mammals serve or provide sustenance to man. From oxygen to food to shelter, there are myriad ways in which the well-being of mankind depends on Nature. Being the highest form of life in the universe, all aspects of Nature are eager to serve the needs of mankind.

A common characteristic of early civilisations was their love and respect for Nature. Ancient cultures lived in harmony with Nature, sharing its bounty with all in their community. They did not have many comforts, but, because of their unselfish approach to life, they effortlessly used the tools of intuition, telepathy, clairvoyance for their survival. Today, the suffering of aboriginal tribes now living in Australia, India, or remote parts of the world has forced them to develop a sense of ownership, or selfishness, and are losing their intuition and culture. Throughout history, human powers were progressively lost, only because they were

used for personal benefit, without caring for all of humanity and all aspects of creation.

A tendency to garner the benefits of Nature or products and services of society for oneself, or one's extended self (family, friends, clan, race, or country), although considered normal, is a learned and unnatural habit. Self-interest has become the primary driving force, the commonest motivation, or the only consideration for our choices and actions today. Very few can overcome our conditioned selfishness that starts from infancy, is confirmed during childhood, and becomes ingrained in youth and early adulthood. This ubiquitous conditioning leads us to believe that an individual is "separate" from the rest of creation, and therefore, it must "protect" its interests from the rest of creation. The relentless pursuit of greater personal benefits, coupled with the constant exploitation of Nature, has resulted in an increasing frequency of natural disasters, global warming, epidemic diseases, wars and internecine struggles – bringing mankind to the brink of disaster!

Love is forgiving and so is *Prakriti* or Nature. All the damage perpetrated by selfish beings can be repaired quickly if we collectively start treating Nature with love and respect. The greatest of environmentalists have recognised this aspect of Nature, how it quickly forgives the excesses or exploitations perpetrated by mankind.

"My fourth reason for hope is the incredible resilience of nature. I have visited Nagasaki, target of the second atomic bomb that ended World War II. Scientists had predicted that nothing could grow there for at least 30 years. But, amazingly, greenery grew very quickly. One sapling actually managed to survive the bombing, and today it is a large tree, with great cracks and fissures, all black inside; but that tree still produces leaves.I have seen such renewals time and again, including animal species brought back from the brink of extinction. ... Let us develop respect for all living things. Let us try to replace impatience and intolerance with understanding and compassion. And love."

Dr. Jane Goodall (1934 –) <http://www.janegoodall.org>



Numerous stories abound of recovery and repair in ecosystems that were damaged potentially beyond repair, because of uncontrolled human greed and pollution. The Caribbean reefs were degraded by massive disease-induced mortality of the herbivorous urchin *Diadema antillarum* in 1983. Declining reef health was characterised by progressive increases in macroalgae. Despite scientific predictions of irreparable damage, recent discoveries showed that the reef has rebounded much faster than predicted, even following desultory efforts to rescue it. Another example relates to the South China tigers, smallest among the tiger species that numbered 4,000 in the early 1950s. These tigers were critically endangered when Communist leader Mao Zedong labeled them as "pests" and ordered their extermination. South China tigers were considered extinct and had not been seen in the wild since 1964. Soon after Chinese farmers became aware of environmental concerns and tried to protect the few remaining forests, a South China tiger was sighted and photographed in the wild as recently as 12 October 2007. If humans show sincere love and respect for Nature, it will respond by repairing the damaged ecosystems with remarkable speed and efficiency – again, teaching us how Love can be giving and forgiving. Could these virtues, manifested by Nature, also help us to repair all the ills of human society?

Love is the Glue in family, community and society

At a sports meet for handicapped children, nine contestants were assembled at the starting line for the 100-metre dash. At the gun, they all started out running to win the race. One little boy, however, stumbled and fell, and began to cry. The others heard him cry; they slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back to him. One girl bent down and



kissed him and said, “This will make it better”. Then all nine children linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood up, cheering for several minutes..... Witnesses of this event are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we all know one thing: *when one of us falls or fails, we all lose*. What matters in life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters is helping others to win, even if it means changing course.

Human brains are only three times larger than the great apes, closest to us in evolution, yet they have evolved many skills that are not seen in other primates, from dexterity and balance, to complex languages, to mathematics and scientific reasoning, to music and art and culture. Most of these advances can be linked to social interactions and human values. The Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology tested 106 chimpanzees, 32 orangutans and 105 two-year-old children (who had used language for less than 1 year, before literacy or schooling). They found that children and adult chimpanzees had

comparable cognitive skills for dealing with the physical world, but children were far more sophisticated for dealing with social constructs than the two ape species. Can we ignore the unique human ability to build social relationships, which have nothing to do with procreation or the struggle for survival?

The Mother's Love

The first source of this social-cultural conditioning is from their mother or surrogate mother-figure. Slowly, patiently, consistently, playfully, joyously - and lovingly - a mother teaches her child basic values and social behaviors, the means of communication, the control of bodily urges and impulses, and countless other things that go into developing a child's “social intelligence”. The child consistently experiences love and learns the meaning of Love. This early mother-infant bond becomes the template with which a child views the world; not only it enhances the child's cognitive development and exploratory behaviours, but also becomes the basis of a child's emotional regulation. Any disruption or derangement of these early experiences in infancy have dire consequences for their ability to form mutually supportive relationships, or friendships with peers, or the social skills to live and succeed within society. Love within the family shows up as concern for the well-being of others, a sensitivity to their needs, a willingness to happily sacrifice one's self-interest.



From affectionate interactions in the family emerge altruistic motives in society. Unlike material goods or worldly credits, love grows when it is shared. Love is the basis for building character in children. The highest human qualities: patience, forbearance, truthfulness, charity, speaking sweetly and/or softly – these are different manifestations of Love. Verily, love is the core of all human values! Great leaders have recognised and propagated these values. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. realised “*a web of mutuality*”, President John F. Kennedy recognised “*our common humanity*”, and used it to fight injustice. As our innate oneness between human beings is recognised more and more, collaboration overtakes competition, service supersedes selfishness, being together is more than being better. Love literally is the glue that holds a family, a community, or a society together – because it allows humans to rise above the motives of self-preservation and self-interest. Examples of love are around us all the time. A mother’s love for her infant even under the most trying circumstances, a family’s response to the sickness of a loved one, a community’s support for accident victims, or society’s response to a natural disaster. Love manifests as “random and senseless acts of kindness” all the time and allows us to experience a higher calling than other creatures. More and more we see people simply helping people, children sharing their lunch box with less fortunate classmates, high schoolers volunteering at homeless shelters, young adults launching or enrolling in social entrepreneurship programmes. Indeed, despite what the popular media may project, waves of violence and fear-motivated actions are becoming more stark, but fewer and more restricted; whereas love-motivated actions are slowly gaining ground and popularity. Philanthropists like Bill Gates and Warren are the role models of today.

As the current economic, environmental, social and political problems seem to overwhelm even the most powerful governments and multinational corporations, today can the power of Love help us heal the wounds of greed and selfishness and hatred? Or solve the most complex and pressing problems facing humanity today? Families, communities, societies, and governments must rise above their selfish motives, to cooperate, collaborate, and collectively address the problems that threaten our planet.

When leaders are making the most difficult decisions, they may well ask: “what is our most loving option?” or even consider the words of Emmet Fox: “There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer, no disease that enough love will not heal, no door that enough love will not open, no gulf that enough love will not bridge, no wall that enough love will not throw down, no sin that enough love will not redeem.

It makes no difference how deeply seated may be the trouble, how hopeless the outlook, how muddled the tangle, how great the mistake – a sufficient realisation of love will dissolve it all.”

Just as the body’s cells are organised into tissues, organs, and organ systems, each of which contribute to the overall well-being of the body, so too, all individuals, groups, and organs of society must contribute to its well-being. Cells or tissues that garner additional resources for themselves leading to unbridled growth are cancerous, ultimately threatening the survival of the body they arose from. Similarly, the organs of society (like health care, or banking, or industry) that gain excessive influence or resources and disregard their responsibility for the overall well-being of society can threaten its survival.

What is called for, to solve the current economic, environmental, social, or political crises, is our ability to rise above our narrow self-interests. In the Recession of 2008, “greed layered upon greed, frosted with recklessness” brought the entire banking system to disaster. To avoid mishaps like this, our emphasis must shift from accumulation of wealth to sharing of wealth, with an equitable distribution of the resources and benefits in society. And the motive for this approach will come from Love, not from a desire for power or privilege or self-aggrandisement of any sort. The underlying intent is as important as the actions performed.

Only selfless love between communities will solve the Israel-Palestine conflict (*or India-Pakistan! Ed*), or heal the wounds of hostility, or repair the ravages of war. Returning violence with violence only escalates conflict and increases human suffering. Love alone can build trust in the stock market, safeguard the rights of factory workers, or strengthen the moral fibre of corporate America. A health care system driven by

love and compassion – not reimbursement, not power or greed, will make the right decisions for each patient and eliminate waste, promote prevention, and enable universal health care for all. The leaders of today must harness the most sublime of human emotions, the underlying cause of Creation, the most powerful binding force in Nature, to solve the pressing problems created by greed, distrust, or self-interest.

The German poet and playwright, Goethe, referred to the world as “the living visible garment of God”. This garment is woven with love, maintained by love, and can be repaired through love. So as humans, by progressing through the four stages of love, we can use love only to understand human sexuality or other animal instincts, thus promoting society’s steady march to anarchy and exploitation, destroying humanity in its wake. Or, we can synchronise our heart beats to the pulse of this planet and reap the benefits of sharing our love with all of Creation. How do we do that? Every human being has the opportunity to do that by progressing through the four stages of Love.

The four Stages of Love

Just as pure white light when passing through a prism breaks up into the colours of the rainbow,

similarly, pure love, when passing through the prism of the mind, manifests the entire spectrum of human emotions. But the sceptics would ask: If that is the case, then what about hate? Does that also come from love? The physical world helps us understand this paradox. Just as darkness is defined as the absence of light, or cold is simply the absence of heat – in reality, darkness and cold do not really exist as separate entities. Similarly, hatred is simply the absence of love – when love is focused intensely in one particular direction – the opposite direction perceives an absence of love. Extremists are obsessed with extreme love for some aspect of creation – an idea or an ideal, so they consider other aspects of creation as threatening, or insignificant, and thus dispensable. Under the right conditions, this obsession can overwhelm the rational or discriminative faculties of the human mind and crystallise as a hate crime, or justify the Holocaust, or lead to attacks like those on 9/11. Ostracising or torturing these individuals simply hardens their stance – or recruits others to their cause! Instead, they need to know and understand the impact of their misdirected love. Again, the advice of Sri Sathya Sai Baba comes to our mind: “Foster the tiny seed of Love that clings to ‘me’ and ‘mine’; let it sprout into love for the group around you, and grow into love for all mankind, and



spread out its branches over animals, birds, and those that creep and crawl, and let that love enfold all things and beings in all the worlds. Proceed from less love to more love, from narrow love to expanded Love”.

The expansion of love occurs in four stages, outlining the natural progression of human love. In the *first stage*, the widely prevalent form of human love is like a lamp kept in a room. A particular lamp illumines only that room. The glow of this love illumines a small group of people, like family and friends, and does not extend to others. The *second stage* of love is like the moonlight. This love goes beyond direct relationships and bathes everyone (inside and outside the room), but is not very effulgent or intense.



The *third stage* of human love is selfless, like the sunlight – it brilliantly illuminates those both inside and outside the room – and indeed, all of creation feels its presence. But, it is not constant in the sense that the sun is not visible at night. Of course, this is not a permanent absence, because the sun rises each morning. Likewise too, selfless love may appear to be absent at some times, but it inevitably appears again.

Eternal Love

The fourth and *final stage* is reached when human love is intense and is always present, beyond the confines of worldly relationships, in all places, at all times, under all circumstances. For such a person, all experiences and perceptions are suffused with Love, all thoughts, words and deeds emanate from intense

Love, all relationships and interactions are based on Love. Indeed, the fourth stage of Love is imperishable, it is eternal. This degree of love is immanent in each and everyone – with the Guru’s Grace, we all have the potential to attain the *fourth stage* of Divine Love. Whenever any human being develops such love, they will be established in a peace “that passeth all understanding”, they will be remembered by generations of sincere men and women; they will be living answers to the question of “what is love?”

Dr. Kanwaljeet Singh Anand graduated from MGM Medical College, Indore (India). As a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, he received the D.Phil. degree, followed by post-doctoral training at Harvard Medical School. His pioneering research was recognised by the



British Paediatric Association (1986), American Academy of Pediatrics (1992), International Association for Study of Pain (1994), American Pain Society (2000), Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health (2004). He received the highest international honour in Pediatrics, the 2009 Nils Rosén von Rosenstein Award (given by Swedish Academy of Medicine every 5 years). Dr. Anand presented the “In Praise of Medicine” Public Address at the 100th Anniversary of Erasmus University Medical Center (2013), the 2015 *Journées Nationales de Néonatalogie* Address at The Pasteur Institute in Paris, and received the Nightingale Excellence Award (2016) from Stanford Children’s Healthcare. His community service activities founded the Harmony Health Clinic, promoted inter-faith harmony, and served victims of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Recognised by Father Joseph Biltz Award (2007) from NCCJ and Dr. Martin Luther King “Salute to Greatness” Individual Award (2008) from Governor of Arkansas, Dr. Anand is currently Professor of Pediatrics, Anesthesiology, Perioperative & Pain Medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine.

The Sikh Way of Life

There were several young speakers at the Sixth Annual Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib



Guru Nanak Dev ji walking beside his horse, with Bhai Lehna riding upon it

Harnoor Kaur Panesar spoke on the 'Sikh Way of Life inspired by Guru Nanak'

Guru Nanak Dev and the Sakhis

The prime message as explained by Guru Nanak Dev ji to Bhai Lehna is that, "We should serve and pray to ONE Waheguru rather than MANY 'gods and goddesses' of this world. These Gods beg the ONE Waheguru to fulfill the needs of their devotees. So, instead of praying to MANY Gods, we should keep our trust in the ONE beloved Lord."

Jap man sat naam sadaa sat naa'm.

There are several messages in this sakhi. We learn that Guru Nanak Dev ji was very humble, even as he walked and let Bhai Lehna ride on his horse when showing Bhai Lehna the way to his place. Guru Nanak Dev was very peaceful, conveying his message on One Waheguru.

I will always follow the teachings of this Sakhi in my life holding my faith and praying to the ONE Lord. I



Guru Amar Das ji with disciples

will also learn to become more humble while dealing with fellow students, teachers, friends or my family members.

In the Sakhi on the ‘Jealous Ascetic’, one person called Shiv Nath was a master of sorcery but his fame

decreased with the arrival of Guru Angad Dev ji at Village Khadur. At the time of drought, when it did not rain at all for a year, the farmers were instructed by the ascetic to tell Guru Angad Dev ji to leave the village. The ascetic was punished by Guru Amar Das ji but soon thereafter, Guru Amardas ji, realised that we should not punish anybody who makes a mistake. It is our duty to forgive other people’s mistake.

It is from this very important message that I learned about the power of forgiveness. Because of the ascetic, Guru Angad Dev ji had to leave the village, but Guru ji nurtured no grouse against him. Nor was he angry.

