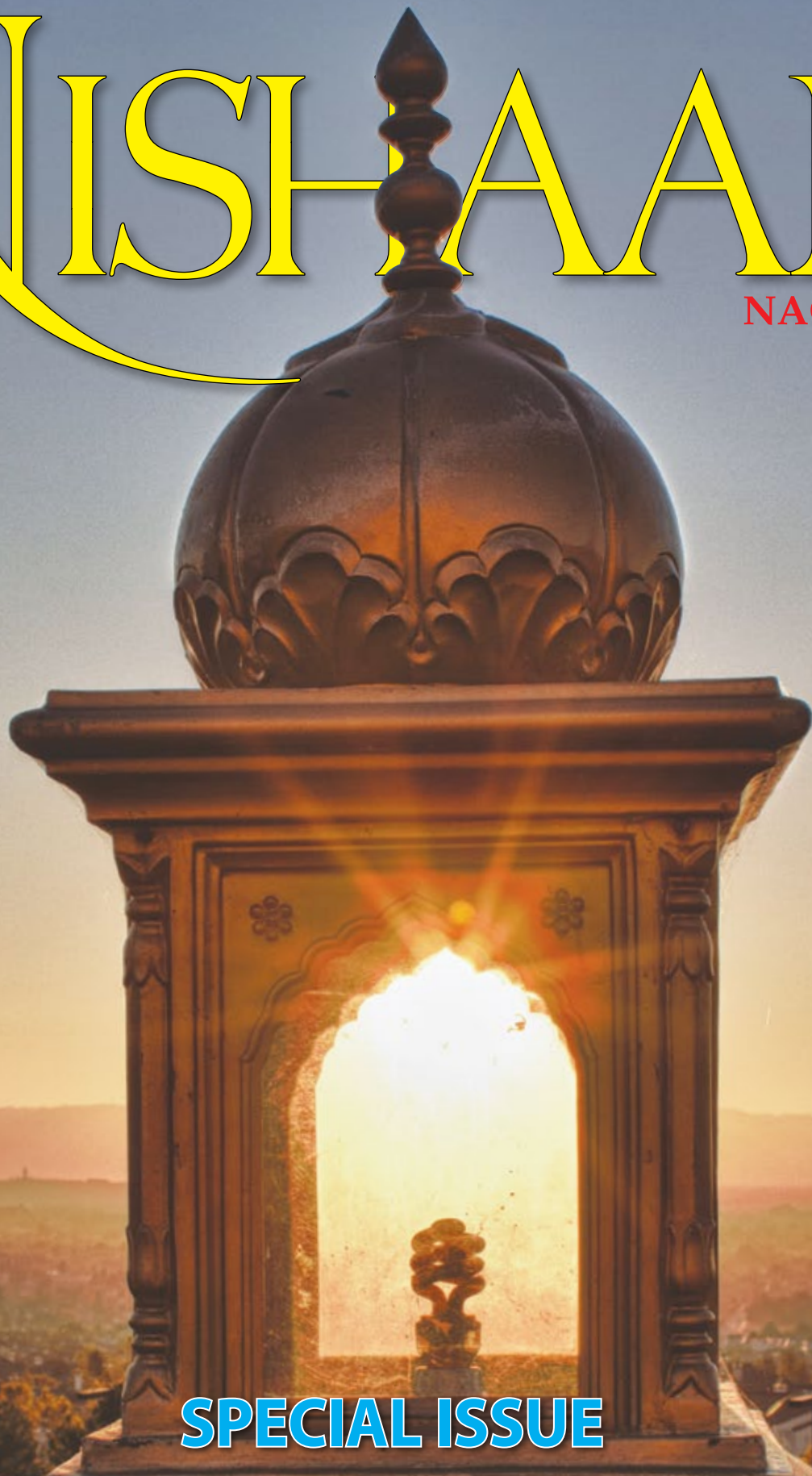


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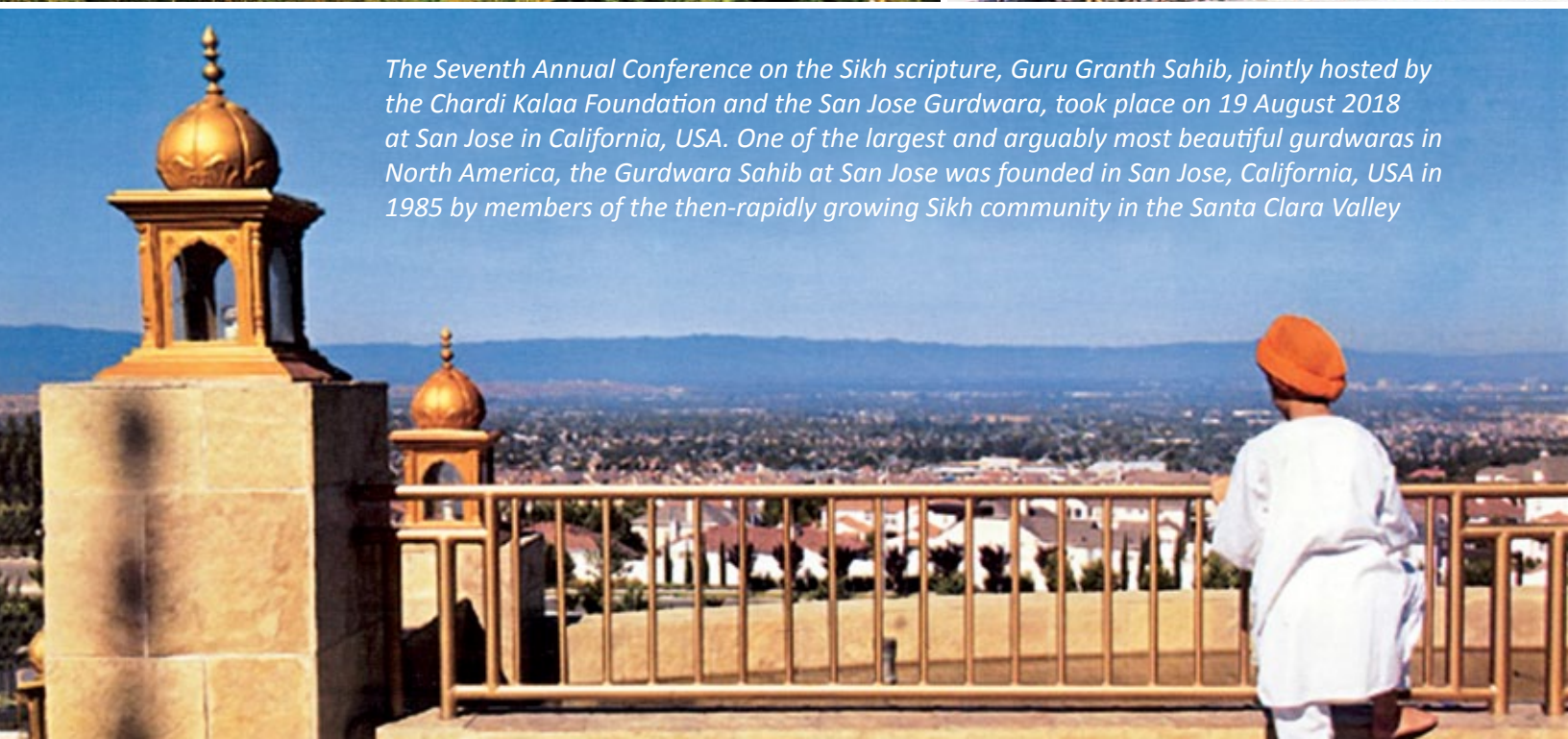


SPECIAL ISSUE

THE CHARDI KALAA CONFERENCE, 2018



The Seventh 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 2018 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





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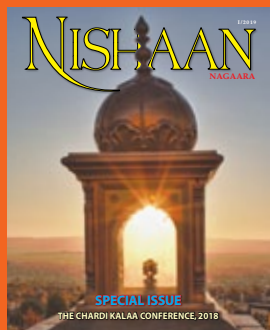
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Looking at Silicon Valley from San Jose
 Gurdwara Sahib (credit www.flickr.com)

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Swelling or Growing: Are We Missing a Generation?

This is the seventh year of a fascinating experiment in San Jose, California, in middle of the Silicon Valley. The purpose remains unchanged – to connect Sikhs to the timeless teachings of the Guru Granth.

Our first year was 2012. Sikhs, young and old, participated. Speakers dissected many an interesting theme with passion, matters that deserved more than intellectual parsing alone. Some are issues that demand public recognition and immediate action, if not sooner. And that is never an easy matter. Inertia is the human default position. Human societies move, but reluctantly. Revolution is rarely peaceful. Evolution is less traumatic but often frustratingly slow, its direction never linear.

When this initiative began at the majestic Sikh Gurdwara San Jose in 2012, we asked each speaker to highlight a doctrine, teaching, theme or principle from the Guru Granth Sahib while modeling a conversation and dialogue around it. The goal, simply stated: how to capture an idea, then to live it and then own it. Both the head and the heart must remain intricately and inseparably intertwined.

Now in its seventh year, it is time to take stock. There is an ebb and flow to how speakers and participants step up to engage with topical themes. Each year seven to ten speakers come formally prepared to showcase their thoughts. The audience hovers around 150 to 200. The conversation is enlightening. The idea that we can disagree without becoming disagreeable has taken root and is reiterated every year; it remains our underlying framework. A larger number would be difficult to manage in a one-day conference.

The papers read at the first symposium were collated as a special issue of *The Sikh Review* (Kolkata, India), the oldest existing monthly magazine in English on Sikhs and Sikhism and founded 65 years ago in 1953. We followed the same exact format the next year as well. In the third year the publishing responsibility

shifted over to the *Nishaan* (New Delhi, India), and now we are in the seventh year.

The *Nishaan* is a superbly designed and attractively packaged quarterly – somewhat like eye-candy. Every issue of *Nishaan* is a collectors' item, to adorn the coffee table, and enhance what lies within its pages. The project was a joint venture of the San Jose-based *Chardi Kalaa* Foundation and Sikh Gurdwara San Jose. Two years ago, *Sikhnet*, the premier Sikh internet site, joined the partnership. Each year adds more progressive and attractive initiatives.

The world has surely changed, some even for the better. This year (2018), when I returned home a day after the event at San Jose I was surprised to discover Sikhs and non-Sikhs in New York and elsewhere who had either taken advantage of live streaming of the day-long activity, or accessed the proceedings via U-Tube. Within days over 13,000 viewers across the world had accessed the programme remotely.

Each year, every registrant receives the special issue of the *Nishaan* comprising all of the presentations at the preceding year's symposium. In addition, the attendees this year were also gifted a copy of I.J. Singh's 2018 book ***SIKHI: The Journey & The Destination*** published jointly by *Nishaan Nagaara* and the *Charhdi Kalaa Foundation* of San Jose.

This year the programme began with Ardas by Bhai Mohinder Singh, Head Granthi of Sikh Gurdwara San Jose. This was followed by soul stirring keertan by young people teenagers and younger – they chose the *Raag Taal*, and even the musical instruments to magically transport the listeners to a different time and place in our history and heritage. They have been trained by the well-known keertan maestro Prof. Dalbir Singh.

The conference main programme began with a brief panel discussion led by Jessie Kaur. Briefly pondering on *Sikh Leadership* were five panelists: Sangeeta Luthra, Reshma Singh, Jujhar Singh, Guneet Kaur and

IJ Singh. We should develop this and similar themes in fuller perspective.

The rest of the day – the major part of the programme – comprised six presentations by adults. Each speaker presented his/her theme in about 20 minutes to be followed by an equal time of spirited give and take with the audience. The wide-ranging topics included ‘Overcoming Haumai’, ‘Seeing God in Everyone’, ‘Relationship of a disciple with the Guru-Sri Guru Granth Sahib’, ‘Wonder of Wonders: Waheguru’, ‘The Purpose of Life and finally, Dating? Guidelines from Gurbani for Finding a Life Partner’.

These presentations were interspersed with spirited speeches by the five young Sikhs who had won first positions in their respective age groups in the Gurbani and speech competitions in the San Francisco bay area.

The ideas and their parsing were awesome, thoughtful, even delightful. Yet, there remain some matters that we need to think about, refine and accommodate into our programmes. But “how” is the question.

For parsing mature ideas, we need young (and not so young) people who enjoy exploring the finer points and complexities of ideas – and are ready to engage with them in public. We continue to seek speakers who may not yet be quite comfortable with complex concepts of history and culture but are old enough to be fascinated by them and curious enough to engage with them. Mind you they have to wield a fine scalpel in separating what is complex from what may be a complication. We need to nurture the former while discarding the latter. In other words, encouraging participants who are perhaps younger in years but a bit older in the state of mind; those who are open to being captured by the rich ideas and ideology of Sikhi. Perhaps young people at and around the borderline of adulthood?

That may be the territory and time where the young do their best most imaginative dance of life. That will inevitably provide a vitality to the community and life to our history.

When do young and not so young people engage most productively in life? We would venture that they might be as young as their late teens, perhaps recently graduated from college, possibly in graduate school, or professionally engaged in their budding careers. *Some even in their late 30’s to early 50’s.* Experience tells us that the 40’s to early 50’s may be the most productive years, both in creative career building as well as in

dedication and focus on family and social structures that support the good and useful life.

Questions about the *self* abound: “Who am I and where am I going? What makes me what I am? Mostly we are involved in settling families. Where am I now? What does life mean? Look for the years of peak activity in and about life and what it is all about?” The Guru Granth can guide us in seeking the answers. But at this stage in life people may have little time or inclination to spare.

The best time to do something vital and critical is not when we have nothing else to do, but when we are at our busiest with the most meaningful tasks in life. *When we think that we have no time to die*, as they say. Isn’t that ironical?

How then to plan and mount programmes for this subset of the Sikh population. They want quick rewards. They can put their hearts and minds into the game, and they approach dilemmas of life differently, not always by a single set formula. We see that speakers and their listeners want to learn and cogitate about what in life Sikhi has taught them, if anything. And their culture and language are often different in perspective or structure, as are their needs and imperatives.

How to ensure that those who come find the thoughts, ideas, platforms and activities that they are looking for in direction, substance or both?

Clearly, such programmes will evolve out of the young and not so young attendees. And just as clearly it is obvious that our programmes will not remain static but will display dynamic energy to change, grow, and reshape our needs. They will, thus, become the much-needed connecting links between the timeless magic of Sikhi, our rich culture, and our lives that become increasingly, sometimes unnecessarily, complex in a world of our own making.

Will we institutionalise our efforts? The test of an institution is that it outlives its founders. It is a poorly run shop, not quite an institution, if it closes its doors when its founders retire or move on, as we all will.

Since our first year (2012) we have undoubtedly swelled but have we grown? Clearly, we need less of the former and more of the latter.

Keep marching forward. Keep growing. Let the swelling remain modest but meaningful.

IJ Singh, Gurinder Pal Singh & Inder Mohan Singh

“Bisam bisam bisam hee bhaee hai” The Wonders of Wonder



In this article, I reflect on the role of wonder in our everyday ethics. Drawing insights from Gurbani about the wonder of wonders, Waheguru and the wonders of wonder for Waheguru, and supplementing this with scholarly inputs from cognitive sciences, I discuss how wonder for Waheguru can help us improve our everyday ethics.

The Wonder of Wonders : Waheguru

In Sikhi, the very word for the divine, Waheguru, builds on an expression of wonder : *wāh* (wow)! Wāh-é-Guru translates, in terms of Persian preposition usage to the *wāh* of gurus, i.e., the most wondrous of gurus.

While the word Wāheguru/Wāhguru is itself used in only a few sabad (by Bhatt Gayand, SGGS: 1402-1404), numerous sabad use the word *wāh-o*, expressing the feelings of wonder and awe, *bismād/vismād*, for the divine. In fact, another word used in gurbāni for the divine is *bisman* (awe-inspiring):

ਬਿਸਮਨ ਬਿਸਮ ਤਏ ਬਿਸਮਾਦ ॥

“Awe-struck by the awe of the awesome (divine)”. (SGGS: 285)

Gurbāni further expounds on this with an extensive exegesis on Wāheguru’s awesome attributes. The Mool Mantar which is the opening verse of the Guru Granth

Sahib, and repeated many times in it, is a string of nine awe-inspiring attributes of Wāheguru – oneness, from which all is manifest, truth by name, creative principle, fearless, without enmity, timeless, incondensable, uncaused.

Thus, Wāheguru is conceived as a composite of vastness and morality. Many sabad elaborate on this theme. Wāheguru is an ocean of moral virtues (*guni gahīr*), and benevolent (*meherbān*), as well as all-knowing (*antarjāmi*), all-pervading (*sarabvyāpi*), incomparable (*anoop*), and imperishable (*avināsi*). Wāheguru is far too vast to be known in entirety. Wāheguru is infinite (*bé-ant*), immeasurable (*atol*), unfathomable (*agādh*) incomprehensible (*agam-agochar*) and indescribable (*kahan na jāee*). These terms permeate the speech of devotees as well.

The wonders of wonder for Wāheguru

Notably, gurbāni also endows these feelings for Wāheguru with the flavour (*svād*) of love (*rang*), attraction (*man mohyo*), adoration (*bal-bal jāee*), and enrapture (*ote-pote*). Moved by such emotions the self can become devoid of ego (*ahnbudh*), fear of death (*jam ki phāsi*) and vices (*bikār*), and capable of virtuous acts (*sach karni*).

With immersion in sabad, *vismāḍ* becomes an experience of the heart from an encounter (*darsan*) with Wāheguru's overwhelming greatness and moral capacities. The recognition of divine capacities is received with awe. Awe then becomes a moral response. Its psychological contours become those of moral contours.

These ideas are well encapsulated in the following sabad (SGGS: 1301):

ਕਾਨੜਾ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ਘਰੁ ੪

Kānṛā mehlā 5 ghar 4

Kaanraa, Fifth Mehl, Fourth House:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Ik oa'ṅkār satgur parsād.

One universal creative principle. By the grace of the true Guru.

ਨਾਰਾਇਨ ਨਰਪਤਿ ਨਮਸਕਾਰੈ ॥

Nārāen narpat namaskārai.

The one who holds reverence for the Supreme.

ਐਸੇ ਗੁਰ ਕਉ ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਆਪਿ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਮੋਹਿ ਤਾਰੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Aisé gur kao bal bal jāiai āp mukaṭ mohi tārāi. ||1|| rahāo.

I am a sacrifice, a sacrifice to such a guru; liberated, and liberates me as well. ||1|| Pause |

ਕਵਨ ਕਵਨ ਕਵਨ ਗੁਨ ਕਹੀਐ ਅੰਤੁ ਨਹੀ ਕਛੁ ਪਾਰੈ ॥

Kavan kavan kavan gun kahīai ant nahī kachḥ pārai.

Which, which, which virtues to chant; no end to them.

ਲਾਖ ਲਾਖ ਲਾਖ ਕਈ ਕੋਰੈ ਕੋ ਹੈ ਐਸੇ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥੧॥

Lākḥ lākḥ lākḥ kai korai ko hai aiso bīchārai. ||1||

Hundreds and hundreds of thousands, millions of virtues, but few who contemplate them. ||1||

ਬਿਸਮ ਬਿਸਮ ਬਿਸਮ ਹੀ ਭਈ ਹੈ ਲਾਲ ਗੁਲਾਲ ਰੰਗਾਰੈ ॥

Bisam bisam bisam hī bhāi hai lāl gulāl rangārai.

Wonder-struck, wonder-struck, wonder-struck; dyed in the crimson color of my Beloved.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੰਤਨ ਰਸੁ ਆਈ ਹੈ ਜਿਉ ਚਾਖਿ ਗੁੰਗਾ ਮੁਸਕਾਰੈ ॥੨॥

Kaho Nānak sanṭan ras āi hai jio chākh gūngā muskārai. ||2||

Says Nanak, I obtain divine essence, like the virtuous; and like the mute, upon tasting, can only smile. ||2||

In the life of Sikhs, the response of awe for Wāheguru is inculcated from early childhood. In addition to



imbibing it from their elder's attitudes, children also obtain it through a number of active means. The *Mool Mantar* often serves as a lullaby. Children learn to chant it and access its psychological power at times of emotional need. Numerous children's books and comics tell marvelously inspiring tales of a loving, protecting and benevolent Wāheguru. Kīrtan events are family events with babies, children, youth and the elderly, all present together. Children are encouraged to perform at important occasions, and tolerance levels for competency are immensely generous. The purpose of inculcating the response of awe is to be moved to align one's embodied capacities to Wāheguru's wisdom, gurnat.

The Wonders of Wonder, from Scholarship in Cognitive Studies

The Sikh concepts of awe and ethical orientation find resonance in cognitive studies on awe and its implications for prosocial behaviour. Recent research by scholars at the University of California, Berkeley, has shown various benefits of wonder from spirituality, nature, and art. These include health benefits, specifically anti-inflammatory effects. Feelings of awe from spirituality, nature, and art promote healthier levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines in the body. Cytokines are proteins that signal the immune system to work harder. Sustained high levels of cytokines are associated with poorer health and such disorders as type-2 diabetes, heart disease, arthritis and even Alzheimer's disease and clinical depression. (For

details, see <http://news.berkeley.edu/2015/02/02/anti-inflammatory/>)

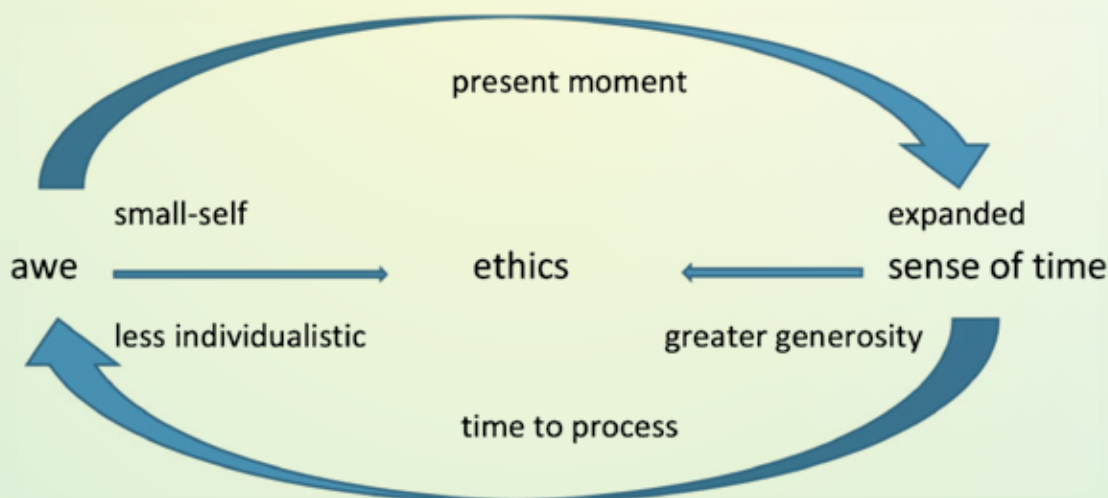
With respect to everyday ethics, the benefits specifically cited are less self-focus and more altruism. (https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_awe_makes_us_generous)

Based on experiments conducted, these scholars argue that the experience of awe leads not only to a smaller sense of the self, but the content of self-concept changes too, so that one sees oneself less individualistically and more as part of a greater whole. These changes in the concept of self, promote more selfless, other-oriented behaviors.

Further, the experience of awe expands perceived time availability, i.e. people feel less pressed for time. This is due to the ability of awe to bring people into the present moment. There is also a feedback loop: when time feels expansive one is more inclined to engage with the experience of awe. Importantly, the expanded temporal effect of awe, induces feelings of reduced impatience, greater generosity such as increased willingness to volunteer time, higher preference for experiential as opposed to material goods, and greater satisfaction with life.

The following figure summarises the arguments from the above mentioned scholarship.

Awe, sense of time, and ethics in cognitive studies



Sabad kīrtan and wonder

Guru Granth Sahib is clear on the importance and effectiveness of sabad kīrtan as a means to comprehending the divine. Music is known to be both an affective activity and one that induces an expanded sense of time. In sabad kīrtan, sabad and music combine to expand the sense of time and heighten the experience of awe.

