



THE SIKH GURUS

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Embodiments of the *Shabda*

Dr SS BHATTI



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SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB - THE ETERNAL GURU

DEDICATED

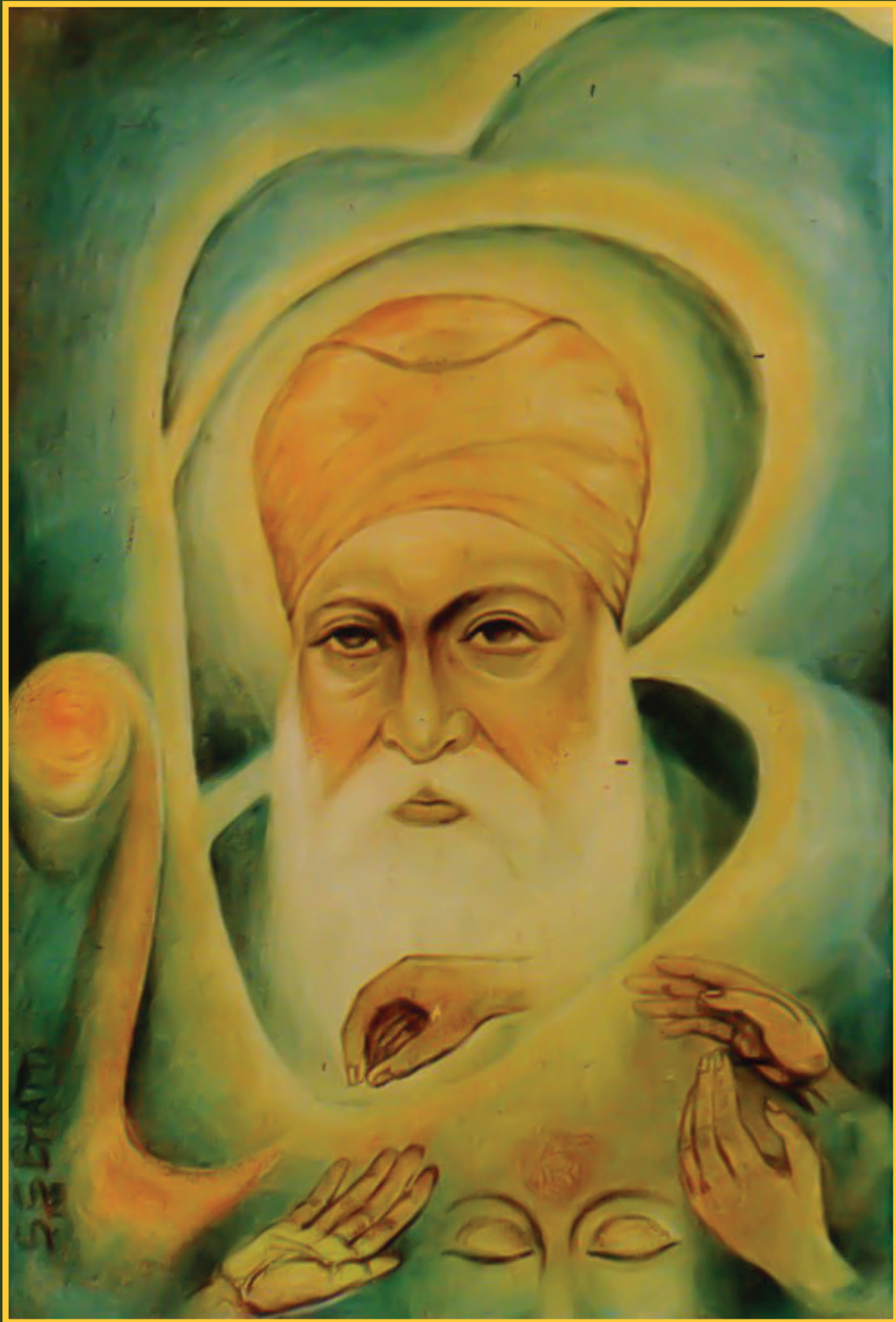
TO

My grandfather Sardar Hira Singh Bhatti [1855 – 1945] whose unswerving faith in divine dispensation was his staple diet and he continued reading Sukhmani Sahib all his life to feed his hungry soul

AND

My father Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti [03 January 1905 – 18 September 1993] who injected into his father's sublime trust huge doses of rationality to ensure objective study rather than mere reading of Gurbani. This self-devised approach helped him in building up an unwavering faith in Guru Nanak's timeless-universal exhortations for the sure-footed treading of the Path of Righteousness

1. AS A RESULT OF THE PSYCHO-SPIRITUAL GROOMING THAT I HAD RECEIVED IN MY CHILDHOOD DIRECTLY FROM MY FATHER AND INDIRECTLY FROM MY GRANDFATHER I GREW UP TO STUDY GURBANI MYSELF AND PLACE IT IN A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE AS A BOON OF MY FORMAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ARCHITECTURE. SIDE BY SIDE LEARNING THE ARCHITECTOINCS OF URDU AND ENGLISH POETRY BY WIDE READING, RESEARCH, AND PRACTICE VIS-A-VIS THE STUDY OF MYSTICISM I WAS ABLE TO GRASP THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR RELIGIONS. I SUBSEQUENTLY VERSIFIED MY MULTI- AND INTER-FAITH UNDERSTANDING ORIGINALLY IN URDU. IN ORTDER TO EXTEND ITS OUTREACH TO WIDER AUDIENCES, I THEN PRODUCED ITS POETIC RENDITION IN ENGLISH. THESE SUCCICNCT COUPLETS CAN BE READ TO ADVANTAGE IN THE FACSIMILE OF THIS BOOK.
2. IF INTERESTED TO KNOW THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND BELIEFS, YOU MAY LIKE TO READ THE BIOGRAPHICAL SKECTHES OF MY GRANDFATHER AND FATHER APPEARING AT THE END OF THIS TREATISE.



Guru Nanak Dev Ji Mixed Media Painting by Dr SS Bhatti



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POETIC RENDERING

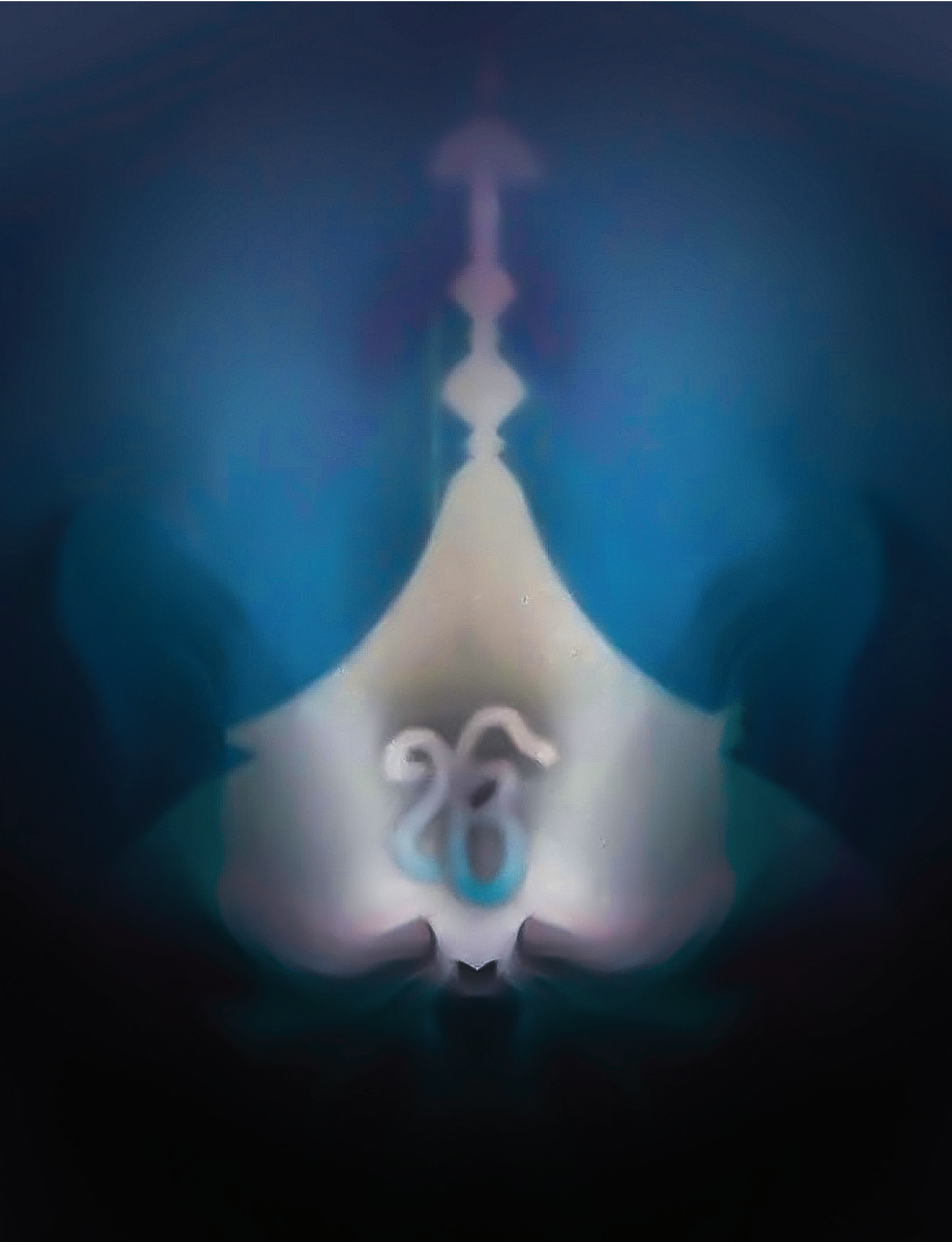
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PROLOGUE

Formally trained in the art and science of Building Design, my profession of Architecture would seem farthest from the realm of Spiritual Realities that constitutes a discipline which is esoteric in every sense of the word and, indeed, outside the scope of its purpose, nature, content, and usefulness. If it were not for the early initiation by my father Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti into the study of the Sikh Faith I would have also been compelled to maintain my distance from religion because there is not anything that could be called materially advantageous and thus worthy of investment of one's time, energy, and hard work. Added to this fortunate psycho-spiritual orientation is the benefit which I strongly believe only Architecture gives—a holistic way and view of human existence without which it is well-nigh impossible to savour the inebriate fantasy of the spirited fullness of life. Not surprisingly, therefore, that which was once a seedling surviving deep within my being without my knowledge showed up in progressive wholeness post-retirement until I became both its tiller and spectator to see its full blossom. This book carries the fragrance of what I have personally experienced in the serious and sustained study of the beauty and bounty of the Sikh Faith that sets it apart as Pragmatic Spirituality embodied in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism. Both terms are my coinages: *Creative Mysticism*, and *Pragmatic Spirituality*.

Let me explain the sense in which I have used the foregoing terms. *Pragmatism* is American philosophy that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success

of their practical application. *Spirituality* is the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. In my coinage, Spirituality gains a new connotation that underscores the fact that it is no longer opposed to material or physical things because without these the Body that has been called *Durlabh* [difficult to find, scarce, rare, unobtainable, uncommon] *Deh* [body, physique, mortal frame] in the Sikh Faith cannot be sustained and thus no spiritual experience can be had without it being there, in the first place. *Mysticism* is the belief that union with or absorption into the Deity or the Absolute, or *the spiritual apprehension of knowledge inaccessible to the intellect*, may be attained through contemplation and self-surrender. If you understand and reflect on the meaning of the *italicised* phrase you will soon realise why Mysticism has been called the “Religion of the Élite”. *Creative* is what relates to or involves the use of the imagination or original ideas to create something. Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist since Isaac Newton, has declared that Imagination is superior to Knowledge. Stated in another way, it means that Knowledge cannot be created without Imagination. However, I have simplified their meaning by defining Mysticism as EXPERIENCE and Creative as EXPRESSION.

Various mystics throughout the world have claimed that Mysticism is such a highly personalised experience that the joyous wonder [*Vismaad*] which it gives to the beneficiary cannot be expressed, much less conveyed to someone else. When I coined the term “*Creative Mysticism*” in 1998 especially for *Guru Nanak Bani*, I used it to say that he stands apart in a class all his own because he is the one and only one World Prophet who has succeeded in expressing as well conveying [via ‘Creative’ means] the joyous wonder that he had experienced as sustained bliss [in Mysticism]. He has called it *Naam-Khumaari Nanaka Charhi Rahey Din Raat* [Nanak, the inebriation that God’s Holy Name provides sustains its kick through night and day as undiminished euphoria]. *Khumaar* is Arabic for ‘effects of drunkenness’.

Though the title of the book, *THE SIKH GURUS – Embodiments of the Shabda*, has been carefully chosen it yet requires clarification that is a prerequisite to a correct interpretation of the intent and content of this treatise. None of the Ten Masters of the Sikh Faith used for themselves the honorific title “Guru”, which is a noun, and connotes “teacher” in Sanskrit. However, in ancient Indian traditions, it had contextual meanings with a significance beyond what the word ‘teacher’ means in English. The Guru is an exemplar in life, a source of inspiration, and the one who reveals the meaning of life by imparting knowledge whose light dispels the darkness of ignorance. Since right from the Revelation of Guru Nanak the Sikh, Faith has had the distinction of accepting, adoring, and following the Revealed Word [*Shabda*] as the only valid Spiritual Preceptor [Guru] representing as it does Lord God in written and spoken form; *never a human person*. Therefore, it should now be crystal clear that the word ‘Guru’ used for the Ten Masters is not of their choice made in self-praise. It has sprung up from the artesian well of the Sikhs’ hearty and perennial veneration for them. However, the reverential title *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was conferred on the Holy Book by the Tenth and the Last Master Guru Gobind Singh.

In the light of the foregoing exposition, the Sikh Faith has Ten Masters, *not human Gurus*, because *Shabda* is the only **Guru** in this distinguished religion. Just the same these rare humans by the Grace of God are the most authentic exemplars as *Embodiments of the Shabda*. They had convincingly demonstrated within their varied mortal spans how life could and should be lived according to the strict regimen of the Revealed Word [*Shabda*] that carries the Edict-Fiat [*Hukm*] of Lord God as a *living force, not merely an indoctrinated decree. It is to be actually lived; not memorized and quoted in pedantic vanity*. The best illustration of this somewhat esoteric averment can be had in how the Ten Masters had imbibed the Divine Attributes of Lord God as revealed by Guru Nanak in the *Mool Mantra*. Out of these, in my considered opinion, the one par excellence is FEARLESSNESS.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh Faith, was the first to display Fearlessness when he told the founder of the Mughal Empire in India on his face that he was “*Jabar* [Tyrant] *not* Babur [Tiger]”. Guru Angad Dev showed it in not being bothered about the presence of Humayun when he had called on him. Instead, he availed of the opportunity to put Babur’s son and successor on the Path of Righteousness, and blessed him to regain the Mughal Empire by following the divine diktat. Gur Arjan Dev bore the most brutal torture smilingly sitting on red-hot iron plate and suffering other monstrous atrocities and, rather than complain or wail, sang eulogy to the Glory of God by saying, “*Thy will tastes sweet and Nanak entertains Thee for the priceless gift of the Holy Name.*”

Guru Har Krishan did not care about his own life and served all those stricken with smallpox during the epidemic in Delhi. Guru Tegh Bahadar laid down his life for the protection of the *Sanatana Dharma* voluntarily and valiantly. Guru Gobind Singh pitted a small army of Saint-Soldiers to fight with legendary valour and heroism against the formidable forces of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb—and eventually succeeded in extirpating the Mughal Empire from the soil of India. These examples of the heroic display of FEARLESSNESS are only illustrative, not comprehensive, but should suffice to underscore the illimitable power of *Shabda* vis-à-vis the savage force of war weaponry. In sum, the Ten Masters of the Sikh Faith were rare humans become divine transmuted by the celestial chemistry of *Shabda*, and have indelibly inscribed the *Power of Example* on the pages of World History in golden letters.

A vast majority of peoples of the world would look askance at the Sikh Faith’s claim that *Shabda* embodies incredible powers that no scientific instrument or philosophy can ever decipher much less measure. Let me see if I can help my co-inhabitants of the planet Earth in showing how it works. First, I have a pet theory that Language in its written form is the most beautiful and unmatched creation of the human genius. No progress of any kind could have been made in its absence because what we call knowledge is a cumulative compendium of thoughts, words, and deeds recorded in writing through the chequered course of human history. If this weren’t the case we would still be there in the wild giving discomfiting company to innumerable animals of many species. The so-called progress comes about by two means, namely, the human brain, and the human hands. But indispensable than both is the presence of the Language as the written word. From the body of the W-O-R-D is born the World of the Origin of Rationality and Divinity. This we can readily discern during workaday existence. Everything happens by the circulation of the WORD in all spheres of life: the civil, the military, the political, the creative, the administrative, the recreative, the economic, the social, and much else. The Word carries a demand, a command, a request, and a message ... whose consummation lies in action taken by the person concerned. Ironically, the irrefutable fact and the formidable force of this averment will show readily when you use the swear words, and invectives against someone.

Sigmund Freud, Father of Psychology, has said that civilisation began when man used an abusive word for his adversary rather than hurl a stone at him. The swear words show their unnerving effect more forcefully and readily when the person involved is an egotist because he feels the hurt most. Coming to the sovereignty of nations, a single Word from the President or the Prime Minister of the country against the enemy quickly makes your blood boil and you are already combat-ready to defend your country even at the cost of your life. Interestingly, the Head of State, or the Army General, or any other person holding a position of power does not have to move around to get the kind of work he desires done. His WORD is ENOUGH!

Love is the WORDLESS language that even the animals understand and react to and respect and reciprocate. Guru Nanak calls it the Language of God. For the Lord, Love is the staple diet of souls with divinity as its chief ingredient. When served as a recipe of Humility it has a lightning effect on the beneficiary. During his Spiritual Journeys called Udasis, covering 28,000 kilometres and spread over nearly three decades, he tried its unflinching



celestial efficacy umpteen numbers of times so much so that the Hindus and Muslims as their mutual arch-enemies for centuries came together to become his Sikhs.

At the mundane level, however, the word must be understood to have its effect on the person addressed. I know it for sure from my personal experience. In our first batch of students in 1961 at Chandigarh College of Architecture most had rural background and spoke and understood only Punjabi. Among them there was one named Gurbhajan Singh Shahi. The founder Principal AR Prabhawalkar was a Maharashtrian whose mother tongue was Marathi. He had the concluding part of his professional education in England and spoke English fluently. He had summoned this boy to his room to chide him over a certain serious fault committed by him. I was a witness to the principal's rebuke that he delivered to the culprit in English in solemn seriousness with a tone of voice charged with anger. The boy listened with strained attention but remained unfazed. Upset over the ineffectiveness of his reprimand Prabhawalkar asked me what the hell was wrong with the boy that couldn't care less even about the institution head's word. When I sent the boy away, and explained to the principal why his rebuke was utterly ineffective he was both annoyed and amused. My clarification was simple and forthright, "Sir, the culprit did not understand a word of what you were telling him in English; therefore, there was no question of intimidation by your anger or obedient reaction to your exalted office!

To conclude, I must say that *Shabda* is *not* an ordinary word coined during the torpor of dailiness. It is a priceless word received in Revelation directly from God sanctified by divinity. Guru Nanak has used the epithet 'NAAM' to encompass the inviolable sovereignty of the Laws of the Universe as well as the pious power of the Holy Name (of Lord God). Because such sanctified words spring from the selfsame Source and are received in the same process they transcend their diverse human backgrounds and the attendant limitations of a given script used by a community. That is what must have led the Guru to proclaim, "Lord, I am a sacrifice to all the many names that Thou have!" In this light, for the purpose of meditation, names like Ram, Krishna, Jesus, Allah-Hu, Wah-e-Guru, *et al* are equally sacred and effective. At any rate, in Islam, Christianity, and the Sikh Faith it is accepted and revered that God created the Universe by a single utterance. Of course, there are antagonists of Religion who would mock at the idea and brush it off as puerile fancy. That is precisely the reason that I should remind them thus: while they are free to hold such unbecoming opinions they must nevertheless consider the irrefutable fact that their names [of which they are so proud and use them as sacrosanct to assert their personal identities] are derived from the same single source: *Religion*. This curious position holds valid and irrefutable for all the World Religions.

In the common parlance of the IT Era, I would call *Shabda* the occult pass-WORD that you must first learn to use in order to access the Digital Divinity uploaded by God on His invisible W-E-B-S-I-T-E. I decipher it to be World of Empathy Beatitude Service Introspection and Truth's Emulation. It goes without saying that just as without requisite knowledge of how to use a password you cannot transact any business in the Digital World in which no tricks, guesses, machinations and strategies work, it is impossible to access God's WEBSITE without first learning with utmost earnestness and sincerity what kind of password *Shabda* is and what you need to do precisely to apply it to advantage. However, as I understand it, even though you may know the divine password it will not work until you earnestly attempt to lodge *Surt* [Soul-Consciousness] within the domain of this Pass-Word [*Shabda*]. Interestingly, the knowledge necessary to use *Shabda* cannot be acquired in schools, colleges, and universities where they only teach you many skills of an amazing diversity beginning with the simplest to the most sophisticated. Knowledge of *Shabda* that comes from inner awakening is out of bounds for the worldly wise and the formally educated smart guys!

The genesis, growth, worth, and perennial relevance of the Sikh Faith began with the birth of its founder Guru Nanak Dev in 1469 CE, moving through successor eight Gurus until it attained to the pinnacle of glory

as the world's youngest and most dynamic religion under the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh. Before he left the mortal world in 1708 CE he declared *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS] as the *Living Eternal Guru*. The entire period coincided with the establishment of the Mughal Empire in India. The Mughal emperors fanatically followed the policy of oppression and persecution that the Sikh Gurus fiercely opposed. They even sacrificed their lives to uphold the fundamental human rights grounded in the recognition of the intrinsic goodness, dignity, and inalienable rights of all members of the *Homo sapiens* species. They heroically fought for equality for all before law, freedom of speech and expression, freedom to practise religion of one's choice, and the liberty to seek justice through peaceful and legal means.

It is very important to understand the social, cultural and political environment in Northern India—especially in the Punjab State and Delhi during the lifetime of Guru Nanak Dev from 1469 to 1539 CE. In 1451, before the birth of Nanak, Bahlol Lodhi occupied Delhi and founded the Lodhi dynasty. The Guru was an eye witness to the rise and establishment of the Lodhi dynasty and then its capture by Babur who founded the Mughal Empire in India. The establishment of the Sikh Faith was in direct response to the socio-cultural and political events that occurred during the stated period of Indian history.

In Sultanpur Lodhi, Nanak's sister's husband Jairam got him a job as an accountant with Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi, a distant relative of the reigning Sultan of Delhi, Sikandar Lodhi. Sikandar was the son of Bahlol Lodhi who, as noted before, had established the Lodhi dynasty in India. While Nanak discharged his duties diligently and won the affection of his employer, he was always preoccupied in spiritual matters and was never at peace with the *status quo* of the existing social order.

However, in Sultanpur; indeed, all of Northern India, Nanak saw a society deeply divided between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims were a relatively new arrival in Punjab—they had begun coming in about 1000 CE—but eventually they started forcible conversion of the local Hindu population to Islam alongside of enslavement of women and children. An integral part of Muslim society was slavery—the nobles and royals kept large retinues of domestic male and female slaves. Interestingly, unlike what we learn from the tales of western slavery, we see that the relationship between the master and the slave in 15th-century Punjab was emotional and humanitarian. On the other hand, the Sufis also played a huge role in the peaceful conversion of people to Islam. Despite the ideal norm of equality in Islam, the Muslim society had degraded into innumerable social divisions.

The origins of the word “Sufi” come from an Arabic term for wool (*suf*). It refers to the unrefined woollen clothes long worn by ancient west Asian ascetics and points to a common quality ascribed to Sufis that is austerity. To common understanding, Muslims viewed this austerity as stemming from a sincere religious devotion that compelled the Sufi into a close, personal relationship with God, modelled on winsome aspects of Prophet Muhammad's life. This often involved a more inward, contemplative focus than many other forms of Islamic practice. In some instances, Sufis challenged contemporary norms in order to shock their Muslim neighbours into more religiously oriented lives. For example, an 8th-century woman Sufi saint, known popularly as *Rabia al-Adawiyya*, is said to have walked through her hometown of Basra, in modern-day Iraq, with a lit torch in one hand and a bucket of water in another. When asked why, she replied that she hoped to burn down heaven and douse hell's fire so people would—without concern for reward or punishment—love God.

The Hindu society was no better either—and the ideal norm was of social differentiation, thanks to centuries-old Brahmanical belligerence. In the 11th century, Al-Biruni, a famous Persian mathematician, who also proposed a method to calculate the circumference of the earth, described in detail the division of the Hindu society. There were at least 36 social groups and except for the higher-caste Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the



proverbial teeming millions lived in abject poverty and social subjugation. The condition of the untouchables was outright inhuman. Women fared no better; child marriage was rampant, women were regarded as inferior to men and widows in particular were treated with contempt. The Brahmins advocated meaningless rituals as a tool to further oppress the common people in order to maintain their hold on the masses. These social norms remained unchanged even in the 15th century. Added to this sordid situation was the discomfiting fact that Hindus and Muslims were always at daggers drawn.

Emerging from this brief exposition is a dismal picture of the prevalent social order: barring a chosen few, everyone was bereft of basic human rights of equality, freedom, and justice. Any deviation from these inhuman social norms, regardless whether one was a Muslim or a Hindu, was not only intolerable but also punishable by law. Living in Sultanpur in the midst of such repressive conditions of Indian society, Nanak at the age of 30, proclaimed “*There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim*” and caused a historic breakthrough from the shackles of centuries-old psycho-social perversion that was cryptically given religious sanction. He declared that everyone being the child of ONE God had the birthright to a life in an aura of freedom and personal dignity.

Guru Nanak is the first prophet who took and propagated a cosmic view of life—piecing together the political, social, and metaphysical imperatives of workaday existence into what I call *Pragmatic Spirituality* that encompasses the terrestrial and the celestial, the mundane and the exalted, serving it on a platter to the low, meek, and the weak. He transformed his Revelation into an intelligible *Mantra* [Self-empowering Master Word] in the common folks’ language for ideal living through “Earning livelihood by honest means; sharing it with the less-privileged; and meditating on God’s Holy Name [*Naam*]”.

The Guru, unlike scores of prophets, gurus, and priests of his times, identified his life with that of the lowest among the lowliest and demonstrated the efficacy of the Sacred Word by personal example. He chose to take meals with Bhai Lalo, a low-caste carpenter who earned his bread and butter by hard work and honest means, much to the chagrin of Malik Bhago, a rich chief of town Saidpur, by declining his invitation to a grand feast. Nanak also demonstrated how conflict between opposing faiths and eternally warring religions, Hinduism and Islam, could be resolved through liberal courtesy and spontaneous beneficence. He took seat between Bala [a Hindu Jatt] and Mardana [a Muslim low-caste], both his lifelong companions, and called them ‘Bhai’ [Brother]: Bhai Bala, and Bhai Mardana. Bala would wave a whisk fashioned with peacock feathers over the Guru, and Mardana played the rebeck when Nanak sang paeans to the glory of God who had stirred his heart and soul by electro-celestial messages.

According to Fenwick, “*Our consciousness tricks us into perceiving a false duality of self and other when in fact there is only unity. We are not separate from other aspects of the universe but an integral and inextricable part of them. And when we die, we transcend the human experience of consciousness, and its illusion of duality, and merge with the universe’s entire and unified property of consciousness. So, ironically, only in death can we be fully conscious.*”

Peter Brooke Cadogan Fenwick (born on 25 May 1935) is a neuro-psychiatrist and neurophysiologist who is known for his studies of epilepsy and end-of-life phenomena. Neuropsychiatry is a branch of medicine that deals with mental disorders attributable to diseases of the nervous system. It preceded the current disciplines of psychiatry and neurology, which had common training. However, psychiatry and neurology have subsequently split apart and are typically practised separately. Neurophysiology is concerned with the investigation of function in the central and peripheral nervous system to diagnose and monitor neurological disorders.

This averment by a celebrity scientist who pointedly investigates the function of the human nervous system underscores the little-suspected limitation of what Science can do and what it cannot do. Ironically, those who stubbornly believe in the infallibility of Science as the human tool of apprehending the structure, function, and the whys and wherefores of living matter unwittingly mix up speculation with their matter-of-fact perceptions and the empirical findings of life. This is precisely where I unswervingly believe in the validity and veracity of Revelation of Guru Nanak who, in my considered opinion, is the greatest prophet of the world so far for his description of an all-inclusive cosmology and innumerable subjects that spell what I call “HOILSTIC HUMANISM”, and have stood the test of an unsparing scientific scrutiny.

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Revelation, in religion, is the disclosure of divine or sacred reality or purpose to humanity (through medium of a being that Lord God chooses to accomplish this esoteric task). In the religious view, such disclosure may come through mystical insights, historical events, or spiritual experiences that transform the lives of individuals and groups. Guru Nanak had his Revelation after he had disappeared while taking a dip in the *Kali Bein* only to reappear three days later. The *Mool Mantra* of Sikhism, *Ik Onkar*, providentially originated from this *enlightenment*. Thus the exclusive distinction of his averments, unlike those of philosophers, scientists, thinkers, and hordes of seekers of truth, is that he is describing his experience of what God had shown him, without the indispensable need to theorise or speculate or philosophise. The *Mool Mantra* [the seed incantation], in this light, is a spontaneous delineation of the primal attributes of God, not a *concept* of the Lord as scholars of all genres tend to project erroneously. You do not require a concept [an abstract idea] when you are face to face with palpable Reality simply because a concept is the academic product of ratiocinative cerebration, *not* an experience of direct *actual* seeing. This is the reason why I doggedly insist that Nanak Bani is a description of what Lord God had shown him in Revelation, not speculative, philosophy or romantic poetry or homespun mythology, not ever mysticism of the kind that has been described as ‘religion of the élite’.