Farida bure da bhala kar, gussa man na handaye
Do good to evil. Do not fill the mind with anger.

I will surely face a situation where someone of my family, friends or even a stranger would hurt my feeling in some manner. But I will not carry any negative feelings as bad feelings do not give happiness and peace of mind. Forgiveness is very powerful.

In the Sakhi, ‘Merger with God’, Guru Angad Dev ji decided that Amar Das ji would be the next Guru.



Mughal Emperor Akbar partaking langar with Guru Amar Das ji at Goindwal Sahib

Guru ji's two sons had desired that they be chosen as Guru but he ignored them as they did not display the true Sikh spirit. Guru Angad Dev ji felt that being Guru is a great responsibility and only Amar Das ji could fulfill this duty.

There are several lessons that I have learned from this sakhi. The first lesson is that we should perform selfless service.

Satgur ki sewa safal hai jai ko kare chit laye

Guru Amar Dass ji was the third Guru and he had done selfless and humble Seva to the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev ji. Amar Das ji wanted to remain a sevadaar but owing to his selfless Seva for many years, Guru Angad Dev ji appointed him as the next Guru.

The second lesson I learned is that we should not favour our family members over other people. We should be impartial and unbiased when selecting the best person for the purpose.

The third lesson I have learned is that we should follow and respect the leader. Guru Angad Dev ji and the other followers bowed in respect or performed *matha tekna* for Guru Amar Das ji. Our living Guru is Guru Granth Sahib and we all should have full respect and faith in the Word.

To expand Sikhi across the country, Guru Amar Das ji created 22 zones called *manjis*. A person with a very high character was appointed as a leader of a *manji* and called *manjidar*.

Manjidaars were responsible for spreading Sikh values; clearing doubts among the Sangat; and solving any other issues. *Manjidaars* would meet Guru Amar Das ji twice a year and clarify matters and pose questions which they could not answer. In those times, only Brahmins could do this job. They then complained to Mughal Emperor Akbar

about it. But Akbar was very pleased with what Guru Amar Das ji was doing and even partook of *langar* with him at Goindwal Sahib.

I truly enjoy reading all Sakhis, but the one I like the most is 'Misapprehension of the Ascetic'. In this Sakhi, there lived an ascetic who used to fool villagers by narrating silly old tales. He came to Amritsar to meet Guru Ram Das ji and asked him as to why Sikhs did not go to *tiraths* or pilgrimages to wash their sins. Guru ji replied that "Sadh Sangat is the best *tirath*". *tirath navan jao, tirath naam hai*

The ascetic then inquired, "How will Sikhs go to heaven?" Guru ji replied that Sikhs treated the state of happiness and sorrow equally or with the same spirit and were not concerned about Heaven. Finally, the ascetic questioned, "Why do Sikhs bow only to you not anyone else?" To this Guru ji stated that Sikhs bow to the One Waheguru.

*Mehimaa Saadhho Sang Kee Sunahu Maerae Meethaa
Mail Khoe Kott Agh Harae Niramal Bheae Cheethaa*

I will always find any opportunity to participate in Sadh Sangat. I will make a routine to do Kirtan Sohila Paath before going to bed. I will make an effort to read the meanings of a new shabad that I learn in my kirtan class. I will bow to none other but the Guru Granth Sahib.

*Antarjāmi purakh bidhāte sardha man kī pure.
Nānak dās ihai sukh māgai mo kao kar santan kī dhure.
Waheguru ji ka khalsa, Waheguru ji kee fateh*

Harnoor Kaur is 8 years old and is studying in grade III in Tom Matsumoto Elementary School. She has been participating in the Hemkunt Speech Competition for the last two years and gets her inspiration to participate from her sister Japleen Kaur. In general, Harnoor enjoys painting and playing chess with her family and friends. She is an accomplished speaker at a very young age.



Human Ideals of Guru Granth Sahib

Bringing Stability in the Global Community



Religion is closely linked to the conscious as well as the sub-conscious of a particular social group. Religion gives expression to transcendental and spiritual experiences and takes the shape of a social organisation by providing members of the group with a definite code of conduct and a life-style governed by strict discipline. On the one hand, religion creates the possibilities and ways of bringing human beings into unity with God and, on the other, promotes feelings of fraternity and cooperation by advising human beings to adopt a humanistic approach while dealing with others, an approach which forms foundation in development of any social group. There are a number of religions in the world, many of these having their specific scriptures which contain the tenets to be adopted by their

devotees while scriptures also help in maintaining the distinct entities of respective religions. Guru Granth Sahib is the cherished scripture of the Sikhs, containing exclusive Sikh philosophy and religious code of conduct to be adopted by followers of the Sikh religion.

Guru Granth Sahib enshrines, on the one hand, matchless elaboration of spirituality and, on the other, a powerful expression of the message of revolutionary ideals of social welfare, multicultural distinctness and eternal ethical code aimed at cultural reconstruction. It is accepted that Sikhism is related to the most modern philosophy and the concepts and doctrines expressed through Guru Granth Sahib contribute to all-round welfare of the modern global community. Through

its insights and dialogue the underlying meaning of Gurbani (verses included in Guru Granth Sahib) when combined with modern perception gives form to varied dimensions of inter-cultural exchange of views and process of human transformation thereby maintaining its timeless and multi-faceted relevance.

Our Global Village



A world-level culture based on post-modern informative thought- process and human consciousness is described as a universal or ‘global village’. Such nuance has come into being through development of modern communication techniques, revolution in means of transportation, emigration and need for economic co-existence at the international level. The process of globalisation begins with the arrival of capitalistic system and emerges as a highly developed economic system representing the modern market and consumer culture. However, many forms of cultural, racial, religious, regional, linguistic limitations are in the process of decay. Modern human beings live in a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-religious, multilingual and multi-regional world. As a result, the world community comes face to face with innumerable challenges and problems related to racial, regional, communal, gender and cultural identities. This has become necessary to activate intra-faith dialogue, multi-religionism, creation of multi-cultural society and globally relevant ethical norms in this global village for establishing everlasting peace, harmony, balance and mutual understanding. In this context, Guru Granth Sahib emerges as a unique text which presents a multi-layered

and multi-dimensional assessment of the realities of human life.

Religious Tolerance and Role of Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib presents a revolutionary consciousness and humanitarian vision for the welfare of mankind. Guru Granth Sahib includes insights which are practical and relevant in modern times at the inter-cultural and global level as these were 500 years ago. Re-defining the essence of religion for developing uniformity and harmony in the modern multi-cultural society has become necessary and in this context, concepts of pluralism and inter-faith dialogue are playing a very active role and these cannot be functional in an effectively productive manner unless communal tolerance is firmly established. Communal tolerance as presented through Guru Granth Sahib is essentially that we should treat all religions at par with one-another even though we do not necessarily agree with the distinctive tenets propagated through them. The communal tolerance of Gurbani develops unity in diversity instead of giving a unified shape to diversity. In this manner, the aim of religious tolerance is not to accept or adopt religious beliefs, doctrines and activities of others nor to assimilate these into one’s own religion. The aim is only to give respect to the religious creeds and beliefs of others without distorting these in any manner so that an environment of peace and understanding is maintained in society.

Guru Granth Sahib is a unique example of religious tolerance. The process of creativity and editing of Guru Granth Sahib is based directly on this. It comprises verses composed by 36 holy persons connected with varied provinces, states, regions, faiths, beliefs and sects, these holy persons including 6 Sikh Gurus, 15 Bhagats, 11 Bhatts and 4 devotees of the Gurus. Bhagats include Hindus as well as Mohammedans, some belong to higher caste sections while some of them belong to lower caste groups but their compositions have been selected without any discrimination. We can see religious tolerance at its most sublime in Guru Granth Sahib because there is no consideration given to anyone’s religious faith or caste. Every caste has been treated with respect, every religion enjoys an honourable status so long as it preaches virtuous deeds and noble practices. The compilation and creation of

Guru Granth Sahib, therefore, builds a harmonious society removing walls created by sectarianism. Such a spirit of tolerance is also apparent in the language of the compositions. The varied diction used in the Granth comes from multiple sources. The verses included in Guru Granth Sahib preach the message of “I have but only one master, that is, God.”

There is but the same spirit emanating from God and pervading all human beings and, thereby, emphasis is on the idea that we cannot afford to be intolerant towards God’s creation and His offspring, that is the entire mankind because we all have only one Master. When this belief takes roots in the human mind, all conflicts disappear. Guru Granth Sahib, in totality of its compositions, promotes the concept of ‘welfare of all’ and never humiliates any religion. Gurbani does not teach partiality, discrimination or fault-finding, but instead imparts a lesson of self-assessment and self-realisation through self-study. In this way, the compilation treats the world as a closely related entity, craves for its welfare without any selfish motive and prays for the grant of bounties and happiness for all:

I beseech you O’, Almighty ! Be merciful and save the burning world; save it in whatever way it can be saved !

The cosmic vision of Guru Granth Sahib exhorts followers of all religions of the world to rise above mutual differences and conflicts and provides them with a common pattern for the welfare of mankind. Religious Pluralism is a concept of ‘global responsibility’ based on the mutual relation of respect for differences, tolerance for other’ views and healthy exchange of ideas.

Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism recognises all the religions of the world as authentic and pure. Every religion is authentic as it is capable of providing a human being with suitable guidance for attaining peace and happiness. Religions of the world describe the same ultimate truth in various ways and, therefore, are similar to a great extent in their approach. In fact, every religion aims at reaching the ultimate truth under different circumstances and prepares norms for the welfare of mankind. Religious pluralism is therefore, a particular approach vis-à-vis religious traditions according to which no single religion is an exclusive expression of supreme or complete truth

and every religion possesses the capacity of reaching selected truths and values. A truly religious person is the one who believes in religious pluralism and attaches similar importance to all religions. The monopolistic feeling or any specific claim carried by any religious sect regarding the ultimate truth only leads to violence, hatred and tension. Religious pluralism is an effort to remove the conflicts among different religions and to bring them closer to one another through the elimination of their mutual differences. But, in modern times, religion reflects the serious, rather, critical situation at the world level. Moving away from its genuine spiritual meanings, religion has fallen into clutches of violence and distrust. Globally, human society is facing decadence in religious, social, economic, and political fields and, as was the case during the medieval period, terror created by hostility, hatred, caste-system, selfishness, regionalism and violence prevails everywhere. Thus, the role of religion has become extremely challenging in modern times: religion may be a significant need of human beings today but what is more important is recognising how other religions are treating them, having due respect for each other.

Guru Granth Sahib is such a creative work through which different layers of religious pluralism are identified. In terms of time and place, Guru Granth Sahib is a historical document, incorporating a variety of geographical regions, occupations, languages, communities, and includes compositions of saints, bhagats and Sufi faqirs, besides the Sikh Gurus, all of whom, though connected with different beliefs, sects, provinces and doctrines are engaged in guiding mankind. This is a genuine illustration of religious pluralism. Guru Nanak travelled through many parts of the world to preach and spread his religious message. His long-drawn journeys (each called an *Udaasi*) were, in reality, aimed at preaching religious pluralism.

Every language has been accorded respectful status in Guru Granth Sahib. In modern times, languages of the minority communities are shrinking, with some of them being at the verge of extinction. Guru Granth Sahib maintains the distinctiveness of such languages, giving them place amongst the dominant languages. “Basis of the thought process of the authors of Gurbani is focused on that metaphysical expanse of cosmic consciousness where feelings of disagreement

and discrimination lose their significance.” As such, this scripture emerges as a common platform for unifying mankind into one fraternity. Sublime contribution of Guru Granth Sahib is in creating an ideal human being living in a peaceful society; it teaches mankind, divided into sects by the religious fanaticism and narrow political approach, how to live in an atmosphere of mutual love and understanding.

Unitary Pluralism

The quintessence of Guru Granth Sahib presents the unity of *Brahm* (the Supreme Soul) and the Cosmos. Here, the first form of pluralism appears as Unitary Pluralism. The main features of *Brahm* (different from Hindu god Brahma) are described in the opening lines (*Mool Mantra*) of *Japji Sahib* composition.

Guru Granth Sahib represents the unity of God (*Brahm*), the Supreme Soul. These days multi-dimensional expanse of cultures, communities and ideologies are recognised. The very foundation of Guru Granth Sahib is provided by the following couplet composed by Bhagat Kabir:

*Avval Allah noor upaai kudrat key sab bandey
Eyk noor tey sab jag upjia kaun bhaley ko mandey.*

“The Almighty created one spirit which pervades all the human beings who form a part of His creation. So no one is better or worse as compared to the others.”

The concept of unity of the *Brahm* (the Supreme Soul) does not suggest ill-will against any one. The message that *The Brahm is the mother as well as father of all* completely eliminates the feeling of discrimination. No religion is ignored or neglected in Guru Granth Sahib, which accords due recognition to the utility and identity of each of the different religions. Gurbani does not reject any religion, but presents arguments against a symbol of a particular sect, cunningness and hypocritical practices of followers and leaders of various sects.

Pluriform Pluralism

Guru Arjan who compiled the verses but the holy persons from different faiths also had referred to the existence of different religions and life-styles of

the authors. Such a propensity leads to expression of pluriform pluralism, which is presented in many forms in Guru Granth Sahib:

*Koi boley Raam-Raam koi Khudaai.
Koi sevei gusayaan koi Allahi.
Koi karan kareem.
Kirpa dhaar raheem.
Koi naavei tirath koi hajj jaai.
Koi karey pooja koi sir nivaai.
Koi parhey beyd koi kateyb.
Koi odhey neel koi supeyd.
Koi kahei turak koi kahei hindu.
Koi baachhei koi surgind.
Kahu Nanak jin hukam pachhaata.
Prabh sahib ka tin bheyd jaata.*

There are innumerable ways when devotees name their deities, adopt their ways of worship, arrange their physical appearances and designate their respective sects but there only one ultimate reality needs to be recognised by one and all.

Ethical Pluralism

Ethical pluralism is that form of religious pluralism which supports a universal ethical system. All religions of the world preach some fundamental values, many of which being common, for example, love, sweetness, humility, sympathy, service, welfare, respectfulness, austerity, renunciation, patience and forgiveness. Gurbani aims at preaching human values for entire mankind through inculcation of virtues such as the sweetness of words. Through such teachings of virtuous conduct, Guru Granth Sahib builds a moral code which serves as a solid and healthy foundation for bringing about excellence in the individual and collective life of human beings.