Guru Granth Sahib also makes clear that our experience of time is subjective. As per the sabad, *ik gharhi na milte, ta kaljug hota* “a moment’s separation is like an era of vices”. Thus, where moments of connection with wāheguru generate an experience of eternal time of virtuous possibilities, moments of separated time magnify into an era where vices prevail. But sabad also recommends, “*kaljug mein kīrtan pardhāna*”: in the era of vices, it is kīrtan that is supreme. For the time in kīrtan is the one that induces the experience of the divine; it is the time

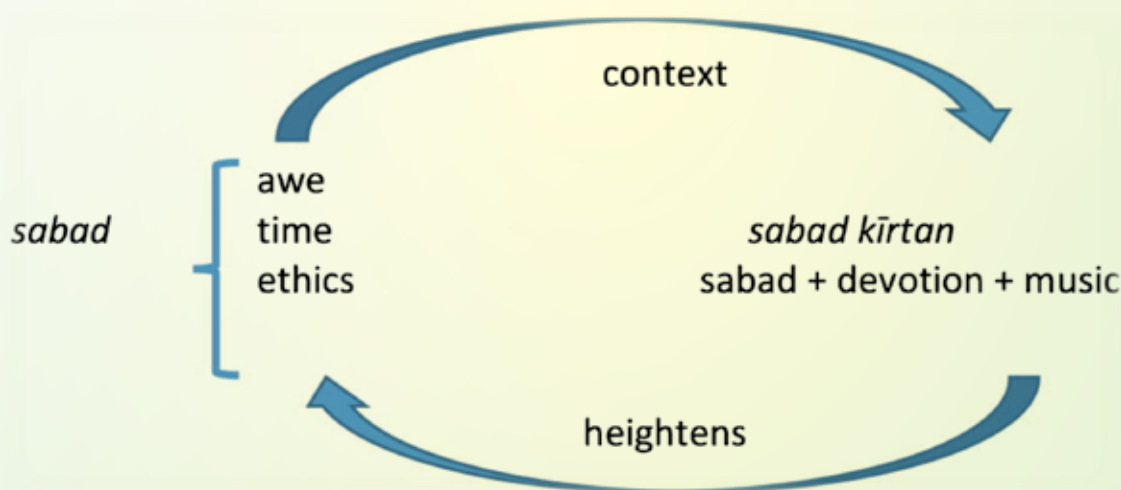
of sabad-attuned consciousness (*surat dhun*) which renders the time of divine wisdom (*satguru mat vela*, GGS: 943).

Thus, sabad kīrtan can both provoke the moral response of awe and is the context in which awe is cultivated, and its experience deepened. The following figure summarises the interplay of awe, sense of time, and ethics possible in experiences of sabad kīrtan.

Guru Granth Sahib urges us to inculcate wonder for the wonder of wonders, Wāheguru, through repeated chanting of Wāheguru’s virtues, and recommends sabad kīrtan as an effective means of comprehending wāheguru’s moral greatness. Repeated contemplation within an attitude of awe for divine moral virtues can help us move toward a sense of self that is a small part of a greater whole, and can thus liberate us from the shackles of *haumai* (egotism) and improve our everyday ethics.

Dr. Inderjit Kaur

Awe, sense of time, and ethics in sabad kīrtan



Dr Inderjit N Kaur is a scholar of Gurbani kirtan, and assistant professor of musicology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has published and presented widely for the academy as well as the community. She is currently working on an academic book on the historical, performative, and experiential aspects of sabad kirtan. She holds two doctoral degrees, both from the University of California, Berkeley – one in ethnomusicology and a prior one in economics. She has earned senior diplomas in North Indian classical music, and South Indian classical dance. Singing sabad kirtan has been an integral part of her whole life.



Overcoming Haumai

Haumai deeragh rog hai haumai is a terrible affliction, according to Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS). We will examine what haumai is, the challenges that haumai poses and how we can try to treat and overcome this terrible affliction, that of haumai.

The word *Haumai* appears thousands of times in the SGGS, as well as in many other related forms such as *hau, mai meri, meri meri, aap, aapat, khudi*. This is shown as the biggest obstacle to spiritual growth. It is *haumai* that keeps us separated from our *mool*, our true reality which is Divine. We all have the spark of Divinity within us *man too jot swaroop hai*. It is the wall of *Haumai* that keeps us apart from our True Reality.

In Kirtan Sohila, Guruji tell us “*saakat har ras sad na jania tin antar haumai kanda hai*”. *Haumai* is like a thorn in our side which constantly bothers and makes us unhappy. The only solution according to Gurbani is to overcome *haumai* and get in tune with the Divine.

“*Haumi jhagra payoy haumai jag muiya*” The world is caught up in strife and conflict because of *haumai* and is dying a spiritual death.

So what is *haumai* ? It means “I am”, and is basically the sense of individual identity. It is often translated as ego, although narcissism or self-centeredness may be the more accurate description. When we think of *haumai*, we usually associate it with egotism : pride, arrogance or *hankar*.

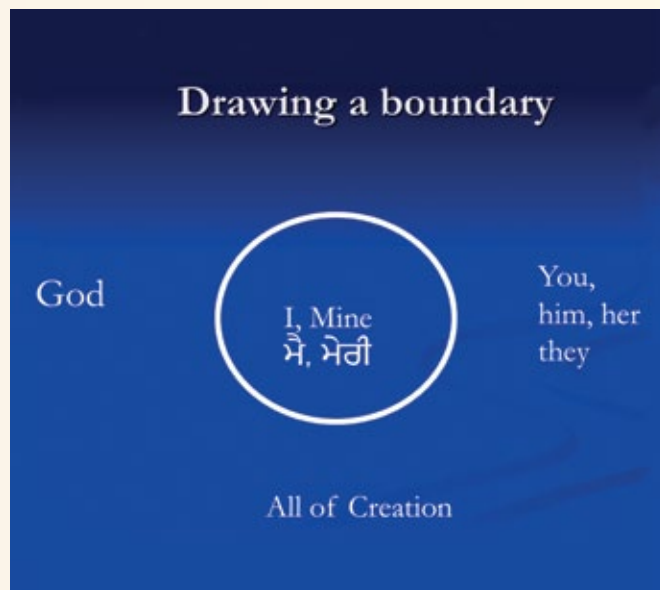
This is the most obvious manifestation of *Haumai* pride or *hankar*. However Gurbani reveals that it is more basic and has a far wider scope than pride. Gurbani frequently tells us about the five prime evils or thieves that constantly attack us and rob us from our within : *kaam, krodh, lobh moh* and *hankar* or lust, anger, greed, unhealthy attachment and pride. Note that the five already include *hankaar* or pride.

Haumai appears separately and is in fact the basic underlying evil that gives rise to these five *vikaars* of *kaam, krodh, lobh moh* and *hankar*. So, clearly *hankar*, pride or egotism is but one of the manifestations of *haumai*. *Haumai* is broader and encompasses all five of them and it is in fact the underlying cause.

Haumai is characterised primarily by creating a boundary around the self and creating a sense of separateness - separateness between I and others between I and you, I and him or her, myself from God – and myself from all of God’s creation.

Haumai creates a sense of “I” versus “the other”, what in Punjabi we call *opra* and *oprapan* or *apna* versus *paraya*. *Haumai* not only separates us from other people but also from God’s creation or nature, and it gives us the freedom – and justification – to exploit nature for our selfish purposes instead of appreciating His bounties and preserving and taking care of them. This too is an aspect of our *Haumai*. We see the environment as separate from us and do not feel connected to it.

In contrast to this *haumai* consciousness, this sense of duality or *dubidha*, a spiritually enlightened person or Gurmukh sees ‘Oneness and connectedness’ – *Ik*



and *ekta*, all is One. He or she sees the One Waheguru pervading everything and every one.

This awesome sense of ‘Oneness’, of every thing and every one being connected, is reported by mystics of all spiritual disciplines, who have meditated or prayed for a long time and attained an advanced spiritual level. This experience has been referred to as the state of ‘Unitive Consciousness’. In this state, the divisions of different religions also dissolve : they experience the One Divine Light in all.

Let us look at some of the ways in which *haumai* manifests itself in one’s behaviour. *Haumai* leads to pride, arrogance and vanity, what we usually think of as egotistical behaviour. It also leads to self-centeredness, narcissism and selfishness. “I am so important, I care only for what is good for me.” Bullying and cruelty also flow from the arrogance and self-centeredness, as well as criticising and putting down others.

Sadly, we can see every one of these characteristics in the world’s top leadership today !

Haumai starts with the boundary around the “I”, but it is quickly extended to include “mine” : me and mine – *mai meri*. It starts with *my* toys, gets extended to *my* car, *my* home, *my* spouse ...we often identify a person by the car he drives or the house he or she lives in (and you can even get yourself a “trophy wife” !).

It was interesting for me to see the evolution of the concept of “mine” in my own grandchildren. My two year old grandson loves to play with his toys but he is not yet as possessive about them as his cousin who is a few months older. She is very emphatic about pointing to a toy, sometimes even one of his toys and declaring them as “mine!”. He is just starting to develop the idea of asserting his ownership and demanding to have his toys back.

Initially a baby doesn’t have the concept of “I”, does not even know his hands or feet, but goes on from there to developing the concept of ‘mine’. Of course it is all very innocent at that stage, but as we get older, the range of “mine” gets both extended and strengthened. We help to reinforce this process as we shower the child

with toys and new clothes. As they grow older, they are bombarded with ads, TV shows and other messages encouraging them to ask for the latest “must have” toy or gadget. This process continues and gets intensified into adulthood. From toys we move on to cars, clothes, fancier gadgets and homes, and of course, money or wealth. The more you get, the more you want and greed sets in. You look at others who have something you don’t have or can’t afford and jealousy rears its head.

None of these possessions give us lasting satisfaction, so we keep looking for more. And of course eventually we depart from this world leaving it all behind.

It may seem counter-intuitive but *haumai* is not just about ego and arrogance, it can also lead to a lack of self esteem and feelings of inferiority. These feelings, too, are driven by the “I”. This kind of a “fragile ego” can lead to a sense of alienation and many kinds of destructive behaviour. Some people who grow up in broken families, join gangs and get in trouble, feel an internal lack and act out to overcome this. Many bullies in fact don’t feel good about themselves, so they compensate by a show of arrogance and attacking others, especially those who they sense are weaker in some way.

These are all a result of *haumai* – driven by the “I” – “something is wrong with me, people don’t respect me, poor me”, victimisation, alienation, they are all forms of *haumai*, as are feelings of hurt and resentment. It is all *haumai* because it is the I that is hurt, and resentful. Sometimes it gives some emotional satisfaction to carry that anger or hurt in your heart – you feel good about feeling bad and that too is *haumai*. If you want real peace and happiness, you have to overcome these kinds of feelings of anger, resentment or hurt. That is why forgiveness is so important on the spiritual path.

Another aspect of this fragile ego is a strong concern about “what will people, or the neighbours say or think of me?” A need to impress others comes from this. All of these reflect the sense of separation from others, instead of feeling connected and a seeing yourself as part of society.

Now we do need *haumai*, in moderation. We have been given this sense of “I” by Waheguru. We need

it for survival and for society to function. We have to protect and take care of our body, we have to have some drive to be successful in life and make a living. But we need it in moderation : it needs to be under our control and instead of it controlling us.

Haumai does not operate just at the level of an individual it also appears at the level of a group or a community. It makes us think in terms of “my tribe, my country, my religion, my race” and so on. In place of drawing a boundary between I and the other, the boundary is between us and them.

There is no need for a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Sadly, for some there already is a much stronger mental wall between “us Americans” and “them Mexicans” : the wall of racism and xenophobia.

This communal *haumai*, which creates the sense of separateness between us and them has been a very destructive force throughout human history. Archaeologists have found evidence of brutal tribal mass acres dating back to the stone age. Warfare has been a constant throughout history causing endless misery and death, and culminating in the two horrific world wars in the last century.

Such “Us versus Them” attitude has justified the domination and exploitation of the weak by the strong. It led the European nations to colonise the rest of the world starting in the sixteenth century in order to enrich themselves at the expense of their colonial subjects. They claimed the right and duty to civilise the backward non-white natives for their own benefit in what was called the “white man’s burden”. And then there was the enslavement of the blacks in the United States which led to the civil war and the continuing problems of racism in America.

Gurbani tells us that *haumai* is a terrible disease (*haumai deeragh rog hai*) . It is the biggest obstacle to spiritual growth. The Divine Light is within each of us (*man too jot saroop hai*) but the thick, hard wall of *haumai* keeps us separated from our Divine Reality.

ਧਨ ਪਿਰ ਕਾ ਇਕ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਹਿਮੈ ਭੀਤਿ ਕਰਾਰੀ ॥
[Guru Ram Das SGGS p. 1263]

“The Soul-Bride and the Husband Lord live together as one within the self, but the hard wall of *haumai* has come between them”.

Haumai, like everything else is given to us by God, but we also have the opportunity to move out of the darkness of *haumai* towards the Divine Light.

The essential solution to *haumai* is *Naam Simran* : reflecting and meditating on His Name, getting in tune with the Divine. Gurbani also tells us that *Naam* and *haumai* are antagonists, both cannot dwell in the same heart, at the same time.

Haumai Naave Naal Virodh Hai Dui Na Vaseh Ik Thaae [Guru Amar Das SGGS p. 560 l. 12]

“*Haumai* is opposed to the Name of the Lord; the two do not dwell in the same place.”

So *Naam* is the ultimate solution, the strongest antidote for this terrible affliction that is *haumai*. The challenge, of course, is that *haumai* is also the biggest obstacle to *Naam*. To banish *haumai* from within, we need *Naam*, but *haumai* stands in the way.

So it has to be an iterative process, a step at a time. Grace plays a big part; it takes continued and dedicated effort or *udam* on our part, but we have to seek the Guru’s help at every step. As soon as we think we are doing something on our own, that itself is an act of *haumai* that blocks our path.

We have to keep at it, and the *Naam* slowly dissolves the *haumai*.

Gurmukh naam salaahiay haumai nivaree bhaai.
Har har sadaa dhiaaeai mal haumai kadhay dhoi. Rahau.

“The Gurmukh praises the *Naam*, and the fire of *haumai* is extinguished. || 1 || Pause ||

They meditate forever on the Lord, Har, Har, and they wash off the filth of *haumai*. || 1 || Pause ||”

Gurbani, the studying and following of Guru’s Word, is an important complement to *Naam Simran*.

The two are closely related – even our ability to successfully practice *Naam Simran* is enabled by invoking Grace of the Satguru through the Divine Words of Gurbani. As we continue to practice and imbibe the teachings of Gurbani, there is a process of internal transformation that takes place, which weakens our *haumai*, and the related evils of *kaam*, *krodh*, *lobh moh*, *ahankar* and makes us more receptive to the power of the Divine Naam.

Shabad Suneeai Shabad Bujheeai Sach Rahai Liv Laai [SGGS M. 3, p.429 l.4]

Shabday Haumai Maareeai Sachai Mehal Sukh Paai

“Listen to the Shabad, and understand the Shabad, and lovingly focus your consciousness on the True One.

Through the Shabad, conquer your *haumai*, and in the True Mansion of the Lord’s Presence, you shall find peace. ||4||”

Naam Simran and the practice of Gurbani are the two basic tools of the path of spiritual growth, whereby we can overcome *haumai* and find oneness with the Divine. Let us look at some specific areas that help us in overcoming *haumai* as we move along this path. Recognising *Hukam*, seeing that everything is happening in His Will is a major help in overcoming *haumai*. The Gurmukh increasingly recognising that whatever “I” did or accomplished was by His blessing.

In the second pauri of Japji Sahib, Guru Nanak tells us how everything is under His *Hukam* or command which is infinite, all encompassing, and beyond description.

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੇਵਨਿ ਆਕਾਰ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥
 ਹੇਵਨਿ ਜੀਅ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥
 ਹਰੁ ਮੀ ਉਤਮੁ ਨੀਚੁ ਹਰੁ ਮਿ ਲਿਖਿ ਦਖੁ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਈਅਹਿ ॥
 ਇਕਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ਇਕਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਦਾ ਭਵਾਈਅਹਿ ॥
 ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥੨॥

Nanak, SGGS p. 1

“By His Command, bodies are created; His Command cannot be described.

By His Command, souls come into being; by His Command, glory and greatness are obtained.

By His Command, some are high and some are low; by His Written Command, pain and pleasure are obtained.

Some, by His Command, are blessed and forgiven; others, by His Command, wander aimlessly forever.

Everyone is subject to His Command; no one is beyond His Command.

O Nanak, one who understands His Command, does not speak in *haumai*. ||2||”

The key message is in the last line, The one who recognises and understands His *Hukam* does not speak in *haumai*. He sees that everything that is happening is in His Will. He accepts and surrenders to the Divine Will.

Some may think of acceptance or surrender to His Will as “Oh we cannot do anything about it” It is more an act of embracing all that happens as something wonderful, that is according to the Will of our loving all-knowing Father.

Intead of ‘Me’ or ‘Mine’, the Gurmukh thinks and says ‘You’ or ‘Yours’. The *haumai* starts to dissolve. Seeing the Divine Light in all, recognising God inside everyone, is a key factor in overcoming our own *haumai*, as we interact with others around us and treat them with respect, compassion and humility.

Seeing God inside every one is the subject of the next talk by S Gurmustuk Singh, which I am looking forward to hearing. So I won’t spend too much more time on this.

In this beautiful shabad by Guru Arjan Dev ji, he shows us how to practice this “I see no stranger, I see no enemy .. and ends the shabad with *sabh me rav rahia prabh rahia prabh eko* – I see the Divine Light in every one, and as I behold Him, I blossom forth with joy”.

In the words of Namdev: *Sabh Gobind Hai* – see God pervading everything and everybody. All of creation, including all of us, are like beads strung on the string of His power, His *Naam*.

As a Gursikh, the spiritual seeker, progresses along the path of Gurmat, there is a transformation from “*haumai* conciousness” to “*naam* conciousness”, from “I” and “Mine” to “Thee” and “Thine.” The *haumai* gets progressively weaker, and the Gurmukh lives in tune with the Divine presence of Waheguru.

As Kabeer ji says, *too too karta too hua* – repeating, ‘You, You’, I have become like ‘You’. Nothing of me remains in myself . When the difference between myself and others is removed, then wherever I look, I see only You”.

Another shabad by Kabeer – *mera mujh me kuchh nahin* – “nothing is mine or within myself. Whatever there is, is Yours, O Lord. If I surrender to You what is already Yours, what what do I lose? || 203 ||”

The above image visually shows this transformation from *mai*, *mainu* and *mera* to *tu*, *tainu* and *tera* : from I, me and mine to thou, thee and thine;

There is that beautiful sakhi about Guru Nanak Dev ji. When he was young, he was given a job as storkeeper in the granary owned by the local noble or nawab. Part of his job was to weigh grain for the customers using a pair of weighing scales. He would weigh out the grain counting one, two, three .. as he weighed and doled it out. When he came to 13, which happens to be the word ‘tera’ in Punjabi

which also means ‘yours’ or ‘thine’, he would keep repeating it saying ‘tera, tera’ each time. He would just get lost in the vision of it is all Waheguru *tera hi tera*. Of course the lucky customer would receive a lot of extra grain ! It is said that after complaints about this, there was an audit and miraculously, the auditor did not find any shortage in the grain count.

Most of us who are trying to walk on the Gurmat path are somewhere between the left column or *haumai* conciousness and right column or *naam* conciousness. Hopefully, by His kindness, His grace we are blessed to make the effort or *udam* to move at least somewhat in the rightward direction.

Inder Mohan Singh

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The transformation

From I conciousness to God conciousness

ਮੈ, I	→>	ਤੂੰ, Thou
ਮੈਨੂੰ, Me	→>	ਤੈਨੂੰ, Thee
ਮੇਰਾ, Mine	→>	ਤੇਰਾ, Thine

S Gurumustuk Singh Khalsa sees

God in Everyone, Everywhere

Looking at the Guru's examples and personal life experiences helps us see beyond other's faults and differences.

So, how do we keep ourselves from being judgmental and critical of others around us in our day to day encounters, and yet still be open and see the God and Goodness in that person? This is a common matter that we all deal with in our day to day relationships, and with people whom we encounter. Guru Nanak was always trying to break down the barriers of differences and showing that we are all One and from the same Source. He taught a message of acceptance, equality, oneness, which is within all of us no matter our colour, or religion practice.



There are numerous stories in Sikh history which share how the Guru saw beyond people's bad deeds, and inspired them to change their ways. In this story about Sheikh Sajjan (*Thugh*) who was a thief and murderer, the Guru did not discard this man, one who had done really terrible things, but instead inspired him to reflect on his actions and so changed his life.

In Japji Sahib Guru Nanak talks about *Nirbau – Nirvair*, “No Enemy Fear and No Animosity or Hate”. In our *Ardaas*, we invoke *Sarbat Da*



Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib

Bhalaa – “Goodwill to all people”. Not just your friends and family and people you like. But all people. However, this is easier said than done.

Overall, every human has a longing to belong, to feel happiness and be loved. No one likes to be put down, judged or criticised. Yet the tendency for many people is to unconsciously react to people and situations in a negative way, rather than trying to “lift up” the situation. And, following the Guru, we can become a lighthouse for others. The Guru’s example was to inspire and up lift people up from where they are at, not push them down or away.

At Vaisakhi, when we gave our head to the Guru, for me that really we give our ego to the Guru, and acted from our hearts and not our heads. This allows us to be less reactive and see the unseen, and respond with love from the heart when otherwise it might be difficult to do.

“Sikhs against Sikhs”

I am a second generation Sikh, born in the mid-1970s in Los Angeles, California and have the name Gurumustuk Singh Khalsa. My parents’ generation were some of these “pioneers”, embarking on a totally new journey on this path of Sikhi. Both came from mixed religious backgrounds, my mother from a Jewish family and my father from a Christian family. They were some of the early western or non-Indian peoples to adopt the Sikh path.

Even though I was born to a Sikh family, it was difficult being a “white Sikh” youth. Everywhere I went I would be stared at. We were clearly different. In India, it was such a novelty for people seeing a “white Sikh” since it was not very common. In America, the stares were there as well, people not knowing what to make of me. So everywhere I went, I would stand out like a sore thumb. Most kids want to fit in, NOT stand out. It didn’t help either that many ‘Heritage’ Sikhs with Punjabi background would pre-judge and



Representation image

Courtesy : Gurumustuk Singh

stereotype me and the actions of any western born Sikhs into a single ‘3HO’ entity, as if we were the same person and all the same. More often this was from lack of understanding about whom we were, what we were about, with little or no real understanding of this community of “seekers”. All that was required was for someone to have an open heart and look deeply to see the same longing for the Guru – and to get to know me and others as “real people”.

To this day I and other ‘White Sikhs’ are generalised and lumped into a category of being ‘3HO people’ (typically when being criticised) as if we were not “real” Sikhs. These sort of labels and categorisations are inaccurate and only divide us. Definitely not what Guru Nanak Dev ji ordained, since he embraced diversity and accepted everyone.

I know of many people new to Sikhi, who love the openness of this path, but later got scared away, disillusioned with how the community acted in contrast to the ideals set forth teachings of the Gurus. Instead of being welcoming, they were criticised and judged. Certainly this does not apply only to people new to Sikhi. I have heard countless stories of Sikhs

(particularly youth) who have shorn hair or do not fit a certain look, and that they are not welcomed in the Guru's house by very many.

When I was a teenager and finding my way, I went through a phase of experimentation with drugs, alcohol, smoking, wild partying, etc. If my family, friends and community just judged me and cast me out during this time then, I would be a very different person than I am today. For me that low part of my life was necessary for me to understand and appreciate the value of this path. It gave me the passion and drive to devote my life to service through *SikhNet*. It helped me to be compassionate with others and more understanding to those who were different. I have no idea what other people's destiny is and what lessons they need to learn to become a better person. It's not for me to judge but just for me to see God and light in that person and try to be a support. I try to look below the surface, of the hurt and pain which is showing up on surface of that person.

