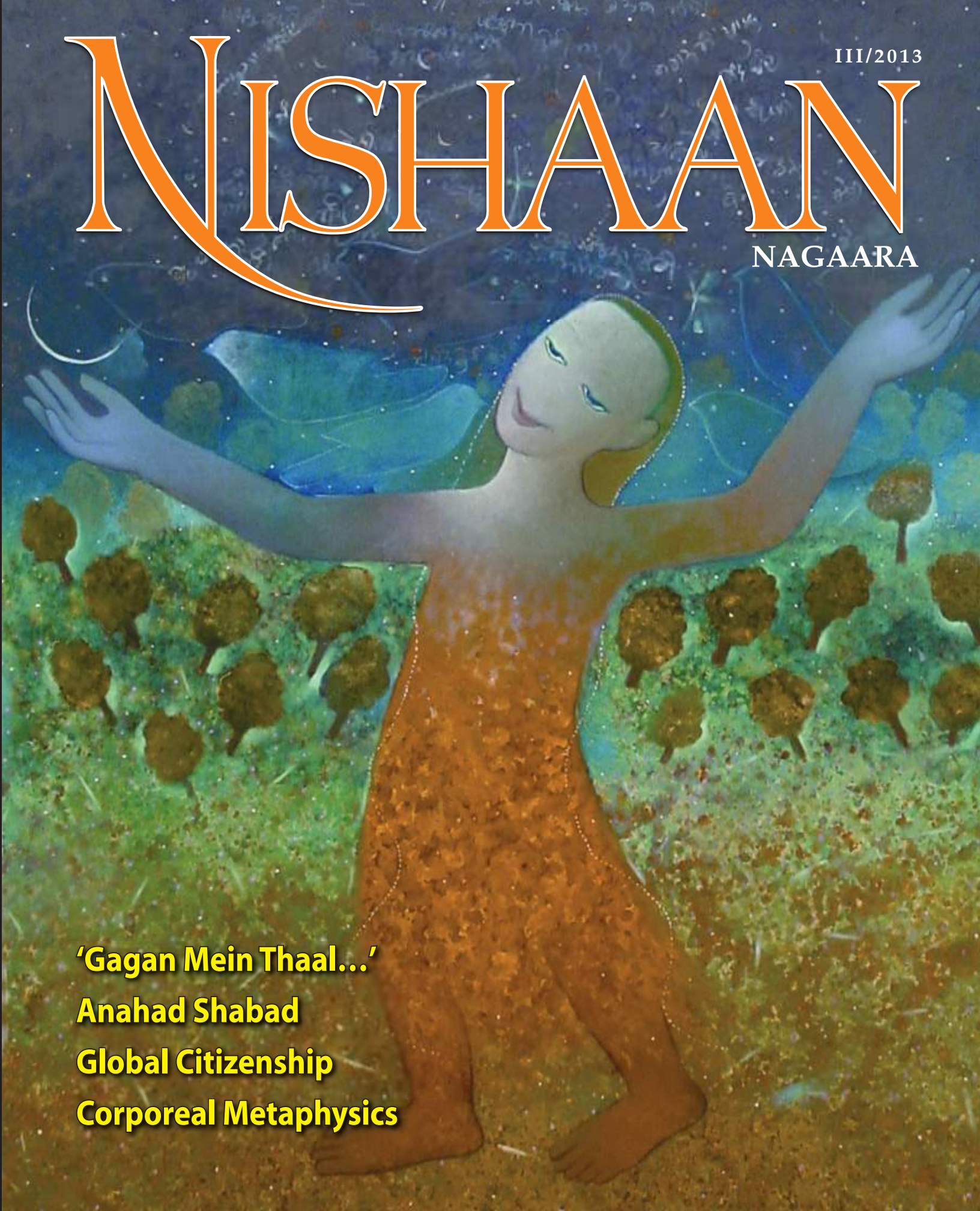


III/2013

# NISHAAN

NAGAARA



**'Gagan Mein Thaal...'**  
**Anahad Shabad**  
**Global Citizenship**  
**Corporeal Metaphysics**

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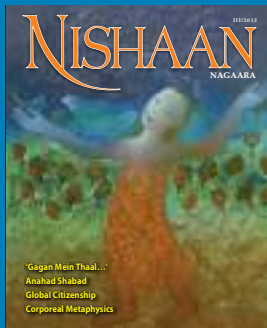


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'Gagan Mein Thaal...' painting by Sidharth, gold leaf and natural pigments on canvas

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# Universal Anthem for the World

*From 'Hymns of Guru Nanak';  
As translated by Khushwant Singh*

The firmament is Thy salver  
The sun and moon Thy lamps;  
The galaxy of stars as pearls strewn.

A mountain of sandal is Thy joss-stick  
Breezes that blow Thy fan;  
All the woods and vegetation  
All flowers that bloom  
Take their colours from Thy light.

Thus we wave the salver of lamps  
How beautiful is this ritual!  
Thou art the destroyer of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.  
In Thy temple echo beats the drum unstruck by hands.

A thousand eyes hast Thou, yet no eye hast Thou.  
A thousand shapes hast Thou, yet no shape hast Thou.  
A thousand feet hast Thou, yet no foot hast Thou.  
A thousand nostrils hast Thou, yet no nose hast Thou.  
These are miracles that have bewitched my heart.

Thine is the light in every lamp.  
Thine the radiance in all that is radiant.  
The guru's teaching illuminates our minds.  
What pleases Him is the true worship of lamps.

As the honeybee seeks honey in flowers  
My soul which is ever athirst,  
Seeks Thy lotus feet  
To slake its thirst for nectar.

Lord, show Thy mercy  
Give Nanak the water he seeks.  
He like the *sarang* cries for rain  
Let him forever abide in Thy Name.



# Gagan Mein Thaal Rav Chand Deepak Bane

(Raga Dhanasari)

**I**t was once suggested to the Nobel Laureate Rabindra Nath Tagore, that “you have written the national anthem for India . Can you write an universal anthem for the entire whole world?”

Tagore immediately replied, “this has already been written, not only for the world but for the entire universe: in the 16th Century by Guru Nanak,”. He was referring to the etherial Aarti (ceremony of light) voiced

by Guru Nanak of which Tagore was so enamoured, that he translated this into Bengali.

Every evening at all Gurdwaras, after the recitation of *Rehraas Sahib*, one listens to a melodious rendition of the Aarti sung by the Raagis in *Raga Dhanashri*. This is a tremendously soothing experience, taking one directly into the spiritual realms of devotion through divine music.

As Guru Arjan Dev has written (page 393 of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) *Aarti kirtan sada anand*, "singing God's praises is His Aarti, bringing boundless bliss"

As the Janamsaakhis have it, in 1508 Guru Nanak Dev visited the temple of Jagannath at Puri in Orissa, which was very well known for its Aarti to Lord Krishna. In the evening, priests brought a platter of many lit lamps, flowers, incense and pearls and began the Aarti. Guru Nanak Sahib meanwhile spontaneously voiced the wonderful Aarti which is continuously being hummed by Nature, before the all pervading altar of God, Creator of the Universe :

*Gagan mein thaal rav chand deepak baney,  
tarika mandal janak moti,  
dhoop maly-anlo pavan chavro kare saal banray  
phulant joti,  
kaisi Aarti hoye bhav khandna - teri aarti.*

(SSGSJ page 663)

The sky is the thaal of puja, in which sun and moon are the diyas

The stars in the constellations are the jewels

The wind, laden with sandal-wood fragrance, is the celestial fans

All the flowering fields, forests are the radiance

What wonderful worship this is,

Oh, destroyer of fear,

This is your Aarti!

The Aarti that is sung daily in Gurdwaras begins with that voiced by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The second stanza, from *Naam tero aarti majan muraare Hark e Naam bin jhoothey sagal pasaarey* (SGGS page 695) ("O Lord, Thy name to me is the Aarti and holy ablutions. Everything else is false"), has been composed by Bhagat Ravi Das, who was a cobbler and was not allowed by Brahmins to enter Hindu temples.

The third stanza, *Dhoop deep ghrith saaji arti vaar ne jaau kamalapati* ('May I be a sacrifice unto the Lord: that for me is the Aarti performed with lamps, ghee and incense' (SGGS page 695) onwards, was composed by Sant Sain, a

barber in the court of Raja Ram, the ruler of Rewa.

The fourth stanza was composed in the same vein by Sant Kabir, the Muslim julaha (weaver) as *Sun sandha teri dev devaakar adhpat aad samaayi*, ('Brothers! That is how the Immaculate Lord's Aarti is made: Let Divine essence be the oil, the Lord's Name the wick and the enlightened self, the lamp. By lighting this lamp we invoke the Lord' (SGGS page 350).

Thereafter, *Gopal tera aarta jo jan tumhri bhagat karante tin ke kaaj sanvaarta*, ('O Gopala, accept your Aarti You grant the wishes of those who worship you !') (SGGS page 695) was composed by Bhagat Dhanna, a Jat farmer from Rajasthan.

The final verse was composed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji,

*Ya te... maha mun devar ke tap mein sukh pave jag kare ik ved rarey.* ('The Lord is pleased by penance, prayers, rituals, recitation of scriptures, meditation music and dance of celestial beings and the melody of the Aarti. The cosmic worlds rejoice and chant the Divine Name onwards').

That the celestial aarti which we recite daily has been composed by two Gurus, a cobbler, a barber, a weaver and a farmer makes clear, if clarity was ever in question, that Sikhism represents the equality of all human beings:

*Awal Allah noor upaya  
Kudrat ke sab bandey  
Ek noor te sab jag upjaya  
Kaun bhale ko mande.*

'First, God created Light;  
Mother Nature created all human beings equal;  
From that one Light the entire world came into being;  
So how can we differentiate  
which one is better ?'

*Jo tis bhave so Aarti hoye*  
(That which pleases Him is a true worship')

# Guru Nanak's Message



*Guru Nanak re-appearing from the river Bein  
(From The Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh)*

**Inder Mohan Singh, Chairman, Chardi Kalaa Foundation, writes on**

## Challenges and Opportunities for today's flat, inter-connected world

**O**ur world has been shrinking since the industrial revolution and has also become flatter and much more interconnected with end of the cold war, economic globalisation, widespread adoption of the Internet and web technologies, as also social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter. We are in a major transformational period, full of both opportunities and challenges for humanity. Freer global trade, more efficient use of capital and labour across national borders, widespread access to knowledge and greater opportunities for innovation have all led to a global economic boom, which may appear as a mirage in the midst of recent economic crises.

People in even the poorest and most remote parts of the world now have phenomenal access to knowledge, and to information about the rest of the world. This leads not only to greater economic opportunity and empowerment, but also enhanced social and political awareness. We see this in the growing protest movements against totalitarian and corrupt governments, such as the Arab Spring in the Middle East.

Increased mobility and migration create societies that are more heterogeneous than ever before. Demographic trends in developed countries - lower birth rates and aging populations - lead to increased immigration into these countries. With the rise of pluralistic societies around the world, religions and cultures come into conflict. We see a rise in fundamentalism and religious bigotry, as well as a backlash against 'foreign' cultures. The rise of global Islamic terrorism and the post 9/11 responses to it confront the world with critical challenges of our time.

Differences in race, culture and language continue to cause conflict around the world. Pluralistic societies appear to be the future of mankind, but we still have a lot to learn about resolving conflicts between different sections of society. In spite of signal advances, women who represent half of all humanity, continue to face discrimination in large parts of the world. Economic disparities and potential shortages of critical natural resources

such as oil and water are looming as additional areas of global conflict. Rapid economic growth in China, India and other emerging nations increases the pressure on our planetary environment, and exacerbates the threat of climate change.

We are at a major transformational period, which is full of both challenges and opportunities for humanity.

### Guru Nanak's Prescription for today's World

Five hundred years ago in Northern India, Guru Nanak preached a beautiful universal message of faith, love and truthful living. His message was not meant for any particular ethnic group. He addressed all humanity. As we look at his teachings and life in the context of the current global environment and the challenges that face us, we find that he provides us with very valuable insights and prescriptions for today's flat, interconnected world. Guru Nanak's values, formulated centuries ago, are incredibly in tune with modern notions of an egalitarian, democratic society which values individual freedom and dignity, coupled with personal responsibility and social awareness. His revolutionary universal approach to the conflicting religious movements of his time provide a compelling roadmap for the promotion of interfaith engagement and mutual respect, thus overcoming the barriers that divide humanity in today's global environment.

Long before swift air travel and the World Wide Web, Guru Nanak set out to do the next best thing - he physically travelled much of the world on foot and by boat, over several decades, making four epic journeys known as 'Udasis'. He journeyed west across the Middle East, through Mecca and Baghdad, north to Afghanistan and Tibet, east as far as Assam and south all the way to Sri Lanka. Besides Guru Nanak (and Marco Polo), we know of few who have travelled through so much of the pre-Industrial Revolution world. Everywhere he went he "networked" in current parlance, with a wide range of spiritual seekers, scholars and leaders of different faiths and sects.

Guru Nanak's message focussed on the core principles of spirituality, which are at the heart of most faiths. He proclaimed faith in one loving and just God who creates and nurtures all living beings. The God of Guru Nanak is formless, all-pervading spiritual force shared by all religions, who is beyond human limitations of fear, hatred greed or envy. He asked that we focus on the shared essential elements of all faiths rather than the more superficial differences that separate them:

*Sagal dharam meh sresht dharam  
Har ko naam jap nirmal karam*

"Of all religions, the most exalted is to worship the Lord and do good deeds."  
[SGGS p. 895]

According to Guru Nanak we are all are children of the One Divine Creator and people of faith should recognise the Divine Light in all. So long as someone fails to see the Divine in others, and holds feelings of hatred or contempt in his heart, he will never be able to experience the Divine Presence within himself.

Guru Nanak averred that social ranks based on religion, race, gender, class or caste, were meaningless and that discrimination based on such labels was immoral. Although the primary focus of Guru Nanak's teachings is spiritual, his path is a balanced, integrated one that combines internal, spiritual enlightenment with an active, engaged life.

Divinely inspired beings can and should be a force for good in society, according to Guru Nanak:

*Brahma gyani parupkar umaha*

"The Enlightened God-conscious person takes delight in doing good deeds for others."  
[SGGS p. 273]

Guru Nanak's message was carried on through nine Gurus who followed him. They led the evolving Sikh community over the next two tumultuous centuries, and in the process provided powerful real-life examples of living by the principles taught by Guru Nanak as well as how to apply them to a range of different challenging situations.

Now let us look at how Guru Nanak's message addresses many of today's challenges.

## Interfaith Engagement and Understanding

With the rise of pluralistic societies around the world, religions and cultures have come into conflict. Different faiths have to learn how to get along through greater interfaith tolerance and understanding. Instead of exacerbating the divisions by taking narrow, divisive approaches to each other's faiths, people of faith should be able to join in promoting fairness and justice around the world and be a force for world peace.

Interfaith engagement and dialogue have been a key part of Sikhi since the time of Guru Nanak, long before the advent of what is now called the interfaith movement. At a time when the environment in India was full of conflict between Hinduism and Islam, he laid foundations for the Sikh faith with a universal message for all humanity, emphasising equality for all, regardless of race, creed, caste or gender.

He taught that all are created by the same one Light, whether we call him Ram, Allah or by any other name. "See the Divine Light in all," was his message. "There are no strangers nor enemies."

It is said that he started his mission with the message that "there is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman". A popular couplet from the time of Guru Nanak illustrates the love and high regard of both Hindus and Muslims had for him:

*Baba Nanak shah fakir, Hindu ka Guru Musalmaan ka Peer.*

"Nanak the holy man is the guru of the Hindus and the peer (or spiritual teacher) of the Muslims."

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture is a unique example of this universal attitude and includes hymns written not only by Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus, but also compositions by both Hindu and Muslim religious thinkers, as well as writings by inspired beings from different social backgrounds including the lowest castes considered by Hindus to be untouchables. It is the only scripture which includes texts of those belonging to other faiths, whose spirit conformed to the teachings of Sikhism.

The holiest of Sikh shrines, the Golden Temple at Amritsar has four doors, each facing a cardinal direction, to indicate that all are welcome. The cornerstone of the Golden Temple was ceremoniously laid by Mian Mir, a celebrated Muslim Sufi saint.

An example of religious tolerance unparalleled in history was the personal sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth



Guru after Nanak, who gave his life to protect the right of freedom of religion for the followers of Hinduism, a religion other than his own. Aurangzeb, the zealous Muslim ruler at the time was on a crusade to convert all his subjects to Islam by force, starting with Kashmir. Threatened with forced conversion to Islam or facing death, a delegation of Kashmiri Hindu religious leaders appealed to Guru Tegh Bahadur for assistance. The Guru took up their case and refusing to convert to Islam, so accepted martyrdom. The decisive event was the seed of the process that led to the disintegration of the Mughal empire, and made possible the survival of Hinduism in India.



Reciting from the Guru Granth Sahib (painting by William Simpson)

The Guru Granth Sahib condemns vilifying the religions of others *bed kateb kaho mat juthe, joohta jo na beechaaray*

"Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran are false. Those who do not contemplate and realize the truths in their scriptures are the ones who are false."

[SGGS p. 1350]

## Addressing Conflict and Discord

In the world today, as during Guru Nanak's times, there was continuing conflict between different religions as well as between ethnic and social classes. Guru Nanak's response to these conflicts as well as to injustice and social inequities, and so on, has much to teach us today.

He advocated a principled life, one that is directed not only to personal spiritual growth and salvation, but also to being an active, contributing member of society and a positive force for welfare of the community. A spiritually enlightened person who follows the path shown by Guru Nanak sees the universal Divine light in all, and is not driven by hatred, discrimination, or being judgmental of any individual or group based on race, caste, gender, religion, nationality, wealth or social status.

*Na ko bairee nahi begaana sagal sang hum ko  
ban aae*

*jo prabh keeno so bhal maanio eh sumat sadhu  
te paaee*

*sabh meh rav rahiaa prabh eko pekh pekh  
naanak bigsaaee*

"I see no stranger, I see no enemy - I get along with everyone.

Whoever God has created, I accept as good. This is the sublime wisdom I have obtained from the Holy and Wise.

The Divine Light of God is pervading in all. Beholding Him, Nanak blossoms forth in joy."

[SGGS p. 1099]

The Naam-conscious person overcomes his own haumai or ego and is not driven by anger or a desire for revenge. He can thus be a force for peaceful resolution of conflicts:

*Fareed burai da bhalaa kar gussa man na  
handhaai*

*dehi rog na lagaee palai sabbh kichh pai*

"Fareed, answer evil with goodness; do not fill your mind with anger.

Your body shall not suffer from any disease, and you shall obtain everything."

[SGGS p. 1381]

He is motivated towards acting for the welfare of others, in other words, for social causes.

*Brahm giaanee parupkaar umahaa .....*

*brahm giaanee kai hoi so bhalaa*

“The God-conscious being delights in doing good deeds for others. ....

The God-conscious being acts in the common good.”

(SGGS pg 273)

By following the path shown by Guru Nanak, enlightened Naam-conscious beings address many of today’s global challenges, by working for global fairness and justice, for equality and freedom for all, through dialogue and debate instead of force.

Social activism and combating social and political injustice has historically been an essential part of Sikhi. Guru Nanak did not turn a blind eye to political repression nor consider it outside the realm of religion, but undertook political protest through his writings, speaking out against the cruelty of rulers. He wrote a number of passages about the Mughal invasion of India by Babar, who became the first emperor of the Mughal dynasty which ruled over much of India for more than two centuries, and he described the brutalities that he personally witnessed. He condemned exploitation of the poor by the rich and powerful and spoke up for fairness and justice for all. Individual freedom, including freedom of religion, was an important right for which Guru Nanak and the Gurus after him carried on as a major crusade.

Not unexpectedly, Guru Nanak and the Gurus who followed him were seen by the ruling powers as a threat. Guru Nanak and Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, underwent imprisonment, while Guru Arjan and Guru Teg Bahadur, the fifth and ninth Gurus, were executed at the orders of the rulers. Through personal sacrifice the Gurus and countless Sikhs demonstrated the value of non-violent means in social and political causes.

Peaceful protest based on principle—and a willingness to make personal sacrifices—can be a powerful means of political transformation. This has been successfully demonstrated in recent history by Mahatma Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King in the USA and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. However, there are times when all peaceful attempts fail and force is the last recourse against evil and injustice. Few would argue that evil wrought by Hitler should have been opposed only through peaceful protest. The actions in Bosnia and Libya provide contemporary examples of necessary use of force by the international community.

In the dire circumstances that followed Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom, Guru Gobind Singh declared that “when all other means have failed, it is righteous to draw the sword.” In fact, it would be immoral and cowardly to submit without resistance.

Guru Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs, who were till then a relatively passive peasant community into a brave, freedom loving people who shook the powerful Mughal Empire, and were able to put an end to the recurring invasions of India by Muslim invaders from the west. They also played a major role in India’s struggle for freedom against the British in the 20th century.

Yet, we must emphasise that Guru Gobind Singh did not condone violence but armed struggle was used only a last resort after all attempts at peaceful resolutions failed. He makes this very clear in his stirring composition, *Zafarnama* that when injustice goes too far and all other means have been exhausted then it is righteous to use the sword. In fact at that point it is one’s fervent duty to act. Under Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhs never initiated a conflict, only responded to aggression. He never tried to conquer any territory nor create a state.

The Sikh resolution for dealing with conflict, discord and injustice offers a distinct three-level approach: resolving conflict through discussion and debate, based on mutual respect and goodwill. *Naam-conscious* beings, who see the divine light in all can play a major role in bringing about this kind of resolution; peaceful non-violent protest only when those in positions of power and authority are driven by their *haumai*, and are not amenable to solutions based on mutual respect. This requires commitment and personal sacrifice. And, finally, when all else fails, armed struggle against injustice and tyranny, and in defence of liberty is appropriate.