Inter-faith Dialogue

In contemporary times, the rise of terrorist activities and trend in fundamentalist religious intolerance have created an atmosphere of tension and confrontation among different religions. Although international bodies are engaged in sincere efforts to deal with such situations yet too inter-faith dialogue has become a necessity. Religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogue are, however, not the same, inter-faith dialogue being a model for religious pluralism. Paul Knitter’s view needs



Inter-faith dialogue in Sikh philosophy was began by Guru Nanak. The four voyages (*udasis*) undertook by him were with knowledge of the real form of religion. He visited different religious centres during his travels and talked to devotees on the facts of truth and purity. He assimilated religious hymns from various places during the course of his journeys. *Sidh Goshit* composed by Guru Nanak is an example

to be given deep thoughts that religious pluralism does not aim at making different religions of the world look similar. It is, rather an approach of criticising of others and any assessment of one's self through positive and face-to-face dialogue for development of human being and welfare of all. Peace and harmony cannot be created among various communities and nations until mutual understanding is established among different religions. Such an atmosphere of mutual understanding can be built up when inter-faith dialogue is established. In contemporary times, inter-faith dialogue has become a prime necessity and persistent efforts need to be made. We should encourage the process of interaction, tolerance, learning and teaching vis-à-vis other faiths. Such a dialogue should not denigrate other religions, or one which does not encourage assimilation of religions into a particular religion but tries to encourage appreciating the points of view held by other religions. Guru Granth Sahib bestows inter-faith understanding for keeping mankind united. Mutual interaction which is being encouraged in modern times was shown by Sikh Gurus centuries back and they incorporated in their compositions.

Jab lag duniyan rahiyei nanak kichh suniyei kichh kahiyei.

This dictum preaches one's expression before others and lays stress on the need to listen to what others have to say. This approach removes ignorance and spread purposeful knowledge among the peoples. Interaction at a common platform brings various religions together and removes fear of assimilation.

of inter-faith dialogue between him and members of Yogi sect to create awareness about genuine faith not enshrouded by useless rituals, insignificant rites and religious symbols. Bhagat Kabir also spoke on irrelevant and unnatural practices adopted by Yogi ascetics. The Guru lays bare the futility of ritualistic practices adopted and preached by certain members of Brahmin class of Hindus as well as Mohammedan devotees and their religious leaders. Such dialogue emerges as an inter-active cultural process leads to building up an exclusive life-style and contributes significantly towards the growth of a composite Indian culture.

Gurbani teaches us that "No one is Hindu or Mohammedan" and all belong to the same fraternity. Being equally so from an individual to entire mankind. Contributors to the Guru Granth Sahib, devoted as they were to the service of humanity were committed to development of pure and truthful character. And they paid similar respect to all religions of the world. Adoption of the model of inter-faith dialogue as in Guru Granth Sahib plays an important role in dealing with challenges of unsavoury situations created by religious fanaticism and intolerance. Guru Granth Sahib, which is affinity between unity and diversity, builds up multi-cultural society in laying the foundation of world community for the development of diverse cultures, classes, races and, especially the minority groups.

Multi-cultural Society

Guru Granth Sahib is not the holy-scripture of an intolerant religion or of any particular community,



or caste group. It is of the people from different provinces, communities and faiths, peoples attuned to cosmic harmony. The ideals preached through Guru Granth Sahib appear as futuristic dialogue which does not admit any discrimination or animosity. The multi-cultural society in Guru Granth Sahib is multi-dimensional based on the welfare-of-all which extends the same respect to strangers as to those closely related. Gurbani contains couplets which express deep reverence for peoples belonging to the so-called lower castes. As example,

Nanak says that he is in tune with the lowest of the lowly, He prefers their company in comparison to these highly placed people because one earns the grace of the Almighty by having care for the under-privileged.

The essential message of Gurbani is to recognise the identity and dignity of each culture on equal basis and to contribute towards establishing the same in effective and meaningful manner. Gurbani discourages animosity, discrimination and violence and promotes communal tolerance, racial harmony and inter-cultural dialogue these being intrinsic in multi-cultural society. Guru Granth Sahib teaches one to recognise and respect values cherished by all others. The following is particularly relevant:

The Gurus wanted to create a classless, casteless society, where each individual enjoyed freedom of

expression; observance and adherence to religion, religious tolerance, and social equality where duties and rights were accorded equal importance. In such a multi-cultural society, adherence to one's religion and faith is expected but disrespect and intolerance to other religious faiths is certainly a sin.

Moral Values

Scientific explorations and technological development in modern times have quite adversely affected the moral values. Major impact of these is material progress and

globalisation, but the race for material gains has led to rise of individualism and selfishness. Human relations have lost their value and relevance as moral degradation has over-powered human psyche. Thus, feelings of love, affection and sympathy for others are fast disappearing. However, various institutions and systems connected with human welfare are exploring the ways and means for restoring equilibrium in human life. It is here that Gurbani can to re-establish the balance amongst human beings through its message of decency and ethics. Gurbani imparts utmost importance to honest living and *seva* (service to others), particularly through sharing one's earnings with others.

Nanak says, earn by the sweat of your brow and share your earnings with the needy. This is the ideal way of living.

Gurbani aims at developing spiritually prosperous, mentally poised and morally sound human beings and, therefore, warns against evil actions through exhortations such as

Having control over one's mind is like having control over the whole world.

One must erase one's ego.

One should be helpful even to an evil-doer.

One should not injure anyone's feelings.

Nanak says, if we speak rough we invite mental as well as physical ailments

We should neither inculcate nor express evil thoughts.

Such advice greatly contributes towards developing sound moral character. Making one's conduct simple and straightforward through a disciplined mind is one of the distinct and special aspects of the teachings of Gurbani. Qualities of ignoring pitfalls of others and being soft spoken and sweet in speech go a long way in becoming foundation of an ideal way of living. Utterances replete with sweetness and humility contribute in big manner towards building a congenial and pleasant environment.

On the other hand, Gurbani rejects the habit of vilification and opposes the slanderers because such people really pollute the social and cultural environment. Conveying feelings of humility and courtesy, Gurbani teaches that inculcation of virtue and humility eradicates one's ego completely. Once the barrier of ego is removed, feelings of hatred, backbiting, jealousy, slander and anger disappear as well. The model of morality presented through Gurbani imparts the qualities of patience, contentment and continence to human beings and teaches how to develop self-control and self-discipline for help in freeing oneself from evil deeds. The principles of morality endow a human being with mental alertness and building up such awareness in human beings, equips them with qualities of firmness, boldness and resourcefulness in leading new and successful lives. The moral code of Guru Granth Sahib forms a healthy amalgam of Indian philosophical tradition though it is not supplementary to it. It

tends to recognise the significance of the spiritual as well as the practical aspects of ethical values.

Unfortunately, the world seems to have become prey to selfishness, disorder and tension-ridden atmosphere born out of mutual differences and conflicts beset with terror and barbarity, and on the verge of disaster. It is essential to disseminate and adopt the message of universal brotherhood given by Guru Granth Sahib. The practicability of the message of religious tolerance, awareness of religious pluralism and model of inter-faith dialogue, as contained in Guru Granth Sahib has the potential of establishing an international fraternity or multi-cultural system, to stir human consciousness. Such virtuous conduct can certainly unite the whole world as one family strengthening human fraternity and mutual understanding and being a medium for solution of world problems.

It is relevant to quote Arnold Toynbee here:

Mankind's religious future may be obscure, yet one thing can be foreseen: the living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in these days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh Religion, and its scriptures, the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. This religion is itself a monument of creative spiritual intercourse between two traditional religions whose relations have otherwise not been happy. This is a good augury

Working in Panjab University, for the last 38 years, as Professor and Academic-in-charge Dept. of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies, Dr. Jaspal Kaur Kaang has translated the universal wisdom and ethical values represented in the lives and works of Sikh Gurus into the interdisciplinary pedagogical modules for the dissemination of value education through Punjabi Language, literature and culture. Moreover, as an administrator (being the member of Senate, Chairperson, Dean, Member of Finance Board and Member of Academic Bodies of various Universities), she has promoted Indian languages and culture as directed by UNESCO and contributed to the reconstruction and the restructuring the policies, programmes and pedagogical practices to nurture the idea of Indianism.

Her objective is to spread the eternal values symbolised by our great Gurus, which are so very relevant in today's world.



HUKAM: What it is & What it Aint?

How do I perceive the meaning of “Hukam” – a defining expression in Sikhi, nay, in pretty much all religions? I also refer you to the exposition of *Hukam* by Hew McLeod, in Punjabi University’s Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, 1996.

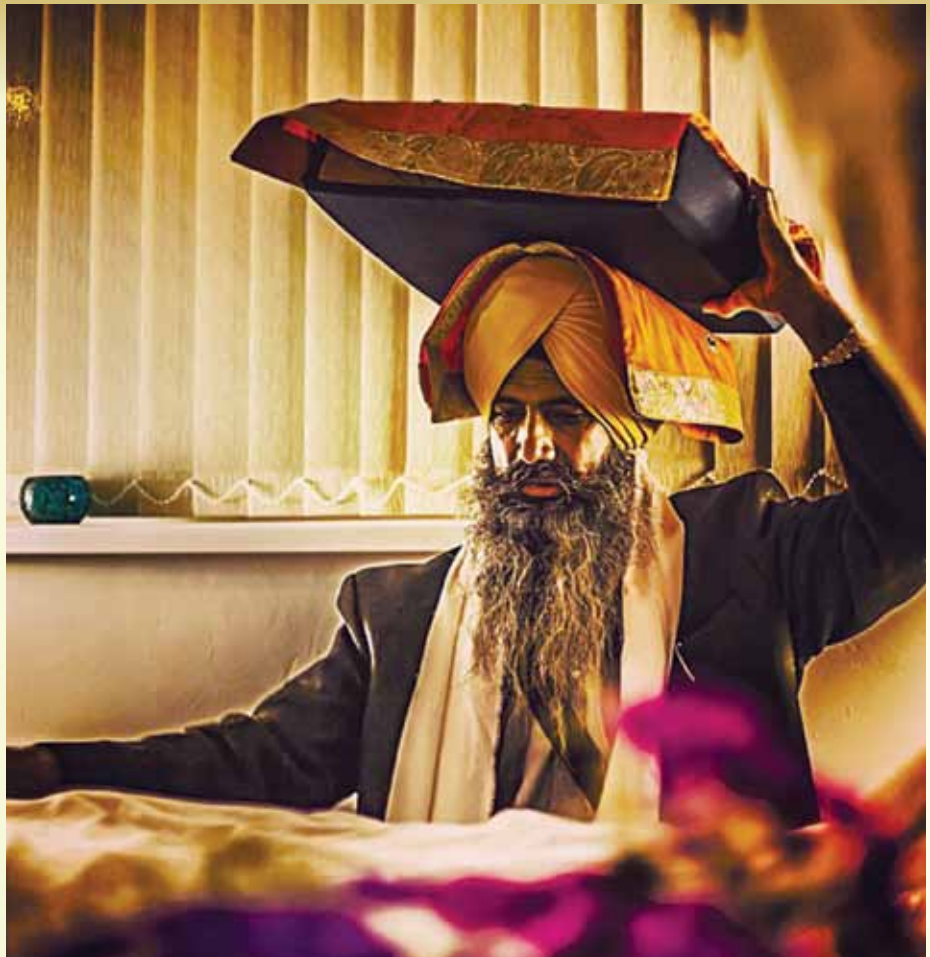
Hukam is Arabic for *Order* or *Command*. In English, *Order* has two meanings: Directive or edict, also systematic organisation, as opposed to random disorder.

Hukam in Sikhi embraces both concepts: Edict or Command, but also organised structure.

In popular usage *Hukam* implies micromanagement of the creation by the Creator – that nothing happens without divine, precise control over all creation.

Contrary to popular belief, I do not mean that an all-pervading Creator controls each and every move that I or anyone will make. That He/She keeps precise, detailed tabs on every one’s shenanigans – yours and mine, ranging from the hopelessly evil or banal to the sometimes decent. I have difficulty ramping up serious fealty to these formulations. I refer you to Mark Twain’s *Letters from The Earth* for a rib tickling parody of such ideas.

I grant that it is reassuring to envision a Creator exerting precise control of our individual lives with every “T” already crossed and every “I” dotted. No one action then, not even a breath, is *mine* to perform, because it is already predetermined to be or not. Yet, our lives remain unpredictable – not only the seminal moments of birth and death, but minutia of our existence as well.



If the Creator is a micromanager, then nothing that I do is my doing, nothing is my fault; no way can I be held responsible or stand trial for any wrong I may do or contemplate.

Wouldn’t a micromanaging Creator become a *free-pass-out-of-jail* card? And our relationship with him becomes a bartering system – entirely transactional. Can we negotiate? “You (Creator) forgive me and I promise to recite so many (?) Sukhmani Sahibs every day for so many(?) days.” Sounds familiar? Very human?

How Sikhi defines Hukam?

On page 1, Guru Granth engages with ideas of Hukam. How is Truth to be attained – veil of falsehood torn asunder (*“Kiv sachiara hoyiyae kiv kooraе thutae paal”*) asks Guru Nanak; his answer



is the next line: By walking the Way of Hukam (*“Hukum rajai chalnaa Nanak likhyaa naal”*).

The next stanzas tell us that all existence is the visible expression of Hukam. It transcends all description and nothing exists outside Hukam. The laws of cause and effect are an aspect of Hukam. The Creator in his fullness is beyond human comprehension, so too, is Hukam, which is the revelation of Akal Purkh. Hukam is a mystical experience that cannot be fully elaborated. Thus, Hukam gathers into a single principle all of God’s activity.

Remember also that we have been endowed with the faculty of reasoning. Every human organ is built to perform its functions that help to sustain life and make us what we are. The human brain was not designed to fill the space between our ears. To look to

a micromanaging Creator is to diminish and discount the greatest achievement of the Creator.

Notwithstanding *Hukam*, in fact, at some level we recognise that within the larger system that remains mysterious, humans have considerable free will. If there were absolutely no choices open to us, then Guru Nanak would not have said “As you sow so shall you reap (*aapay beej aapay hee khaahu* Guru Granth p.4). Nor would Guru Granth advise us to live well and joyfully by our own honest efforts (*Uddam karendia(n) jio too* p. 522) or to resolve our own affairs/needs by our own efforts (*aapan hathee aapnaa aapay hee kaaj savareeyae* p. 473).

Do not rue the results, nor lose the self in pride and pelf, but be at peace with life. Why? To live another day through both defeat and triumph. Engage with

the present to experience Hukam. The goal here is to make honest choices, do the best with them and accept cheerfully what life offers in return.

What does it mean to live in the present?

Keep in mind that in Punjabi and related Indic languages, the word for both tomorrow (the future) and yesterday (the past) is the same – *kull*.

We largely live in an imaginary past, pining for an unknown but rosier future; the present is then lost between these enduring passions. This is the crux of our misalignment — our existence between utopia and dystopia.

How then to redirect the mind towards the present? In Thailand, Buddhist monks meditate on dead bodies (corpses) to refocus on the present. This is meant to enable them to come to terms with the transitory nature of our puny, but not pointless, existence, indeed of all life. Sikhi does not approve such practice and I am not recommending it here.

Undoubtedly, the past is loaded with regrets, the future just as full of worries that might or might not be. With our obsession with the past that needs to be buried and the future yet unborn, we overlook the present. Our paradigm shifts only when we accept that what will be will be, and our focus needs to turn to the present moment, not the moment that is now in the past, nor the moment that is yet to come. Discard worry by accepting Hukam; whatever happens is not in the realm of the impossible, so why worry when anything happens (Guru Granth: *Chinta ta ki keejiyae jo anhoni hoye* p. 1426).