Sikhi is a journey – not a destination

Being a Sikh means that we are learners or students. We are always learning and growing. It is the situations that come in life (good and bad) that give us perspective and teach us. With that in mind it helps me by understanding that everyone is on this path, doing the best that they can, and all I can do is to be present and aware so that when certain situations arise, I can be aware and respond from my heart – and not my head.

The reality is that looks are deceiving too. Some people may look like a Gursikh from the outside, with full *bana*, but may actually be a crook or a cheat. Then there are those that do not look like a Sikh, but have a deep love for the Guru and *seva* for people around them. We need to move beyond the outward expectations and judgments of other people and focus on ourselves, spending more time “looking in the mirror” and working upon ourselves.

“Saving Sikhi”

What is becoming very common, especially in the online world, is criticising and putting others down in the guise of “Saving or protecting Sikhi”. Like a bully that gets a feeling of power by hurting someone,

there is a feeling by the person that they have to “take a stand” and stop whatever “wrong doing” is being done by someone. May be the intention is good, but the typical way this is carried out is unfortunately by putting others down without the interest to actually help or understand the situation.

I quote from Brene Brown:

“There is something seductive about criticism. People think that it is a contribution, that my contribution is the pile on. That my contribution is to make fun of people that are trying, but getting pushed down. That is such a safe way to move through the world right now. People don't understand that joy is the most vulnerable emotion that we experience. Far more vulnerable than fear or shame. We are terrified of joy because when we let ourselves feel joy we are so afraid we will get sucker punched by pain, and so what we do when something joyful comes along is we dress rehearse tragedy or diminish it. We choose comfort over courage.”

We as Sikhs can often get caught up as being the “victims” and so reactive to situations, rather than focusing on positive action to inspire, create change, and uplift, people getting stuck in the “fighting” against and sharing in the put down of others.

Rigidity in the manner of practicing Sikhi

One of the pitfalls that is common is that we are all taught certain beliefs and practices and when someone else does something that doesn't align with that then we react to that in negative way. We haven't developed the awareness to be open to learning something new or seeing another perspective that might give understanding as to why the person does something. How we can sit down and discuss our perspectives on Sikhi in a way that is humanising, connective rather than dividing? Just because I do something a certain way doesn't mean it is the only way.

This is the beauty of the path of Guru Nanak.

Non-Sikhs against Sikhs : An external situation

You may have been the target of someone, who isn't a Sikh, who is angrily shouting at you because of your turban or skin colour. When this happens to



me, I try to put myself in that person's shoes and be understanding of why they are angry or negative. They may have had a hard life, be angry as a result of their situation, and as a result it's hard for them to be positive and kind to others. When I'm having a hard time in my life, I typically am more negative and see others in that way as compared to when I'm feeling happy. This realisation helps my understanding and empathy for others in situations like this.

It could also be that the person is making assumptions about who you are, where you are from and what you stand for. Most likely they don't even know you. Reacting to them and matching hate will only create more of the same.

People are hard to hate closeup. It's like the story of the white supremacist neo Nazi who hated Muslims and wanted to hurt them, but had never actually met a Muslim. He had certain misguided beliefs that created this intense hate. When a friend of his heard that he wanted to kill a Muslim, he intervened. He invited him to go out to lunch, and without him knowing, he had called a Imam at a local Mosque and arranged a meeting to have his friend actually meet a Muslim to talk with. When it was lunch time, the friend told him that they were not going to lunch and instead went to a Mosque. The man freaked out and was afraid and fearful of doing this. He eventually agreed and though the Imam had only 10 minutes to talk because they had arrived

late, they ended up talking for a long time. As a result of this single meeting and getting to know each other, this blossomed into them becoming lifelong friends, which changed his whole life and perspective in relation to "hate."

The Goal is Awareness of our own mind and thoughts.

To summarise I try to make a few points:

- ✠ *Work at being more conscious of negative thoughts towards others that come to your mind and stop them.* It is easier to make a change and be open to other people and the differences. To see the oneness and sameness in each and every person in spite of any perceived differences, the first step is to be aware of this and conscious when you are doing it.
- ✠ *When you find yourself thinking critical and judgemental thoughts try to examine why you are feeling that way and what might be triggering that feeling.*
- ✠ *Just because someone practices or does something differently than one, does not make the other person's way wrong or incorrect.* We all relate to things based on our own experiences and what is right for one isn't necessarily right for someone else.
- ✠ *Look at things from the person's perspective.* Be genuinely open and willing to explore a different viewpoint, try to understand or see beyond the surface.
- ✠ *Sometimes people have to get stuck in the mud and do "bad" things to create a change in their life.* We cannot judge where people are in their journey.
- ✠ *Focus on positive changes one can make in life that will set an example and serve others.* Do not judge or criticise people. Instead use this energy to work

on yourself and become a better *person*. *None of us are perfect, each of us has more than enough to work on in one's own life.*

✦ *Don't be the victim and reactive:* Focus on the positive change that we want to see. So instead of the “Sikh problems blog” why not the “Sikh solutions blog”? Don't fall into the trap of the self righteous attitude of feeling it is their duty to Save Sikhi and tell people what they are doing wrong.

Are you a lighthouse ?



Representation picture

Courtesy: Gurumustuk Singh

Are you a forklift or a weight? Are you a lighthouse or are you a boat tossing in the ocean? We all need to be like a lighthouse or a fork lift. We all have the capacity to be forklifts and lighthouses in our own way and rather than be reactive and negative, we can focus on positive change by lifting each other up. Each of us have a choice to focus on pain and negative things or we can be proactive and focus on the things that make our lives positive and joyful. It's a simple choice of how we use our life energy.

Ek Ong Kaur, who is part of the SikhNet team, shared a really great perspective on this subject in an article that is part of the recent SikhNet Online Learning Centre course (<http://learn.sikhnet.com>) titled *Finding Peace - Healing Trauma and Loss*.

Let us reference the teaching that it is possible to view both friend and enemy as equivalent to one another. What does that mean?

Guru Arjan Dev ji describes this in the following shabad:

Prathhamae Shhoddee Paraaee Nindhaa ||
First, I gave up slandering others.

ਉਤਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਚਿੰਦਾ ॥
Outhar Gee Sabh Man Kee Chindhaha ||
All the anxiety of my mind was dispelled.

ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਸਭੁ ਕੀਨੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥
Lobh Mohu Sabh Keeno Dhoor ||
Greed and attachment were entirely banished.

ਪਰਮ ਬੈਸਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪੇਖਿ ਹਜੂਰਿ ॥੧॥
Param Baisano Prabh Paekh Hajoor || 1 ||
I see God ever-present, close at hand; I have become a great devotee. || 1 ||

ਐਸੇ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਕੋਇ ॥
Aiso Thiaagee Viralaa Koe ||
Such a renunciate is very rare.

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਜਨੁ ਸੋਇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
Har Har Naam Japai Jan Soe || 1 || Rehaao ||
Such a humble servant chants the Name of the Lord,
Har, Har. || 1 || Pause and Reflect ||

ਅਹੰਬੁਧਿ ਕਾ ਛੇਡਿਆ ਸੰਗੁ ॥
Ahanbudhh Kaa Shhoddiaa Sang ||
I have forsaken my egotistical intellect.

ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਕਾ ਉਤਰਿਆ ਰੰਗੁ ॥
Kaam Krodhh Kaa Outhariaa Rang ||
The hue of sensual desire and anger has vanished.

ਨਾਮ ਧਿਆਏ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰੇ ॥
Naam Dhhiaaeae Har Har Harae ||
I meditate on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, Har, Har.

ਸਾਧ ਜਨਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਨਿਸਤਰੇ ॥੨॥
Saadhh Janaa Kai Sang Nisatharae || 2 ||
In the Company of the Holy, I am emancipated. || 2 ||

ਬੈਰੀ ਮੀਤ ਹੋਏ ਸੰਮਾਨ ॥
Bairee Meeth Hoeae Sanmaan ||
Enemy and friends have become the same to me.

ਸਰਬ ਮਹਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਭਗਵਾਨ ॥

Sarab Mehi Pooran Bhagavaan ||

The Perfect Divine is permeating all.

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਮਾਨਿ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Prabh Kee Aagaa Maan Sukh Paaeiaa ||

Accepting the Will of the Divine, I have found peace.

ਗੁਰਿ ਪੂਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦਿੜਾਇਆ ॥੩॥

Gur Poorai Har Naam Dhirraaeiaa || 3 ||

The Perfect Guru has implanted the Name of the Lord within me. || 3 ||

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਰਾਖੈ ਆਪਿ ॥

Kar Kirapaa Jis Raakhai Aap ||

That person, whom the Lord, in His Mercy, saves

ਸੋਈ ਭਗਤੁ ਜਪੈ ਨਾਮ ਜਾਪ ॥

Soee Bhagath Japai Naam Jaap ||

That devotee recites and goes deeper into Naam.

ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸੁ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਮਤਿ ਲਈ ॥

Man Pragaas Gur Thae Math Lee ||

That person who obtains understanding through the Guru's vision, his/her mind becomes illuminated.

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਪਈ ॥੪॥੨੭॥੪੦॥

Kahu Naanak Thaa Kee Pooree Pee || 4 || 27 || 40 ||

- Says Nanak, that person is totally fulfilled.
|| 4 || 27 || 40 ||

The above *Shabad* is so very rich, yet the one facet that struck me the deepest is the first line, on slandering others. The Guru instructs that when we stop slandering others, the mind leaves behind anxiety, greed and attachment.

“That by not slandering them, the anxiety in my mind disappears”.

When we experience trauma, fear or pain, the instinct is to lash out, to blame someone, shame someone, rage against someone, speak negatively about someone, a very normal way of life. Yet in this *Shabad*, the Guru seems to indicate that speaking negatively about others keeps the mind in a state of disease. But that making a choice, not think or say anything negative brings the mind to ease.

When we curb our predisposition to speak negatively, it gives the ability for our sight to soften and widen, to “see the Perfect One permeating all.” If I choose to not speak negatively, and I choose to see the Divine in every heart then it follows quite naturally what the Guru says. That the “enemy and friends have become the same to me”.

In other words, it does not matter whether a person is an enemy or a friend. My mind responds with the same emotional equanimity to both. Accessing this state of consciousness is difficult, no doubt. How can we cultivate the habit of not speaking negatively about others? Rather than just biting our tongue, how do we genuinely come to the state of not having anything negative to say?

Gurumustuk Singh

Known by many from his web blog nick name ‘Mr SikhNet’, Gurumustuk Singh started the *SikhNet.com* website in 1995 as a teenager out of high school during the beginnings of the world wide web. He also



started the first and largest online matrimonial service for Sikhs (*SikhMatrimonials.com*) before any similar service like this existed for the Asian/Sikh community. Later introduced many other innovative and unique web services (including *SikhiWiki*, *Gurbani Media Center*, *The Karma Game*, *Audio Stories for Kids*, *Youth Online Film Festival*), which continue to serve the Sikh community today. *SikhNet* (a non-profit organisation based in Espanola, New Mexico) and now in it's 18th year, continues to serve, inspire, educate and inform over 20,000 unique visitors a day from all over the world. Gurumustuk lives with his wife, daughter, and son in Espanola, New Mexico and continues to develop the *SikhNet* website with rest of the *SikhNet* team.

Dr. Sangeeta Luthra on

“Disciple, student, scholar: the relationship of a Sikh with her Guru, Sri Guru Granth Sahibji”



As a Sikh born and raised in the United States I have struggled with a sense of inadequacy with regard to my knowledge of Gurbani, Gurmukhi, and Punjabi. However, in the last few years, I have tried to rethink my relationship with Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) and Gurbani, as an evolving journey rather than a destination or finish line. Looking back I feel lucky to have grown up in a home with Shri Guru Granth Sahibji and parents who modeled the importance of doing paath at home as well as with our small sangat in Pittsburgh, PA. In my discussion I will explore various tools and contexts in which I, and I believe many other diasporic Sikhs, learn from Sri Guru Granth Sahibji and aspire to live as Gurmukhs.

In recent years I have started to view my engagement with Sri Guru Granth Sahibji as a lifelong journey involving many settings and through various mediums. First I will share some personal experiences as a diasporic Sikh in order to trace the various ways in which I have engaged with Sri Guru Granth Sahibji and Gurbani. I will then explore how different settings enabled different modes of experiencing and understanding Gurbani enshrined within Shri Guru Granth Sahibji.

Migration : While I began this paper, which focused on the disadvantages of growing up outside of the Punjab in India, as I reflected more deeply on my

personal journey, I began to see that this disadvantage has the potential to become an advantage. In other words, migration and the cultural distance it initially creates can become a powerful motivator for embracing the Gurmukh frame of mind or that of the disciple, student, and scholar engaged with Gurbani. As a first generation Sikh American, born and raised in the United States, I have been engaging with Gurbani through Sri Guru Granth Sahib and in particular through the *Nitnem Paaths* in various settings and mediums. While I was born in the Newark, New Jersey where my parents had come to complete postgraduate training in medicine, I lived in New Delhi from the age of 1 to 5. As a result, when my parents decided to become permanent residents of the US, my first language was Hindi. Within a few months of settling in the US, I learned English and today I am more at ease in English than in Hindi or Punjabi, but have a moderate level of fluency in both Punjabi and Hindi.

Gurdwara/Sangat : I am referencing, with permission from the authors, an unpublished paper about the TriState Sikh Cultural Society of Pittsburgh, PA: *The Building of the Sikh Gurdwara: A Brief History*” by *Sohan Singh Chaudhary and Rekhinder Kaur* :

Growing up in a small but close-knit Sikh community in Pittsburgh PA, my first systematic exposure to Gurbani was at our monthly dewans where children were taught prayers and the key elements of a Sikh ‘service’ which included recitation of Japji Sahib or Rehras Sahib (depending on the time of day), *Shabad Kirtan*, *Anand Sahib*, *Ardaas*, *Vaak*, distribution of *Karah Prashad*, and how to do the *Prakash* and *Sukhasan* of Sri Guru Granth Sahibji. These early years of learning of Gurbani through participating in *sangat*-directed monthly dewans were very special and important to me and generated a deep and emotional connection to the Sikh faith and identity.

In 1974, the small *sangat* was formally established as the *Tri-State Sikh Cultural Society* and eventually began to raise funds for a new Gurdwara which was completed in the late 1980s. Soon after construction of the Gurdwara Sahib, the *sangat* hired a Granthiji to run the weekly Sunday dewan and manage the Gurdwara building. The current Bhai Sahib offers various classes

Gurmukh as *disciple*:

*Gurmukh kirpā karē bhagat kījai,
bin gur bhagat na hoī.*

Page 32, Line 4, Guru Amar Das

By His Grace one becomes Gurmukh, worshipping the Lord with devotion. Without the Guru there is no devotional worship.

Gurmukh as *student*:

*Ėman ālas kiā, karahi gurmukh nām dhiāe.
||1 || rahāo.*

Page 28, Line 15, Guru Amar Das

O mind, why are you so lazy? Become Gurmukh, and meditate on the Naam.
||1 || Pause ||

Gurmukh as *scholar*:

*Har bhagat har kā piār hai,
je gurmukh karē bīchār.*

Page 28, Line 16 Guru Amar Das

Devotion to the Lord is love for the Lord, if the Gurmukh reflects deeply and contemplates.

Quotes and translations from Srigranth.org.
<http://www.srigranth.org/servlet/gurbani.gurbani?S=y>

in Shabad Kirtan, Gurmukhi, Gurmat/Vichaar, Gatka, and in recitation and understanding of the Baani of Sri Guru Granth Sahibji. Some of these programmes are also for adults. Increasingly it seems these types of programmes, classes, and resources are becoming common in Gurdwaras around these country. This trend also requires reflection and study of the role and conditions of the ‘ecclesiastical’ community – Bhaisahibs, Granthis, Pracharaks, and Kirtania - in promoting and teaching Gurbani and Gurmukhi. How can Sangats best support those who seek to become experts in linguistics and theology of the Sikhi and to help educate their fellow Sikhs in the diaspora? Equally importantly we must do so without creating a class system or a formal priestly class which would be contrary to the principles of worship envisioned by the Gurus?



Family connections with the ‘homeland’ Looking back on my family life, my parents’ investments in staying connected with family back home provided rich opportunities for learning Gurbani as well as becoming familiar with the cultural milieu within which the Shri Guru Granth Sahibji was created. Obviously the cultural milieu of Punjab in India today is not identical to the era in which the Guru’s lived. But looking back on my experiences, I believe that in many powerful ways there is cultural continuity. In particular, the identity politics or inter-community dynamics of the last 30 or 40 years are not dissimilar with those of the Gurus’ period. In particular the need to define, express, and defend the distinctness of Sikhism which has been and continues to be, an issue for Sikhs in India and in different ways around the world.

Visits to family back in India also were an important source of language and Gurbani learning. In particular my paternal grandfather, known to the family as ‘Darji,’ was important in my learning Gurbani. I have vivid memories of reciting *Nitnem paath* in the morning

and evening, even if we happened to be traveling in his car. The children in particular were all expected to participate and to sing simple *shabads* after the *paath*. Darji also loved to take his grandchildren on excursions around New Delhi, which usually included visiting different Gurdwara Sahibs. Those excursions were very special to me because they allowed me to experience Sikhi in a sensory as well as intellectual and spiritual way. To this day when I visit any Gurdwara, especially in the evening during the *Rehras Sahib paath*, I cannot help but feel Darji’s presence with me.

Sikh Camps: Sikh ‘youth summer camps’ are a wonderful mix of Western and Sikh tradition and were very important for me in the journey of Gurmukh learning and for cultural and social growth. My brother and I attended a Sikh Youth Camp run by the Pittsburgh Gurdwara over the years from 1974 to 1986. The camp became a very special part of our childhood in which we learned about Sikh values, beliefs, history and culture. The two week overnight camp was held in the lush green Racoon Creek State Park in nearby



West Virginia. It attracted Sikh children from all over the US and had at its peak about 100 campers per year. Parent volunteers ran the camp and did everything from preparing meals to cleaning, providing emergency health care, teaching, and chaperoning. Every morning and evening we did *Paath* and *Shabad Kirtan* in a dedicated Darbar hall. For the rest of the morning we learned Gurmukhi, Punjabi, Sikh history and philosophy. In the afternoons we had sports/recreation performed Bhangra and Gidda and in the evenings, had a bonfire and enjoyed chatting with our buddies under starry night skies. Many of the alumnae of the camp, continued to meet in our college years, organising seminars to discuss Sikh topics and current events. Many of the friendships forged at the Sikh youth camp continue to thrive to this day. The camps generated a sense of camaraderie for the small Sikh community and encouraged a network at a time when we were few and far between.

The importance of Sikh youth camps as a means for spreading the message, wisdom and poetic beauty of Sri Guru Granth Sahibji has continued to grow in the 21st century in terms of access to many regional camps and in the number of Sikh youth who attend.

A special Sikh Youth Camp in India : In the summer of 1980, about a group of about 20 students attended the camp which included about three weeks at a boarding school in Dalhousie in India and three weeks traveling through the Punjab and Jammu-Kashmir. During the travel through Punjab and Jammu Kashmir were able to visit many historical sites linked to the Guru's lives. Being in India as a teenager was a great opportunity to continue to improve my Punjabi, Gurmukhi and Shabad Kirtan.

Self-learning in college

In college, my main exposure to Gurbani was through audio tapes of Nitnem. In the evenings in my



dormitory room, I listened to and recited Rehras Sahib and Kirtan Sohila paath with the help of these tapes. I would also follow along with a 'gutka' as the audio was running. In this way I tried to improve my reading skills and pronunciation. Listening to the tapes and doing Paath was a source of comfort and guidance for me as I faced the emotional, social, and academic stressors that so many students and young adults experience.

Going back to India and the Punjab as a young adult

From 1986 to 1987 during my junior years of college, I spent one year in Varanasi, India through the University of Wisconsin-Madison's study abroad programme. Over that year I learned to read and write in Hindi and some Persian, and I really improved by verbal skills in Hindi. I also learned many Sanskrit words and more about Hindu mythology which has

been helpful for understanding references made within Sri Guru Granth Sahibji. I was also able to travel a great deal that year. I visited places like Bodhgaya, Kathmandu, Patna, Nainital, Rishikesh, Manali, Dharmasala, Jaipur, and Indore. In many of these places I visited local Gurdwaras which helped me feel a connection to the Gurus' lives. The most impactful visit was to Patna Sahib Gurdwara and the various small Gurdwaras and historical sites related to Guru Tegh Bahadurji and Guru Gobind Singhji's childhood. I was given tours by local Sikhs whose ancestors had become Sikhs during the time of Guru Tegh Bahadurji. At Varanasi, to fulfill the programmes research requirement, I decided to learn about the historical Gurdwaras and other historical sites relating to Guru Nanak Devji, Guru Tegh Bahadurji, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. I also interviewed members of the local Sikh community about their experiences migrating to Varanasi after the Partition of 1947. Finally, and perhaps the most difficult discussions were about the devastating pogrom of 1984 and effects on the Sikh community in Varanasi and many other towns and cities throughout North India. My year in Varanasi in 1986-1987 brought home the rich multiculturalism of the Guru's lives and the difficulties of the post 1984 period for Sikhs outside of Punjab.

In 1994-1995, I went back to India for my PhD dissertation research and lived in New Delhi. Conducting research in Hindi and Punjabi of course allowed me to improve my language skills. I also happened to visit a newly constructed neighborhood which I later found out was populated by Punjabi Hindus who had left the Punjab in the late 1980s and 1990s in response to the Khalistani movement. This was again a difficult but important learning moment, as I had to grapple with the complexities of late 20th century Sikh history and identity.

Parenting with Gurbani

Perhaps the most difficult but important point in my journey to learn Gurbani continued after marriage and especially when I became a mother to two daughters. Both my husband and I are primarily English speakers at home and that has put our daughters at a disadvantage in learning Punjabi and Gurbani. Attending the Khalsa School at the San Jose Gurdwara,

participating in the *Vaisakhi Raat* event for many years, and reciting Japji Sahib and Sukhmani Sahib at home have been some of the ways to help them learn about the core beliefs and values enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahibji. Grandparents' visits have also been important for our daughters to hear spoken Punjabi, Paath and Shabad Kirtan. Learning Gurmukhi script and spoken Punjabi at Khalsa School and participating in the *Vaisakhi Raat* programme have been important spaces for learning and connecting to Sikhi. Equally important is the Sangat we have gained with which to share this amazing journey of learning.

Shri Guru Granth Sahib in my home

I was reluctant to keep SGGS at home initially because I didn't feel I could live up to the responsibility, but my mother-in-law, Sardarni Darshan Kaur, really pushed me to make space and looking back I am grateful that she did. She told me that just having a space like this in the home was a source of great strength and solace in the face of "*life's dukh sukh*." I was hesitant in the beginning but in the end I realised mother was absolutely right.

Online environment and 'Digital Guru Granth Sahib'

Since beginning of the 21st century, like many other Sikhs around the world, I have increasingly utilised various online sites and search and translation tools to improve my Gurbani and Gurmukhi literacy. An example of my access of the Guru online is my subscription to an email list called "Gurbani Word of the Day." This daily email service is sponsored by the Shabad Foundation based in Faridabad, India. I receive four to five emails a week exploring the meaning of a Gurbani term. The email includes information on the Gurbani term with translation, the Gurbani term in an original quote or line from a *shabad* from Sri Guru Granth Sahibji, translations of the quote in both Punjabi and English, transliteration of the quote, the etymology of the Gurbani term, and a description of social and cultural context of the meaning of the Gurbani term.

According to S Jasjit Singh, online engagement with Sikhism can be organised in three categories: social networking, worship online, and as a "missionary tool" (2014, p 85).