## Inequity and Discrimination

“Recognise the Divine light of God in each individual, and treat all equally without discriminating against anyone based on race, caste, religion, gender or social position”. This revolutionary concept was aimed at the very foundations of caste-bound Indian society and is one of the most basic teachings of Guru Nanak.

Where Hindus justified the caste system based on religious texts, Guru Nanak emphasised that there are no such distinctions in the eyes of God.

*Janoh jot na poochoh jaatee aahai jaat na hai*

*"Recognise the Lord's Light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter." (SGGS p. 349)*

The Sikh scriptures declare that all men and women are created equal, as are pots of different sizes, shapes and colours fashioned from the same clay by God, the Cosmic Potter:

*Aval allah noor upaaia kudrat ke sabh Bandai*

*ek noor te sabh jag upjia kaun bhalai ko mandai*

*maatee ek anek bhant kar saaji sijranharai*

*na kachh poch maatee ke bhandai na kachh poch kumbhaarai*

*sabh meh sachaa eko sooe tis ka keea sabh kachh hoee*

*"In the beginning, Allah created the Light; from that light, He has created all mortal beings.*

*From the One Light, the entire universe welled up. So who is good, and who is bad? ....*

*The clay is the same, but the Cosmic Potter has fashioned vessels of many kinds.*

*There is nothing wrong with the pot of clay - there can be no error by the Potter.*

*The One True Lord abides in all; by His power, every thing is fashioned."*

*[SGGS p. 1349]*

## **Alleviation of poverty in the world**

One of the most reassuring outcomes of globalisation has been the rise of emerging nations like China, India, Brazil and others, with a gradual shift towards equitable distribution of resources and incomes between advanced nations of the West and rest of the world. Millions of people are rising from poverty into a growing middle class. At the same time the advanced nations are facing a crisis as their workers have now to compete in a global labour market.

Still, in both advanced and emerging nations, the gap between the rich and poor has continued to increase over the last several decades. Most wealth is increasingly concentrated with a minority of the population at the very top,



even as the vast majority continue in their struggle for economic survival. The 'Occupy Wall Street' movement, which has found echoes in many countries around the globe, was an expected reaction to this.

Guru Nanak articulated that simply amassing of money was foolish and, if obtained by exploiting the weak, positively criminal. The true use of wealth is to help create a fairer and more contented society. This is a message for all of us in today's turbulent economy.

Compassion and charity are important values promoted in Guru Nanak's compositions.

*Ghaal khaai kichh hathau dai*

*naanak rah pachhanai sai*

*"One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has in charity*

*- O Nanak, he knows the Path."*

*[SGGS p. 1245]*

In Guru Nanak's travels, he preferred to visit with the poor and humble rather than the wealthy who flamboyantly made offerings for the Guru. In his own words:

*Neecha andar neech jaat neechee hoo at neech. Naanak tin kai sang saath vadiaa so kia rees*

*jithai neech samaaleean tithai nadir teri bakhsees*

“Nanak seeks the company of the lowest of the low class, the very meekest of the meek. Why should he try to compete with the great?”

In that place where the lowly are cared for- there, the Blessings of Your Glance of Grace rain down.”

[SGGS p. 15]

## Gender Inequality

Half of humanity comprises women, who continue to face discrimination in many manners, in many parts of the world. Even if the feminist movement has done much to address gender discrimination in western societies, women in much of rest of the world still face serious issues including violence, illiteracy, and economic and social deprivation. It is increasingly apparent that education and economic empowerment of women plays a major role in raising the economic level of families and nations, as well as lowering birth rates.

Several centuries ahead of any such feminist movement, Guru Nanak spoke out against gender discrimination in the rigidly patriarchal Indian culture. He confronted established order with the radical assertion that women were equal to men and worthy of every respect.

Guru Nanak taught that God is beyond gender and can be experienced as both Father and Mother.

*Tum maat pitaa hum baarik terai  
tumree kirpa meh sookh ghanerai*

“You are our mother and father; we are Your children.

In Your Grace, there is so much joy!”

[SGGS p. 268]

Both men and women are infused with the same Divine light. Instead of being denigrated and mistreated, woman should be cherished and respected:

*Bhand jameeai bhand nimeeai bhand magan veeeah  
bhandoh hovai dosti bhndoh chalai raah  
bhand mooa bhand bhaaleeai band hovai bandhaan  
so kio mandaa aakheeai jit jamai raajaan  
bhandoh hi band oopjai bandhai baajh na koi  
naanak bhndai baahara eko sachaa soi*

“We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman.

We make friendship with woman; through woman, future generations are born.

When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman.

Why should we talk ill of her? From her, kings are born.

From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all.

O Nanak, God alone can exist without a woman.”

[Guru Nanak in *Asa Di Vaar*, pg. 473]

Guru Nanak and the Gurus who succeeded him actively encouraged the participation of women as equals in worship, in society, and on the battlefield. The practice of sati or widow burning and female infanticide were forbidden and remarriage of widows encouraged. Amazingly all of this occurred in the midst of the male-dominated Muslim and Hindu societies in India, many centuries before the feminist movement in the West!



Sadly, present day Sikh society has not been able to fully overcome old cultural traditions and live up to the ideals of gender equality taught by Guru Nanak. Sex selective abortions driven by a desire for male children are driving down the sex ratio in Punjab. Still, it is encouraging to note that all Sikh religious organisations including the Akal Takhat have spoken up against this practice.

## Environmental Issues, Climate Change.

In emerging nations, rapid economic growth and rising standards of living are simultaneously causing deterioration of the environment, and adding to the threat of climate change. While these issues were perhaps, not of significant societal concern at the time of Guru Nanak, hence not explicitly addressed by him, his life and teachings clearly supported active participation in the environment movement.

Guru Nanak himself was a great lover of nature. In his poetry he loves to talk about the beauty of nature, often seeing in it the reflection of God as the wondrous artist who has painted a marvelous nature on a cosmic canvas.

In *Kirtan Sohila*, the Sikh bedtime prayer, there is that beautiful verse by Guru Nanak describing his vision of how the whole universe is constantly worshipping the Creator in a majestic colourful ritual with lights and music, using the imagery of the famous Hindu Aarti ritual performed during the worship of idols in the temple of Jagannath Puri.

*Gagan mai thaal ravi chand deepak banai taarika mandal  
janak moti*

*dhoop malaanlo pavan chavaro karai sagal banrai  
phoolant joti*

*kaisi aartee hoi bhav khandanaa teri aarti*

“Upon that cosmic platter of the sky, the sun and the moon are the lamps. The stars and their orbs are the studded pearls.

The fragrance of sandalwood in the air is the temple incense, and the wind is the fan. All the plants of the world are the altar flowers in offering to You, O Luminous Lord.

What a beautiful Aartee, lamp-lit worship service this is! O Destroyer of Fear, this is Your Ceremony of Light.”

(SGGS p.13)

Guru Nanak taught that the purpose of human life is to grow spiritually and to achieve a state of harmony with God and His creation. Guru Nanak's vision is a society comprising God-conscious human beings. To these spiritual beings the earth and the universe are sacred, and all life is part of a Universal Unity. We are all completely connected! According to Guru Nanak, the reality humans create around

themselves is a reflection of their inner state. The current instability of the natural system of the earth - the external environment of human beings - is only a reflection of the instability within humans. The increasing barrenness of the earth's terrain is a reflection of the emptiness within humans.

Guru Nanak advocated a highly disciplined life with a focus on spiritual progress, while remaining fully engaged in the world and upholding one's responsibilities. Inherent in this personal discipline is a simple life style, free of greed, selfishness and possessiveness. The emphasis is on mastery over the self and the discovery of the self, not mastery over nature, external forms, and other beings. Sikhism clearly teaches against a life of conspicuous, wasteful consumption. The Guru recommends a judicious utilisation of material and cultural resources available to humankind.

Sikhism opposes the idea that the human goal lies in “harnessing” nature. The objective is harmony with the Eternal - Creator - which implies a life of harmony with all existence.

Guru Nanak's divinely inspired message of universal love and mutual understanding and respect turns out to be more relevant then ever in today's increasingly interconnected, flattening world. It speaks to us across the centuries and provides us with important guidelines to address the challenges that we collectively face.



# Anahad Shabad

## *The Unstruck Melody : Vani of the Saints*

**G**uru Nanak Devji noticed that the priests at Jagannaath Puri, a famous pilgrimage centre of the Hindus, were more concerned with rituals and elaborate arrangements rather than for the love of God.

He stepped outside the temple and evoked the following composition.

"The Sky is Your platter, The sun and moon are they 'deepaks' the lamps, The stars in the sky are the

*Gagan mein thaal rav chand deepak bane  
Tarika mandal janak moti  
Dhoop maly aanlo pawan chavaro kare  
Sagal banrai phoolant jyoti  
Kaisi aarti hove bhavkhandna teri aarti  
Kaisi aarti hove bhavkhandna teri aarti  
Anahad shabd vajant bheri  
Anahad shabd vajant bheri  
Sahas tav nain nan  
Nain hai tohe kau  
Sahas murat nan na ek tohe  
Sahas pad bimal nan ek pad gandh bin  
Sahas tav gandh ev chalat mohi  
Sab mein jot jot hai sohi  
Tis ke chaanan sab mein chaanan hoi  
Gur sakhi jot pargat hoe  
Jo tis bhave so aarti hoe  
Har charan kamal makrand lobit mano  
Aneno mohe aae piyasa  
Kirpa jal de nanak sarang ko  
Hoe jate tere naam vasa  
Hoe jate tere naam vasa*



pearls, The 'Dhoop' is the fragrance, That the wind propels, The whole forest is Your flowers.

O! What a wonderful Aarti, this is!  
You, are a destroyer of Fear,  
The sound of Your Name, which is so subtle,  
It goes unheard, Resounds endlessly.  
You have a thousand eyes, forms, feet, noses...and  
you have none...  
I am charmed!  
Your Light enlightens all!  
It is by the Grace of the Guru that the real Light  
(Knowledge) manifests.  
What pleases the Almighty is this Aarti (Creation)  
I yearn for Your Lotus feet, night and day,  
Nanak is like the thirsty bird that asks,  
For a drop of water,  
From You 'O' Lord!  
That drop (Grace) will make Nanak find comfort,  
In the uttering of Your Name."

The following lines were later added by Sant Ravidas ji.

*Naam tero aarti majan murare  
Har ke naam bin chootey sagal pasare  
Naam tero aasno naam tero ursa  
Naam tera kesaro ley chitkare  
Naam tera ambula naam tero chandano  
Ghas jape naam ley tujhe kauchare  
Naam tera diva naam tero baati  
Naam tero tel ley maah pasare  
Naam tere ki jot lagaee  
Bhayo ujiaro pavan sagalare  
Naam tero taaga naam phool mala  
Naam tero taaga naam phool mala*



*Bhar athare sagal juthare  
Tera kiya tujhe kya arpu  
Naam tera tuhi chavar dulare  
Dus ath ath sathe chare khani  
Ehe vartan hai sagal sansare  
Kahe ravidas naam tero aarti  
Sat naam hai har bhog tuhare  
Sat naam hai har bhog tuhare*

"O Lord, Your name is the Aarti,  
Your name is the Flower, the saffron, and the  
sandalwood  
That is offered to You.  
Your Name is the (Deeya)  
The Lamp, the oil and the cotton  
That is lighted in it.  
With the Light that Your Name gives out,  
The whole world is brightened.  
Your Name is the Thread and Your Name is also  
The Flowers that are strung into that thread.  
All that I offer to You is Yours.  
Your Name is the flywhisk, that you use,  
The (Chant of Your) True Name,  
We offer to You,  
All is false except Your Name!"

The following lines were composed by Sant Sain ji.

*Dhup deep krit saaj aarti  
Varan jau kamalapati  
Mangala har mangala  
Nit mangal raja ram raeko  
Utam diyara nirmal baati  
Utam diyara nirmal baati  
Tu hi niranjan kamalapati  
Ram bhagat ramanand jane  
Puran paramanand bakhane*



*Ram bhagat ramanand jane  
Puran paramanand bakhane  
Madan murat bhay tare govindey  
Sain bhane bhaj paramanandey*

"The Aarti is adorned by the lighted lamp  
And the fragrance of the incense.  
All is Auspicious.  
Thou art the Supreme and Pure Light.  
Thou art the Lord of the Goddess of Wealth.  
My obeisance to Thee.  
And to the Lord Rama, Beautiful Govinda,  
Who is described as Replete Pure Bliss!  
Sain prays to Thee, Who obliterates all Fear."

The following lines were composed by Sant Kabir ji.

*Sun sandheya teri dev divakar  
Ad pat aad samaee  
Siddh samadh aant nahi paya  
Laag rahe sharanaee  
Leho aarti ho purukh niranjan  
Sat guru pujo bhai  
Thaada brahma nigam bechare  
Alakh na lakheya jaaee  
Taat tel naam kiya baati  
Taat tel naam kiya baati  
Deepak de ujjiyara  
Jot lae jagadish jugaya  
Bhuje bhujan hara  
Panche shabd anahad baje  
Sang sarang paani  
Kabir das teri aarti kini  
Nirankar nirbani  
Nirankar nirbani*



"Dear Lord!  
The Greatest of Yogis have not been able to  
comprehend You,  
Those who worship the Unmanifest,  
Fail to realise You.

Even though they have persevered in their quest.  
Your Name resounds unheard (By the worldly)  
And only He can hear (On who Your Grace  
descends)

Pray to Your Satguru!  
Almighty Lord!  
Accept the Aarti, with the oil, Lit with the Chant of  
Your Name,  
By You, the Lord of the Universe!

Kabirdas performs the Aarti of the 'Beyond  
Description' and the 'Without Form' "

The following lines were composed by Bhagat  
Dhanna ji.

*Gopal tera aarta  
Gopal tera aarta  
Jo jan tumri bhagat karante  
Tin ke kaaj savarta  
Daal sidha mangu gheyo  
Humra khushi kare nit jiyo  
Paniya chandan nika  
Anaaj mangu sab sika  
Gau bhas mangula veri  
Ek tajan turi changeri  
Gau bhas mangula veri  
Ek tajan turi changeri  
Ghar ki gheehan changi  
Jan dhanna leve mangi  
Gopal tera aarta  
Gopal tera aarta*

"O Gopaala, (Accept) your Aarti!  
You grant the wishes of those who worship You!  
I ask for my basic sustenance (food, oil, lentils,  
good quality grains)  
Which makes me feel fulfilled.  
I also pray for a good wife, good clothes, good  
grain, a horse, a cow..."





The following lines were composed by Guru  
Gobind Singh ji.

*Yate parsan bhaye hain maha muni  
Devan ke taap mein sukh pave*

*Jag kare ek ved rare  
Bhav taap hare mil dhyam e lave  
Jhaalar taal murdang upang  
Rabaab liye sur saaj milave*



Kinnar gandharv gaan kare  
 Gaan jache upachar nirt dikhave  
 Shankhan ki dhun kaantan ki  
 Kar phoolan ki barakha barakhave  
 Aarti kot kare sur sundar  
 Pekh purandar ke bal jave  
 Danat dachan dey key pardachan  
 Baal mein kum kum aachat lave  
 Hot kulahaal dev puri mil  
 Devan ke kul magal gave  
 Tera vahe sas he karuna nidh  
 Meri ave viniti sun lije  
 Aur na mangat hoon tum te kachu  
 Chahat ho chit mein so hi kije  
 Kashtan sovat hiran kitar  
 Joojh marun to saach patije  
 Sang suhaye sada jag maye  
 Kirpa kar shaam ni hai man piye  
 Aae gaye jab te tumare  
 Tab te kou aankh kare nahi anyo  
 Raam rahim puran qoran  
 Aane kahein mat ek na manyo  
 Simrat shashtar ved sabhe kahon  
 Bed khahein hum ek na janyo  
 Tristra paan kripa tumari kar  
 Main na kahyo sab tohe bakhanyo  
 Main na kahyo sab tohe bakhanyo  
 Main na kahyo sab tohe bakhanyo  
 Sagal dwar ko chad ke gayo tumharo dwar  
 Baan gaye ki laaj raas govind das tohar  
 Aise chandh partap te Din badhayo partap  
 Teen lok jai jai karein rare naam sat jaap  
 Teen lok jai jai karein rare naam sat jaap  
 Ke parchakra varki chatar chakra pukhe  
 Swayambar sugam sarva das sarva chukhe  
 Guru param paranasi dayalam swarupe  
 Saada ang sange apangandh tute  
 Guru param paranasi dayalam swarupe  
 Saada ang sange apangandh tute

"The Lord is pleased by the penance, prayers, rituals recitation of the Scriptures, Meditation, music, dance of the Celestial Beings, adorned with vermilion, various musical instruments, Ringing of bells and the showering of flowers, and the tune of the Aarti . The cosmic worlds rejoice and chant the Divine Name.

I have come to Your door-step O Lord, having left the world behind,  
 Protect me, I am in Your service."

**R**endition of this all-encompassing *aarti* every evening in gurdwaras is an ethereal and pious conclusion to the day's ablutions. Noteworthy is that it includes voices or *vanis* of various saints talking about the same divine power in different ways. Also about HIS power sustaining the creation known as the *Anahad Shabad* or the unstruck melody. Guru Nanak dev ji tells us how this divine sound, this sweet melody ring within us which comes directly from God, showing us the path. This Anahad Shabad is ringing within us at the eye centre or by any name.

Sant Ravidas ji goes one step ahead and dwells on how this *naam* or *shabd* sustains everything that exists. He says that only this *naad* which sounds without any instruments and which cannot be spoken or written, this divine sound is the only *aarti* of the Lord of all the souls and it is only when one unites with that one, performs true *aarti* or worship of the supreme. Even Sant Sain ji talks about the light aspect of it. He tells us how the power of God manifests itself as sound and light or the divine flame which is burning day and night within us but we do not see it owing to our ignorance.

In an amazing detail given by Sant Kabir ji, he refers to this *anahad naad* and how it resounds in five main melodies. Although there are many melodies within but there are five major ones which are taught to musicians to calculate its ascend to the higher regions according to them. These five major melodies or *panch shabad* represent the astral, casual, super casual, spiritual casual and pure spiritual regions. These melodies cannot be spoken but words which represent these melodies are given at the time of initiation. Here Kabir ji also tells us how he worships this *nirankar nirbani* or the primal sound the voice of God. Bhagat Dhanna ji reflects on the Lord as a devotee and Guru Gobind Singh ji discusses the many scriptures which preach myriad paths to reach or attain the same God as also about the highest state of a disciple where he is one with the supreme. Thus many hints and clues are given in the *vanis* of saints about *anahad shabad* or the divine melody within but we never introspect fully and instead wander about when the very element or essence that we seek is resounding day and night within our body, the temple of the living God.

Aman Sandhu



*As the Creator intended: nature in its untarnished beauty!*

# Global Citizenship: Sustainable Development

**G**od created the universe and the world for reasons best known to Him. And being the results of God's actions, all parts of the universe are holy. God is an all-pervasive being manifest through various elements of creation.

Having created this universe and the world, God directs everything. All actions take place within God's *hukam*. God alone knows how and why. God, however, not only directs this vast and massive theatre, but also watches over with care and kindness—the eternally benign and supportive parent!

Guru Nanak speaks of innumerable galaxies, of a limitless universe, the boundaries of which are beyond human ability to comprehend. God alone knows the extent of His creation.

*"Men, trees, pilgrimage places, banks of sacred streams, clouds, fields. Islands, spheres, universes, continents, solar systems.*

*The sources of creation, egg-born, womb-born, earth-born, sweat-born, oceans, mountains and sentient beings.*

*He, the Lord, knows their condition, O' Nanak. Nanak, having created beings, the Lord takes care of them all.*

*The Creator who created the world, He takes thought of it as well". (SGGS, p.466)*

In her essay, Dr Surjeet Kaur, Professor & Head, Department of Philosophy, University of Pune, writes that we see unlimited progress around us. The only limits to progress are human creativity and policy. The whole and sole aim of our actions today is development. By development and progress we merely mean material development. Traditionally human beings have taken the view that nature is created simply for man, which was the philosophy of Bacon and Charter of the Industrial Revolution. Bacon had said "Let the human race recover that right over nature, which belongs to it by Divine Bequest." It was such an attitude towards nature which has led to the present situation which results in massive degradation of the environment. The West has always been interested in external material progress.

In contrast to this, the Sikh Gurus looked down upon mere material progress, and instead stressed upon both material as well as internal progress. Internal progress was considered as having more value. Stressed was the need to search within rather than the material world. Nature was not regarded as having merely instrumental value. God dwells in nature. Therefore nature is not created solely for mankind, but has a right of its own. Global ecological crises have arisen because we think we have a right to use nature

as we wish to. We are unconcerned about the effects of our actions on nature. We are using more than what the earth can replace. Till now, we have been closing our eyes towards the ecological threat, thinking like a rabbit. We think that if we close our eyes the danger automatically goes away. We cannot do that anymore.

Ecological threats stare at us at three levels:

There is a serious danger to the environment triggered by factories, industries, and automobiles. But in spite of the fact that air is getting unbreatheable, we consider rise in consumption as "progress."

Global environmental pollution caused by the emission of greenhouse gases especially carbon dioxide. Global warming is also caused by cutting down of forests. The ecological threat to nature by human 'culture' is rising alarmingly.