And then we encounter a most challenging and meaningful citation from the Guru Granth (p. 660). It tells us that we are creatures of one single breath only (*Hum aadmi hae(n) ik dami....*). This tells us bluntly that life is really the one breath that one is engaged in at any given moment. The breath that preceded it is already in the past; the breath yet to be taken is the future, never certain, never guaranteed. Only the breath we are in defines the present; that alone is life. It is best then to live in the present to its hilt in that single breath that defines it. In fact, to me the idea of *Hukam* or divine will that pervades Sikh teaching

means exactly that — living fully and productively in the moment.

Our existence remains limited to the one breath in the present moment of time. Is it that easy? Not really, but it is essential.

In Punjabi and related languages, the word “*Admi*” for a human can be parsed as “*Aa*” and “*Dum*” where *Dum* means breath and *Aa* stands for both the first primal number, *One*, as well for an invitation “*to come*”. So, *admi* speaks of a creature of one breath, the singular reality of a single breath. I am not a linguist but I wonder if the Biblical *Adam* and the Punjabi *Admi* are related terms that come to us from shared linguistic and philosophic antecedents.

Briefly, Hukam asks us to stop worrying and start living by a realignment of our lives to become alive to the reality of the moment that stands between life and death – in other words, we need develop a relationship of deep trust with the unknown, the unseen.

Walking in *Hukam* frees us of guilt, misplaced hubris and pride. Every moment then is a new dawn – the start of a new day. It effectively clears the slate for the future – the next moment – to write anew. *Hukam* illustrates most powerfully the principles of attaining closure with the past and embarking on a fresh start, on a clean slate.

In short, the directive of *Hukam* becomes living life fully, honestly, and purposefully – to live in the present, to live fully in the moment. Hence the promise of constant renewal in life.

But People will be People

Thoreau bewailed human existence as lives of quiet desperation. What does it mean to accept the Creator’s Hukam? If a confession of helplessness, it is then not willing acceptance of what is but more like swallowing a bitter pill, because no alternative exists.

Then we cavil, “Well! It’s God’s will that my lottery ticket didn’t pan out – perhaps next time.” But an underlying thought tortures us: “Why my neighbour won the lottery and I didn’t?” Surely God knows, as I do, that my neighbour is a no-good jerk and God knows

as I do that I am a good person. I regularly attend services at gurdwara and say my requisite prayers, I feed the homeless, so on and so forth. ... *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum*.

And then an easy way out of the dilemma appears: lean on an imaginative string of past lives, cyclical birth and so on and on...of the Creator's mysterious ways for transferring responsibility to unknown others. Hindu mythology certainly helps, doesn't it? As does literal interpretation of such references in the Guru Granth.

A Possibly Reasonable Alternative

A more rational explanation exists. A benevolent Creator created the systems in which life exists and evolves. (A version of intelligent design!) He/She allows us considerable free will to rewrite our own narrative. We live and die as per the laws that govern us on Earth. Our lives are shaped by a complex interaction of our genes and the environment – our nature and nurture. And despite the many who pretend to read the past and foresee the future, life remains a mystery; a box, fuller than Pandora's, that delivers pain, suffering, even death. This box also bestows on us heavenly delights and unequalled success. Unearned and uninvited come the many defeats, as do life's triumphs. Like manna from heaven, they are best not seen as entitlements or earned.

Hukam, then, becomes a state of mind. It determines how we engage, in Shakespeare's words, with "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." An ancient prayer goes, "O God grant me the courage to change the things that I can change, the serenity

to accept what I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference." The third clause is crucial.

Which battles to fight and from which battles to walk away with grace. This, the most difficult to see as a governing commandment of life, is a major determinant of our sanity and survival. It is the wisdom of Hukam and sets the trajectory of our lives.

To live with equanimity means to accept the unexpected turns that life offers – pain and pleasure, success and defeat – and see them as two robes in the wardrobe that each of us wears interchangeably (*Sukh dukh doey dar kaparay pehrey aaye manukh* p. 149). Guru Granth also advises that much in life is beyond our design, so accept it with good grace as the essential reality – whatever pleases (the Creator) is the good deed (*Jo tudh bhavae saayi bhali kaar* p. 3). As a popular adage goes: *Que Sera Sera*.

Thus, we cultivate positive lives without obsessing its downturns. And to face life with a realistic but hopeful and positive stance.

Sikhi takes this issue head on. A plethora of citations can be mustered but I drive home my point with only two. The Guru Granth (p. 922) pointedly challenges us with *Eh sareera meriya iss jug meh aye ke kya tudh karam kamaaya* (What footprints will you leave in the sands of time?) and then it adds (p. 1102,) *Pahila marn kabool kar jeevan ki chhudd aas* (Accept first the reality of death and abandon all hope of endless life).

How then to leave the world? *An iota better would be plenty!*

Dr. IJ Singh came to the United States in 1960 on a Murry & Leonie Guggenheim Foundation fellowship. He received a PhD in anatomical sciences from the University of Oregon Medical School (now Oregon Health Sciences University), and a DDS from Columbia University. He is a professor emeritus of anatomical sciences at New York University and serves on the Editorial Advisory Boards of *The Sikh Review* (Calcutta) as well as *Nishaan* (New Delhi), and writes a regular internet column on *Sikhi*.



Sri Guru Granth Sahib

Scripture of Global Concerns



Gurdwara at Hazoor Sahib

All religious scriptures of the world have reverence. The message of all scriptures guides our lives in one way or the other. But there is the least doubt that the place and position of the Guru Granth Sahib is singular in the tradition of religious scriptures of the world.

Guru Granth Sahib is the unique holy scripture which occupies the status of the Guru. It is looked upon by the Sikhs not as only a scripture but as the visible body of the Guru. History tells us that the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev in addition to Bani of the Gurus, compiled and edited the collected Bani of Saints and Bhaktas before installing Guru Granth Sahib in Harmandar Sahib for the first time in 1604. Following

this, the Bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib was added to the Bir, edited by Guru Arjan Dev, by the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh under his own supervision and direction at Damdama Sahib. This Damdami Bir was then installed at Abchal Nagar, Hazoor Sahib by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 and was given the exalted status of a Guru for all times to come.

The distinctness of Guru Granth Sahib is in the fact that its concerns are global. The nature of Bani and its reach is manifestly global. The global concerns are discussed predominantly in the spiritual scope of Guru Granth Sahib. Sometimes a question comes to mind, as to which composition can be identified as global and what are its essential features. I firmly believe that a

global composition is the one which has the capacity to bridge the gap between human beings and the potency to cross all hurdles and impediments of the world by talking about them in all candidness.

An in-depth study of the Bani very clearly brings out the fact that it transcends all walls of discrimination and divisions. Every barrier and obstacle caves in before its forceful and spontaneous flow of words. The entire humanity is immersed into its fold. It is a gateway for resolving all kinds of problems inflicted upon human society and the entire world and its concerns are the subject-matter of the Bani.

Questions such as what is the global scope of Guru Granth Sahib and who is covered in its ambit also come to my mind. Here, the following lines from *Asa-Di-Var*, composed by Guru Nanak, seem quite befitting while answering this:

*Purkhan birkhan tirthan tattan meghan khetanh
Dipan loan mandlan khandan varbhandanh
Andaj jeraj utbhujan khani setjanh
So mit janai Nanka sran meran jantah
Nanak jant upai kai samale saabhnah
Jini kartai karna kia chinta bhi karni tah*

*“Men, trees, holy places,
banks of sacred streams,
clouds and fields, islands, spheres,
universes, continents and solar system.
The sources of creation, egg-born,
womb-born, earth-born and sweat-born
and oceans, mountains and sentient beings;*



The Starry Night by Vincent Van Gogh

*He, the Lord, knows their condition,
O Nanak, having created the beings,
the Lord takes care of them all.
The Creator, who has created the world.
He takes care of it well.”*

Arti is another beautiful composition of Guru Nanak Dev which is recited at every Sikh shrine. Nothing can be written better than this to depict the whole universe and its creation. These lines reflect the enormous and panoramic wisdom of Guru Nanak:

*Gagan main thalu ravi chandu dipak bane
tarika mandal janak moti
Dhup malanlo pawanu chavro kare
sagal banrai phulant joti
Kaisi arti hoi Bhav khandana teri arti*

*“The sky is Thy salver,
The sun and moon Thy lamps,
The galaxy of stars as pearls scattered.
The woods of sandal are Thine incense,
The forests Thy flowers,
What a beautiful worship is this O Destroyer of fear.”*

It is quite obvious from the above lines that the nature and scope of the Bani of Guru Granth Sahib is global and its sensitivity is responsive to all global concerns.

One of the major concerns of the Guru Granth Sahib is religious pluralism, very important in the situation that exists in the world today. In fact, Pluralism has become a key challenge in a contemporary globalised world. On one hand, the present globalisation has brought the whole world closer together, while on the other, the world has become divided and fragmented. Undoubtedly, we are living in an era of possible conflicts and violence. Strengthening religious pluralism and mutual understanding is more important and required than ever before.

In today’s situation, what we need is a true pluralistic model which teaches tolerance towards each other, understanding each other and appreciating each other. A model through which we learn to share what is common in our religious philosophies. This is, in fact, the very essence of pluralism.

I believe that the message of Guru Granth Sahib is fully capable of giving an affirmative direction to this world facing a grave confrontational situation. It is crystal clear that the quintessence of Bani corresponds to righteousness in a pluralistic society, as it does not cater to any kind of discriminatory tendencies. The followers of Bani also seek the emergence of a large, liberal and progressive world.

We have a perfect pluralistic model in the Guru Granth Sahib to guide us and give us direction in the present scenario. In this model, different religious traditions and their identities have been given due recognition. The Bani, very emphatically, lays stress on plurality and is quite explicit in accepting the identities of the different religious traditions. Not only this, the Bani of the Guru Granth Sahib appreciates and glorifies pluralism and considers the plurality of the world in all its beauty and strength. Furthermore, the Bani of Guru Granth Sahib shows the way forward to promote and how to strengthen the process of consolidation of the pluralistic system.

The fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev, in one of his hymns in *Rag Ramkali*, accepting the independent identities of the different religions, has given due recognition to their established and diverse traditions and customs:

*Koi bolai raam raam koe khudaae.
Koe sevai gusaeaa koe alaahe.
Karaan karan kareem.
Kirpaa dhaar raheem. Rahaa.
Koe naavai teerath koe haj jaae.
Koe karai poojaa koe sir nivaee.
Koe parai bed koe kateb.
Koe odhai neel koe suped.
Koe kahai turak koe kahai hindoo.
Koe baachhai bhisat koe surgindoo.
Kah Naanak jin hukam pachhaataa.
Prabh sahib kaa tin bhed jaataa.*

“One calls Him Ram, another Khuda;
Some call Him Gosain, some Allah.
He is All-powerful, bountiful, beneficent and merciful.
Some go to Hindu bathing-places; some to Mecca;
Some perform Hindu ritual of worship, others bow

down in namaz.
Some read the Vedas; others the Koran.
Some wear blue; others white.
Some are called Turk; others Hindu.
Some covet Bohisht, some Swarga.
Saith Nanak, he who has understood God’s commandment,
He alone knows His ways.”

The Guru Granth Sahib declares that all religious dispensations are equal and lead the humanity to salvation. Guru Amar Das, in one of His hymns says:

*Jagat jalandaa raakh lai aapnee kirpaa dhaar.
Jit duaarai ubrai titai laih ubaar.
“The world is burning, save it, O Lord,
Out of thy mercy,
Save it through whichever dispensations,
Thou consider best.”*

In his Bani, Guru Nanak teaches us how to respectfully accept the identity of all religious denominations. He says:

*Nanak wechaaraa kias kahai
Sabh lok salaah eksai,
Sir Nanak lokaa paav hai
Balihaaree jaao jete tere naav hai.*

“What can poor Nanak say that is new?
The whole world proclaims the Sole Lord.
At feet of those uttering Thy names,
Is placed Nanak’s head in reverence.
To all Thy Names am I a sacrifice.”

Let me also quote a poetic composition of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, which over-rules differences and divisions among men on the grounds of birth, caste, creed or religious belief and lay emphasis on the common fatherhood of God and common brotherhood of man:

*Kou bhyo mundia sanyasi, kou jogi bhaio;
Kou brahmchari, kou jati anmanbo.
Hindu turak kou, rafzi immam safi;
Manas ki jaat, sabe ekey pechnbo.
Karta karim soi, rajak rahim oei;
Dusro na bhed koi bhul bharm manbo.*

*Ek hi ki sev, sabh hi ko Guru Dev ek;
Ek hi sroop, sabe eke jyot janbo.*

“Many believe that they have become superior by accepting celibacy or undertaking meditation, by giving up material comforts, or by making themselves look different, or by wearing matted hair or no hair. Others feel higher by joining a particular sect of Islam as, Shia, Sunni, and so on.

But no one should overlook the basic fact that followers of all religions are the same human beings.

The Creator of all provides for the needs of all humans.

There is one Lord and that Lord alone should be worshipped.

Do not remain an ignorant and believe in anyone else except the one Lord. All humanity is equal, each one of us carries the reflection of the Creator in us, and we are all manifestations of one Creator.”

Another salient feature of Guru Granth Sahib is that its structure is Pluralistic. The exclusivity of Guru Granth Sahib is in the fact that in addition to the Bani of Gurus, the Bani of Bhaktas has also been included in it. Not only this, their hymns have been given the same degree of esteem as the hymns of the Gurus and this Bani enjoys the same status and reverence for the Sikhs. In fact, the range of contributors in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is quite vast. A contributor belonging to any caste, religion or occupation had the privilege to find space for his hymns in the Granth. He could be a Hindu-Jaidev or a Muslim-Baba Farid, a Brahmin Parmanand or a so-called low caste-Ravidas, Namdev of Maharashtra or Bhagat Kabir of Banaras. Evidently, by including the hymns of Bhaktas belonging to different castes and faiths, the Gurus eradicated the caste system and inculcated true spirit of tolerance among the people.

It must be stated that to incorporate the hymns of saints and bhaktas in the Guru Granth Sahib was a revolutionary step. The decision of the Gurus took the shape of a crusade to give boost to the concept of religious pluralism in India. From the historical point of view, it must be said that the influence of these saints and *bhaktas*, which spanned over five centuries and belonged to different parts and regions, stands testimony to the fact that their geographical influence

traversed all boundaries. It should also be noted that this historical step led to the preservation of precious Bani of saints and *bhaktas* on one hand and on the other, added glow and grace to the Sikh tradition. Dr. S Radhakrishnan, so very aptly observed, “A remarkable feature of the Adi Granth is that it contains the writings of the religious teacher of the Hinduism, Islam, etc. This is in consistency with the tradition of India which respects all religions and believes in freedom of the human spirit.”

This aspect should also be clearly understood that Pluralism cannot be confined to only knowing each other. Knowing each other's traditions is also not enough. Having a dialogue between different religious communities is extremely important and necessary for peace and understanding. The times are gone when people of one religion could afford to live as separate religious groups without much interaction with other religious communities. The people of different religions and the people who have faith in different religious philosophies have to live together and are bound to interact with each other. Constructive and meaningful Inter-faith dialogue is a must in the world of today.