According to him, an analysis of the survey responses to questions about Sikhism-related internet usage reveals that young Sikhs primarily go online in order to:

- ◆ discuss taboo subjects;
- ◆ obtain answers to questions about the Sikh tradition;
- ◆ explore differing practices within the Sikh tradition;
- ◆ access repositories of kirtan and katha;
- ◆ examine English translations of Sikh scriptures;
- ◆ obtain orders from the Guru Granth Sahib (hukamnamas);
- ◆ find out about Sikh events;
- ◆ access event archives, recordings, and instructional videos;
- ◆ purchase Sikh resources, including books, photographs, and clothing; and understand the legal position of Sikh articles of faith (Jasjit Singh, 2014, pp 86-88)

To summarise some advantages of the online environment are the easy access to original texts, historical archives relating to Gurbani and Sikh history, and translations and transliterations of Gurbani and Shri Guru Granth Sahibji. Online discussion forums allow for more open discussions of problems or issues in the community especially in relation to 'taboo topics' like dating and marriage, Gurdwara management, equality of women, caste discrimination, and support for Sikhs who identify as LGBTQ (*Jasjit Singh presentation, 4th Sikh Studies Conference, University of California, Riverside, May 8-10, 2015*). Finally, Jasjit Singh concludes that 'online' engagement and communities are in effect "electronic extensions" of real world communities and *sangats*.

One potential disadvantage is the potential for the transmission of inaccurate or partial information. Another potential disadvantage is that the overwhelming majority of online translations of Gurbani/SGGS are increasingly coming from just one or two sources and often the sources are not clearly identified to the online user. The complexities of translation are often overshadowed by the ease of access. In other words, it is important for Sikh users of online information and tools to carefully assess whether the information we are getting online is accurate and

Here, I am referencing two papers by Dr. Jasjit Singh in the School of Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science, University of Leeds, England: “Sikh-ing Online: the role of the Internet in the lives of young British Sikhs” explores the advantages and disadvantages of the growing importance of online environment for Sikhs around the world today (Jasjit Singh, *Contemporary South Asia*, 2014, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp 82-97; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2013.870974>). The second publication is, “Lost in Translation? The emergence of the Digital Guru Granth Sahib,” Jasjit Singh (*Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory*, June 19, 2018; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17448727.2018.1485355>) looks specifically at the issue of online translations of Shri Guru Granth Sahib and the impact of those on locating Sikh “religious authority” and the transmission of Sikh tradition across time and space.

from experts who are trained in the study of Gurbani. The question of authenticity or interpretation is a complex one that I will not elaborate on at this point. But being aware of the sources of the information or interpretations we get online, and the qualifications and methods of those sources, is obviously very critical to all aspects of life in the contemporary world, including in our journey through and with Shri Guru Granth Sahibji.

Thus, in this reflection paper, I have described a number of tools and contexts through which I have tried to be a better student of Sri Guru Granth Sahibji. The kinds of learning I have experienced and discussed can be thought of as a mixture of participatory and contextual/experiential learning. The participatory learning is illustrated in my experiences in sangat-directed worship, camps, conferences, doing *paath* by myself, and eventually in teaching my children. The contextual or experiential learning occurred in time spent with my grandparents and extended family and time spent traveling and living in India. Both modes of learning were important and helped me to experience

Sri Guru Granth Sahibji holistically, by which I mean intellectually, spiritually, and emotively. I also hope this discussion resonates with younger generations of Sikhs around the world as they forge their own tools and contexts.

Finally I want to return to the idea of Gurmukh, literally ‘one who faces the Guru’ through the lifelong practice of being a disciple, student, and scholar of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Dr Sangeeta Luthra



Dr Sangeeta Luthra is an anthropologist and educator. She has taught classes in cultural anthropology, gender studies, and cultural studies. Her research interests are women’s development and empowerment, feminist theory, cultural politics of development, and most recently Sikh American institution building in the post 9/11 period. Her writing on diasporic Sikhs has been featured in the academic journal *Sikh Formations*, and in online forms like *SikhChic.com*, *Punjabi Beat Magazine*, and *Sikhpoint.com*. She is a contributing writer and member of the editorial board of *Her Name is Kaur: Sikh American women write about Love, Courage, and Faith*. Sangeeta volunteers her time in her community and in South Asian cultural associations. Sangeeta lives in Los Altos, CA with her husband and two daughters

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE



I am minimally computer savvy, yet recently almost a hundred e-mails filled my inbox, each indulging in some micro-fine hair splitting on “The Purpose of Life.” Some were book length papers on the question. And this entire bagful inundated my inbox in less than a few days.

These are Sikh sites, so they largely dissect the idea from the perspective of Sikhi. But sometimes they lean for comparison on other religious systems that surround us. Mine is a brief take today that should equally engage those who are religious-spiritual or simply spiritual minus any over-riding religious label. It should even apply to those who are agnostics or atheists.

Why frame my view by deliberately leaving out religion? Although religions mostly parse life exactly

for this purpose the paradox of the goal or purpose of existence – it is undeniably true that a large segment of humanity is non-religious or is at the ever-shifting borderline between faith and reason. I add that I will lean on *Sikhi* to define a purpose to life.

If there is a purpose that is common to all humanity, then it should be able to stand without necessarily leaning on one or the many religious systems of mankind.

If the purpose of life is to meet God or merge in Him at death, then why wait on a good thing? Surely, the sooner one dies the faster will be the union and that seems to dismiss any overarching long-term purpose to life. Dying early would surely reduce the time available to accumulate more sins! Similar reasoning prevails if at the end of life there is a heaven or hell waiting for us, as many religious systems insist. They seem like

differing versions of ‘Waiting for Godot’ and perhaps equally without hope. I would think that the Day of Reckoning doesn’t have to wait for the uncertain and unwelcome time of death, but instead occurs every moment of every day.

The models of heaven and hell that occupy most religions are universally and uniformly unrealistic but remain a tribute to human imagination and its yearnings. To be living for heavenly (decidedly unearthly!) reward seems childish unrealistic regardless of what one is hoping for – for instance, a heavenly court with a seat near a prophet. Think of the Sistine Chapel, Michael Angelo’s unparalleled artwork dating from 1477 to 1480 of *The Last Supper* with a precise seating arrangement for Jesus and other Christian Saints next to an imaginary physical form of the Creator.

Then there is that heaven with promise of enjoying an endless company of beautiful sirens (for men) and what not (hunks?) for women. Don’t forget that the Creator, in the Sikh view, has no form, shape, colour or gender in the Sikh view – “*Roop na rekh naa rung ...*” as we imbibe from the Jaap Sahib. Then, of course, there is hell for non-believers or those of the “wrong” faith, perhaps like Dante’s Inferno. Surely, we have reduced the Creator to very human dimensions somewhat like the boss of all bosses or perhaps an arbitrary, capricious parent. I recommend Mark Twain’s *Letters from the Earth* as a wonderfully creative but instructive riposte.

My purpose today is not to sell you a particular model of heaven or hell but to foster a spirited discussion. I assure you, from our differences, we will learn.

Sohan Singh, a Britain-based Sikh, has written a neat little book titled *The Real Purpose of Life* detailing the Sikh perspective on the matter. I suggest that we carefully read the Guru Granth Sahib. Instead of promoting a largely imaginative model of life after death, it talks clearly of *Jeevan Mukht*, a concept that speaks of liberation while living a life (*Aap pachhanea manu nirmal hoe; Jeevan mukht har pavae soi*, p. 161) that is well and productively lived, a life attuned to a perspective that is bigger than the self (*Aap gavaaye*

seva karay ta kitch paaye maan, p. 474). And that beckons an unmatched purpose of life.

And then I think of the variety of systems religious as well as secular non-religious ways of life that humans have evolved over eons. A quick survey will convince us of a commonality of core beliefs and practices that transcend what we commonly encounter stark differences between the many religious models. The differences among them are raving mad is how I would put it.

If religions have given us a purpose larger than life, they also have, as their critics assert, willed us the Pandora’s Box of war, hatred, pestilence, destruction and so on, in an endless supply.

And then there are the non-religious models of human development. Some stem from politico-economic necessities, others flow from psychological underpinnings of human behavior – ego, anger, envy, lust, greed, and their counterparts, but also those that define their kissing cousins on the other side of the coin – love, kindness, charity, loyalty, and their ilk. Don’t forget movements like capitalism, socialism, even communism that address matters of economic inequality. They, like religions, give us hope and sometimes the opportunities to dream big but they, too, carry their boxful of potential troubles with them.

There are ongoing discussions on the purpose of life on Gurmat Learning Zone (GLZ); many perhaps destined never to end, but they will surely take a breather now and then.

I want to submit to you a model that both the religious-spiritual minded and the non-religious could equally embrace without feeling diminished or left out.

Yet, I will draw on Sikhi to make the case. My perspective here starts with the obviously self-evident fact that *at birth, we inherit the world as it is – the good, the bad and the ugly. This has always been true, as it will always be.* True that technology was not as advanced millennia ago or even 500 or 100 years ago as it is today, but the wheel had been invented, along with many other artifacts that made life remarkably easier

and richer. The car, computer and telephone did not exist in quite the form that we have today. Today's generation has much more complexity to its life along with the instruments and pathways of convenience that were not available then. And the next generation will do even better in such matters. Our inheritance includes not just the technology, but also the cuisine, art, music, technology, and history etc. that make a culture. This is self-evident.

My point, however, is that at birth we are atop a certain rung on the ladder of humanity's achievement, march, and progress because we are at a certain point on the timeline of human existence. Where exactly? It depends on our education, resources, opportunities, and personal talents, as well as our cultural context and constraints. *This, then, defines our place and our moment. At birth, we inherit a full bucket.*

Look again at the rung of the ladder of existence that we are on at birth or at any given time of our life. Humans have existed for thousands of years before us – with perhaps many, many more years to come. We did not have to invent the simple but versatile wheel. Now, that is a debt that we are born with. How and to whom do we pay back this debt that we inherited at birth? How then to treat what makes life possible, our Earth Mother, known to us by her many a moniker Terra Mater, Tellus, Gaia, Panchamama, Prithvi, Dharti the Mother of a myriad names. (Terra firma and Terra not so firma as in California with its earthquakes – my brand of quixotic humour). Her singular voice rumbles through our endless variety.

There is only one way to nurture this mother – leave the world a bit better – even an iota of progress matters. This, then, becomes the purpose of life, simply stated.

But what exactly do we mean by the recommendation of leaving the world at least a bit better? How will we define progress? I leave the details to my readers at this time; it is, however, something that should be a primary goal of education, whether religious or secular.

The goal of human societies – religious or secular – remains unchanged. Both recognise that the puny human alone is too slow and weak to escape or manage

the existential threats that surround him. Safety and progress demand the creation of coalitions into families, *sangats*, congregations, religions and collectives, clans, tribes, and progressively larger groupings, including nations.

The collectives make it possible for us to survive and thrive. They enable us to harness nature and its forces to our will and needs. Ergo, our desires must be progressive and goal-oriented.

Religions – their practices and traditions – often provide the glue of connectivity.

The traditions that morph into religious codes and laws of society bind a people together. In time, such traditions become sacred, and then good people will live and die for them. That is what social scientists tell us. There is strength and unmatched collective power in a community that transcends individual initiative and achievement. That's why *sangat* is supreme.

Bhai Gurdas reminds us that some *sangat* will liberate us, some *sangat* will consign us to hell (*Kahoo ki sangat mil Jeevan mukt hoe; kahoo ki sangat mil jampur jaat hae* . Kabit 549)

Fair warning: sometimes the glue sets and hardens to the consistency of cement or Krazy Glue and then rather than binding people together, it imprisons and chains them.

Here I have focused on the common goals of humanity regardless of which religion, if any, or culture we follow, or which language or definition of God claims our fealty. Then why do religions differ so vehemently, even violently, in their assumptions and processes?

This has baffled me until I looked at the trade that I have plied all my life. Look at education and how we impart it. The fundamentals of mathematics or anatomy (I teach anatomy) do not change very much from country to country or from one school to another. But often different educational systems differ in how they teach, where they place their emphasis, or how they cover the territory. What shapes the teaching is the language, cultural context and economy, even

socio-political realities. Yet the student is expected to master largely the same material and put it to similar use in life.

Let different schools (of thought) compete as they do even in religions, but we need to recognise the common ground which makes life possible, even magical. A fragment of an old poem from my school days comes to mind. In 'To Althea from Prison' Richard Lovelace reminds us that:

Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.

I absolutely do not mean to split the purpose of life from the fundamentals of Sikh core values. Guru Granth Sahib, holy scripture of the Sikhs, pointedly challenges us in a manner that applies to all, those of any religious persuasion or none. *Eh sareera merya iss jugg meh aye ke kya tudh karam kamayya*, (p. 922). In other words, this challenging line forthrightly asks us what footprints we would leave in the sands of time. *An iota better would be sufficient.*

And the Guru Granth further tells us *Ghaal khaaye kitch hatho deh; Nanak raah pahtchanay se*, p. 1245: "From an honest living share your rewards; in that, says Guru Nanak, is found the true path of life."

Think with me for a moment while I try to connect the two lines of gurbani that I have cited above. Many interpretations of these lines are possible but my bias runs thus: Sikh teaching and tradition speak of two aspects to our earthly existence here and now : *Peeri* and *Meeri*, respectively the spiritual and the worldly. In a centered and balanced life, the two remain in sync and must never be sundered wherein *Peeri* provides the underlying direction for *Meeri*. When Guru Nanak fed the hungry with twenty Rupees at the beginning of his mission, the cash was a product of *Meeri*, the feeding was *Peeri* in action.

Sikhi fully embraces the progressive meaning of such teaching with a life inseparably connected to the One Creator of all creation. Only then do we create a life where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And that makes for a better world, if ever so slightly.

I know I have left untouched the two possibilities at death that preoccupy us: freedom from or existence in the never-ending cycle of birth, death and rebirth, as our flesh ends up pushing up thorns or roses, if not becoming a feeding frenzy for worms. But my mandate today are not those issues but the goal of an active, productive life here on earth and inherent in Gurbani.

That, to me, speaks timelessly of the primary goal of life. It is and will always remain the unfinished business of life.

IJ Singh



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. He 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*.

The Panel Discussion on

Global crisis in Leadership and lessons from lives of the Gurus *



(Clockwise from top) Panel leader, Sn. Jessi Kaur; Panelists : Dr. IJ Singh, Sn. Sangeeta Luthra, Sn. Reshma Kaur, Sn. Guneet Kaur, S. Jujhaar Singh

JagJot Singh: I would like to welcome Sardarni Jessi Kaur ji, who can introduce each speaker. Dr IJ Singh ji, Sardarni Sangeeta Luthra, Sardarni Reshma Kaur, Sardarni Guneet Kaur, Sardar Jujhaar Singh, please come on up!

Let me first introduce Jessi Kaur ji. Most of us know her as one of the most prolific authors, and people whom

the community usually asks to do seva for any public forum where she gives speeches and talks, gurbani vichar. Her views are widely published, travels around the world. You have also seen most of her books, *The Royal Falcon*, she's written plays and produced many.

Jessi Kaur: *Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji ki Fateh*. Thank you JJ for that introduction, thank

* *Transcribed from the audio recording*

you very much, it's a pleasure to be here today. We're talking about crisis in leadership, and the lessons gleaned from the life and teachings of the Sikh Gurus. A couple of years ago, the World Economic Forum conducted surveys about whether there is a crisis in leadership or not. They talked to several thousand people from a cross-section of society, across the world, and 86 percent of people interviewed said that there was a dire crisis in leadership. Now we don't need a survey to remind us of that. Every time we click our phone, or turn on our TV, or turn on our computer, we hear of something terrible happening somewhere in the world. It seems to be a systemic problem, not just with the US, but closer at home we are definitely facing a crisis in leadership.

Our times are terrible, but let's go back to 500 years earlier... our Gurus were born to redeem and save mankind and bring about social justice, the emancipation of women. They were the saviours of not just Hindustan or India but all of mankind.

What is the Sikh response, and what are some of the ways and shapes that this crisis is manifesting itself? It is visible on the political stage, international stage, with Sikhs all around the world, in the refugee crisis we are facing, in the economic downfall of nations, in women's issues that are coming up and the 'Me Too' movement that is making the assault on them obvious, the abuse of children by churches, in our own Gurdwaras where swords are picked up instantly and police called in, shameful situations, very very close to home.

What do we do? Our times are terrible, but let's go back to 500 years earlier. How were the times then? We had an invader who began the Mughal Dynasty and was a cruel Emperor. We had atrocities heaped upon the masses. We had conversions by force, we had a price on the head of Sikhs, and then our Gurus were born to redeem and save mankind and bring about social justice, the emancipation of women. They were the saviours of not just Hindustan or India but all of mankind.

Today, we are going to get some perspectives from an all-star, multi-generational panel. If I were to go over their resumes, it would take half a day just telling you about these wonderful *panj pyaras* that are on stage right now!

I am going to begin with Dr IJ Singh, an iconic figure. Professor of Anatomy, but well versed in matters of mind and spirit and soul – and Sikhi. Such a pleasure to have you here Doctor IJ Singh, and we are looking forward to having you share your one-liners which are always witty, and your wisdom which is cutting.

We have Sangeeta Luthra, a dear friend. An anthropologist by training, but a very typical Sikh woman, part of the Sikh diaspora and relates to what is needed to keep Sikhi roots intact in the diaspora. Very passionate, very sincere about her work, both as an accommodation and as a Sikh. I am proud to call her my dear friend.

And then there is Reshma, whom I say lights up a room wherever she goes. A Harvard undergrad, sharp as a whistle, witty. Recipient of many awards, director of a US Department of Energy, author, leader of Women tech forums. What else can I say Reshma, other than it is a joy to know her!

Guneet, what a pleasure to have you in this forum, daughter of a dear friend, a Scripps undergrad, already an activist at such a young age, passionate about women studies, gender issues, children's causes, Sikhi, always there in the forefront of Sikh issues. And Jujhaar, so proud of you, so proud of you!

I have known Jujhaar since he was a newborn, and all that I can say is whatever Jujhaar does, he does with his heart and mind and soul. Since he was very young, I knew, I could tell he was an overachiever. He is an undergraduate of Stanford, software engineer at AirBnB. But more than that, if you see him do Bhangra, you know there's no tomorrow. He'll rock the stage and every single being that is there. If he translates a *Hukam Vakh*, you will be amazed at the depth of this young man's awareness and knowledge. If he talks about Sikhi, you're awed by how much he

knows. How does one raise a young man like Jujhaar? He's on the board of SikhRi and teaches at Sidhak.

So I was not kidding when I said I had an All-Star panel today. They are going to tell us about what they see as the leadership lesson given to us by our Guru. I am going to call upon Dr. IJ Singh, and have him in about four or five minutes, tell us about how he views the establishment of Sikhi, and give us a foundation of what leadership is in terms of he sees it.

Dr IJ Singh: You know, when I look at the Sikhs the world over, and over a lifetime, with all the shenanigans in their gurudwaras and other societies all around, I wonder sometimes if we are a leaderless people – that we have no leaders- or are we leader led, as we ought to be or we think we are.

I know not how and why leaders emerge, why and when they don't, I speak from total ignorance, but let me do that for the next four to five minutes.

With our endless search for leaders we often end up with more leaders than followers, but I don't know how leaders emerge, when, and why they don't. Even more importantly, what they're up to when they do emerge.

First some geopolitical realities of Punjab and northwestern India, where Sikhi arose in the 15th century. Until the British and the French came in large numbers, all soldiers, fortune hunters, migrants, traders, first settlers into India from Asia Minor, even the Greeks and Mongols and Mughals entered the sub-continent through a narrow passage – the Khyber Pass - into the Punjab to settle, pillage, loot, perish, or return. This created a zone of genetic hybridisation, mixed DNA, in Punjab. Our DNA is now richer for the mixing, in many ways, similar to United States. War was a continuous phenomenon, and genetic hybridisation, as you know, creates vigour, we must have a lot of vigour. Now only if we could get some sense, life would be good!

But look at much of India at the time, divided into principalities, nation-states, often at loggerheads, even though they were and are neighbours. Rivalries with neighbours, invitations to conquerors, were the norm. Hinduism divided along rigid lines of caste, in which

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women had few rights, low-castes had none. Islam, the politically dominant faith, had become confrontational, with mass forced conversions to Islam.

Religions, they tell us, provide the glue that unites the people into a community. In India, I think much of the glue seems to have dried into *Krazy Glue*, with little peace for each other. Surely, people need minimally participatory self governance, economical and social justice, equality, institutional infrastructure, a code of ethics, to support the communities that hope for a better future. A transformational paradigm shift was necessary, but could not happen in a day, or a week, or a month, or even a year. Ten generations of Gurus guided the process.

There are as many styles of leadership as there are aspirants to it. Leadership can be autocratic, democratic, strategic, transformational, charismatic, many a mixed model, the meaning is clear from the definition.

In Sikhi, governance and leadership flow from *sangat*, the organ of community life. The practice of *Sarbat Khalsa* at the place of the *Panj Pyarae* can create a communal sharing of responsibility. The institutions founded centuries ago were superbly successful in their times but are no longer. Today, the methods and structures need re-interpretation to include the voice of women, the place of non-keshdhari Sikhs, the ever-expanding Sikh diaspora, the place of non-Indian and non-Punjabi Sikhs. These are contentious, but manageable issues under the big tent of Sikhism. Global implications of leadership, ask that we keep in mind two principles where the cookie crumbles :

Think globally but act locally; Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. No one can be a wise ruler until he learns to serve honestly, learn to follow before you command others, one cannot die for a cause until he or she has learned to walk the path.

To lead, first learn to serve. Now this thought is finding resonance in progressive programmes at business schools where they emphasise the idea of the servant leader. The concept is underscored through the Sikh principle of guru-chela. Leadership is not a matter of entitlement, it is in giving that we receive - that is biblical. *Aap gavaye seva karey ta kich paey maan*. That comes from the Guru Granth Sahib (p. 474). To my mind, the fundamental qualities are the triad of being flexible, fair, and fluid.

Thank you, I look for a discussion.

Jessi Kaur: Would you like to add on Guru Nanak Sahib, the founder of Sikhi, what kind of a visionary or servant leader was he, how did he lead by example?

Dr IJ Singh: I hinted on that when I said it took Ten Gurus to design and live the path. Obviously each Guru had a process in mind. Think for a moment, Guru Nanak was the Guru, the founder of a set of ideas. Now, when his time came to choose a successor, he chose not the son, but a follower, who was the fittest person to take us to the next stage. So every Guru had a next stage, and a model, and the many stages that are needed to design a free participatory governance and culture for free people. Then the time came for Guru Nanak to choose a successor, Guru Angad. Now we know that the Guru Nanak lived on for a certain time while Angad was the Guru. Whether it was days or months, I do not know, history does not tell us that. But we know one thing: There is not a shred of evidence of where he might have interfered with Guru Angad's decision, out-guessed him, or told him "I wouldn't have done it". He did not do that. That's our simplest lesson, perhaps, in that we can learn and apply to the institutions we have founded here. In our modern institutions and gurduaras, the Chairman or President usually leaves unwillingly, and of course, as long as he can, he keeps interfering, like a poker in the game.

Jessi: Reshma, can I turn to you for a bit more elaboration on how the vision and mission of the founder of Sikhi was carried on by the next five Gurus.

Reshma: Sat Sri Akal everyone. I would request everyone to close your eyes for a second and visualise

when Guru Nanak Sahib came to the world. Babar, at that time, was invading India. He had pillaged and marauded his way all the way to India, and then there is this young farmer. He sees these atrocities being committed and he is awakened. He says "this is anarchy", and what is needed right now is *Manas ki Jaat Sabay Ekay Pehchanbo*. He is the one who is the visionary who lays the foundation of our entire faith. 550 years later we very much believe in that essential message from Guru Nanak Dev ji. He is really the person who did activism : activism both by faith so his leadership is through faith-based activism, but also intellectual activism. He went on his udasis all over the world, had four long udasis, on intellectual discourses. Did you know that what we are doing today is an intellectual discourse, but taking that from a discussion to activism, taking it from thought to belief to action, I think that is the leadership he really showed us. Today we can sit here and we can think about the anarchy happening in the world, with nationalism, and all the horrible happenings, but can take one human being to change the world, and he showed us that.