The third level at which the ecological threat is rising is at the personal level. We think that something has to be done at the governmental level or by science or by someone else. We do not realise each one of us has a major role to play. Each one of us needs to limit our consumption in every way, be it consumption of petrol, diesel, water or food. It is high time that we realise the need to tread lightly on the earth. We should realise that ecological ethics is centre stage for this millennium. We need to examine our lifestyles. We need to examine the meaning of economic growth and development. Economic growth has lowered, rather than raised, our standard of living, which includes time spent with family and friends, enjoyment of a rich human and natural environment. Consumption provides an entity into a complex set of problems. Proliferation of gadgets and malls adds to the rat race. We are so optimistic about technology that we feel technology is the answer to all our problems. We need to change our consciousness and also need to support this change with the creation of appropriate institutions and structures that hold a genuine promise of a better life. Further economic growth and consumption are not the solution. One finds greater depression in precisely those countries that have experienced or are currently



**Hell on Earth! Uncontrolled industrialisation is destroying the planet.**

experiencing rapid economic growth. Friendship and other social supports are antidotes to depression. The Guru Granth Sahib states that religiosity, a turning inwards, meditation, altruism will lead to lowering of jealousy, lesser feelings of domination and will reduce depression.

We are releasing toxic gases into the atmosphere through our automobiles and gadgets. These gases are as deadly and toxic as were gas chambers of the Nazis. But do we ever stop and think? Do we ever consider ourselves immoral? Are we not responsible for the increasing ecological threat to the planet? Are we not responsible for the increasing ecological threat to the planet? Can we merely blame others? It is high time we change our concept of morality. Today we require not merely traditional ethics but ecological ethics.

Sikhism believes in living with minimum requirements and hoarding is looked down upon. Under the impact of Western worldly, desires are no more considered unworthy. On the contrary, a person's status is measured from his material possessions. The insatiable desire is continuously being fuelled by science and technology. We are no longer searching from within, which is a value prescribed by our Gurus (*Bande Khoj Dil Har Raj*). The aim is not to conquer ourselves but rather to conquer others. We try to conquer others by dominating over them. We dominate over others by our material possessions. These possessions are

possible only by exploiting nature. We are thereby continuously exploiting nature without paying heed to its consequences.

In earlier times too, there used to be those who exploited the common man, primarily, the affluent classes, enjoying the fruits of human labour. Therefore, the pace of exploitation of nature was slow. Today, science and technology is feeding desires at such a terrific pace that the exploitation of nature is taking place very rapidly indeed! The demand being placed on Earth is more than what the earth can give. We are feeding our egoistic tendencies, our urge to dominate over others. But as stated by Erazim Kohak, limitless egoism elevated to a civilisation strategy is not sustainable. We need to search within ourselves and discover the desirable traits which will help us to live in harmony with the planet earth.

Paul Santmire has said, "The earth is in danger of destruction". A time has come today when we all are feeling the pinch of the environmental crisis. This environmental crisis is engulfing us at such a rapid speed that we can no longer neglect it saying that it is an affair of the environmentalists. We all need to address ourselves to this and try to reduce-if not reverse or stop-the environmental deterioration.

Sikhism is not against development. It does not preach asceticism. It encourages progress and development. However, to be remembered is that if we look at Sikh theology, it does not prescribe anthropocentric development or egocentric development. It preaches altruism, which will in its turn lead to sustainable development. It prescribes co-operation in place of domination. Co-operation leads to humility. According to Sikh metaphysics, 'I' is related to the entire universe. It therefore prescribes development in which the environment is not exploited or subdued. How can I be justified in exploiting that to which I am closely related?

Sikhism prescribes sustainable development. Sustainability is the capacity to keep going indefinitely. Development could be defined as bringing out what is latent, bringing out potentialities. But while doing so, the present and the future all have to be taken into account. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in its 1987 report, 'Our Common Future' defined *Sustainable Development* as 'development that meets needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. While discussing sustainability, focus is on two issues : meeting the needs of the present generation and not undermining the ability of future generations, of people to achieve acceptable standards of living themselves. There are four factors that threaten the well being of the present and future generations to meet their own needs" while discussing sustainability the focus is on two issues : meeting the needs of the present generation and not undermining the ability of future generations, of people to achieve acceptable standards of living themselves. There are four factors that threaten the well being of the present and future generations : population, pollution, resource-use and consumption. Increase in any one or all these factors causes imbalance and furthers the ecological crisis causing devastation. When a Sikh prays daily, he asks for the welfare of all : *Sarbat da Bhala*. This welfare of all includes welfare of all-present as well as the future. A development which does not consider welfare of the future is proscribed.

Sustainable development raises various ethical issues. These have two main thrusts : social justice and the concern for future generations. Sustainable development implies that we should not proceed with our development, researches and progressive plans without taking into account the needy around us and the well being of future generations. We have a positive duty to help those in need. In this connection there are different views. Those who propound the 'Lifeboat ethics' hold the view that if you help people who are starving, there will be more suffering a century later.

Garret Hardin holds the view that we should not attempt to equalise. If we feed people who cannot look after themselves they will produce more of their kind. "Let them fend for themselves or else perish." On the contrary, Peter Singer holds the view that those of us with surplus wealth should share it with the unfortunate and needy. Singer believes in helping starving babies rather than buying a new car or suit. Hardin's plan is to control human population by the policy of 'survival of the fittest.'

Our Gurus have stressed on contentment, on inner progress and on consideration of the welfare of others. They emphasised "*Pichhon bachia aap khaavanda*". i.e. a true Sikh eats only whatever remains after feeding others, So, if this is our attitude, we would

automatically be helping the poor and the needy. Emphasis is on helping those in need (*Gau garib di Raksha*). Only that development or progress is acceptable which is sustainable. Not just the needy ones at present have to be given justice but the future generations too must be taken care of.

The US population is very low as compared to third world countries but its consumption is largest in the world and this has increased tenfold since 1960 as pointed by Erazim Kohak in *The Green Halo*. This clearly indicates that reducing population levels are not a magic solution to all our environmental problems. It requires deeper thinking and a change of our attitude. Thus Hardin's way of thinking (which is opposite to that of the Sikh Gurus) does not really help in sustainable development. We need to work for a 'sustainable society'. Population control will definitely reduce pollution and thereby consumption but we require a change of attitude, rather than a mechanical reduction of population.

With the use of modern gadgetry, technological innovations, we so ruin the environment. We deplete the resources of the environment. In this regard, our Gurus stressed *Sanjam*, i.e. control and moderation. Anyone who believes in moderation can not waste the resources of nature. In the name of development, we devastate nature.

In this context Guru Nanak Devji says that man is just a speck of dust in this universe. The universe is made by God and man is just a very tiny part of it like any other part. No doubt he is 'higher' because he alone has the capacity for self-realisation; however, this does not give him licence to degrade nature as he desires. Nature is independent of man, and exists in its own right. Man can use it wherever necessary but must at the same time realise the intrinsic worth of nature. The universe is a complex web as well as one with the ecosystem. Once we have knowledge of the complex web of relations, our attitudes towards nature will see God immanent in it and therefore realise its intrinsic worth.

Once we see God immanent in His creation, we will identify ourselves with the creation and the



*Guru ka Langar is a bedrock of the Sikh faith*

result would be respect, concern for nature as we realise that we are part of nature and if we try to bring any changes in its homeostatic balance, these will be serious repercussions. Whatever is in the macrocosm exists simultaneously in the microcosm. Thus, in order to understand the universe and its complex web of relations we have to look within ourselves, realise our potential and realise ourselves. The knowledge of the universe will automatically follow. Our development will be sustainable and not selfish, egoistic, short lived. Once we have knowledge of the complex web of relations, our attitudes towards nature will automatically change. We will no longer want to exploit but will rather make friends will see God immanent in it and therefore understand its intrinsic worth.

Sikhism preaches unity in diversity. A self-realised individual sees this unity and no longer exploits nature, rather respects it as a 'House of the Lord'. Such a person will always be for sustainable development, for he cannot but think of the well being of the present, future generations as well as the entire ecosystem. Sustainable development understood in this way would entail a positive obligation to assist present generations and obligation not to hinder future generations.

We could hinder the development of future generations in a variety of ways: by depleting resources, by storing radioactive waste unsafely, by diminishing biodiversity, by bringing about climatic

change and by causing other kinds of pollution. We all can play a role in providing a safe liveable environment for future generations. For example, if I use public transport, or walk wherever I can instead of using my car, avoid usage of the air-conditioner or at least switch it off whenever not needed, I reduce pollution. Every air conditioner releases CFCs causing holes in the ozone layer which protects us from the sun's ultraviolet radiation. By the holes in this layer we are exposing humans to ultra violet radiation which causes skin cancer. Similarly we can use scarce resources such as water, electricity, food, judiciously. We need not go back to the Stone Age and live in the dark but we can certainly find sustainable manners of living.

Many oppose sustainable development on the pretext that science and technology will find alternative ways, alternative resources. Is it really so? The alternative to electricity may be nuclear energy but not without its accompanying danger? The problem of nuclear waste disposal, the possibility of nuclear accidents, all these make us query such development as it puts future generations at a considerable risk.

Similarly, the developments in genetic engineering are questionable. Gene therapy promises very bright future for medicine. Many incurable diseases will be curable. However, is this development sustainable or does it raise ethical and religious issues? Genetic engineering would make it possible to create clones, to engineer animals genetically so that we could use them for organ transplantation. By genetically engineering animals for xenotransplantation, are we not treating them as ends in themselves but as a means to human ends?

By creating new species we are trying to become co-creators with God. Sikhism questions such development. Sikh Gurus state "*Poorai ka kia sabh kichh poora, ghat wadh kichh nahi*". (SGGS p.1412). God has made this world complete. The imperfections that are there in the world as we perceive them are all as per the Will of God. He does not need man's help to perfect the world. In fact, if we go around genetically modifying organisms this could result in creation of new organisms which would be too dangerous to contemplate, may lead to disaster and would not be sustainable. It is better if we live with what is the time tested genetic diversity rather than tamper with it and

perhaps even reduce the genetic diversity. Genetic engineering treats the entire plant and animal as a *means* rather than as an *end*. As regards human genetic engineering for the purpose of cure, most scientists accept the fact that the process of human genetic engineering is risky and the process itself could generate new mutations which will be passed on to future generations. There is need for looking back to the past and learning from past experience. However, we must remember that human creativity depends upon human brain. Any alteration that would injure the brain and hence his very creativity would indeed be a disastrous mutilation, especially if this were to be transmitted genetically, thus further polluting the gene pool with defects which might be hidden yet – incalculable.

Thus, scientific advances should not be made just for the sake of mere progress or research. Sikhism prevents us from trying to be co-creators with God. If we start playing with genes, we are 'playing God.' We are very finite beings aware of only our present and past, the future too is unpredictable and it is not possible for us to know the long term consequences of our actions. When we genetically engineer organism, we are trying to create new organisms, a new type of world. We think we have the power to create but do we really have this power? We must be humble. We are like a speck of dust!

Guru Nanak says that we finite beings cannot know the limit of God. If we cannot know God, how can we 'play God'? How can we bring about creation? If we do so, our actions would lead to disastrous results and we would not know how to reverse our actions, especially in case of genetically engineered organisms. Man must adjust himself to the environment, let nature take its course and not interfere either by 'miracles' or by science. This is called *Hukam* in Sikhism or accepting the Will of God or the Law of Nature. Heidegger states "in technology we make objects according to some blueprint that we determine. We design things to satisfy our purpose rather than allow our purposes to be affected by, and find creative expression through, the qualities of the objects themselves."

We are restless, not satisfied with mere tools designed to serve our purposes. We are now aiming at nature, animals and humans designed to serve new purposes. How arrogant and selfish! Genetic



The Nanhi Chhaan Foundation works with the objective of empowering rights of the girl child.  
We need many such initiatives for 'sustainable development'!

engineering is questionable because it goes against the very basic principle of Sikhism: the world as it is created. God knows what is right and wrong. He has created the laws of nature, birth, and dissolution. Man has no right to interfere with any genetic changes.

The main question is "what is the root cause of our ecological crisis"? Is it human greed or a flawed technology which is unsustainable?

There are two extremes: on the one hand we have the deprived, dying of hunger and starvation. On the other hand, in western countries and even ours, we have the 'haves' who are 'good's rich and time poor', but suffering from stress and over consumption. These people are ready to consume the Earth itself! They consume because others consume, a rat race of consumption!

As Paul Wachtel claims, nothing is 'as naively utopian as continuing on our present course .... and hoping for a *deus ex machina* by the name of 'technology' to bail us out at the last minute.'

According to Sikhism, the environment exists for itself, has its own intrinsic worth. Just as God created humans whenever He so desired under His Will, similarly, the entire universe is His Creation, created under His Will. He is immanent in it. We have a duty to look after another human being who is in need and also have a duty to take care not to harm the future generations, we also have a duty not to harm

the environment. We have a positive duty to work for sustainability of the environment. In fact, to help others we need to realise that they are part of the complex web of relations found in the ecosystem. Thus we cannot help others in need without taking care of the environment or by destroying it.

To sum up, any discussion on sustainable development centres around issues of social justice and the future generations. The main issues are population, consumption, resource use and pollution. In the context of all these, Sikhism clearly prescribes moderation. Once moderation is exercised in intimate interpersonal relations, population would automatically be controlled. As regards consumption, Sikhism prescribes an attitude of contentment, non domination over others, humility, *vand chhakna* and *sarabat da bhala*.

With such an attitude, the spirit of competition will be replaced with spirit of co-operation, helping others whether presently existent or to come future generations. As regards resource use, moderation and a spirit of non-domination brings about lesser wastage of resources of nature. Concern for others and recognition of the intrinsic value of ecosystem makes us utilise the ecosystem with care so that benefits we and future generations will draw from it will be 'sustainable'. According to the Sikh understanding of sustainable development, human autonomy and the common good are certainly not in conflict.



# Élan vital

## Shaping Civilisation in the Third Millennium

The advent of Sikhism, which began with Guru Nanak, culminated in creation of the Khalsa in 1699. The Khalsa celebrated 300 years in 1999, when the Tercentenary of its founding was commemorated with great joy and fanfare all over the globe (*readers will recall that The Nishaan Journal too was born in the same year and launched by Dr Manmohan Singh*). That the Sikh religion has all the potential to play a dominant role in shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century society is a given. The third millennium civilisation which would be, in its fundamental postulates, marked as quite different from western civilisation which dominated the world for several centuries.

Thus, in the third millennium, it is necessary to recall message of the Gurus, to assess our past performance and the present situation in planning our future, because if one forgets one's past and ignores one's present, it is an uncertain future.

*The Guru's message is for all mankind.* It is the message of love, service and sacrifice. It is also the message of happiness for every other religious belief too. It is the message of co-operative effort for eradication of suffering and bringing bliss for all, a message of justice and equality, the message not just of tolerance, but genuine respect for all humanity. The world must heed and absorb this message so as to avert an impending tragedy in the so-called 'clash of civilisations'.

The Sikh scripture is unique. This is the first religious scripture amongst world religions, compiled by one of its prophets, Guru Arjan Dev and institutionalised as the eternal Guru by the tenth prophet, Guru Gobind Singh. It is unique in that it contains holy compositions



of not only the Sikh Gurus but also those of Hindu Saints and Muslim Sufis. This is, verily, the scripture of a *universal religion* and pristine proof of religious pluralism. Its message of inter-religious dialogue and intercommunity understanding has tremendous significance for the present day world, which urgently needs interfaith dialogue to resolve religious conflicts which continue to manifest themselves in different manner in different parts of the globe.

It is inevitable that the emerging third millennium global civilisation would have spiritualism as its foundation in the same manner in which modern western civilisation arose on the foundation of a deified reason, which reigned supreme in nature, history and society. Sikhism, with its essential basis of the *spirit*, can and should play its due role in the evolution of such global civilisation.

The Sikh faith has the potential of ushering in a new higher civilisation which qualitatively departs from all earlier Indic and Hindu civilisations. Sikh religion, its *élan vital\**, can play a dominant role in shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century society and civilisation of the third millennium which is different in its fundamental postulates from the modern western civilisation. Islam and Christianity at their prime, had enormously shaped their respective civilisations, but these were uni-centric: religiously, socially and politically.

Uni-centricity of the Christian, Islamic and modern Western civilisation implied homogenisation on social levels and unitarianism-totalitarianism on the political level. Such a new global civilisation of the third millennium would be pluri-centric. Sikhism, with its inherent religious, social, cultural, economic and political pluralism, could provide ideological postulates for the new pluralist world civilisation.

In Jap(u)ji, Guru Nanak stresses inexhaustibility of the attributes of the Divine and relativity of the human modes of perception, figuratively expressing such concepts in the following prose :

*The Brave sees God in the form of Might*

*The intellectual comprehends Him in the form of Light (of knowledge);*

*The Aesthete perceives the Divine in his aspect of the Beauty;*

*The Moralist envisions Him as Goodness, and so on.*

Different revelations of the Spirit are like the variety of different seasons which refer always to the same sun:

*"Numerous are the seasons emanating from the one Sun,*

*Numerous are the guises in which the Creator appears".*

In the Sikh ethos, all revelations of God are equally valid, having been given to man relative to the variables of time and space. This immediately rules out any room for dogmatic assertion of either fullness or finality of any single religion's revelation as well as religious totalitarianism which is certainly not the case in Sikhism. Though Sikhism embraces the other-worldly concerns of man as well as the 'this worldly' concerns of society and the state, yet it is not an all-encompassing ideology. All revelations being relatively co-valid, no 'ism', whether religious or secular, can claim to be the single way to God or any exclusive path to salvation.

But first, if contemporary Sikhism has to play such a role on the global level, it would have to update its *praxis* and reform the stereotyped mindset in line with doctrines of Sikhism as enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The decade (1980s) of Sikh unrest in the Punjab (arguably state-sponsored) left behind toxic effects in the form of asphyxiating dominance, crippling conservatism, mindless dogmatism, intolerance and fetishisation of symbols. All these after-effects are encrusting the essential spirit of Sikhism, but thanks to inherent liberalism of the Sikh religion, Sikhism has immense potential for self-revival.

The Sikh community is, in a sense, once again at the crossroads of its history where it either follows the path of revival or chooses the path towards further entrenchment of dogmatised creed presided over by a self-appointed priestly class and reinforced by fast-growing *santdom*, neither of which has any place in Sikh doctrine. If the Sikh community is driven to the latter path, it would, for its fresh growth, require another kind of martyr from within for bringing about the second Sikh revival, which is actually overdue after the first Sikh reformation that arose in last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The vital agenda of this second Sikh revival would critically be liberation of Sikhism from the dominant Gurdwara management just as liberation of the Sikh shrines from hereditary *mahants* was uppermost an agenda of the first Sikh revival.

The world, in the third millennium, is turning to religion in a new manner, as the Spirit has manifested itself from time to time in religious revelations. In this context, Sikhism, with its futuristic vision, is destined to play a leading role in evolving ideology of the coming global civilisation. Sikhism is distinct among world religions in that its basic category is 'spirit' and not 'being'; its vision is holistic and not dualistic. In the Sikh religion, God is the creative Spirit (*Karta Purakh*) distinguishable from, say, the Vedantic and Vedanta-based religions for which Brahma is *Sat* (Being), *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Anand* (Bliss), but not the Creator. Before the Nanakian speculative thought, whenever the notion of Spirit appeared, it was seen as manifesting and revealing itself in space (nature), in the word and in the human soul.

With Sikh thought comes, for the first time in the history of religious philosophy, the concept of the Spirit continuously manifesting through the Guru-medium from the past to the present and into the future. The spiritual aspect of the spirit (spiritual sovereignty) becomes immanent in the Word (Guru Granth) and the temporal aspect (temporal sovereignty) becomes determinate in the societal category known in Sikh parlance as the *Khalsa Panth* or *Guru Panth*.

*Dr. Kiran Arora*

*\*Élan vital or 'vital impetus' was coined by French philosopher Henri Bergson in his 1907 book Creative Evolution, in which he addresses the question of self-organisation and spontaneous morphogenesis of things in an increasingly complex manner.*

# Corporeal Metaphysics

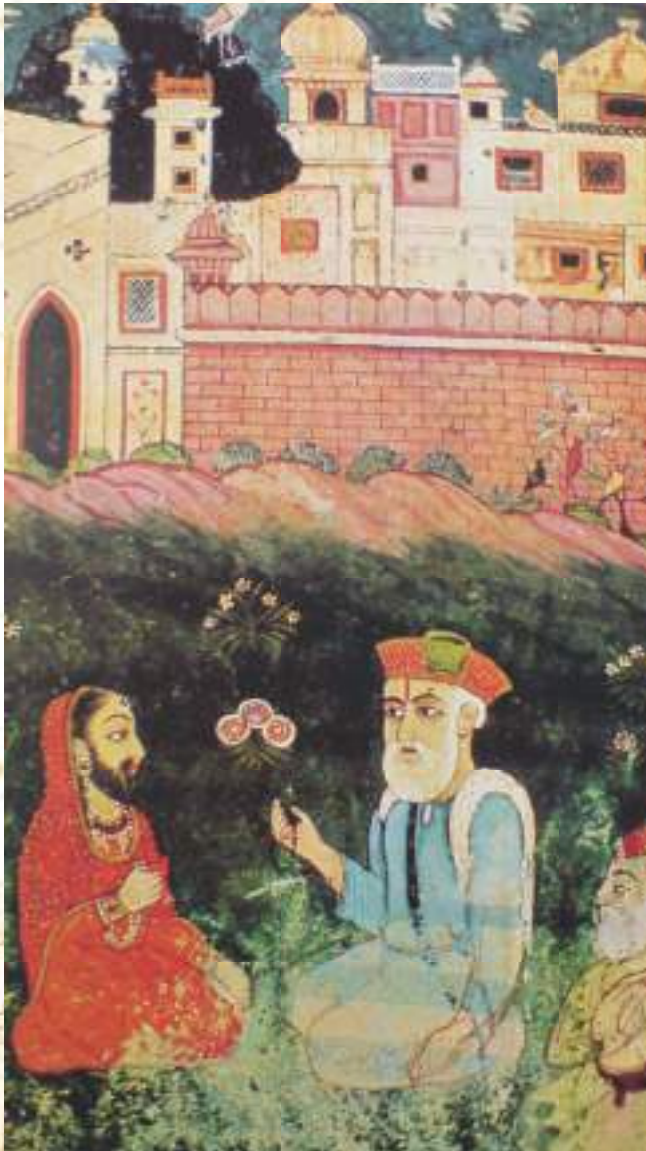
## Guru Nanak in Early Sikh Art

The first part of this thesis by Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh appeared in Nishaan Issue II/2013. This is the second part.