I am reminded of the process of inter-faith dialogue, which was started by Guru Nanak five centuries ago and of the pluralistic model of *Unity in Diversity* which emerges out of the Bani of the Gurus and various bhaktas compiled in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Over five centuries ago, Guru Nanak initiated inter-faith dialogue to establish the Universal Brotherhood of men. During his travels to Multan, Pakpattan, Haridwar, Kurukshetra, Kashmir, Banaras, Gaya, Rajgir, Puri, Ceylon, Tibet, Mecca, Medina and Baghdad and elsewhere, Guru Nanak opened a dialogue with all the existing faiths. He filled the inter-religious void with love, ethical humanism and spirituality for the first time. He approached every religion as his own and presented his own faith and philosophy as everyone's religion. In all his dialogues with the Yogis, Siddhas, Vedantists, Vaishnavas, Shaivas, Buddhists, Jains, Sufis, Mullas, Pandits and so on, Guru Nanak told them that religion is worthless till it joins the main life-current of humanity and implies itself socially and spiritually into mankind. Certainly, Guru Nanak, for the first time, introduced ecumenism in religion and



Bhai Manohar Singh and jatha in kirtan

philosophy and brought different religions and religious philosophies closer to each other.

Today, Guru Nanak's philosophy of inter-faith understanding through dialogue is the only approach to attain peace and progress of humanity and unity in diversity. To conclude, I would once again like to reiterate the fact that Guru Granth Sahib is a scripture of *Global Concerns*. It is also a fact that one of its major concerns, in the present context, is Pluralism. The Bani of the Guru Granth Sahib very clearly manifests that Pluralism is the way of life. It teaches us to accept and respect diversities and always remain in dialogue with others. The message of Guru Granth Sahib is very clear and can be summed up as: "To maintain Pluralism in true spirit and to have meaningful dialogue among different denominations, we must make the commitment to accept the identity of others, to respect the identity of others, and to protect the identity of others."

Dr. Jaspal Singh is former Indian High Commissioner to Mozambique and Swaziland and till lately, Vice Chancellor, Punjabi University, Patiala. He held the post of Vice Chancellor, Punjabi University Patiala, India from 2007 to 2017. During his tenure, the University established a number of new institutions: Women's Study Centre, Academic Staff College, Baba Farid Centre for Sufi Studies; Centre for Diaspora Studies; Centre for Census Studies and Research; Sophisticated Instrumentation Centre; a monumental Media Centre; and School of Social Sciences. The overall development of Punjabi, language, literature and culture has been the major thrust area with launching of Punjabipedia on the lines of Wikipedia, All-India and Regional Punjabi Conferences, and Mission Punjabi-2020 as the highlighting factors.



Dr. Jaspal Singh has authored five highly acclaimed books on Sikh religion, Sikh politics and Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He has authored over 300 articles on Medieval literature with particular focus on Sikh scriptures including Guru Granth Sahib.

Interconnected Ethics

“Living as Warrior-Saints for the Freedom and Equality of all,
across Centuries, Cultures, Religions and Continents”



When discussing how one can apply the timeless and universal message of Sri Guru Granth Sahib across time, space, cultures and religions, here and now, in today's world, it becomes important to acknowledge how the Sikh teachings shape our own lived experiences. I was born and raised a Sikh in the 3HO (*Healthy, Happy, Holy*) Sikh dharma community with Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogi ji's emphasis on "experiential knowing." Since 2000, I have been studying Gurbani Kirtan and the *jori-pakhawaj* with 13th generation exponent Bhai Baldeep Singh (photograph above) who honoured me as the first female exponent of the Amritsari-Kapurthala Baaj. I have attended classes, spent time with and interviewed his grand uncles, Bhai Gurcharan Singh, Bhai Avtar Singh and son Bhai Kultar Singh. During 2010-2011, I travelled throughout Northern India as a Fulbright fellow, interviewing the extant memory bearers of the

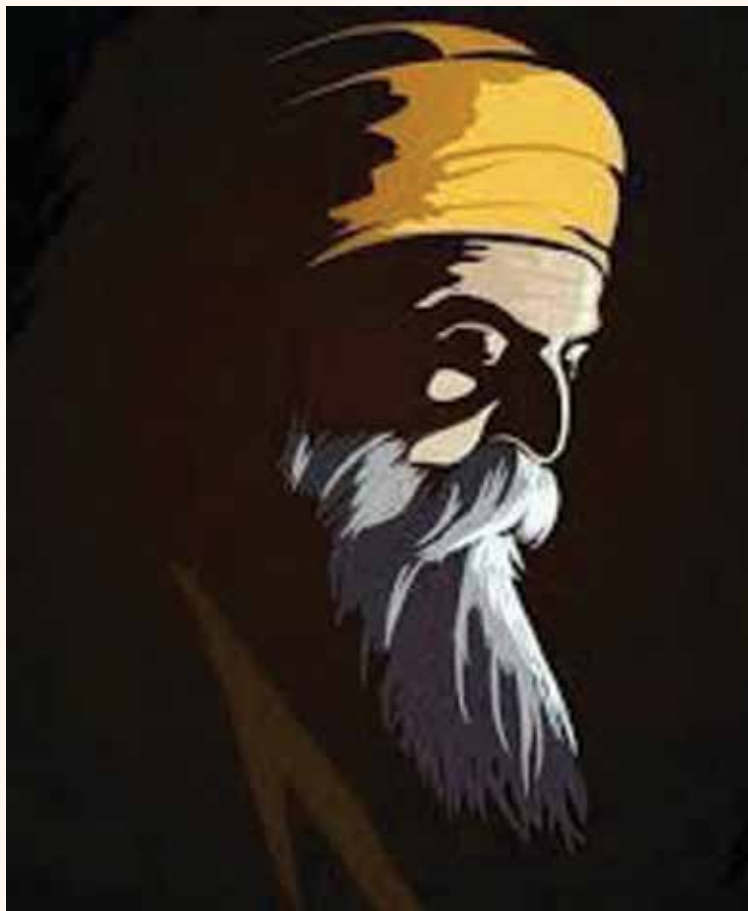
Gurbani Sangeet parampara, hosted by Dr Gurnam Singh and the The Gurmat Sangeet Department at Punjabi Univeristy Patiala. My graduate study with Dr. Arvind S. Mandair at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor expanded my horizons in Sikh Studies through its history, philosophy, language and culture.

Now, as a professor of Sikh and Jain Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, I teach an upper division undergraduate course 'Sikhism: Warrior Saints,' where students visit multiple gurdwaras in the area, attend Baisakhi and Guru Nanak's Birthday at the LA Convention Centre, sit in on Sunday school classes and get to know the lived aspects of Sikhi by interviewing community members. Students also are given opportunities to perform seva both at the Sikh gurdwaras as well as with the Khalsa Peace Corps' *Share a Meal* programme where

they make burritos on a food truck which they then serve to the homeless around Los Angeles. Additionally, students gain first-hand experience of aspects of Sikhi by performing a forty-day practice of their choosing (ie. *nam simran*, *nam japna*, meditation, seva, veganism/vegetarianism or relinquishing one of the five drives: *kam*, *krodh*, *lobh*, *moh*, and *ahankar*.) For example, when a student chooses to work on their ego (*ahankar*), they begin to recognise their own self-centered tendencies or desires and move towards a mindset that acknowledges the self in relation to all others. Such a relationship is characterised by love for one another, a love that sacrifices the ego-self. It is this core concept of egolessness that offers a dynamic ethical paradigm based on the interconnectedness of life. By observing the symbiotic relationship between perspectives and practices, between thought and action, between mind, body and spirit, students experience first-hand how Sikhi offers ethical and moral guidelines for living in the world.

Timeless, Universal Message

The wisdom enshrined in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib therefore is not meant to only be read, recited, sung, and studied, but is meant to be experienced, practiced and LIVED—today—here and now. Sri Guru Granth Sahib conveys a harmonious vision beyond boundaries, borders, and divisions. It encapsulates the interconnected nature of this harmony through its materiality, musicality, authorship, language, script and content. It aligns pan-Indic spiritual insights and wisdoms, from multiple religions, regions, languages, faiths, and castes. Within Sri Guru Granth Sahib, this diversity is harmonised through a common text, a common script (Gurmukhi), a shared musical language of raag, and a common message clearly conveyed by Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogi ji's who said "If you can't see God in all, you can't see God at all." This popular phrase clearly illustrates the "Interconnected Ethics" revealed by Guru Nanak Dev ji as *Ik Ongkar*, that we are ONE, a revolutionary concept that was continued by the succeeding Sikh Gurus, enshrined in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, and imprinted in our hearts and minds. Guru Nanak states: "the highest yogic



order is to see the brotherhood of mankind; through conquering your own mind, you conquer the world (*man jitai jag jit*)" (Siri Guru Granth Sahib 6). This interconnected perspective based on an experience of ego-loss is the foundation of Sikh ethics. It encourages us to practice love-in-action as Warrior-Saints who have the courage to stand against injustice and defend those in need for the freedom and equality of All.

The Sikh concept of the Warrior Saint began with Guru Nanak. He taught a revolutionary mode of living in the world through a saintly mindset that renounces ego-centric behavior, recognises our shared humanity and allows us to serve others with mutual care and respect, while also living the life of a householder – willing to stand against inequality, segregation, and discrimination. This ethical mode of living in the world offers a response to the separatist ideologies currently being erected along nationalistic, religious, ethnic, and race lines, escalating hate rhetoric and acts of violence, particularly aimed at our Sikh brothers and sisters.

Guru Nanak Dev ji's socio-religious intervention in the early 16th century promotes an ethical paradigm based on an interconnected oneness that resists religious and social inequality and communal violence. Guru Nanak Dev ji paved the way for the Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev ji to transcend social, religious, and linguistic divisions in compiling the *Adi Granth*, a musical-poetic scripture unlike any other with firsthand expressions of divine experience from the Sikh Gurus themselves, from their disciples, court musicians and saints of differing religious, ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds. The Tenth Sikh Guru further transgressed socio-politico-religious norms by proclaiming that the *Adi Granth* scripture would henceforth be the eternal, living Guru of the Sikhs, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru Gobind Singh ji, recognising the faulty nature of human authority that can lend itself to unethical behaviour, removed any possibility of ego-posturing in relationship to the Guruship. He ceased the lineage of human successors and instead invested the sovereign authority of the Guruship into the *Guru Granth*, the *Shabd Guru*. This act effectively displaced human authority that is subject to time and space, and invested it in the eternal Word as Guru that each Sikh can embody within their self, through the practices of *nam jap*, *nam simran*, and *Gurbani kirtan*. In this way the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as *Shabd Guru* offers a radical mode of sovereignty that unifies rather than divides, that is not subject to laws of succession and infighting. It is an authority that itself

contains the tools towards one's own liberation from the ego-dominated self towards a path of Love. This revolutionary notion of sovereignty allows us to live as Warrior Saints who, through conquering our selfish ego-centered minds and behaviour, recognise the shared humanity of all beings and stand courageously for the equal rights and freedom of ALL.

Guru Gobind Singh ji poetically expresses:

“All men are the same though they appear different.
The bright and the dark, the ugly and the beautiful, ...
All human beings have the same eyes, the same ears,
The same body build composed of earth, air, fire and water. ...
The names Allah and Abhekh are for the same God ...
The same is referred to in the Puranas and the Quran.
All human beings are the reflection of one and the same Lord.
Recognise the whole human race as One.”

Guru Gobind Singh ji, like the Sikh Gurus before him, led by example, recognising the interconnected nature of the *hukam* at play within the world. Even after his great-grand father, father, sons and disciples had been martyred for taking a stand against religious persecution and forceful conversion at the hands of Mughal rulers, he understood the importance of fighting for justice without vengeance, greed, pride, attachments, hate or enmity. Instead, he fought so that those of all faiths may live and worship freely rather than submit to an oppressive, unjust rule.



Relevance of Guru's Message in Today's World

While the world has changed much in the last 550 years since the time of the Sikh Gurus, there are many things that remain the same. People continue to struggle against unjust power structures. Owing to the pervasiveness of fear and hate rhetoric, we continue to see boundaries erected along nationalistic, religious, ethnic, and race lines, separating ourselves



from our shared humanity and causing acts of violence.

In the USA, there have been many hate crimes particularly aimed at our Khalsa Sikh fathers, uncles, husbands, brothers, grandfathers, and sons, whose identity with their turbans and beards visually represent to an un-informed public, terrorism, fear, and distrust rather than the Khalsa attributes as given by Guru Gobind Singh ji which represent contentment, acceptance, honour, strength, justice and equality for all.

Thousands of hate crimes have been inflicted upon Sikhs since 11 September 2001 when terrorists flew their airplanes into the Twin Towers and the media continually showed Osama Bin Laden, with his turban and beard, as the epitome of evil – the enemy. Since then, there have been countless hate crimes against Sikhs who continue to be targeted as terrorists, owing to their own turbans and beards. Rather than responding with hate and rage the Sikh community has called for greater education about who Sikhs are, with prayers for unity and with forgiveness in the heart.

A few days after 11th September, a Sikh, Balbir Singh Sodhi was murdered outside his gas station in Phoenix, Arizona by a man who killed him out of rage and hate because he perceived him as the “enemy.” After this horrific crime, Balbir Singh’s brother, Rana Singh Sodhi began working with activist Valarie Kaur to spread the Sikh message of “revolutionary love and forgiveness, even for your opponents or enemies.” While serving a life sentence, the killer agreed to speak with Rana Singh over the phone. In the spirit of Sikhi, Rana Singh offered him forgiveness.

We recently commemorated the 5th anniversary of the horrific shooting at the Gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin when on 5 August 2012, a white supremacist opened fire on the Sikh sangat during a Sunday Gurdwara service, killing six people. We keep Paramjit Kaur Saini, Suveg Singh Khattri, Ranjit Singh, Katwant Singh Kaleka, Prakash Singh, and Sita Singh, and Baba Punjab Singh, now paralysed, in our prayers and hearts.

After this atrocity, Harpreet Singh Saini, who had lost his mother Paramjit Kaur in the attack, worked

with the Sikh Coalition, to pass a resolution that the FBI's national hate crimes database would finally track hate crimes against Sikhs. His testimony in front of the US Senate demonstrates the Sikh capacity to stand with courage and love in the face of enormous tragedy, loss, and grief.

“He killed my mother, Paramjit Kaur, while she was sitting for morning prayers. He shot and killed five more men—all of them were fathers, all had turbans like me. And now people know all our names: Sita Singh. Ranjit Singh. Prakash Singh. Suvegh Singh. Satwant Singh Kaleka. This was not supposed to be our American story. This was not my mother's dream... Senators, my mother was our biggest fan, our biggest supporter. She was always there for us, she always had a smile on her face. But now she's gone. Because of a man who hated her because she wasn't his colour? His religion?... I want to tell the gunman who took her from me: You may have been full of hate, but my mother was full of love.”

This eloquent proclamation of love from a young Sikh man who had just lost his mother exemplifies how Sikhs continue to respond to these hate crimes. Rather than giving in to hate, anger, revenge, and fear Sikhs continue to stand with strength, courage and compassion.

The Sikh Gurus teach us how to live in *Ik Ong Kar*, with *Nirbhao* and *Nirvair*. How to be fearless warriors who also do not cause fear. How to be without enmity, to have no enemies and recognise our shared humanity. The warrior saint concept can serve as an ethical model for us all—to not vilify the other, but to act with compassion, grace, dignity, and understanding, even in the face of hostility and adversity.