Jessi: Reshma, you are the director of the United States Department of Energy and the author of a book called *Building Innovation: Cleantech Technologies*. I would like you to tell us how the Gurus build institutions that supported their vision.

Reshma: So it may be worthwhile to go on after Guru Nanak Sahib on the first few gurus, because not much is written and spoken about the first Five Gurus. We focus a lot of our thought process on some of our most charismatic gurus, Guru Hargobind Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh ji. But if you think about what Guru Nanak calls to action : *Jo To Prem Khelan Ka Chao, Sir Par Tali Gali Meri Aao*. He lays the path for the next gurus, to carry on his work, institutionalise and codify this, so Sikhism became an established religion. So he gave Sikhism in its infancy with a set of beliefs, the three golden rules, which were very universal, and very inclusive, and laid the path for fairness and social justice. But when you look at Guru Angad, Lehna, Angad is a part (*ang*) of his (Nanak's) body, and it is not a hierarchical system or hereditary system where the second one is just a son or child. Guru Angad Dev ji is probably even more important because

it is the second one who perpetuated the thoughts of the first. If you don't have a first follower, there is no legacy to be built.

Jessi: That is something very important that Reshma just said. If the leader does not have a second, then the leadership peters away. That is golden.

Reshma: If we can sum up Guru Nanak Dev ji's life in two words, 'visionary' and 'activism', I think Guru Angad Dev ji's work and legacy also in two words, 'community' and 'access'. I think what he built and what is needed today is for the community to come together. Perhaps the two most important things he did was to build a language, codified gurmukhi as a script for us and provided access, so beyond the Brahmans who could access Sanskrit and the scriptures, I think what he provided for us was- that anybody, without a middleman, could access and be part of a strong community.

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And the second, in a similar vein, he established, langar. I will not go very deep into the other three Guru sahibs but I want to touch upon them. When you look at Guru Amar Das Ji. When he takes on Guruship at the age of 70, he is a wise person, an experienced person. I think what he really did was to spread Sikhi and the influence of Sikhi. While Guru Nanak Dev ji established, and Guru Angad started sowing the seeds of community and inclusiveness through *langar* and gurmukhi, I think Guru Amar Das ji deeply analysed what was happening with the Brahmanical times at that time, and really looked at influence.

Three things that he did which established influence and dispersal of Sikhi was the *Manjis*. It was a hub-and-spoke model. While the gurus were at Kiratpur and Kartarpur, he established manjis where he chose



eminent Sikhs who were respected, and they established different centres to spread the teachings of Sikhi. The second thing (which he did), which is actually very interesting in today's times, is he established the Bisova Divas or the Vaisakhi Divas, which was "Yes, I am sending my messengers to different places, but I am also bringing people in." It is just like an annual conference, like we have an annual conference today, where we are bringing people from all over the world and all over the country. Bisova Divas was the annual conference where Sikhs could come, talk to each other, and gain strength from each others faith, and the third thing was when he saw people rushing to Haridwar, and to places where they could go and take a dip in the Ganga, he said 'The spirit of Waheguru lives everywhere.'

So he built a baoli at Goindwal, which was kind of an anti-establishment act. So what he really said was but you don't have to go to the Ganga. This is a very beautiful sakhi where he told this person who was going to the Ganga, if you think the Ganga is so pure, bring back the water for me. So this man went to the Ganga, and everytime he tried to bring the water, the lota would slip from his hand, and he could not bring the Ganga back, but when he came back to Goindwal he saw the beautiful baoli there he said that the Ganga is everywhere. So I think this anti establishment, removing old rituals, and saying that you don't have to be an ascetic to be a true Sikh. You can be a householder, you can be a person who takes on both spiritual and temporal activities. So I think this removal of old influence and establishment and the spread of influence was very important with Guru Amar Das Sahib.

With Guru Ram Das Sahib, his most tangible effect was taking the same principle as the baoli, and establishing Amritsar: the *amrit sarovar*. So I think this (is) codification. If you look at how (the company) Salesforce today makes its towers in San Francisco, or if you look at how Apple build its beautiful edifice in Cupertino, if you look at how the Guru established the Golden Temple so many years ago. It is still the most important place for us, that is our legacy, institutionalisation and nation building was getting tangible at that time.

I finally want to touch upon Guru Arjan Dev ji, who through his sacrifice showed that leadership can be through service. I think all of the Gurus show that leadership is really about other people. It is about strengthening the community, it is about the spread of influence not for what we do today in LinkedIn, or how many followers do I have on Facebook or how many people are liking my post, but it's truly about do I leave a value behind, do I leave a legacy behind which is going to make other people grow, be happy, and bring back goodness to the world ? I think that's what we need today and that's the most powerful message of Sikhi. How over the centuries the gurus established this pathway for us that we can actually embrace and follow.

Jessi: Thank you Reshma. I am now going to turn to the youngest panelist. She is very active in causes that are dear to her heart. She just came back from an internship in Hawaii, where she focused her summer stay on women and gender issues. Guneet has a feisty spirit and you will hear it ! I want Guneet to talk about the next Gurus and also relate them to the causes that are dear to her. Because yes, this is wonderful what we are hearing about the Gurus, but how do we apply some of these to our circumstances, to our communities, to perhaps creating a movement.

Guneet: *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh*. Thank you Jessi Aunty. I am going to start where Reshma Aunty left off at Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji and his concept of Miri-Piri which I personally see as one of the focus points in terms of Sikh history, in terms of the Gurgaddi being passed on. At the establishment of Miri-Piri, as you know, Guru Hargobind Sahib Sahib wore two swords. One of *Miri* or temporal or worldly

power, and one of *Piri* or spiritual power. The two swords that are kept alive today in our khanda, as well as in our Sikhi. And I think this is a really important moment in terms of access as well. Kind of jumping off of what Reshma Aunty said, in this moment, Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib really tied Sikh spirituality as inherently connected to social justice and a fight against oppression, towards truth, or *sat*. And in this moment he really established the idea of Sant Sipahi, the saint soldier and that there are two aspects of Sikhi.

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This really goes back to access as well, and just thinking about, as Jessi Aunty was touching on, thinking about before the Gurus, who had access to spirituality, who had access to the divine power, who had access to praying, to inner growth, and who that was kept from. We have this image of a Hindu monk, the bald Hindu monk sitting way far in the forest, far far away from society who has surplus of economic power that is allowing him to do that, who has someone probably taking care of his parents and his family at home that are allowing him to go find his Waheguru or finding the Divine. This model was really disrupted by Sikhi which is so powerful, this model was really displaced by the Gurus who disagreed and said that spiritual power is only as important as temporal power. It is only as linked to our path to Waheguru as politics and social justice and all these things that so many folks in society are facing, are being influenced by. In western society, the one we live in, it is interesting how in the last four years the cycles of politics have turned, and in a lot of ways people are saying that a mask has come off. All these things that were under the radar, all these sentiments that were building up, the mask is ripped off, nobody can deny that these things are happening now, and a lot of this oppression is perpetuated at the hands of capitalism.

We can talk about wealth and equality in this country, we can talk about racial supremacy, we can



talk about patriarchy, and these things also however affect our communities in so so many ways. And with Guru Hargobind Sahib at the core of his tenets and practice, he was very focused on inclusivity and allyship, as were all the gurus. I like thinking of the gurus with the word ‘ally’, as I personally learning about Sikhi definitely questioned: where are the girls at? Where are my female gurus at? But thinking of the gurus as allies, as folks who had that power in society. Many of them were coming from upper class male families that did have a voice, and were able to say, hey no, what is happening right now is not okay.

What’s happening to women right now, the practice of sati is not okay. What’s happening to dalits, to dalit women right now with caste supremacy, that’s not okay. And also thinking about allyship, as ourselves as people who hold power, who hold some set of privileges, and in many ways that privilege is Sikhi.

It is the ability to be in this room and to have these intellectual conversations. To have Guru Granth, that gives us so many valuable lessons that we can carry on. So I think with Guru Hargobind Sahib, this idea of inclusivity is also very evident in the *Bandi Chhor Divas*. When Guru Sahib was imprisoned and was offered freedom, he refused to accept it without extending his allyship and advocating for those who were wrongfully imprisoned. We can talk about prisons

in this country as well, we can talk about whos making those prisons and who is wrongfully imprisoned there, and we can talk about how relevant that exact moment in Sikh history is right now. We can talk about Sikhs who are institutions, we have Sikhs in detention centres right now because of the immigration policies in this country, and how all those things are changing. Those things are very relevant to our community. But also it goes deeper than that because we are talking things at the national level and we are talking about things at the community levels, but before that there is the level of the family and the level of the self.

It all starts with the self, with having those learning moments with yourself, educating yourself about those issues, about what is happening with society. About who is marginalised, how these power systems are functioning, who is at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, of the class hierarchy, and who these power systems are really over and over and over again always annexing at the very centre of all these axes. I think it is really to see how from day one, the Gurus really understood how these power systems were functioning during Mughal rule, and in so many ways those things still exist.

Now let’s talk about our community. In a lot of ways we have a really amazing community, we are all in this room today, we have a very diverse panel, but also in a

lot of ways we have a classist and fractured community. Think about it, how many of us really come from caste-integrated communities or caste-integrated families? How many gurdwaras in California alone are built on caste ? And how can we change anything when we have this casteist, classist infrastructure? All just food for thought. And think about gender in the gurdwara. Who is doing the visible verses the invisible seva. Who is granted the opportunity to address and lead the sangat. In the darbar hall, typically, who are the members standing in front, in the closest proximity to the Guru, attending to the Guru ?

Jessi: Who gets the Panj Pyare parshad when it is distributed, who is passed over? These are very symbolic things. I do not mean to interrupt your train of thought, but I just want to point out something else you said that is very very meaningful. Here are the gurus from a very privileged background, giving up those privileges for the fight for truth, for the fight for social justice, for the elevation of women. And we are all very privileged here, but what are we giving for the fight for truth. Also, one of the things you talked about, mentioned by Dr. IJ Singh, was the concept for servant leadership, and what we are seeing today is strongman leadership, strongman politics, macho leadership. We are seeing this is the way, and I don't care what you think. We have come a long ways, but we have gone back to the time of the gurus where the exact same things were happening. I would for you to go on, but for the sake of time we will move on to Sangeeta. She is very passionate about these exact same issues, and has often in this forum, and in her talks, talked about time for rising up to combat violence by swords and the time for diplomacy. I know that's an issue that is dear to her heart, and I would like Sangeeta to focus on our tenth guru, who really epitomised the servant leadership as well as the philosopher-king aspect of leadership. Philosopher-king where you are are a king, but what you say or do comes from a deep wisdom, and inspiration that inspires. So Sangeeta, take it away with the lessons for leadership and service that comes directly to us from our last Guru.

Sangeeta: Guneet, I love the concept of ally. In gurbani we are always hearing about how the guru is our friend, our pyara, but also he is our ally. It is a

beautiful metaphor. So I just wanted to talk a little bit about Guru Gobind Singh ji. I picked the most charismatic and easiest guru to talk about, but I wanted to talk about him in terms of choices. Guru Gobind Singh ji, from a very young age, was always faced with really life changing choices. At first I was going to talk about those moments, but I thought, let me summarise the elements of Guru ji's leadership style that I find very inspiring, but also very, very relevant to the issues that we as a community, we as a nation, we as a world are facing.

In gurbani we are always hearing about how the guru is our friend, our pyara, but also he is our ally. It is a beautiful metaphor.

So first of all I focus on Guru ji's commitment to the dignity of all human beings, and the idea that even finding the humanity in his opponents and enemies, and that ability to even in the heat of battle, to be able to look across the field and see a soldier that is hurt from the other side, and see their humanity. That is a leader who has a very special gift to give us because the battle can't go on forever, and that is something I really admire about Guru ji, because while he fought, he fought grudgingly, and when he could stop fighting, he stopped and used his words and used his pen. So one important characteristic is this notion that Guru ji lived by, in many many moments of his life, the concept of a shared humanity and the dignity of every human being on the planet. To constantly look at each person and to think about them and their dignity, the value they bring to the world in front of us.

The other thing I admire about Guru ji is that he built institutions that promoted the consensus-building and democratic principles. And of course, the most obvious one is the creation of the Khalsa. There is a wonderful scholar, Arvindpal Singh Mander out of the University of Michigan, and he described the Khalsa as a moment of *radical egalitarianism*. I think those words really capture what the Guru ji was looking for, how do we create institutions that really give everybody a voice. Sometimes some voices are muffled while others a louder, but the institutions insist that everyone should have an opportunity and have a voice. So of course,

within the Khalsa we see these moments of radical egalitarianism and his insistence on that. The kind of fact that the Khalsa demands the renunciation of caste and our caste identity, at that moment in time that was probably the most radical thing you would do.

And then, of course, something that Dr. IJ Singh spoke about, the idea of the leader also being a peer. This was other brilliant thing about Guru ji, he saw himself as a peer to the Khalsa, we all know this because we all have probably heard the sakhis. The concept of *Aapey Gur Chela*. In our lingo today, he was a very peer-driven leader, he led with people, not ahead of them. This is another important thing I think that we should think about and aspire to. His leadership was focused not on personal being or national glory, but it was really a pragmatic leadership, how do we deal with crisis that we are facing. How do we solve the problems of the community and the collective. So he was, in many respects, very pragmatic. For all his brilliance as a philosopher and scholar he was also pragmatic, and part of pragmatism is being flexible, is being able to admit that maybe “the path that I am on right now isn’t working, and I can shift to something else”.

That requires a level of humility and self awareness. It’s very hard, when I have arguments with my children, it’s very hard for me to back down sometimes and think, maybe I’m not right about this. We as parents are so anxious and want to make sure that our kids are on the right path, and sometimes they are right and we are wrong, and how difficult it is to just be quiet say OK, maybe you have a point here.

So just to wrap up, Guru ji engaged in what I like to think about as a very principled pragmatism. He was willing to change course, he was willing to stop the battle to write the Zafarnama. How much humility and foresight, and long vision it took to write to Aurangzeb, to write to his enemy and say look, we can stop for a minute to think about a way to get out of this conflict. In a world where people are anxious, and today in the political atmosphere, the desire to engage or get angry or confront, what Guru ji showed us was sometimes you have to pause, think about your own motivations, think about whether I am doing it for my own ego, or whether I am doing it for the greater good. He just modeled

these things throughout his life, and it is an amazing role model to have.

Jessi: Very beautiful Sangeeta. I want to emphasise a couple of points that you have touched upon. Guru Ji did not win battles to raise his own flag, or to start his own coins, to annex territory. He never struck the first blow. He waged battles to give the power back to the people. One of the symbolic things is the Panj Piaras. How at a time of crisis, the Panj Pyaras ordered the Guru to leave the fortress. Talk about humility and submission, and giving the power back to the people, and he did listen to them. The Zafarnama was an act of humility, but also an act of victory. It’s a letter of victory, and raising the awareness of a tyrant - making him aware of what true Islam teaches is what he did with Aurangzeb. It is said that soon after Aurangzeb got this letter, he was crushed and passed away. Guru ji had troubled his conscience, and today, when we live in silos of right wing or left wing loyalties, and there is so much discord, and so much hatred, and even though we have the first amendment that ensure we speak openly, we attack each other for that. I think we need to remember that all voices need to be heard, and pause is a very important juncture in driving for harmony.

Jujhaar, you have a tough task. We have talked about leadership, we have talked about role models of the gurus in their life. What happened after the gurus? Do we have good examples of post-guru leadership? Do we have a succinct definition left to us in Sri Guru Granth Sahib about who a good leader is? Do we have any contemporary leaders? I know we have a very little time, but take 5-6 minutes and give us a quick summary of the post-guru period, and perhaps throw some lite on what we can do today.

We will open it to discussion after that. If you have any questions, please send them my way. If you want to address them to a particular panelist, that is fine, otherwise, I will open it up and whoever wants to answer those questions would be just as good.

Jujhaar Singh: *Ek Ongkar*. This is the foundation for Sikhi. One force, one power. What I got from the previous panelists was that if there is only One, then there is no other. *Na Ko Bairi, Nahee Begaana*. So,

Guru Gobind Singh said you are now ready, you have the individual values, you are the masters of your own destiny. Guru Granth Sahib will be your guide, and you will make the impact on the world that is revolutionary.

when we talk about the leadership style of the gurus, it came from that beginning, that idea that everything is done, every piece of revolution, is done out of love. I think that is one of the key differentiators of a good leader. There are times when you have to fight, there are times when you need to stand up for what is right, and whether it comes from a place of anger, or a place of love, in a lot of ways it determines whether you will be victorious. Jessi Masi specifically asked about the post-guru period. I think one of the key things Sangeeta Aunty talked about was the guruship given to the Khalsa Panth. Guru Gobind Singh said you are now ready, you have the individual values, you are the masters of your own destiny. Guru Granth Sahib will be your guide, and you will make the impact on the world that is revolutionary.

I want to give up a few examples of Sikhs who had helped do that, an example being Banda Singh Bahadar. Here is someone who was, until the age of 38, not even involved in Sikhi. But meeting Guru Gobind Singh ji had him completely transformed, and says “I am your *Banda*, I am your slave”. The way in which he leads the Sikh Panth, the call, is all about political freedom. He goes to different places in the country and he says, the people who are working under the zamindari system, which means that they were very poor but working the land, they were now given that land as their own. Political power was given back to those people. The rakhi system was established where Sikhs all over were saying, we’ll help protect you, and allow you to live your livelihoods, and you will help support us as well. And so, I think Banda Singh Bahadar really embodied the idea of giving power back to the people. Then, after Banda Singh Bahadar, was a dark period in the time of Sikh history in terms of Sikhs being hunted, prices on their heads, and they had to take refuge in the jungles. But even at that juncture, the spirit of *chardi kala* and leadership is so strong.

You have *Khalsa Boli* where, you know when langar is finished, it is said that *langar mast ho gaya hai*. Or when you are given *roti*, it is called *Parshada*. These are all ways of keeping the *chardi kala* spirit alive, that no matter what the circumstances are, we are still a sovereign people, and we are still in love with the *Ek Ongkar*. I think sometimes when the times are hard, that’s when you really see what the community is made of, the ability to stick to one’s principles and to continue being in that *chardi kalaa* and the love was huge.

And then we have a system, the *misl* system, which was an example of distributed power so you have 11 or 12 misls that had their own ideas, they didn’t agree on everything, they had their own ways of doing things, their own ways of about XYZ.

Today you might think about different jathey bandis, or different groups of people, do you eat meat or do you not eat meat, do you wear this colour or that colour, do you do this or that. They all had their personal ways of connecting with that Sikhi, but when the times got tough, they came together and decided how to face those problems. The *Sarbat Khalsas*, every half year during diwali and vaishakhi, where they came together and decided that it doesn’t matter that you and I do not agree on this small thing, we have an existential threat, and we need to decide how to pool our resources in order to fight it.

At the end of the day, what differentiated these leaders, if I may make a thesis, was their connection to *Ek Ongkar*, was their ability to tap into that One. If you look even at the shabad today, *Man Tan Tera, Dhan Bhi Tera*. They were at that point where it said I am free, I have found you, *Ek Ongkar*, and for you everything I have is yours. Everything I have is going to be in service of that mission. And when you’re in that state, there’s no more fear, there is no more jealousy, *Bisar Gae Sabh Taat Paraaiee*. There is no other except for that One, and that makes your purpose very clear. It is hard to be a leader sometimes today, it’s hard to go up and fight and it is exhausting. If you don’t have that source to replenish you, it’s easy to burn out. So the gurus gave us that inner strength, to be able to combat whatever issues come by our way. In my opinion that is our social strength.

Jessi: Are there any questions from the audience, and if not, there are some questions that I would like to ask the panelists.

Audience member: I just want to touch upon the gurus that were glossed over in some ways, just to point out that the leadership that then showed. In terms of the seventh Guru, Har Rai ji, the main concepts that he felt important to propagate was free education and free healthcare. So he went around and established very many schools and many dispensaries where one did not have to pay a fee or to get a service or to get education. He predates all the environmentalists, and he knew that the ecosystem depended on humans, he was so forward thinking in terms of preserving nature, of not over farming, in not cutting forests, of bordering conservation, recycling, all of those ideas he brought into practice. It was just an amazing period where after the tumultuous times of Guru Hargobind, there was a period of establishment, of building the *paniri*, as we call it.

And then lastly, Guru Harkrishan ji, in terms of his leadership and his compassion of healing, of propagating, giving courage at the time of despair, and Guru Tegh bahadur ji gave his great sacrifice, what an amazing leader he was, he knew the challenges ahead so he unified the community in so many different ways, he traveled far and wide. So those seeds of love that Nanak had scattered in all directions, these were all now becoming oaks of ocean, and leadership in all of those places.

Jessi: Excellent pointers and thanks for bridging the gap. I think for the sake of time we had to gloss over some very important details. Sunny ji, you have very very aptly pointed out the contribution of Guru Har Rai, who actually started a research centre where studies were done on herbal medicines, ayurveda research, and he also, when Shah Jahan reached out to him when his son, Dara Shikoh had grave illness, actually helped him. Now just look at this, forgetting, laying aside what happened in the times of Jahangir, putting aside the enmity, that rancour, that desire for revenge, he looked after his son and healed him, which later enraged Aurangzeb, and he took the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Then Guru Harkrishan, talk about sacrifices at so many different levels. You give up your head to save the dignity and the freedom of worship of a people with whom you do not agree. And then you give up your life to take care of the sick and the diseased at the age of eight. We have some incredibly lofty examples of leadership. I have a question here that has already been answered: do Sikhs expect to have a democracy or a monarchy, very clearly the Sikhs laid a foundation of radical egalitarianism, to quote Sangeeta ? Here is another question: Why do we continue to conduct our proceedings in english, when the gurus conducted everything in Punjabi. Does anyone want to answer that ?

Reshma: I can answer that. When Guru Angad Dev ji created Gurmukhi and codified it as a manner of access to people to understand what was happening, it was in the context of the spoken tongue at that time which was Punjabi in Punjab. Today we want to have our children have access to what we are saying, I think we are following that without forgetting that our roots are in Gurmukhi, and our scriptures in Gurmukhi, and you can never explain some words in Punjabi, but for the sake of access, it is important to do that. It is just pragmatic.

Jessi: Guneet, would you like to go back and talk a little bit more, maybe a couple of minutes, about the causes that are personally dear to you, and what are you doing. I know you are doing a lot. And the reason I am asking Guneet is this, discussions can go on endlessly, but we need to have some takeaways. Here is a young lady that is putting into practice what she believes in.

Guneet: Yeah, absolutely Jessi Aunty, thank you. I think we have talked about social justice a lot, and we have recognised the fact that the fight for social justice can take many many forms, and the gurus established that you can't have Sikhi without having social justice, you cannot have *naam* without having action. In many ways, this action and this dialogue starts from within, so from educating ourselves on these issues, staying involved with interracial faith dialogue, which I know so many of you are doing. Even learning our own histories and having the hard conversations with our family members, and helping break down those

prejudices. I think in a lot of ways, making Sikhi base as accessible and the Sikh community welcoming and supportive to the most marginalised folks in society, so thinking about how to support our black community members, and how to support indigenous folks whose land we are on, and how to support LGBTQ+ folks who are in our communities, and recognising that so many of these people are in our communities – but are they talking about these things? Do they feel like they are able to talk about these things? And yeah, bridging a lot of those gaps. And that also means, in a lot of ways, really opening up really difficult conversations within our communities, and I think that goes back to the Guru's courage, and that is something that I have been thinking a lot about. In so many ways it, like Jujhaar says, it can be very exhausting, and it can be really really difficult to have these conversations, but that's why the gurus enabled us, they enabled us with *naam*, they enabled us with *baani* to be able to replenish ourselves. I think within our communities there is also many difficult topics, let's talk about substance abuse, let's talk about domestic violence, and the cycle between those two. Let's talk about how common that is in Sikh communities. Let's talk about mental health in this Trump era, in this post-9/11 world. Let's talk about how the three create a cycle.