**F**or the Sikhs in particular, Alam's images inspire a deeper communion with the five 'ks' they wear as part of their religious identity. His painting of Guru Nanak comfortably conversing with Sheikh

Sharaf is popular with the group of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Sikhs as visual evidence that the progressive Guru Nanak did not condemn cross-dressing or same-sex relationships. Alam's scenes have great relevance, and if their visceral impact were to reach wider audiences, there could be a real shift in the oppressive paradigms dominating contemporary society.

The artist evokes Guru Nanak's human personality that transcended religious stereotypes current in his milieu. He accomplishes it by utilising disparate motifs of the tilak and the seli: the Guru almost always has a vertical red tilak mark on his forehead, just as he has a woolen cord, seli, slung across his left shoulder coming down to his right waist. Explained by Gadamer, "What makes a motif is that it has unity in a convincing way and that the artist has carried through this unity as the unity of meaning, just as the viewer understands it as a unity." Evidently, the bright red line between the Guru's dark eyes or the dark semi circle sinuously clinging to his yellow robe, are not mere art designs: the tilak is saturated with the holiness of the Vaishnava Hindus; the seli with the devotion of the Muslim Sufis. Each has enormous unity of meaning for its specific community, and the artist brings them together on the Sikh Guru's body to project his inclusive personality (the Muslim Mardana is also painted with the tilak.) Alam's motifs from two different traditions do not reproduce some sort of a composite or a hybrid model; rather, they convincingly convey to the viewer a figure beyond the either-or religious categories prevalent in medieval India. As we travel with Guru Nanak in his multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural cosmos, we become sensitive to the multifaceted sensory richness of human existence and begin to realise that there is no single model of the body that dominates. As a result of Guru Nanak's personal experience, the Sikh canon contains not only the verses



*Guru Nanak, Mardana and Sheikh Sharaf*

of their Gurus but also those of Hindu and Muslim holy men belonging to different centuries, different social classes, and different regions and cultures.

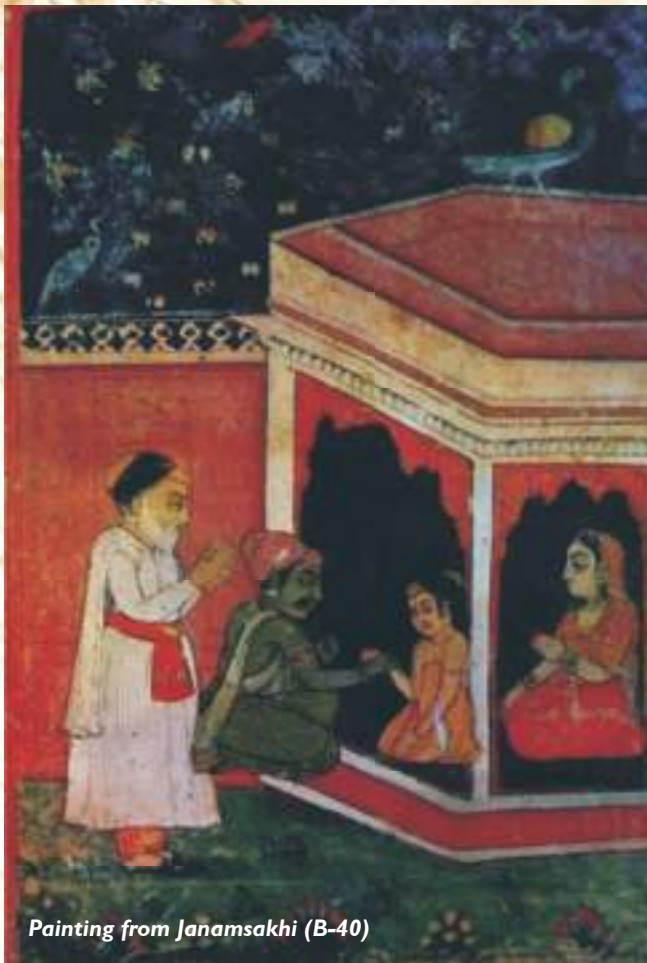
Alam depicts Guru Nanak's revelation (in painting no. 28), which in Sikh public memory is the starting point of their religion. As we discover, this mystical moment is not something abstract or static but a sensuous experience of the transcendent Divine. The unique theology and praxis of Sikhism arise from this sensuous ontology of Guru Nanak.

The Guru is positioned standing in the middle of a panoramic view. Trees and shrubs in a round horizon stretch into infinity, and bunches of little colourful flowers pop up all over the green grass. Bhai Mardana's curled fingers spell out the vigour with which he is striking his rebab, making us virtually see melodious sound waves bursting in the air. In this visually and aurally rich scene, Guru Nanak's hands—with a rosary—are joined together in homage and reach above him. His face is tilted. Extending both below and above, it is an intriguing multi-dimensional perspective. According to the written text, "Baba Nanak" is endowed with Guruship in this "divine palace of the formless One" (*baba nanak nrinakar de mahil vic B-40, 100*). Evidently, the palace of the formless One is no different from this world of ours. The figure of the bird in the tree echoes Guru Nanak's human body. The Guru appears in total ecstasy. With his eyes half-closed, his lips in a smile, he stands (stasis) outside of himself - a perfect intersection of the physical and the spiritual spheres. Guru Nanak's numinous experience is with and through his own body. His fluid emotional state corresponds with the expansive circular landscape. Demarcations between mind and body, individual body and the bodies of others, *lok* (world) and *paramarth* (transcendental reality), are totally obliterated. Without seeing the Divine in any form—whether physical or cosmic—Guru Nanak appears to feel the formless One pulsate in each and every form. His vision of the singular infinite formless Divine, his moral impulse to connect with everybody around him, and his heightened sensuousness constitute Guru Nanak's revelation. Captured perfectly by the painter, these currents subsequently crystallised into Sikh meta physics, ethics, and aesthetics.

But preceding this ecstatic moment was a long and arduous process of solitude, self-reflection, and psychological turmoil. In that traumatic period,

Nanak does not seek out any Sant or Nath or Sufi master: Alam shows him communing in nature, all by himself, his body in the throes of incubating a new Reality (nos.2 and 3). "Nanak visited by a physician" (no.4) is particularly effective in conveying his angst. Unlike his harmonious and expansive appearance in number 28, Nanak here is all scrunched up. He is sitting in the interior world of his home, which in the typical Malwa School of painting is pictorially compartmentalised. He is not wearing his turban, and his left hand languidly touches the ground beside his left foot. A very attractive woman (his mother?) sits behind him. Her revealing red outfit, heavy jewels, and striking pose are quite incongruous with Nanak's sick demeanor. (In the literary version, his wife is anxious about his ongoing sickness and stridently asks the family to call in for a doctor. In the illustration, Nanak appears younger than the lady seated behind him, which suggests that the painter decided to depict a youthful mother Tripta and not wife Sulakhni.) A dark complexioned mustached physician (looks much like the teacher in no.1) kneels across from him. He attentively holds the youngster's right wrist (very fair in contrast with his own) to diagnose his fever-stricken body. And though a peacock struts on the roof, and birds and fruit enliven the landscape, Nanak is not in sync with it. If anything, its nocturnal slate-blue backdrop illuminates the darkness of his spirit. Unlike the sweeping circular horizon in number 28, the angular architecture of number 4 draws up chasms and segregations. The white pillar stands between Nanak and his mother, the threshold separates him from the doctor, and the orange wall with its elaborate molding cuts through the composition.

Alam's disjointed iconography is the perfect setting for Guru Nanak's poetically charged verse quoted in the Guru Granth, "the naive physician does not know that the pain lies in the liver" (*bhola vaidu na janai karak kaleje mahi*) (GGs, p. 1279). In the Punjabi idiom, *kaleja* (liver) is the emotional, moral, and spiritual core of the human being. Whereas the physician with his scientific training fails, his mother pictured with her chin up and confidently raised left hand sees through her son's biological organ and recognises his spiritual disease. That the transcendent is not up above or beyond to be accessed by the mind or disembodied soul, but rather painfully felt by Guru Nanak in the recesses of his visceral organ so crucial to bodily functions, is profoundly illustrated. The scene testifies to Guru



Painting from Janamsakhi (B-40)

Nanak's personal psychic trauma, a trauma that sets him on his spiritual journey, which ultimately leads to his divine revelation (no.28). Subsequently, he shares his divine enchantment, and people attracted by his universal message and simple style start following him, calling themselves 'Sikhs,' a Punjabi word that means 'disciple' or 'seeker' (Sanskrit *shishya*; Pali *sekha*).

In almost all of his adult images, he has in his hand a simple circle of beads on a string, which ends in a tassel. The 'rosary' is a widespread and enduring article. For men and women across cultures and centuries, the touch of the circular beads creates a synergy with their mental currents. In Guru Nanak's immediate historical and geographical context, different Indic groups used specific types of malas. For example, the *rudraksa mala*, made up of thirty two berries (or its double, sixty-four) from the special Rudraksa tree, was used for meditation on Shiva; the *tulsi mala*, with 108 beads made from the wood of the sacred Tulsi shrub, was used for the worship of Vishnu and Rama.

Similarly, the *tasbih*, with its ninety-nine beads, was popular among the Sufis for exalting the ninety-nine names of Allah. Actually, these three types are mentioned in Sikh scripture. Guru Nanak's rosaries that we see in the B-40 vary in colour, material, and size. Some are black, some white. Their performance varies too: sometimes the Guru holds it in his right hand, sometimes in his left, sometimes with both hands, and sometimes he holds two rosaries simultaneously—one in each hand (nos.8 and9). The variations suggest that he does not uphold any established religious norms, and since it is almost always in the Guru's hand—even when he is animatedly conversing—it is something other than an instrument for meditational practices. In fact, when he is pictured with them in both his hands, he is encountering the demon (no. 8) and the robber (no.9), which indicates that the rosary functioned as the Guru's weapon against evil forces.

Alam's varied depictions uniformly convey the profound sensuousness with which Guru Nanak embraces the artefact. In illustration number 28, we can literally see luminous joy pouring out from his fingers and palms, touching the circle of stringed white beads as he stands in the palace of the Formless One. The circle in the centre of Alam's composition sends the mind reeling into infinity. We see no Being, and yet the sheer reverence with which Guru Nanak's rosary reaches out to welcome evokes an awesome presence. In the language of colours, Alam writes down the Sikh liturgical verse: "the entire world is beaded on your thread" (*sagal samagri tumrai sutar dhari*) (GGS, p. 268).

On Guru Nanak's rosary, the temporal and eternal, human and divine, finite and infinite hang together, giving us a glimpse of the variegated universe beaded upon the singular thread. Guru Nanak's ethical message—the equality of class, caste, creed, race, and gender—is perfectly visible.

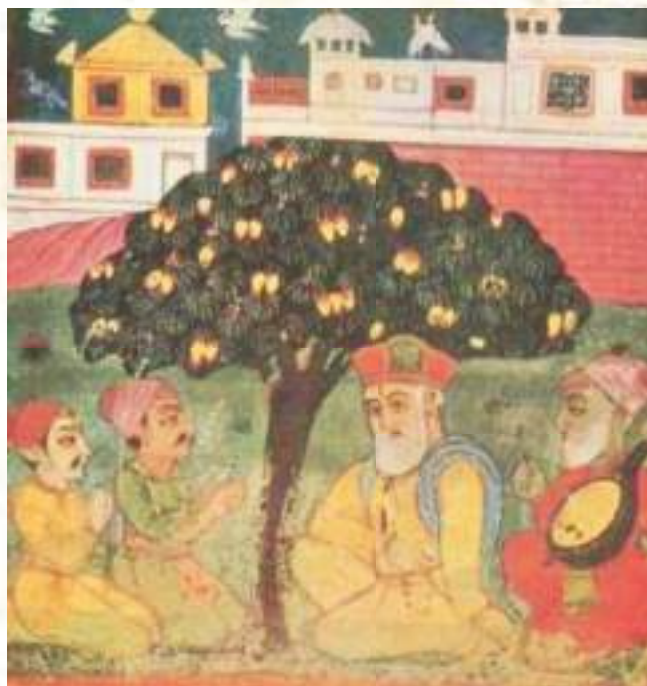
Another item is the little white daisy in his right hand (no.39), and the Guru appears to be fully absorbed in enjoying its fragrance. According to the long narrative, the Guru travels beyond Kashmir and is turned into a boy by a Rohila Pathan and sold several times over. A great deal of drama takes place in the text, but the painter chooses to focus simply on the aesthete par excellence smelling the flower sitting up on a hillock amid birds and flowers. A contemporary spectator can read here a visual hermeneutics of Guru Nanak's verse recorded in

scripture: “Only the relisher of fragrance can recognise the flower” (*Rasia hovai musk ka tab phul pachanai*) (GGS, p. 725). Since the complex process of recognition (*pachanai*) requires a physical act as well as a cognitive realisation, the body with its sensuous experience is exalted as the conduit for metaphysical knowledge. In Alam’s artistic script, we discover the Sikh Guru fostering aesthetics as the approach to knowledge and spirituality.

He comes across very different from Plato, who regarded the essence, the formlessness of a rose to be real, and all those that could be seen, smelt, or touched, merely mutable, temporary, and unreal. Guru Nanak so absorbed in the daisy—one among the many in the picture—validates the reality of all of them; his gesture points viewers to a universal force permeating each of those particular daisies, every bit in this world. In fact, the melodious sound from Mardana’s rebab on the lower right appears to float toward the flower in the Guru’s hand and augment its beauty and fragrance. The abounding smells and sounds and sights raise immediate awareness of a boundless pattern, confirming Gadamer’s theory, “An aesthetic Erlebnis always contains the experience of an infinite whole.” No wonder Alam portrays the second Guru also enjoying the fragrance of a flower (no. 21).

Alam makes visible the invisible confluence of sublime poetry and Guru Nanak’s physical body. As we noted at the outset, many of the scenes are created by the Janamsakhi composers to contextualise the Guru’s verse. But interestingly, even the Guru’s figure and his concrete attributes are made of poetic materials. To begin with, the wooden board (no.1) with a tiny handle carried on Nanak’s first day to school is a metonymic marker that its holder would write up a new morality. The reverence with which the seven-year-old carries it with both hands joined is strikingly reminiscent of the rosary in number 28. But whereas the rosary appears to be a delicate offering to the Divine, the board is held tightly from below—at a 45-degree angle, towards his own body. Sandwiched between the patriarchal world of his father and the upper caste Brahmin teacher, the boy’s tight hold of the writing board foreshadows his ‘semiotic’ script. The feminist philosopher of language Julia Kristeva describes ‘semiotic’ as the maternal basis of language—its sounds, cadences, tones, and rhythms. Kristeva distinguishes this primordial modality from the “symbolic,” which she defines as

the male construction and codification of language. Her analysis has been very useful to understanding the semiotic nature of the Sikh sacred text. When Guru Nanak envisioned the formless One, he burst into poetry. Without succumbing to the male symbolic governed by its linguistic, grammatical, and rational laws, his sublime utterances came with a gusty speed in a most natural momentum and took on artistic designs with alliteration, assonance, and consonance. The wooden board clutched by the little boy in B-40, Janamsakhi’s first illustration, would inscribe his somatic response to the Infinite and eventually



Painting from Janamsakhi (B-40)

concretize into the 1,430-page Sikh scripture the Guru Granth Sahib. Alam’s depiction of the youngster’s grip reveals the intrinsic bond between Sikh sacred text and Guru Nanak’s corporeal matrices.

Another item in the Guru’s hand is difficult to detect at the outset (no. 6), but looking at the full picture we realise it is a piece of fabric, used for covering food. It has to be thin muslin because the Guru’s palm can be seen through it. The text describes the Guru and Mardana returning to the Punjab after twelve years of travel. When Mardana goes to visit his home, Guru Nanak’s parents follow him to the spot where Guru Nanak is seated under a tree on a rectangular piece of cloth. Alam paints the parents in profile facing their son. Following the Punjabi socio-cultural norms, they

must have brought those two large platters of goodies to welcome their son that we see placed in front of him on either side. The one farther is smaller, creating an illusion of space. The round saffron ladoos and white squares of barfi so neatly arranged are apt to make any Punjabi viewer's mouth water. The gooey sweets on the Guru's left are partially covered by cloth—probably to keep bugs away. Those on his right are uncovered, and it is their covering we see in the Guru's right hand. Alam's brush captures the Guru's gesture in motion—he is lifting off the cover from the sweets in a most inviting manner. The parents greet their spiritually exalted son, and he in turn greets the audience to partake of those delicious sweets while being cognisant of the transcendent Infinite saturating the wondrous landscape. The joyous scene sumptuously affirms the unity of spiritual and digestive processes, recalling the Guru's wish that the Divine be remembered in every "morsel of food" (sas gras) (GGS, p.961). Alimentary canals are considered elementary to spiritual progress throughout Sikh scripture. Body and spirit are not binaries, and spiritual knowledge is not to be confined to the realm of Plato's philosopher-king or the Brahmins of Vedic India.

The delicate transparent text (ural) coverings and the covered delicacies are made of the same material. The saffron ladoos in the middle of Alam's composition delightfully replay in the designs on Mother Tripta's large full dupatta, on Guru Nanak's turban, and on the sashes of Father Kalu and Bhai Mardana. Altogether, the festive platters create visual links among the four figures and feed us with positive associations for eating and learning.

Furthermore, there is a material transference of the Guru into his disciple, from Lahina is made Angad, literally a part of Guru Nanak's own body. The corporeal succession started by Guru Nanak continued on through his nine historical successors and finally merged with their book of verse, the Guru Granth. Across continents, Sikhs revere their scripture as the embodiment of their Ten Gurus and conduct all their ceremonies and rituals in its presence. The poetic text as the physical Guru is a unique phenomenon in the history of religions and traces its origins to Guru Nanak's performance. Alam illustrates that crucial identity with enormous interest and sensitivity.

Lahina is depicted five times in the B-40. We first see him before he comes into the Sikh fold and

materialises as Angad. He is going to the shrine of goddess Durga with three other men (no. 21). The bounce in their gait, their flexed knees and raised heels, and the animated birds and trees in the background impart briskness to the scene. All four carry banners in their hand. Lahina also has a tiny white flower in his right hand and appears to be enjoying its fragrance as he walks along. This image makes the ideological point that Lahina was the rightful heir to Guru Nanak (no. 39).

The next one (no. 22) marks a nuanced reverse: the group is now entering into the frame from the left. The men are paying homage to Guru Nanak, who is seated under a tree in the far right with Mardana striking the strings of his rebab. Lahina, identified in the text as wearing "pure white," is bowing to the Guru, who reciprocates by showering blessings with his extended right hand. The narrative reads, "From the beginning to the end you are me. You will not be parted from my body. You are born from my body" (*Tun aadi ant mera hai / tun mere ang thi juda na hohiga / meriah angahu tun paida hoia ha*) (B-40, 86). The painting tries to depict the quintessential phenomenon of Guru Nanak transforming his disciple Lahina into Angad, literally making him a limb of his body.

In illustration number 54, they are symmetrically facing each other. Guru Nanak is on the left; Guru Angad is on the right. Guru Nanak's beard is white; Guru Angad's is dark. Guru Nanak has a rosary in one hand and looks into the far beyond; Guru Angad has his eyes lowered, and his hands are joined in veneration to Guru Nanak. The scene poignantly captures the moment of succession from the venerable Nanak to the middle-aged Angad. While Guru Nanak looks into his timeless and spaceless future, his younger successor with his folded hands accepts the responsibility to replace him as the Guru. The sounds of Mardana's rebab merge with the spiritual flow from Nanak's lips, creating a cosmic symphony that chimes with the music of the blooming flowers and the chirping birds. The red bird above is witnessing the scene. According to the Janamsakhi text, Guru Nanak says, "I have put my hand on you; speak whatever comes to you" (*Mai tudh upar hath rakhia hai Jeo e tio aakh*) (B-40, 146). The founder Guru of Sikhism is clearly transmitting his divine heritage of the formless word to the second through his corporeal touch. There is total coalescence of the physical with the meta physical. But missing in the pictorial rendition is the

Guru's hand on Angad's body. As spectators, we are left wondering: Was it merely a technical problem for the artist or some discomfort with physical intimacy?