Guru Nanak Dev ji in this *shlok* instructs:

Jo to praem khaelan kaa chaao || Sir dhar talee galee maeree aao ||

If you desire to play this game of love with me, then step onto my path with your head in hand, and do not heed public opinion.

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1412)

The Sikh perspective that we must first conquer the ego-centred-mind to serve others, underpins the

warrior-saint tradition that calls us to stand against injustice and defend those in need; whereby serving others we serve the Divine interconnected whole. The Sikh Gurus teach us that the root cause of injustice and oppression is our *haumai*. That our selfish desires build walls between you and me but never make us truly happy. They teach that our desires are thirsts that can never be quenched while our minds beg for more, blind to the gifts we have already been given. It is our selfish nature that obscures our recognition of the Divine Light within ALL and separates us from our humanity.

Psychoanalysis teaches us that separation from the greater whole causes a deep existential pain, lack or void that the ego tries to fill by creating an economy of exchange that treats others as objects that can be used, bought, or sold. This existential grief and pain is then externalised, expressed as an economic lack, that can only be fulfilled through accumulation and oppression and that can only be solved by vilifying and hating the other rather than looking within one's own mind, heart and self. Today, we see this existential cum economic grief and pain projected onto precarious minority communities worldwide. From the killing of Srinivas in Kansas and the shooting of Deep Rai, a Sikh in Kent, Washington, who were both told “go back to your country,” to the bomb threats at Jewish community centres and fires and shooting at mosques, to the most recent killing of Heather Heyer in Charlottesville who, though concerned about the potential violence that would occur, decided to follow the path of love and protest the hateful white supremacist rally. She offered her heart and head to stand against social inequality and injustice, and was killed by a motorist full of hate and rage.

Sikh teachings, enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, offer an ethical model to train our bodies and minds to live as Warrior Saints who have the courage (‘cor’ is the latin root for *heart*) to give of one's head, to give of one's ego, to stand against injustice and defend those in need, for the Freedom and Equality of ALL. The Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev ji in *Sukhmani Sahib* gives a formula for how humans can remove their inner turmoil, pain, and sorrow to find peace, love and acceptance. He instructs:

*Replace self-centered thought, speech and action
With love for All
By meditating on the Divine Unity of Creation
Our Pain and Sorrow Depart
And Peace dwells in our hearts and mind*

*We perform good deeds and selfless service for Others
Because we see no separation between our self and others
Once we are able to recognise the Divine Light that shines
within ALL
We are then able to treat enemies and friends alike*

And to peacefully accept whatever happens

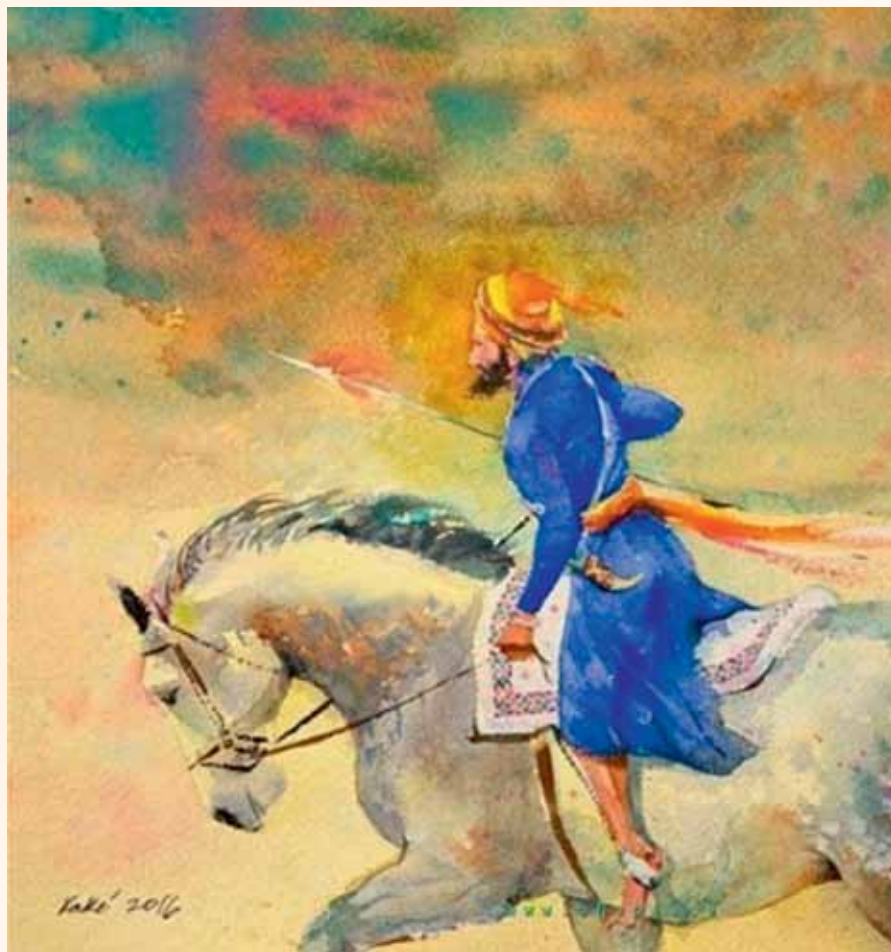
The path of the Warrior Saint is not an easy one, it is difficult. Sri Guru Granth Sahib instructs us to stand tall in the face of darkness, so that ALL may live in *Chardi Kalaa*!

As a reminder to lead by example, I offer the “Song of the Khalsa” sung at the end of every 3HO Sikh Gurdwara, before the Anand Sahib:

*Many speak of courage
Speaking cannot give it
It's in the face of death that we must live it*

*When things are down and darkest
That's when we stand tallest
Until the last star falls
We won't give an inch at All*

*Stand as the Khalsa
Strong as steel, steady as stone
Give our lives to God and Guru
Mind and Soul
Breath and Bone.*



Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa, Ph.D. is Clinical Professor Sikh & Jain Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California where she teaches a highly popular course ‘Sikhism: Warrior Saints.’ Professor Khalsa received her Ph.D in Asian Languages and Cultures from the University of Michigan in 2014 on ‘The Renaissance of Sikh Devotional Music.’ She has conducted extensive ethnographic research throughout Northern India, interviewing the remaining memory bearers of the Gurbani Kirtan parampara and was honoured by 13th generation kirtaniya Bhai Baldeep Singh (grandnephew of Bhai Avtar and Bhai Gurcharan Singh) as the first female exponent of the Amritsari-Baaj on the jori-pakhawaj. Her ongoing research investigates diversity in the Sikh diaspora particularly as it relates to gendered and institutionalised norms within the devotional sphere.



“Sikh Way of Life as inspired by the Sikh Rehat Maryada”

Sukhveer Singh answers the questions put to him:



Guru Gobind Singh ji, the Tenth Master

What is Sikh Rehat Maryada? When and why was it instituted? To what extent it is relevant in present times?

The Sikh Rehat Maryada is the code of conduct for Sikh social, religious, and general living that follows the teachings of our Gurus. After Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji left for his heavenly abode, many contradictory practices, often drawn from the religious traditions of Hinduism and Islam, had forced their way into the Sikh way of life. Furthermore, as Sikhs were not custodians of many Gurdwaras, they could not ensure that correct practices were followed.

The Khalsa Panth was being led astray and there was need to have a code of conduct to protect the unique tenor of our religion. Starting in 1927, the

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee took on the task to enshrine the Sikh Rehat Maryada.

The Committee involved Gursikhs and Sikh scholars from across the world. Those who debated over the initial draft sought to bring consistency to our practices so we could be more united, advance ourselves collectively, and resist external disruptive influences.



The doctrine of the Sikh Rehat Maryada

The Sikh Rehat Maryada was instituted on 12 October 1936 and is the **only** version that has been authorised by Sri Akal Takht Sahib. It remains as relevant now as it was when first published. Its implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in our religious and social practices. It provides guidelines against which all Sikh individuals and communities around the world can measure themselves. It addresses key issues such as the definition of a Sikh, personal and communal obligations, rules for Gurdwara services, and conduct at Sikh ceremonies. We can turn to the Sikh Rehat Maryada as a guide on how to apply the universal spiritual principles of the Gurus.

What is the significance of adhering to different aspects of Sikh way of life such as visiting Gurudwara , doing Nitnem and speaking Punjabi? How does practicing or not practicing these principles impact your lifestyle?

The purpose of this life is to become one with Waheguru by living the life of a Gurmukh and **not** that of a Manmukh. To do this, our Gurus emphasised that we should lead a disciplined life. The Amrit Ceremony is one of our most important ceremonies as it is when we make the commitment to lead a pure and pious life

The *Panj Kakkar* are articles of faith that collectively define our external appearance and express our commitment to the pursuit of the aims and ideals of our Gurus. By wearing them, we set aside all other religious beliefs and practices. They are essential for fostering the Khalsa brotherhood and serve as a constant reminder to us of our core values.

We need to make every effort at learning Gurmukhi in order to read the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji in its original written form as this is central to our identity. We cannot get the full meaning or essence from a translation. Just as the greatness of Waheguru cannot



The panj kakkar

be described, the greatness of Gurbani cannot be translated.

We should wake up early to become one with Waheguru by reciting the Nitnem Banis and doing Simran. This brings the Gurus into my daily life and helps provide spiritual guidance and inspire me to better my life, and thus become a better Gursikh. The company we keep has major effects on our mind, attitude, and outlook towards others. This is why it is necessary for us to visit the Gurdwara for worship and joining with the Sadh Sangat.

By keeping company of the Sadh Sangat, my negativity and sins are dispelled and I become more aligned with Waheguru. It is only by doing Nitnem, and visiting the Gurdwara that I can mould my life according to the teachings of our Gurus.

How do five facets of corporate Sikh life affect the everyday life of a Sikh?



Our life has both individual and corporate or Panthic aspects. Each one of us is expected to take part in the life of the community as a matter of our sacred duty to build a better Panth. The Guru Panth is the total body of Sikhs who live according to the teachings of our Gurus. Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji gave its final shape, passing temporal leadership of the Sikhs to the Guru Panth and spiritual leadership to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji.

The Amrit Ceremony opens the path to become part of the Guru Panth. A Sikh that breaches any of the four major transgressions: hair cutting, adultery, using alcohol or tobacco or eating of *kutta* meat are called Patit and are required to take Amrit again.

If a Sikh has a lapse in observing discipline against lesser transgressions, they need to appear before the Panj Pyaras for undergoing Tankhah. When an issue arises that impacts our entire community, a unanimous decision is sought from the Panj Pyarae at one of the five Takhts in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji.

As this decision is deemed to have been endorsed by the Guru himself, it is called Gurmata, and is binding to all Sikhs. If there is a need to appeal against a decision made by the local congregation, it can be made to the Sri Akal Takht Sahib. As with the Gurmatta, the decision is also binding to all concerned.

Avoidance of discrimination based on caste, religion, or gender is a key tenet of the Sikh faith. However, Sikhism also urges its followers to respect the views of other faiths who do discriminate based on caste, religion, or gender. How can you reconcile this seeming contradiction?

Our Gurus taught us that everyone is equal, regardless of religion or caste or colour. The object of religion is to unite mankind and **not** to divide it. It is our duty to respect, understand, and co-operate with other faith communities. We should focus on the essential shared elements of other faiths rather than the superficial differences that separate them.

The positive virtues and moral values of different faiths foster unity and cohesion of mankind. It is only through love, compassion, and truthfulness that we can reach the deepest fathoms of the heart and enlighten others. However, we also need to respectfully disagree with any practice of prejudice or discrimination based on caste, race, gender or religion.

I view the worship of idols and deities by others as simply their worship of Waheguru's creations. As Waheguru is above all of His creations, I will only worship Him. In our Ardas, we ask for Guru's blessing for the welfare of **all**. This comes from the teachings of our Gurus that the same One God resides within all of us and we are children of that One God.



The Anand Karaj ceremony

While Sikhism preaches equality for all humankind, it is decreed that a Sikh woman may only marry a Sikh man. How do you explain this anomaly?

One of the major principles taught by our Gurus is to treat everyone as equal because we were all created by one God. Marriage of a Sikh man and woman should be based on the physical state and individual traits of the couple. The Sikh Rehat Maryada specifies that no thought should be given to the caste or creed of the couple. However, it is wrong for any couple to go through the Anand Karaj if they have no intention of living according to the teachings of our Gurus. Those wishing to take part in an Anand Karaj **must** adopt the Sikh faith. The *Chaar Phere* around the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji are a reminder of this.

The goal of human life is to realise God. The spouse is a companion, a life-partner to travel on that path. Two people cannot simultaneously walk on different paths and still remain together

as a couple. Religious feelings of the partner cannot be ignored, otherwise married life becomes troublesome. The relationship should be so strong that the husband and wife live as one soul. Therefore, it becomes essential that the couple be followers of same faith.

During these difficult and troubled times, we need to embrace the glorious teachings of our Gurus, by living in accordance with the Sikh Rehat Maryada.

Sukhveer Singh Karlecut is a senior at Monta Vista High School in Cupertino. He has been a regular participant in the Sri Hemkunt Foundation Symposium for over ten years. He enjoys playing the violin and is part of the chamber orchestra at his high school. On Sundays, he helps teach Punjabi and Gurbani to young children at Guru Nanak Khalsa School at the San Jose Gurdwara.



Harbir Kaur Bhatia suggests that

“By walking the walk with SGGS and our beloved Gurus, are Sikhs designed to be civic entrepreneurs, public ombudsmen or future leaders?”

Sikhi's universal principles of *Naam*, social values and their birth across over 200 years of turmoil and invasions, religious oppression by foreign invaders and religious abuse under Brahmic leadership, have presented a way of life that is resilient, practical, inclusive, and of high ideals! It enjoins the Sikhs to live a God (Divine) conscious, moral, and socially ethical life. Sikhi has fundamentally given high value to activism, equality, justice, community service and brotherhood and have empowered all for direct connection with the Divine, irrespective of social status or religious affiliation.

“Recognise the human race as one”, said Guru Gobind Singh ji, and “the betterment of all, *sarbat da bhalla*”, proclaimed Guru Nanak. By walking the walk of Sikhi, as a Sant-Sipahi, could the future Governor be a Sikh? Could the future US President be a Sikh? One does not have to be an expert theologian or have a doctorate in Sikhi to see the opportunity, possibility - and reality! I will cite specific examples from SGGS and stories of our beloved Guru in our history, which endorse that Sikhs can be effective activists and leaders, those who can help create successful societies.

To provide a frame and perspective around as to why I share this view, let me recount a little about my own background. I grew up in the Midwest USA with my parents, a brother, and a sister. My educational and professional background has been in Engineering. Our family taught us the values of social service, and Sikhi was a central part of our upbringing. It was a pillar of strength and identification for us as children. Sikhi directly impacted our actions and choices. Through *Sakhis* of the Gurus and *Gurbani* we gained most of our fundamentals. The *Sakhis* (stories of our Gurus) and examples of *Gurbani* to be shared are not unknown to you, but I hope to provide a perspective on how they

designed and developed the character of activists and leaders. I have always found religions interesting and explored many with the empowerment of Sikhi to accept others, which helped my understanding of Sikhi more and also allowed me to appreciate other stories as well. Having worked and served in various forms of public, service, and private sectors for more than 30 years, I share this perspective from personal experience.