A COSMIC VIEW OF LIFE INEXTRICABLY INTERWEAVING THE WORLDLY WITH THE SPIRITUAL

Sikh Faith was raised on Guru Nanak’s Revelation in which all that is attributed to him collectively called Nanak Bani is first and last a firsthand seeing and description of what Lord God showed him by way of divine exhortations and mesmerising Drama of the universe, which philosophers invariably speculate as ‘cosmology’. His utterances are not compositions of an inspired poet as all scholars including Sikhs understand them to be. Poetry as we mortals know it is a form of Literary Art grounded in the rules and regulations of a strict lingual discipline among which the predominant are several poetic metres whose use injects music into prose to transform it into poetry. Interestingly and irrefutably all scriptures of many world religions are written in poetry that sounds like but is not poetry of the literary kind. Perhaps the best and most convincing example of this assertion is the Holy Quran that was *revealed* to Prophet Muhammad who was illiterate which fact corroborates that he could not have learned it as some gifted mortals do in colleges and universities. This curious feature upholds my theory that Poetry is the Language of Prophesy whereby all Prophets are invariably *poets* though all Poets are not *prophets*! In other words, Poetry is God’s divine stenography that He uses to convey His message (prophesy) to His chosen messenger (prophet).

Guru Nanak’s unswerving and unremitting faith in **One God** is an uncompromising Monotheism. To say it once and for all he affixed the Numeral ‘1’ before *Oankar* that is represented in *Gurmukhi* script [in which the Punjabi language is written in Indian Punjab] as follows.



It thus reads as *IK OANKAR* unambiguously signifying that God is One without a second and He alone performs the triple functions of Creation, Protection, and Destruction. It is pertinent to point out that in *Sanatana Dharma*, now erroneously called ‘Hinduism’, these three primary activities were assigned to three deities, namely, Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh or Shiva, respectively. This tripartite concept of God eventually mushroomed into a pantheon of 330 million gods and goddesses leading to a colourful confusion in which the Hindus pride for having it as their incomparable spiritual legacy. This is dead against the declaration of the Vedas according to which their followers ought to worship only One God who is Omnipresent, Omniscient, and Omnipotent Lord of the universe. This clearly is not the case with the result that it is well-nigh impossible to define who a Hindu is. The confusion does not end there. It takes in its sweep questions such as the defining of Hinduism as a religion. The country’s Supreme Court was unable to do so and pronounced the judgement that “Hinduism is *not* a religion ... it is a way of life.” I am not trying to look askance at my compatriots’ creedal beliefs, only pointing out that Guru Nanak must have experienced the impossibility of defining Hinduism; as such solved the problem by asserting that God is ONE without a second and He does not take birth in human form [*Avatara*] as Hindus stubbornly believe. This underscores and upholds the timeless-universal significance of his declaration that the Numeral One embodies.

There is another noteworthy unique feature of Guru Nanak’s Revelation. He vociferously discountenances that the so-called spiritual preceptors can be befitting representatives of God on Earth. During his famous discourse with the *Siddhas* [those who have acquired supernatural powers through ascetic practices by abandoning their households] he had pointedly answered their query regarding who his Guru was—“God is my Guru!” However, to another obvious question about the need for a Guru on Earth, he had asserted, “*Shabda Guru, Surt Dhun Chela*.” [The WORD is the Spiritual Preceptor *Guru* and Consciousness *Surt* in single-minded absorption in its cosmic sound is the Disciple]. Living his entire life strictly in obedience to this divine diktat he did not tell anyone that he was their Guru, much less warrant that they worship him. He called himself the lowliest amongst the lowliest of all humans, and made Humility the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. **The abiding inference is that it is HUMILITY, which makes you a SIKH, not what you wear or eat or do, including recitation of Gurbani, engagement in rituals, and going on pilgrimages.** His Nine Successors followed this rule in letter and spirit. However, it was his and their followers that started addressing them as ‘Guru’, and in the course of time some began to call them by the royal title of “*Patshah*” [Emperor]. It has since become an established and unquestioned convention to use this title with the Gurus as author of their Bani such as ‘*Pehli Patshahi*’ [Guru Nanak Dev], ‘*Dooji Patshahi*’ [Guru Angad Dev] ... ‘*Dasveen Patshahi*’ [Guru Gobind Singh]. In addition to this practice, another convention has been established to use the prefix ‘SRI’ and suffixes “*SAHIB*” and “*JI/JEE*” with the Gurus, the Holy Book, and the *Gurdwaras* [Sikh Temples]. *Shri*, also transliterated as *Shree*, *Sri*, or *Sree*, is a Sanskrit term denoting resplendence, wealth and prosperity, which is

primarily used as an honorific. *Sahib* is Arabic word which means possessor/owner/chief/lord. *Ji* or *Jee* is an honorific suffix used in Hindi and Urdu to convey respect to the individual whose name it is appended to. Thus, we have “*Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*”; “*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*”; and “*Gurdwara Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib*”.

It is noteworthy that Guru Nanak’s immediate successor who he named *Angad* [meaning, part of my person] claimed equality by using his name ‘Nanak’ in his own divine utterances [*Bani*]. Its other aspect was Humility which, as noted before, the founder had made the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. Surprisingly, despite the use of ‘Nanak’ as their common penname, as it were, the Bani of each contributing Guru can be recognised as distinct even though the spirit of an uncompromising Monotheism runs through his divine utterances as his soul singing a perennial song to God’s eternal glory.

The inference is that the Ten Masters of the Sikh Faith were living examples that showed how to lead a life in strict obedience to the Divine Diktat as had been received by Guru Nanak in his Revelation. Moreover, the primary concept of Holistic Humanism cast in God’s grace showered on the Ten Masters was consummated in Guru Gobind’ Singh’s Khalsa, the “Commonwealth of Saints-Soldiers” as ideal ‘Total Human Beings.’ The Sikhs were made WHOLE on baptism and divinely equipped to earn an honest livelihood that they would generously share with the less privileged as thanksgiving to Lord God, the entire Humankind’s Common Father.

I have attempted to capture something of the *Bani · Blessing · Benediction · Beauty · Beatitude* that God gifted to Humankind through Guru Nanak’s Revelation and the successor Sikh Gurus. At any rate, my purpose of compiling the short biographies of the Ten Sikh Gurus in a single volume in the English language seems fulfilled, especially with a comprehensive write-up on *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* that all Sikhs worldwide are spiritually enjoined upon to revere and follow as the Eternal Guru. I have furnished explanatory notes on many diverse subjects which support the original intention as well as facilitate comprehension of the sacred contents of the Holy Book.

I have divided the book in three sections. **Section-I** contains biographic sketches of the Ten Gurus besides *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS] that Guru Gobind Singh declared to be the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs so that the Sikhs seek guidance and everything else on matters mundane and spiritual from *Shabda Guru* [The Sacred Word], *not* any human teacher, thereby preventing them from straying into blind alleys of meaningless rituals and senseless ceremonies. **Section-II** carries articles on persons and subjects which if included in the biographical notes would have not only affected the flow of the text but also made difficult the grasp of the message that the life of each holy personage continues to be a living example for seekers of truth. In **Section-III** I have put my poetic rendering in English of a selection of *Gurbani* done at different times over a few years as a result of afflatus that had dawned upon me by God’s grace.

As a professional formally trained in the discipline of Architecture, I had little in my kitty to arouse my passion for a sustained and rational study of *Gurbani* in the global perspective of World Religions except my father’s non-formal teaching who kept hammering into my head throughout my life beginning in my childhood the universal-timeless import of the Sacred Word. Genetically, I would say that I had inherited this sacrosanct interest in spiritual realities from my grandfather whose education was just enough to read *Sukhmani Sahib* regularly. He had a blind faith, as it were, in divine dispensation, that my father replaced with healthy-eyed perception using the irreverent tool of Reason to figure out what is what followed by stringent test of the validity and verity of the Revealed Word on the anvil of workaday existence. Given these conditions and contributions, I have precious little for which to claim any credit except that when God put unseen some ideas into my head [commonly called inspiration] I went the whole hog to study *Gurbani* with probing insight and sustained seriousness deploying the tools of Architecture. I dare say that to my knowledge such an approach has never been attempted by any scholar and I may well be the first architect in the world to dabble in spiritual realities,



mysticism, and everything that is esoteric and other-worldly without loosening my foothold on the ground of workaday existence. I only hope that readers will find this book worthy of their time, energy, and interest and, in the engagement, derive some benefit.

Biographical notes on the Sikh Gurus were written at different times, for different needs over nearly three decades, which a discerning reader might detect. My submission is that given the stated conditions their formats and line of thought vary in content and emphasis and, therefore, should be accepted as such. At any rate, both my style of writing and the approach to the treatment of diverse subjects, rooted as these are in the intent and content of my profession of architecture, will sound very different from the umpteen writings done by accomplished scholars and historians. I urge my readers to be generous and tolerant of my deviation from the familiar course that I have unavoidably made by the dictates of my discipline.



Before closing this note, I would like express my profound appreciation and sincere gratitude to Prof Ravinder Sharma who on my request created marvellous works of art for my project. He taught the subject of Graphics & Sculpture at Chandigarh College of Architecture where I had brought him from a school on the strength of his great potential that I discovered in him as the official Art Critic of *The Tribune*, a leading English newspaper of north-western India. As an unwavering devotee of Lord Shiva since 1983 he has become a personification of politeness and humility such as Guru Nanak has lauded as the quintessence of all virtues.

I have no way of knowing who the artists are and what their names are to thank them for creating very expressive paintings of the Sikh Gurus and other personages known and revered in the Sikh Faith, but I have used their images in celebration of their artistic talent as an offering at the Altar of Truth where they will remain forever in the divine ambience of God's grace.

CHANDIGARH, 03 January 2022

—Dr SS Bhatti





SECTION-I
BIOGRAPHICAL
NOTES
ON
THE SIKH GURUS





GURU NANAK DEV

World's Greatest Prophet

(Thursday, 15 April 1469 - Friday, 22 September 1539)

PART - I

Guru Nanak Dev founded the Sikh Faith and was succeeded by Nine Sikh Gurus. His birth is celebrated worldwide as Guru Nanak *Gurpurab* on *Kartik Pooranmashi*, the full-moon day in the Indian month of *Katak* [*Kartik* in Hindi], October-November every year.

Guru Nanak travelled far and wide spreading the message of an uncompromising Monotheism grounded in One [Peerless] God who dwells in the hearts of all creatures and has Truth as His Primal Attribute. He established a unique holistic faith of spiritual, social, and political realities based on equality, love, justice, peace, and virtue. His Revelation [I have named Creative Mysticism in my second PhD] is preserved in 974 *shabads* [hymns] in the sacred scripture of the Sikh Faith, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS]. The Sikh Bible contains, among many things, his major prayers such as *Japuji*, *Asa di Var*, and *Siddha-Gosht*. An inviolable tenet of the Sikh Faith is that the soul of Guru Nanak's sacrosanctity, divinity, and religious authority was infused into each of his nine successors when they were admitted to his Spiritual Ministry.

Sikh Faith's Distinguished Traits: The genesis, growth, worth, and perennial relevance of the Sikh Faith began with the birth of the founder Guru Nanak Dev in 1469 CE to the death of Guru Gobind in 1708 CE. This period coincided with the establishment and consolidation of the Mughal Empire in India. The Mughal rulers

followed the policy of oppression and persecution that the Sikh Gurus fiercely opposed and even sacrificed their lives to uphold the fundamental human rights grounded in the recognition of the intrinsic goodness and dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family such as equality before law, freedom of speech and expression, freedom to practise religion, and freedom to seek justice through peaceful and legal means.

Quintessence of Guru Nanak's Message: The most famous teachings attributed to Guru Nanak are: There is only one God without a second—omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient—and that all human beings can have direct access to Him with no need of getting into the rigmarole of rituals, and without the intervention of priests. His most radical social exhortations denounced the caste system and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of caste, creed, gender, nationality, cultural prejudices, nationality, and ethnic eccentricities.

Tenets of the Sikh Faith: As enunciated by Guru Nanak, the tenets of the Sikh Faith are: (i) Unswerving faith in One Lord God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; (ii) Engagement in socially-beneficent activities [*Sewa*]; (iii) Collective singing of paeans to the Glory and Grandeur of Lord God [*Kirtan*]; and (iv) Regular participation in Holy Congregation [*Satsang*]. He established a network of preaching centres each called a *Manji* [Diocese] and appointed able and committed followers to head each diocese.

Majestic Title: 'Sikh' is one of the 30,000 most commonly used words in the Collins dictionary. A 'Sikh' is a member of the youngest and most pragmatic of world's major religions. Founded in 16th century by Guru Nanak [1469 - 1539 CE] in Punjab, which is a state in north-western India that once was the cradle of the well-known Indus Valley Civilisation, and the birthplace of the Vedas and Hindu spiritual-metaphysical sacred literature, the Sikh Faith stands apart for its perennial freshness of socio-psychological attitude, spiritual profundity, scientific temper, and rational-emotional appeal. 'Sikh' is a majestic title that suggests 'simple living and high thinking'—a benefactor, not a beggar, who, despite steeped in 'Humility' is yet exalted in Spirituality.

Birth: Nanak was born on 15 April 1469 at Rai Bho di Talwandi (present-day Nankana Sahib, Punjab, Pakistan) near Lahore, the capital of the state. His parents were Kalyan Chand Das Bedi, his name popularly shortened to Mehta Kalu, and Mata Tripta. His father was the local *patwari*—village-level revenue official who kept record of land holdings/surveys, crops, and calculated land revenue of Talwandi. His parents were both Hindus and belonged to the merchant caste according to the centuries-old caste system of Hinduism.

He had one sister, Bebe Nanaki, who was five years older than him. After her marriage in 1475, she moved to Sultanpur Lodhi where her husband Jai Ram was in the Nawab's employment. Nanak was so attached to his sister that he followed her there. When he was 16 years, he started working under Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi as a storekeeper in *Modikhana* [*Provisions Store*].

Guru Nanak was born in a society sharply divided into Hindus and Muslims, and there were further subdivisions within Hinduism and Islam, and discrimination was order of the day. Dignified life was a distant dream of the masses and the general atmosphere had deteriorated to such an extent that the poor and helpless were brutally oppressed by the ruling classes. Women were held inferior to men who looked down upon them as mere chattel. To the environment of turbulence and despair was added the dynamics of political rivalry and immoral wrangling. Having captured the Lodhi Empire Babur established the oppressive Mughal Empire in India.

Triune Formula: Providentially, in such a culturally debased society, Guru Nanak's disciples were the only ones who rebelled against the pervert socio-political order and created a whole new identity for themselves. Some of the significant values that Guru Nanak instilled in his followers veered round his triune formula of "*Kirat Karo; Vand Chhako; and Naam Japo*". It inspired them to outrightly reject asceticism, and instead grasp the oft-ignored importance of honesty and hard work within the exigencies of a householder's life. Such an unprecedented initiative was taken in the pursuit of a casteless society that would guarantee equality for all and work towards everyone's betterment. Above all, it was focused on generating a lifestyle of active involvement in the business of workaday existence rather than escape into a wayward fulfilment through renunciation and facile abdication of domestic responsibility and accountability.

Marriage and Children: Guru Nanak was married in 1487 CE to Bibi Sulakhni, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala, in the district of Gurdaspur. Guru Nanak fathered two sons, Sri Chand and Lakshmi Chand, both born during the decade of 1490 CE. In 1496 CE, although married and having a family, Guru Nanak embarked upon Missionary Travels to spread the Holy Word in India and abroad.

Rai Bular Bhatti: Also called Rai Bhoie (died circa 1515) was a Rajput Muslim noble of the Bhatti clan during the latter-half of the fifteenth century. He was the chief of Rai Bhoie di Talwandi (also called Rai Bular's Talwandi), the village where Guru Nanak was born in 1469. Later in life, Rai Bular was granted a feudal estate by his son-in-law, Daulat Khan Lodhi, the Governor of Punjab. Rai Bhoie selected and rebuilt Talwandi, earlier known as Raipur. This city, which is situated about forty-two miles west of Lahore and eighteen miles south of river Ravi, later became known as Nankana Sahib.

Rai discerned the divine in Guru Nanak: Rai Bular had great affection for the young Guru Nanak and held him in high esteem. According to *Janam Sakhis* [Hagiographic accounts of the birth and life of Guru Nanak Dev], Rai Bular discerned the Divine in Guru Nanak and became his second devotee; the Guru's sister Bebe Nanaki elder to him was his first devotee. Young Nanak was amazingly precocious with an attitude and outlook all his own that led him to do things by which his father Mehta Kalu—a businessman to the core—would be either unnerved or enraged. His son was a perpetual problem for him, and he kept embroiling more often than not in looking for ways and means to keep him busy profitably. Once when young Nanak was sent by him to graze the household cattle, he as usual soon relapsed into transcendental meditation leaving the animals to their own fate. It was not long before an upset villager came to complain to the Nawab that Nanak's buffaloes had run riot over their crop fields. He was thus arraigned before Rai Bular for having caused substantial damage to the crops. Bhatti sent for Mehta Kalu and directed him to compensate the farmer for the damage. But footmen sent to estimate the loss reported that they had seen no damage whatsoever. Rai Bular was as much surprised as the complainant himself, who insisted that he had seen with his own eyes the whole crop ruined and the buffaloes sitting amidst it after they had heartily gorged themselves on it.

Nature's Miracle: On another occasion, Guru Nanak, while out with his herd of cattle, lay down to rest under a shade-tree in the summer afternoon and fell asleep. After a while, Rai Bular along with his retinue of servants happened to pass by. The village chief was astounded to see a strange phenomenon. The shadows of other trees had travelled round with the sun, but not shade of the tree under which Nanak was fast asleep. Returning to the town, the Nawab called Mehta Kalu and told him, "Your son is a great man. He is the honour of my town. Kalu, you have become exalted and I too am exalted, for it's in my town that such a blessed one has been born."



Guru Nanak reciprocated the honour and affection extended to him by Rai Bular and never failed to visit him whenever he was back home from his long travels, and the Nawab always felt blessed to see the divine soul. Therefore, it is no small matter that when Rai Bular Bhatti was lying on his deathbed, the young Guru was by his bedside.

Cobra and Sleeping Nanak: There is another interesting episode of Nanak's younger days. As was his wont and genetic reflective nature, he would regularly walk into the jungle near his home and spend his time in contemplation. Nanak always told people that even when he was sleeping, he was with God. Once when he was fast asleep the sun moved high into the sky as the day wore on, and he would have been exposed to the burning rays of the sun. As Nanak continued to sleep unperturbed, a cobra slid out of its burrow, and drew itself up tall, flaring its hood full width. But instead of striking Nanak, it used its hooded 'umbrella' to provide shade for the sleeping boy. This incident and many more convinced the village folks that Nanak was, indeed, an exceptional human.

Storekeeper in Modikhana: In Sultanpur Lodhi that is in present-day Kapurthala district of the Punjab, Jairam, husband of Nanak's sister, got him a job as a storekeeper/accountant in the Modikhana [Provisions Store] of Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi, a distant relative of the reigning Sultan of Delhi Sikandar Lodhi. Sikandar was the son of Bahlol Lodhi, who as we have come to know, had established the Lodhi dynasty in India. While Nanak discharged his duties diligently and won the affection of his employer, he was always preoccupied in spiritual matters and was never at peace with the status quo of the corrupt existing social order.

Modikhana Astounding Episode: One day at the Modikhana, the Guru while weighing wheat flour, counted: "One, Two, Three...until he reached the number thirteen where he lost all count and started chanting - Tera, Tera, Tera..." 'Tera' is the Punjabi word for the figure 13 and in the present context means, "It's yours!" Nanak's mind, transfixed on the Divine, would not stoop to earthly measures, and all subsequent weighments thus went singularly 13. The customers were happy to receive the extra provisions and did not know how to carry away so many goods. They could not understand the bounties of the Lord. Eventually the problem was reported to Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi with a charge against the divine storekeeper that he was recklessly distributing food grains. The Nawab promptly ordered an inquiry that was conducted with utmost care. His detractors were in for a rude shock when the investigating officers found the stores full; in fact, the accounts showed surplus quantity in favour of Guru Nanak. This, indeed, was God's call on receiving which Nanak first went to the house where he used to lodge his disciples, guests, and friends. He opened wide the doors and invited the poor to take away all that was there; and to those who hesitated, he himself handed over his articles.

Guru Nanak at Hasan Abdal: Baba Wali Kandhari [also spelled 'Qandhari'] was a Sufi saint or *pir* [Muslim holy man, religious teacher or recluse especially one with a distinct following] who is believed to have been born in about 1476 in Kandahar in Afghanistan. According to folk etymology, the word "kand" or "qand" in Persian and Pashto (the local languages) means "candy". The name "Candahar" or "Kandahar" in this form translates to 'candy area' alluding to the location that is fertile and historically known for producing fine grapes, pomegranates, apricots, melons, and other sweet fruits. Around 1498 Kandhari moved to Hasan Abdal near present-day Rawalpindi in Pakistan. This town is about 30 miles from Rawalpindi to the west side of the mountains. This being an entirely hilly area, in some places, natural water-fountains would spring up from underground.

Wali Qandhari's Hermitage: On a nearby hill, at an altitude of 2340 feet, Wali Kandhari settled and built a small house near a natural fountain. The water here was very clear and so the town people used to fetch drinking water from this fountain. Kandhari would preach to the simple people who came there as a necessity. Soon he had enlarged his house into a small community building called *Dera* [Hermitage]. His house was very close to the freshwater spring from where the water flowed down to the town and people used it for all their needs. There was no other source of fresh drinking water nearby. Therefore, Wali Qandhari used the advantageous location of his hermitage to assist people who followed his faith and to punish those who did not.

Muslim Version of the Story: There lived a Gujjar named Hasan who had many buffaloes. Once a Fakir [a religious mendicant] called Abdal visited him and asked for a draught of milk. Hasan said that he would gladly give him some, but his buffaloes were at that time dry. Hearing this, Abdal laid his hand on one of the animals and said, "Now milk it". He did so, and soon served a copious draught to the strange visitor. Abdal expressed his gratitude to Hasan and asked what he could do for him. Hasan replied that they were much straitened for want of water, on which Abdal struck the neighbouring hills in two places from which the two streams of the town promptly came forth. On the departure of the Fakir, Hasan told his people that the spot would thenceforth be named after them jointly: *Hasan Abdal*.

Xuanzang's Account: The famous Chinese traveller Xuanzang who visited the place in the seventh century CE mentions the sacred spring of Elapatra to the northwest of Taxila which has since been identified as the spring of **Gurdwara Panja Sahib**. William Finch who travelled through India between 1608 and 1611 describes Hasan Abdal to be a "pleasant town with a small river and many fair tanks in which are many fishes with golden rings in their noses ...; the water so clear that you may see a penny in the bottom".

Guru's Kirtan sanctified the place: Halting here on the foothill with a small party, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana took refuge under the cool shade of a tree. As was their routine practice, they started reciting *Kirtan*. Slowly, the local devotees began to gather at the spot and soon the gathering swelled into a large *Sangat* [Congregation]. The Guru gave discourses about God and the true path of the Holy Name underscoring how we should all remember Him at all times to remain on the path of righteousness.

Wali Qandhari's Arrogance: Notwithstanding his pretensions to ceremonial piety, Wali Qandhari was an arrogant man who was enraged when he saw people gathering around Guru Nanak in preference to his place. To avenge the growing popularity of the holy intruder, he stopped the spring water from flowing down to the town. The people became frustrated and now the question arose, how could they and their cattle survive without water? A delegation thus went uphill to Baba Wali Qandhari and begged him to let the water flow down as before. But he said angrily, "Go to your Guru, the one you visit daily and ask him for water." The people went to the Guru and told him the whole story. The Guru said, "Don't lose heart. Trust in God. He will not let you die of thirst", and then told Bhai Mardana, "Go and appeal to Baba Wali Qandhari to let the water flow down to the town."

Mardana's Entreaty: Bhai Mardana went up to entreat Qandhari to release water so that the village folk could quench their thirst and give water to the thirsty animals. But as soon as Bhai Mardana got to the top of the hill, the headstrong 'divine' began shouting angrily, "Go back to your Guru and ask him to give water to the people. I will not give you any water." Bhai Mardana who was asked to go again did so reluctantly and very humbly



approached Wali Qandhari and begged for water a third time. Unmoved by his pleadings and assuming even more obduracy, the Wali far from granting his request used abusive language to put him off. Bhai Mardana calmly bore with all the ill treatment meted out to him and politely stuck to his supplication. This time Wali mockingly remarked: “Why don’t you ask your *Master* whom you serve? Isn’t he able to give you any water?”

Guru forgives Wali Qandhari: When Bhai Mardana returned empty handed in utter frustration, the Guru lifted a stone from under his feet and lo! a jet of cool, clean water shot up to everyone’s surprise. At the same time, miraculously, Wali Qandhari’s spring began to dry up. Red with anger; he could not control his fury and, in a crazy state of his mind, pushed down a large boulder from atop the hill with intent of crushing the holy personage. The rock came rolling down towards the Guru who calmly raised his hand to stop it. While his palm-impression got imprinted on the rock it shattered the *pir’s* pride. Instantly, he realised that the Guru was a person of God protected by divine intervention and blessing. He quickly came downhill and fell at Nanak’s feet. The Guru in his infinite mercy said, “Rise, my friend; live as one who truly loves God ought to live, and be kind and humble to all.”

Why ‘Panja’ Sahib: The rock with the Guru’s palm-imprint still exists, commemorated by a beautiful Gurdwara called *Panja* [Palm-Mark] Sahib. Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s legendary army commander Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, after conquering the Sindh province during the Sikh reign, had the Gurdwara built at the historic site. The present-day Gurdwara, however, was built in mid-1930s on a new design developed by my father Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti [1905-1993] who was a self-taught professional of amazing versatility—artist, architect, sculptor, wood-carver, wrestler, musicologist, political analyst, etc.

Thousands of devotees visit the sanctified site as a Centre of Pilgrimage and when, during hot summer season, they bathe in the cool water of the historic Gurdwara Panja Sahib *Sarovar* [Sacred Pool] they are in psycho-emotional vibrations with the Holy Word that God had given to Guru Nanak Dev through Revelation as divine sacrament via Rivulet *Vain* in Punjab. The old name of town was Talwandi Rai Bhoë Ki or “Talwandi of Rai Bhoë”, since renamed Nankana Sahib, was a Muslim Rajput of the Bhatti clan and a retainer of the Delhi rulers of the early-fifteenth century. His descendant, Rai Bular, the chief of Talwandi, was a contemporary of Guru Nanak. The town has nine gurdwaras including the *Gurdwara Janam Asthan* which marks the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev.

From a Pakistani newspaper editorial:

“In 1994, the foundation-stone of Nankana Sahib Foundation was laid by Rai Bashir Ahmad Khan Bhatti, a member of the National Assembly and chairman of the Standing Committee on Education. Mr Bhatti is the oldest living descendent of Chaudhary Rai Bular Bhatti, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, who had recognised that the Guru was a divine soul. Over the last five hundred years, the Bhatti family has donated almost 11,000 acres of its land to the Sikh religious shrines in and around Nankana Sahib. The 1994 foundation, built over 10 acres of land, was donated by Chaudhary Rai Sarwar Bhatti, also a direct descendent of Rai Bular Bhatti.

The entire Nankana Sahib Estate consists of 16,962 acres. Most of it is leased to the farmers and residents of Nankana Sahib. Almost all the houses in Nankana Sahib are built on this property. The Nankana Sahib Estate is the property of the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara (Gurdwara Janam Asthan).”

Guru Nanak's Times: It is very important to understand the social, cultural, and political environment in Northern India—especially in the Punjab State and Delhi during the lifetime of Guru Nanak Dev from 1469 to 1539. In 1451, before the birth of Nanak, Bahlol Lodhi occupied Delhi and founded the Lodhi dynasty. The Guru was an eyewitness to the rise and establishment of the Lodhi dynasty and then its capture by Babur who founded the Mughal Empire in India. The establishment of the Sikh Faith was in direct response to the socio-cultural and political events that occurred during the stated historical period.

Divided Society: However, in Sultanpur; indeed, in all Northern India, Nanak saw a society deeply divided between Hindus and Muslims. The Muslims were a relatively new arrival in Punjab—they had begun coming in about 1000 CE—but eventually they started forcible conversion of the local Hindu population to Islam alongside of enslavement of women and children. An integral part of Muslim society was slavery—the nobles and royals kept large retinues of domestic male and female slaves. Interestingly, unlike what we learn from the tales of western slavery, we see that the relationship between the master and the slave in 15th century Punjab was emotional and humanitarian. On the other hand, the Sufis also played a huge role in the peaceful conversion of people to Islam. Despite the ideal norm of equality in Islam, the Muslim society was degraded into innumerable social divisions.

At Daggers Drawn: The Hindu society was no better either—and the ideal norm of social differentiation and discrimination by caste as birthright or birth-deprivation. In the 11th century, Al-Biruni, a famous Persian mathematician who also proposed a method to calculate the circumference of the earth, described in detail the division of the Hindu society. There were at least 36 social groups and except for the higher caste Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the proverbial teeming millions lived in abject poverty. The condition of the untouchables was outright inhuman. Women fared no better; child marriage was rampant; women were regarded as inferior to men and widows in particular were treated with contempt. The Brahmins advocated meaningless rituals as a tool to further oppress the common people in order to maintain their hold on the masses. These social norms remained unchanged even in the 15th century in which Nanak was born. Added to this sordid situation was the discomfiting fact that Hindus and Muslims were always at daggers drawn.

Dismal Picture of Social Order: Emerging from this brief exposition is a dismal picture of the prevalent social order: barring a chosen few, everyone was bereft of basic human rights of equality, freedom, and justice. Any deviation from these inhuman social norms, regardless whether one was a Muslim or a Hindu, was not only intolerable but also punishable by law. Living in Sultanpur Lodhi [named after Sultan Khan Lodhi who was a general of Mahmud of Ghazni in 1103 CE] amidst such repressive conditions of Indian society, Nanak, at the age of 30, proclaimed “There is no Hindu and there is no Muslim” and caused a historic breakthrough from the shackles of centuries-old psycho-social perversion. He declared that everyone being the child of one God had the birthright to a life of freedom and dignity.

Fundamental Human Rights: The Guru spelled out and propagated the fundamental human rights of equality, freedom and justice. He provided moral justification for the use of force if it were imperative to preserve the dignity of human life. His exhortation was: *Must you have passion for playing the game of love come hither to my street with thy head on thy palm!* This proclamation along with other teachings eventually laid the foundations of the *Khalsa* during the dynamic Spiritual Ministry of the last and Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Gobind Singh.



Consolidation of the Sikh Faith: Babur, the founder of Mughal Empire in India, died in 1530; his death resulting in a relatively peaceful period in north-west India's history and there were no further skirmishes of contending political outfits with his son and successor Humayun. This fortuitous interregnum enabled the Guru to consolidate the growing community of his disciples and he successfully laid a solid foundation for the raising of Sikh Faith's superstructure.