Alam's next painting (no. 55) shows Guru Angad resuming his spiritual legacy: his chin is higher, his eyes are wider, and to the figure whose human contours appear to be merging with infinite space, he says, "You are the Guru, you are Gobind; I see no other" (*Guru bhi tu hai gobind bhi tu hai duja koi najari nahin avda*) (B-40, 149; also cited in Hans's illustrated edition). What does not fully come out in the scene—and undoubtedly it would have been difficult to render pictorially—is Guru Nanak's view of the human body as the supreme realm. Earlier in the Janamsakhi text, the departing Guru instructs his successor that the eight spheres are external, but it is the ninth within that holds the nine treasures of the DivineName:

*athi khand prithmi hai  
nava khand eh sariru hai  
eho jeha pasara su dehi khand vic hai  
una atttha khanda te nava srest hai kisu gun karke  
ju is vic nau nidh namu pamesaru ka hai  
khajite paite hai  
iss deh khand kau khajate hai su paramesaru ke bhagat hai*

(B-40, 149)

[The eight spheres extend out. The ninth sphere is this body. This entire expansion is in the sphere of the body itself. The ninth is superior to the eight regions for what virtue? Because it has the nine treasures of the divine Name! By searching it is discovered. Those who search this realm of the body, they are the devotees of the Divine.]

The human body is explicitly exalted as the reservoir of the Divine treasures, and everybody is exhorted to discover its wealth.

The next and penultimate illustration drives Guru Nanak's corporeal message further. The Guru is pointing to his black and blue skin near his rib cage (no. 56; fig. 10). His torso is bare, and he is not wearing his turban. Iconographically, it varies from the standard Alami illustrations. The Guru stands on a small black square stool with two pots beside him in the middle plane. He is bathing himself with a jug of water while his successor Guru Angad watches him. Below front is Mardana playing his rebab. The usual tree above and the houses behind are missing in the patterned flat background. Along with Guru Angad, the viewer

witnesses the porous nature of the Guru's body—its fusion with his intangible word. Pointing to the skin on his waist, Nanak explains to Angad that a young shepherd was reciting his composition Arati, and since he somatically exists in his verse, he was with the shepherd and his goats at that particular time of the evening. The terrain happened to be thorny, and as the Guru brushed against some of the bushes, he was bruised. The Guru's enchantment with the corporeality of sacred verse is strikingly conveyed in the painting. Clearly the body as poetry is not some plain old simile, it is not a figurative trope either, and it is not a literalist slip. His sonorous verse (*bani*) is the actual breathing, injured Guru. His verse is his body, and as the Sikh text claims, "bani is the guru, the guru is bani" (*bani guru guru hai bani*) (GGS, p.982). Shattering the tyrannical opposition of body and mind, language and reality, a new vision of being in the world springs forth. Centuries later, the lingering image of Guru Nanak's bruises reflected through the primordial mirror opens fresh new possibilities for viewers to experience the sacred and the sensuous in their daily life.

Subsequent artists continue to underscore the link between the physical and metaphysical identity so crucial to the founder Sikh Guru. In a late nineteenth century watercolour (at the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh), we see him in a mesmerising full-sleeved robe. With the patronage of the first Sikh emperor Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839), Sikh art had reached new heights. In this exquisite painting, the Guru has a full beard, but in addition to Alam's iconography, he has a halo, his turban has a high flap and a domed top, and he is framed in a regal setting. One of the Janamsakhis recounts Guru Nanak receiving a cloak of honour during his visit to Baghdad, with verses from the holy Quran embroidered on it. In the watercolor, tinted in a golden hue, the Guru's robe is inscribed all over with calligraphy in Arabic characters in the naksh script. The Guru, deep in thought with a rosary in his hands, is seated on a terrace. Some branches, in brushstrokes on the right, echo his profile. In the far background is an impressionist rendering of sizable foliage. In the foreground, we get a glimpse of the Mughal-styled balcony balustrade with latticework. Closer still is a big round pillow cushion associated with emperors, and the Guru, with his left leg tucked under and the right one placed over the left knee, sits perfectly aligned with



his royal backdrop. The rich horizontal folds of his pillow cushion dynamically intersect with the vertical stripes of his pajama-trousers; the circular designs on his turban rhythmically repeat the circles on the pillow, the necklace around his neck, and the rosary in his right hand; the triangles decorated with yet more triangular florets on his draping shawl join the rectangular border of the carpet he is seated on.

In this scene of perpetual motion, the Guru is wrapped in a robe spun with verses from the holy Quran and the sublime Japji that cover his entire front and sleeves. The Islamic invocation *bismillah al rahman al rahim* and the Sikh *adi sacu jugadi sacu hai bhi sacu hosi bhi sacu* appear together.

Diverse threads of Guru Nanak's dress powerfully weave That One who is beyond all external designs and forms. In its visual hermeneutics, the work unravels not only the meaning of the term "text" (derived from the Latin *texere*, to weave), but also the singular transcendent matrix from which all the materials are born. The call for *rahimat* or *rahim* is the perennial womb of Truth (*sacu*), which always was (*jugadi sacu*), is (*hai bhi sacu*), and will be evermore (*hosi bhi sacu*). Without halting the mind anywhere, the painting gives a visual and sonorous push to imagine and intuit That Infinite One, common to everybody.

Such visual presentations powerfully demonstrate Guru Nanak's somatic existence in his word. They also foreshadow his tenth successor, who invested the Granth with physical Guruship. The bruised body in Alam's scene is a palpable reminder of Guru Gobind Singh's momentous action performed just before he passed away in 1708; it is a graphic explanation for the liturgical verse recited daily by the Sikhs: "Know the Guru Granthji as the manifest body of the Gurus" (*Guru granth ji manio pragat guran ki deh*; *deh* literally means body). With his anthropomorphic depictions, Guru Nanak's word enshrined in scripture only becomes more applicable in daily life. The Sikh community can shed its fear and anxiety about the visual.

### Supra Sensible meaning

The Guru's body, his gestures, his garments, and the items held by him are imbued with enormous spiritual values. They function as symbols, for they bring about a "coincidence of sensible appearance and supra sensible meaning," which Gadamer notes



Janam Sakhi gyan ratanavali Bhai Bala

is the original significance of the Greek symbol on, "the union of two things that belong together." Palpably held by the Guru, the rosary, the writing board, the flower, the cloth covering, and the jug of water reach out to the transcendent sphere and bring back enchantment to daily acts—be they bathing, smelling, eating, writing, or contemplating. By choreographing the Guru's performance, the painter puts us in touch with our own somatic bodies and orients us to a powerful ontological experience in this temporal world.

Likewise, the scenes of Guru Nanak performing miracles depicted by Alam are existentially important for viewers. The Guru can read minds, he can make crops grow instantly, he can make the shade of a tree stand still, he can change a ram back to Mardana, he can make a mosque turn around, he can cool a monster's boiling cauldron of oil with a dip of his finger; he can turn icy waters lukewarm, and so on. But these visual renditions do something more. Rather than miracles displaying or communicating Guru Nanak's supernatural grandeur, they strike upon the inner eye and play upon our imagination. These are not miracles in the Western semantic

sense. Full of wit and wonder, they wander from the protagonist to the wonders of our own bodies and those that surround us—human or natural—and incite us to expect the extraordinary events in the daily rhythms of ordinary life.

When we see a teenage Nanak lying on his right side on the ground in the fields (no. 2), something happens in our bodies. His eyes are closed, and his face rests peacefully on his crossed arms. He is sound asleep while birds chirp above in the trees, and his cows and buffaloes graze freely around him. The illustration does more than tell the story that these rich crops grew miraculously after being devoured by the cattle while the herdsman Nanak, lost in thought, happened to neglect his professional duties. As the shadowy figures grazing in the rich wheat fields in the foreground and the birds amid the foliage of the trees at the back frame the sleeping figure, they evoke the vast dream world where anything is possible. Science teaches us that each cell of the human body is an elaborate biochemical computer with its own power management and information processing structures. The sleeping teenager in Alam's painting opens us to the vast potential of the human body along with its exciting un-conscious world full of "miracles."

The next illustration (no.3) also presents Guru Nanak sleeping horizontally, with his upper body bare. This time, the immobile shade of the tree above protects him from the scorching sun, a pan-Indian symbol (utilised in Buddhist Jatakas) to mark his 'supernatural' quality. Again, Alam's painting accomplishes something more with its playfulness. We see a row of birds flying toward the left, ripe mangoes dangling from the tree above, the horse in the foreground galloping, its rider pointing excitedly, the man across from him gasping in amazement, and the anthropomorphic face of the sun with his big eyes betraying a wild curiosity. In the centre of it all we see the teenager blissfully asleep. His serene body seems to have gathered the multivalent energy of his landscape. Paradoxically, the sleeping Guru Nanak takes away the attention from himself and instead awakens the spectator to the richness that surrounds everybody at every moment.

Such scenes reproduce the somatic response of *Vismaya*. From the Sanskrit root *smi*, the word is etymologically related with the Greek *meidian*, to smile, and Latin *miraculum*, to wonder. Importantly,

scriptural evidence points to *vismad* (wonder) as the supreme aesthetic mood for Guru Nanak, and since it is grounded in his experience, the 1,430 pages of the Guru Granth are saturated in it. In Guru Nanak's words, "wondrous are the forms, wondrous the colours ... wondrous is the earth, wondrous the species" (*vismad roop vismad rang ... vismad dharti vismad khani*) (GGS p. 463–64). Rather than steer us to some otherworldly sphere, Guru Nanak's miracles—just like his verse-animate us so we too can see, smell, touch, taste, and hear the wondrous qualities of our fellow beings on planet earth.

When Guru Nanak goes to Mecca, the mosque moves around—following the direction of his feet. In this popular narrative, the Guru falls asleep in front of the mosque, with his feet turned toward its mehrab. The Qazi in charge gets upset for the irreverence shown by the visitor, but in response, the Guru politely asks the Qazi to turn his feet in a direction he felt proper. As Guru Nanak's feet are turned, so does the sacred mosque. Alam shows an astonished Qazi marveling at a blue-robed Nanak sound asleep (no. 12 fig. 11).

There is no need to consider it a historical fact; the motion of circularity simply shatters rigid mental formulas. That the Divine exists in every direction is the moral derived from the narrative, which is retold over and over in Sikh life and scholarship. But what has been woefully overlooked once again is Guru Nanak's affirmation of the human body. This scene of the Guru in Mecca in fact brings attention to our own bodies: from head to toe, nothing is polluted; all parts are equally sacred. Guru Nanak's act breaks somatophobic prejudice that upholds the thinking 'head' above the corporeal 'body'—along with all its hegemonic structures—and whirls the viewers into a vast wholesome horizon. His so-called miracles challenge society to interrogate their innate assumptions and simultaneously create "widening experience" (a distinguishing feature of metaphors for Gadamer). Indeed, each of Alam's fifty-seven paintings is a metaphor that allows his audience to read Guru Nanak's transcendental understanding in their own bodies. They visually reinforce the Sikh scriptural message and concretise Guru's aural verses into actions and reactions.

Ultimately, Alam's collection leaves us with a 'biophilial' imaginary. Appropriated as a



psychological and philosophical category by feminist thinkers, biophilial—literally, a love for life—reorients the preoccupation with death and the other world. (no.49) The above themes converge in Alam’s finale, a split narrative about the death of the Guru (no. 57). In the bottom scene are three yogis handing ashes to a young fellow, an attendant of the Guru. Youth is the channel to communicate to the Guru about his final moments of embodiment. The attendant has luxurious curls similar to the young Nanak we first saw. In the upper plane, the Guru as usual is seated under the tree, with Mardana playing the rebab. He prepares for his cremation in this final scene, an enigmatic replay of his preparation for school in the opening (no.1). No eternity, no disembodied soul, no otherworld; in this biophilial finale, finite metaphysics sweeps into sensuous ontology. Mangoes and birds and roses-everything around Guru Nanak is in vibrant motion. His own departure fits in with this natural momentum of the universe. In the text, “Baba sat cross-legged on the

funeral pyre! When the fire had subsided... a divine fragrance hung in the air and there reverberated the unearthly cadence of falling waters, [with] the strains of all manner of musical instrument.”

The ash that he turned into will perpetually enliven the cosmos. So will his flesh that is his sublime verse. So will his fragrance, and that cadence of waters, and those musical strains. Pulling together the multifarious sensations, the anthropomorphic images painted by Alam Chand Raj render an intimate presence of the first Sikh Guru in this magical world. Spectators are viscerally stimulated to experience the infinite Divine in the very fibres of their physical, social, and cosmic reality. The Guru’s body is no different from his word.

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# On Sidharth : the man and the artist

**S**idharth, the multi talented creative and colourful personality with a remarkably checkered career, has led a life full of turns and twists that make this born-again artist's story full of mystique, one that gets mirrored in his art. Traversing from realistic figuration to ritualistic work, classical imagery to abstract installations, folk idiom to international contemporary sensibility, his repertoire includes painting, print making, writing poetry, composing music, singing, sculpting, calligraphy, drawing, filming and now a unique creative genre that is an assimilation of these varied streams. From humble beginnings as a child assistant to a wall painter he has turned out to be an internationally acclaimed artist, exhibited and collected extensively.

The journey however has not been a straight forward or an easy one. When I first met the artist nearly three decades ago, he was still at Chandigarh, struggling to find his feet on a new ground of urban artistic practice and lingo. But for someone so deeply rooted in to the soil, putting behind the learning from real life until then, was not to be. Instead of flowing with the current, he changed it to suit his own philosophy and creative track. The work he created as a young person working under various masters including wall paintings, murals, sculptures, portraits and installations using traditional and natural materials helped to sharpen his academic skills in working with pen, pencil, water colours, pastels, oil, papier-mâché and tempera at a later stage in his career.

Some of the childhood learning and memories are replayed in his early work- such as the old havelis in charcoal drawings, the village festivities around Baisakhi in many of his paintings wherever he went in the series that he did during his lonesome days in Chandigarh. There are portraits of Sikh gurus including the one he made when just 8 years old, influenced by what he had seen at the Golden Temple when on a pilgrimage to Amritsar with his mother.

Socio-political concerns such as the riots and violence of 1984 have also featured in his work.

## Baramasa

Sidharth seems to have found his nemesis in the vast and varied repertory around Baramasa or Baramaha that continues to resonate through his work (these were reproduced in previous issues of the *Nishaan*). Rotating around the twelve months or seasons of the year, his ensemble in the series runs through most of his creativity of the last decade or so. In terms of its philosophy, aesthetics and matrix the work springs from the artist's learnings of Guru Granth Sahib and other mystical traditions of the world.

Known for making his own colours, paper and canvases from minerals, vegetables and other organic sources, his fascination and study of nature gets variously reflected in the distinct- *Rooh* (spirit/mood), *Raung* (colours/flora & fauna), *Roop* (image/weather) and *Rachna* (life/creation), of each season. Depicting the changing pattern of nature and the physical landscape, it celebrates the changing seasons, time, mood and the resulting life pattern and consciousness.

Using motifs from the Indian philosophic and literary traditions, folk culture, history and techniques in his own unique vision and in an androgynous form, the artist's work evokes the spiritual. As extolled in Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Sufi and all other sacred texts it attempts to awaken the soul. There are celestial creatures in flying postures, with embedded images of nature, its flora and fauna in one form or another created with organic material. Meditative in spirit his oeuvre is pleasing and festive in a mix of earthy and bright hues. It is joyous even in its subtle forms and softer tones represented in a cohabitation of movement and stillness. The layered imagery is heightened with fine lines and scrapings in variable transparency and textures highlighting its links with folk and classical culture and traditional techniques in synergy with changing times. Though



Painting of Guru Nanak with Bala and Mardana, by Sidharth

love is omnipresent in his oeuvre, there is no explicit expression of sexuality or man-woman sagas of love.

The most distinct feature of Sidharth's artistic oeuvre is his figuration. Often lonesome and poignant, more universal and not culture specific, it is personified in a sphinx-like androgynous form, dressed in long flowing robes, always noseless as is often the case with ancient statues due to ravages of time or human vandalism. Oval shaped faces with beautiful lips and large dove like eyes, half open or closed, it adorns a silent look as if in *dhyana mudra*. Sitting or reclining or standing his figure set amidst nature comes as an assimilation of male and female, orient and west, sensitive and beautiful but not erotic. There are glimpses of Nanak or Christ or Buddha or a saint may be Sufi, Chinese or Japanese or possibly Madonna in a profile that reflects a peace of mind, timelessness, sublimation of the ego and a touch of the Tantric perhaps *Ardh Narishwar*. Placed amidst trees under the open sky it appears devoid of any past or future, pain or joy. Nothingness pervades the mood as the pristine simplicity and beauty of the form endows it with a Zen and weight-less, lyrical and spiritual, tender and vulnerable appearance and spirit.

The artist is an engaging story teller and each of his creations is immersed in layered and folded narratives that try to evoke a long forgotten moment/memory or present a thought or an idea or bring up an issue confronting the individual or society. Each form or colour in his imagery has a story to tell and *Kahania* or *baaten* as he calls them reverberate through all his work. His motifs, metaphors and markings alongside the calligraphic writing, flora and fauna rotate around srishti and a play of the five elements or Panchtatva. Deeply rooted in its philosophical strand, the intrinsic merit of his narrative art comes from the heart. It brings forth contemporary concerns around human emotions and environment but sans any expression of alienation, imitation or malice.

### The born again persona

Winding back to the very beginning of the born again artist we encounter Sidharth nee Harjinder Singh nick-named Cuckoo, a little boy born to a frail mother Rukmani Bibi and burly father Jagtar Singh who worked for the local landlord. The middle one amongst six kids in a Sikh family of Gurbani singers with meagre resources but strong cultural roots, he grew up in the interiors of rustic Punjab at Bassian

pind near Barnala. With no schooling he led a carefree life listening to the melodious singing of Kabir, Nanak and Baba Farid's religious songs. He loved helping his mother tend the animals and make papier mache toys and dolls for which they collected natural pigments from the Sutlej and Beas river beds and the fields around. Sidharth and his siblings saw very little of their father who was often away traveling for his landlord master from one village to another.

The maverick artist's stints as a visualiser with an ad agency, then learning about miniature tradition in Rajasthan, craft techniques including paper making at the Crafts Museum, designing houses, studying and filming Indian classical and temple architecture, composing music—all manifest his commitment to art and survival instinct that make him a multi talented and born again artist. The large and impressive repertoire of drawings, paintings and now some amazing life size sculptures of birds and cows in fibre glass as well as his new media work in film and music shows a maturity of the prolific artist's vision and the depth of his symbolic and allegorical visual language. Sidharth likes to chant and sing aloud while painting, which for him is a ritual and a meditative act. A master of many languages and scripts- Persian, Pali, Sanskrit, Swahili, Tibetan and Gurmukhi besides English and Hindi, he has also learnt calligraphy and studied astronomy and the solar system besides folk memory and tales. The strength of his work comes from his mastery of the philosophy, aesthetics and techniques of oriental art which he is able to assimilate comfortably with a contemporary sensibility and awareness and his versatile handling of various materials and matrix.

The checkered life and predilections of this self taught, highly driven artist, thinker, musician and kind hearted persona—born and reborn – from a vagabond to a monk and finally an artist of international repute—seem to have influenced the metaphors of his art and shape his aesthetics that resurrect his amazingly varied personal experiences, his intuitive and humanist fortitude and spiritual bent of mind, crisscrossing many interesting turns and twists. As Sidharth's insatiable thirst for learning and exploring continues to refine his form and technique, his art with its subtle quality, unique style, vocabulary and vision that echoes a Zen spirit, innocence, beauty and naïve romanticism will hopefully continue to augment its universal appeal.

## Dr IJ Singh queries the functions of

# A Granthi ... Priest, Rabbi and Minister

There are several drawbacks to emigrating, as well as a major gain. One has to recast one's assumptions and cultural framework in terms of the new, host culture and in a new language. Such transformation is not easy.

Since culture and language are inseparably intertwined, many of the religious and cultural concepts cannot be adequately or accurately expressed in a different language. Yet, effective communication requires that we try.



*Women granthis perform their duties alongside the men*

The constant immersion in a new system and a new society forces us to think afresh our fondest assumptions and beliefs - and that is the gain though it is not without pain.

I smile to myself when I hear a Sikh refer to a gurdwara as our "temple" or "church" in a non-Sikh gathering. He is trying a short-cut to communication but loses precision in the process. A gurdwara is definitely not a church or a temple, just as a

synagogue is not one, and nor is it a mosque. Now with so many gurdwaras around the world, it is time for the term 'gurdwara' to take its rightful place in the lexicon describing places of worship.

What also bothers me is our confusion in how to refer to the person who conducts the religious service in a gurdwara. Is he akin to a priest, a minister, or a rabbi, or is he uniquely different? What should we expect of him? What moral or ecclesiastical authority does he have? What title shall we give him when we speak in English so that his position and functions are not misunderstood?

When Guru Nanak settled in Kartarpur after his many far-flung travels, he became an active farmer. He tilled the lands, earned an honest living, fed his family and preached his message. In many ways, his life remains the ideal.-

Given the bent and history of the Hindu Brahmin who made a business of religion and sold religious indulgences while making himself the sole proprietor of this less than honest trade, the pragmatic Sikh mind remains sceptical of a professional clergy. At one level, we feel that no man should sell religious knowledge; such truth should be freely given and to profit from it would be sinful. Yet we recognise that the person who dedicates his life to learning and teaching about Sikhism, needs to be paid.

Religious learning is his (her) trade just as you and I making our living from other vocations. And like us, he too has a family to support and bills to meet; the world does not put food on his table.

This dichotomy in our thinking does not sit well. The result is that the man who performs the religious service is usually inadequately and grudgingly compensated, and little respected. At another level however, we also see that this man brings us the teachings of our Gurus and sometimes both the heart and purse strings open most generously. Some itinerant preachers rake in millions!

Our preacher has historically been called a *Bhai* which translates into 'Brother', or Granthi which means "curator of the Guru Granth".

'Granthi' appears to be a more accurate term and it seems to me that it need not be translated into English. A rabbi is not called someone else in English, nor should he be. An imam remains that in English as well. Pundit, the Sanskrit word for a scholar, is now part of the English language.