When we look at the issues affecting modern day society, you will see similar themes in history time and time again. An article in the *New York Times* ‘What Do You Think is the Most Important Problem Facing This Country Today?’ shares the results by Gallups polls from 1935 through February 2017, from the times of President Franklin Roosevelt to the beginning of President Trump's term in office. I share the 1935 and 2017 results. The themes and issues are surprisingly common through history, and looking back into our Sikh history the concerns remain the same.

Need For Equality, Liberty and Justice for All

The summary of what is affecting us today is the lack of those willing to serve the whole community fairly and equally. There is a strong need for independent, fair and just, and inclusive mindset. The teachings of Sikhi provide that. Let us examine the times of the Gurus and South Asian history. For centuries after centuries, the Indian Sub-continent faced constant foreign invasions and with it varied philosophies, traditions, and communities of people. In the earlier phases of invasions, cultures were largely incorporated and absorbed into the way of life from early BCE, Greeks (Alexander), Scythians, Parthians, Ionians, Bactrians, Huns and others a thousand years over.

Thereafter, in the times of late-Medieval period in India, invasions from Arabs to Mughals, India's

culture faced two different challenges: foreign rulers with oppressive regimes and foreign religions impacted on a country weakened by ritualism, caste system, apathy, and inequality. Thus, the times were covered with abuse of power and misuse of religion, spiritual and moral decline, poverty, injustice, foreign invasions, divided society, lack of resources and opportunities, powerlessness and lack of security, access, and so much more. There was a need for a fair and socially responsible society.

Sikhi shows the way

Through this period what resulted was a new way of life, Sikhi, and the final Guru and guide for all times. It laid the groundwork for a stout halt of invasions, whilst it empowered and activated the community to participate in their own future and society as an entity.

Through the immense challenges and the teachings, we see that the basic and fundamental principles, practices, and stories highlight and promote the values of unity of God, unity and equality in all mankind, activism, justice and fairness, higher thinking, and empowerment for bettering one's own life and those of others. Sikhi's golden rules or three pillars are summarised as: *Naam Japna*—reflecting/reciting *Naam* (essence of God); *Vand Ke Chakna*—sharing with others, and *Keerat Karna*—honest work.

Examples from the Gurbani

Throughout Gurbani we find examples of the common themes of unity God and amongst mankind, therein we should not ignore harm, inequality, or injustice of others. Instead, we must help or serve them. There are many examples, and I hope the following provide a perspective and also inspire you to explore more.

Equality

Pārbarahm parabh̄ ek hai dūjā nāhī koe.

There is only the One Supreme Lord God; there is no other at all.

Manas Kee Jaat Ek Ko Pachaniya

Recognise the human race as one

Sarbat da Bhalla,

We look for the betterment of all

Guraa ik dayhi bujhaa-ee. sabhnaa jee-aa kaa ik daataa so mai visar na jaa-ee.

The Guru has made one thing clear: the One God is the provider for all beings – May I never forget this.

Brahm giānī kai dristi saman.

The God-conscious being looks upon all as alike,

Jaise rāj rank ka

o lāgai tūl pavān

Like the wind, which blows equally upon the king and the poor.

Being with the Underprivileged

Neecha Undar Neech Jaat, Neechi Hoon Aat Neech!

Nanak Tinke Sang Saath, Baddian Se Kiyya Rees!

Guru Nanak Dev ji says, stand with the lowest of the low class, the very lowest of the low. Why with those who are from the upper-class (rich)?

Jithai neech samaalee-an tithai nadar tayree bakhsees.

The place where the lowly are cared for, there the Blessings of Your Grace rain down.

Integrity and Faith

Kahe Re Ma Chitvae Udam Ja Aahar Har Jeeo Paria,

O' my mind, why keep on worrying about livelihood, when God Himself is taking care of it.

This does not mean that one should not work for a livelihood. But, that one should make the honest effort but not worry about the results.

Sail Pathar Me Jant Upaaye Taa Ka Rijak Aagae Kar Dharia.

Even for those creatures He created in rocks and stones (tiny worms), He provided their livelihood in advance (before they were born).

Action and Empowerment vs. Entitlement

Jaat Paat Nahin Poochhia, Sach Ghar Leh Basai!

Sa Jaat Sa Paat Hai, Jaise Karam Kama

(High) Levels of haves in society are irrelevant, we are made by our actions.

Activism and Defending Rights

Soora so pehchaniye jo lare deen ke het

Purja purja kat mare kabhi na khet

The badge of a true soldier is to fight to the end for justice and freedom.

The values of high character were laid down and reinforced as Gurbani in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Through Nitnem, Amrit Kirtan and SGGs explanation is provided poetically to help us understand this through the lives of the Ten Gurus, from where we learn that

- see all as equal
- have courage to act
- work as per *hukam*, the highest order
- think practically, innovatively, and independently
- to standup, defend, care and serve
- to be inclusive and accessible
- to do what is right
- imbibe togetherness
- stand up for liberty, equality and justice for all

Lives of the Gurus

Sikh history provides examples of the practical applications of such characteristics in religious practice, activism, leadership, righteousness, and service to humanity.

Let us now take a look at a set of Sakhis:

Sakhi 1: Bhai Lalo and Malik Bhago

During one of the many travels of Guru Nanak Dev ji, he went to the city of Saidpur (Eminabad). Stories about the Guru had reached many in the region and that he may be visiting the town of which Malik Bhago was the Chief. Malik Bhago was known for creating much wealth by corrupt means and unfairly taxing poor farmers and taking most of the harvest for himself, leaving the farmers very little. Arriving at Saidpur, Guru Nanak chose the house of a poor carpenter, Bhai Lalo, to stay with. Having little means, Bhai Lalo was able to offer only simple fare but much



love and devotion. Malik Bhago came to know that the Guru was in his town and invited him to a feast, but was offended when Guru Nanak refused to join him. “Oh holy Man, I have prepared so many dishes for you, but why are you staying with a poor carpenter and eating his dry bread?” The Guru replied, “I cannot eat your food because your bread is ill-begotten and has been made with money taken from the poor through unfair means, while Lalo’s bread is made from his hard-earned money.” Guru ji then squeezed the chapati made by Bhai Lalo and one other from Malik Bhago. Bhai Lalo’s chapati dripped of milk while Malik Bhago’s dripped blood! Malik’s life was changed as he realised his character and thereafter shared his wealth to redeem himself. This story presents multiple principles and characteristics, first, that truth and love are greater wealth than money and riches. Secondly, our methods matter. Thirdly the through art of conversation and a strong argument. The most important is courage, to speak up against wrong, irrespective of power and status.

Sakhi 2: Guru Hargobind and the 52 Princes



Guru Hargobind had been arrested by then Mughal king along with 52 other Indian princes. After constant protests from his devotees, the King agreed to release Guru Hargobind from Gwalior jail but with conditions. He refused to leave unless all other princes were also released with him, so as to be fair. Then the authorities ruled that anyone who could hold Guru ji’s garment would also be able to walk out free along with him. Guru Hargobind had a robe creatively made with 52 tabs that became quite large, thus allowing all the 52 princes to hold a tab each so all walked out along with him. This demonstrated importance of equality in

human beings, irrespective of their stature in society, and fearlessness in challenging unjust rule.

Sakhi 3: Guru Hargobind and Guru's Maseet on the River Beas, Sri Hargobindpur

After Guru Hargobind Sahib was victorious in a fierce battle even though his army was heavily outnumbered by the Mughals near the River Beas, he established a small settlement which expanded into a town and was known as Sri Hargobindpur, near Gurdaspur. The town was fortified to withstand Mughal invasions and many of the city walls remain there. People of all faiths settled in this town following Guru Hargobind's desire for a secular settlement near the River Beas. Soon, local Muslims asked Guru ji for support in building a masjid (mosque). Guru Hargobind was known for his equal respect of all faiths, and therefore ordered a mosque to be constructed for the Muslims. This is an example of caring and leading one's community fairly and equally, irrespective of their faith. Gururji defended, supported and served all peoples in a thriving and cooperative community.

Sakhi 4: Equality or Religions, Kashmiri Pandits and Guru Tegh Bahadur

During the times of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Mughal rulers made strenuous efforts to convert people to Islam, particularly the Kashmiri Pandits who were told to either convert or face death. They came to Guru Tegh Bahadur to request protection from the Mughal rulers. Guru Tegh Bahadur realised that the only way to do this was for him to stand against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb himself. Guru Tegh Bahadur suggested the Pandits notify the Emperor that they would accept Islam only if he could first convert the Guru.

Guru Tegh Bahadur foreseeing the time ahead, appointed his son Gobind Rai as the next Guru to succeed him. On the way to Delhi, Guru ji was arrested soon after departing at Malikhpur. Together he and Bhai Dayala, Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Sati Das were sent to Sirhind in



November 1675, kept in an iron cage in Bassi Pathana and moved to Delhi, where he was chained and tortured. Since Guru ji maintained his faith, he was then asked to perform miracles to prove his powers. He refused and was then beheaded at Chandni Chowk on 24 November 1675. His followers were also tortured and killed, one in boiling hot water, the other being cut by a saw, and the third burnt alive. Guru Tegh Bahadur ji has thereafter been known as *Hind ki Chaddar* or 'The Shield of India', giving up his life to protect the religious freedom of others. This reinforces the value given to freedom and liberty of all people, irrespective of their faith or identity, one of the most powerful examples on the importance of fighting for human rights even if it means giving up one's own life.

Gurugaddi: Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib

The Gurus' teachings and selected wisdom of Hindu and Muslim sages were imbibed by the Gurus. Since each of us are all on our own journeys, we must recognise that human condition is not perfect and we are always battling the five vices, including the desire for power. Blind faith in a living Guru is not necessary because the eternal messages were compiled as the Guru Granth to show us the way of life. A universal message then, now and forever.

Throughout Gurbani, the Shabads explain that one's ego plays the greatest challenge in our abilities to be truly effective and serving the greater good. The five vices of *kaam* (lust), *krodh* (rage), *lobh* (greed), *moh* (attachment) and *ahankar* (arrogance) are to be overcome, which reduces one's own selfishness and works for greater good of society, required in leadership and civic service. At the same time, the Gurus also explained the five virtues which are the best of humanity: *Sat* (Truth), *Santok* (contentment), *Daya* (compassion), *Nimrata* (humility), and *Pyaar* (love). Tackling these enables the leader to seek the best for all.

The Gurus gave us *Nitnem*, which reminds us on a daily basis of the principles and virtues. It resets us to be in alignment with the teachings, at the beginning the day and ending of the day.

Sikhi teachings, examples, and manners allow the principles to be applied to serve society. Though these sound like common sense principles, these are a unique



combination of principles that are needed to lead and serve at all levels of society.

Alignment with American values

Through the various levels of leadership and support needed in society from neighbourhood leaders, school boards, public servants in City-State-National roles, one sees the need to be innovators and entrepreneurs bringing the best of private and public sector together. There are various forms and opportunities as leaders, civic entrepreneurs, trusted ombudsmen, and other.

Looking back at the American Declaration of Independence, we see the alignment of core values, including the right to question the authority and government if it is not in consonance with those values.

Sikhs hold these truths to be self-evident, in that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish those, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organising its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Throughout Sikh history and including recent have been concerns, the issues are the same, similar themes have been occurring again and again over time, which

leads to the constant need for service towards freedom, opportunity, equality, and justice.

Sikhi provides the principles for social justice, stands for all humans to live free and fair lives in where they have the liberty to create their own just future. Such inclusive and unifying humanity is the key to bettering society. There are few traditions or faiths that promote and accept a multicultural and multi-faith world for healthy and successful unified existence. Our Gurus gave us the courage to stand for rights and to always serve with integrity and activism.

Sikhs have been in North America since the early 1900s and share the common values and a long heritage of building the nation. It is time for Sikhs to increasingly participate in society at all levels and bring courage, equality, liberty and justice for all by the principles and virtues provided, selflessly!

Sikhi Is Timeless!

Harbir Kaur remains a very active community leader in Santa Clara County. Her background includes 20 years of Engineering and an even longer history of volunteerism and community development. She is



Harbir Kaur Bhatia

a Commissioner with the City of Santa Clara Cultural Commission, Board Member of The Chamber of Commerce, a Rotarian, Library Foundation Board Member, founder of Joy of SEWA, and most recently was appointed CEO of HI5 Youth Foundation, amongst others. Harbir Kaur was recognised as a 'Community Hero' by the State of California and was given 'Women's Empowerment: Inspiring Achievers Award'. She has become known for bringing 'Sikh Awareness' in the cities of Santa Clara and South Bay and hopes to activate increasing number of Sikhs to become community leaders.

Geeta Kaur on the Sikh Way of Life

Some questions, and answers as inspired by Bhai Vir Singh's novel 'Satwant Kaur'

In the story, what did Satwant Kaur say to Fatima about what all true Sikhs should be and do? What lessons can we learn from this and apply in our daily lives?

Courage. Faith. Compassion. These are some of the virtues that Satwant Kaur lived by.

She was a mere child when she was kidnapped and sold into Khan and Fatima's household.

Despite Satwant's difficult situation, she always lived in Chardi Kala and faced her challenges head on.

Satwant's life of purity and bravery, greatly impressed Fatima. Satwant told her that all true Sikhs should be good human beings, who are truthful and compassionate. Sikhs must live according to the Rehit by waking up at Amrit Vela to recite the Gurbani to purify minds. They must also not become too attached to worldly pleasures and relationships.

There are many lessons that we can learn from how Satwant lived her life. When things are not going our way, or we encounter hardships, by reciting the Gurbani and praying for Waheguru's blessing, we will be bestowed the strength to face these challenges. Waheguru has given us a life to enjoy, but we must not lose ourselves in it. We should remember that the source of spiritual happiness can be found within our hearts, and not in the outer world. By understanding this message from Gurbani, we learn to avoid rituals and treat everyone with respect. Waheguru will always be with us when we recite Gurbani from the heart.



The courageous Satwant Kaur



Using examples from Satwant Kaur's life, describe how her faith and belief in God afforded her with protection? What does faith mean to you?

When Satwant first arrived at Fatima's house, she was given only meat to eat which she refused. Even though she was weak and hungry, she never gave up on her Dharam. Instead, she prayed to Waheguru to help and protect her. Her prayers were answered when Fatima's son gave her grapes to eat and she ended up becoming his nanny.

Just as Fatima helped her in her time of need, Satwant then saved Khan's life when he was arrested by the Amir. Sometimes our needs are fulfilled by Waheguru through someone else.

By setting a room on fire in the Amir's palace, Satwant escaped from being married to him, and hid in a room in Fatima's house. Satwant still kept her faith, by continuing to meditate and recite Gurbani daily.

By disguising herself as a man, she had an opportunity to escape with Baba Ladha Singh and

return to her homeland. She shows us that if we have complete faith in Waheguru, He will always protect us. Faith is believing in Waheguru, no matter what. It is about having trust and belief in the presence of Waheguru.