Lets go a little back and lets talk about how our community needs to heal from some older trauma, let's talk about partition, let's talk about opening up those conversations with our grandparents, let's talk about the struggles of 1984, and then the struggles on 9/11, and in so many ways, generation after generation that our people have gone through, and have in so many ways overcome. But are we talking about those things? How are those things living on within us. How are so many of those things still affecting our mentality, our psyches, and how is that intergenerational trauma passed down. I think in a lot of ways, it comes back to having those real difficult conversations starting from within the community, and starting from within the family. And also taking that next step to bridge the gap between our community and the communities around us.

Thinking about who are our neighbours in this gurudwara area, who are our neighbours on our

campus. On my campus there is a lot of solidarity work done between different communities of color, and we are constantly working to improve that. In a lot of ways, we hold these very political identities of being Sikh, of being Punjabi, of being misrecognised and misidentified in so many ways. I think there is a lot that can be done, and a lot of parallels drawn between our struggles, and the struggles of our brothers and sisters, and our indigenous brothers and sisters in this country. I just think there is a lot of internal things that our community has dealt with that are so similar and so tied to the internal struggles of other communities that surround us have dealt with, and there is a lot of work that we can do in parallel with each other.

Jessi: Thank you, thank you so much for those very insightful pointers. I have a question and I would like to pose this to all the panelists. I am going to start with Jujhaar, and I would like each of the panelists to give a one-liner on how we can bring the lessons of good leadership into our lives, because it all begins with self-empowerment. And how do we bring the gurus message home, within ourselves, to our families, and to our communities. I know I am asking for a tall order, but keep it to a line or 2 sentences, and let's start with Jujhaar this time.

Jujhaar: The first sloka of Aasa di Vaar: *Balihaari Gur Aapne Deohaari Sadbaar, Jin Manas De Devtey Kiye Karat Na Lagi Vaar*. Our goal in life is to go from human, to divine being, and I think that happens through a personal connection to the guru.

Jessi: Thank you. Reshma?

Reshma: I think two phrases when it come pragmatic leadership: *Man Neeva Mat Uchi. So aasi roz ardaas karday haan ke saada man neeva ravey, pur matt ucchi ravey* (keep the mind humble, keep the intellect high). I think that encapsulates leadership for me, and the second is: *Sarbat Da Bhala*. I think I mentioned all the gurus main credo wasn't *aapna bhala*, it was *sarbat da bhallaa*.

Jessi: So how do we, Sangeeta, bring these amazing lessons from the guru in our daily life for good leadership decisions.

Sangeeta: I will address that, but my one line takeaway, while we talked I think Jujhaar and I emphasised the notion of *Ek Ongkar*, the oneness that is the reality. The other important idea is the respect for diversity, which the gurus also indicated in their lives. Guru Nanak Dev ji travelled around the world, engaged with people of many different cultures and backgrounds, as did Guru Gobind Singh ji. So they were not parochial, in other words they were not engaged only in their own community and tradition, they were open to many traditions. Related to that, I read a blog by Bhai Nand Lal ji in which he talked about the fact that within the Guru Granth Sahib there are 22 different languages. English might become the 23rd language, and maybe Spanish the 24th. But the point of that is that the Gurus, again, were truly multicultural. As an anthropologist that is really dear to my heart, they really were. They really engaged with people who were different from them, yet they could find some commonality.

Jessi: Thank you. Dr IJ Singh, wrap it up for us !

Dr IJ Singh: Alright, I am going to take an unusual direction here. We have looked very well at the beauty of the message, how good it was. And we are at a point where we are not happy with the way things are, that is quite obvious. But I think there is one little step missing. The message permeated Punjab particularly,

but also Indian society, during the Guru period, which was about a couple hundred years ago, which in terms of history is just a drop in the bucket. Very quickly, just in generations, I agree, couple centuries. But the fall from that to where we are today, why was that fall so rapid, so complete, and so thorough? I think those are issues that we surely need to look at.

Why did Sikh values fall so completely, and there is a couple of things to look at. One is that Punjab has the strength of hybridisation of its DNA, a more vigorous people. That I had said earlier, and I will repeat that so keep it in mind. Now, when the British took over India, they ruled India for 200 years, they ruled Punjab for only 100 years. They had respect for the Punjabi, largely Sikh soldiers, and the government. And that changed : the Sikh power base collapsed and the British ruled for 100 years, when they took over. But they still had the respect for the Sikh soldier that they did not have for most of the Indians. History is witness to that. So what did they do? They encouraged Sikhs to join the British-Indian Army. They respected their traditions, if you recall when the Sikhs joined the army, they saluted the Guru Granth. The British encouraged that, they encouraged the Sikhs to strictly keep their practices, yet they encouraged them to be loyal now to the new government of the British, and they recognized that the Sikhs, when they promised loyalty, they would fulfill it. That's what they needed, that's what they wanted. So they encouraged them to join the army, and they opened plenty of churches in Punjab, but that is secondary in some degree, but that was a good way to westernise the Sikhs without diminishing their values, but ensuring their loyalty. And that is what they did, but it created a widening gap between the Sikh values, and the western values that they were learning and bringing back to their villages and their homes. The Granthi, the gyani, the gurdwara, was not really equipped to be a good school for the westernised people, successful ones. It was not equipped for that, and we did not do a damn thing about it just – we let it go on.



Guru Granth Sahib leads Sikh soldiers on the march in Mesopotamia during the Great War

The Sikhs are a pragmatic people, people at the border always are, they knew their future lay at the hands of the British, so let's follow their ways, and their values, and they respected our traditions, and we will keep doing what we are doing. But the gap between what we are and what we practiced grew, and that's what happened. So the gurdwara, the traditional gurdwara, and the gurdwara granthi had almost no connection to how we lived. They didn't teach that, they taught a set of rituals, do this, do that, do ten thousand japji sahibs in a day, and you will reserve a place in heaven. That is total nonsense from a Sikh point of view, but that is what we do. So that opened the gap. Let's not blame the British only for it, we had a lot to do with it ourselves. We are a pragmatic people, we saw where the future is. So that's why the fall was so fast, and so thorough, and so complete.

It is a disintegration, a divide between our values as they were, and our practices as they became. The values we should respect, while the practices should

play catch up. But, our practices are not relevant yet we don't do much about it. It is more convenient to let things be.

Now this is not a complete answer, but it is an opening up of an issue, of a problem which has no quick answers. But without facing that, we cannot reform our gurdwaras, we cannot reform our way of life, we cannot look to a very bright future. We are going to face the way things are. The fault lies not with the British entirely, they were good business men. The fault is not with our genes, we were also good business men, but we forgot what is real and what isn't.

Jessi: So we'll leave you with some simulating insights and provocative questions, and will wrap up our panel discussions. Thank you very much to my amazing panelists, and to a very patient and very engaged audience.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh.



[See video of panel discussion at <http://www.chardikalaa.com/?p=2567>]

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ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਚੌਥੀ ਪਉੜੀ ਦੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ॥

ਸਹਜਿ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਸਾਤੀ (*)

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ।

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥

ਤੇਰੇ ਗੁਣ ਬਹੁਤੇ ਮੈ ਏਕੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਿਆ ਮੈ ਮੂਰਖ ਕਿਛੁ ਦੀਜੈ॥

ਪ੍ਰਵਤਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਣਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਹਿਬਾ ਡੁਬਦਾ ਪਥਰੁ ਲੀਜੈ ॥

ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੇ ਪਹਿਲੇ ਗੁਰੂ, ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਦੀ ਰਚੀ ਹੋਈ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੈ। ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨਿਤਨੇਮ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੰਜ ਬਾਣੀਆਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੈ। ਇਹ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਵਿੱਚ ਦਰਜ ਹੈ।

ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਸਾਚਾ ਸਾਚੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਾ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਇਸ ਵਿੱਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਨੇ ਉਸ ਸੱਚੇ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਗੁਣਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਰਨਣ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ।

ਤੁਧ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵਹਿ

ਸੁਖੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਦਿਤਾ ਲਹੀਐ ॥

ਇਸ ਤਰ੍ਹਾਂ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜ ਕੇ, ਉਸਦੇ ਰੰਗਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਰੰਗਕੇ, ਉਸਦਾ ਭਾਣਾ ਮੰਨਕੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਜੀਵਨ ਨੂੰ ਤਾਰਨਾ ਹੀ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦਾ ਸਹੀ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਹੈ।

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ॥

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥

ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਹ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਸੱਚ ਹੈ, ਬਾਕੀ ਸਭ ਮਿਥਿਆ ਹੈ। ਉਸਦੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਮਿੱਠੀ ਹੈ। ਜੇ ਉਸ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਨੂੰ ਦਿਨ ਰਾਤ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਹੀ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਉਸਦੀ ਮਿਹਰ ਦੇ ਪਾਤਰ ਬਣਦੇ ਹਨ।

ਸਚੁ ਵੇਖਣੁ ਸਚੁ ਬੋਲਣਾ

ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਸਚਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

ਜਦੋਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਚੀਜ਼ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਪੈਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਉਸ ਦਾਤਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਤੋਂ ਮੰਗਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਦੇਵਹਾਰ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਦਾਤਾਂ ਬਖਸ਼ਦਾ ਹੈ। ਫਿਰ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਨੂੰ ਦਰ-ਦਰ ਭਟਕਣ ਦੀ ਕੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ।

ਸਭਨਾ ਵਿਚ ਤੂ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਸਾਹਾ
ਸਭ ਤੁਝਹਿ ਧਿਆਵਹਿ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤਿ ॥
ਸਭਿ ਤੁਝ ਹੀ ਥਾਵਹੁ ਮੰਗਦੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਹਾ
ਤੂ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਰਹਿ ਇਕ ਦਾਤਿ ॥

ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਚੌਥੀ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੱਸਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਸੱਚਾ ਹੈ। ਉਸਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਸੱਚਾ ਹੈ। ਚੰਗੇ ਕਰਮਾਂ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਚੌਰਾਸੀ ਲੱਖ ਜੂਨਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਮਨੁੱਖਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਜੀਵਨ ਨੂੰ ਸਵਾਰਨ ਲਈ ਉਸ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਦੀ ਬਖਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ।

ਚਰਣ ਧੂੜਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਮਾਗੈ
ਤੇਰੇ ਦਰਸਨ ਕਉ ਬਲਿਹਾਰਾ ॥

ਅਸੀਂ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਕੀ ਭੇਟ ਕਰੀਏ, ਕਿਹੜੇ ਇਹੋ ਜਹੇ ਮਿੱਠੇ ਬੋਲ ਬੋਲੀਏ, ਜਿਸਤੇ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਪਿਆਰ ਆ ਜਾਵੇ? ਜਾਂ ਫਿਰ ਜੀਵਨ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਉਹ ਸਵੇਰੇ ਅੱਝਿਤ ਵੇਲੇ ਉਠ ਕੇ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਕਰੇ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦੇ ਗੁਣਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਵਡਿਆਈਆਂ ਕਰੇ। ਜਿਸ ਤੇ ਉਸਦੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ਉਹੀ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਦੇ ਹਨ ਅਤੇ ਉਸਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਭੁੱਖ ਪਿਆਸ ਤੋਂ ਦੂਰ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਅਤੇ ਫਿਰ ਇਹ ਹੀ ਕਹਿੰਦੇ ਹਨ,

ਮੈਂ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਦੇਖੇ ਨੀਦ ਨ ਆਵੈ
ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਤਨਿ ਵੇਦਨ ਗੁਰ ਬਿਰਹੁ ਲਗਾਵੈ॥

ਜਪੁਜੀ ਦੀ ਚੌਥੀ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਿੱਖਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਤੋਂ ਨਿਰੰਤਰ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

ਤੁਝ ਬਿਨ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਾਹਿਬਾ
ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਾ ਨਿਤ ਤੇਰੇ ॥

ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਅਸੀਂ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਪਾ ਸਕੀਏ।

ਮੈਂ ਹਰ ਰੋਜ਼ ਸਵੇਰੇ ਉਠਕੇ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜਪਾਗਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ।
ਜੁਬਾਨੀ ਯਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ, ਕਿਸੇ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਮਾੜਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਬੋਲਾਂਗਾ।

ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ
ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ ॥

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਜੋ ਕੁਝ ਵੀ ਆਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਦੇਸਤਾਂ ਨਾਲ ਵੰਡਣ ਦਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ, ਅਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਤਿੰਨ ਸੁਨਿਹਰੀ ਅਸੂਲ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣਾ, ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਨੀ ਅਤੇ ਵੰਡ ਕੇ ਛਕਣਾ ਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਰੱਖਾਂਗਾ।

ਮੈਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਕੂਲ ਵਿੱਚ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਹਰ ਐਤਵਾਰ ਗਰੀਬ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਖਾਣਾ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਸਰਦੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਕੰਬਲ ਵੰਡੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ। ਇਸ

ਕਰਕੇ ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਸੋਚਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਜੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਕੋਲ ਵਾਧੂ ਸਮਾਨ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਮੈਂ ਬੇਘਰ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦੇਕੇ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਾਂਗਾ, ਤਾਂ ਜੋ ਮੈਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਅਸੂਲਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਖਰਾ ਉਤਰ ਸਕਾਂ, ਅਤੇ ਇਹੀ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਮੰਗਾਂਗਾ।

ਹੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੱਚੇ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਸਭ ਤੇ ਮਿਹਰ ਭਰਿਆ ਹੱਥ ਰੱਖੀ।

ਲਖ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆ ਪਾਤਿਸ਼ਾਹੀਆ
ਜੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ।
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥



I was born on 22 November, 2007, got admitted to Guru Nanak Khalsa School, San Jose in August 2014. Besides Punjabi language and Gurmat studies, I am also learning the Tabla and since last three years, have been placed first in the Tabla competitions. I also participate in the Hemkunt Speech Competition, Keertan Darbar and Gurbani competitions. In 2017 my team of Keertan Darbar was placed first in Sacramento. I have also been participating in the Kavi Darbar at the Sikh Gurdwara San Jose.

Am glad to be a student at Guru Nanak Khalsa School.

Sahej Singh Basati

Sargundeeep Singh Girm : 'Japji Sahib, Four Pauris of Manne'

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ, ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਿ ਫਤਿਹ

ਪੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਆਈ ॥ ਤਿਨਿ ਸਗਲੀ ਚਿੰਤ ਮਿਟਾਈ ॥

ਧੰਨ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਉਚਾਰਣ ਕੀਤੀ ਹੋਈ ਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਹੈ ॥

“ਜਪਹੁ ਤਾ ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮਾ ॥ ਅਰਿਰ ਨਿਰਾਫਲ ਕਾਮਾ ॥”

ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੀ ਚਾਰ ਪੌੜੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਬਾਅਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਮੰਨੇ ਦੀਆ ਚਾਰ ਪੌੜੀਆਂ ਉਚਾਰਣ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ ਹਨ ॥ ਜੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡਾ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਨ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਦਾ ॥

“ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਸੁਣਿ ਕੈ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਹਉ ਤਿਨਾ ਵਿਟਹੁ ਕੁਰਬਾਣੁ ॥”

ਮੇਰੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਫੁਰਮਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਹੇ ਭਾਈ, ਜਿਸ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਨੇ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨ ਲਿਆ ਹੈ, ਭਾਵ ਜਿਸ ਦੀ ਲਗਨ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਚ ਲੱਗ ਗਈ ਹੈ, ਉਸ ਦੀ ਆਤਮਿਕ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਦੱਸੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ॥ ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਬਿਆਨ ਕਰੇ ਵੀ, ਤਾਂ ਉਹ ਪਿਛੋਂ ਪਛੋਂਦਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਹੋਛਾ ਜਤਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੈ ॥

“ਤੇਰੇ ਕਵਨ ਕਵਨ ਗੁਣ ਕਹਿ ਕਹਿ ਗਾਵਾ ॥”

ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਅੱਗੇ ਫੁਰਮਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਕਿ ਕੋਈ ਐਸਾ ਲਿਖਾਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਐਸੀ ਕਲਮ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਈ ਅਜਿਹਾ ਕਾਗਜ਼ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਨਾਮ ਲੈਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਬਿਆਨ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕੇ ॥ ਲਿਖਾਰੀ ਉਸ ਦੀ ਆਤਮਿਕ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਿਆਨ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ॥ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਰ ਬਾਰ ਇਹ ਸਮਝਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ ਕਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਹੈ, ਭਾਵ ਬਹੁਤ ਉਚਾ, ਅਤੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਭਾਵ ਤੋਂ ਪਰੇ ਹੈ, ਇਸ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਵੀ ਉੱਚੀ ਆਤਮਿਕ ਅਵਸਥਾ ਵਾਲਾ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਪਰ ਇਹ ਗੱਲ ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਸਮਝ ਵਿਚ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਲਗਨ ਲਾ ਕੇ ਵੇਖੇ ॥

“ਜਾਗੁ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਜਾਗਨਹਾਰੇ ॥”

ਪਿਆਰੀ ਸਾਦ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ, ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਦੁੱਜੀ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿਚ ਫੁਰਮਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਕਿ ਰੱਬ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨ ਲੈਣ ਨਾਲ, ਬੁੱਧੀ ਨੂੰ ਸੂਰਤ ਮਿਲ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਉਹ ਕਦੇ ਵੀ ਗ਼ਲਤ ਕੰਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਦਾ ॥ ਉਸ ਜੀਵ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਰੇ ਭਵਨਾਂ ਦਾ ਗਿਆਨ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਮੰਨ ਲੈਣਿਆਂ ਹੀ, ਉਸ ਦੇ ਮੂੰਹ ਤੋਂ ਵਿਕਾਰਾਂ ਦੀ ਚੋਟ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਂਦੀ, ਅਤੇ ਏਨਾ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਜੰਮ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਸਾਥੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਂਦੇ, ਅਤੇ ਫੇਰ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਸਾਥੀ ਕੇਵਲ ਤੇ ਕੇਵਲ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਹੋਦਾ ਹੈ ॥

“ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇ ਲੇ ਮੀਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਤੇਰੀ ਲਾਜ ਰਹੈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਜਮੁ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਕਰੈ ॥”

ਮੇਰੇ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਜੀ ਤਿੱਜੀ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿਚ ਫੁਰਮਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਕਿ ਜੇਕਰੋ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਰੱਬ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨ ਲੈਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਜਿੰਦਗੀ ਦੇ ਸਫਰ ਵਿਚ ਠੱਗਣਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ॥ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਸੋਭਾ ਖੱਟ ਕੇ ਇਜੱਤ ਨਾਲ, ਸੱਚੀ ਦਰਗਾਹ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਤੇ ਉਹ ਛੋਟੇ ਛੋਟੇ ਬਿਹਮਾ ਤੇ ਭਰਮਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੈਂਦਾ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਉਸ ਦਾ ਧਰਮ ਨਾਲ ਐਸਾ ਗੂੜਾ ਸੰਬੰਧ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥

“ਜਾ ਕੈ ਰਿਦੈ ਬਿਸ੍ਵਾਸੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਇਆ ॥ ਤਤੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਇਆ ॥”

ਚੌਥੀ ਪੌੜੀ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਦੇਂਦੇ ਹਨ, ਕਿ ਜੇਕਰੋ ਬੰਦਨਾ ਨੇ ਭਾਵ, ਕਾਮ, ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਰੱਬ ਨਾਲੋਂ ਤੋੜਿਆ ਸੀ, ਉਹ ਸਾਰੇ ਬੰਧਨ ਟੁੱਟ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਹਨ ॥ ਐਸੀ ਲਗਨ ਵਾਲਾ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਕੇਵਲ ਆਪ ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ, ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਵਾਰ ਦੇ ਜੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਦੇ ਲੜ ਲਾ ਲੈਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥ ਰੱਬ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨ ਲੈਣ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੀ ਉਹ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਾਗਰ ਤੋਂ ਪਾਰ ਲੰਗ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਪਾਰ ਲੰਗਾਉਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥

ਮੰਨੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਚਾਰ ਪੌੜੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਮਿਲਦੀ ਹੈ, ਕਿ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਉਸ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਧਿਆਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ ॥

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਇਹ ਚਾਓ ਹੈ, ਕਿ ਮੈਂ ਵੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਪਿਆਰਿਆ ਦੀ ਤਰਾਹ ਉਚਾ ਤੇ ਸੁੱਚਾ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ ਵਾਲਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਵਯਤੀਤ ਕਰਾਂ ॥ ਮੈਂ ਹਰ ਰੋਜ਼ ਉੱਠ ਕੇ ਜਪੁਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ॥ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਣ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਾਰਾ ਦਿਨ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ ਵਾਲਾ ਨਿਕਲਦਾ ਹੈ, ਮਨ ਵਿਚ ਸਬਰ ਸੰਤੋਖ ਰਿਹੰਦਾ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਸਾਰੀ ਸ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੀ ਵਿਚ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਦਿਸਦਾ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਇੰਜ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਅੰਗ ਸੰਗ ਮੌਜੂਦ ਹਨ ॥ ਮੈਂ ਨਾਮ ਸਿਮਰਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਚੰਗੇ ਮਾੜੇ ਰਸਤਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਪਹਿਚਾਣ ਹੋ ਜਾਵੇ ॥ ਅੱਜ ਦੇ ਸਮਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਮੇਰੇ ਲਈ ਉਹ ਹਰ ਇਕ ਰਸਤਾ ਮਾੜਾ ਹੈ, ਜੇੜਾ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਗੁਰੂ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਮੁੱਖ ਕਰਦਾ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਤੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਵਿਸ਼ਵਾਸ ਹੈ ਕੇ ਮੈਂ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦਾ ਓਟ ਆਸਰਾ ਲੈਕੇ, ਅਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਤੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਸਾਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਵੀ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਕੁਰੈਤਾਂ ਤੋਂ ਬਚਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹਾਂ ॥

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਇਹ ਫੁਰਮਾਣ, “ਮੰਨੈ ਪਰਵਾਰੈ ਸਾਧਾਰੁ ॥” ਬਿਲਕੁਲ ਅਟੱਲ ਸੱਚਾਈ ਹੈ ॥ ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਇਕ ਛੋਟੀ ਜਹੀ ਉਧਾਰਣ ਮੇਰੇ ਪਰਵਾਰ ਦੀ, ਗੁਰੂ ਦੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਾਲ ਪਹਿਲਾ ਮੈਂ ਪਾਠ ਤੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਕਰਦਾ ਸੀ, ਤੇ ਹੁਣ ਮੇਰੇ ਛੋਟੇ ਵੀਰੇ ਵੀ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਪਾਠ ਤੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਕਰਦੇ ਹਨ ॥ ਜਿੰਦੇ ਕਰਕੇ ਸੰਗਤ ਹੋ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ, ਤੇ ਘਰ ਦਾ ਮਾਹੌਲ ਵੀ ਬਦਲ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ ॥

ਆਖਿਰ ਵਿਚ ਮੈਂ ਇਹ ਹੀ ਕਹਿਣਾ ਚਾਵਾਂਗਾ, ਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸਾਰਿਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਭੁਲਣਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ, ਕਿ ਪੁਰਮਾਤਮਾ ਨੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਹੀਰੇ ਜਿਹਾ ਜਨਮ ਕਯੋ ਦਿੱਤਾ ਹੈ ਸਾਦ ਸੰਗਤ ਜੀ ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਰੱਬ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਮਨੁੱਖਾ ਦੇਹੀ ਦੇ ਰਾਹੀਂ,

੧. ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਕੇ,
 ੨. ਵੰਡ ਛਕ ਕੇ,
 ੩. ਤੇ ਨਾਮ ਜਪ ਕੇ ਹੀ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ ॥
- “ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥
- ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਤੇਰੈ ਕਿਤੈ ਨ ਕਾਮ ॥ ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਭਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ॥”
- ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ, ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਿ ਫਤਹਿ ॥

Sargundeeep Singh is 13 years old and attached to Guru Ji and Gurbani. He has been learning Kirtan and how to play Tabla since he was 6 years old. At the age of 7, he started participating in Gurbani Kanth and Hemkunt Speech competition. He also enjoys playing basketball, learning Gatka, baking and reading. His goal is to become a cardiologist and as a volunteer help his community.