If non-Sikhs are not now familiar with the word 'Granthi', they will, in time and with usage. Some concepts lose their majesty, power and accuracy upon translation.

The granthi is very different from a priest. Sikhism has never recommended, required or taught that a granthi be celibate. In fact, most Sikhs would be suspicious and leery of one who was. In the Sikh view, the family life is the right way; renunciation just would not do for either the clergy or the laity.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the office of the priest carries certain ecclesiastical authority which is not granted to the clergy by the Sikhs. The office of the granthi is accepted by the Sikhs as a necessity. The respect for the man who occupies it does not come with the title; it has to be earned and depends upon the individual.

The expositions of the granthi are at best recommendations. In many ways the style of the traditional granthi is that of a Talmudic scholar, his sermons and writings are commentaries on Sikh scriptures and he often attempts to apply the lessons of history to contemporary life-situations. He never speaks *ex cathedra*, no matter how important the subject, how strongly he feels about it, or how venerated he is.



*Respect for the Granthi is natural, but earned*

Anyone may openly disagree with him or engage him in debate, although not while a service is in progress. Also in most gurdwaras, his tenure of office depends upon the pleasure of the congregation and the management committee that is responsible for the physical property and the financial health of the gurdwara.

There are several caveats to these general statements. Many of the historical gurdwaras in India are managed by a legislated nation-wide organisation called the Shiromini Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). In these gurdwaras, granthis are appointed, transferred, certified, and so on by a central system of civil service. For these granthis, job tenure is not much different from that of a priest or any other bureaucrat, though moral authority still does not come with the territory.

Following the times of the Gurus, four major historical gurdwaras acquired a pre-eminent place in the Sikh psyche and have come to be referred to as 'Takhts' or Thrones (Seats or Centres) of authority. In the last century, during the fifties, another was added to make a total of five. The Centre at the Akal Takht in Amritsar, which

was founded by the Sixth Master, Guru Hargobind, remains the first among equals among these five.

The granthis of the five centres of authority are appointed by the SGPC and referred to as 'Jathedars' : literally, leaders of 'jathas' or bands or the community. These five leaders of the community, after collective deliberation, can issue joint directives or edicts to the community, including notification of a rare honour or castigation of an individual for a particularly heinous act.



However, even they lack any machinery or system for enforcement of their edicts except the social acceptability and respect for their pronouncements within the Sikh community.

If today not many gurdwaras have women granthis, it is because of custom and not canon. A minuscule minority like the Sikhs could not remain free from the influence of the predominant cultures of India - Hinduism and to some extent Islam. In those two religions, women are not allowed as functionaries in the temple or mosque. Consequently, few Sikh women became granthis although many more perform the duties on an informal basis at Sikh services.

I was amazed to learn that the management of the Golden Temple would not allow any woman to sing within the inner sanctum, since none had by tradition. In reality, there is no function within the Sikh place of worship or in a Sikh service that is not allowed to a woman. It is well to remember that when Guru Amar Das first organised the widespread Sikh community into 22 dioceses, several of those named to head them were women.

Some of the cultural baggage that we bring with us, and the dead-weight that we carry with us, was brought home to me about three years ago. A newly established gurdwara in New York was looking for a new granthi. Many were interviewed. I recommended a young man in his thirties who was fluent in Punjabi and English. As part of the job interview he gave a sermon. He was good but was not seriously considered because many of the older congregation were uneasy - he was too young to be a spiritual leader!

It reminded me that John Kennedy, when told he was too young to be President, made an election promise that he vowed never to break - if elected, he promised never to be that young again. The gurdwara found an excellent but older granthi instead.

Guru Gobind Singh is said to have sent several promising Sikh scholars to various centres of indigenous Indian Vedic philosophy, only because they were then the primary centres of formal religious learning. These Sikh scholars, on their return, then helped initiate Sikh seminaries and themselves formed the nucleus for the first granthis, because they were now well versed not only in the teachings of the Gurus but also in the scholarly

tradition of the other major religions then known in the land.

From such noble beginnings we seem to have slipped, although there are still some very erudite granthis. By and large, most granthis today are limited in their education to knowledge of Sikh, Hindu and Moslem scriptures. Often, their familiarity with history is rudimentary and their sermons are overlaid with a strong dose of mythology and folk-tales. Entertaining but confusing, and certainly not satisfying.

The granthis are at a particular disadvantage when they follow the migration of Sikhs away from India. They are usually not schooled in any language but Punjabi, nor are they equipped to hold any other job. They have never been exposed to the teachings of Judaism or Christianity - the religions of the West. It becomes impossible for them to represent Sikhism outside to non-Sikhs or participate in inter-religious dialogues. Their role becomes increasingly limited.

Their congregation acquires sophisticated life-styles and is exposed to the temptations, successes and the excesses of the new culture. The granthi does not venture outside the circle of the gurdwara very much and cannot experience the needs and the frustrations of his congregation. Increasingly, he becomes only marginally relevant to the lives of the Sikhs, particularly the young. Only the older generation weaned on similar teaching in India listens raptly to the granthi. Even they do not find him or his message particularly important to their lives but his presence is comforting because it captures the emotional aura of back home.

Thus the listeners, but particularly the young, tend increasingly to lead schizoid lives.

Lest someone think that I am too strongly condemnatory - and that is certainly not the intent - I merely ask how many Sikhs, young or old, confide in the granthi about personal or familial problems that confront them?

Is it not that a major function of the priest, rabbi, minister or granthi - to be a sensitive and learned ear and counsel. The fault lies not in the granthi but in how he is perceived and trained, and in the system which has not responded to the changing needs and times.

Parenthetically, I should add that some new Sikh academies in India are training a new, refreshing breed of granthis, but they are few and far between.

Not long ago, when I had to confront my mortality via a two-week hospital stay, I noticed that our granthi does not visit the sick or comfort the old and the poor. He was never taught that this is part of the job. The priest and the rabbi do so.

A minister must minister and so should a granthi.

The granthi needs to get out from the four walls of the gurdwara. He needs to become a friend and a guide. As the person in the gurdwara, the granthi has to be the pivot which holds the community together.

I would like to see a granthi who can communicate not only in the language of our scriptures but also in the local argot; who can represent us and our religion to others. A man who is at home in the library but also on the golf course and the tennis court. We do not need a recluse for a granthi but one who understands life and is paid accordingly; who is not so busy valuing book-learning that he has neither time nor skill to live a full life. Like a Talmudic scholar, he can make the teachings of Sikhism come alive to the needs of today and tomorrow.

The granthi can create an environment and a feeling where one can laugh at the absurdities of the young, hold a seminar where rebellious questioning is not deemed blasphemy, where frank discussions about sex and drugs would not be shocking, yet where the Guru's grace pervades.

The Gurus were very forthright in their comments about the evils of the day, whether they were sati, the caste system, female infanticide or the use of intoxicants, etc. Our granthi needs to be equally forthcoming on what the twenty-first century promises to us - from domestic conflict to the environmental crisis; from the dowry system to AIDS; from human rights to disarmament and reproductive rights.

This does not mean that the granthi needs to be an expert and speak authoritatively on all these matters. No one man can. It does mean that the granthi has to provide the atmosphere and the direction where these matters can be freely discussed - experts can always be found. Conclusions will rarely emerge, and any that we derive today may be modified tomorrow with changes in our understanding and our circumstances. The discussion in a spiritual ambience will not lead us astray but will indeed enrich us. Who but the granthi should provide the lead?

Who else but the granthi should steer the religious service in the gurdwara? No one else is as well trained. He should coordinate the programme; arrange the appropriate mix of *kirtan* and *kathaa*. He should invite the appropriate singers of the liturgy, performers or lecturers. His opinion should be respectfully sought and heard, if a question arises on interpretation of a religious teaching, doctrine, tradition or dogma.

The management committee or other elected representatives have a different job; to set policy, to design guidelines within which the functions are held, to manage the property, raise funds, to hire or fire a granthi or other employees, and so on. The granthi remains answerable to the management as I remain responsible to my Dean for my performance at my University, but how I teach my specialty lies outside the Dean's immediate expertise. If a serious disagreement surfaces, a parting of the ways may be necessary, but the Dean is not trained to teach my subjects, nor does he micromanage my teaching.

Why should we think that the management committee of a gurdwara, by virtue of having been elected, all of a sudden have acquired the specialised religious knowledge of a granthi? It seems hardly reasonable or operationally efficient for the secretary of the management committee to micromanage the daily religious service.

The duties of a modern granthi should occupy him longer than the two to four hours a week that he seems to work in most gurdwaras. And he needs to be well rewarded, consistent with his qualifications as a scholar, and the society in which he operates.

He needs and deserves our support and respect for he can help us find the way to an inner beauty and truth. He puts us in touch with our spiritual heritage.

On the other hand, we should not recast our granthi into the role of a brahmin who is called to officiate at a religious ceremony because without him the ceremony may not be valid. Such a view has no place in Sikh teaching.

The granthi, unlike the brahmin, does not hold the keys of heaven in his hands but he can help us discover our own way to unlock that door.

# Gurdwaras and Granthis

In his prolific writings, Dr IJ Singh has drawn attention to a very vital issue of Sikhism and re-structuring: the training, employment and wages of Granthis have been neglected for far too long.

Any type of training, more so of *Granthis* or *Katha Vachaks*, requires a professional approach to ensure consistency of quality. This quality is achieved by building a body of knowledge, careful training of people in that knowledge and then requiring aspirants to show diligence in that knowledge.

Unfortunately, there is no widely- agreed curriculum for the Sikh preachers (*Granthis* or *Katha Vachaks*); their training is brief and slipshod, criteria for passing examination non-existent. Majority of the persons opting for this cadre of Sikh preachers are hardly educated above the secondary level, having poor communication skills, lack of missionary zeal or ambitious career aspirations.

Although a number of Sikh Missionary Colleges have come up in the Punjab during the last decade, there is neither any common syllabus nor fixed duration of training nor even standard examination system. There is no minimum eligibility criterion for teachers. There is no Sikh institutional body for proper gradation of their performance.

I recollect that in the pre-partition days there were examinations conducted by the Punjab University of Lahore in *Giani* which was equivalent to graduation in Punjabi. There were two lower exams, *Budhimani* and *Vidmani*. No



*The devout at a Gurdwara: Sikhism is distinct, its essence being the 'spirit' and not 'being'*

one was appointed even an assistant Granthi unless he was at least 'Giani Pass'.

Unfortunately, things have steadily declined since then. The Shaheed Sikh Missionary College at Amritsar, established by the SGPC, came into being for training of *Granthis* and *Kirtanias*, but has remained a neglected institution. The number of trainees and facilities has remained the same over the last eight decades. Regrettably, little attention has been paid by SGPC or its Dharm Parchar Committee towards this vital issue.



*"Sikhism is destined to play a leading role in the coming global civilisation."*



Lack of proper training and knowledge of Sikh scriptures and Sikh history of our Granthis is clearly evident. Three distinct incidents come to my mind which expose the utter inadequacy of the prevailing system of conducting the daily service in our Gurdwaras today.

First, it was during the post-9/11 assemblies for prayers for the departed. One such function in Markham (Toronto) was organised by the City's Municipal Corporation. Representatives from all the religions had been invited and asked to speak. Whereas the representatives of Muslims, Hindus, Jews and Budhists, made very impressive and well prepared speeches in English followed by a short few words of prayer, our religious representatives (the *Granthis*) recited the typical *Ardas* in Punjabi which had no impact on the mixed audience and left no impression whatsoever.

Another perhaps typical example is about two young men, who had visited their Gurdwara regularly with their parents since childhood. The boys grew up and soon joined University, necessitating their stay in hostels, coming home on some weekends. Otherwise they would stay on in their hostels, completing assignments and enjoying themselves with

friends. One Sunday, when one of them came home, he told his mother "Mom we know Guru Granth Sahib is our Guru and we go to the Gurdwara only, but twice I have gone with my friends to the Mandir and have learnt something on each visit; whereas in the Gurdwara we do not learn anything. The entire programme is in *Punjabi* only."



Other religions have made appropriate changes with the times. Their priests are well-educated, qualified to take questions from the audience and communicate with them in English in rational manner.

Another incident depicts the state of our so-called 'Missionary Colleges'. A few years ago, newspapers reported a strike in a Missionary college. The boys had complained about the poor quality of food and their being sent to people's homes to do *Akhand Paths*, instead of attending classes. The money from *Akhand Paths* went to the college authorities.

All these factors are self explanatory and highlight different aspects of the problem.

What is the way forward ? For good Sikh preachers (*Granthi* or *katha vachak*) today, the following should be the minimum criteria :

- ❖ Good basic education : this helps develop rational thinking, sharpness of mind and analytical capacity plus sufficient communication skills.
- ❖ Good knowledge of the text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib
- ❖ A deep understanding of Sikh Theology, based on teachings enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
- ❖ A detailed knowledge of the lives of Sikh Guru Sahiban.
- ❖ Good knowledge of Sikh history.
- ❖ Essential knowledge of other world religions.

**The impressive facade of the SGGSW University main buildings**



- ◀ Proficiency in at least one foreign language such as English, French, Spanish, Arabic for those who want to work abroad and an Indian language like Tamil, Telgu Bengali, Assamese, apart from Hindi for those working in India.
- ◀ Proper communication skills.
- ◀ Training in ethics, moral code and capacity to interact with other people.
- ◀ A Granthi is also expected to be a role model for others and also a confidant of members of the sangat.

A Christian Missionary takes 8-10 years of hard study and training before he is ordained as a priest in a church. With us Sikhs, anyone can become a Granthi, without any orientation training.

When one speaks to some of them on the subject of their training, a usual answer is that he hashad this bent of mind since childhood, came into the *sangat* of so and so Baba ji and it is with Babai *ji*'s blessings etc!

One had hoped that with the establishment of Sri Guru Granth Sahib World Sikh University (SGGSWU) at Fatehgarh Sahib, most of these adequacies would be addressed, but I was regretfully mistaken. Though the University is being funded solely by the SGPC, which in fact represents the Sikh *Sangat* itself, its functioning is just like any other Indian University.

A review of the departments at the University will prove my contention. Hereunder is the information as obtained from website of the University. There are:

- ☉ School of Guru Granth Sahib Studies

- ☉ School of Basic and Applied Sciences
- ☉ School of Engineering
- ☉ School of Engineering Technologies
- ☉ School of Commerce and Management
- ☉ School of Economics
- ☉ School of Social Sciences
- ☉ School of Performing Arts
- ☉ School of Education and Sports

Of the nine schools, only one deals with Guru Granth Sahib Studies, the other eight departments could just as well be part of any other university in the country !

Thus why name it as Guru Granth Sahib International University and why is it funded by the SGPC i.e. the Sikh Sangat? The university could well be named as 'Fateh Garh Sahib University' just like any other university of the Punjab, funded by the Government of Punjab.

In my humble opinion, the University should have the following schools, if it is to serve the desired purpose :

#### *School of SGGGS Students*

At present, Ph.D. research on Sikh religion is being done by many scholars in different parts of the world, under teachers and evaluators who do not fully understand the Sikh faith or the Gurbani enshrined in SGGGS. This should provide an opportunity for proper research under learned scholars.

### *School of Sikh History Students*

So much needs to be revealed in Sikh history ! Sikh history is being distorted and misinterpreted. There is an urgent need to write an authentic history of the Sikhs. As it is, history has either been written by rulers of the day or those who wanted to attack Sikhs and their identity as an independent religion. There is an urgent need for writing Sikh history based on Sikh ideology and Sikh heritage.

### *School of Comparative Religions*

The need for comparative study of different religions, particularly by Sikh scholars and Granthis cannot be over-emphasised. If we want to establish our presence (*Pehchan*) in the world, our scholars have to be competent enough to take part in world religious meets and conferences and be capable of having meaningful, persuasive and convincing dialogue with all others, based on Gurbani.

### *School of Translation of SGGS in all global and Indian Languages*

The world is now is a global village. The message of universality, diversity and oneness of the creator and equality of human race enshrined in SGGS can only be spread if we have SGGS translated into all major languages of the world. This is a major but most essential task for missionary work. Also, to evaluate existing English translations on an accepted theological (*Bhav* meaning) form is required.

### *School of Sikh Missionary Institutions*

Firstly, there is need to have a top class Sikh Missionary college, which can meet requirements of the Sikh Faith, both in quality and quantity. The admission criteria should be at least a graduate with four years of extensive study and training programme in Sikh theology, Sikh ideology, Sikh history and pedagogy.

Secondly, a central affiliating body should be entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the working of all existing Missionary colleges, to bring them at par with the desired knowledge base, admission criteria, duration of training, testing, evaluation and certification.

### *School of Languages*

The school should have facilities for study of different languages. It will prove an important link with schools like that of translation and missionary

training. From the time of Guru Nanak (1469 AD) to 1849 or till the time British rule was established in the Punjab, official language of Punjab was Persian. In other words all Sikh history as recorded by court recorders or other authors in Persian. For proper missionary activity, this school should impart multi-lingual training to the incumbents.

### *School of Gurdwara Management*

The SGPC was created in 1925 “for efficient management of Sikh Gurdwaras and propagation of the Sikh Religion”. It did a wonderful job for the first 25 years. Thereafter, it started getting politicised, to the detriment of its main charter. For the past half a century, it is being called the 'mini parliament of Sikhs'. Its members are mostly budding politicians with little or no knowledge or interest in Sikhi or its well being or its propagation.

No wonder during elections to the SGPC today, various corrupt practices as prevailing in the national polity, including muscle and money power, alcohol, drugs and other conceivable unethical and immoral practices are being resorted to win elections at any cost. Candidates are selected on the basis of their “winability” rather than on the basis of a good moral character and Gurmat orientation.

Under such circumstances, most gurdwara management has gone off on a tangent : instead of being centres of Gurmat, learning they are becoming centres of *karam kinds*. A good training programme for gurdwara managers and research in the field may help us reverse the situation.

### *School of Gurus Lives*

There are too many imaginary (*Man-Gharat*) stories associated with lives of Guru Sahibans. It is very important is separate facts from mythological fiction. This school has its work really cut out !

### *School of Communications and Multimedia*

As mentioned earlier, communication skills are very important for an effective missionary. Media is an efficient and effective tool, use of which by Granthis must be introduced.

There can be many other ideas and suggestions. The main point is that the SGGSW University should work for the advancement of Sikh thought and theology. Merely naming the University after Sri Guru Granth Sahib does not serve any purpose.



# A Great Seva

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra at Mehrauli, Delhi has been dedicated to service of the Sikh community for nearly 30 years.



This is a wonderful charity that I have been lucky enough to be involved with during my entire life and I wanted more people in the UK, the USA and Canada to know what fantastic *seva* is being undertaken on behalf of the Panth at the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra ("SGGSVK"), Mehrauli.

Thousands of Sikh orphans from all across India have been given shelter at the SGGSVK where they are taught Gurmukhi, Santhiya and Kirtan as well as schooling in subjects such as Maths and English up to the age of 18. This has given a good start in life to these children and has even led to some of them going on to university for higher studies in subjects such as engineering and IT. These graduates usually choose to be closely involved with



the Kendra when they start working, thus guaranteeing continuing funds for the existing set of children at the institution.

I had it in my mind to do more for SGGSVK but to be completely honest, the *sevadaars* are doing such a great job, that there is little I

could possibly do to add to that. Wahe Guruji then gave me the idea that I could help raise their profile on the internet through sites such as Sikhnet, particularly amongst the global diaspora.

One of our main objectives is to generate awareness (if you were not already aware), of the amazing *seva* that is going on and has been going on here for nearly 30 years now. Please visit the orphanage when you are next in Delhi because I know the young children like nothing more than seeing *sangat* from abroad come to visit them. When you go to the Darbar Sahib, there are around 90 young boys doing beautiful *kirtan*: there are few places on earth where you will experience the same *anand* from listening to *kirtan*.

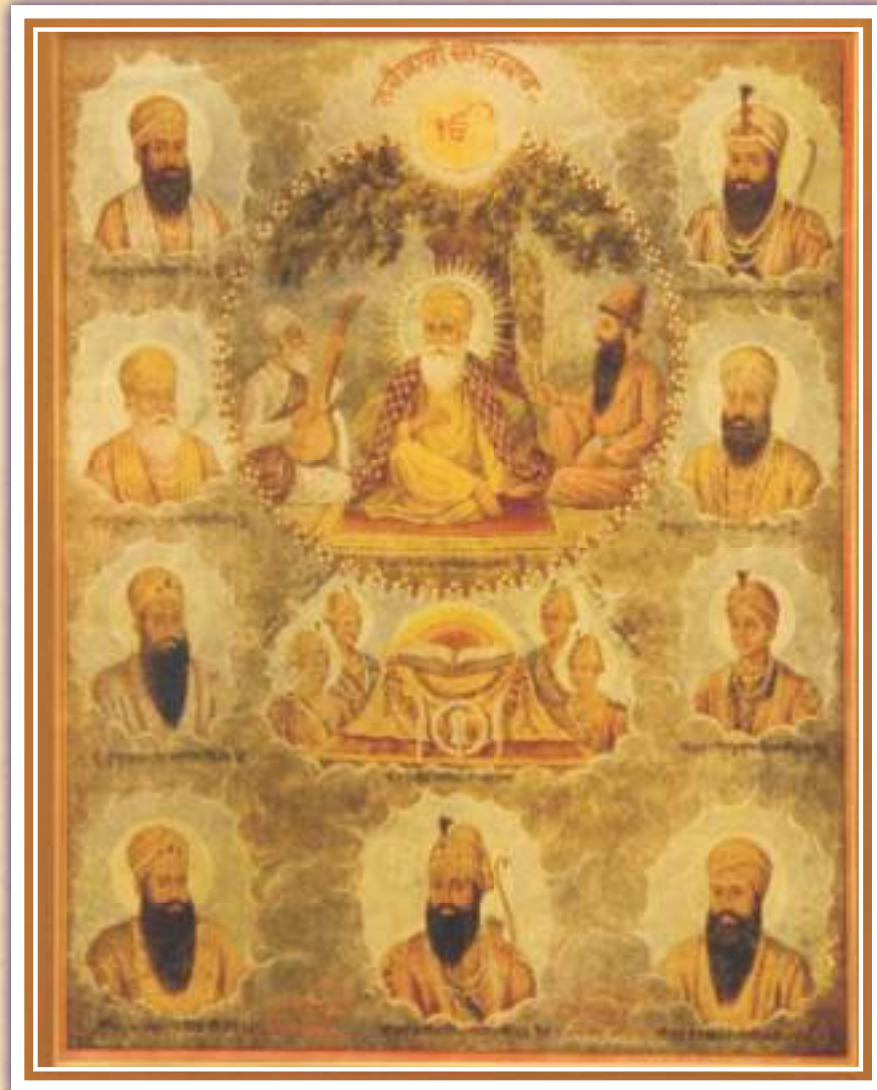
Sukhvinder Singh





# Guide to Sikh History & Traditions

With over 500 questions – and answers – compiled by Gurdeep Singh, this is being published in two parts.