Dynamics of Honesty and Psycho-Social Responsibility: Guru Nanak is the first prophet who presented and propagated a cosmic view of life—piecing together the political, social, and metaphysical imperatives of workaday existence into what I call Pragmatic Spirituality that encompasses the terrestrial and the celestial, the mundane and the exalted, serving it on a platter to the low and weak. He transformed his Revelation into a comprehensible *mantra* in the common folks' language for ideal living through “Earn thy living through honest means; share it with the less-privileged; and meditate on God's Holy Name”. He identified himself with the lowest among the lowly and demonstrated the efficacy of the Sacred Word by personal example. He showed how conflict between opposing ideologies could be resolved through socially-beneficent action. He would customarily take his seat between Bala and Mardana, his lifelong companions, and addressed them as ‘Bhai’ [Brother]. He chose to take meals with Bhai Lalo, a humble carpenter, much to the chagrin of Malik Bhago by declining his invitation to a grand feast.

Uncompromising Monotheism: It cannot be emphasised enough that Guru Nanak received the Message of God by His grace through Revelation by virtue of which he injected into popular notions of Monotheism a perennial vitality and an uncompromising conviction steeped in Humility as the rarest of rare divine dispensation. His *Bani* is thus soul-resurrecting and consciousness-exalting utterance sprung from artesian wells of direct knowledge within his being that comes only from actual seeing, never by speculation and ratiocinative cerebration. Not once in his 974 *Shabads* (hymns) any doubt occurs to show that what he is saying is a figment of his own imagination. Unfortunately, this truth has been eluding all genres of historians, scholars, and researchers who end up suggesting that *Nanak Bani* that had actually descended in his Revelation is a mere rehashing of Vedic metaphysics and Islamic religious thought as an ingenious psycho-spiritual syncretism. His proclamation is substantiated by the Sacred Formula that he put forth in a form never before and since his times attempted by any god man: *Ek Onkar* or *Ik Onkar*—prefixing of the digit “1” before the written symbol “Omkar” or “Oankar” or “Onkar” is unique in the annals of World Religions.

Divine Distinction of *Ik Onkar*: Two sacred words “Om” and “Omkar” had existed in the Indian religious tradition for many centuries but the prefix “1” made the latter unique, universal, and timeless. The word “OM”, sacred though it is, is at bottom a primal sound which it is hard to accept as an equivalent of God. The word “OM-KAR”, a later addition to the prevalent sacred words, says much more through the addition of the suffix “KAR” suggesting that the Divine Doer who has the absolute autocratic powers of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. But the problem with it was that it tended to drift from Monotheism to Polytheism and many other “isms” as in the typical case of Hinduism. Originally called the Sanatana Dharma it pertained to “Brahman” of the Vedas—an Abstract Principle of Truth that one finds hard to identify with. Hence its incredible multiplication into 330-million-strong pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses that have found their way into Hindu mythology and thence into the hearts of countless Hindus inhabiting the globe, so much so that it is impossible to evict them from the “Collective Unconscious” even by the awesome weaponry of science and technology.

Numeral “1” spells God’s Inviolable *Unicity*: Since Guru Nanak embarked upon his mission of spreading God’s Word internationally, he at first identified himself with the lowest among the lowly so that he could bring it to the doorstep of the illiterate, ignorant masses on a platter in their language, unlike in Sanskrit that the scheming Brahmins had designated as “*Deva Bhasha*” [Language of the Gods] to exploit the low-caste teeming millions to their own advantage to preserve their supremacy throughout the chequered history of humanity that had been fated to be born and brought up in India. The Guru, therefore, stressed the inviolable-indivisible Unicity of God by the numeral “1” and presented Him as the Supreme Divine Being as One without a Second to possess the absolute and autocratic powers of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction that He need not delegate any task to an assistant, a regent, or a subordinate deity such as Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh. The word ‘Unicity’ is a necessary coinage to connote ‘inviolable-indivisible ONENESS’ [it does not exist in the English dictionary] in an attempt to distinguish it from the connotation of the word ‘Unity’ that has an intrinsic infirmity to drift from ‘the state of being one; oneness’ into ‘totality as combining all its parts into one’. Therefore, ‘Unity’ is a plural, with minimum two!



God as Primal Person: Guru Nanak thus describes God as Primal Person [not an abstract principle of truth as the ‘Brahman’ of the Vedas] both in His *Nirguna* [without attributes] and *Sarguna* [with attributes] Being. While underscoring His unique powers of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction as Self-Existing Primal Person, the Guru stresses God’s inviolable-indivisible Unicity by the Numeral “1” as a starting point of the soul-uplifting *Mantra* [Master Word]. Thus ‘OM’ is the Primal Sound associated with God’s Immaculate, Impeccable, Untaintable, Incorruptible Purity, and ‘KAR’ is the active principle operating the three complementary primary functions of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction.

Brahman is not “God”: Brahman, as understood by the scriptures of Hinduism, as well as by the ‘*Acharyas*’ of the Vedanta School, is a very specific conception of the Absolute. This unique conception has not been replicated by any other religion on earth and is exclusive to Hinduism. Thus to even call this conception of Brahman “God” is, in a sense, somewhat imprecise. This is the case because Brahman does not refer to the anthropomorphic concept of God of the Abrahamic religions. When we speak of Brahman, we are referring neither to the “old man in the sky” concept nor to the idea of the Absolute as even capable of being vengeful, fearful or engaging in choosing a favourite people from among His creatures. For that matter, Brahman is not a “He” at all, but rather transcends all empirically discernable categories, limitations, and dualities [Dr Frank Morales].

***Omkar* or *Oankar*:** In the light of foregoing exposition, when the Guru proclaims “Ek Omkar” he makes an uncompromising revelatory, *not* reharsed, averment that God is One, and He performs the three functions of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction unaided [Many Sikh scholars use the spelling ‘Oankar’ in

preference to ‘Omkar’ in a vain bid to show that that the former Sacred Word is new, without a past—this is being unfair and unjust to history which, in my considered opinion belongs to all humankind, *not* Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Jews, and others]. Be that as it may the Guru then reveals *Truth* as God’s Primary Attribute in the sense of real, *not* imaginary as in mythology. However, in my opinion, this statement despite its novelty yet tends to sound ‘abstract’ much like the word ‘Brahman’ in Vedic literature suggests. The next word in the *Mool Mantra* [Creedal Proclamation] is ‘Naam’ which has been combined with ‘Sat’ to make ‘Sat-Naam’ that in popular parlance is accepted as God’s Name. For me, it has a different connotation as I will presently attempt to show.



Reconciling Immanence with Transcendence: To infuse pulsating vitality into what appears to be an abstract principle of truth Guru Nanak says: Ek Omkar is ‘Sat’ but let us ‘name’ Him [try to identify His comprehensible attributes], and goes on to spell out – *Karta Purkh* [Creative Person] who is *Nirbhau* [Fearless], *Nirvair* [Without Enmity], *Akaal* [Beyond Time] *Moorat* [literally, ‘likeness’ or ‘image’; but I prefer ‘Personage’ so as not to confuse it with ‘idol’ because ‘idolatry’ is forbidden in the Sikh Faith], *Ajouni* [Unborn], *Saibhang* [Self-Existent] *Gur Parsad* [The Spiritual Preceptor’s Grace]. The last expression is popularly interpreted to mean ‘(God is) realisable by the Guru’s grace—literally, divine sacrament] but I feel that though Guru Nanak is proclaiming the advent of a new religion he is stressing the fact that he is doing so *not* as a wilful act of personal glorification but by the Grace [Divine Sacrament] of the Spiritual Preceptor—the

Guru [who is none other than God]. I think there could not be a better proof that Guru Nanak is sharing his Revelation, not concocting an alternative mythology. Following this line of thinking, I have rendered in English as follows the *Mool Mantra* with which Guru Nanak’s Japuji launches the Sikh Faith.

THE SEED-WORD

[*Mool Mantra*]

G-O-D [Generator-Operator-Destroyer] is ONE

All-Inclusive, All-Pervasive

Truth, the Unchanging Reality

Transcendent Being

One may Name Him thus

Intrepid, Uninimical

Imperishable Icon

Beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death

Self-Existent

By the Grace of God, the Guru

This Creed is proclaimed

Pragmatic Spirituality: Guru Nanak ushered an all-inclusive higher order of civilisation containing a complete set of moral and spiritual guidelines for shouldering religious, social and political responsibilities so that even the masses could lead a holistic life. His was a bloodless Revolution that sought to demolish the hegemony as much of the Brahmanical priest craft as of the tyranny of the feudal lords. He sought to create an equal and just society for the downtrodden, humble, and the weak. Throughout his life Guru Nanak taught the virtues of equality and dignity to all humankind irrespective of their perverted practices, caste structures, gender biases, social maladies, and geo-political affiliations and unending conflicts. In sharp contrast to the centuries-old customs and practices he accorded women equal status in society. Pragmatic Spirituality as the directive principle of workaday existence is Guru Nanak's priceless gift to all Humanity.

Guru's Hymns as Historical Records: Guru Nanak has the distinction of having been an eye witness to the tyranny and trauma of the period between 1519 and 1526—the most dramatic in the political landscape of Punjab—even more so, because he is the only god man to have well documented in his hymns [an unusual medium for writing history] the unfortunate misadventures of invaders of the time and mass-scale bloodshed that they caused to capture the Golden Sparrow that India was perceived to be in the eyes of the lust-blinded foreigners. What perhaps has not been properly noticed by historians and scholars in his matchless 'memoirs' is the crucial fact how Guru Nanak had imbibed in his own life the divine attributes of *Ek Omkar*, notably, *fearlessness* and then demonstrated their spiritual power in real-life situation with absolutely no fear or favour. Out in the town square he told Babur in his face that he was not Babur [Lion] but *Jabir* [Tyrant].

Last Years of Life: Guru Nanak spent the last 18 years of his life living with his wife and family at Kartarpur [Lord God's Establishment], the town he founded on the bank of river Ravi in West Punjab now in Pakistan. He took to farming for earning his livelihood as a living example of his triune formula: *Kirat Karo; Vand Chhako;* and *Naam Japo*. He established a *Dharamsaal* [literally, God's House—meant as a resting place for travellers] which eventually became the nerve centre for Sikh Way of Life. Guru Nanak preached the Name of God, affirmed his belief in the equality of all humankind and upheld the right to a dignified life, free from religious coercion, social bondage and political oppression. It is noteworthy such resting places for travellers had existed before but it was Guru Nanak who renamed them *Dharamsaals*; their earlier name was '*Ramasaals*'. In doing so he imparted to them the divine touch of universalness by obliterating the parochial suggestion that they belonged to Hinduism.

Strict Ethical Tests: Guru Nanak laid down strict ethical tests for his disciples emphasising that "Truth is higher than everything. But higher still is truthful living." Accordingly, "*Kirat Karo; Vand Chhako;* and *Naam Japo*" became the tenets of the Sikh Faith. Guru Nanak gave God's message to the masses in their mother tongue, Punjabi; script called *Gurmukhi* [literally, from the Guru's mouth: the script using Arabic-Persian alphabet is called '*Shahmukhi*' and the Muslims in Pakistan use it for written Punjabi] was developed by the Second Master Guru Angad Dev from the existing one. Guru Nanak also founded the institution of *Sangat*, congregation of devotees in worship and in the singing of *Shabads* [hymns] and for listening to religious discourses. These congregations also provided the people a platform to exchange views on common problems and generate a feeling of camaraderie and national consciousness.





Free Community Kitchen (Above): One of the hallmarks of Guru Nanak's Dharamsaals was the *Langar*, Free Community Kitchen, where all devotees were served free food irrespective of caste, creed, colour, or gender. This heroic initiative was revolutionary in that the Sikhs' contributions in cash and kind, besides service in the preparation of food and serving it to the *Sangats* seated together on mats laid on the floor, was entirely voluntary. *Langar* facetly ended the centuries-old social differentiation and discrimination based on the Hindu caste system thereby fostering a spirit of camaraderie and fellowship among human beings.

Choice of Successor: In his lifetime, Guru Nanak was able to create a community of people who had much more in common amongst themselves than to the communities they originally belonged to. Khushwant Singh, the famous Sikh author, has proposed that this ideal gave birth to collective Punjabi consciousness and Punjabi nationalism as distinct from all others. Perhaps, Guru Nanak's greatest contribution to the consolidation of the Sikh Faith was installation of Guru Angad as his most suitable and fit successor to carry on his divine mission. Guru Nanak passed away peacefully in 1539 at the age of 70 leaving behind many zealous and admiring disciples.

Creative Mysticism: Sikh Faith or *Sikhi* is an uncompromisingly monotheistic religion that refuses to recognise the Brahmanical priesthood and forbids magic, idolatry, and ceremonial visits to Hindi places of pilgrimage [*Tirathas*]. I use Sikh Faith or *Sikhi* in stubborn preference to Sikhism because I am convinced that the suffix "ism" devalues irreparably the intrinsic beauty and bounty of the world's youngest religion which, by any standards of discourse, stands apart on the divine power of its founder Guru Nanak Dev's Revelation. In my second PhD earned in 2000 I have established on the comparative method and studious analysis that it is an advanced version among World Religions by virtue of the founder's cosmic view of life and his unruffled courage to put it to the profoundest of scientific and metaphysical investigations. I have coined a new term "Creative Mysticism" for it because it transcends the nature, scope, and applicability of centuries-old disciplines like Metaphysics, Mythology, the Muse—even Mysticism that has hitherto been regarded as 'religion of the élite'.

Incredibly Fast Learner: Nanak was a child prodigy with a difference. God had endowed him with a contemplative bent of mind and rational thinking about the whys and wherefores of the phenomenal world and the world of spiritual realities. At the age of seven, he learnt Hindi and Sanskrit. He surprised his teachers with the sublimity of his intuitive knowledge of things divine—and his innate ability to lift the concrete to abstract, the mundane to the celestial, and to relate the two the corroborative evidence available to the discerning during workaday existence. On turning thirteen, he learned Persian [now called Iranian] and Sanskrit and became the most learned young man in the region at the age of 16. He was married to Mata Sulakhni who gave birth to two sons: Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. In November 1504, Guru Nanak's elder sister Bebe Nanaki took him to Sultanpur Lodhi where her husband Jai Ram got him the job of a storekeeper in the *Modikhana* [provisions store] of the local Nawab, Daulat Khan Lodhi.

TURNING POINT: Every day, Guru Nanak would get up early morning and go to take bath in *Vain* [also spelled: *Bein*], a rivulet, near Sultanpur Lodhi. After daily ablutions, he would religiously say his prayers. However, in August 1507 at the age of 38, his ritual bath turned out to be a turning point in his life. He had an experience of the Divine that he described it as Revelation. It was an unmediated, direct encounter with God that shaped the rest of his life and showed him what he was to do on earth for the well-being and prosperity of the entire Humankind. *Janam Sakhis* (hagiographic accounts) recount his childhood meditative inwardness, on the one hand, and, on the other, passionate engagement with the people's social plight, economic insufficiency, moral mess, political predicament, and spiritual quandary. These heavenly stories tell of his youth steeped in unflinching honesty and zealous devotion to Truth that he eventually identified as a Primary Attribute of God. Furthermore, they narrate the story of his life-transforming encounter with God.

Gone to the river Bein for his regular bath he waded down into deep water and then dived while Bhai Mardana was sitting on the bank. After long time had passed and Guru Nanak had not come out of the river suddenly the small pile of clothes lying on the riverbank shocked Mardana's awareness into a whirl of mounting anxiety. He ran to the bank, and scanned the still waters, calling out aloud his friend's name but no reply broke the breezy morning's quietude. The river flowed by in nonchalant calmness, unruffled by any swimmer's movements. When Mardana shouted out fearing that the Guru had drowned the whole village was on tenterhooks and the people in utter desperation searched all morning, spreading nets in the flowing water, going several miles downstream and searching the opposite bank for any sign of the holy personage but there was absolutely no sign of him. One by one some, sooner than others, went back to the village convinced that Guru Nanak must have drowned. However, Mardana and Bebe Nanaki waited, helplessly watching the river flow by while the river of agony flowed in tears down their own faces.



REVELATION: Two days passed in heart-rending despair but amazingly, on the third day, without fuss or surprise, Guru Nanak surfaced from out of the river well and alive. He sat on the riverbank, with water dripping, tight-lipped, and contemplating. He seemed absorbed by some mystery or inscrutable secret and uttered not a word. As news that ‘Guru Nanak’s back’ spread like wildfire through the village, Mardana, Bebe Nanaki, and villagers gathered on the site of surrealistic occurrence. It was here that on emerging from the river, he proclaimed, “There is neither Hindu nor Muslim!” Then, he went on to articulate that God was neither Hindu nor Muslim; therefore, he would follow the path that God had laid for him. Subsequently, Guru Nanak described his mystical encounter with God in one of his hymns: *He was taken to God’s Court and given a cup of amrit, or elixir of immortality. This empyrean drink bestowed upon him the celestial gift of God’s Holy Name, and God then charged him with the ethereal duty of preaching it to Humankind.*

Jobless Minstrel finds Employment: The crowd in its puzzled concern wondered what had happened to the Guru, he broke his inordinate silence with this strange utterance: Guru Nanak spoke: “There is neither Hindu nor Musalman ... Whose path shall I follow?” Then, he declared solemnly, “I shall follow God’s path.” It is widely interpreted to mean that Guru Nanak had heard God’s mystic call to dedicate his life to the service of humanity. During the period he was presumed drowned God had summoned the Guru to His presence and entrusted him the task of preaching the Divine Name (Sat Naam) to the world gone astray. All utterances of Guru Nanak that followed this episode collectively became “Gurbani”—Guru’s Word that God had given him through Revelation. According to the Revelation recorded in *Puratan Janamsakhi*, the Guru himself confirms that the Almighty Father had commanded him to go to the world and sing His praises. Sometime after this mystic experience, Guru Nanak wrote: “I was a jobless wandering minstrel; the Merciful Lord has taken me in His employment...”

Some of the crowd drifted away, and went back to work shrugging in disbelief. Others were puzzled about Guru Nanak’s mysterious disappearance, more so by his unnerving utterance. Mardana was just glad to see his friend alive again. Guru Nanak could not speak to them about where he had been for the past three days, or what he had experienced, but he was different – he was incredibly different. He went straight to his house, and took out most of his possessions to give away to the poor and the needy.

Re-Emergence with a Halo: After three days when Guru Nanak reappeared from *Vain*, some people saw a halo around his head. Some people say that Guru Nanak’s *Guruship* started with his reappearance from the river water. There are three entities in Sikh Faith or *Sikhi*: God, *Guru*, and *Gurbani* (Divine Word uttered by the *Guru* or Spiritual Preceptor). There is only One God; God sent his emissary, the *Guru*, who is embodiment of Divine Light. God delivered the Divine Word (*Gurbani*) through Nanak—that is how “*Bani is Guru and Guru is Bani.*”

Harbinger of Gurbani: In my view, without Guru Nanak, there would have been no *Gurbani*. *Guru* [Spiritual Preceptor] is the channel through whom *Gurbani* [Guru’s Word] is delivered. Therefore, when, at the age of seven, the first divine message that he delivered to his teacher (Raag Asa Mahalla 1, SGGS, Patti Likhi, Ang 432) had embodied the truism “coming events cast their shadows before” and thus he had to be the *Guru*. Before disappearing in *Vain* [also spelled ‘*Bein*’] river, because a lot of *Gurbani* had already been delivered by him he, indeed, was a born *Guru* and his *Guruship*, transcending ceremonial investiture then extant in the Indian religious tradition, had started from the day of his birth.

When he was asked by the Siddhas who his Guru was, Guru Nanak had replied that God Himself was his Guru:

“Unfathomable and Infinite is Lord God
It’s He who alone had acted as Nanak’s Guru”

(Sorath Mahalla 1, SGGS, Ang 599)

Introduction to Islam and Sufism: Early in life Nanak was introduced to the most esteemed writings of the Muslims and had his initiation in their principles and Sufism. The stimulus from these sources was so great that he grew so much fond of books as to utilise his leisure time in the translation of maxims as had made the deepest impression on his mind. This exercise helped him in developing the idiom of his mother tongue, Punjabi. Little by little he strung those loose sentences, put then in order, and converted them into verses. The net gain was tremendous. Though still young he was able to shake off those prejudices of *Gentilism* which he had imbibed with his mother’s milk, so much so that he was transformed into quite another man. **Gentilism**, or paganism, is derived from ‘Gentile’—a word used to address anyone who is not a Jew, or not a Christian, or a Mormon. A pagan is a heathen: one who is not a Christian, Jew, or Muslim. However, more recently, the connotation refers to one who has no religion; also one who sets a high value on sensual pleasures. Hence ‘Paganism’ is looked down upon as a way of life of the barbarians; uncivilised brutes.

As Gopal’s Student: Nanak was sent to school when he was five. His first teacher Gopal was an agnostic, hard-working and down-to-earth realist. A Sunday was selected as the most auspicious day for Nanak to begin his schooling. Mehta Kalu offered five rupees to Gopal as a mark of respect and distributed sweets to all the schoolchildren. For three years Gopal gave elementary education to Nanak in language, arithmetic and other subjects that were taught during those days. Nanak loved poetry, songs, and music. He easily committed to memory everything that was taught to him. Every day he wrote his lessons on a wooden tablet (*Patti* or *Takhti*). Three-year education was followed by the teaching of subjects that could help the students in trade, government service, and other secular pursuits.


Amazing Childhood Composition: In his first lesson in a secular subject, Gopal asked the students to write it on the *Patti* [Wooden environment-friendly slate or tablet to write on in washable ink]. In response, unlike his classmates, Nanak wrote some verses in the form of an acrostic and showed them to his teacher. Gopal was taken aback by what he saw written on the wooden slate. “So, the boys are right,” said he, “when they say that you keep on humming and composing poems. You really are a *Shā’ir* (poet).” The teacher found on the *Patti* an acrostic, written in couplets of extremely simple Panjabi language. What surprised him were the profound thoughts vested in the poems composed by Nanak. *Acrostic* is a poem or puzzle in which the first (or last) letters of each line spell a word or sentence: an acronym.

Tenets of the Sikh Faith: As enunciated by Guru Nanak the tenets of the Sikh Faith are: unswerving faith in One Lord God who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; Engagement in socially-beneficent activities [*Sewa*]; Collective singing of paeans to the Glory and Grandeur of Lord God [*Kirtan*]; and Regular participation in Holy Congregation [*Satsang*]. He established a network of preaching centres each called a *Manji* [Diocese]. He appointed able and committed followers to head each diocese.



Majestic Title: ‘Sikh’ is one of the 30,000 most commonly used words in the Collins dictionary. A ‘Sikh’ is a member of the world’s youngest and most pragmatic of world’s major religions. Founded in 16th century by Guru Nanak [1469 - 1539 CE] in Punjab, which is a state in north-western India that once was the cradle of well-known Indus Valley Civilisation, and the birthplace of the Vedas and Hindu spiritual-metaphysical sacred literature, the Sikh Faith stands apart for its perennial freshness of socio-psychological attitude, spiritual profundity, scientific temper, and rational-emotional appeal. ‘Sikh’ is a majestic title that suggests ‘simple living and high thinking’—a benefactor, not a beggar, who, despite being steeped in Humility is yet exalted in Spirituality.

Cardinal Principle: Guru Nanak has thus made Humility the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith, and propounded, practised, and propagated Cosmic Way of Life grounded in *Sahj*. *Sahj* is equipoise rooted in unconditioned spontaneity, and is a state of consciousness in which body, mind, and soul are in perfect equilibrium from which are born socially-beneficent activities without premeditation, fear or favour. Seen in this light the word ‘Sikh’ chosen by Guru Nanak for a devotee treading the Path of Truth assumes exemplary significance. A ‘Sikh’ becomes disciple of the Guru [*Shabda* or the Sacred Word, *not* a human preceptor] who is eternally learning and, therefore, unaffected by the psychopathic disease of a pedant whose knowledge is his worst enemy because he is constantly bogged down by arrogance. An arrogant person turns dialogue into monologue and by his own misgiving—the feeling that ‘all is not well’ unless he remains centre-stage, a cynosure of all eyes.



Sacha Sauda: Perhaps the most famous episode connected with Guru Nanak’s life is the story of “*Sacha Sauda*”. Its popular English translation as “True Bargain”, in my view, is not right. Bargaining takes place at the time of purchasing merchandise with a view to making a favourable transaction; an advantageous purchase and subsequently selling it to earn profit. In “*Sacha Sauda*” the Guru did none of these things, and entered into a trade of a curious kind. The word ‘trade’ is, therefore, more appropriate because a trader only buys and sells merchandise that he does not manufacture and engages in it as a way of livelihood, especially skilled but not learned. It goes without saying that livelihood would be earned only if he makes profit in selling his wares at a price higher than its cost—and obviously he would always strive to buy merchandise at less price and sell it at more to earn his living. When Mehta Kalu sent young Nanak with Mardana to buy some merchandise with twenty rupees, he was initiating his son into business whose commerce was primarily profit-making. His father was disappointed that Nanak’s mind was not into farming and other worldly work. He, therefore, thought perhaps engaging him in trade would, firstly, be a good profitable occupation for his son, and, secondly, he would be happy all day talking to his clients about his business rather than dalliance with other-worldly fancies.

On Maiden Business Trip: Nanak and Mardana started from Talwandi towards Choohar-Khaana on this maiden business trip on an auspicious day that had been chosen by the Pandit through ritual foreseeing. They had hardly gone ten or twelve miles from the village when they came across a village infested by an epidemic, where the people were thirsty, hungry and sick due to lack of water and an outbreak of disease. Nanak told Mardana, “Father has asked us to carry out some profitable transaction. No bargain can be truly profitable than to feed and clothe these naked and hungry children and adults. I cannot let go of this god-send opportunity to strike a profitable deal. Taking all the money from Mardana he went to the nearest village where he bought plentiful supply of food and brought water for the disease-ridden villagers. He felt that he had struck the best deal and earned enormous profit on it by investing twenty rupees in the divine trade of “Free Community

Kitchen” called *Langar*. The notion that he had fed hungry *Sadhus* has gained since the fifteenth century so much currency and acceptability as to become deeply ingrained in the Sikh “Collective Unconscious”, but this is dead against the Guru’s primary tenet.

This crucial tenet of “*Vand Chhako*” [Share what you have with poor and the needy] has been succinctly explained by Guru Amardas thus: *ਇਸੁ ਭੇਖੈ ਥਾਵਹੁ ਗਿਰਹੇ ਭਲਾ ਜਿਥਹੁ ਕੇ ਵਰਸਾਇ॥* “Instead of asking alms wearing these beggarly robes, better be a householder, and give charity to others.” (Raga Vadhans, SGGS, Ang 58)

Gurdwara Sacha Sauda commemorates the spot in the city of Farooqabad (now in Pakistan) where this historic episode had taken place. An elderly Muslim man narrated to a Sikh researcher the story that corroborates what is written above. Nanak fed the hungry and the sick villagers, not, as is popularly believed, the shirkers, loitering *Sadhus* [mendicants] who, according to *Gurbani*, are a burden on society. He was grateful that the Guru had saved his ancestors from starvation and sickness by coming to their timely rescue. This is the foundation of *Guru-Ka-Langar* [Free Community Kitchen for everyone regardless of their caste, colour, creed, ethnicity, and national prejudices]. A sum of twenty rupees invested by Guru Nanak has inspired Sikhs all over the world for doing never-ending *sewa* [service] of the poor, the needy, and the sick as an eloquent example that upholds the supreme virtue of a householder’s life. Guru Amardas reiterates Guru Nanak’s exhortation thus: “Doing good deeds to the people is the Sikh Way of Life. Sikhs’ day is made when he shares whatever he has with the needy.”

Father’s Wrath awaited Nanak: On arrival near Talwandi, Nanak said to Mardana, “You go to the village alone while I wait here.” Mardana went to the village and narrated the whole story to Mehta Kalu; also told him where his son was waiting. Furious that they had wasted so much of money on feeding the hungry and the sick, he put aside all work and asked Mardana to take him to where his son was. Reaching the well where Nanak had been waiting, he caught hold of him and vented his anger by slapping him hard. For the worldly-wise father, the amassing of wealth was the only true bargain because he knew that in this world money alone is the mark of nobility; only the wealthy are looked up to as wise, and considered gentle, honest, pious; above all, magnanimous benefactors of humanity. Nobody gives a damn to the means by which the money is earned by the dishonest and powerful.

An Important Lesson: To my reckoning, there is an important lesson in this episode. A son does not [need not] *naturally* follow the occupation of his father; otherwise, Nanak would have been a businessman or an accountant as Mehta Kalu had wished. By the same token, one of Guru Nanak’s two sons would have been a natural successor to his Spiritual Ministry, but it did not happen that way. The gift of Spirituality is rarest of rare divine endowment. God confers it on those He chooses by His own inscrutable will regardless of their caste, creed, colour, gender, nationality, and ethnicity.

Rai Bular, the Guru’s Impassioned Supporter: Once, the Guru’s father complained to Rai Bular Bhatti that his son was so crazy that he would away his earnings to the poor. Rai Bular, in reply, warned Mehta Kalu saying: “Your son is not an ordinary man. You can have from me double the amount that he spends on the needy, but do not stop him from doing so.” There are many interesting stories from the early life of the Divine Master when he was at Talwandi that he really enjoyed distributing articles of daily needs to the poor and feeding the hungry at all times. Wherever Nanak went charity moved with him like his shadow. He felt that in giving he was performing God-assigned duty of socially-beneficent action. No one thus went away disappointed from his door.



Holy Service at Sultanpur: Guru Nanak used to give discourses to *Sangats* every evening at Sultanpur. Many would come to join the holy service and were served food by the Guru out of the ration that was permitted to him with his salary. He distributed all that he saved, for he had no liking for hoarding. Guru Nanak had ample opportunities there to satisfy his obsession for open-handed charity. After meeting the needs and expenses of his own family out of his allowances and profit, he used to give away a large part of his earnings in charity. His charity was his love in kind for humankind. He thus earned affection of the poor and the needy and admiration of the people at large.

Rai Bular learns about the Guru's Mission: The Guru was ready to leave Sultanpur Lodhi for good when the Nawab made an attempt to dissuade him from stepping on the path of renunciation, but when the Guru told the Nawab about his mission he bowed his head in reverence and said, "... but do kindly accept for the use of your family the sum that has been found due to you from the Modikhana." The Guru desired him to distribute that amount among the poor, saying, "As for my family and my wherewithal the Sustainer of all will take care of us." Having given away all his material wealth, he was now ready to distribute, with an equally liberal and generous heart, the spiritual riches that he had received from Lord God.