Sargundeeep Singh Girm



Geeta Kaur on

Lessons from 21st Pauri of Japji Sahib

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੇਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

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

The Japji Sahib contains the whole essence of the Sikh philosophy and appears at the very beginning of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. It was composed by our first Guru, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and contains his fundamental teachings.

Doing Nitnem and reciting Gurbani daily is the first of the three main teachings of Guru Ji: *Naam Jappo, Kirat Karo and Vand Ke Chhako*.

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਮੰਨਿਐ
ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਰਾ ਸਭਿ ਬਾਦਿ ॥

Meditation, austerity and everything come through belief in the Lord's Name. All other actions are useless.

In the 21st Pauri, Guru Ji, explains that just the act of going on pilgrimages to holy places is meaningless.

ਵਰਤ ਨੇਮੁ ਸੁਚ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਪੂਜਾ ਪਾਖੰਡਿ
ਭਰਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

By ritualistic fasts, vows, purities, self-disciplines and worship ceremonies, they still cannot get rid of their hypocrisy and doubt.

The true pilgrimage is within ourselves. By controlling our mind and immersing our inner selves in Waheguru's name - only then can we cleanse the dirt of our sins.

ਹਿਰਦੈ ਜਿਸ ਦੈ ਸਚੁ ਹੈ ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਭੀ ਸਚਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

One who has Truth within his heart - his body and mind are also true.

From this Pauri, we learn that the practice of worshipping idols, religious fasts, pilgrimage to holy places, and superstitions are meaningless. They will not bring us closer to Waheguru or make us better human beings.

ਤੀਰਥਿ ਨਾਵਣ ਜਾਉ ਤੀਰਥੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ॥
ਤੀਰਥੁ ਸਬਦ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਹੈ ॥

Why should I bathe at sacred shrines of pilgrimage? The Naam, the Name of the Lord, is the sacred shrine of pilgrimage. My sacred shrine of pilgrimage is spiritual wisdom within, and contemplation on the Word of the Shabad.

At a young age, Guru Ji refused to wear the janeau, teaching us that a sacred thread alone cannot help us to attain salvation. It is our good actions that will help us in our next life, and not by wearing a thread that is weak and can break.

ਬਾਹਰਿ ਜਨੇਊ ਜਿਚਰੁ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

The outer sacred thread is worthwhile only as long as the Divine Light is within.

Guru Ji showed us that the ritual of throwing water from the River Ganges towards the Sun was meaningless. If the water could not reach the crops in Punjab, which were a few hundred miles away, then how could it reach their ancestors beyond the Sun?

ਵਰਤੁ ਨੇਮੁ ਨਿਤਾਪ੍ਰਤਿ ਪੂਜਾ ॥
ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਸਭੁ ਭਾਉ ਹੈ ਦੂਜਾ ॥

Without genuine understanding, all fasts, religious rituals and daily worship services lead only to the love of duality.

From this Pauri, we learn that we should develop a good character and fill our mind with love and humility. By having Waheguru's blessing, we attain noble virtues such as modesty, righteousness, truth, and justice. Only then, can we remember Him with true devotion.

ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਆਪਣੀ ਸੇ ਚਲੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਭਾਇ ॥

Whoever is blessed with the Lord's Glance of Grace, walks in harmony with the Will of the True Guru.

Guru Ji explains that the learned Pandits do not know when the universe was created, otherwise they would have recorded it in the Puranas. Nor do the wise Kazis, otherwise they would have included it in the Quaran. The Yogis also do not know when this world started.

Guru Ji reveals his complete devotion towards Waheguru. He boldly proclaims that there is no point of arguing about how, when and where the creation began. It is only Waheguru who created everything, that knows the answer.

ਆਪਿ ਸਤਿ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਸਤਿ ॥
ਤਿਸੁ ਪ੍ਰਰਭ ਤੇ ਸਗਲੀ ਉਤਪਤਿ ॥
*He Himself is True, and all that He has made is True.
The entire creation came from God.*

It is important to remember that we can never know or even claim to know all of Waheguru's virtues or fully understand Him. We would be fools to even think that we could describe His infinite greatness. To have such egos would mean that we would not get His blessings. It is only Waheguru who knows all and everything happens according to His will.

ਨਹੀ ਤੁਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੀਐ ਇਕ ਬਾਰ ॥
None of these are equal to the contemplation of the Name of the Lord, O Nanak, if, as Gurmukh, one chants the Naam, even once.

Pyari sadh sangat ji, some people believe we should not wash our hair on certain days. Similarly, they believe we should not clean our house as soon as guests leave. I know that whatever happens is because of His will, and so we should avoid following superstitious beliefs.

The company that I keep is of great importance and plays a big role in shaping me. It has a major effect on my mind, my attitude, and the outlook I have towards others.

If I were to keep the company of robbers, liars and bad people, then I would only learn the evil ways of life. However, by trying to keep the company of good people, I hope to learn from them and mould my life to follow their good example.

I should make every effort to find good sangat of Gurmukh people, so that the thought of Waheguru is always within my mind.

ਜਿਨੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਗਏ ਮਸਕਤਿ ਘਾਲਿ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇ ਮੁਖ ਉਜਲੇ ਕੇਤੀ ਛੁਟੀ ਨਾਲਿ ॥
Those who have meditated on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, and departed after having worked by the sweat of their

brows. O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many are saved along with them!

Doing Paath every day and keeping in good company will help me avoid the five vices: kaam, krodh, lobh, moh, and hankaar.

For the last few years, after graduating from Khalsa School, I have been teaching Punjabi and Paath to young children. I am trying to be a good role model to them, so I can make a positive difference in someone else's life. We need to help those who are less fortunate than we are, and perform good deeds by doing seva.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸਫਲ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਕੇ ਕਰੇ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥
Fruitful is service to the True Guru, if one does so with a sincere mind.

Pyari Sadh Sangat Ji, I pray to Waheguru that he gives me strength to be a good person, and remember Him every day. I should ask Waheguru for the gift of Naam, so that I can obey His Hukam and become a better person.

ਵਿਸਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਦਾਤਾਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਦੇਹੁ ॥
ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਚਾਉ ਏਹੁ ॥
Never forget me, O Great Giver - please bless me with Your Naam. To sing Your Glorious Praises day and night - O Nanak, this is my heart-felt desire.

Geeta is a freshman at Monta Vista High School in Cupertino and has been a regular participant in the Gurbani Contest for many years. 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.



Geeta Kaur

Tanvir Kaur Sandhu on

Anand Karaj : Wedding Ceremony of the Sikhs



In which Guru Ji's time was the Anand Karaj become the wedding ceremony for the Sikhs. How has it evolved since then ?

Anand Karaj is the marriage ceremony conducted according to Sikh rites, meaning "Blissful or Joyful Union, between a man and a woman". The Anand Karaj ceremony was started during the times of Guru Amar Das ji, who also composed the 40-stanza hymn of *Anand*, which is full of devotion to *Waheguru* and is recited on all occasions of religious importance.

The four *laavaan*, which were composed by Guru Ram Dass ji, are the hymns recited and sung during this marriage ceremony to solemnise nuptials, with the bride and groom circumambulating Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji.

Circumambulating around a fire, as in the Hindu way, has no place in our tenets as Sikhs are forbidden to worship any element or idol.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Baba Dyal ji made his big contribution to popularise the Anand way. Under the influence of Singh Sabha Movement, on 22 October 1909, Tikka Ripuduman Singh Nabha got clearance from the then British Colonial Government of the Sikh Marriage Act.

After this legal victory, solemnising of Anand Karaj for Sikh couples in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji became the way to be.

All the Sikhs are ordained to accept the Granth as their Guru; Accept Guru Granth Sahib as living Guru for all ages to come

In 2012, the Government of India passed The Anand Marriage Amendment Bill, whence Sikhs are able to register their marriages under the Anand Marriage Act instead of any previous manner.

This is now governed by the Sikh Rehat Maryada issued by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

In a recent Hukamnama from Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Anand Karaj can only be performed at a Gurdwara or in a home, and can be conducted by any Amritdhari Sikh.

What can be done to ensure understanding and significance of the ceremony to avoid turning this into a meaningless ritual ?

In order to ensure understanding significance of the marriage ceremony, Gurdwara's should adopt a procedure for inviting the couple prior to the Anand Karaj and a trained individual assigned to educate them on significance of Anand Karaj and what its spiritual impact on married life would be.

ਰੂੜੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੀ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

Through the beautiful Word of the Gurus Bani, the Lord is obtained; contemplate the Word of the Gurus Shabad

It is very important that the couple understands that circumambulating around Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji, is not merely a rite, rather is a commitment of entering family life.

The Giani ji should ensure the couple is aware of basic Sikh tenets:

Believe in One God. Accept Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji as our eternal Guru. Renouncing all that is superstitious. Be aware of the philosophy and the simple spirituality of Anand Karaj, which is a deep spiritual experience to help them towards an Anandful, married life.

They should then discuss any questions they might have.

At the time of the Anand Karaj, the couple should be advised that the relationship between a husband and wife, the love between the individual soul and the supreme soul, reflects light of contents of the *laavan* hymns.

Giani ji should explain the notion of “a single soul in two bodies”, to be achieved through love and how they can attain union with Waheguru by discharging their duties and obligations of householder’s life.

Both should lead clean and Guru-oriented lives to accomplish that goal.

ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਬਹਨਿ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਇ ॥

They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together.

ਏਕ ਜੋਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਮੂਰਤੀ ਧਨ ਪਿਰੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ ॥੩॥

They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light in two bodies. || 3 ||

What are the useless and harmful traditions that have crept into marriage ceremonies for Sikhs and how are they affecting the community?

Anand Karaj used to be a pure and a simple marriage ceremony. Throughout the years, many extraneous elements have crept into this ceremony of the Sikhs.

Many consult horoscopes for an auspicious day of marriage. Any day that is suitable and mutually agreed by both parties should be fixed.

ਸਾਰਾ ਗਣਹਿ ਨ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

You calculate the auspicious days, but you do not understand

ਸਾਰੇ ਊਪਿਰ ਏਕੰਕਾਰੁ ॥

That the One Creator Lord is above these auspicious days.

Putting on a *sehra*, red thread band around the wrist, worshipping ancestors, dipping feet in milk mixed with water, filling pitcher, reciting couplets, throwing of rice by the bride when leaving her family, are all extraneous according to Sikh Rehat Maryada.

Excessive showmanship, hiring of entertainers, disturbances during the ceremony such as video recording and lighting technicians, are activities which certainly affect the solemn, joyous and pureness of this spiritual ceremony into becoming a chaotic filming of a movie.

The result is confusion, tensions, non concentration on Gurbani messages. The most crucial aspect of the ceremony is the Guru and his Gurbani which is sacrificed with distraction and interruptions.

Even though it is strictly against Sikh way of life, liquor is served freely, even to underage kids and this affects our community badly in many ways as it creates addicts.

Some Sikhs use this occasion to display their wealth, and others to compete with their relatives. The result is that some families go into heavy debt simply to live this pretense for a day or two.

All these useless and harmful traditions followed in Sikh marriages are weakening the Sikh community as these are Brahminical in nature and against the tenets of Gurbani.

Thus money spent uselessly can be donated to a good cause.

As Gurbani says:

“He who labors hard, earns honestly and gives something in charity with his hands, he, O Nanak, has found out the path of Truth.”

Sikhi considers married life a cornerstone for the community. What can be done to ensure that marriage creates a happy and stable relationship between two persons and their families.

Married life is a cornerstone in Sikh faith. The house holders who do honest labour to earn their livelihood, serve others selflessly and remember Waheguru addressed the pious ones as ‘bhela’.

To ensure that marriage creates a happy and stable relationship between their families, the couple should be advised of their individually respective duties and their roles in a married life. They should trust and love each other.

Be loyal. Keep each other content, in body, mind and soul. Both should be humble, tolerant and politely spoken.

This will make their married life peaceful, happy, pleasant and successful.

ਨਿਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਖਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ॥

Humility is the word, forgiveness is the virtue, and sweet speech is the magic mantra.

ਏ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਭੈਣੇ ਵੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਤਾਂ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੀ ਕੰਤੁ ॥੧੨੭॥
Wear these three robes, O sister, and you will
captivate your Husband Lord. |

The parents of the couple should be advised to give up bad habits, of being greedy. No exchange of dowry should take place. Ego should not come in the way of their relationship.

The couple should respect each other and their families.

Always consult each other on family matters and come to an agreement.

They should have mutual trust and forget and forgive each other's mistakes.

ਜਹਾ ਲੋਭੁ ਤਹ ਕਾਲੁ ਹੈ ਜਹਾ ਖਿਮਾ ਤਹ ਆਪਿ ॥੧੫੫॥
Where there is greed, there is death. Where there is
forgiveness, there is God Himself.

A Sikh family is a close knit unit. A couple leading a blissful, strong and fulfilling relationship will provide the base for a strong, united and coherent community.

Religion will become guiding principle for the conduct and activity of their children.

The basic belief in human fellowship and the need to be selfless, humble and good, will encourage Sikh children to do voluntary service both at home and outside.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਫਲੁ ਕਬਹੂ ਨ ਪਾਵਸਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਈ ਸਾਰੀ ॥੨॥
Without selfless service, no one ever receives the
fruits of their rewards. Serving the Lord is the most
excellent action. ||2||

Should Anand Karaj only be conducted between two Sikhs?

According to Sikh Rehat Maryada, the Anand Karaj is to be done when both parties are Sikhs, and intend to live the Sikh way of Life.

It leaves no doubt whatsoever that the entire process of Anand Karaj is part and parcel of Sikhi, and meant for believing and practicing Sikhs.

The solemn undertaking of the *laavan*, and the philosophical essence of the *hukumnama* that is taken after the *Ardas* displays the commitment demanded therein.

One of the major principles taught by our Gurus is to treat everyone as equal.

However, it is wrong for any couple to go through the Anand Karaj ceremony if they have no intention of living according to the teachings of our Gurus.

Anyone who does not acknowledge the Guru as their religious lord, what regard, what meaning does the promise made, in presence of Guru then hold ?

ਮਨਮੁਖ ਸੇਤੀ ਦੇਸਤੀ ਬੋੜੜਾਇ ਦਿਨ ਚਾਰਿ ॥

Friendship with the self-willed manmukhs lasts for only a few short days.

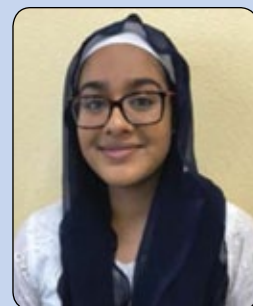
Those wishing to take part in an Anand Karaj must adopt the Sikh faith. The *Chaar Phere* around the Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji is a manifestation of this.

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 the same faith.

I am a 17-year old student at University Preparatory Academy and have been giving speeches at the Gurdwara since I was 7 years old and continue to enjoy it. Kirtan has also been one of my passions since I was 6 years old. I have come to learn how to play a multitude of instruments, including vaji, rebab, and dil ruba. I continue to learn about my Sikh Heritage and am tremendously proud of my roots.



Tanvir Kaur Sandhu

This speech was first given at the International Sikh Youth Symposium organized by Sri Hemkunt Foundation at London in July 2018. The speakers were to answer five question in 8 minutes and 30 seconds.

Sania Bhella on

The Akhand Paath Tradition



Our Sikh religion calls for faith in that Guru Granth Sahib ji is the divinely revealed scripture, the living embodiment of the Ten Sikh Gurus.

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਣੀ ਅਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਾਰੇ ।
ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਰੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ, ਪਰਤਖਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥

When the Paath of Guru Granth Sahib ji is continuously read from beginning to end in an uninterrupted manner, it is respectfully called Akhand Paath. It usually lasts about 48 hours, but there is no strict time limit. It must be read clearly and correctly as saying it too fast does not serve its purpose. Akhand Paath started in the mid-18th century in Punjab during a time when Sikhs were constantly being hunted. For this reason, they were always on the move.

Due to limited time during the various 18th century wars, Sikhs would perform Akhand Paaths as the relatively fast pace allowed them to complete it quickly. This allowed them to feel that Guru ji was with them. It also provided a calming atmosphere for Sikhs to discuss issues keeping Sikhi principles in mind. Through this they received blessing of the Guru, and used his guidance to choose the right path for victory and success, and accepted all outcome as Guru's *bhanna*.

Some assertions made by other organisations suggest that when the Guru Granth Sahib ji had been completed, Guru Gobind Singh ji had people of the Sadh Sangat read it to him continuously which was said to have been the first Akhand Paath.

These days, Akhand Paath is traditionally done at homes and in gurdwaras where there is clean environment, free from interruptions or distractions. We must treat Guru Granth Sahib ji with utmost respect as this is our Guru for eternity.

For carrying out Akhand paath Guru Granth Sahib ji is installed on the Palki Sahib and chanani is placed above.

ਜਿਥੈ ਜਾਇ ਬਹੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸੇ ਥਾਨ ਸੁਹਾਵਾ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਜੇ ॥
jithhai jaai bahai mayraa satiguroo so thhaan
suhaavaa raam raajay ||

The paath begins after reciting the first five and 40th paurdi of the Anand Sahib and an Ardas done to request blessings for successful completion of the Akhand Paath. After that, a randomly selected passage is read from the Guru Granth Sahib ji which is considered as the Divine Order or “Hukam.” Soon the continuous orating of the Guru Granth Sahib ji starts from the

Japji Sahib, the first Paath given by Guru Nanak Dev ji. According to tradition Karah Parshad is served to the Sadh Sangat after reading of the first five stanzas of the Japji Sahib. Once the paath has started there is no pause until the completion of all 1,430 *Angs*. A team of 3 to 5 trained Granthis will take turns to read the Gurbani and sometimes family members participate. During the course of these three days and two nights, sangat comes to *matha tek* and listen to paath. Karah parshad and langar blessed by Guru Ji, are served to the sangat.

On the third day, in a big congregation, the Akhand Paath is completed by the reading of *Raag Maala*. On some occasions Kirtan will be performed by Granthis directly after the Akhand Paath is over. Then, reciting of the six stanzas of Anand Sahib are done at the conclusion. Sikh religious ceremonies concluded by a formal Ardas. When the ardasia recites *Hun Lavo Bhog Har Rai*, the Karah Parshad is kindled with the Kirpan, and distributed after *Hukamnama*. This ceremony is called *Bhog* and may be followed by *Langar*.

If an Akhand Paath is simply held before a big event and done with the purpose of seva and listening to obtain the wisdom within the paath, then it is not ritualistic. However, if the paath is done as a task or for the sake of just doing it, then it can become a ritual. Often times people who host a paath at their house, never prioritise listening to the paath which is read and, therefore, just the house is purified owing to holy presence of Guru Granth Sahib.

In the same way, placing of a *narial* (coconut) or *jot* (lamp) at time of the Akhand Paath is completely unnecessary and quite ritualistic as it serves no purpose and has no affect in enhancing the paath. Actually, Sikh Rehat Maryada condemns such rituals. If our mind and body is not engrossed in the message of the paath, then what is the purpose of hearing it? We benefit only if we think about the message of Gurbani and imbibe it in our lives.

ਡਿਠੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜਿਚਰੁ ਸਬਦਿ ਨ ਕਰੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥

ddittai mukat n hoviee jichar sabadh n karay veechaar ||

The purpose of doing any paath, let alone Akhand paath, is to imbibe its message so we can live our lives according to Gurbani. The *Bani* is key to a long and happy life no matter what form it is expressed in. So, we

cannot say that Akhand Paath is ritualistic if we abide by its teachings. However it does become ritualistic when we have someone else read it and we do not even listen to it at all.

So, the question, what is the religious significance of the Akhand Paath practice? Sadh Sangat ji, Gurbani is our Guru. The religious significance of the Paath is to seek guidance from the Guru Granth Sahib ji. According to Sikh Rehat Maryada, the Akhand Paath is to be done during *pbeerd* and *uthsha*, denoting to extreme ends of sorrow and happiness respectively. Today, non-stop reading of the Guru Granth Sahib through Akhand Paath is carried out on birthdays, weddings, or on important religious events such as Gurburabs at Gurdwaras.

When someone is reading or singing *Akal Purakh di Gurbani* we are essentially listening to the Guru who is speaking to us and giving us directions and instructions to live our life in a moral and truthful way. However, the key is to learn to read and interpret Gurbani correctly so that we can properly translate and apply the Guru's teaching in our daily lives. By connecting to Waheguru through Gurbani, our doubts are banished and our ego destroyed. When our mind is fixed on the Almighty, many complicated enquiries and philosophies become suddenly clearer because we are tuned to the Guru as we directly listen to Him.

ਸੁਨਿ ਮਨ ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ॥

sun man akathh kathhaa har naam

The message is also revealed to the listeners or readers, when one recites Gurbani with Love as one's mind is drenched in its thought presented by the Hymn. Eventually, the deep understanding that comes with listening and obeying the advice of the Guru becomes darshan of the Guru which takes away our sins and sorrows and helps us to connect with Waheguru. Only he has ability to save us from the cycle of birth and death, giving us *Mukti*.

I believe that it does not matter how the Sikhia of Gurbani comes to us, where it is through Akhand Paath or Sehaj Paath. Sehaj paath allows us to gradually understand the Guru Granth Sahib and each person



Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose

can take their own time to complete and gives us the opportunity to discuss the paath that is recited to gain the internal meaning behind the Bani, while with Akhand paath there is sometimes pressure of trying to complete the paath in 48 hours. Nevertheless, each form of paath was created with its own unique purpose. We could never say that one form is more beneficial than the other because no matter what, it is the listening and understanding of Gurbani that leads us along the spiritual path.

When *paath* is done amongst our close relatives and friends, it allows everyone to get together and collaborate, strengthening bonds of family through the Guru's message. It allows the whole family to be united toward a spiritual path to be one with Waheguru.

It is fine to hold Akhand Paaths at the Gurdwara as long as their motive is not to generate revenue and perform it as a ritual. Nowadays a trend has been started where *larivaar akhand paaths* are done in gurdwaras, bookings to be done in advance, the akhand paath completed with the families' name mentioned during the bhog and yet no one from the family is present during the paath ! Gurdwaras should do the akhand paaths regularly, but instead of having the paath always being done by Granthis, they should facilitate paaths being done by the sangat as well.

What better way to rejoice and be thankful to Waheguru than getting together and reading and listening to the entire 1430 pages, jointly and collectively.

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥

bhiee paraapat maanukh dhayhureeaa | |

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

gobi(n)dh milann kee ieh tayree bareeaa | |

ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਿਤੈ ਨ ਕਾਮ ॥

avar kaaj tayrai kitai n kaam | |

ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਭਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ॥ 1॥

mil saadhasa(n)gat bhaj kayval naam | | 1 | |

Sania Kaur Bhella is a junior at high school and has been part of Guru Nanak Khalsa School San Jose since she was 6 years old. She graduated from Khalsa School and has been teaching for the past 3 years. She learnt kirtan in various raags as well as how to sing, play harmonium, and the rabab. In addition she has actively participated in the International Hemkunt Speech and Kirtan Competitions. Being part of the Khalsa School has brought her closer to Sikhi and her heritage.



Sania Bhella

Rahit Maryada

THE SIKH CODE OF CONDUCT



Guru Gobind Singh issued a proclamation to the Sangat at Kabul in the form of a letter. It is dated 10 *Jeth* 1756 (Samvat), that is 23 May 1699. Clearly it was issued after he had initiated the *Panj Pyare* and established the order of the Khalsa.