◀ **Name the ten Sikh Gurus, in order.**

- ❖ Guru Nanak Dev ji (1469 - 1539)
- ❖ Guru Amardas ji (1479 - 1574)
- ❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji (1563 - 1606)
- ❖ Guru Har Rai ji (1630 - 1661)
- ❖ Guru Tegh Bahadur ji (1621 - 1675)
- ❖ Guru Angad Dev ji (1504 - 1552)
- ❖ Guru Ramdas ji (1534 - 1581)
- ❖ Guru Hargobind ji (1595 - 1644)
- ❖ Guru Harkrishan ji (1656 - 1664)
- ❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji (1666 - 1708).

◀ **Name the eternal Guru of the Sikhs.**

- ❖ Guru Granth Sahib ji and Guru Panth Khalsa.

◀ **When was Guru Nanak Dev ji born and where ?**

- ❖ 15 April 1469 AD in Talwandi (now in Pakistan : Nankana Saheb).

◀ **Name the parents of Guru Nanak Dev ji.**

- ❖ Father : Mehta Kalu ji
- ❖ Mother : Mata Tripta ji.

◀ **Who were Bebe Nanaki and Bhai Jai Ram ?**

- ❖ Bebe Nanaki was Guru Nanak Dev ji's older sister and Bhai Jai Ram was her husband.

◀ **Name the wife of Guru Nanak Dev ji.**

- ❖ Mata Sulakhani ji.

◀ **Name the sons of Guru Nanak Dev ji.**

- ❖ Baba Sri Chand ji
- ❖ Baba Lakhmi Das ji.

◀ **Which Guru established the first Gurdwara (Sangat) ? Where and when ?**

- ❖ Guru Nanak Dev ji at Kartarpur in 1521 AD.

◀ **What were Guru Nanak Dev ji's travels called ?**

- ❖ Udaasis.

◀ **Name the Muslim who accompanied Guru Nanak Dev ji with a rebab (a musical instrument invented by himself).**

- ❖ Bhai Mardana ji.



◀ **Where are the descendants of Mardana ?**

- ❖ In Ramdas, the city of Baba Buddha, and called Rababies or the people of Rebeck.

◀ **During his travels, Guru Nanak Dev ji went to Sayyadpur (now Eminabad) and stayed at a carpenter's house (considered low caste according to the Hindu caste system). Name the carpenter.**

- ❖ Bhai Laalo.

◀ **Who was the (high caste) local official there whose feast Guru Nanak Dev ji rejected ?**

- ❖ Malik Bhaago.

◀ **Where was the first missionary centre (Manji) established by Guru Nanak Dev ji ?**

- ❖ At Bhai Laalo's house in northern Punjab.

◀ **What was abode of the Jogis (Yogis) of Gorakhnath clan called ?**

- ❖ Gorakhmata (later Nanakmata).

◀ **Name the mountain where Guru Nanak Dev ji met the renowned 'Sidhas'.**

- ❖ Kailash Parbat (also known as Sumer Parbat).

◀ **Name the composition in Guru Granth Saheb ji that records the dialogues Guru Nanak Dev ji had with the 'Sidhas'.**

- ❖ Sidh Ghosht.

◀ **Who was the 'cannibal' whom Guru Nanak Dev ji met during his travels through the wilderness of Assam.**

- ❖ Kauda Rakhshash.

◀ **During his travels, whom did Guru Nanak Dev ji meet at Sangladeep (Ceylon) ?**

- ❖ Raja Shiv Nabh.

◀ **Who was founder of the Mughal dynasty in India ?**

- ❖ Babar.

◀ **Name the reigning Mughal ruler during Guru Nanak Dev ji's time.**

- ❖ Babar.

◀ **What are the four hymns by Guru Nanak alluding to the invasions by Babar (1483- 1530 AD) collectively known as in Sikh literature ?**

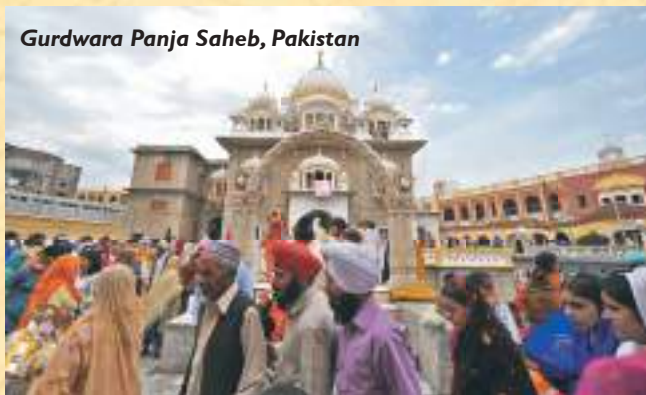
- ❖ Babarvani (Guru Nanak described the atrocities of Babar and his men in Punjab).

◀ **Where was Guru Nanak taken captive during Babar's invasion ?**

- ❖ Sayyadpur, now Eminabad, in Gujranwala district of Pakistan.

◀ **Where did Guru Nanak Devji meet Vali Kandhari ?**

- ❖ Hasan Abdal.



**Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Pakistan**

◀ **Name the gurdwara, now in Pakistan, which is at the place where Vali Kandhari's ego was broken.**

- ❖ Panja Sahib.

◀ **When and where did Guru Nanak Dev ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light)?**

- ❖ In 1539 at Kartarpur.

◀ **When and where was the Khalsa Panth created ?**

- ❖ On the day of Vaisakhi in 1699 at Keshgarh Saheb by Guru Gobind Singh ji.

◀ **What name did Guru Gobind Singh ji give to the newly created Sikh Community?**

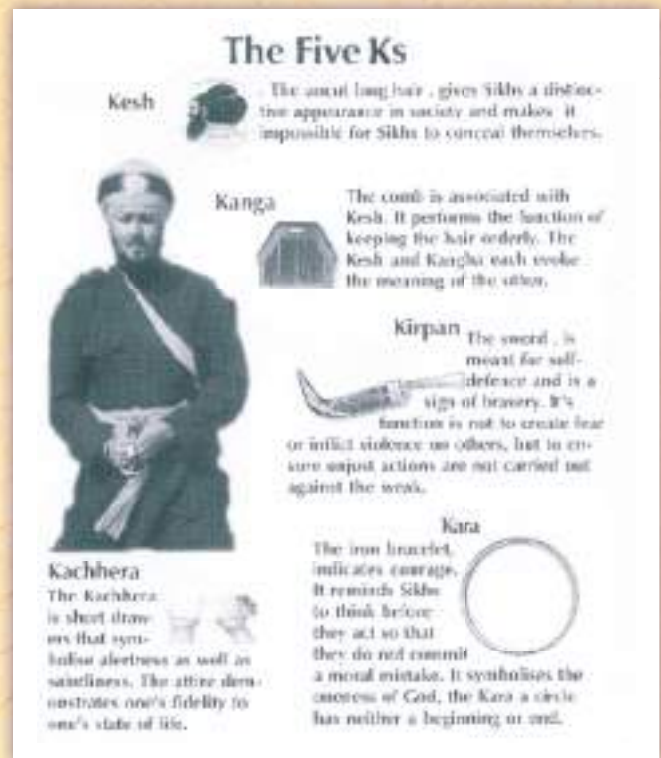
- ❖ Khalsa Panth.

◀ **Who were first 'Panj Pyaras' (the five beloved ones).**

- ❖ Bhai Daya Singh ji
- ❖ Bhai Dharam Singh ji
- ❖ Bhai Himmat Singh ji
- ❖ Bhai Mohkam Singh ji
- ❖ Bhai Saheb Singh Ji.

◀ **Name the five 'Ks' that every Sikh must always possess.**

- ❖ Kesh (unshorn hair)
- ❖ Kangha (comb)
- ❖ Kirpan (sword)
- ❖ Kaccha (short breeches)
- ❖ Kara (iron band / bangle).



◀ **Who is spiritual father of the Sikhs (Khalsa) ?**

- ❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji

◀ **Who is the spiritual mother of the Sikhs (Khalsa) ?**

- ❖ Mata Saheb Kaur ji

◀ **Where is foundation of the Khalsa ?**

- ❖ Anandpur Saheb

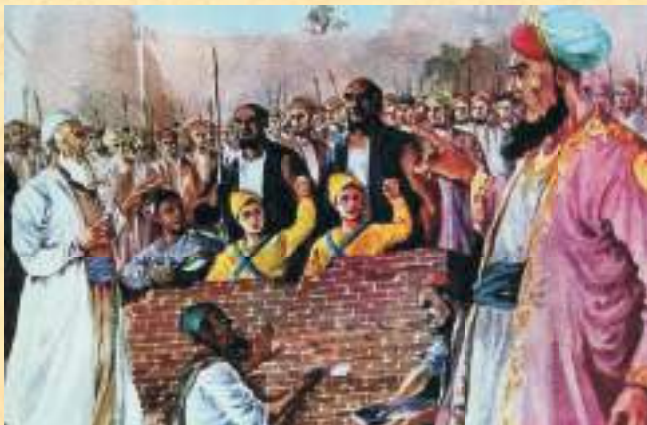
◀ **Who were the four Sahebzadas ?**

- ❖ The sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji.

◀ **Name the four Sahebzadas.**

- ❖ Baba Ajit Singh ji (1687 - 1704)
- ❖ Baba Jujhar Singh ji (1689 - 1704)
- ❖ Baba Zorawar Singh ji (1696 - 1704)
- ❖ Baba Fateh Singh ji (1698 - 1704).

- ◀ **Who was the eldest Sahebzada ?**
  - ❖ Baba Ajit Singh ji.
- ◀ **Who was the youngest Sahebzada ?**
  - ❖ Baba Fateh Singh ji
- ◀ **Name the Sahebzadas who were bricked alive.**
  - ❖ Baba Fateh Singh ji
  - ❖ Baba Zorawar Singh ji.
- ◀ **Name the Sahebzadas who achieved martyrdom in the battlefield of Chamkaur.**
  - ❖ Baba Ajit Singh ji
  - ❖ Baba Jujhar Singh ji
- ◀ **Which Gurdwara is at the place where the younger Sahebzadas were bricked alive.**
  - ❖ Fatehgarh Saheb ('Fort of Victory')



- ◀ **When did Guru Gobind Singhji receive the news of the martyrdom of the younger Sahebzadas ?**
  - ❖ While he was in Lakhi Jungle.
- ◀ **What was his prophecy then ?**
  - ❖ On hearing the news, he pulled a shrub from its roots with his arrow and said: "thus will this tyrannous rule be destroyed, root and branch."
- ◀ **What is the Sikh salutation ?**
  - ❖ Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh
- ◀ **What is the Sikh Jaikara ?**
  - ❖ Jo Boley So Nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal

- ◀ **What is the literal meaning of the word 'Sikh' ?**
  - ❖ Disciple
- ◀ **What is the literal meaning of the word 'Singh' ?**
  - ❖ Lion
- ◀ **What is the literal meaning of the word 'Kaur' ?**
  - ❖ Princess
- ◀ **Name the five prayers that comprise 'Nitnem', daily prayer of the Sikhs (according to the SGPC Rehat Maryada).**
  - ❖ At (Dawn - Amrit Wela)
  - ❖ Japji Saheb
  - ❖ Jaap Saheb
  - ❖ Sawaiye



- ◀ **Evening (Dusk)**
  - ❖ Rehras Saheb which comprises Sodar, Choupai Saheb, six (first 5 and 40th) Pauris of Anand Saheb, Mundawani, Salok Mahala 2, concluding hymn of Guru Granth Saheb.
- ◀ **Night (before retiring)**
  - ❖ (Kirtan) Sohaila.
- ◀ **Where has the starting 'Pauri' of 'Ardas' i.e. from 'Sri Bhagauti Ji sahay ...to... sab thain hoe sahay' taken from ?**
  - ❖ It is the first 'Pauri' of 'Bhagauti Ki Vaar' (or 'Chandi Ki Vaar') taken from the 'Dasaam Granth'.



◀ Referring to the daily Sikh 'Ardas' who were the various Sikh martyrs remembered ?

- ❖ Bhai Mati Das: (*Aariyaan naal cheere gaye*).
- ❖ Bhai Mani Singh: (*Band band kataye*).
- ❖ Bhai Taru Singh: (*Khopariaan utarwaiyaan*).
- ❖ Bhai Shahbaz Singh: (*Charakhariyaan te chare*).

◀ Which 'Baanis' of 'Nitnem' are not included in Guru Granth Saheb, but are taken from the 'Dasam Granth' ?

- ❖ Jaap Saheb
- ❖ Sawaye
- ❖ Choupai Saheb (included in Rehras Saheb).

◀ Name the 'Five Takhts'

- ❖ Akal Takht, Amritsar
- ❖ Patna Saheb, Patna
- ❖ Keshgarh Saheb, Anandpur
- ❖ Hazur Saheb, Nander
- ❖ Talwandi Sabo (Bhatinda).



Talwand Sabo (Bhatinda)

◀ Which Guru begin formal teaching of the 'Gurmukhi' script ?

- ❖ Guru Angad Dev ji.

◀ Which Guru institutionised concept of the shared meal into 'Guru-Ka-Langar' ?

- ❖ Guru Amardas ji

◀ Which Guru lived the longest?

- ❖ Guru Amardas ji

◀ Who had the tank excavated at Amritsar?

- ❖ Guru Ramdas ji

◀ Which Guru built Harmandar Saheb (The Golden Temple) ?

- ❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji

◀ Which Guru compiled the Guru Granth Saheb (The Adi Granth, then known as Pothi Saheb) ?

- ❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji.

◀ When was first compilation of Guru Granth Saheb installed in Harmandar Saheb ?

- ❖ 1604 AD.

◀ Who was appointed as first Granthi of Guru Granth Saheb ?

- ❖ Baba Buddha ji.



- ◀ **Where is original copy of Guru Granth Saheb placed ?**
  - ❖ At Kartarpur.
- ◀ **How many pages does the standard printed volume of Guru Granth Saheb contain ?**
  - ❖ 1430 pages.
- ◀ **Guru Granth Saheb contains the compositions of how many Gurus ?**
  - ❖ Six Gurus : first five Gurus and the ninth Guru.
- ◀ **When did Guru Granth Saheb get 'Guru Gaddi' (Guruship) ?**
  - ❖ 3 October 1708 AD.
- ◀ **Which Guru was placed on a red-hot iron plate and burning hot sand poured on his body ?**
  - ❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji.
- ◀ **Which Guru is titled 'Shahidaan de Sirtaj' ?**
  - ❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji, the pioneer and champion of martyrdom in Sikh history.
- ◀ **Who first placed sheets of copper gilt on Harmandir Saheb ?**
  - ❖ Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- ◀ **Which Guru created the concept of 'Miri-Piri' ?**
  - ❖ Guru Hargobind ji.
- ◀ **Which Guru was beheaded by the Mughals ?**
  - ❖ Guru Tegh Bahadur ji.
- ◀ **Which Guru is called 'Hind di Chadar' ?**
  - ❖ Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji offered his life to protect the Hindu faith.



- ◀ **What is 'Simran' ?**
  - ❖ Contemplation of Almighty God.
- ◀ **What is the Sikh marriage ceremony called ?**
  - ❖ Anand Karaj.
- ◀ **How many 'lawans' are recited during the Sikh marriage ?**
  - ❖ Four.



- ◀ **How much income must every Sikh contribute for religious purposes ?**
  - ❖ One-tenth (called *Daswandh*).
- ◀ **How old was Guru Nanak Dev ji when he passed away and transferred the 'Divine Light' over to Guru Angad Dev ji ?**
  - ❖ Seventy years.
- ◀ **In which year was Guru Angad Dev ji born ?**
  - ❖ In 1504 AD.
- ◀ **What was the original name of Guru Angad Dev ji ?**
  - ❖ Bhai Lehna.
- ◀ **Name the father of Bhai Lehna ji.**
  - ❖ Bhai Pheru.
- ◀ **Who was Mata Khevi ji ?**
  - ❖ Wife of Guru Angad Dev ji, and mentioned in Guru Granth Saheb ji.
- ◀ **Name the children of Guru Angad Dev ji.**
  - ❖ sons: Bhai Datu and Bhai Dasu.
  - ❖ daughter: Bibi Amro.

◀ **In which year was Guru Angad Devji appointed as Guru ?**

❖ 1539 AD.

◀ **Where did Guru Angad Dev ji stay during the years that Guru Amardas ji served him ?**

Khadur Saheb.

◀ **Who was Humayun, and why was did he pay a visit to Guru Angad Dev ji ?**

❖ Humayun was Babar's son. Having been defeated by Sher Shah, he was fleeing India via Lahore and knowing the reputation of Guru Angad Dev ji, came to meet him at Khadur for his blessings.

◀ **When did Guru Angad Dev ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light)?**

❖ In 1552 AD.

◀ **When was Guru Amardas ji born ?**

❖ In 1479 AD.

◀ **Name the parents of Guru Amardas ji.**

❖ Bhai Tej Bhan and Mata Lakhmi.

◀ **Name the wife of Guru Amardas ji.**

❖ Bibi Mansa Devi.

◀ **Name the children of Guru Amardas ji.**

❖ 2 sons: Baba Mohan and Baba Mohri.  
❖ 2 daughters: Bibi Dani and Bibi Bhani.

◀ **Who was Bibi Amro ji ?**

❖ She was the daughter of Guru Angad Dev ji and daughter-in-law of the brother of Guru Amardas ji.

◀ **How old was Guru Amardas ji when he met Guru Angad Dev ji ?**

❖ 61 years old.

◀ **For how many years did Guru Amardas ji serve Guru Angad Dev ji ?**

❖ 12 years.

◀ **Explain the inter-family relationships of the Gurus after Guru Amardas.**

❖ Guru Ramdas ji was the son-in-law of Guru Amardas ji

❖ Guru Arjan Dev ji was the son of Guru Ramdas ji

❖ Guru Hargobind ji was the son of Guru Arjan Dev ji

❖ Guru Har Rai ji was the grandson of Guru Hargobind ji

❖ Guru Harkrishan ji was the son of Guru Har Rai ji

❖ Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was the son of Guru Hargobind ji

❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji was the son of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji.

◀ **Which was the river that Guru Amardas ji walked to, to get water for Guru Angad Dev ji's bath ?**

❖ River Beas.



Upper reaches of River Beas

◀ **When was Guru Amardas ji appointed as Guru ?**

❖ 1552 AD.

◀ **Name the eldest son of Guru Angad Dev ji?**

❖ Bhai Datu.

◀ **Which city was founded by Guru Amardas ji, after being appointed as Guru?**

❖ Goindwal.

◀ **What is a baoli ?**

❖ A well with steps proceeding down to the water level.



Baoli at Anandpur Saheb

- ◀ **When was the Baoli with 84 steps completed by Guru Amardas ji in Goindval ?**
  - ❖ In 1559 AD.
- ◀ **Who established the system of preachers called 'masands' ?**
  - ❖ Guru Amardas ji.
- ◀ **In which year did Emperor Akbar visit Guru Amardas ji ?**
  - ❖ 1567 AD.
- ◀ **Why did Guru Amardas ji refuse Emperor Akbar's offering of village revenues for the Guru-ka-langar ?**
  - ❖ As this must be community supported and depend only on offerings of the devout.



Akbar at Guru ka Langar

- ◀ **What did Akbar have to do before attending discourse with Guru Amardas ji ?**
  - ❖ To partake Guru ka langar.
- ◀ **Which three special days were declared by Guru Amardas ji when Sikhs were to congregate at the Guru's place to hear His words ?**
  - ❖ Baisakhi (13 April), Maghi (1st day of Magha, mid-January) and Diwali (in October/November).
- ◀ **Guru Amardas ji opposed the practice of Purdah. What is Purdah ?**
  - ❖ Wearing of veils by women.
- ◀ **Guru Amardas ji opposed the practice of Sati. What is Sati ?**
  - ❖ The practice of burning widows on their husband's funeral pyre.
- ◀ **How many missionaries ('masands') did Guru Amardasji train and send out to various places? How many were women?**
  - ❖ 146 missionaries, of which 52 were women. (Note: at one time, Afghanistan and Kashmir were under the jurisdiction of women masands.)
- ◀ **In which year did Guru Amardas ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?**
  - ❖ In 1574 AD.
- ◀ **In which year was Guru Ramdas ji born ?**
  - ❖ 1534 AD.
- ◀ **Name the parents of Guru Ramdas ji.**
  - ❖ Hari Das and Anup Devi.
- ◀ **What was Guru Ramdas ji's wife's name ?**
  - ❖ Bibi Bhani ji (daughter of Guru Amardas ji).
- ◀ **What was the original name of Guru Ramdas ji ?**
  - ❖ Bhai Jetha.
- ◀ **Name the three sons of Guru Ramdas ji.**
  - ❖ Prithi Chand (eldest)
  - ❖ Mahadeo
  - ❖ Arjan Mal (later Guru Arjan Dev ji).