Aim of Udasis: Guru Nanak's extended Missionary Travels [Udasis] in India and abroad were aimed at spreading the Word of God as received by him in his Revelation based on which he had established the Sikh Faith. He discountenanced *Tyaga*, the path of renunciation, and *Yoga* for self-realisation, rejected the 'inviolable' authority of the Vedas, and eradicated the centuries-old Hindu caste system from among his followers. Instead, he commended the leading of a householder's life (*Grihsta*) avoiding the marshland of materialistic pursuits and prosperity. He introduced the triune formula of simple living and high thinking: *Kirat Karo* [Earning livelihood by honest means]; *Vand Chhako* [Sharing one's earnings with the needy and poor]; and *Naam Japo* [Meditation on the Holy Name].

Most Travelled God's Messenger: Guru Nanak is the most travelled Messenger of God in the world. Most of his journeys were made on foot accompanied by Bhai Mardana. He travelled in all four directions—North, East, West, and South—through uncharted, inhospitable tracts of land. He is believed to have travelled more than 17500 miles [28,000 kilometres] in four [according to some accounts: five] major national and international tours from 1500 to 1524. In secular terms, he is the most travelled man in the world next only to Ibn Battuta (25 February 1304 - 1368 or 1369). He was a Muslim Moroccan scholar and explorer who widely travelled the mediaeval world. His main reason to travel was to go on a Hajj or a Pilgrimage to Mecca, to fulfil the obligation of the Fifth Pillar of Islam. But his travelling went on for about 29 years during which he visited an equivalent of 44 modern countries such as were then mostly under the governments of Muslim leaders of the World of Islam, or "*Dar al-Islam*".

Ibn Battuta: The story of Ibn Battuta's travel adventures spread over 30 years is lengthy. Given here is a brief account of his travels just to show that he was the most widely travelled individual. Therefore, more than anything else it is the duration of his travels that is worth noting with reference to Guru Nanak's odysseys. Having spent a month in Gao city, Ibn Battuta set off with a large caravan for the oasis of Takedda. Situated in Mali Gao city is the capital of the Gao Region. The city is located on the River Niger, 200 miles east-south-east of Timbuktu on the left bank at the junction with the Tilemsi Valley on the African Continent. On his journey across the desert, he received a message from the Sultan of Morocco commanding him to return home.

He set off for Sijilmasa in September 1353, accompanying a large caravan transporting 600 female slaves, and arrived back in Morocco early in 1354. Ibn Battuta led a complete life while travelling. He studied and prayed; practised law; and had astonishing adventures. He married at least 10 times and left children growing up all over Afro-Eurasia.

Sobha Singh's Comment: As an official Art Critic of *The Tribune*, a leading English newspaper of north-western India, I along with my wife visited Sobha Singh in the summer of 1986 at residence-cum-art gallery in Andretta. Andretta is a village and a colony in Himachal Pradesh. His is a household name and the Punjab where he is known, as well as elsewhere in the world where Sikh Diaspora is settled, as a painter of the iconographic portraits of the Sikh Gurus. During an extended interview he revealed many facets of his chequered career including how he got down to painting Guru Nanak. Interestingly, he shared the little-known secret how the first portrait of the founder of the Sikh Faith when shown to the Sikh scholars was made fun of to the extent of making him feel sheepish and puerile. Ironically, this mockery only reinforced his resolve to go ahead painting the divine personage as his imagination dictated him and his painterly prowess supported his adventures into the world of the spirit. Eventually he made arrangements to colour print his creations and give them as signed gifts to celebrity visitors to his 'ashram'. Anyway, reverting to the crucial point of discussion let me say that I asked him several questions to test if he was well read or only a juggler of oil paints. The deeper the enquiry grew the more he outpoured his thoughts and feelings in mounting spontaneity. And finally it yielded a gem of an idea. He declared, "Guru Nanak was a born Buddha." I found this comment so exciting that right away asked him if he had revealed it to someone else too. He said, "No, not all, because the followers of both faiths (Sikhism and Buddhism) are pitifully so illiterate that they would troll me to hell!" He died in August 1986, and I am using his comment after 35 years because it reveals volumes of facts about Guru Nanak. Just look at Siddhartha's sculpture that shows him in an utter state of starvation as one of the several practices he observed with amazing daring and tenacity in search of truth until he received enlightenment when he had let go of his life-threatening bodily workouts. See the enormity of Guru Nanak's blessing that he should have been born at a stage where Buddha had got after an incredibly strenuous and long-drawn struggle. He spent six years wandering from place to place, in search of truth that would decipher the mystery of life and death. Finally, he sat under a peepal [*Ficus religiosa* or scared fig] tree in Bodh Gaya and began to meditate. Bodh Gaya is a village in the northeast Indian state of Bihar. After many days of meditation, he attained enlightenment and came to be known as *Buddha* or the 'Enlightened One'. The noteworthy point is that Buddha used reasoning to explain the esoteric in his teachings without recourse to sentimental gobbledygook. I call him the First Formula Religious Leader in recorded history. He identified the causes of human suffering and showed the way to get rid of it. Lest it should be misconstrued let Sobha Singh's anecdote end here because Guru Nanak's approach was a divine endowment received in Revelation, he followed no method of asceticism, and was fullness of life lived in the midst of the trials and travails of workday existence. He used Reason in the unique form I call "Logic of the Soul" far above and beyond the reach of familiar ratiocinative cerebration of Logic as taught in universities in courses on philosophy. What he practised and preached was a life of involvement [Seva], not escape, as succinctly packaged in the three-prong formula: (1) *Kirat Karo*; (2) *Vand Chhako*; and (3) *Naam Japo*. I have named it Guru Nanak's "Pragmatic Spirituality". It works perfectly well everywhere, all the time, for anyone who cares to grasp and practice its Holistic Humanism embodying as it does Honest Livelihood that spells Ergonomic Economics; Sharing one's honest earnings means Altruistic Sociology; and Meditation on the Holy Name—a deceptively simple way of remaining in touch with God's invigorating divinity, which acts like a radar so that man does not grow astray into misadventures that infest the mortal human life on planet earth.



Guru Nanak's Times and His Mission: There was widespread confusion in the society of Guru Nanak's times in which the prevalent views concerning Spiritual Realities were conflicting because the Priests, Pandits, Qazis, Mullas, and other religious leaders of Hinduism and Islam were continually at daggers drawn in desperate attempts at one-upmanship to prove the supremacy of their own faith. Guru Nanak who had identified himself with the lowliest of the lowly was deeply moved by the sad plight of the hapless people. The world suffering from mutual hatred, fanaticism, falsehood, and hypocrisy had sunk in the quagmire of wickedness, evil, and sin. Determined to bring God's message of love and peace to the misled masses far and wide he set out on his missionary travels [*Udasis*] in 1499 accompanied by Bhai Mardana. For one year he discoursed with the people in and around his home. However, in 1500, he embarked upon his First Udasi [1500 - 1506] and covered the east of India before returning home after six years.



The above painting was done by the surrealist artist Jaswant Singh to symbolize Guru Nanak's travels. Given below is a summary of the confirmed places that Guru Nanak had visited during his Missionary Odysseys [*Udasis*]:

FIRST UDASI (1500-1506 CE) lasted about seven years and covered the following towns and regions: Sultanpur, Tulamba [modern Makhdunpur (erstwhile village Tulba), district Multan], Panipat, Delhi, Banaras (Varanasi), Nanakmata (district Nainital, Uttar Pradesh), Tanda Vanjara (district Rampur), Kamrup (Assam), Asa Desh (Assam), Saidpur (modern Aminabad, Pakistan), Pasrur (Pakistan), Sialkot (Pakistan).

In his first Udasi (missionary travel), Guru Nanak covered east of India and returned home after spending about six years. He started from Sultanpur in 1500 and went to his village Talwandi to meet and inform his

parents about his long journey. The old parents wanted comfort and protection from their young son and persuaded him not to go. However, he convinced them of his mission by saying that it was God's command that he must travel in various directions in the country and abroad to spread His message to innumerable people who were in dire need of spiritual solace, love and salvation. The Guru pleaded with his parents for their blessing to undertake the onerous task, "There is a call from Heaven that I must go and I ask for your blessing." With their permission he set out on his first travel of God-assigned Humane Mission.

First Stop at Aminabad: After receiving the permission and blessings of his parents, Guru Nanak embarked on his first Udasi, accompanied by Bhai Mardana. Their first stop was at Saidpur, now known as Aminabad, where they met a poor carpenter named Lalo. The Master looked at poor Lalo graciously and he was blessed with Divine love and lo, he was a blessed man. By his infinite mercy for the honest and poor, the Guru graciously chose to stay as a guest with the carpenter for some time (Below, left).



Encounter with Malik Bhago (Above, right): The news reached the chief of the town Malik Bhago that a holy person was staying with Lalo. Malik Bhago, a corrupt man who had amassed wealth through unfair means, threw a sumptuous feast for all holy men including the Guru who politely declined his invitation. The Malik then made a special arrangement for the Guru and requested him to come and dine at his residence. On receiving the Guru, Malik Bhago said, "O holy man, I have prepared so many dishes for you, but you are staying with a poor carpenter and eating his dry bread. Why don't you stay with me?" Guru Nanak replied, "I cannot eat your food because it has been made with money sucked from the poor through unfair means, while Lalo's dry bread is made from the hard-earned money." Puzzled at this unexpected curious comment, he asked the holy personage to prove his point. The Guru then sent for a loaf of bread from Lalo's house; then, holding it in one hand, held Malik Bhago's in the other, and squeezed both. To everyone's befuddlements, milk came out from Lalo's bread while blood dripped from Malik Bhago's bread. Completely unnerved and shaken by his guilt he asked for forgiveness. The Guru told him to distribute his ill-gotten wealth among the poor and thenceforth lead an honest life. With Guru's blessings Malik Bhago was re-born into a life of honesty and fairness.

SECOND UDASI (1506-1513 CE) lasted about seven years and covered the following towns and regions: Dhanasri Valley, Sangladeep (Ceylon or Sri Lanka).

THIRD UDASI (1514-1518 CE) lasted about five years and covered the following towns and regions: Kashmir, Sumer Parbat, Nepal, Tashkent, Sikkim, Tibet. Guru Nanak is also believed to have gone to China. However, collection of evidence to support this claim is underway.

FOURTH UDASI (1519-1521 CE) lasted about **three years** and covered the following towns and regions: Iraq, Mecca, Turkey, and the Arab countries. It is said that in Syria there is a mosque named ‘Mosque of Wali-e-Hind’ near the mosque of Baba Farid. Guru Nanak is also believed to have gone to Africa. However, collection of evidence to support this claim is underway.

Bhai Mardana, a disciple from the Muslim faith, accompanied Guru Nanak. Prophet Muhammad had designated *Mecca* (his birthplace) as the Holy City of Islam and the direction (*Qibla*) in which all Muslims should offer their prayers wherever they be in the world. Since no non-Muslim is allowed to go there on pilgrimage, Guru Nanak had to feign to be one to gain access. He put on *Ihram*, unstitched dress worn by *Hajis* or Muhammedans who went on pilgrimage in those times, carried a Faqir’s staff in his hand, a collection of his hymns under his arm, with a jug (*Lota*) for ablutions, thus he was in the guise of a *Haji*. This is considered to be the last and longest Udasi to the headquarters of Islam. During three of the four Udasis, he had travelled to famous religious places in South India, East India, and North India discussing, in the light of his Revelation, the nature and impact of Spiritual Realities during workaday existence, eventually showing the path of righteousness to one and all regardless of caste, creed, colour, ethnicity, and geo-political prejudices

Following inscription appears on Guru Nanak’s memorial in Turkey:

In Arabic/Persian/Turkish languages
(Transliterated in Gurmukhi Script)
ਜਹਾਂਗੀਰ ਜਮਾਂ ਹਿੰਦ ਲਤ ਅਬਦ ਅਲ ਮਜੀਦ ਨਾਨਕ।
(Jehangir jaman hind lat abd al majid Nanak)

Meanings in Punjabi
ਜਮਾਨੇ ਦਾ ਮਾਲਕ, ਹਿੰਦ ਦਾ ਬੰਦਾ, ਰੱਬ ਦਾ ਨਾਨਕ।
(jamanay da malik, hind da banda, rab da Nanak)

Meanings in English
Lord of the Time, Citizen of India, the Man of God

Note: The rest of the long inscription is not legible and is still to be deciphered. However, the date 1267 Hijri (1850 CE) in the crown and at the bottom line of the monument is quite legible.

Sajjan Thug: According to *Puratan Janamsakhi* [Old Hagiographic Account of Guru Nanak’s Life], before Guru Nanak turned towards east, he went to Tolumba (now known as Makaddampur in West Pakistan) and met Sajjan Thug who always wore a white dress, displayed his rosary and thus posed to be a holy man. He had built a *Mandir* and a *Masjid* in the courtyard of his residence. His practice was to invite wayfarers to his home to rest for the night when he would rob their goods and money and sometimes kill them. The Guru went and stayed with him for the night but when he did not go to bed early Sajjan was a bit too nervous to perform his nefarious act of robbing. Sajjan asked the Guru to take rest and sleep but the Guru replied, “I am God’s minstrel and do not go to sleep till He commands me to do so.” The Guru then asked Mardana to play the *Rabab* and he sang a heart-rending hymn [Suhi Mahalla 1, SGGS, page 729].

First Historical Gurdwara: When Sajjan listened to the divine melody, he realized that the Guru's words were actually addressed to him. Upon this he made his obeisance, fell at the Guru's feet, and prayed to him to pardon his sins. The Guru said, "Sajjan, in the Sovereignty of God, grace is obtained by two things: (i) open confession and (ii) reparation for wrong." Sajjan stood speechless in submission and was asked to give all his ill-gotten wealth to the poor. He obeyed the mandate and became a follower of the Guru after receiving *Charan Pahul* [initiation ceremony in which the novitiate drinks water touched by being poured over the spiritual preceptor's toes]. It is said that the first historical *Gurdwara* [Sikh temple] was raised on the spot to commemorate the episode.



Guru Nanak at Hardwar (Above): Hardwar is one of the key Hindu pilgrimage places on the bank of river Ganges. It was a Baisakhi day and the pilgrims had got up early in the morning and bathed in the river. As the sun came out, they started throwing water towards the sun. When Guru Nanak asked what they were doing, one priest replied, "We are offering water to our dead ancestors in the region of the Sun to quench their thirst." Hearing this strange rationale, the Guru turned his back and started throwing water towards the west. The pilgrims laughed and ridiculing him asked what he was doing. He replied, "I am watering my fields in my village in the Punjab." The priest asked, "How can your water reach such a distance?" The Guru retorted, "How

far your ancestors are from here?” One of them replied, “In the other world.” The Guru reasoned, “If water cannot reach my fields which are about four hundred miles away from here, how can it reach your ancestors who are no longer on this earth?” Receiving instant illumination the crowd stood in speechless awe. The Guru educated them against superstitions, false rituals, idol worship, penances, renunciation, and monastic life. He stressed that only One God, the Formless, was to be worshipped by singing paeans to His glory and grandeur—the right path to the realisation of truth and enlightenment. **Gurdwara Nanakwara** situated in Hardwar on the bank of the river Ganges now stands as a memorial of the Hindus’ spiritual transformation.

Guru Nanak at Gorakhmata: After Hardwar, the Guru took his route towards Gorakhmata, about twenty miles north of Pilibhit, and reached the place via Joshi Math and Almora, which was then ruled by the members of Chand family who used to sacrifice human beings to please the Hindu goddess Chandi. Guru Nanak showed them the path of truth and thus stopped them from massacring innocent people as part of their weird worship.

From there he reached Gorakhmata which was the abode of Yogis (also spelled Jogis) of Gorakhnath clan. These Jogis had supernatural powers called *Ridhi-Sidhi*. Their blessings were eagerly sought by all householders who took pains to avoid their curses at all costs. Just as their reputation had spread far and wide, these Jogis had also heard about Guru Nanak’s divine endowment. On reaching there he was received with great courtesy and reverence and they cordially invited him to adopt their cult, wear their garb and join them as a Jogi. The Guru explained to them that the life of seclusion which was not in the service of their fellow beings was worthless. The Guru sang the following *Shabad* [hymn]:

Religion is not what you see in a patched gown
 Nor it resides in a Jogi’s staff
 Not even in ashes-besmear’d body
 Neither in earrings worn, nor in a shaven head
 Nor in the blowing of conch-shell makes up religion
 Abiding pure amid the world’s impurities
 One shall find the way of religion
 Mere verbiage does not constitute religion
 The religious is he who looks upon all men as equal
 Not in visiting tombs or cremation grounds
 Or sitting in postures of contemplation dwells religion
 Religion consists not in wandering in foreign countries
 Or in ritualistic bathing at places of pilgrimage
 Abiding pure amid the world’s impurities
 One shall find the way of religion
 On meeting a true Guru doubt is dispelled, and
 Wanderings of the mind done away with
 Religion lies in the shower of grace, and
 In the soothing ecstasy of its divine music
 One discovers happiness within oneself.

Abiding pure amid the world's impurities
 One shall find the way of religion
 Practise such religion, Nanak, in the midst of life
 Without forgetting death
 When your conch-shell sounds
 Without being blown shall you
 Attain immaculate dignity
 For, abiding pure amid the world's impurities
 One shall find the way of religion

[Suhi Mahalla-1, SGGS, p. 730]

On hearing this *Shabad*, the Yogis paid obeisance to Guru Nanak whose teaching was so powerful and effective that Gorakhmata soon became **Nanakmata**.

Reettha Sahib: Moving about 40 miles from Gorakhmata through forests, the Guru met another group of Yogis. He sat under a soap-nut tree and told them that by discarding family life and living in the forests away from worldly life, could not bring salvation. The inner change for attainment of peace and everlasting joy and happiness, could be obtained anywhere by contemplating on God's Name. The Yogis asked, "Master, the fire of desire is not quenched even by endless subjection of the body to discipline. Pray tell us a way to quench it." The Guru sang the following hymn:

Extirpating Ego-Consciousness destroy
 The sense of duality and attain
 Oneness with Lord God
 Intractable is the path for the ignorant and egotistic
 But those who take refuge in the Sacred Word
 And get mystically absorbed in it
 Realising thereby that He is both within and without
 Thus their fire of desire is destroyed
 By the Guru's grace, says Nanak

(Ramkali Mahalla-1, SGGS, *Siddh-Gosht*-46, p. 943)

The Yogis' shrewd mind yet wanted to test the Guru further. Knowing fully well that he did not have anything to offer, they implored him to give them something to eat. The Guru was sitting under the soap-nut tree that yields bitter fruit. He gave them soap nuts to eat. To the utter surprise of the Yogis, the soap nuts turned out to be sweet. By the Grace of God, the soap nuts of half-side of the tree where the Guru was sitting had become sweet and the other half of the same tree retained bitter fruit, which is true even to-day. **Gurdwara Reettha Sahib** was built to commemorate the miraculous event.



At Banaras: After Gorakhmata, the Guru took southerly route and, passing through Gola, Ayodhya and Prayag (Allahabad), reached Banaras. Also called Varanasi the town is said to have been established by Lord Shiva and is revered as the Seat of Hindu Learning. The Guru and his companion Mardana encamped in a public square. Pandit Chatur Das was the chief Brahmin of the place who saw to his dismay that the Guru's dress was neither of a family man nor of a *Sanyasi* (ascetic). This prompted the Pandit to hold a long discussion with the Guru. Guru Nanak asked the Pandit what he read to teach the people and what type of knowledge he imparted to his disciples. The Pandit replied, "By the will of God I teach the people the fourteen sciences: reading, swimming, medicine, alchemy, astrology, singing the six *Ragas* and their *Raginis*, the science of sexual enjoyment, grammar, music, horsemanship, dancing, archery, theology, and statesmanship." Explaining that better than all this was the knowledge of God the Guru uttered the fifty-four stanzas of Ramkali Mahalla 1- Dakhni Omkar. The true God is superior to all other gods.

The first two stanzas are as follows:

One Lord God created Brahma
 It is He who created our understanding
 It is from the same one God the mountains
 And the ages of the world issued forth
 It is the one God who bestowed knowledge
 It is by the Word of God that man is saved
 It is by the Name of the one God
 That the pious are saved
 Hear an account of the letter 'O':
 'O' is the best letter in the three worlds
 Hear, O Pandit, why you write puzzles?
 Write under the Guru's instruction
 The Name of God, the
 Cherisher of the world
 He created the world with ease
 In the three worlds there is
 Only one Lord of Light
 Under the Guru's instruction pick up gems and pearls
 And you shall realise God's divine essence
 If man understands, reflects on
 And comprehend what he reads
 He shall know at last that
 The True One is everywhere.
 The pious man knows and
 Remembers the truth- that without
 The True One the world is unreal

(Ramkali Mahalla 1 - Dakhni Omkar, SGGS, p-929)

On hearing the Shabad of Ramkali, Pandit Chatur Das fell at the Guru's feet, became a Sikh, and did much to spread the New Faith in that area. The place where the Guru stayed stands *Guru Ka Bagh Gurdwara*.

At Gaya: After Banaras, Guru Nanak reached Gaya which is a famous Hindu pilgrimage centre situated at the river Phalgu (or Falgu). The Hindu priests had declared that any offerings made at Gaya especially at the time of Baisakhi would secure salvation for seven generations of those who had departed from this world. Innocent people made huge offerings and the priests fed their *pittars* (ancestors) by offering rice balls, lighted up little lamps to illuminate their paths in the high heavens. The Guru's laughter at this ridiculous ceremony infuriated the priests. However, the Guru explained that those who had left their bodies on earth did not need any food or a glow of lamp to find their way about. If this body could not go to the other world, obviously it was not possible for any material substance of this world to reach there. The priests and people thus enlightened were exhorted to worship One God, the Formless.

To Kamrup: After Gaya, Guru Nanak passed through the area where the modern city of Patna stands, and reached Hajipur from where through Kantnagar he arrived at Malda. The town of Malda was situated at the confluence of rivers Ganges and Mahanadi. It is reported that a local merchant of Malda did a great service to the divine personage for whom he received Guru's blessings. The next stop was Dhubri in Assam. After Dhubri he proceeded along the Brahmaputra River on to Kamrup, a place near the modern city of Gauhati. *This whole route is marked by many old historical Gurdwaras bearing association with Guru Nanak.*

The city of Kamrup was ruled by a woman who practised black magic. She had assumed the name of Nurshah, the name of her teacher. She and her female companions practised black magic and had overwhelming influence over the local populace, especially when the word had spread that she had charmed many a holy man.



Mardana under Nurshah's spell: The Guru stayed under a tree on the outskirts while Mardana went into the city to fetch something to eat. On his way he met some women and fell victim to their machination by which he was turned into a lamb. In a state of hypnosis Mardana did all that they commanded him to do. He was thus imprisoned by Nurshah's witchcraft and did not return to the Guru. The Guru knew what had happened to his minstrel and he marched on to rescue him from his captors. Nurshah saw the Guru coming and tried to captivate him with her charms but her black magic utterly failed. On all the black magicians' fruitless efforts, the Guru sang the following *Shabad* on *Kuchajji* [Witch]:

I am a worthless woman; full of faults;
How can I go to enjoy my spouse's company?
Each of my spouse's wives is better than the other
O my life, nobody cares for me
My female friends who have earned
Their Spouses' favours are enjoying themselves
In the shade of the mango tree
Who can I blame for the lack of virtues in me?
What attributes of Thine, O Lord,

Shall I blazon abroad?
 What names of Thine shall I repeat?
 I cannot even attain one of
 Thy many excellences:
 I am ever a sacrifice unto Thee.
 Gold, silver, pearls, and rubies which gladden the heart
 Bridegroom hath given me, and
 I have fixed my heart on them.
 I had palaces of brick fashioned with marble.
 In these luxuries I forgot the Bridegroom
 And sat not near Him
 The kalongs cry in the heavens,
 And the cranes have come to roost.
 The woman goes to her father-in-law's;
 How shall she show her face as she proceeds?
 As morning dawned she soundly slept
 And forgot to continue her journey
 She separated from Thee, O Spouse,
 And thus stored up only grief for herself
 In Thee, O Lord, are merits; in me only faults:
 Nanak has this one supplication to make,
 Every night is for the virtuous woman;
 Though unchaste, may I obtain a night too?
 (Raga Suhi Mahalla-1, SGGS, p. 762)

Following is another revelatory utterance that the Guru made on the occasion:

Our speech is impressive, but deeds not so
 Our minds and hearts are stained with
 Black of worldliness, yet we wear white robes
 We are jealous of those who stand and serve at God's gate
 Those who love the Divine Bridegroom
 Experience the bliss of His hallowed hugs
 They remain meek and humble in their strength
 Our lives shall be enriched, Nanak, if we meet such women

[Sri Rag ki Var, Mahalla 1, 2-7, SGGS, page 85]

After the Guru's divine utterances, Nurshah thought that she would tempt him with wealth. Her attendants brought pearls, diamonds, gold, and silver, and laid them down before him. She then entreated, "O great magician, take me under your umbrage as your disciple and teach me your unique magic."

The Guru rejected all the costly gifts and spoke thus:

Why are you so haughty, O silly woman?
 Why don't you relish God's love in your own home?
 The Bridegroom is near, not far, you fool
 Apply the collyrium of God's fear in your eyes
 Wear the adornments of divine love
 You will be reckoned a devoted happy wife
 If you love the Divine Husband
 What will a silly woman do if she can't please her spouse?
 However hard she may implore she can't enter His boudoir
 Without God's grace she obtains nothing
 And all her striving comes to nought
 Intoxicated with avarice, covetousness, and pride
 She remains in drunken stupor of Mammonism
 Never by these means is the Bridegroom won over
 Stupid is the woman who believes thus
 Go, ask the happy wives by what means had they
 Won over their spouses
 Accept as good whatever He does
 Get done with conceit and cleverness
 Worship is the surrender of the mind
 At His feet by whose love is obtained
 What is most valued and beyond worldly riches
 Do whatever the Bridegroom bids you to do
 Give Him your body and soul; and such perfumes apply
 As are spoken of by the happy wives: "O Sister, by these means
 The Spouse is won over.
 Efface yourself, and you shall win Him over
 What other art is there?"
 Only that day is of any account when
 The Bridegroom with favour looks
 The wife has all worldly wealth earned
 So is the happy wife; Nanak, who pleases her spouse
 She is the queen of them all.
 Steeped in pleasure, she is drunk with happiness
 And day and night in His love absorbed
 She is beautiful, fair to behold, and accomplished
 She alone is the one properly wise."

(Tilang Mahalla-1, SGGS, p. 722)



On hearing this *Shabad*, Nurshah and her companions made obeisance to the Guru, and asked for his forgiveness and blessings to attain salvation. The Guru told them to repeat God's Name conscientiously, perform their domestic duties earnestly, renounce black magic and thus would they secure salvation. It is said that they became Guru's followers who, after a short stay, departed from there to carry on his divine mission, leaving behind many awakened souls.

Kauda Rakhshash: The Guru travelled many miles in the wilderness of Assam. As his minstrel Mardana was very hungry and tired they sat under a tree. After some time Mardana went to get something to eat. On his way he met Kauda Rakhshash, the cannibal. Kauda took Mardana by surprise and bound him hand and foot with a rope; then carried him to the spot where he had kept a large cauldron full of oil for frying the flesh of his victims. When Kauda started to light fire Mardana was mortally frightened and prayed to the Guru to come to his rescue who had foreseen what would come and was already on his way to get him released.

Nanak's Mercy: The Guru's sudden appearance completely bewildered Kauda who was struggling to light the fire. The Guru looked at him compassionately and graciously said, "Kauda! You see not what you do that your own actions shall throw you in hell fire!"

Kauda whose conscience was dead with heinous crimes suddenly realised his folly and was overwhelmed with repentance. He fell at the feet of the Master who, in his infinite mercy, blessed him with the Holy Name. Thus completely transformed he led the rest of his life as the Guru's devotee engaged in socially-beneficent work.

At Jagannath Puri: After Golaghat Nagar and Dhanasri valley that was inhabited by cannibals in large numbers, the Guru went back to Gauhati. From there he proceeded to Shillong and to Sylhet where an old Gurdwara stands in his memory. He then went to Dacca and on the way passed through Calcutta and Cuttack and finally reached Puri. One of the four most revered temples of the Hindus is located at Jagannath Puri in Odisha where God Jagannath's idol sculpted by Lord Vishwakarma [In Hindu mythology the celestial architect who created the universe] was installed by the Hindu god Lord Brahma. It was the anniversary of installation of the idol when Guru Nanak reached the temple. The Guru visited the temple not to adore their Lord but to teach the people that the worship of God was superior to the worship of the mythological deities. It was evening time and the priests brought a salver studded with many lighted lamps, flowers, incense and pearls and then all stood to offer the salver to their enshrined idol-god. The ceremony was called 'Arti', a song of dedication. The high priest invited Guru Nanak to join in the god's worship. The Guru did not join their service which enraged the priests.

Exposition of Aarti: On being asked the reason the Guru explained that a wonderful serenade was being sung by Nature before God's Invisible Altar. The sun and the moon were the lamps, placed in the salver of the firmament and the fragrance wafted from off the Malayan mountains was the pervasive incense. The Guru, therefore, instead of accepting the invitation of the high-priest to adore the idol, uttered the following Sikh *Shabad* (that is not all the Hindu *Aarti*):

(Raag (u) Dhanaasri; Mahalla-1: *Aarti*, p. 663 of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*)

Sun and moon are the lamps in the salver of sky
 And adorning it pearls of galaxies sparkling lie
 From Malayan mountains wind fans off pervasive incense
 The entire vegetation is an offering of fruits immense
 What wondrous worship is going on, O destroyer of fear
 Unstruck strains of ecstasy are the trumpets here
 In one sense, You have a thousand organs of sight
 In another sense, one could say You have none
 One could say the same about Your lotus feet
 And your thousands of organs of olfaction
 I am wonderstruck by this mysterious play
 The light that lights everything night and day
 By Guru's grace this light manifests
 Many a brilliance in this light rests
 True *Aarti* is that which pleases Thee
 My mind is enchanted by Your lotus feet
 Just as flower enchants the bumblebee
 Night and day I am longing to meet
 Pray, quench this cuckoo's thirst by Your grace
 That in Thy Name I find my resting place

[English Poetic Rendering by the Author]



Note: According to the *Puratan Janamsakhi*, the Guru ended his first Udasi with the visit to Puri and returned to Punjab in 1506.