To live by faith means to surrender myself to Guru ji, and acknowledge that everything I have, including





Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev ji

my life, is a gift from Him. Faith gives me the strength to carry on, even when I'm hurt or having a bad day. Gurbani teaches me to have faith in Waheguru, in good times as well as bad.

Do you agree with Satwant Kaur when she said that if someone isn't able to practice their religion in peace, it is better to die? If so, why; and if not, why not?

I agree with Satwant Kaur, that if you're not allowed to practice your religion, then it is better to die. Sikhs believe that protecting one's faith is the utmost priority. It is a basic human right to have freedom of religion. Without this choice, we become a slave to others.

Agha Khan's mother sacrificed her life, but did not give up on her religion. Instead of converting to Islam, Guru Arjan Dev ji accepted martyrdom on the orders of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. So that Hindus could practice their own religion, Guru Tegh Bahadur ji accepted death to defend them and their faith. Baba

Banda Singh Bahadur, the Chaar Sahibzaade and Guru Gobind Singh ji all sacrificed their lives defending our religion.

Life is living according to your faith and having freedom to live the Sikh way of life. If we have our freedom, then we can make the right decisions; we can choose truth over lies.

What did Saeen give up and why? What was Agha's reaction when he heard the truth? What do we learn from this story?

Agha was a Sikh boy who had been abducted along with his mother and his ayah, Saeen.

Saeen promised to take care of Agha Khan, after his mother was killed by Hassan Khan for refusing to convert to Islam. Saeen gave up her religion, her name and her identity, so she could love and care for Agha and keep her promise to his mother. Since Hassan did not have a son, he adopted Agha and had him converted to

Islam. When Agha Khan grew up, Saeen told him the truth about his past and his mother's sacrifice. His face became red with anger and his eyes turned blood-shot. He picked up his sword, to seek revenge and kill Hassan. However, Saeen was able to calm him down.

From this story, I learned that Sikhs are courageous and forgiving. Even on her death bed, Agha Khan's mother forgave her killer and did not want her son to avenge her death.



Sikhs offering ardaas

Sikhs have the highest of character and are brave warriors. They do not pick up swords to take revenge, but only to fight against evil and tyranny. Indeed, in our Ardaas we pray to Waheguru for the welfare of all humanity.

In this book what other messages did you take away other than the ones discussed in these questions and how would you apply that in your daily living?

There are many important messages that can be taken from this book. Bhai Vir Singh reminds us that as Sikhs we should always remain humble. Even when we become successful or powerful, we should never develop egos or feel superior to others. We should always avoid saying things like "I did this" or "I did that". This is not the way to get Waheguru's blessing. Remembering this helps me avoid getting an inflated ego and knowing that everything that happens is due to Guru ji's Hukam.

Satwant Kaur inspired me to live my life as a true Gursikh and follow the teachings of our Gurus. It is only by praying to Waheguru for the gift of Naam, obeying His Hukam, and helping those in need, that we become good human beings.

Can you imagine how much better this world would be if we started living by the messages in Gurbani?



Geeta Kaur is in VIIIth grade at Kennedy Middle School in Cupertino. She has been a regular participant in the Sri Hemkunt Foundation Symposium for the past seven years and this year has been placed first in group III at the International Sikh Youth Symposium. She enjoys playing the rabab, harmonium and violin as well as performing kirtan. On Sundays, she helps teach Punjabi and Gurbani to young children at Guru Nanak Khalsa School at San Jose Gurdwara. In her spare time she loves reading books of fiction.

S. Sundeeep Singh on

The Mool Project

Contemporary relevance of Guru Granth Sahib: communication
with cutting edge AV technology



A representation of Gagan Mein Thaal, part of the Mool Project

Many thousands of years of history have shown that whenever mankind strays into ‘undesirable space,’ there is a need for correction and some enlightened person takes on the role of a master and attempts to redefine a way of life. Over a period of time, such a way of life matures into a programmed set of actions and then takes on the shape of a faith or religion.

Thereafter suggested practices start being followed in letter, perhaps not in spirit, which leads people away from spirituality and into blind faith. People are again led astray, the cycle is complete and a new Master comes onto the world and we start once again!

Krishna and Moses existed more than four thousand years back, Buddha and Mahavira walked this earth



Guru Nanak Dev ji in conversation with Siddhas

two thousand five hundred years ago. Five hundred years later there was Christ and four centuries after Christ came Mohammad. In that context Sikhism is a very young religion. The five centuries that have elapsed since its founder Guru Nanak walked upon this earth are thus, but a blink of an eye in the history of men. Events happening at that time are well known; men who lived at that time are easily remembered. It was at that the time that Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the new world, that Vasco da Gama found the route to India, that Magellan completed his first voyage around the world.

William Shakespeare was writing his plays and his complete works were compiled before compilation of the Granth Sahib. All this serves to demonstrate as to how recent and contemporary Guru Granth Sahib is, more recent than Shakespeare which is taught in schools till today.

The Lodhi tombs existed from the time of Nanak's lifetime; Humayun, whose tomb is in New Delhi, was battling to save his fledgling kingdom when Nanak

passed into eternity. The Qutub Minar, in fact, was already dominating Delhi's skies two centuries before Nanak was born. The Unsurpassed beauty is that Sikh philosophy is available with us in its original form, fully authenticated and set to music in specified ragas. This is the story of a very young religion. Its concerns are immediate; its message, absolutely fresh.

However, even though Sikhi is the most recent and probably the most relevant faith, it is still centuries away from the present world, especially the youth of today. The development of AV technologies in the past few decades have

rapidly pushed even current written matter into the past. Science text books are supported by animated diagrams, comics have become animated films, novels and books are now films and TV. Virtual and augmented reality have enabled people to transport themselves into immersive experiences and environments. All this just means that today's young people are very unlikely have either the inclination or the languages or even the time to read the spiritual texts, be it the Gita, Bible, Quran or even the recent Granth Sahib, the words of masters or Gurbani. This is very unfortunate because many of the values captured in our Gurbani are relevant and even taught today.

Some of them are:

- Secularism
- Gender equality
- The use of violence only in the defence of the defenceless, not for personal gain
- Caring and sharing
- Deep respect for nature and environment

The Mool Project is an initiative that takes Gurbani that relates to or expresses the above five values and communicates them to two key target audiences. The first and primary target are our own children who would otherwise be unwilling to imbibe the values of their faith. The second and equally relevant audience is the international community. People who have a reluctance or difficulty in understanding the tenets of Sikhism. Recent events in the US and other parts of the world have shown that the distinct identity of the Sikhs is confusing them and confusion naturally leads to uncertainty and even negative impressions and actions.

Deploying the latest Audio-Visual technology such as dome projection, mechanised seats, multichannel sound, and holography and technology that uses motion, breeze, perfume, we talk to young people about core values using their language, their aesthetic and their technology. I believe it is a natural form of evolution.

The Mool Project is designed as a show which is written by well-known writer and diplomat Navtej Singh Sarna (presently Indian Ambassador in the USA) many of whose words are reproduced in this talk. It will be presented through the medium of Holographs by Kabir Bedi and will be directed by a host of young directors. The Gurbani and other music will be done in a non-traditional manner by contemporary singers and artists and produced by a many time Grammy award winner.

It will take several forms. Initially it will be shown as a permanent show housed in a special building in Central Delhi, (next to Rakabganj Sahib) a stone's throw from India's parliament, a location akin to the Smithsonian Institution of Washington DC and subsequently on devices using immersive and wearable technology such as Google Glass etc.

Finally, the content will be formatted to be made available globally to anyone who wants to showcase it in locations of their choice.



S. Sundeep Singh (Bobby) is a graduate in Economics and an MBA in Finance. He has worked with HCL Technologies Ltd. Philips and Sony before he started Kaleidoscope Entertainment Private Limited. Bobby has produced several national and International award winning films which have featured in Cannes, Toronto, Berlin, Venice, Locarno, Montreal, Goa, Pusan, London and Valladolid film festivals. Some of his films are *Bandit Queen*, *Fire*, *Mangal Pandey*, *Maqbool* and *Saathiya*.

Bobby has twice received the National Award for Best Film by the President of India and in 2016 he received a lifetime achievement award by the Valladolid Film Festival in Spain. Apart from producing feature films and directing documentaries, Bobby designs, and produces content for Museums. These include *Virasat E Khalsa* at Anandpur Sahib, The Mahabharat Multimedia Gallery at Kurukshetra, The Bihar History Museum at Patna and the Baba Baghel Singh Museum at Bangla Sahib. At present Bobby is creating the Mool Project, a multi-dimensional show using holography, 360° Projection, and 4DX Technology in New Delhi.

Bobby has conceptualised the building and is designing and producing the content.

Bobby has been invited to speak several times on Intellectual Property issues at WIPO, Geneva and has represented the FIAPF (the world Producer Body) at Internet Governance Forum Brazil (2015) and Guadalajara, Mexico (2016) and at the Beijing Treaty (2012). Bobby is on the board of Indian Motion Picture Producers Association and a Vice President of the Film Federation of India. He is also on the board of TiE.

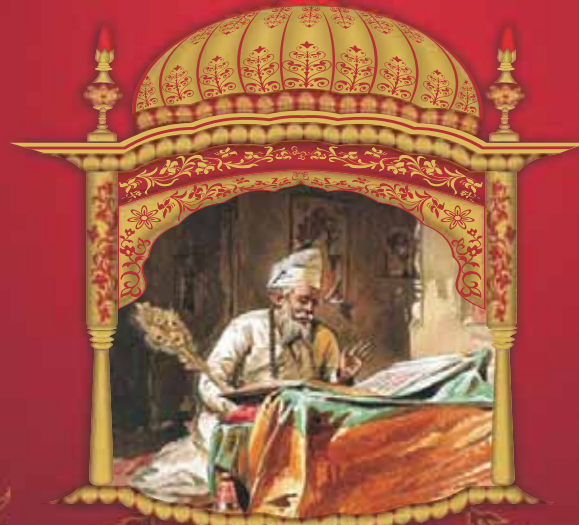


ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ ।।

The Book is the Abode of God.

Guru Granth Sahib

T H E G U R U E T E R N A L



With Message from Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India
Dr. Mohinder Singh

To mark the tercentenary of the Gurgaddi Divas of Guru Granth Sahib in 2008, this volume is being brought out to highlight some distinctive features of the Sikh scripture.

This book features the history of the compilation of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Pictures of various Gurdwaras and ceremonies covered by India's leading photographers.

A photo montage on the morning and evening ceremony of the *Granth* at Harimandir Sahib.

A look at the world's smallest and biggest *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Important *Banis* of all the contributors to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, along with their translations.

Paintings contributed by the most renowned artists and other collections from around the world.

The first ever camera photograph of the Golden Temple by William Baker.

Glimpses of rare *Guru Granth Sahib Birs* from different repositories in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and U.K.

Pictures of *Mool Mantra* in the hand of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh in different rare *Birs*, *Hukamnamas* and relics of the Sikh Gurus.

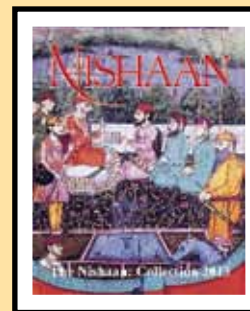
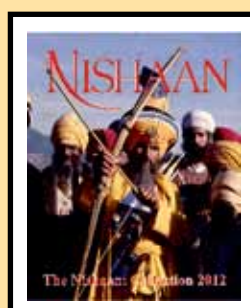
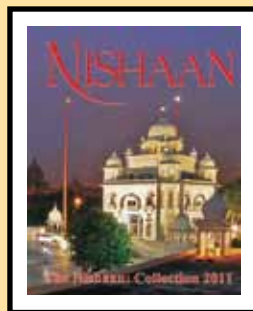
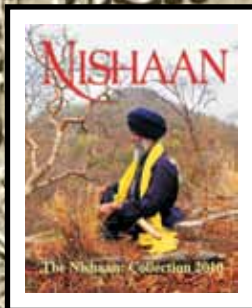
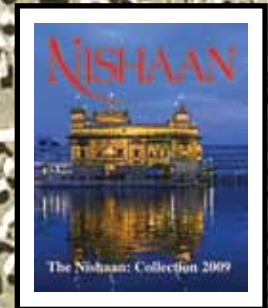
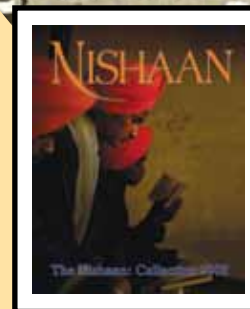
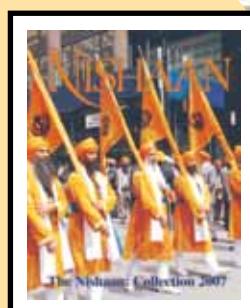
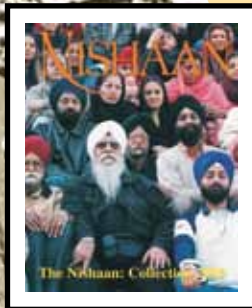
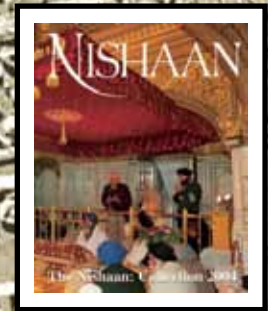
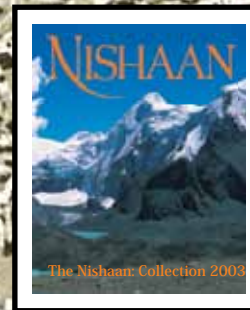
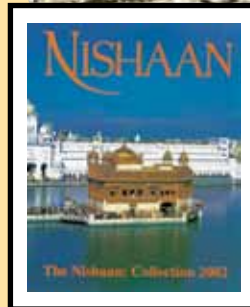
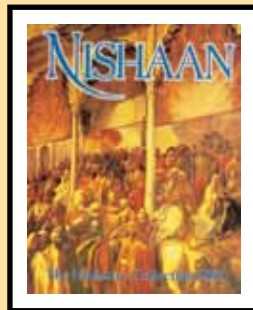
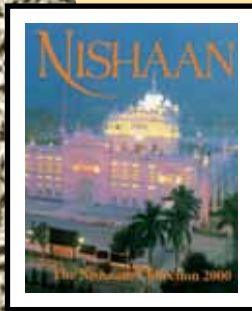


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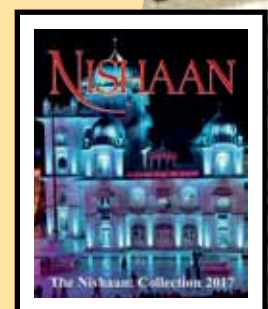
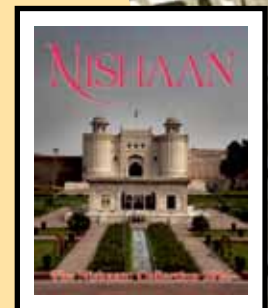
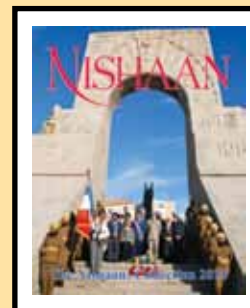
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