◀ **When and where did Guru Ramdas ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?**

❖ In 1581 AD at Goindval.

◀ **In which year was Guru Arjan Dev ji born ?**

❖ In 1563 AD.

◀ **What was Guru Arjan Dev ji's wife's name ?**

❖ Mata Ganga ji.

◀ **Name the only son of Guru Arjan Dev ji.**

❖ Hargobind.

◀ **Name the son of Prithi Chand.**

❖ Meharban.

◀ **When was first construction of Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) completed ?**

❖ 1589 AD.

◀ **Which Guru taught obedience to Satta and Balwand when they struck at work ?**

Guru Arjan Dev ji.

◀ **Who was Bhai Gurdas ?**

❖ Nephew (son of younger brother) of Guru Amardas ji. He was one of the most learned of Sikhs and his writings are still greatly respected. The copy of Guru Granth Sahib at Kartarpur is written in his hand.

◀ **How was Bhai Gurdasji a relative of Guru Arjan Dev ji ?**

❖ He was cousin of Bibi Bhaani ji, who was daughter of Guru Amardas ji, wife of Guru Ramdas ji, and mother of Guru Arjan Dev ji.

◀ **Which Guru initiated Bhai Gurdas ji into Sikhism ?**

❖ Guru Ramdas ji.

◀ **Whom did Guru Arjan Dev ji dictate the Adi Granth to ?**

❖ Bhai Gurdas ji.

◀ **In which year did Bhai Gurdas die ?**

❖ 1629 AD.

◀ **When did Akbar die ?**

❖ 17 October 1605 AD.

◀ **Under which Mughal Emperor's role was Guru Arjan Dev ji tortured on a red-hot iron plate ?**

❖ Jehangir.

◀ **Where and when did Guru Arjan Devji achieve martyrdom ?**

❖ In Lahore on 25 May 1606 AD.

◀ **Name the Gurdwara, now in Pakistan, which stands at the place where Guru Arjan Dev ji was martyred.**

❖ Dera Saheb (see below)



◀ **In which year was Guru Hargobind ji born ?**

❖ In 1595 AD.

◀ **Name the wives of Guru Hargobind ji.**

❖ Bibi Damodri, Bibi Mahadevi and Bibi Nanaki.

◀ **How many sons did Guru Hargobind ji have ?**

❖ Five:

Baba Gurditta (born of Bibi Damodri)

Baba Suraj Mal (born of Bibi Mahadevi)

Baba Ani Rai (born of Bibi Nanaki)

Baba Atal Rai (born of Bibi Nanaki)

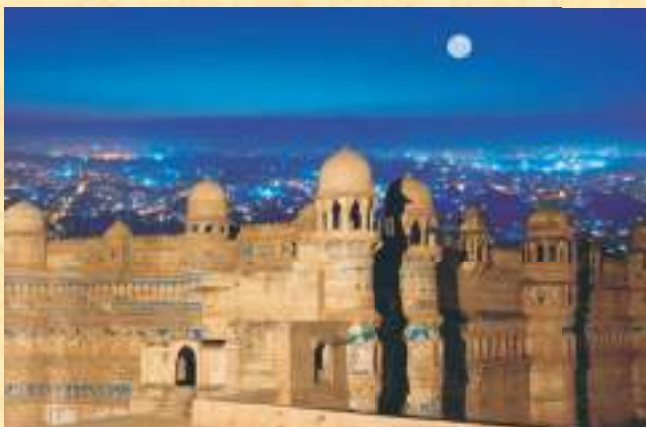
(Guru) Tegh Bahadur (born of Bibi Nanaki).

◀ **Name the daughter of Guru Hargobind ji ?**

❖ Bibi Viro (born of Bibi Damodri).



- ◀ How high is the tower of Baba Atal (built in memory of Baba Atal in Amritsar) ?
  - ❖ 9 storeys.
- ◀ Where was Guru Hargobind ji sent as a state prisoner ?
  - ❖ Fort of Gwalior.



Gwalior fort overlooks the city.

- ◀ How many Kings and princes already imprisoned in the Fort of Gwalior were freed as asked by Guru Hargobind ji ?
  - ❖ 52.



- ◀ Guru Hargobindji donned the sword as symbols of twin powers. Name them.
  - ❖ Miri (Temporal Power) and Piri (Spiritual Power).
- ◀ Name the fortification that Guru Hargobind ji built in Amritsar.
  - ❖ Lohgarh.
- ◀ What is the literal meaning of Akal Takht ?
  - ❖ Throne of the Almighty.
- ◀ Who built the Akal Takht (then called Akal Bunga) ?
  - ❖ Guru Hargobind ji.
- ◀ When did Guru Hargobind ji build Akal Takht (Akal Bunga) in Amritsar ?
  - ❖ 1609 AD.
- ◀ Why did Guru Hargobind Saheb ji build the Akal Takht directly across from Harmandar Saheb ?
  - ❖ To represent the unity of spiritual and secular (military) affairs. Akal Takht (*miri*) was complementary to Harmandar Saheb (*piri*).
- ◀ When did Jehangir die ?
  - ❖ 28 October 1627 AD.

◀ In which year was the first battle fought between Emperor Shah Jahan and Guru Hargobind Saheb ji ?

- ❖ 1634 AD : the Emperor sent an army of 7000 cavalry under the command of Mukhlis Khan, to capture the Guru. In the ensuing battle, the Guru's forces emerged victorious with Mukhlis Khan killed in single combat. This battle marked turning point as the Sikhs now turned militant in reaction to Mughal persecution.

◀ How many battles did Guru Hargobind Saheb fight against the Mughal armies of Shah Jahan ?

- ❖ Six battles (all won).

◀ Who were the two masands of Kabul bringing choice steeds (horses) of high pedigree to Guru Hargobind Saheb?

- ❖ Bakht Mal and Tara Chand.

◀ Name the reigning Mughal rulers during Guru Hargobind ji's time.

- ❖ Jehangir and Shah Jahan.

◀ Name the person who recovered the Kabul horses from the Mughals.

- ❖ Bhai Bidhi Chand.



◀ What were names of the two horses which Bidhi Chand rescued from the stables of the governor of Lahore ?

- ❖ Dilbaag and Gulbaag.

◀ Who recited the correct pronunciation ('Shudh Paath') of Japji Saheb to Guru Hargobind ji ?

- ❖ Bhai Gopala ji.

◀ How many Gurus did Baba Budha ji serve ?

- ❖ Six.

◀ How old was Baba Budha ji when he passed away in 1631 ?

- ❖ 125 years old.

◀ In which year did Guru Hargobind ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?

- ❖ In 1644 AD.

◀ In which year and where was Guru Har Raiji born ?

- ❖ In 1630 AD at Kiratpur.

◀ Name the father of Guru Har Rai ji.

- ❖ Baba Gurditta ji.

◀ Name the brother of Guru Har Raiji.

- ❖ Dhir Mal.

◀ Name the wife of Guru Har Rai ji.

- ❖ Krishan Kaur.

◀ How many sons did Guru Har Rai ji have ?

- ❖ Ram Rai
- ❖ (Guru) Harkrishan.

◀ Who was punished (excommunicated from the community) for misinterpreting Gurbani and displaying miracles before Aurangzeb ?

- ❖ Ram Rai, son of Guru Har Rai ji.

◀ In which year did Guru Har Rai ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?

- ❖ 1661 AD.

◀ In which year was Guru Harkrishan ji born ?

- ❖ 1656 AD.

◀ How old was Guru Harkrishan ji when he received the Guruship ?

- ❖ Five years.

◀ Which Gurdwara stands at the place of Mirza Raja Jai Singh's bungalow where Guru Harkrishan ji stayed at Delhi ?

- ❖ Gurdwara Bangla Saheb.



*Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, New Delhi.*

- ◀ In which year did Guru Harkrishan ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?
  - ❖ 1664 AD.
- ◀ How old was Guru Harkrishan ji when he became 'Jyoti Jyot' ?
  - ❖ Eight years old.
- ◀ Which Gurdwara stands at the place where Guru Harkrishan ji's body was cremated after he became 'Jyoti Jyot' ?
  - ❖ Gurdwara Bala Sahib.
- ◀ What were the last words of Guru Harkrishan ji announcing the next Guru ?
  - ❖ "Baba Bakale", which meant that his successor (his grand uncle) would be found at the village of Bakala.
- ◀ How many members of the Sodhi family gathered at the village of Bakala claiming that they were the Guru successor as named by Guru Harkrishan ji ?
  - ❖ Twenty two
- ◀ Who found the true Guru in Guru Tegh Bahadur ji and proclaimed him to the world ?
  - ❖ Bhai Makhan Shah.
- ◀ In which year and where was Guru Tegh Bahadur ji born ?
  - ❖ In 1621 AD at Amritsar.

- ◀ What was Guru Tegh Bahadur ji's wife's name ?
  - ❖ Mata Gujri ji.
- ◀ How many children did Guru Tegh Bahadur ji have ?
  - ❖ One son, Gobind Rai, who later became Guru Gobind Singh ji.
- ◀ Who denied Guru Tegh Bahadur ji entry to the Golden Temple ?
  - ❖ The Sodhi Mahants.
- ◀ At Kamrup (Assam), when the two forces came to a truce brought about by Guru Tegh Bahadur ji ?
  - ❖ The forces of Raja Ram Singh (a Rajput General of Aurangzeb) who led an expedition against the Ahom King.
- ◀ Where did Guru Tegh Bahadur ji get a massive memorial built ?
  - ❖ At Dhubri in Western Assam.



◀ **Name leader of the delegation of 500 Kashmiri Brahmins who came to Guru Tegh Bahadur ji for help.**

- ❖ Pandit Kirpa Ram (later the Sanskrit teacher of Guru Gobind Singh ji and eventually a Khalsa who was martyred in the battle of Chamkaur).



◀ **How old was Gobind Rai (Guru Gobind Singh) then ?**

- ❖ Nine years old.

◀ **Where and when did Guru Tegh Bahadur ji achieve martyrdom ?**

- ❖ In Delhi on 11 November 1675 AD.

◀ **Which Mughal Emperor ordered Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji to be beheaded at Chandni Chowk, Delhi?**

- ❖ Aurangzeb.

◀ **Who were the other three Sikhs martyred along with Guru Tegh Bahadur by order of Aurangzeb ?**

- ❖ Bhai Mati Das : sawn into two halves
- ❖ Bhai Sati Das : burnt in cotton wrapped around his body
- ❖ Bhai Dayala : boiled in hot water.

◀ **Which Gurdwara stands at the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was beheaded ?**

- ❖ Gurdwara Sis Ganj, Chandni Chowk, Delhi.



◀ **Who cremated Guru Tegh Bahadur ji's body after he was beheaded ?**

- ❖ Bhai Lakhi Shah.

◀ **Which Gurdwara stands at the place where the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was cremated ?**

- ❖ Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, Delhi.

◀ **Who took Guru Tegh Bahadur ji's head to Anandpur ?**

- ❖ Bhai Jaita ji.

◀ **Which Gurdwara stands at the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur ji's head was cremated ?**

- ❖ Gurdwara Sis Ganj, at Anandpur Saheb.

◀ **Who built Gurdwara Rakab Ganj and Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Delhi ?**

- ❖ Sardar Baghel Singh in 1790 AD.



◀ **When was Guru Gobind Singh ji born and where ?**

❖ 22 December 1666 in Patna.



*Prakash Diwas being celebrated at Gurudwara Patna Sahib*

◀ **In what year did Bhai Nandlal Goyaa go to Anandpur Saheb to pay homage to Guru Gobind Singh ji ?**

❖ 1682.

◀ **The poems of Bhai Nandlaal Goyaa were dedicated to whom ?**

❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji.

◀ **Which was the first battle fought between Guru Gobind Singh ji and the hill chiefs ?**

❖ Battle of Bhangani, fought in 1687 against the hill chiefs led by Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur.

◀ **In which battle did Guru Gobind Singh ji's Pathans leave him at a very critical point ?**

❖ Battle of Bhangani.



◀ **How many sons did Peer Budhu Shah have? How many of them died in the battle of Bhangani ?**

❖ He had four sons, two of whom died in that battle.

◀ **What did Guru Gobind Singh ji give Peer Budhu Shah in remembrance of services rendered in the battle at Bhangani ?**

❖ A kanga with some of his broken hair, a kirpan and a turban.

◀ **At the battle of Anandpur, who cut off the head of Raja Kesari Chand ?**

❖ Bhai Ude Singh.

◀ **What was the name of the Sikh who drove a spear into the elephant's head at the battle of Anandpur ?**

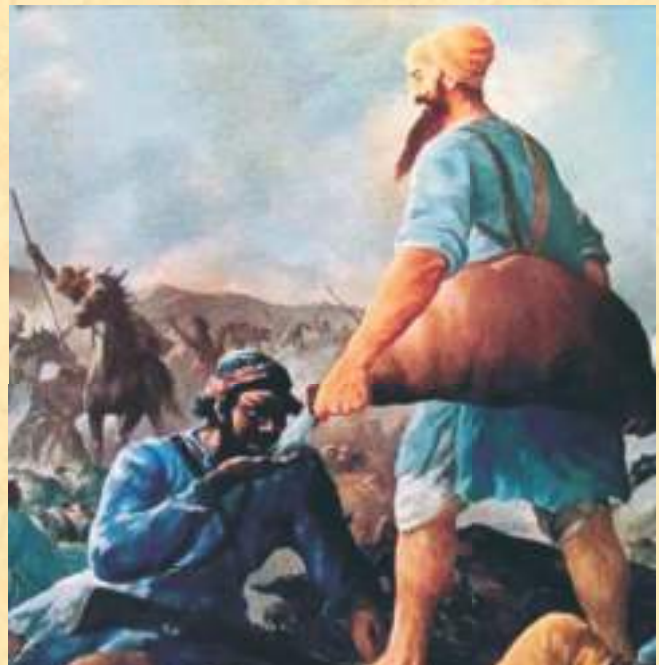
❖ Bhai Bachittar Singh.

◀ **Where did Raja Gummand Chand die ?**

❖ Battle of Anandpur Saheb.

◀ **In the battle of Anandpur Saheb, who gave water to all dying soldiers irrespective of whether they were Sikhs or Muslims ?**

❖ Bhai Kanhaiya (later Kanhaiya Singh).



*Bhai Kanhaiya*

◀ **When and where did Guru Gobind Singhji separate from his mother and two younger sons before going to the fort of Chamkaur ?**

❖ 20 December 1704, at Sirsa River.

◀ **Who betrayed Mata Gujri ji and the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji to the Nawab of Sirhind ?**

❖ Gangu Brahmin.

◀ **Where were Mata Gujri ji and the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji kept after being imprisoned ?**

❖ Saman Burj (tower), Sirhind.

◀ **From which fort did the Panj Pyare order Guru Gobind Singh ji to leave for his safety ?**

❖ Fort of Chamkaur.

◀ **Name the two Pathans who helped Guru Gobind Singh ji march through the Mughal camp.**

❖ Nabi Khan and Gani Khan.

◀ **Who were the 'Chaali Mukte' i.e. the forty immortals referred to in the Sikh 'Ardas' ?**

❖ Those forty Sikhs who first denied Guru Gobind Singh ji to be their Guru and after repentance, were martyred fighting valiantly near the lake of Khidrana, also called Isharsar, on 29 December 1705. Guru Gobind Singh ji blessed them as Chali Mukte, the 'Forty Immortals'. Khidrana soon became Muktsar - the 'Pool of Liberation'.

◀ **Who was leader of the 'Chaali' (40) Mukte ?**

❖ Bhai Maha Singh ji.

◀ **Who was Mai Bhago ji ?**

❖ Mai Bhago ji who led the forty Sikhs (*Chaali Mukte*) back to Guru Gobind Singh ji and was also injured in the battle. After 1708, she retired to the south, settled down at Jinvara, 11 km from Bidar, now marked by Gurdwara Tap Asthan Mai Bhago.



◀ **Who once boasted about his bravery to Guru Gobind Singh ji ?**

❖ Bhai Dalla.

◀ **What is the significance of Patna Saheb ?**

❖ Birth place of Guru Gobind Singh ji.

◀ **Who built Harmandir Saheb at Patna (Patna Saheb) ?**

❖ Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

◀ **What is the significance of Keshgarh Saheb (one of the 5 Takhts) ?**

❖ Khalsa Panth was created here on Vaisakhi of 1699 AD by Guru Gobind Singh ji.

◀ **What is significance of the word "Khalsa" ?**

❖ "Khalsa" as a technical term, in the days of Mughal administration, meant "inalienable lands or revenues directly looked after or administered directly by the king." Guru Gobind Singh applied this word to those whom he had baptised as Singhs/Kaurs. Khalsa is being 'of his own'.

◀ **What is the significance of Damdama Saheb ?**

❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji had the Guru Granth Saheb written here, also called 'Guru Ki Kashi'.

◀ **What does 'Damdama' mean ?**

❖ Resting place.

◀ **Whom did Guru Gobind Singhji dictate the Guru Granth Saheb to ?**

❖ Bhai Mani Singh ji.

◀ **When did Aurangzeb die ?**

❖ 3 March 1707 AD.

◀ **Who was the eldest son of Aurangzeb and why didn't he become the next Emperor ?**

❖ Muhammad Sultan had died before Aurangzeb on 14 December 1676.

◀ **Name the third son of Aurangzeb who proclaimed himself the Emperor of India after the death of Aurangzeb.**

❖ Muhammad Azam.

◀ **Who was second son of Aurangzeb, heir-apparent and who begged Guru Gobind Singh ji's assistance against his brother, Muhammad Azam.**

❖ Prince Muhammad Muazzam (later became Emperor Muhammad Muazzam Bahadur Shah).

◀ **What was the relationship between Akbar, Jehangir, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb ?**

❖ Jehangir was Akbar's son, Shah Jahan's father and Aurangzeb's grandfather.

❖ (Akbar → Jehangir → Shah Jahan → Aurangzeb)

◀ **Origin of the 'Zaffarnama' ?**



Guru Gobind Singh ji wrote this 'Epistle of Victory' in Persian to Aurangzeb.

◀ **In which battle did Guru Gobind Singhji assist Muhammad Muazzam ?**

❖ Battle of Jajau (18 June 1707).

◀ **In which year did Guru Gobind Singh ji become 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) ?**

❖ 1708 AD.

◀ **What is the significance of Hazur Saheb in the Deccan ?**

❖ Guru Gobind Singh ji became 'Jyoti Jyot' (immersed in the Eternal Light) here in 1708 AD.

◀ **Who built the Gurdwara at Hazur Saheb ?**

❖ Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

**Gurdwara Hazur Saheb**



◀ **On the banks of which river is Hazur Saheb located ?**

❖ River Godavari.

◀ **Name the cities associated with the Gurus ?**

❖ Guru Nanak Dev Ji : Kartarpur

❖ Guru Angad Dev Ji : Khadur Saheb

❖ Guru Amardas Ji : Goindval Saheb

❖ Guru Ramdas Ji : Amritsar

❖ Guru Arjan Dev Ji : Tarn Taran, Kartarpur (Jullunder), Sri Hargobindpur

❖ Guru Hargobind Ji : Kiratpur, Mehrey



- ❖ Guru Har Rai Ji : Bagat and Chiryaghar of Kiratpur
- ❖ Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji : Anandpur (originally known as Chak Nanaki)
- ❖ Guru Gobind Singh Ji : Paonta Saheb, Guru Ka Lahore.

◀ **Name the six forts of Anandpur.**

- ❖ Anandgarh
- ❖ Lohgarh
- ❖ Fatehgarh
- ❖ Holgarh
- ❖ Keshgarh
- ❖ Taragarh.

◀ **Name the five cardinal vices.**

- ❖ *Kam* (lust, fornication)
- ❖ *Krodh* (anger, wrath)
- ❖ *Lobh* (greed, hoarding)
- ❖ *Moh* (worldly attachment)
- ❖ *Ahankar* (conceit, egoism, pride)

◀ **What are the virtuous counterparts of these five vices ?**

- ❖ Self Control (of *Kam*)
- ❖ Forgiveness (of *Krodh*)
- ❖ Contentment (of *Lobh*)

- ❖ Love of God (of *Moh*)
- ❖ Humility (of *Ahankar*)

◀ **Which are the four main apostate acts ('Kuraihats') prohibited for Sikhs ?**

- ❖ Shorning of hair
- ❖ Eating kuttha meat
- ❖ Adultery
- ❖ Use of tobacco or other intoxicants.

◀ **Name ten historic Gurdwaras, now in Pakistan.**

- ❖ Nankana Saheb
- ❖ Panja Saheb
- ❖ Bal Leela
- ❖ Chhevin Patshai
- ❖ Dehra Saheb
- ❖ Kyara Saheb
- ❖ Maal Ji Saheb
- ❖ Pati Saheb
- ❖ Sacha Soda
- ❖ Tambu Saheb

◀ **Name the five 'sarovars' of Amritsar.**

- ❖ Amritsar
- ❖ Kolsar
- ❖ Santokhsar
- ❖ Bibeksar
- ❖ Ramsar.



Nankana Saheb