Jatt Brahmins: Combat and cultivation were the main profession of the **Mohyals** or Jatt Brahmins for centuries. With a noble heritage behind them they were the sovereigns of Punjab before the advent of Muslim emperors. There are some who believe that even Porus who valiantly faced Alexander the Great was a Mohyal. Though they are known to be Brahmins they never took to Brahmanical ritualism and vehemently discountenanced alms or *Puja daan* [devotees' worship offerings]. Sikhi denounces the concept of renunciation or withdrawal from society and exhorts its followers to participate in the natural processes of life. This was the reason why the militant castes, notably, the Mohyals were attracted towards it. Furthermore, the founder of the Sikh Faith Guru Nanak did not believe in the theory of '*Paap-Pun*' i.e., sin and good. According to him, the universe is a drama enacted by God in which an individual as His creature ought to participate by siding with the forces of good in order to resist the villains of evil without fear of death because the soul is immortal. During armed fight for a noble cause or '*sewa*' if this body is lost the soul will merge with Divine Essence liberating the martyr from the endless cycle of life and death. The Mohyals found these tenets welcome and thus converted to Sikhi *en masse*. Also, because Guru Nanak's New Faith did not particularly prohibit consumption of meat it suited the Mohyals' eating habits.

Number	Name of Guru	Date of Birth	Attained Guruship	Date of Ascension	Age
1	Nanak Dev	15 April 1469	20 August 1507	22 September 1539	69
2	Angad Dev	31 March 1504	7 September 1539	29 March 1552	48
3	Amar Das	5 May 1479	26 March 1552	1 September 1574	95
4	Ram Das	24 September 1534	1 September 1574	1 September 1581	46
5	Arjan Dev	15 April 1563	1 September 1581	30 May 1606	43
6	Har Gobind	19 June 1595	25 May 1606	28 February 1644	48
7	Har Rai	16 January 1630	3 March 1644	6 October 1661	31
8	Har Krishan	7 July 1656	6 October 1661	30 March 1664	7
9	Tegh Bahadur	1 April 1621	20 March 1665	11 November 1675	54
10	Gobind Singh	22 December 1666	11 November 1675	7 October 1708	41
11	Guru Granth Sahib	Not Applicable	7 October 1708	Not Applicable	N/A

SOURCE: Internet

CURIOUS FACTS ABOUT TEN GURUS OF THE SIKH FAITH

Guru Angad Dev attained Guruship in the same month, September, in which Guru Nanak Dev died.

Guru Angad Dev's birthday and death day fall in the same month: March.

Both Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Arjan Dev were born on the same date i.e. April 15 separated by 94 years.

Both Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas died on September 1 separated by seven years.

Guru Gobind Singh died one day and 47 years after Guru Har Rai.

Guru Har Krishan and Guru Angad Dev died in the same month, March, separated by 112 years and one day.

Guru Amardas was the oldest to be sworn in to Guru Nanak Dev's Spiritual Ministry at the age of 72 years one month and 21 days, and Guru Har Krishan was the youngest to become Guru at the age of 5 years two months 29 days and the youngest to die at the age of seven years three months and 23 days.

Guru Ramdas was born and died in the same month, September.

Bhai Mardana died five years before (1534) and Bhai Bala left this world five years after (1544) Guru Nanak cast off his mortal frame (1539).

Guru Nanak and Raja Shivnabh: In the first decade of the sixteenth century, when Guru Nanak visited *Singhladweep* [Sri Lanka], the island nation's rulers were from Prakarmbahu dynasty, and Shivnabh or Sheonabh was the king. It is said that the Guru "covered his head with ropes, and tied ropes around arms and legs during his visit to the South. He wore wooden sandals and sported Hindu vermilion mark on his forehead. He was accompanied by Saido and Seeho Gheho, Jatt by caste." In *Bhai Bala Janamsakhi*, the duration of the visit to Sri Lanka is recorded thus: "Further they reached the kingdom of King Sheonabh Sangla Deep [also spelled *Singhladweep*] in one and a half months---Guru Nanak stayed there for two years five months." His mode

of travel is described in *Meharban Janamsakhi*: “If Baba so felt, he walked for days together or sat for many days. For many days he remained meditating and for many days he remained quiet.” His travel to Sri Lanka was by boat/ship from one port to another and on foot when going cross-country. The purpose of Guru Nanak’s visit to Sri Lanka was to spread the message of One Lord God whose key attribute is Truth—unchanging reality because He transcends Time-Space Continuum as His own creation. His devout follower Mansukh, a Lahore-based *Bania* (trader), had visited Sri Lanka earlier on many business trips. He religiously recited Guru’s hymns and lived a pious life. King Shivnabh was very much impressed by this trader’s devotion to the Guru, and experienced a mounting desire to pay his obeisance to him. It was on his request that Guru Nanak visited Sri Lanka.

Mandatory Fast on *Ikadashi*: According to another legend, the King of Sri Lanka, Shivnabh, used to observe fast on *Ikadashi* (first of each lunar month) and enforced this practice as a rule on his people. Those who did not obey it were punished. However, Mansukh did not observe fast; instead as his well-established routine continued to sing hymns of the Lord and distribute *Prasad* on *Ikadashi*. The king got him arrested on a complaint and enquired as to why he did not observe the fast. The trader stated that it was his Guru’s teachings that those who eat less and worship the Lord, they observe *Ikadashi* daily. The king enquired, “Who is your Guru?” The trader said, “My Guru is Nanak of Kartarpur.» The king then said, “I wish to see Guru Nanak. How can I see him?” The trader said, “You pray to the Lord, build halting place for the Guru and serve the visiting saints. Guru Nanak will be seen by you as well.” The king enquired further, “Which form does he appear in?” The trader said, “He will appear as a saint. You have to keep faith and remember him.” The king had the Guru’s place raised in a dried-up garden and started serving the visiting saints.” Back in Punjab, when Mansukh narrated the episode and conveyed Shivnabh’s eagerness to meet him, Guru Nanak said, “Listen to this, Bhai Mardana; it is important that we go there.” Mardana agreed with the Guru and they embarked upon a journey towards South.

Barren Garden turns Green: Guru Nanak took his seat in Raja Shivnabh’s garden which was at that time barren, but it is said to have turned green on the Guru’s arrival. The gardener requested the king to go and see the fakir who had caused the withered garden to bloom afresh. The Guru had gone to those places where the worst of sinners and evil doers dwelt. When Guru Nanak visited Shivnabh’s kingdom, the Raja was an atheist and was thus in dire need of psycho-spiritual treatment of the damned disease.

Shivnabh’s ministers did not want him to meet Guru Nanak and warned him that in doing so he would be cursed. Therefore, four ministers were sent to meet him with a view to stopping him reaching the Kingdom. They made obeisance and offered a silver plate laden with diamonds at his feet. They said, “This offering shows our King’s respect for you.”

Guru Nanak said, “Tell him how he can express his respect for me with mere pennies.” The ministers were taken aback because all other saints had accepted such offerings and left the King alone. Shivnabh was thus told them that this was no ordinary saint. Guru Nanak said to the ministers, “Tell Shiv-Nabh that if he wants to make an offering he ought to come and do so personally.”

King’s Puzzlement: As an egotist Shivnabh failed to discern the Guru’s extraordinary exalted stature. Much to the contrary, he felt convinced that the Guru too was stricken with the same disease. Next time he sent a group



of his dancing prostitutes feeling confident that the Guru would be tempted, but this move too turned out to be a ridiculous fiasco when he addressed them as daughters. When this news was conveyed to him, puzzled Raja Shivnabh was shaken to the core of his being and as God's fear entered his mind he mumbled to himself, "Who is this incorruptible man?"

Penitent Shivnabh meets the Guru: A sudden upsurge of penitence welled up in his heart and the King came personally to enquire his name, caste, and whether he was a Jogi. As was his wont, the Guru replied: "*A Jogi is he who has identified his life with the Holy Name; he alone is pure without an iota of uncleanness. He who keeps with him the Name of the Beloved, which is ever true, stands liberated from the endless cycle of births and deaths.*"

The King queried if he was a Brahmin. The Guru replied, "*A Brahmin is he who has divine knowledge for his ablutions, and God's praises for the offertory leaves of his worship. There is but One Name, One God, and One Light in the three worlds.*"

Then the King asked if he was a shopkeeper. The Guru replied, "*Make your heart the weighing scale, your tongue the beam, and weigh the inestimable Holy Name. There is but one shop, one Merchant above all though the dealers are many.*"

The King again enquired if he was a Hindu or a Muhammedan. The Guru continued his enigmatical replies, "*The True Guru has solved the problem of duality of the two ways. It is he who fixes attention on the One God, and whose mind wanders not, who can understand it. He, who abides in the Word and ever worships day and night, has ended his doubts.*"

Driven by childlike curiosity the King then asked if he was Gorakhnath. The Guru, showing no inclination to directly gratify his curiosity, proclaimed thus: "*Above us is the sky, Gorakh is above the sky; His inaccessible form dwells there; By the favour of the Guru, whether I am abroad or at home matters not to me; Nanak has become such an anchorite.*"

When the Guru had ended his discourse, the King invited him to come to his palace and see his queen. He gave him an opportunity of administering his doctrines to her.

Without firstly having the fear of God, love can't enter. Without love one can't worship the Lord God. Shivnabh had the fear of God enter into his mind. He bowed to the Guru; then joined his hands and made supplication.

Humility is Receptivity: To ask for something you have to become humble because without Humility mind is not receptive to the Sacrament of Spirituality. "*Gareeb Nivaz, O Protector of the Poor, I'm the King of this land. Be merciful and grant me the gift of Sewa [service]. But the service shouldn't be small it should be big enough for a King, what can I offer you in return?*"

Guru Nanak said, "This is the path of love, no one else can travel this path. If you want to give an offering, then donate something of yours and do something that's going to help you in your next life."

Shivnabh said, "I will donate *my* kingdom to you, Guru." Guru Nanak said, "O foolish Shivnabh, I said - give me something of *yours*, this Kingdom isn't yours and it is not going to help you in the next world. Your father couldn't take it when he died; your grandfather couldn't take it either and neither can you take it because it doesn't belong to you!"

The Guru repeated his original question and asked, “O *Shiv-Nabh*, donate something of yours, the kingdom is not yours, the queen that rules it with you is not yours; now donate something that’s yours!”

Shivnabh said, “I will donate *my* body to you.” The Guru reiterated, ‘O foolish Shivnabh, this body isn’t *yours*. Where are your father’s and grandfather’s bodies now? They had to leave them in this world, the body wasn’t theirs and it is not yours either. Now donate something that’s *yours*!”

Shivnabh said desperately, “What can I give? Take my name.” To which, Guru Nanak said, “Shivnabh, if you want to give me your name; then show me Shiva’s Navel, that’s what *Shiv-Nabh* means. You aren’t Shiva; you can’t give me *his* navel, can you?”

Shivnabh, who was nervous and confused, and in a quandary, said, “I don’t own this body, I haven’t got riches, I don’t own my Kingdom, the Queen doesn’t belong to me, O Guru, what ‘I’ can give?” [He repeated the ‘I’ three times.]

The Guru said, “But you’re in possession of such a great thing that if you give it to me you’ll be liberated from the endless cycle of birth and death.”

Shivnabh said, “I can’t see what ‘I’ can give? Pray, tell me, what “I” actually can give?” Again, his stress was on his “I”!

The Guru said, “Give this “I” that you keep bleating like a goat! Your kingdom, your body, and your name will all come when you part with *your* ‘I’.”

Shivnabh fell at the Guru’s feet as a changed man—reborn into a state of spiritual illumination, and in self-surrender he said, “Everything is *yours*, nothing is mine, nothing is mine, my Guru.”

With his ‘Ego’ completely demolished, Shivnabh became a humble servant, and said, “I’m nothing!”

Guru Nanak said, “Now go back to your duties and rule the Kingdom.”

Shivnabh replied, “I can’t rule, before *my* “I” was doing it, but now I’m nothing; therefore, I cannot do anything.”

Guru said, “If someone asks you whose Kingdom you are ruling, just say it’s the Guru’s. If someone asks you who you belong to, your reply should be: my Guru.”

Having obtained *Brahma Gyan* [Highest Knowledge] Shivnabh acquiesced. Then, Guru Nanak said, “Ask for something?”

Raja Shivnabh asked for God’s Name, “Bless me with *Naam* so that I may always have a place at your lotus feet!” King of a mere island kingdom Shivnabh thus became an ocean of Humility filled with infinite compassion.

Rameshwaram: It is said that Guru Nanak on his return journey from Sri Lanka visited Rameshwaram in 1511 and halted there for 19 days.



On to Mecca: Guru Nanak was dead tired when he reached Mecca on foot. As his feet were sore he needed rest. So he lay down with his feet towards the *K'aba*. On observing this blasphemy, Qazi Rukn-ud-din kicked the Guru and angrily shouted: "Infidel! How dare you dishonour God's place by turning your feet towards Him?" Calmly, Guru Nanak said to him, "Brother, don't be angry. I am very tired. I need rest. I respect the House of God as much as you do. Please turn my feet in a direction in which God or the House of God is not."

The Qazi caught hold of the Guru's feet and dragged them in the opposite direction but when he lifted his eyes he saw the *K'aba* standing in the direction of the Guru's feet. He turned the Guru's feet in another direction. The *K'aba* was seen standing in that direction. He dragged them round and the *K'aba* was seen rotating too and religiously followed the direction of the Guru's feet. Wonderstruck the Qazi recognised the glory of Guru Nanak. Not only he but also *haajis* [pilgrims] were all filled with wonder—and gave up in utter helplessness. The Guru got up and said, "Don't you see that God's House is in every direction? I tell you He dwells in every place, in every heart. He is in you people's hearts. He is also in mine."

Meeting the Pir and the Qazi: Accompanied by Bhai Mardana Guru Nanak met Pir Bahawal Haq and Qazi Rukn-ud-din at Mecca. In the morning, a number of learned *haajis* would gather around the Guru and hold religious discourses with him. He satisfied every one of them, and explained to them his golden rules of religious life. They listened to him with rapt attention and were changed persons. The Qazis and the Mullahs assembled to question Nanak on the subject of religion and God and many related questions that pester the human mind. The Muslim priest opened a book and asked him, "Who is superior – Hindu or Musalman?" The Guru answered, "Oh *Haajis*, without performance of good deeds, both Hindus and Muslims shall lament. Both will be denied shelter at God's court because mere affiliation with faith or another is no qualification. The colour of the flower called *Kusumbha* (*Carthamus tinctorius*) is washed away by water (so labels are fragile). The followers of both religions are quarrelling, but all of them are equal in the eyes of God. The world has gone astray by treading the path of sin." His unconditional equal love for both Hindus and Muslims who were always at daggers drawn won him the famous sobriquet: *Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu's Guru; Muslim's Pir*. This unprecedented title coming from the followers of two religion that were always at daggers drawn puts him in a class apart to testify to the oft-ignored fact that Guru Nanak, indeed, is the greatest prophet the world has known so far.

Unlike any other prophet or God man or sage or Rishi, Guru Nanak never sought to convert anyone to the Sikh Faith. Only in an open-minded, self-illuminating discourse, he showed to his admirers the True Way of their own Religion. Mardana was his first Sikh but remained a Muslim all his life. The same was true of Bhai Bala who continued to be a Hindu. The following example is among the pithiest of his God-inspired spiritual exhortations.

It is difficult to be called a Muslim; if one is truly a Muslim, then he may be called one. First, let him savour the religion of the Prophet as sweet; then, let his pride of his possessions be scraped away. Becoming a true Muslim, a disciple of the faith of Mohammed, let him put aside the delusion of death and life. As he submits to God's Will, and surrenders to the Creator, he is rid of selfishness and conceit. And when, O Nanak, he is merciful to all beings, only then shall he be called a Muslim. (1) [SGGS, p. 141]

There are five prayers and five times of day for prayer; the five have five names.
 Let the first be truthfulness, the second honest living, and the third charity in the Name of God.
 Let the fourth be good will to all, and the fifth the praise of the Lord.
 Repeat the prayer of good deeds, and then, you may call yourself a Muslim.
 O Nanak, the false obtain falsehood, nothing but falsehood. (3) [SGGS, p. 141]

K'aba: Keeping your fasts, reciting your prayers, and reading the *Kalima*, the Islamic creed, shall not take you to paradise.

The Temple of Mecca is hidden within your mind, only if you knew it. ||2||

Mecca: Let compassion be your Mecca, and the dust of the feet of the holy your fast.

Let Paradise be your practice of the Prophet's Word.

God is the beauty, the light and the fragrance. Meditation on Allah is the secluded meditation chamber. ||5||

Let your mind be Mecca, and your body the temple of worship.

Haaji: He alone is a Haaji, a pilgrim to Mecca, who purifies his heart.

Namaaz: Sikhs neither worship books, nor do they believe in empty rituals. In *Gurmat* [Guru's Wisdom] these are condemned. Further Nanak also explained what the actual definition of true *Namaaz* is.

Hindu Ritualism and Mythological Mentality: According to Hindu religious books and Manusmriti [an ancient legal text among the many *Dharma Shastras* of Hinduism], the first birth of an Aryan is from his biological mother, and it is his second birth when he is given the sacred thread or *Yajnopavita* (*Janeu*) in a ceremony called *Upanayanam* that is considered to be a very significant and auspicious event in the life of a devout Hindu. There is a third birth that takes place when performance of a sacrifice is initiated. Out of these three births, the second one outclasses the other two as this is for the sake of Vedas. In this birth, Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, becomes his spiritual mother and teacher, and the Brahmin *Guru* his father. A strict injunction forbids the one who has not been thus initiated to read or pronounce any Vedic text except at the time of funeral rites.

Inherent Discrimination: Interestingly [because it shows the inbuilt discrimination that Brahmins had invented and practised for centuries and continue to do so claiming its divine origin] a boy belonging to the highest caste, Brahmin, is eligible for the ceremony of the sacred thread when he is between five and eight; the Kshatriya between nine and eleven; and the Vaishya is entitled to it at the age of twelve. The age for the third birth concerning the Saraswati initiation is sixteen, twenty-two, and twenty-four for a Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, respectively.

Unfettered by the Sacred Thread: Born as a Kshatriya in the subcaste *Bedi* [one who has mastered one Veda] the time was ripe for Nanak to receive this sacred thread when he crossed his ninth year. His parents were very religious and had organised a grand gala function for their only son. Nanak was a genius and, according



to Pandit Hardial, the family's *Purohita* (Brahmin priest), once initiated by this ceremony of sacred thread, he would have access to the treasure of the knowledge of the Vedas and other Hindu religious books. The *Purohita* said that without any doubt one day Nanak, after going through the *Upanayanam* ceremony, would become a great scholar of Vedic texts including Manusmriti and Hindu sacred literature.

In 1479, this *Upanayanam* ceremony was a day of great festivity in the household of Mehta Kalu who was a highly respected Hindu as prominent *Patwari* for Talwandi village that like all the surrounding villages was under the control of the Muslims who had invaded India and decided to stay the conquered province of Punjab.

Mehta Kalu who was a much worried man because his son freely mixed and played with not only Muslim children but also with Hindu 'untouchable' children whose parents could only dream of dying, to be reborn again into a higher caste, before their children were entitled to wear such a magical string. This day was one for which Nanak's father had waited with great eagerness and anticipation. Therefore, in an atmosphere of joyous hustle and bustle a big feast was planned for the event. Hordes of relatives from far and near as well as friends and the village folks were invited to partake of the grand feast.

Nanak's Lateral Thinking: At the time of this ceremony Nanak was already famous throughout the territory for what we today call lateral, or outside the box, thinking. The questions he put to his teachers and the elderly not only unnerved them but also left them embarrassed. In sharp contradistinction, he himself gave intelligent answers to questions asked by other people as well as the village elders. His logic was irrefutable, and everyone loved him for his humility in asking innocent but probing questions and for his extraordinary genius in answering such questions himself with convincing explanations. He was the only one in his village who dared to think laterally and question the centuries-old traditions and their irrational explanations that both the Hindu and Muslim priests patently, if unthinkingly, gave. However, Nanak's logic was not born of ratiocinative cerebration. It would shoot forth from divine light in his heart that God had blessed him with at birth.

The Sacred Fire was Lit: *Havan*, the sacred fire, was lit amidst the chanting of verses from Hindu religious books. Everyone gathered around the fire and took their assigned seats. Pandit Hardial asked Nanak to sit by his side so that he could perform the ceremony of *Yajnopavita*, the ritualistic investiture of the sacred thread. Nanak moved close to the Brahmin priest and said, "Pandit Ji, can I ask you some questions about *Yajnopavita*?" "Of course, you can. Your father has already told me about inquisitiveness. Let us finish the ceremony first and then I will answer all your questions," replied Pandit Hardial.

"Pandit Ji, I request you to answer my questions first to mentally prepare me to enjoy the whole ceremony," urged Nanak. Pandit Hardial replied, "In fact, I knew that you'll ask me questions about this ceremony and I have come prepared to answer all your questions. However, before you ask me a question; I will explain in detail for the benefit of everyone here what the significance of *Yajnopavita* is. I am sure this will answer most of your questions." "Yes, that will be good", said Nanak. Pandit Hardial started addressing the audience; then, recited verses from Manusmriti and other Hindu religious texts. Bulk of the audience could not understand a word of what he said but yet they submissively bowed their heads in awe of the incomprehensible scriptural pronouncements. The priest glanced at the audience appreciatively because it was spellbound by his erudition. He looked at child Nanak who was listening to the discourse with rapt attention imbibing each and every word and seemed to have understood everything very well.

The Pandit continued. "All this is from our ancient scriptures. We should never question our scriptures. Anyone who questions them will not only go to hell himself but his entire family and the next seven generations

would also be damned and doomed. As you know Brahmins, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas wear the sacred thread because wearing it is a very sacred ceremony amongst the Hindus. A Brahmin becomes a true Brahmin only after this ceremony. Similarly, a Kshatriya and a Vaishya become true Kshatriya and Vaishya only after ceremony of the sacred thread. Our *Shastras* say that *Janmana jayate sudrah, karmana jayate dvijah*, which means that by birth we are all Shudras, but by *Upanayanam* ceremony we are re-born [*Dwij*] as Brahmins or Kshatriyas or Vaishyas—properly so called.” Even in their so-called spiritual practices, the Brahmins’ pathogenic mindset of innate hatred for the Shudras cannot be camouflaged!

Sacred Thread was rejected: Guru Nanak disapproved of the ceremony and refused to wear the sacred thread. Dilating upon the absurdity of the centuries-old Brahmanical custom he gave these for rejection: (i) Far from being sacred, the thread is a sign of social discrimination because the low castes are not allowed to wear it, (ii) It brings no virtue to the wearer. Being weak and fragile it cannot give strength to wearer such as may help him in gaining self-control on his baser passions, (iii) It gets filthy very easily, and can be burnt or lost, and (iv) It undeservedly gives the Brahmin a position of spiritual guide. It is a custom created by the Brahmin to exercise and create an empty ritual which only he can perform. It creates this unnecessary “priestly” class that abuses its power to maintain and perpetuate its hegemony over the illiterate, weak, and hapless.

Nanak, the Charitable Guru: Even when Guru Nanak was yet a child his compassionate heart would melt in deep sympathy for the poor and the needy. He often offered them with food and clothing. Child Nanak took great pleasure in visiting and serving bands of Hindu Sadhus and Muslim Fakirs, who lived in the woods in the neighbourhood of Talwandi and would come to the town off and on. Sometimes he would himself go to the jungle and meet them there, and distribute among them articles of food. His father, Mehta Kalu, wanted to check what he thought were wasteful indulgences of his spendthrift son. But he knew not how to counsel Nanak to mend his ways. Charity, open-handed charity, was in the emotional construct of his moral fibre. He had come to tend and feed with the bread of benediction the souls and the bodies of poor and the needy. In the words of Puran Singh, “Whosoever met him; the Guru burnt his poverty and his clinging thereto and made him rich.”

At Kurukshetra: When it was the day of solar eclipse Guru Nanak was at Kurukshetra. People in large numbers had gathered there. In those days people had wrong ideas about Solar and Lunar eclipse. They believed that on such occasions Moon and Sun are attacked by demons and this attack can be averted if people take bath in the holy rivers and give money in charity. In order to enlighten the people that these ideas are not true, Guru Nanak went to Kurukshetra when a fair on the day of solar eclipse was being held there. Guru Nanak set up a camp at an open space outside the city and started Kirtan. Mardana played at the rabab and accompanied Guru Nanak in singing.

It so happened that the Ruler of Hansi and his queen passed that way. He had been driven out of his kingdom by his opponents. He had come to Kurukshetra to get the blessings of some holy man. He sat near Guru Nanak and listened to the kirtan. As he sat there and looked at the divine face of Guru and listened to the *Kirtan* he was convinced that Guru Nanak was a holy man with great spiritual power. On his way to Kurukshetra, the ruler had hunted a deer and asked his attendants to cook its meat.

An Unpardonable Sin: For orthodox Hindus it is sin enough to cook on the day of eclipse but cooking meat at pilgrim centres becomes an unpardonable sin that they dread due to deeply ingrained fear instilled through



the centuries by crafty Pandits. Therefore, when the priests saw the smoke rising from the cooking fire they raised a hue and cry, and on learning that meat was being cooked they were visibly enraged. They promptly gathered a large number of people and led them to attack and kill such a sinner. As the cooking was being done near the place where Guru Nanak was singing they thought that he was the culprit. They abused Guru Nanak and threatened to kill him. Guru Nanak spoke to them gently and said, “If it is a sin to cook the flesh of a deer during solar eclipse how can killing a man be an act of piety? If killing an animal is a sin, killing a man cannot be a virtue!” Guru’s answer silenced them.

Invitation to Debate: Dilating upon his defence he said, “If you want to discuss the issue, ask Pandits, Scholars and Sanyasis to come here!” Thus, many Pandits were called including one named Pandit Nanoo who called himself “Nanak”. A debate about vegetarian versus non-vegetarian food started with curious crowds listening with rapt attention. Pandits argued that the Hindu scriptures forbade consumption of meat eating because their ancestors were uncompromisingly vegetarian.

Rebuttal and Rationale: Guru Nanak rebutted, “Your holy books say that in the past animals were killed and their flesh offered as sacrifice to fire. Aryans, your ancestors, ate flesh. Even now when marriage feasts are held at Kshatriya houses, goats are slaughtered and non-vegetarian food is served to guests. In any case, why do you accept charity from those who are meat eaters?” The irrational pedantry of the bookish-knowledge-proud Pandits utterly failed them in the debate.

Guru’s Culinary Prescription: It is said that Guru Nanak did not conclusively say whether one should eat non-vegetarian food or not. His aim was to expose and oppose priestly hypocrisy. He stressed that we should not say one thing and do another. There should always be perfect consistency between thoughts, words, and deeds. However, he made his point of view crystal clear when he made this averment, “We should not eat the food that harms the body, makes it sick, and leads mind astray. Only that food is good which keeps the body in perfect health and the mind pure like the Holy Ganga!”

The principle enunciated by Guru Nanak in controversial matters of vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism is universal-timeless, and easy to follow for leading a healthy and happy life.

Ayurveda and Eating Habits: I am adding a comment from the Indian tradition and updating it with scientific findings concerning vegetarianism versus non-vegetarianism in the hope that readers will be in a better position to grasp the problem to choose their favourite diet without compunction of pedantic prescriptions upheld by unquestioned religious tenets. In Ayurveda, no food is eliminated, all foods are welcome. The one signal injunction is that your dietary habits should be guided by how often you eat certain foods, and how they are prepared. However, it does not imply that you cannot make meat part and parcel of your eating routine. In fact, depending upon their constitutions (particularly those with a lot of *Vata*—one of the three *Doshas* in Ayurveda; the other two are *Pitta*, and *Kapha*) many people fare well eating meat regularly, so much so that they feel depleted if they skip it altogether. Meat is incredibly nourishing and also very fulfilling and, therefore, helps to pacify *Vata*. But, it is also very heavy so if you suffer from *Vata*-type indigestion (variable appetite, bloating, gastric pain), it can sit a bit too heavily in the belly.

Biological Energies: The *Doshas* are biological energies found throughout the human body and mind. They govern all physical and mental processes and provide every living being with an individual blueprint

for health and fulfilment. The Doshas derive from the Five Elements and their related properties. *Vata* is composed of Space and Air, *Pitta* of Fire and Water, and *Kapha* of Earth and Water. *Vata* is a sum total of qualities reflecting the elements of Space and Air; *Pitta* reflects the elements of Fire and Water; and *Kapha* those of Water and Earth. A person with a predominantly *Vata* constitution will have physical and mental qualities that reflect the elemental qualities of Space and Air. That is why *Vata* types are commonly quick thinking, thin, and fast moving. A *Pitta* type, on the other hand, will have qualities reflective of Fire and Water, such as a fiery personality and oily skin. A *Kapha* type will typically have a solid bodily frame and calm temperament, reflecting the underlying elements of Earth and Water. While one dosha predominates in most individuals, a second dosha typically has a strong influence. This is referred to as a dual-*doshic* constitution. [http://eattasteheal.com/ETH_dosha.htm]

Modern Outlook: According to Dr David L Katz, MD, “Health is not a moral imperative. It is not the prize, either. Living the life each of us wants is the prize. Arguably, if a given individual has a “better” life eating baloney sandwiches at each meal and cotton candy for dessert, whatever the health consequences, then that is what they “should” do since health is in the service of living, not the other way around ... Evolutionary biology clearly allows for meat in the human diet but does not necessarily require it ... The simple fact is that physiology, *not* ideology, determines what is required to build muscle. Carnivores do it with meat; herbivores do it with plants. We, as noted, are omnivores. We get to choose.” [Source: Internet]

Some medicos think of Milk as “liquid meat” or “liquid flesh” because of its high protein content and the good bacteria that compose it.

Marathoner’s Menu: Be that as it may, the 107-year-old Fauja Singh, world-renowned marathoner, has the last word on the polemics of vegetarianism versus non-vegetarianism. Asked what he eats to be in perfect health to win marathon races at this ripe age, he declares forthrightly: “Eat what you can digest and eat less.”

Guru Nanak’s Exhortation: At this juncture, it is useful to remember Guru Nanak’s patent *Law of Conservation of Energy*: “Eat little; Sleep little, and Speak little.” Stomach works more efficiently when not over-burdened with overeating and therefore, digestion and ingestion are better. It goes without saying that undigested food far from producing energy for workaday existence is poison for the body. Sleeping more than necessary takes the kick out of vibrant energy eventually making you a victim of lethargy. Similarly, speaking requires lots of energy apart from taxing your throat, vocal cords, and lungs with little benefit. The ancients knew this problem and that’s why they chose to observe “*Maun Vrat*” [Speech Fasting] at regular intervals to replenish their energy. There is a moral dimension to this axiom. Frugal speech prevents “loose talk” that helps you make fewer enemies. International aggression and antagonism are more a result of indiscreet talk than anything else. However, keeping your mouth shut does not purify your mind as some glib-talking leaders claim and millions of their gullible admirers believe.