The entire Kabul Sangat comes under my sustenance and protection. The Guru's blessings are upon you. I am very pleased with you. You should get yourselves initiated with the double-edged sword by the panj pyare. Keep the hair uncut. Never do away with kirpan and kachha. Always wear a steel kara. Look after your hair by combing it twice a day, never eat kutha meat. Do not smoke or keep family ties with those who kill their daughters. Do not enter into the company of Minas, Masands or Ramrayas. Always meditate on the name Waheguru and follow the Guru's ways. I am pleased with the Sangat.

This code of conduct, which is a clear set of rules to be observed by Sikhs has much more. A number of instructions have been laid down in the *Gurbani* with regard to *Nam Simran* and the ethics of life. Leading Sikhs and close associates of Guru Gobind Singh have come out with various *Rahit Namas* and *Tankhah Namas*, from time to time.

Many matters as mentioned in the aforesaid letter of the Guru Sahib are quite common in those *Hukam Namas* and *Tankhah Namas*, but there are a few deviations and even incorrect observations here and there. A few such examples to be mentioned here are:

‘Tankhah Nama Bhai Daya Singh’. ‘Tankhah Nama Bhai Prahlad Singh’. ‘Rahit Nama Bhai Desa Singh.’ ‘Ra hit Nama Bhai Chopra Singh’, ‘Ratan Singh Bhangu’.

At times references are also made to various other religious books, like *Sarab Loh Granth*, *Gur Partap Suraj* or *Suraj Parkash* of Bhai Santokh Singh, *Panth Parkash* of Bhai Rattan Singh and *Prem Sumarag*.

It became quite essential to produce a code of conduct acceptable to all the schools of thought. This formidable task was undertaken by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, which is considered to be the supreme body of the religion. They have their headquarters at the *Samundri Hall*, Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

There are five *Takhats* (the religious thrones of the Sikh faith). Four out of the five are managed by this body. The fifth one, *Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib* is managed by the local committee of the *Takhat* itself. In the year 1936 this challenge was entrusted to the Raho

Rit Sub-Committee. A number of prominent Sikhs and scholars of the time were its members. The list includes *Jathedars* and Head *Granthis* of the *Takhats*, Sikh missions, scholars, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, Bhai Vir Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, representatives of Sikh organisations from the length and breadth of India and abroad. The draft outlines laid down by the Raho Rit Committee were printed and circulated amongst the Sikh nation. Many Sikh organisations, Singh Sabhas, prominent Sikh Sants and others sent their comments.

The final draft of the *Rahit Maryada* was approved in 1945. Out of the twenty three Sikh organisations which participated in this exercise, one to be mentioned here was the Shromani Akali Dal : the President of the Dal, Master Tara Singh, was one of the active participants in the meetings. The representative of

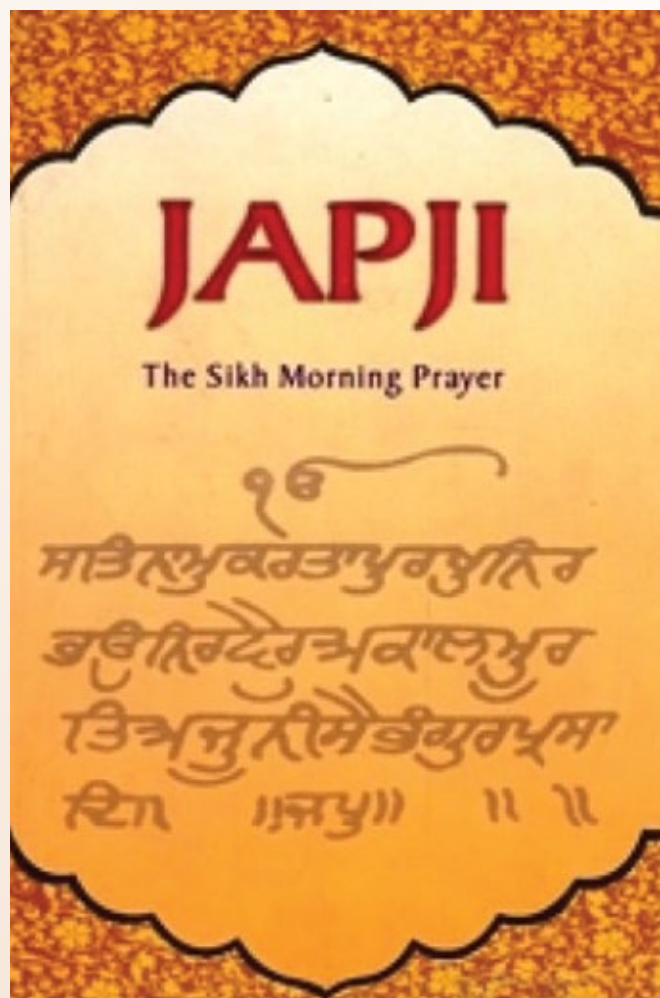


Takhat Sri Hazur Sahib also rendered tremendous help in shaping the *Rahit Maryada*. Teachers, scholars, *Istri Satsang*, *Jathedars* of all the *Takhats*, missionary colleges and the Singh Sabhas fully contributed in this hard exercise of approval, deliberation, editing, reading, writing, revising and printing.

Let us now have a look at the *Rahit Maryada* itself. It opens with a definition of the Sikh.

A Sikh

A Sikh has been defined here as one who believes in the one and only God. He possess an undaunted faith in the preachings of the Gurus and the *Gurbani*. He believes in initiation offered by the Five Beloved Ones. He has no faith in the religious orders outside Sikhism. His image is two-fold (i) Personal life (ii) Congregational faith in the institutional life. He meditates on the *Waheguru*.



The five passages of *Gurbani* as laid down for daily worship are: *Japji* of Guru Nanak, *Jaap* and *Swayas* of Guru Gobind Singh as the morning prayers: *Rehras* (the first nine passages after *Japji* from *Guru Granth Sahib*, *Chaupai* of Guru Gobind Singh and six stanzas of the *Anand Sahib* of Guru Armar Das), as his evening prayer, and (*Kirtan*) *Sohila* as the bed-time prayer. Sikhs always offer an *Ardas* at the conclusion of each one of the prayers.

Ardas

Ardas, offered by the Sikhs is unique in character. It opens with words of praise devoted to God. Thereafter, Sikhs meditate on names of the Ten Gurus and the *holy Guru Granth Sahib*, and their preachings. Various references appreciating the deeds, services and sacrifices of the martyrs, brave men and women, saints and people of wisdom are made. After every such stanza, a chant of “*Waheguru*” is uttered. After meditating on the *Holy Takhts*, shrines, emblems, nation’s flag and Sikh institutions and praying for prosperity of the Sikh nation, another chant of “*Waheguru*” is made.



Finally, it is prayed that the Sikhs be blessed with the spirit of Sikhism, keeping long hair, the gift of meditation on God’s Name, confidence in God, full faith, the gift of knowledge and an opportunity of visit to the holy sarovar at Amritsar.

On conclusion of the *Ardas*, there is prayer for the forgiveness of errors and commissions in chanting of or reciting the *Gurbani*. They pray to meet those blessed



ones, in whose company they are inspired to meditate on the Name of the Almighty God.

The prayer always ends with:

“O Nanak, let Naam be held in the highest esteem. By your grace may the world prosper and may your “blessings descend upon everyone.”

The Gurdwara

The Gurdwara has been defined as a place for congregational prayer and worship. *Guru Granth Sahib* is seated on a platform under the cover of a canopy, called *chanani* and a *chour* is always kept at hand to wave over as a mark of respect. When the *Holy Granth* is brought in or out of the place of its rest or from anywhere, the entire congregation stands and bows their heads in reverence. *Ardas* is always offered at the time of opening or closing the holy *Granth Sahib*. Ringing of bells, incense, burning of *ghee* (butter oil) lamps, or waving of the *aarti thali* before the *Guru Granth Sahib* is considered superstitious.

No other holy book can ever be installed along with *Guru Granth Sahib* and the celebration

of religious ceremonies other than Sikh ones is prohibited at the Gurdwara. All visitors, Sikhs or non-Sikhs, must cover their heads and take off their shoes before entering the Gurdwara. No intoxicants, alcohol, drugs or tobacco are allowed in the Gurdwara. The seating arrangements for all the congregation are uniform. Nobody is offered any special place at the Gurdwara.

Singing of Hymns

Hymns are limited to the *Gurbani* or authentic verses of Bhai Gurdas or of Bhai Nand Lal. Discourses on the *Gurbani* with reference to the writings of Bhai



Nand Lal or Bhai Gurdas, Gurpartap Suraj, Mehma Parkash or such religious books may be delivered at the Gurdwara. The purpose is mainly to present spiritual aspects, while strict injunctions are given to speakers to observe respect towards other religions.

Sikhs are also required to sing along or chant or recite the *Gurbani* or at least read a few pages from the Holy Guru Granth, congregationally or in their own family daily. On the conclusion of recitations, discourses or an such assembly, the Anand Sahib (six stanzas) is recited, followed by Ardas. Finally a *Hukam Nama* is read from the *Guru Granth Sahib* before distribution of *Karah Parshad*.

Sahaj Path

Every Sikh should learn *Gurmukhi* and read the holy *Granth*. They should read at least a hymn by way of *Hukam Nama* (spiritual order) before their morning meals. Should they not be in a position to do so, they may do so at any other appropriate hour of the day.

Sikhs are also desired to read the holy Granth from cover to cover, over any suitable period convenient to them at least once a year or so. This is called *Sehaj Path*. At many times a *Sehaj Path* can be completed much earlier than this, say a week or so.

Akhand Path

An uninterrupted continuous recital of the Holy Guru Granth is called *Akhand Path*. It takes normally about forty eight hours to complete the reading and a number of Gur-Sikhs can perform it by taking turns. No other book should be read along with the Holy Granth at the time of Akhand Path. The complete recitation of the Guru Granth is then followed by Anand Sahib, Ardas, *Hukam Nama* and distribution of *Karah Parshad*.

Karah Parshad

So as to remove caste distinctions and to teach social equality, Guru Nanak started the custom of distribution of *Karah Parshad* amongst the congregation, a preparation of butter (ghee),

flour and sugar mixed in equal proportions and often prepared in an iron pan. Recitation of the *Anand* (six stanzas, i.e. the first five and last, fortieth one) is followed by Ardas. The person officiating as Granthi, or some other Gur-Sikh, touches the *parshad* with a *kirpan*.

The parshad is distributed amongst the congregation equally, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. Before distribution of the Parshad commences, a portion of it is set aside in the memory of the Five Beloved Ones and for the Granthi sitting in attendance upon the Guru Granth Sahib. This is then given to five Sikhs and the Granthi.

Life and work

Sikhs should live and work in accordance with the principles of Sikhism. They should believe in the oneness of the Ten Gurus, having no belief in caste, black magic, or superstitions like feeding Brahmins in the name of their ancestors, or fasting. They may, if they wish, read the holy scriptures of other religious but only for the sake of the general enlightenment and in no way offend others in this respect. They should never cut their hair, nor that of their children and as a matter of duty should teach Sikhism to them. Sikh boys should be named Singhs and girls Kaurs. The use of intoxicants like alcohol, tobacco or drugs is prohibited. Infanticide is strongly condemned. Sikhs should live on their own hard-earned income, and keep aside a *Daswandh* (tenth) from it, for religious or charitable purposes. Sikhs should never indulge in gambling, theft or adultery. All women other than the man's wedded wife, should be respected as mothers, sisters or daughters. A Sikh should be faithful to his wife, as she should be to him. There is no restriction on wearing any kind of dress, but a turban for males is essential.

Birth and the naming ceremonies

After birth of child, on an appropriate day, the child and the mother accompanied by some relatives or friends, go to the Gurdwara. After offering thanksgiving prayers, when the *Hukam Nama* is taken, the first letter of the verse is noted and the name of the child should commence with this initial. No omens or superstitions should ever be observed.

Anand Karaj (Marriage)

Sikh men and women are married at a mature age. A betrothal ceremony is not essential, but if it does take place, should be very simple. A mutually convenient

solace as well as for the peace of the departed soul, start the reading of the Holy Granth. It could be a *Sehaj Path* or *Akhand Path*. On the concluding day final prayers should be offered.



date for the marriage having been fixed, the ceremony is solemnised in the presence of the Holy Guru Granth. The marriage vows should be explained and clearly understood by the bride and the groom. It is either done by the Granthi or some learned person from among the congregation. After having their consent, the marriage ceremony is solemnised by chanting the four stanzas from the Holy Guru Granth, called *Lavan*. Anand Karaj is essential to solemnise a marriage among Sikhs. Polygamy is discouraged and the couple enjoined to be faithful to each other. The same ceremony is performed at the time of a widow or widower's remarriage.

At the end of life

Lamentations at the time of death or thereafter are highly discouraged. The mortal remains of the adult or child, male or female, should be cremated.

At the time of cremation, a prayer known as *Kirtan Sohila* should be offered. The bereaved family, for their

Discipline of Service

Holy service at the Gurdwara or for the community is an essential part of a Sikh's duty. Service recognises no barriers of religion, caste, creed or sex. It may not necessarily be in the form of charity but may vary according to the needs of the hour. Gurdwaras are in fact laboratories for teaching sacred service to the community. This service is called *Sewa*.

Langar (free kitchen)

This is also called *Guru ka Langar*. The purpose of

community dining is to spread a message of equality and brotherhood of mankind. All are treated alike in the *Langar*, thus removing the evil of untouchability. It is an important institution with the Sikhs and is run in every Gurdwara to serve the needy and the hungry.



Corporate Life (Panthak Rehani)

A Sikh should practise holy service in social life as well, i.e. service for the organisation (*panth*). This is very important. Every Sikh is expected to take part in the life of the community as a matter of sacred duty.

Amrit Sanskar (Initiation)

The initiation of the Sikhs is called *Amrit Sanskar*. The *Amrit Sanskar* ceremony is usually held at a Gurdwara, in the presence of the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*. At least six initiated Sikhs (Five Beloved Ones with sixth in attendance on the *Holy Granth*) are required to conduct this ceremony. The ‘Five Beloved Ones,’ and those desirous of being initiated, offer *Ardas* before conducting the *Sanskar*. Thereafter, the Holy Vows (*Rahit*) are administered to them. The *Amrit* is prepared in an iron bowl, water and sugar crystals are added to the bowl while it is being held securely by the Five Beloved Ones. One by one, they stir it by means of the double edged sword (*Khanda*), while in turn, each one of them recites one of the following five *baanis*:



The Japji of Guru Nanak

Jaap Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh Ji

Chaupai of Guru Gobind Singh Ji

Ten Swayyas of Guru Gobind Singh Ji

Anand Sahib of Guru Amar Das Ji.

The (*Amrit*) prepared thus, is offered to the ones being initiated in the prescribed manner as laid down in the *Rahit Maryada*. They are reminded of injunctions against removing hair by any means, from any part of their body, eating *Kuthha* meat, committing adultery and smoking tobacco or using any intoxicants. These are the four major taboos. A Sikh who violates these injections becomes *Patit* (apostate).

Reinitiation can be allowed to an apostate person, only when he requests for it and admits his guilt before the *Sangat*. The Five Beloved Ones consider the request and usually decide to pardon him imposing some sort of *Tankhah* (Punishment) on him. When he accepts it, he is administered *Amrit* in the same manner as above.

Discipline of the Organisation

All decisions affecting the entire community are made by the *Panthic* gathering. These decisions are taken to clarify some fundamental issues or matters of national or panthic importance. This is called *Gurmata* (“Panthic Resolution”). *Gurmatas* can only be passed in respect of the purity of rituals or for the sake of the panthic organisation in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Appeals against the decision of the local *Sangat* are with the *Akal Takhat*. The decisions of the Panthic gathering or nominees of the Panthic meeting are inviolable and binding on the Sikh community. The decisions of *Akal Takhat* are known as *Hukam Namas*, only issued by *Akal Takhat*, through its *Jathedar* or head priest, in the manner prescribed above.

Disciplinary Action (Tankhah)

A Sikh who commits a breach of *Rahit*, is expected to present herself/himself before the nearest *Sikh Sangat* to confess her/his guilt. At this, a commission of the Five Beloved Ones is appointed from the *Sangat*, who would hear the “confession in” detail and ascertain the magnitude of the fault. They can then suggest some sort of punishment.

It may be cleaning the utensils in the *Langar*, wiping the floors, cleaning shoes of the congregation or some act of service or any other punishment. The *Sangat* is generally not very rigid or revengeful while imposing punishment in pardoning the wrong-doer. The purpose is to mend him.

If there has been a breach of the major taboos, in addition to the punishment he/she is also commanded to be reinitiated. The punishment is taken without any contempt or humiliation. A prayer for forgiveness is then offered before the Holy *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Rahit Maryada

Evidently, there is only one Code of Conduct or *Rahit Maryada*, approved by the Sikh Nation under the seal and authority of the Supreme institution *Akal Takht*, the spiritual throne of the Sikhs, from where religious injunctions are issued, and respected by Sikhs throughout the world. These injunctions are unquestionable.

After the passing of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, a number of *Rahit Namas* or *Rahit Maryadas* came up as given, written or unwritten. *Rahit Maryadas*, it is revealed are one in character, except for minor deviations. In fact most of them are elaborations of the original *Maryada* as laid down in the letter, written by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib to his followers in Kabul, as at the start of this article.

The idea of formulating the present Code of Conduct of the Sikhs was to bring about global uniformity among the followers of the Sikh faith. Sikh organisations, prominent Sikhs, Sikh institutions, *Satsang* and on top of all the institutions, the representatives of the spiritual Throne assembled together, drafted and laid the seal of finality on this Code of Conduct (*Rahit Maryada*). Unfortunately some of us are still not quite

clear about the standard *Rahit Maryada*. Some Sikhs individually or otherwise have started introducing variations from the, approved *Rahit Maryada*. This is hardly desirable, being against the spirit of the Sikh tradition of public or collective decisions.

Maryada does not mean a book of ethics or a Code of Conduct only. It is not a green passport to heaven or personal glorification. It lays down the discipline of sacrament for the followers of the faith. Being Sikhs of the Khalsa order, we are sons and daughters of the one and only one Holy Father. Being the Wards of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, we become free of caste, colour or race prejudice. There does not remain an iota of doubt, why we should not have one uniform Code of Conduct, which should be followed by all of us. We should pledge whole-heartedly not to be led away by the so-called thinkers and reformers. How can they seduce Guru's Sikh with their materialistic ideas? A Khalsa of the Waheguru, the illustrious Lord can only be pure-one (Khalsa), when in the words of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib *Ra hit piari mujh ko Sikh piara nahin*, "the discipline, and not an individual is dear to me."

RS Wahiwala



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In Transit

During the half-an-hour that this writer spent in the Transit Lounge at Munich Airport recently, before boarding the Lufthansa flight to Delhi, he noticed a number of young Sikh families as also a few wizened elderlies coming from various parts of the western world on their way to India.



Nishaan talked to some of them including Harbans Singh and Baljinder Singh (above) the former now in Toronto in Canada having migrated from his village near Moga, the latter having left his home in Jullundur to settle down in Halifax, also in Canada. They were going to India for some family functions and then returning to their ‘new homeland’.

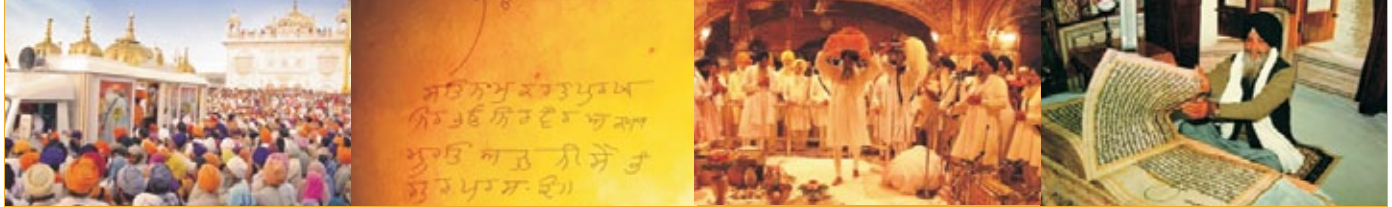


Meanwhile, Ajit Singh was keeping his little son Mukht Singh in good humour while they waited boarding. Talking with him, *Nishaan* learnt Ajit Singh is from a second-generation north Bengal family (father in transportation business at Siliguri) but the new generation have moved to Winnipeg in Canada, “where opportunities are immense and there is no prejudice.”



And then there was Khushvinder Singh Bhara with his wife Javinder Kaur, son Aman Singh and daughter Shaan Kaur (above). Originally from Ludhiana, they are now ‘Brits’, Khushvinder working in IT in London and going on a short holiday to the Punjab.

A Common Theme: without any rancour they all felt that moving to Canada or the UK had been a well-considered decision, especially in the wake of 1984 and how thereafter, no matter which government is at the helm in India, “Sikhs will not get justice !”



ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ ।।

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Guru Granth Sahib

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Dr. Mohinder Singh

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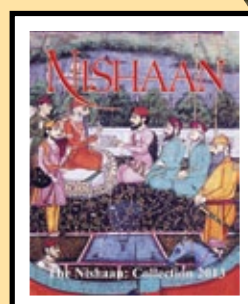
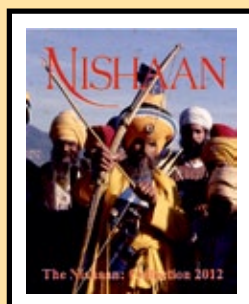
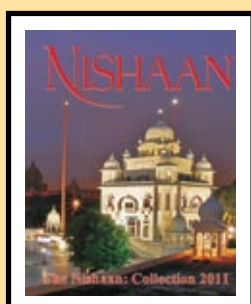
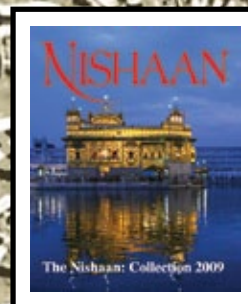
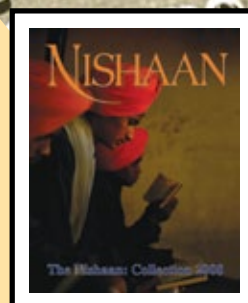
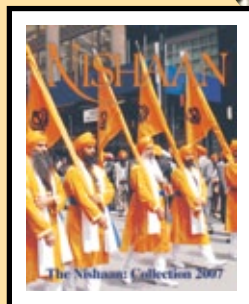
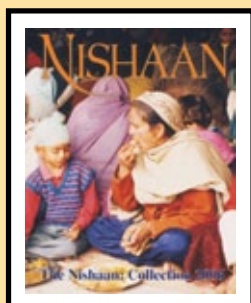
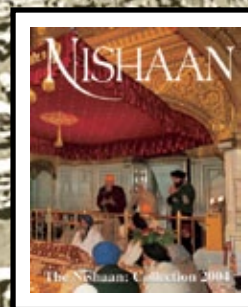
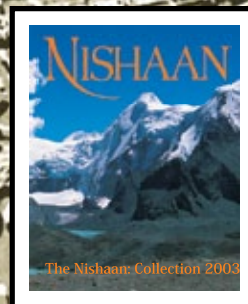
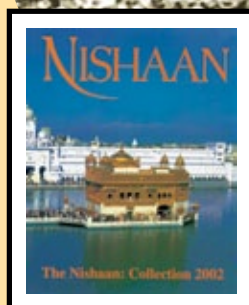
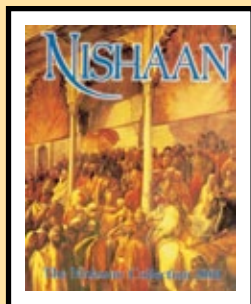
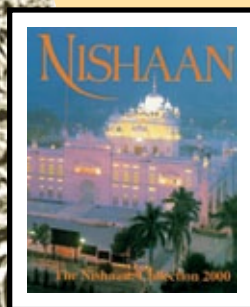


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