Guru Nanak has made it crystal clear in *Japuji Sahib*, Pauri 20, which I have rendered in English verse as under:

Dirt-smear'd hands, feet, or the body
 Can be wash'd clean with water
 And if it be soiled laundry
 Clean would it with soap launder
 But when the mind is with the filth of sins smear'd
 By the dye of God's-Name alone can it be clear'd
 Mere saying makes nobody a saint or a sinner
 Deeds are man-making seeds whose account is kept by the Maker
 One must reap as one sows
 By His Edict-Fiat, Nanak, one comes and goes

It is important to point out that Guru Nanak Dev has designated all human beings regardless of their gender as “Soul-Brides” and called Lord God the Divine Husband. Following the Sikh Faith’s Founder’s line of Revelation, all the successor Gurus, with the exception of the Tenth and Last Master Guru Gobind Singh, have done two unique things: (i) Used the name “Nanak” in their Bani, and (ii) used the Sanskrit word *Mehala* for the “Soul-Bride”. Thus *Mehala* is a term followed by numeral indicating Guru-Authors of *Shabads* in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* e.g. *Mehala-1*, *Mehala-2*, *Mehala-3*, and so forth, respectively, stand for the First, Second, Third Masters as Guru-Authors of the relevant Bani. Use of the name “Nanak” while revealing the subtle glow of ‘Humility’ [The Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith] express the Sikh Sangat’s belief that all the Gurus are One, though their forms are different, and partake of and spread the Divine Light received by Guru Nanak Dev in his Revelation. Ironically, however, the word *Mehala*, due to wide-spread and deeply ingrained ignorance, has been replaced by the Arabic word “Mahalla” which means ‘Neighbourhood’.

In my considered opinion, this deviation does great disservice to the revelatory designation, and should be corrected as soon as possible. Furthermore, in the light of the miserable plight of women in his times, the merciful Guru sought to extend the scope of his Revelation to deal with this centuries-old social malaise in his powerful proclamation: *Ekai Purakh sagalei nari...* Lord God alone is Man [Primal Person] all human beings are Women. His was a comment with a punch on the injustices and brutalities of the patriarchal system that had been created by Man as the physically stronger counterpart of Woman whose status in a man-ruled world was systematically and studiously reduced to a mere chattel eventually putting her life at the absolute mercy of maverick Man.

Woman’s genetic dignity was restored: In his *Shabad* that exclusively deals with Woman as a subject the Guru attempted to uplift her position socially by highlighting her intrinsic virtues and indispensability in the genesis and survival of the *Homo sapiens*’ species hijacked by the Savage-in-Man. His declaration begins with “From a woman, a man is born” in order to emphasise that all men and women come from a woman—and he goes on step by step, logically, to define her role as life-giver and paint an exquisite canvas of her virtues until her indispensability is established as ‘self-evident’, though invisible to the ‘gender-blindness’ caused in man by his own ego that primarily springs from his genetic physical strength and stamina. Though this *Shabad* was originally aimed at the sick society and cancerous culture of the mediaeval times that arrogantly and

unremittingly assigned women a status far inferior to that of men by revolutionary thinking to encourage equality among the sexes, it is as fresh and relevant today as it was centuries before due to the mass-scale subjugation of women in many cultures—notably, in India where Hinduism brags of worshipping Woman as Goddess in diverse incarnations. As some wit has wryly remarked highlighting the sickness in Hindu mentality, “In India, Woman is a goddess during the day but a concubine at night!” Full *Shabad* in English rendering is given below.

Within Woman is Man conceived

To woman he is engaged and married
Woman becomes his most trustworthy friend

Through woman issue forth the future generations
When his woman dies, man seeks another woman

To woman he is inextricably bound
There is no reason to call her bad

Because from her are born kings
And woman too is born from woman

Without woman, there would be no one at all

[Guru Nanak, Raag Aasa Mehala-1, Ang 473]



After deep and long reflection, I have defined WO-MAN as ‘MAN’ with ‘WO (MB)’. The implication is that Lord God has created Man and Woman as ‘Equal’. The difference in their sexes is borne of a biological necessity that ought not to be turned into social sickness as ‘Ego-Blind’ Men have thus far brutally done.



PART-II

THE FIVE *KHANDS*

KHANDS, in mystic parlance, are the regions of creation. Using this term, Guru Nanak has described the creation as consisting of five main realms, which are: (i) Dharam Khand, (ii) Gyan Khand, (iii) Saram Khand, (iv) Karam Khand, and (v) Sach Khand.

(i) *DHARAM KHAND*: Realm of Cosmic Moral Law; Justice; the physical universe of *Pinda*. The word ‘*Dharam*’ is pregnant with meanings. However, I am using it to connote “Cosmic Moral Law” meaning, among other things: duty, justice, and right, appropriate living, righteousness, and religion. These are all

aspects of living in *this* world; hence, the term's crucial importance in the comprehension of the Guru's description of *Dharam Khand*.

- (ii) Guru Nanak says that the 'embodied' souls in *Dharam Khand* are subject to seasons, and the passage of Time, and are enveloped by Matter in various combinations and permutations as a result of the bodies having been fashioned out of Five Elements [Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and Space] and Three Gunas [*Satogun*, *Rajogun*, and *Tamogun*]. Creatures of various forms, shapes, and kinds live here, bearing diverse and endless names [Science has estimated that one trillion species exist on earth], all of whom are judged by their action [*Karmas*]. This, he avers, is Lord God's design for the 'mortal' world:

The Realm of Righteous Action abides in the stated way
 Next is the Realm of Knowledge which enchants by its working
 There many forms of air, water, fire which hold sway
 There countless *Krishnas* and *Shivas* have their dwelling
 Numberless *Brahmas* are fashioning worlds, et al
 Of many a form, colour, and bodily-ware
 Many a karmic earth exists, many a mount celestial
 Many a sermon is delivered to *Dhruva* out there
 Many are the *Indras*, many the spheres of moons and suns
 Many are the continents, and the lands galore
 Many are the accomplished yogis, supreme ascetics, enlightened ones
 Many are the incarnations of Mother Goddess evermore
 Many are the species of gods, demons, celibates
 Many are the oceans which gems produce
 Many a mode is there which creatures creates
 Many are the languages which they all use
 There is many a lineage down which kings descend
 Many are God's devotees engrossed in serving him
 But none of them, Nanak, knows any end

- (iii) *GYAN KHAND*, Realm of Knowledge, is described as a vast region with many continents, worlds, and underworlds, with numerous suns, moon and stars, and inhabited by angels, gods, goddesses, and deities, corresponding to the worlds of the Mind that lie beyond the eye centre [Third Eye Chakra]. It is called *Gyan Khand* because the realms of Mind are primarily blissful regions of diversity and activity that the soul and mind together perceive with great interest, understanding, and knowledge, rather than with deep love and devotion. Knowledge of this realm also provides profound comprehension of how things happen in the physical universe. Guru Nanak says:

The Realm of Knowledge is where illumination holds sway
 And mystic melody reigns amid sublime visions and wonder
 Enchanting beauty pervades the Realm of Endeavour
 Where matchless forms are forged everyday
 So unique is their beauty that it beggars all description
 Whoever attempts it would be left speechless, ashamed of his antics
 Fashioned in that realm are absorption, wisdom, and mind's illumination
 Forged therein are the visions of innumerable gods and mystics

- (iv) *SARAM KHAND* is the Realm of Spiritual Endeavour, corresponding to the higher regions of the Mind. The Sound of this region, according to Guru Nanak, is full of beauty and attraction. This is a land of indescribable aesthetic charm and splendour. All aspects of Mind originate from here in fine and subtle form as described above by the Guru.
- (v) *KARAM KHAND* is the Region of Compassion, mercy, and grace. This is the spiritual region beyond the Mind, but below *Sach Khand*. The soul experiences love and divine grace when it ascends higher than the realms of Matter and Mind. Within the regions of the Mind, the prevailing law is that of causality, justice, automatic action and reaction. Beyond that, the prevailing reality is that of love, compassion, forgiveness, and grace. According to Guru Nanak, the Sound of *Karam Khand* is full of power and force. Here, duality ends and the soul realises by direct experience that its individual identity is a mere drop of pure spirit [divine essence]. Only brave and courageous souls reach here; that is, those devotees who have vanquished the forces of Mind and *Maya*. Here, their being is engrossed only by God, and they enjoy unmitigated bliss:

Might is the hallmark of the Realm of Grace
 Where no one lives except heroes of might supreme
 An endowment received through constant God-consciousness
 Many Sita-like heroines are there of surpassing esteem
 Those who are with God in constant communion
 Never suffer mortality or anybody's guile
 Dwell in there devotees assembled from many a dominion
 Cherishing true bliss in their hearts all the while
 The Realm of Truth is where God himself reposes
 And casts His gracious glance, always watching o'er
 That realm houses all the continents and universes
 Whose limits nobody can by any means even explore
 Abide in that realm all forms of worlds of creation
 Untiring a-whirl in submission to His will
 God sees them, enjoys them, in divine elation
 To describe its limits, Nanak, is a task uphill



(vi) *SACH KHAND*: This is the Realm of Truth, of real or true existence; the eternal realm; the region of eternal Truth; the soul's true home, also called *Sat Lok* by some Indian Saints. Guru Nanak says that the Formless Lord resides and presides here; from here. The Creator surveys His entire creation within which His will and Edict-Fiat reign supreme. The glory of this realm of supreme bliss being ineffable, the Guru says that the wonders of this land are well nigh impossible to describe [see the verse given above].

According to a great many Mystics, God is the supreme power, and everything else is formed from Him as a projection or emanations when He so wills. In the hierarchy of creation, everything below is a reflection of what lies above or deeper within. Similarly, what is above is contained in what is below. The Lord is within everything, and everything is actually His projection or emanation, His show, or Divine Sport [*Leela*]. He is encapsulated within everything; He is what gives it existence. From his point of view, therefore, everything is a simple and completely ordered affair. I am reminded of the marvellous couplet Dr Mohan Singh Diwana (1899-1984) who was a polyglot, scholar par excellence, accomplished mystic, and powerful poet:

*Jab Aadmi tha to kehta tha yeh aur woh ghalat
Ban kar khuda jo dekhaa toh sab durust hai*
As embodied soul Man grumbled over this and that as wrong
When he rose to become God everything was right and in order

•
As a tribute to his awesome genius I wrote this couplet:

*Sha'ir-o-Majzoob bhi 'Aalam bhi Mohan Singh hain
Baat hai jo is qadar hain 'aashiq-i-Diwana ham*
Mohan Singh is a poet, a mystic, and an outstanding scholar
That's some reason for me to be Diwana's love-stricken admirer

All creation is simply the ramifications of God's unrivalled creative Power. From the point of view of the soul within the creation, it is multi-level, multi-dimensional, intricately complex, interwoven tapestry that is by its very nature, scope, and immensity beyond comprehension. Mystics of all ages and cultures have said that there are other regions in the creation in addition to the physical inverse perceived by the five human senses. They insist and reiterate that everything lies within Man. However, the situation is confounded by the fact that Mystics must necessarily describe the inner regions known to them from firsthand experience by means of physical language which we humans have fashioned from the materials and methods of *Maya*. This unique paradox, borne out of the existence of physical, astral and causal regions and the vain bid to describe them in terrestrial language, can never be grasped by a Scientist whose mind is irretrievably conditioned by hypothesis, observation, measurement, and self-limiting laboratory experiments. To put it simply: Can a Scientist be open-minded enough to accept the fact [which can be neither proved or disproved] that contained within 18 inches of the human spine is a working mortal model of the entire universe which the Indian Mystics have described in terms of Seven *Chakras*, [Subtle Centres of energy], beginning with Root Chakra (*Mooladhara*), Sacral Chakra (*Swadhishtana*), Solar Plexus Chakra (*Manipura*), Heart Chakra (*Anahata*), Throat Chakra (*Vishuddha*), Third Eye Chakra (*Ajna*), and Crown Chakra (*Sahasrara*).

Just as the womb of the mother creates the basic requirement for the growth of the embryo, the Muldhara Chakra forms the basis and the starting point for our spiritual development. It is the foundation from which we climb the ladder of the Chakras; the root from which we receive the nourishment for our spiritual development. For this reason, and because it lies at the lowest point of the spinal column below the Coccyx, it also bears the name “Root Chakra”. *Kundalini Shakti* (Spiritual Energy) has its roots in the *Muldhara Chakra*, but it is in a deep, motionless sleep. When we awaken this slumbering potential that lies within the *Muldhara Chakra* we are able to work our way towards the light of knowledge and attain the fruit of Self-Realisation.

Jiddu Krishnamurti, the greatest thinker of the world, called such knowledge the ‘mechanics’ of man’s spiritual quest and discountenanced as wasteful of time, energy, and other resources. What he commended was ‘choiceless inner seeking’ in which an individual human person approaches the problem with full responsibility and without any conditioning of metaphysical and mythological know-how. Despite its deceptive simplicity the exercise turns out to be extremely tough—almost unattainable of goal. I am saying from personal experience of having learnt and practiced various forms of meditation. The problem was revealed to me by understanding of ‘hypnotism’ and ‘mesmerism’. In the former, which is nothing more than induced sleep, you could get tranquillising effect by repeating the name of your dog. The trick lies in the fact that repetition *ad nauseum* bores the mind to sleep! In the latter method, the expert makes passes over the body of the subject relaxing in a couch in order to transmit energy to him. If it really comes to pass the practitioner would feel tired and exhausted testifying to the fact that his energy has, indeed, passed on the patient. These and scores of other methods developed by quacks trick the patients into submission for moral and material exploitation. Multi-National Companies [MNCs] deploy mass hypnosis through their TV and print-media ads endorsed by celebrities. The celebrities by their credibility established in a given field have mustered large fan following who are only too willing to be put to ‘induced sleep’ to be swindled until they are left wearing their birthday suits!

Guru Nanak, the greatest Prophet of the World, was painfully aware of how men in power exploited the meek and the hapless to turn them into eternal slaves in order to stay as their beneficent rulers. They used everything—muscle power, mental power, power of caste, creed, social status, learning, political clout and what have you—to achieve the one-point agendum of making people their slaves *en masse*. The Guru, therefore, sought to uplift the masses by means of what I call “Pragmatic Spirituality” that works by building self-confidence and life-affirming faith in divine dispensation. He offered the fruits of his Revelation on a platter to the lowliest of the lowly across the globe by the three-pronged formula of *Kirat Karo*, *Vand Chhako*, and *Naam Japo*.

Guru Nanak’s genius lay in that he could present the most abstruse and abstract ideas in simple and concrete terms in the language of the masses so that they take full charge of their lives as God’s greatest gift. He thus helped them identify the spiritual aspect even in the mundane by alluding to the contents of *Dharam Khand* as the essential foundation of human life. Insisting on earning one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow meant that the tenets of “Cosmic Moral Law” are strictly observed. Sharing one’s earnings with the less-privileged meant that understanding of right and wrong was actually practised as warranted by *Gyan Khand*. Chanting God’s Name meant that the person is in touch with *The Source* from which to draw psychosomatic strength [*Saram Khand*] for upholding morality in the midst of the corrupt and the base. In doing, and unaware of its ultimate benefits, the seeker was preparing himself as a suitable and fit receptacle of God’s grace [*Karam Khand*][—]from where if the Lord so willed he would be uplifted to gain entry into the *Sach Khand*.



SIGNIFICANCE OF NAAM

Apart from dilating upon the definition of 'NAAM' because it is central to *Gurbani* based on Revelation, I have tried to classify its Timeless- Universal validity and veracity in terms of its Significance, Magnificence, and Munificence. Guru Nanak Dev set all speculations and prejudices to rest proclaimed the *Mool Mantra's* significance by placing 'NAAM' immediately after stating that 'Truth' is the Primal attribute of 'Ik Oankar'. The *Guru*, in my considered opinion, the greatest prophet of the world, has used the word for two reasons: (i) If Oankar is ONE, without a second, and He actually exists [Truth], the seeker would curiously know Him by His other traits that are known to peoples of the world from common everyday experience so that they could address Him [albeit as Formless Lord] with reference to one or more of them, (ii) He is obliquely suggesting that the word 'Naam' would perform a much deeper, wider, and higher—and more ubiquitous, function than a mere appellation of the Creator. Therefore, the word 'Naam' here says—having said that God is One and He performs the three roles of the Creator, Provider, and Destroyer Himself besides His status being True 'Being' [not a figment of imagination or a philosophical concept or a scientific hypothesis or a mythological deity or a poetic fancy]—let us name His other Unique Attributes.

These as you can see are spelled out with a pithy punch resolving every contradiction that came on the way. For example, when we say 'Akal' [Beyond the ken of Time] the seeker would wonder how to identify himself with Him; so the *Guru* hastens to use the word 'Moorat'. But that would suggest an image or an idol, to resolve which he stresses the fact that he is 'Ajooni'. This word again raises a question if He is not born the way we humans are born "How did He come into being, in the first place?" This conundrum is resolved by the term "Saibhang". The last phrase "Gur-Parsad" is commonly interpreted as "by the Grace of the *Guru* He could be known". I think this contradicts everything that the *Guru* has so magnificently communicated in his entire *Bani*—nobody can reckon his magnificence, grandeur, glory, and countless other traits because only exalted consciousness can access that realm but the paradox is that when the blessed seeker is at that point encounter his soul immediately gets merged in God's Divine Essence or Light.

While still on the subject I would like to share my views on two crucial words used by the *Guru* and their strategic placement in the *Mool Mantra*. After stating that God the Creator, as the Primal Person, he introduces the word 'Nirbhau' and immediately follows it by 'Nirvair'.

MOOL MANTRA

[THE SEED-WORD]

ੴ

[IK OANKAR]

G-O-D [Generator-Operator-Destroyer]

IS

ONE

All-Inclusive, All-Pervasive

Truth, the Unchanging Reality

Transcendent Being

One may Name Him thus

Intrepid, Uninimical
Imperishable Icon
Beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death
Self-Existent
By the Grace of God, the Guru
This Creed is proclaimed

•

Apart from their psycho-spiritual significance there is a primordial dimension to the two words—Fearlessness and Freedom from Animosity—that heightens the indispensability and interdependence between them. Unless one is completely free from ‘fear’ it is impossible to be free from ‘animosity’. The action to eliminate your adversary springs from the thought that crops in your mind as a result of perception of the other to be your enemy. At play in it is Sigmund Freud’s *libido* [the Life-Instinct] that compels action in the pursuit of self-preservation [by defence or by attack—although as the proverb goes: “Attack is the best form of defence”] in the mortal world this has been in action since time immemorial.

American philosopher-historian Will Durant has stated the case with a punch: “There have been only 268 of the past 3,421 years free of war.” Among the *Homo sapiens* species ‘fear’ has persisted in the human mind since man rose on his two feet from the awkward, self-limiting posture of a quadruped. It is in our DNA with millions of years of reinforcement provided by the inhospitable natural environment in which man had appeared on Planet Earth. Its classic modern example is Donald Trump, President of USA, the only superpower in the world. Sitting back in the White House in the midst of awesome security he is scared of Kim Jong-un, Marshal of North Korean Republic, situated at a distance, as the crow flies, of 10,367 kilometres. Why? Because he perceives him to be his potential enemy! Ironically, therefore, it is fear—perceived or real does not matter—that makes him inimical.

Seen in this lurid light, you will marvel at Guru Nanak’s genius at choosing most appropriate words and placing them in the stated order. As he has described God’s attributes he has made it in the very beginning that God is ONE, without a ‘Second’, and used the Numeral ‘1’ to do so. This being the case, it is easy to appreciate that Lord God is the only Being who is absolutely free from FEAR! That is why he tenaciously insists that we humans mortally benumbed by dread should worship only the Fearless One. Guru Arjan Dev declares: Worship the Fearless One to be *free* from all fear!

Guru Nanak set an historic example how these divine traits, notably, ‘fearlessness’ and ‘freedom from animosity’ can be imbibed chanting the Holy Name. He called *Babur* [which means ‘Lion’] *Jabir* [despot/tyrant] publicly.

Concerning this point, Guru Angad Dev’s meeting with Mughal Emperor Humayun forms a very interesting part of his biography showing as it does how Guru Nanak Dev’s legacy of absolute freedom from fear and animosity had travelled to his worthy Nine Successors along the line of his Spiritual Ministry. It is said that Humayun, son of the founder of Mughal Empire Babur, after his crushing defeat at Kanauj, had come to Khadur to seek the blessings of the Second Master. When Humayun reached there, the Guru was in meditation, and consequently the emperor had to wait. Taking it as an insult he was about to draw out his sword from the scabbard, when the Guru noticed his angered desperation. He politely but firmly remarked that he should have used that same sword against Sher Shah Suri, who was his rival, rather than against a



man of God. He reprimanded the royal visitor saying that he had fled from the battlefield like a coward, and now he was posing as a hero in front of an innocent, religious man. Humayun felt ashamed of his conduct and begged forgiveness. The Guru then blessed and assured him that he would get back his kingdom after some time.

Mughal Emperor Akbar had heard favourable accounts of the Third Master Guru Amar Das. Therefore, out of respect for the Guru, he walked barefoot to meet him. He respectfully followed the sacred rule of "*Pehle Pangat Phir Sangat*" [First Meal; then, Meeting] and partook of *Langar* [Free Community Kitchen for all and sundry] sitting on the floor among the commoners. The food that day consisted of coarse bread, rice, and pulses, which the Mughal Emperor found very delicious as could be noticed from the fact that he had had a hearty meal. All his soldiers followed suit.

Here is an unmatched example of absolute freedom from fear and animosity, for the Sixth Master, Guru Har Gobind, nursed no feelings of revenge despite the fact it was on the orders of the tyrant Emperor Jahangir that Guru Arjan Dev, his father, had been martyred. In a friendly gesture of hospitality, Jahangir invited Guru Har Gobind to accompany him on a hunting expedition. As they rode along, a ferocious tiger suddenly appeared from out of the thick forest. When the Emperor saw that the tiger was about to pounce upon him, he called out to the Guru to save him. Guru Har Gobind, shield and sword in hand, jumped off his horse, ran in front of the Emperor, and, with one stroke of his sword, killed the tiger. After that life-saving incident Jahangir considered him a true friend, and often invited the Guru to go with him on hunting sprees.

This episode demonstrates how fear was not at all tolerated in the House Guru Nanak. When the bigoted Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb came to the throne, he accused the Seventh Master Guru Har Rai of having helped Dara Shikoh (Aurangzeb's brother but arch-enemy) and summoned him to his court in Delhi. The Guru sent his eldest son, Baba Ram, with the strict instructions not to change anything in the Adi Granth for fear or favour. Well received by Aurangzeb, he not only satisfactorily responded to all charges but also impressed the Emperor Aurangzeb with his cleverness. As a result, Ram Rai was asked to stay on as a state guest for some period. Subsequently pestered by Qazis and Mullas, one day, Aurangzeb questioned why Guru Nanak had criticized Islam in salok "*Mitti Musalmaan Ki*"? Ram Rai satisfied the royal assembly by saying that the actual writing was "*Mitti Baiemaan Ki*", not "*Mitti Musalmaan Ki*". Though Ram Rai had managed on the sly to please Aurangzeb, Guru Har Rai promptly disowned him for the unpardonable sacrilege and forbade all Sikhs from associating with him. Subsequently, the Guru declared his youngest son Har Krishan as his successor [Eighth Master] at Kiratpur Sahib when he was only five years and three months of age.

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In Pauri-Four of Japuji, Guru Nanak states the Timeless-Universal import of 'Naam' when he commends that he who desires to have a glimpse of God's court and win over His heart he ought to reflect on the Glory of Name in the ambrosial hour religiously. He presents another point that sets his *Gurbani* apart from the tenets of World Religions. He says while good deeds can get you a better vesture on the principle of "As you sow so shall you reap" those aspiring to liberation from the endless cycle of birth, death, rebirth, must await His grace because, unlike in other religions where hard work, meditation and good deeds promise salvation, this is what God bestows on the earnest and persevering devotee by His own sweet Will, which is inscrutable.

PAURI-FOUR

Unchanging is the Sire, True His justice, His language love infinite
 We only ask and implore—and so graciously He gives it
 What can we offer the Giver for a glimpse of His court
 How prayers must be worded to melt His heart
 Meditate on the True Name's glory in the ambrosial hours
 Good deeds beget good life, but salvation His grace confers
 The Omnipotent is All-Holy, Nanak avers

Guru Nanak shows in Pauri-Twenty-four of Japji Sahib without any shadow of doubt the Significance, Magnificence, and Munificence that he has imparted to “NAAM”: He has placed the Holy Name higher than Lord Himself because without it being there in the first place, from the mortals' impermanent position, a seeker, however earnest, long-drawn and perseverant his meditation may be, the divine cannot be accessed by any means or schemes whatsoever.

PAURI-TWENTYFOUR

There is no limit to God's unique virtues
 Nor any to their human reckoning
 Beyond all measure is His vast creation
 And endless is His act of giving
 No limit to the spectacles that He stirs
 And infinite are the melodies that He conjures
 No limit to the secrets that His mind bears
 No limit to the creation of unreachable spheres
 Beyond could are those who've vexed to reckon
 But no success has ever been achieved by anyone
 The more certain we are, the greater He's become
 Great is the Lord God, exalted His station
 Still higher than the most high is His Holy Name
 He who must ever venture to know his greatness
 Has to be as great as He, His stature to assess
 He alone knows His greatness, and He Himself can aver
 By His glance of grace, Nanak, He does His blessings shower



Examples that follow are self-explanatory. In any case, I would like the readers to use their minds and discretion to figure out what is what and practise it unremittingly to earn invaluable wealth of Naam.

Performed umpteen times in *Gurdwaras* every day across the globe is the Sikh Faith's Collective Worship of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* that concludes with the prayer for obtaining the general weal of the entire humanity [*Sarbat da Bhala*] and also entreats *Wah-i-Guru* thus: Pray, have us come by only those of Thy beloved ones meeting whom we would spontaneously remember Thy Name.

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 ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੈਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ
 ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ
Sarab dharm maih sreist dharmu
Hari ko naamu japi nirmal karmu
 Of all the world religions the best one till date
 Is ceaseless chant of Hari Name immaculate

[SGGS, Page 266]

•
 Even if I were to become a doe, living in the forest, grazing on wild vegetation
 By Guru's Grace, I would meet my Master, and be sacrificed unto Him again and again

I am a shop-keeper of the Lord God
 His Name is my merchandise and trade
 If I were to become a cuckoo, residing on a mango tree
 I would attain equipoise by the Word through reflection
 Yet meet my Master spontaneously

And of His ineffable Form would I have vision
 If I were to become a fish, always living in water

I would still remember the Lord who on all creatures watches over

My Divine Husband dwells on the yonder shore

With open arms I would approach and hug Him evermore
 If I were to become a snake, living beneath ground

In-dwelling *Shabda* would all my fears smite
 O Nanak, those soul-brides are happy, safe and sound

Whose light has commingled with Divine Light

[SGGS, Page 157]



Har sabhna ka hai khasmu so bhagat jan chiti kari
 God is the Divine Husband of one and all
 Remember Him, and be at His beck 'n' call

[SGGS, Page 849]

ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇ ਜੀਉ
Eko Naamu Hukmu hai Nanak Satigur diya bujhaaye jio
 True Lord's instruction has enlightened me
 That His Edict-Fiat unfolds His mystery

[SGGS, Page 72]

ਅਵਰੇ ਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਏਕੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵਹੇ
Avaro na jaanaih sabdi gur kai eku naamu dhiaavahei
 Except *Shabda-Guru* he knows no other
 He meditates on the Name of One Lord

[SGGS, Page 923]

MAGNIFICENCE OF NAAM

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਵੈ ਕੇਇ
Vaahu vaahu amrit naam hai gurmukhi paavai koye
 Hail the ambrosial nectar, Lord's Name
 That's only by the Guru-oriented obtained

[SGGS, Page 515]

Meetu saajanu sakha prabhu eku
Naam suaami ka Nanak tek
 Pal friend and benevolent is the Lord
 The Master's Name is Nanak's support

[SGGS, Page 197]

ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਏਕੁ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਏਕਾ ਜੋਤੀ
Eko naamu eku naraainu tribhawan eka joti
 One Name, One Lord
 One light in three worlds

[SGGS, Page 992]



ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਇ ਸੁ ਰਾਚੈ ਨਾਇ

Gurmukhi hoye su raachai naaye

He who orients consciousness Guru-ward

Gets absorbed in the Name of Lord

[SGGS, Page 1330]

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MUNIFICENCE OF NAAM

ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਜਲੁ ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਇਹੁ ਅਉਖਧੁ ਜਗਿ ਸਾਰਾ

Hari ka namu amrit jalu nirmalu aukhadhu jagi saara

The Water of the Hari's Name-Nectar is the purest

In the world this is the best medicine among the rest

[SGGS, Page 659]

•

ਸਬਦੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਈਐ ਸਬਦੇ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਇ

Sabade namu dhiaayai sabade sach samaaye

Contemplate the Name with Shabda in trance

You shall thus merge in the Truth's essence

[SGGS, Page 67]

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ਇਹੁ ਸਚੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਕਾ ਖਸਮੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਬਖਸੇ ਸੇ ਜਨੁ ਪਾਵਹੇ

This Truth is every soul-bride's Divine Groom

The one receiving his grace gets Him

[SGGS, Page 922]

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ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਕੈਸੀ ਜਾਣੀਐ

Satsaganti kaisi jaanyai

How is the Holy Congregation to be known?

ਜਿਥੈ ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੀਐ

Jithe i eko namu vakhaaniye

Chanted there is the Name of Lord who's One

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ਆਇਆ ਹਕਾਰਾ ਚਲਣਵਾਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ

Aaya hakaara chalanwaara hari ram naami samaaya

When he received the call to depart

He merged in Lord's Name soul 'n' heart

[SGGS, Page 923]

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ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਲਇਆ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲੇ
Gurmukhi naamu laiyya jotee joti rale
 When the Guru-oriented utters the Name
 The soul-spark is absorbed in Divine Flame
 [SGGS, Page 362]

EXPOSITION OF THE ‘WORD’ MIND

Conventionally, it was customary to speak of human life-span as “three scores and ten” which worked out to 70 years. In Hindu Mythology, however, Rama, Vishnu’s Avatara in Tretayuga, is said to have lived a life of 10, 000 years; while Krishna, Vishnu’s Avatara in Dwaparayuga, 1,000 years. While these figures may be disputed among the non-believers or sceptics and agnostics, Guru Nanak Dev points to the little-known and indisputable fact that life-span is barely one-breath long. In this respect, I must share my joy of finding the English phrase as the best expression of the conundrum. “To breathe one’s last is to die”. The interesting aspect of this averment is that you cannot be sure of any breath *except* the one that you have presently inhaled because this is the only one that shall certainly go out on exhalation but may or may not return as inhalation. The Guru, therefore, proclaims with a flourish of finality that “we are humans of single breath”.

Read the whole *Shabad* for fuller illumination.

DHANASARI MEHLA-1: CHOWPADE: Number 2

Ham Aadmi hain ik dami muhalati muhatu n jaana
Nanak binwai tisai sareivahu jaa kei jeea praana...

Men of single breath, we know not life-span or auspicious time one goes
 Thus entreats Nanak: Remember Him who soul and life on you bestows
 O Fool! Reflect how inordinately long one’s life-span can ever be
 Breath, flesh, and soul are your gifts; I love you Lord immensely
 If you don’t bless me with *Naam*; none has anything for mortgage to offer
 Poet Nanak has only this supplication to make, O You Sustainer-Nurturer
 What one gets in this life is foreordained from one’s previous life
 Oblivious the Divine Groom’s Name, man wastes life in hypocritical strife
 When he is grabbed by Death and pushed to the exit he repents out on the way
 As long as you are in this world, Nanak, hear you something; have something to say
 When tired of looking for permanent home it’s better to die ere death takes you away



SIRI RAAG(U) MEHLA-1 PADE: Number 17
Sun(i) mann mitra piyaariya mil(u) vela hai eh
Jablag joban(i) saas(u) hai tablag(u) ih(u) tan(u) deh

EXPOSITION OF THE “WORD” MIND

PADA [verse/stanza/hymn] Number 17 has 14 lines in which Guru Nanak Dev deals with one of the most important constituents of his *Bani*, the *Mind*. Since spiritual quest is essentially a vertical journey along the spinal column [about 18 inches in height] starting at the anus and going right upwards to the crown of the skull, it is absolutely necessary to clearly understand and deeply reflect on what the Guru has to convey from his marvellous Revelation for the general weal of the entire Humankind [*Sarbat da Bhala*]. Therefore, I am taking up the exposition of this verse, line by line.

1. My dear friend, Mind: Listen with rapt attention that this human life is a golden opportunity for you, and you must conscientiously use it to meet the Creator.
2. As long as you are in the prime of youth and your breathing is robust, this Body will have the requisite usefulness for achieving the stated goal.
3. Without possession of virtues, this ‘Mortal Frame’ is worthless because virtues alone will accompany the Soul to the Divine Home. If you do not cultivate virtues the Body will fall to the lot of the grave or the cremation ground.
4. O my Mind, take good care of this priceless chance and earn something of value for taking along to the Divine destination.
5. There is only one effective way of preserving this opportunity—Right away get down enthusiastically and commit whole-heartedly to *NAAM*-Remembrance. Therefore, following the Guru’s instruction take up the sacred assignment. What will it achieve? *NAAM*-Remembrance shall douse the conflagration of egotism because this is the fire that has misled you into getting distanced from the Master [by passionate engrossing yourself in worthless pursuits].
6. Some people satisfy their soul-burning lust by listening to stories, myths, and fables; others wear away their lives in ratiocinative cerebration. They build up tons of dead load of pointless learning which does nothing but inflate their egos.
7. However, their craving [for Life Eternal, another name for Godhood] yet keeps mounting day and night, and the disease of egotism continually generates perversions and immoral acts thereby building up their bank balance of sins.
8. The Supreme Master is absolutely carefree and His grandeur cannot be measured. Some reckoning of His majesty can be had only through the Guru’s precepts.
9. If I tried a million tricks and through affection increase my association with as many people, by then without the holy company of the *Sadhus* and the *Guru*, my inner hunger could not be satisfied. It

is because only in blessed association one is able to receive *NAAM* without which sorrows and troubles stubbornly persist.

10. O my Soul! It is by God-Remembrance alone that one gets rid of perpetual suffering. Because by the grace of *Guru* one gains self-knowledge from which abiding happiness and well-being emanate.
11. This is the reason why I have myself sacrificed my Body and Mind along with my Head to the *Guru*.
12. He who I was searching in vain in the Three Worlds the *Guru* has granted me His vision here and now.
13. The *Guru* has arranged my union with God; Nanak, He who was [surprisingly] with me always—in my own heart.

WHERE IS OUR PERMANENT HOME?

In this example, Guru Nanak Dev draws our attention to a queer fact that we all facilely ignore as if it were possible to shut our eyes on the grim truth that we all shall have willy-nilly to leave the world because it is an inn on our way back home and, therefore, impermanent. Our Permanent Home is where Our Creator lives beyond the ken of Time and Space. Getting back there with the Guru's guidance and God's mercy is the whole purpose of mortal life in the Divine Drama the whys and wherefores of which are beyond explanation and description.

SIRI RAAG MEHLA-1 GHAR-1 ASHTAPADIS: Number 17 [Last four of 18 lines]

*Mukaamu tis no aakhiyei jis sisi na hovei leikh
Asmaanu dharti chalsi mukaamu ohee eku
Din ravi chalei, nisi sasi chalei, taarika lakh paloyei
Mukaamu ohee eku hai, Nanak sach bagoyei*

Permanent abode is the one free from karmas' writ on head
The sky and earth would disappear while the Lord forever abides
Day's sun goes, so too night's moon, millions stars will be dead
His alone is permanent abode, Nanak thus avers, and guides

TRUTH IS A LIVING FORCE

Here, Guru Nanak Dev has stated the case of Veracity as no one else has ever done. Truth is a Living Force—and in the World of Relativity the Mystics call it "*MAYA*"—and it has a sacrosanct status in Time-Space Continuum. Its movement is always forward—an indefatigable effervescent dash towards the Future. With reference to the Present—the Here and Now—the Past is dead. Therefore, Truth that once was, is now only of academic interest, *not* of any real value. The Guru demonstrated this crucial fact umpteen times in which one instance



stands out. Standing in the public square he had spoken this historic Truth without any fear whatsoever. He called Founder of the Mughal Empire in India ‘*Babur*’ [Lion] a *Jabir* [Tyrant].

ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਆਖੈ ਸਚੁ ਸੁਣਾਇਸੀ ਸਚ ਕੀ ਬੇਲਾ
Sach ki bani nanaku aakhei sachu sunaayisi sach ki bela

[SGGS, Page 723]

Nanak utters but the Truth’s speech
 Speaking Truth at the right time each



KEY TERMS EXPLAINED

Aab-i-Hyaat, literally, ‘water of life’ is used by Sufis to denote ‘Elixir of Immortality’. It is the divine current of spirituality that provides self-renewing energy and sustenance to all living beings. In Sufi terminology, the Spring of the water of life (*Chashmah-i-Aab-i-Hyaat*) is the inner living Name, and anyone gaining access to that Name can drink from the spring of Water of Life, and never dies. Anyone who tastes it becomes immortal. According to Rumi, to find the Water of Life the seeker must undertake the interior “journey” into the divine “sea” [Spirit], leaving behind the exterior “journey” on the “land” [Matter] of mundane existence. The long-drawn, arduous exercise involved is akin to Guru Nanak’s “Saram Khand” access to which is preceded by many years of stringent spiritual endeavour.

Akath Katha: ‘Akath’ means unutterable, and ‘Katha’ denotes Story—explanation, description, exposition or message of a religious nature. Human language, as a creation of Maya [Matter] is an ‘outer’-ance, an expression of one who utters. The Lord’s utterance, that which emanates from Him, is the Word—His Language, His Speech or Discourse which brings the creation into being. However, it is unspoken because no physical words are involved. Mystics have thus described it as unspoken and indescribable. In this sense, *Akath Katha* refers to the divine ‘exposition, ‘story’ or ‘discourse’ concerning god and his creation, ‘told’ within the unspoken mystic Word:

Ineffable and true is the Discourse of the perfect Lord
 The light of the luminous Lord is all-pervasive

[SGGS, Page 897]

•
 Within the world, the mortal is engrossed in doubt
 And realises not the incomprehensible Lord
 Whose Discourse is ineffable

[SGGS, Page 1019]

Akkhar [which means ‘letter’], metaphorically, is the creative Word or divine Power:

Nanak, the Lord Himself has uttered forth the Word
Doubt departs from him who receives the gift [SGGS, Page 150]

•
All the Vedas, the religious books of the Muslims
The *Smritis* and *Shastras*
By reading these, salvation is not obtained
He who, by guru’s instruction, utters the one Name
Gathers pristine glory
[SGGS, Page 747]

•
In the Lord’s Word is the installation of the three worlds
By joining together the words, the *Vedas* are studied
The words tell what is written in *Shastras*, *Smritis*, and *Puranas*
In letters are written the hymns, discourses, and lectures
By means of letters is described the way of escape from dread and doubt
The words narrate the religious rites, worldly acts, piety, and religion
In the entire visible world is contained the indestructible Lord
Nevertheless, O Nanak, the supreme Lord remains unattached
[SGGS, Page 261]



Akhand Kirtan means ceaseless or unending Music, the unbroken Song:

Says Nanak, they who have the perfect true Guru as their guide
Enjoy the incessant lauding of praises
Of the Lord as their food and dainty
[SGGS, Page 261]

Kirtan is the singing of hymns or paeans of glory to the Lord to the accompaniment of instruments set to tune [often prescribed] in a raga [Mode of Indian classical music; the Sikh Gurus have used 31 Ragas and each Shabad requires its singing to the stipulated mode/tune] to qualify as “Shabad Kirtan”; otherwise it is *Shabad Gaayan*. In my assessment, Guru Nanak Dev is the first Prophet blessed with knowledge of *Shastriya Sangeet* to have used it for Kirtan and elevated as a means of communion with the Lord thereby imparting to it a dimension of divinity. This was a rocket-like upward thrust that uplifted it from a mere instrument of entertainment to the level of a veritable vehicle of gaining divine grace.

The soul is satiated
By lovingly singing Lord’s praises
[SGGS, Page 299]

However, *Shabad Kirtan* performed in ecstatic devotion or heard in trance-like receptivity raises the consciousness from the mundane [gross/terrestrial] to the spiritual [subtle/celestial] levels to facilitate merger of an individual's self with Lord's Self. Therefore, mystically, it is listening to the divine Melody within; hence, the eternal reverberation of the divine Music throughout creation—in which case it is called *Hari Kirtan* [God's Music] and *Akhand Kirtan* [the unbroken Song of panegyrics to God].

This is the state of consciousness evocatively described by Guru Nanak Dev in Pauri-27 of *Japji Sahib*:

What's His abode like, whence He does His business carry
 From where does He oversee and sustain all His creation
 Countless melodies are struck of a staggering variety
 And countless minstrels always sing in heady elation
 Many are the musical measures which praise Thee
 With celestial bards singing to the tunes in harmony
 Air, water, fire express Thy glory in charming music
Dharamraja's tunes are also profoundly mystic
Chitra Gupta keeps record of all actions human
 For *Dharamraja* to adjudicate thereon
 Sing of Thee *Isar, Brahma, and Parvati*
 All of them created and blessed by Thee
 Seated on his throne, Indra bows to Thee in singing
 Engrossed in the very midst of many a godling
 Miracle men sing of Thee entranced in *Samadhi*
 The saints, in singing, fix their thoughts on Thee
 The celibate, the virtuous, and the contented—one and all
 Pay obeisance to Thee as do the valiant heroes too
 Scholars of the Vedas and the great sages extol
 Thee, O Lord, age aft age—the ages through
 Exalted, too, are Thou by bewitching maids
 From heavens, earths, and the nether hades
 Praised are Ye by all the gems Thou did create
 And so by the places of pilgrimage, in all sixty-eight
 By all the four modes of life-generation
 Thy Name is kept in external glorification
 All terrestrial regions and celestial spheres
 Thou all the cosmos forever reveres
 And in so doing are they themselves sustained
 They alone have the privilege of singing of Thy glory
 Who have first Thy choicest blessings attained
 And thus deeply steeped abide in the love of Thee
 Just how many more, Nanak, also sing of God

Are beyond my imagination's wildest flight
 He alone is eternal, unchanging Lord
 His Name remains true—beyond all spite
 He has authored all this vast creation, He
 Is, has always been, and forever shall be
 Having created beings of many hues and kinds
 As enchanting *Maya* of supreme physical beauty
 God looks after His grand handiwork, as He minds
 The cosmic business, and sustains it by His gracious decree
 Whatever pleases Him, happens—and has His nod
 King of Kings is the Sole Lord God
 And inviolable is His Edict-Fiat
 Nanak's own life is propped by it

•

John of the Cross has used the term “silent Music” in his *Spiritual Canticle* to mean that it is the divine Sound heard within the soul:

The sonorous rivers, the whisper of amorous breezes
 The tranquil night, at the time of the rising of the dawn
 The silent Music, the sounding Solitude
 The supper that recreates and enkindles love

•



John of the Cross equates this “spiritual Sound” with the “Voice of many harpers who harped upon their harps, as described in Revelations. This was not material music, he emphasises, but spiritual.

Rabab [also spelled ‘Rubab’] is a two- or three-stringed mediaeval instrument played with a bow, like a violin. In Sufi writings, it is symbolic of the cry, “Return!” voiced by God to summon the wayfarer [that is Soul lost in the *Sahara of Desires* and thus endlessly chasing mirages to quench its insatiable thirst] back home.

Thy slave dances and sings of Thine excellences
 He plays upon the *Rabab* [rebeck], tambourine, cymbals, and anklets
 And thus Thy slave hears the divine Music

[SGGS, Page 381]

•

Hari Naam is a popular appellation for the mystic Name [*Naam*] or creative Power of God. Guru Ramdas exhorts the soul to meditate on *Hari Naam*:

O my soul, meditate thou
 On the Lord's Name, the treasure of bliss
 Thiswise, thou shalt obtain honour at the lord's court
 All those who remember their God are ferried across
 O my soul
 Attentively hearken to the Lord's Name

Hari Ras, literally, means Juice of God; hence, God's Elixir, divine Dew, and the Lord's creative Power understood as the divine drink for eternal sustenance of the soul. Ras implies something of sweet, pleasant, and enjoyable flavour. Therefore, similar terms include Naam Ras, Maha Ras, Amrit Ras, and so on. The expression is used extensively in Gurbani. It is said to be present within all souls:

By Guru's instruction
 I have realised the unstruck Music
 And enjoy the divine Relish
 Of God's Name
 Says Nanak: the Lord Himself
 Who is omnipotent to do all deeds, has met me
 [SGGS, Page 921]

When man tastes God's Elixir
 He instantly becomes immaculate
 Nanak, true is the glory of those
 Who are imbued with the Name

Intellect is the capacity for thinking, reasoning, and understanding, as opposed to feeling and desiring. This word is used by scholars to translate terms such as the Greek, *Logos* and *Nous*, and the Arabic, *'aql*, often when the terms 'soul' or 'spirit' would be more appropriate, as in such expressions as the 'intellectual world' or 'intelligible world', where the 'spiritual world' would make better sense. However, Guru Nanak used it in characteristic precision that goes beyond sentimental religiosity as under:

Akli sahib(u) seviai akli paayiai maan(u)
Akli parh kai bujhiyai akli keechai daan(u)
Nanak(u) aakhai raah(u) ih(u) hor(i) galla saitaan(u)

[SGGS, Page 1245]

Let by Reason Lord be served
And honour won eventually
Reason alone illuminates study
And leads to profound insight
Reason enables one to dispense charity
Says Nanak: This is the only true way
In all other means, the Satan leads astray







GURU ANGAD DEV

Adopter and Formaliser of Gurmukhi Script

[Sunday, 31 March 1504 - Saturday, 29 March 1552]

Devotee of Durga: When *Matte Di Sarai* was sacked by the Mughals and *Balochis*, Lehna and his father moved to Khadur, now a famous town near Tarn Taran in Punjab State of India. Lehna grew very religious under the influence of his mother, Daya Kaur, and became a devotee of Durga, the Hindu goddess of *Shakti* (Power). He used to organise yearly pilgrimage of devout Hindus to Jawalamukhi, a place of Durga temple in the lower Himalayas where fire issued forth from the mountains [hence the name ‘Jawalamukhi’]. He would lead Durga devotees in spirited sessions of dance around the sacred fire to the heady music of jingling bells.

Divine Shabad: Bhai Jodha, Guru Nanak’s Sikh, lived in Khadur and it was his daily routine to rise at *Amrit-Vela* [ambrosial hour well before dawn] and recite *Japji* and *Asa di Var*—the Guru’s *Bani*. One day as Lehna attentively listened to the Divine *Shabad* recited by Bhai Jodha, his mind became serene and tranquil. After daybreak, he asked Jodha who had composed those soul-uplifting hymns. Bhai Jodha told him all about Guru Nanak who was then living at Kartarpur—the town he had founded after completing his Spiritual Odysseys. The divine sound of the *Shabad* made such an impact on Lehna’s mind that he got impatient to meet the Guru.

Desire became Obsession: Guru Nanak's *Shabads* never left his mind, so much so that his desire soon assumed the form of obsession. Thus overtaken by divine inebriation he mounted his horse and one night left for the Guru's village. It is said that when he was near the place he saw a saintly old person and requested if he could guide him to his destination: Guru Nanak's residence. As was divinely characteristic of his humility, the Guru did not disclose his identity and taking hold of the horse's rein led the inquisitive stranger to his place. When they reached the place, Lehna discovered that his guide was none other than Guru Nanak himself. He instantly became his disciple, and decided to spend the rest of his life in the Guru's service.

Impact on Lehna's Mind: It is said that during his meeting, the Guru spoke to his young admirer of the True Creator, with such an impact on Lehna's mind that he threw away the jingling bells, which he was carrying with him to dance before the goddess. As leader of the group of pilgrims to Jawalamukhi on annual pilgrimage, as noted before, he would also lead them in dancing around the sacred fire to the heady jingle of bells. However, he had attained such peace and tranquillity of mind from this lightning connection with the Master that he decided right away to discontinue his pilgrimage and abide with the Guru. On seeing his increasing devotion, the Guru said to him one day that he should go home and settle his affairs and on his return he would initiate him as his Sikh. Lehna returned to Khadur and stayed there for some time. However, when he came back to Kartarpur he was in for an unnerving surprise. Guru Nanak put him to severe tests to ascertain his suitability and fitness for Guruship.

Birth: After prolonged and rigorous tests of various kinds aimed at ascertaining the aspirant's undiminished devotion and unwavering obedience under all circumstances, Guru Nanak Dev selected Lehna on 07 September 1539 as his successor worthy of being elevated to the Ministry of Spirituality. Punning on his name "Lehna" that obliquely suggests in Punjabi "to take", the Guru affectionately hugged his successor and said, "*Bhai, toon 'lehna' te aseen dena*" [Brother, you are ordained to *take* and me to *give*] and renamed him "Angad" [Limb of *my* Life]. The successor guru was born in a wealthy family on 31 March 1504 in Matte di Sarai, Muktsar, in Punjab. His parents were Pheru Mal, a prosperous trader, and mother Mata Ramo. He was married to Mata Khivi and had two sons, Datu and Dasu, and two daughters named Amro and Anokhi.

First Test: On his return to Kartarpur, Lehna was wearing silk clothes befitting his social status as the son of a wealthy trader. Looking for his Master, he hurried to the fields where he found Guru Nanak standing beside three bales of hay that were to be lifted and carried home as fodder for the cattle. The bales were wet and muddy from rains earlier that day, and the peasants did not want to carry them. Guru Nanak asked his sons to carry them, but they refused, saying they would send a servant back from the house to do this menial task. Hearing his Master's request, without a moment's hesitation, Lehna picked up the dirty bales and bundling them on top of each other carried all the three of them home in one go. His clothes muddied and out-of-shape, Mata Sulakhni [Guru Nanak's spiritual consort] was horrified to see a guest call on them in that pitiable condition. The Guru pacified her using a cryptic metaphor, "*The load has been carried by the one who was the fittest to carry it.*" Furthermore, he told her that it was not dirt but saffron on his clothes which, indeed, it was when she looked at the guest's dress a second time.

Second Test: The second test was no less challenging and arduous. During the winter rains, one of the mud walls of Guru Nanak's house collapsed, and he wanted it rebuilt right away, that very night. When he asked his sons, Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das, to undertake the emergent task, they retorted, "What is the tearing hurry?"

Can't you wait until the next morning when it can be easily rebuilt by the masons?" On hearing the young men's impudent argument, Lehna volunteered to do the job immediately. Just as it was finished, plastered and neatly done, Guru Nanak inspected it and said, "It's all uneven; very unprofessional." Without hesitation, Lehna tore down what he had so painstakingly raised, and started all over again.

He made the Test tougher: When it was done a second time, the Guru again expressed his inscrutable dissatisfaction. Rather than argue with the Master, Lehna, once again, without complaint, started from scratch. Guru Nanak's sons watched this strange drama, and told Lehna not to pay heed to the crazy demands of "the senile old man". But the unusual guest stoically ignored their unsavoury comments and continued obeying the Master's wishes. Finally, after many attempts, the tedious and tiring task was so accomplished that it met with the Guru's fastidious taste and hard-to-attain approval. A teacher has to test a disciple's obedience and ability to surrender. The inherent lesson in the strange episode is that *"To be a great leader; you first have to be an obedient follower!"*

Third Test: Having closely and studiously observed Lehna's behaviour for a long time, Guru Nanak one day placed his hand affectionately upon Lehna's head and called him *Angad*—"a limb of my own body". It seemed pretty obvious that Angad would be Guru Nanak's successor but yet there was another test to be taken to prove that he was the right choice for this exalted position of the Guru's Spiritual Ministry. One day, accompanied by his sons and a group of Sikhs, the Guru was out on a walk, when they came upon a platform on which there seemed to be a corpse placed and covered with a sheet. Guru Nanak suddenly commanded, "Eat it". While everyone just laughed at his shocking order, Lehna gently requested, "Master, pray, tell me at which end should I begin?" However, when the sheet was pulled off the corpse, it revealed to everyone's surprise choicest food spread out on a table. Before eating anything himself, Angad offered this sacrament first to Guru Nanak and then to others, saying that he would eat last whatever was left over. This is one of the key tenets of the Sikh Faith called *Vand Chhakna*, which is the intransigent principle of *first sharing* with others whatever you have.

Appointment to Guruship: One day as the *Sangat* assembled at Kartarpur, Guru Nanak seated Lehna on his throne, placed five paisa along with a coconut in front of him and bowing before him said to Baba Buddha, "This is my successor, Guru Angad; put a *Tilak* on his forehead as a mark of his appointment to the Guruship." When Baba Buddha had accomplished the assigned task, the Guru ordered his followers to obey and serve Guru Angad because thenceforth he was in *his* own image and likeness. By this time, Lehna had spent six or seven years in the service of Guru Nanak at Kartarpur.

Bhai Gurdas describes the succession to Guru Angad (Var 1, Pauri-45) thus: "*Angad got the same Tilak, the same umbrella over his head, and was seated on the same true throne as Guru Nanak until then had sat. The seal of Guru Nanak's hand entered Guru Angad's being, and proclaimed his sovereignty.*" However, after his appointment to Guruship, Guru Angad was directed by Guru Nanak to return to Khadur; he did as bidden, returned to and lived at Khadur for some time.



Spiritual Journey Begins.

*“Seeing without eyes
 Hearing without ears
 Walking without feet
 Working without hands
 Uttering His Name without tongue
 And dying while living
 Is accepting His Will.”*

Guru Angad Dev began his spiritual journey as a devoted and devout Sikh of Guru Nanak Dev on meeting whom he had realised that idolatry held no meaning in the Spiritual World, especially God-realisation. Thus unlike the Guru’s sons he acted upon every command of his with lightning alacrity and unwavering faith. His puritan character and phenomenal precocity endeared him to Guru Nanak so much that he chose him as his successor rather than one of his sons. Following Guru Nanak’s advice, he travelled to different places to spread the Holy Word and distribute alms among the poor. As the Second Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Angad Dev conscientiously continued the Guru’s legacy and followed an austere life dedicated to the well being of others. He is credited to have adopted, modified, and popularised the modern version of the *Gurmukhi* script, which eventually became the medium of writing the Punjabi language, especially in the State of Punjab, and, more importantly, the script of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Bible.

Sikh Tradition Liberated: By liberating the newly-established Sikh tradition from Sanskrit [a language that with its script was largely unknown to the masses] and the Vedic lore which had hitherto held sway in India, Guru Angad underscored the simplicity and accessibility of Sikh Faith’s tenets, and consolidated the idea that it was based on Guru Nanak’s Revelation and was a distinct religion, *not* a rehashing of the prevalent Hinduism and Islam which were always at daggers drawn. Scores of scholars and historians have spread the word that the Sikh Faith is a syncretism of Hinduism and Islam—the former mistaking it for the ontological meanderings of Vedanta, and the latter misinterpreting it to be a variation of Islam’s irreconcilable monotheism. Having closely studied the major Religions of the World that won me my second doctorate in 2000 I can vouch that the Sikh Faith is the only religion so far based on Revelation of its founder [Guru nanak] who himself has recorded this fact in his own hand unlike the Holy Books of other religions that were written by the followers after the death of their founders. Anyone in doubt of the verity of my averment must examine firsthand the mind-boggling description that Guru Nanak has given of what we call cosmology and cosmogony. I urge the true seekers to read my book *CREATIVE MYSTICISM – Guru Nana’s Pragmatic Spirituality* in which I have dealt all aspects of the problem most comprehensively and provided un rebuttable evidence in defence of my inferences and assertions.

Guru Angad spread the New Religion: While making extensive and well-planned efforts to spread the new religion far and wide, Guru Angad improved literacy among the Sikhs, and established a school at Khadur for teaching *Gurmukhi* to children. He enthusiastically put into practice Guru Nanak’s Pragmatic Spirituality grounded in his Revelation by encouraging the upkeep of physical health through wrestling and sports, and mental health through self-discipline and truthful living. He consolidated the unique institution of *Langar*

established by Guru Nanak and exhorted the Sikhs to live in the will of Lord God for rendering selfless service to Humankind by the founder's personal example of humility, generosity, wisdom, and pragmatic spirituality. Guru Angad Dev's spiritual consort Mata Khivi was known to personally oversee *Langar* and serve it to the *Sangat*. Upholding Guru Nanak's strict criterion of selection on merit he excluded his sons, Datu and Dasu, from the race for succession, and instead admitted Guru Amar Das to the Spiritual Ministry of Guru Nanak.

Guru earned his own Livelihood: True to Guru Nanak's Tenets of the Sikh Faith, Guru Angad earned his own living by twisting coarse grass into strings and ropes that were used for cots to demonstrate that physical labour is honourable, desirable, and dignified. He travelled widely spreading the Sacred Word, and established several new centres of learning. He loved children and had an active concern about their education that led to the opening of many schools. He felt it was better for the children to receive education in their own mother tongue. He thus popularised the use of *Gurmukhi* script for education, which is now most commonly used for writing the Punjabi language. Conventionally, the Punjabi language was written in the *Landay* or *Mahajani* script which was not suitable for *Gurbani* [Gurus' Utterances] as there was a risk of incorrectly deciphering the writing. The development of the *Gurmukhi* script thus helped to express the true meaning of the Revealed Word without any misunderstanding or ambiguity. Guru Angad was a prolific writer and was the first one to pen the biography of Guru Nanak after collecting the facts about his life from his companion Bhai Bala. In addition, his 63 *Saloks* (stanzas according to Indian tradition of religious poetry and its prosody), are enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Compilation of Japuji: Perhaps Guru Angad's most famous and succinct *Salok* is the Epilogue of Guru Nanak's *Japuji*. This *Bani* has been given pride of place as number one in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. As commanded by the Sikh Faith's First Master, *Japuji* was compiled by Guru Angad in the present form—beginning with *Mool Mantra*, followed by 38 *Pauris* [stanzas] and closed with his own *Salok*, which I have rendered in English verse as follows.



EPILOGUE

[*Sloku*]

Air is the spiritual guide, subtle his worth
 Water like father sires everything
 That's borne by the great mother earth
 The whole world plays without tiring
 Looked after by day and night: the two nurses
 The court of moral law is forever
 Taking note of all virtues and vices
 Accountable for his own actions is each creature
 More by token, some are granted nearness (to YOU)
 Others, who are kept at bay, embroil
 Meditation on the Holy Name blesses humans' toil
 Their faces glow, Nanak, others with them are liberated, too

ALTERNATIVE RENDERING OF THE EPILOGUE

[*Sloku*]

Subtle as the air is the path-finder, and water does sire
 Everything, borne by Mother Earth, the intellect
 Day and night engage this world entire
 As male and female nurses, in life's playful act
 All virtues and vices are accounted at the Court
 Of Cosmic Moral Law, whereby all mortals
 By the force of their deeds, in the divine sport
 Move close to, or, away from, His portals
 Those, who meditate on the Holy Name, receive God's exclusive benefaction
 Deliverance illumines their faces, Nanak, as they secure others' salvation

In Splendid Isolation: At 25, Lehna became the Second Master of the Sikh Faith as Guru Angad Dev. However, he went into seclusion to meditate to muster all forms of power he would need to return to active leadership of the new-fangled *Sikh Dharma*. Unknown to anyone except his immediate attendant, the Guru retired to a room near Khadur Sahib, sat down and had it locked from outside, and began his meditation on God without any distraction or interruption. He did not eat or drink anything. A pot of milk was his daily diet. About six months passed like this in splendid isolation and the Sikhs had absolutely no idea of his whereabouts. However, one day Bhai Lalo, Bhai Saido and Bhai Ajita, and other Sikhs called on Baba Buddha and asked him the whereabouts of the Guru. They had searched Khadur and other places but could not find him anywhere. It is said that Baba Buddha by transfixing his thoughts on the Guru was able to locate his place of meditation. Next morning, they all went to the house near Khadur where the Guru was meditating in seclusion. The owner of the house gave them no information but went inside the house and told the Guru about the visit of four Sikhs. The Guru told the owner that they should be shown inside.

Welcoming Baba Buddha, Guru Angad embraced him and uttered the following *Salok*:

“Cut off the head which bows not to the Lord, Nanak, take and burn
 the wretched body which feels not the pain of separation.”

(*Salok Mahalla 2, SGGS, Ang 89*)

Burgeoning Following: Baba Buddha requested him to take his seat as the Guru and receive and address the Sikhs publicly. When the Guru came out, crowds of loyal followers saluted him with their offerings. However, the Guru passed on all the offerings to the *Langar*. There were continuous preaching, the singing of hymns and the chanting of the Holy Name [*Naam*]. As the Second Master, his role was crucial in that while spreading the Holy Word he had the onerous responsibility of consolidating the New Religion to set an ideal example by meditating, living, and serving as Guru Nanak himself had done.

A Great Tradition was Extended: Guru Angad Dev held the firm belief that physical austerity was not necessary for spiritual development because it was not dependent on ritual and external wanderings. *“Austerity and everything else come through immersing oneself in meditation of the Lord’s Name. All other actions are useless. O Nanak, believe in the One who is worth believing in. By Guru’s Grace, he is realised.”*

Guru Angad was at once a spiritual teacher and a man of action. To him, religion was not only a spiritual experience but a way of life in which every action must have ingredients of spirituality, humility, and love. This can be achieved only when one is always conscious of the presence of God. He thus insisted that there should be harmony between thought, word, and deed at once subsumed in the purity of life.

“Doing something unwillingly or doing it under duress does not bring either merit or goodness. That alone is a good deed, O Nanak, which is done by one’s own free will.”

“Mortals are known by their actions; this is the way it ought to be. They should show goodness, and not be deformed by crooked actions; this is how they are called beautiful. Whatever they desire, they shall receive; O Nanak, they become the very image of God.”

“O Nanak, the worldly achievements and glory are worthy of being burnt in the fire if they intoxicate one to forget God because not even one of them will go along with you in the end.”

Encounter with Emperor Humayun: Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire in India, was succeeded by his son Humayun who was routed in a battle by Sher Shah. The defeated Mughal enquired if there was a saint who could help him regain his throne and kingdom. On advice of the locals, he came to Khadur to seek Guru Angad’s blessings. When he arrived the Guru was in a trance as the minstrels were performing *Kirtan*, and thus the ‘royal’ visitor was kept standing, unattended. At this Humayun felt offended and, in a moment of rage, put his hand on the hilt of his sword with the intention of striking the Guru. The sword, however, did not come out of the sheath, which gave Humayun time to reflect on his foolish act and repent.

Humayun Reprimanded: Upon his restive gesture the Guru accosted him thus: *“Where was your sword when you were facing Sher Shah? Now when you have come amongst the priests, instead of saluting them respectfully, you want to wield your sword on them. As a coward you fled from the battlefield, but now you pose as a hero and wish to attack the priests engaged in their prayer and devotion—and yet seek their blessings for regaining temporal power.”*

Emperor’s Repentance: Humayun repented and begged for Guru’s pardon, and implored him for spiritual assistance. The Guru replied, *“If you had not put your hand on your sword’s hilt you would have readily won back your kingdom. Now you ought to go back to your country, and when you return you will succeed in your goal.”* Obeying the Guru’s injunction, Humayun went back to his country where he succeeded in obtaining reinforcement of cavalry from the king of Persia. Thus armed, he returned to India, and waged a pitched battle against Sher Shah, and as Guru Angad had prophesied, succeeded in recovering his empire and eventually in occupying the throne of Delhi.

Investiture of Guru Amar Das: Before his death on 28 March 1552 at the age of 47, Guru Angad Dev appointed his sincerest and worthiest disciple Amar Das as his successor, upholding Guru Nanak’s signal criterion of strict selection on merit regardless of any extraneous considerations.







GURU AMAR DAS

Founder of the Religious Organisation “Manji System”

(Sunday, 23 May 1479 - Thursday, 16 September 1574)

Appointed Guru on Saturday, 16 April 1552, at the age of 73, Guru Amar Das was the oldest to be admitted to the Spiritual Ministry of Guru Nanak to succeed Guru Angad Dev who died on 29 March 1552 at the age of 48.

Parentage and Family Calling: Guru Amar Das was born on Sunday, 16 April 1479, 10 years after the birth of the Founder Guru of the Sikh Faith. He was the eldest son of Tej Bhan, a farmer and trader, and Mata Lachmi. He was a shopkeeper and lived in a village called Basarke near Amritsar. He was married to Mata Mansa Devi, and they had four children: sons Mohan and Mohri, and daughters: Dani and Bhani. Bibi Bhani was later married to Bhai Jetha who became the Fourth Master, Guru Ram Das.

How he became a Sikh: He was a devout Vaishnavite Hindu who spent most of life in going on pilgrimages observing ritual fasts as prescribed in Hinduism. However, one day, Amar Das heard some hymns of Guru Nanak Dev sung by Bibi Amro, daughter of Guru Angad Dev. She was married to his brother, Manak Chand's son named Jasso, and they lived together in a nearby house. His niece-in-law's mellifluous recitation of *Gurbani* so deeply touched Amar Das that then 61 he promptly decided to call on Guru Angad Dev at Khadur.

Bhai Gurdas: Amar Das had a younger brother named Ishar Das whose son Gurdas grew up to be a superb poet and scholar of Comparative Religion, and eventually became Guru Arjan Dev's scribe to pen the first edition of the *Adi Granth* [The Primal Book]. *Adi Granth* was the name of Sikh Faith's Holy Book compiled and edited by the Fifth Master Guru Arjan Dev. However, when the Tenth Master announced the closure of lineage of human *Gurus* he added the *Bani* of his father and predecessor Guru Tegh Bahadar, and conferred on the original volume called *Adi Granth* the title of *Guru Granth*. Ever since final compilation, the Sikhs throughout the world know the Holy Book as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS].

Sri is a word of Sanskrit origin and has Mr/Miss/Ms as its equivalents in English, and used as such as a prefix before proper nouns. *Sahib* is an Arabic word that means Lord and used as a suffix for the same purpose. It should be clear that words of different languages used in the title of the Holy Book allude to its being a Sovereign, Eternal-Living (Spiritual) Preceptor underscoring its cosmopolitan character and appeal as intended by Guru Gobind Singh. In the Indian culture, we often add the vernacular word "Ji" at the end of a proper name to convey our respect and reverence. Thus *Ji* to *Guru Granth* is invariably added and it is read and spoken as *Guru Granth Ji* in Sikh religious tradition. In doing so the Sikhs throughout the world exalt the Holy Book to a *Living Person* who is worthy of their unconditional, spontaneous veneration.

Instant Illumination: When he met Guru Angad Dev in 1635, Amar Das was so deeply touched by his divine message that he instantly became his devout Sikh, and thenceforth got involved in rendering *Sewa* [Service] to the Guru and the *Sangat* [Holy Congregation]. Adopting him as his Guru he began living at Khadur and followed a strict regimen of the prescribed lifestyle. He used to rise at *Amrit Vela*, fetch water from river Beas for Guru Angad Dev's bath, wash his clothes, and collect firewood from the forest for *Guru Ka Langar* [Guru's Free Community Kitchen]. His wholesome dedication to *Sewa* completely extinguished his vainglory. So lost was he in *Sewa* to the Guru that the locals considered him to be an old man who had no interest in life and was dubbed by them as *Amru Nithhaavaan* [Amru the Homeless], and derisively forsaken.

Worthy Successor: Amar Das presented himself to Guru Angad Dev in Khadur and became an ardent devotee. He carried firewood and water for the Langar from Goindwal to Khadur every day. Guru Angad Dev requested Amar Das to move his family to Goindwal, and stay there during nights so that he would have to carry water only once a day to Khadur. Amar Das tirelessly served the Sikh congregation for 12 years. As a result of his unwavering commitment to Tenets of the Sikh Faith, dedicated service and devotion to the furtherance of its cause, he won the trust Guru Angad Dev who, before he breathed his last at age 48, appointed the elderly personage as his worthy successor. He thus became Guru Amar Das, the Third Master, in the spiritual lineage of Guru Nanak in March 1552 at the ripe age of 73—as the oldest Guru. He established his headquarters at the newly-built town of Goindwal that Guru Angad Dev had founded.

Datu's Misbehaviour: Soon Sikhs in large numbers started flocking to Goindwal to see their new Guru. Meanwhile, Guru Angad Dev's elder son Datu, following his father's death, claimed the succession for himself and challenged the authority of Guru Amar Das. He was so jealous of Guru Amar Das that he, with a small group of his supporters, proceeded to Goindwal to confront the Guru. Upon seeing Guru Amar Das seated on a podium and surrounded by his followers, he blurted angrily, "*You were a mere menial servant of our house until yesterday; how dare you become a self-styled Master?*" Unable to control his unprovoked rage, Datu kicked the aged Guru so hard that he fell off the podium to the floor. Then taking the Master's seat he proclaimed himself Guru to the *Sangat* much to its shock and chagrin.

Humility's Glorious Triumph: Datu's act was not only uncalled for but it also went against Guru Angad's wishes. It struck at the very core of the Indian tradition of respect and regard that people have culturally shown to their elders through the chequered course of the country's history. However, much to the contrary, Guru Amar Das, in utter humility, rose from the floor and caressed Datu's foot saying, "I am old and my bones have grown very hard, I fear that they might have hurt your tender foot." It was not merely a sad anecdote from his life but an unmatched display of imperturbable acquiescence which reiterates the presence of deep divinity in Humility in recognition of which Guru Nanak Dev had made it the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. In sum, it was Humility's glorious triumph. However, after this unfortunate incident, Guru Amar Das left Goindwal that evening and returned to his native village Basarke.

Solitary Meditation: After the unfortunate incident, Guru Amar Das, saying goodbye to Datu, left Goindwal and went straight to Basarke, his ancestral village. There Guru Amar Das shut himself in a small house for solitary meditation. He had told no one where he was headed, but just in case someone tracked him down he attached a notice on the front door saying, "He who opens this door is no Sikh of mine, nor am I his Guru!" A delegation of devout Sikhs led by Baba Buddha found the house and seeing the notice on the front door, finally chose to 'go between the Guru's words', cutting a hole through a wall to reach their beloved Guru. Then peeping through the aperture, Baba Buddha said to the Guru, "*O Master, we know that being a supreme yogi you care for nothing in the world—neither fame, nor riches nor a crowd of followers, but we certainly need you and cannot live without your guidance. Guru Angad has tied us to your apron, where should we go now if you do not show us the way?*"

Overwhelmed by the devotion in his Sikhs' tearful entreaty, Guru Amar Das returned to Goindwal from where Datu, who had been unable to muster any following of his own, had returned to his native Khadur.

System of Administration: At Goindwal, Guru Amar Das propagated the Sikh Faith's tenets logically based on a comprehensive plan. He himself visited and sent Sikh missionaries to different parts of India to spread the Holy Word. He divided the Sikh *Sangat* into 22 branches called *Manjis* [Diocese] and appointed a local devout Sikh as its head who would be seated on a *Manji* (vernacular word for wickerwork cot) while the *Sangat* sat around it. The key areas of diocese were: Majha (Amritsar, Lahore, and Sialkot), Doab (Jalandhar), Kangra Hills, Kashmir Hills, Malwa (Patiala, Ludhiana, and Bathinda), and Sind.

Piri System: Impressed with Bhai Gurdas's thorough knowledge of Hindi, Sanskrit, and the Hindu scriptures, and following the tradition of sending out *Masands* across the country, Guru Amar Das deputed him to Agra to spread the Sikh Gospel. Guru Amar Das prescribed the following routine for Sikhs: "*He who calls himself a Sikh of the True Guru must get up in the morning and say his prayers. He must rise in the early hours and bathe in the holy tank. He must meditate on God as advised by the Guru to rid himself of the afflictions of lust, greed, and evil. As the day dawns, he should recite the scriptures, and repeat God's Name in every activity. He to whom the Guru takes kindly is shown the path. Nanak! I seek the dust of the feet of the Guru's Sikh who himself remembers God and exhorts others to remember Him.*"

'Pehle Pangat Phir Sangat': Strengthening the tradition of 'Guru Ka Langar', Guru Amar Das made it compulsory for all visitors in the form of an adage: '*Pehle Pangat Phir Sangat*' (Partake of the *Langar* before gaining audience with the Guru). This injunction was so strictly followed that it is said that once when Emperor Akbar the Great came to see Guru Amar Das he had to eat coarse rice in the *Langar* before he



could have an interview with the Holy Personage. The Mughal Ruler was so impressed with this system that he expressed his desire to grant some royal property for 'Guru Ka Langar', but the Guru politely declined it. Instead, Guru Amardas persuaded Akbar to waive off pilgrim's tax that was in vogue for non-Muslims while crossing the holy rivers Yamuna and Ganga, which the emperor gladly did. The two maintained cordial relations with each other to the great advantage of the new-fangled religion. This is a sacrosanct and rare example of 'Service before Self'.

Laudable Social Changes: Guru Amar Das preached against *Sati* and advocated the re-marrying of widows. *Sati* is the act or custom of a Hindu widow burning herself to death or being burned to death on the funeral pyre of her husband. He also asked all women to discard '*Purdah*' (wearing a veil), and instituted new ceremonies and rites for birth, marriage, and death. Thus raising the status of women he protected the rights of girls by abolishing infanticide. Revolutionary as these were the Guru's initiative met with stiff resistance from the Orthodox Hindus and Muslim fundamentalists. The Guru fixed three *Gurpurbs* [Holy Festivals] for Sikh celebrations: Diwali, Baisakhi, and Maghi. Visiting Hindu pilgrimage centres [*Tirathas*] and paying obeisance at Muslim places was strictly prohibited.

Historic Reforms: Guru Amar Das followed his own injunction concerning "*Pehle Pangat Phir Sangat*" with absolute seriousness and consistency. When the Raja of Haripur called on him, he insisted that he first partake of *Langar* before seeking audience with him. Though the Raja obeyed, one of his queens refused to lift the veil from off her face resulting in the Guru's refusal to meet her. Not only did Guru Amar Das preach equality among people irrespective of their caste, colour, and creed but also tried to uplift women's social status. He discountenanced the custom of *Purdah* and determinedly sought to stop the practice of *Sati*. He also disapproved of a widow remaining unmarried for the rest of her life, and encouraged remarriage.

Baoli Constructed: A step-well of eighty-four steps called *Baoli* was constructed at Goindwal and made a centre of Sikh pilgrimage for the first time in the history of Hinduism that had held sway with its hoary customs and practices mentored, monitored, and maintained by Brahmins to keep intact their centuries-old hegemony. The Guru got more copies of the hymns of his predecessors made for easy accessibility to the masses. His own 869 *Shabads* (hymns in verse-units), in 18 *Ragas*, including *Anand Sahib* in Raga Ramkali, eventually found their pride of place in the *Adi Granth*.

Guru Amar Das consolidated his predecessors' mission of disseminating the tenets of the young Sikh Faith by introducing pragmatic social reforms strengthening new practices in society by boldly endorsing the long-awaited, much-needed changes in the degenerating social order. That he was a true personification of *Sewa* [selfless service as voluntary labour of love dedicated to Lord God] which he had earlier shown by the fact that inclement weather, old age, and any other constraint could not upset his daily routine and he continued to serve Guru Angad Dev and *Sangat* [Holy Assembly of the Devout]. He regularly held morning sessions of which religious discourses formed an integral part along with *Shabad Kirtan* [Raga-based hymn-singing performed by baptised classical singers] for the benefit of the distressed, the sick, and the hapless. The Guru redefined life as priceless gift of God by stressing that rituals and rites associated with death were meaningless and, therefore, singing paeans to Lord God's glory was the only valid ceremony worth performing to guide the departed soul to its destination.

Quizzical Episode: Once during several days of rain while Guru Amar Das was riding past a wall which he saw to be on the verge of falling he galloped his horse past it. The Sikhs questioned him thus; “O Master, you have instructed us, ‘fear not death, for it comes to all’ and ‘the Guru and the God-man are beyond the pale of birth and death,’ why then did you gallop past the about-to-collapse wall?” He replied; “Our body is an embodiment of God’s light. It is through the human body that one can explore one’s limitless spiritual possibilities. Demigods envy the humans’ mortal frame. One should not, therefore, play with it recklessly. One must submit to God’s will but not crave death nor invite it without sufficient and noble cause. It is surrender of the ‘self’ for the good of Humankind that one should seek, not wilful physical annihilation.”

Bibi Bhani’s Marriage: When it was time to marry his younger daughter Bibi Bhani, Guru Amar Das selected Jetha a pious and diligent young follower who hailed from Lahore. Jetha had come from Lahore to visit the Guru with a party of pilgrims and become so enchanted by the Holy Word that he decided to settle in Goindwal. Here, he earned his livelihood by selling *Ghunganiyaan* [salted grain boiled whole] and would regularly attend the services of Guru Amar Das in his spare time. The Guru did not consider anyone of his sons fit to succeed him; instead, he chose his son-in-law for Guruship. This was a befitting example of Guru Nanak Dev’s Pragmatic Spirituality in action upholding the value of merit transcending soul-stifling emotional and socio-cultural constraints. Certainly it was practically a right step not as emotional, because Bibi Bhani and (Guru) Ram Das possessed true spirit of service and keen understanding of the Sikh principles deserved this.

Guru Ram Das: This practice reiterated the directive principle of the Sikh Faith’s Spiritual Ministry that Guruship could be transferred to anybody found perfectly fit, and not merely to a person whose only qualification was that he belonged to the Holy Family. Having passed to the Fourth Master, Guru Ram Das, the onerous responsibility of Guruship, Guru Amar Das left the mortal world at the ripe age of 95 on 01 September 1574 at Goindwal that he had founded on the banks of River Beas in 1552.

Among his 907 revelatory hymns enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Anand Sahib* is a rare gift of prayer for devout Sikhs who recite it daily as one of the Five Banis.







GURU RAM DAS

Founder of Amritsar


(Friday, 9 October 1534 - Saturday, 16 September 1581)

Guru Ram Das was the Fourth Master of the Sikh Faith. He was born on 9 October 1534 in Chuna Mandi, Lahore, where he spent the first seven years of his life. His parents Hari Das and Mata Anup Devi named him Jetha, which means the ‘first-born’. Orphaned at 7, Jetha grew up under the care of his maternal grandmother who had taken him to Basarke. At the age of 12, after meeting Guru Amar Das, he continued serving him and the *Sangat* with supreme devotion and humility. He was married to the Guru’s younger daughter Bibi Bhani. True to the nature of the Sikh tradition, Guru Amar Das put his son-in-law to the toughest of tests over the years to assess the spirit of his service and sacrifice and, finally, in 1574, appointed Jetha as the Fourth Master and renamed him Guru Ram Das [God’s Servant].

Divine Message: 638 *Shabads* constitute the Guru’s revelatory utterances recorded in 30 *Ragas* that are enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. His Bani is also part of *Rehras Sahib* and *Sohila* which form daily prayers of the Sikhs. Through these hymns, the Guru has given the divine message to all humanity in simple terms: to live a disciplined life steeped in humility, and to be forever grateful to Lord God for His benediction and mercy. In his *Shabad* on page 305 of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Guru Ram Das vehemently disapproved prevalent the ritual morning activities, and instead prescribed that the person who calls himself a Sikh of the True Guru must observe the following routine:

*One who calls himself
 A Sikh of the True Guru
 Shall get up early morning and
 Meditate on God's Holy Name
 Bathe daily in the ambrosial pool
 Obey the Guru's instructions
 Chant Lord God's Name
 Thus all sins and misdeeds
 Shall be erased from his life*

I must point out a crucial fact that Guru Nanak Dev's spontaneous adoption for his *Bani* of words from other languages in consonance with the timeless-universal significance of his Revelation for all Humanity established a tradition that has no historical precedents. His worthy successors happily extended this psycho-spiritual convention by the use of words from other languages in their divine utterances [*Bani*]. However, few devout Sikhs and avid scholars of *Sikhi* [Sikh Faith] know that Guru Ram Das used the Persian [Iranian] phrase *Raah-i-Raast* [Path of Righteousness] in its Punjabi version "Rehras" that has since become the honorific title of the Sikh evening prayer.



Structured Sikh Society: During his seven-year-long Spiritual Ministry, Guru Ram Das focused keenly on developing a secure organisational structure for Sikh society. Like his predecessors he too founded a township named Ramdaspur, which subsequently assumed the name "Amritsar" to become the Vatican City of the Sikh Faith. Ever since it was founded the city of Amritsar has been a vibrant centre of spiritual and socio-political activities of the Sikh Faith. As a farsighted town planner Guru Ram Das began the exercise with the digging up of the water pool by enlarging an existing water-body. Having created an urban nucleus the Guru invited and helped settle traders and craftsmen from fifty-two different professions, leading to its rapid growth, so much so that in due course of time the town became the largest commercial centre in the north-western region of the Indian sub-continent.

Landmark New Town: As a central place of the Sikh Faith, distinct from the centres of prevalent religious traditions, the new town was a landmark development in the life of the Sikh community. Guru Ram Das also introduced a new and distinct code and ceremony for solemnising Sikh marriages by the reading and singing of *Laavaan* [Sikh marriage ceremony with four circumambulations round *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*]. A country-wide system of collecting devotees' offerings through *Masands* was also instituted which, while earning revenue for running and supporting Sikh institutions, served as the means of spreading the Holy Word. The term *Masand* denotes a Sikh Guru's agent or priest who acts as preacher-cum-collector of tithes and offerings from Sikh *Sangats*.

Successor Appointed: Before his demise on 16 September 1581, Guru Ram Das named his youngest son as his successor: Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith.

In Goindwal: One day Jetha came across a party of Sikhs who were on their way to Goindwal to pay homage to Guru Amar das. Jetha joined and travelled with them to their destination. During the visiting Sikhs' meeting

with him, Guru Amar Das was quick to notice the young Jetha who had a pleasant personality and a visible sense of devotion. When his fellow travellers returned to Lahore, Jetha stayed back to become a disciple of the Guru. In Goindwal he worked hard on various under-construction projects and so impressed Guru Amar Das with his dedicated Sewa that he married his daughter Bibi Bhani to Jetha on 18 February 1554. After their marriage, the couple continued to live in Goindwal which was then an upcoming town, and did voluntary service in the construction of the step-well, Baoli, while serving the Guru and the *Sangat*.

Having become the most trusted disciple of Guru Amar Das, Jetha performed various services under the Guru's guidance and care besides successfully representing him at the Mughal royal court to refute charges by some jealous Hindus who had taken exception to some of the wording of *Gurbani*. With unveiled malice they desperately spread the word that the Sikh Faith had maligned the sacred literature of both Hinduism and Islam.

Translation of what Jetha said in the Court of Akbar is given below:

“Birth and caste are of no avail before God. It is his deeds which make or mar a man’s life. To exploit ignorant people with superstitions and to call it religion is a sacrilege against God and man. To worship the infinite, formless and absolute God in the form of a totem, an image or an insignificant time-bound object of nature; to lead people to believe that they can wash away their sins, not through compassion and self-surrender, but through ablutions; to insist upon special diets prescribing what to eat and what not to eat; to say that a certain language and dress allow access to God and to condemn men, women and children to the status of sub-humans; to deny them the knowledge of reading the scriptures; that they are told rule their lives; banning their entry to places of worship; and forcing them to do only degrading work is to tear man apart from man. This is not religion nor is it religion to deny the world by becoming an ascetic, for it is in the world alone that man can find his way to spiritual realities.”

As explained by Jetha, Emperor Akbar the Great was impressed by the tenets of the Sikh Faith, and promptly dismissed all of the charges against the Guru as false and malicious.

Activities as the Fourth Master: On attainment of the coveted seat in Guru Nanak's Spiritual Ministry, Guru Ram Das enthusiastically continued the building of Ramdaspur (the city of Ram Das) by the digging of the second sacred pool as he had been instructed by his predecessor. Pilgrims came in ever-growing numbers to hear the Guru's discourses and to help in the excavation work. The holy tank would be called *Amritsar*, the pool of nectar. Amritsar, the Vatican City of the Sikh Faith, is now the holiest of *Tirathas* [Pilgrimage Centres] for the Sikhs all over the globe. Guru Ram Das exhorted the Sikhs to actively participate in the joys and sorrows of Humankind because quiet and withdrawn meditation is not the way to life's fulfilment and salvation. The pathogenic effect of Ego on the mind breeding selfishness could be rid of by no known praxis *except* through socially-beneficent activities. The 'Self' recovers its pristine glory and divine sheen only by dissolution in *Sewa* that transcend the barriers of caste, creed, colour, national prejudices, and ethnic eccentricities.

Bhai Gurdas: One of the novitiates into the Sikh Faith at this time was Bhai Gurdas Bhalla son of Guru Amar Das's younger brother Bhai Ishar Das. As has been noted before, Bhai Gurdas's contribution to the Sikh Faith is so huge that his name has become synonymous with the Sikh tradition. His erudition, insight, and felicity of expression were so enormous that Guru Arjan Dev whose scribe he was for writing the original copy of the *Adi Granth* honoured him with the title of "Key to the Holy Book". His superb and enduring



gift was the coinage “*VahiGuru*” [Hail the Guru] compounded of the initial letters of the sacred names of God: Vishnu, Hari, Gobind, and Ram—which are associated in India with the Four *Yugas* [Eras] and their Divine Saviours. The newest Holy Name is so catchy that it is chanted everyday all over the globe countless number of times.

Anand Karaj: Guru Ram Das defined and designed the Sikh marriage ceremony in a four-stanza *Shabad* called *Laavaan*. The pair to be married is seated before *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS] and circumambulates four times round the Holy Book. Each circumambulation corresponds to the relevant stanza that is first read out by the priest [*Granthi*] from the Holy Book and then followed by its singing to prescribed *Raga* and tune by *Ragis* [baptised, qualified hymn-singers]. As soon as they begin singing the pair makes obeisance to SGGS, stands up, and begins to circumambulate clockwise round the Holy Book. Each circumambulation is paced such that the pair arrives back to the starting point on its conclusion, makes obeisance, and gets seated again.

Meaning of *Laavaan*: The first round seeks divine consent for commencing the householders’ life through marriage. The second round states that the union of the couple has been brought about by God’s Edict-Fiat. In the third round the pair is hailed as the most fortunate as those who have sung paeans to Lord God’s glory and grandeur in the company of saints. The fourth and concluding round describes the ineffable feeling of the two that they experience on obtaining their hearts’ desire and are thus congratulated. It is imperative to note that Guru Nanak on receiving his Revelation had called all human beings regardless of their gender as “Soul-Brides” of the divine Husband, Lord God. Therefore, marriage on planet earth is as much the consummation of mortal life as it is the first step towards wedding the Divine Husband by His own sweet choice and will. It is thus remarkable how Guru Ram Das has defined the meaning of marriage to a Sikh couple with incomparable succinctness in just two lines: “*Husband and wife are not they who merely sit or live together. They alone are truly husband and wife who have one soul in two bodies.*”

Guru’s Unmatched Humility: When Guru Nanak Dev’s aging elder son Baba Sri Chand, who had chosen to become an ascetic (he was the founder the Udasis Sect) came to visit Guru Ram Das, he asked him why he was sporting such a long beard. Guru Ram Das in his characteristic politeness replied: “*To wipe the dust off from the feet of holy men such as you are*” and then he proceeded to perform this supreme act of humility. Seeing this Sri Chand held his hand and embraced Guru Ram Das saying; “It’s enough. This is the kind of character by which you have deprived me of my ancestral heritage. Now, what more is left with me that I could offer you for your piety and goodness of heart?” It is said that as he was outraged by his father’s choice to pass on Guruship to Guru Angad Dev, Sri Chand had attempted to install himself as the second Guru of the Sikhs and had hoped to alter the direction of *Sikhi* that Guru Nanak had chartered. It is also noteworthy that Guru Ram Das’s unmatched humility imparts a distinct divine glow to his *Bani* as can be seen in the use of the suffix “*Ji*” in Raag Asa Mahala-4: “*So Purakh Niranjjan Har Purakh Niranjjan Har Agamaa Agam Apaaraa*”.

Guru Ram Das’s first cousin Sahari Mal’s son’s marriage was to be solemnised at Lahore and he came to invite the Guru. As he was much too busy with his work he promised to send one of his sons instead. Therefore, he asked his eldest son Prithi Chand to attend on his behalf, but he refused citing a frivolous reason. In the heart of his hearts he feared that his father would, in his absence, install his youngest brother, Arjan Dev who was Guru Ram Das’s favourite as the next Guru. This led the Guru to ask his second son Mahadev to attend the

wedding who being a recluse excused himself saying that he was not interested in the affairs of the world. The last choice was Arjan, the youngest son, who agreed with such grace and humility to go that Guru Ram Das was extremely pleased.

Guru Ram Das sent Arjan Dev to Lahore on another condition that he had to stay there in their ancestral house until called back home and to take charge of the needs and education of the Sikhs. Two years later, feeling intensely homesick, Arjan Dev composed a poem of love and devotion and sent it to his father. This poem along with another one, sent a few months later, was intercepted by his eldest brother Prithi Chand who made sure that Guru Ram Das never received them. Finally, the love-stricken Arjan wrote a third poem, marked it as Number 3, and gave strict instructions to the messenger to deliver it to the Guru personally.

*Unremitting my mind longs for
The blessed vision of the Guru's Visage
It utters cries of the thirsty song-bird
Unless my thirst is quenched
I can find no peace—none at all
Without the beatific sight
Of the Beloved Saint ||1||
I am a sacrifice; nay, my whole being is a sacrifice
To the Gracious Glimpse of the Revered Saint Guru*

(SGGS, Raag Maajh, Ang-96)



Guru Moved to Tears: When Guru Ram Das received this poem and saw Number 3 marked on it, he at once sensed that Arjan must have written two letters earlier too. Aware that Prithi Chand was jealous of his youngest brother he confronted and asked him if he knew anything about the two previous letters. At first, Prithi Chand denied everything, but unnerved by his father's insistence and the consequences of disobeying him, he finally confessed his treachery and produced the two earlier letters. On reading them Guru Ram Das was moved to tears by Arjan's humility and the pulsating sincerity of filial love in his poetic compositions.

Departure from the Mortal World: Having known the truth about Prithi Chand's deception, Guru Ram Das immediately sent for Baba Buddha to go to Lahore and to bring back Arjan with full honours. On his return the Guru declared him his successor. Prithi Chand's deception had created apprehensions as he never accepted his father's choice and continued to misbehave and abuse him. Therefore, Guru Ram Das was forced to eventually to condemn Prithi Chand for his misdeeds publicly. Shortly after this unfortunate incident, Guru Ram Das jettisoned his mortal frame on 16 September 1581.







GURU ARJAN DEV

SPIRITUAL SYMBIOSIS OF THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED

[Monday, 15 April 1563 - Tuesday, 30 May 1606]

The spiritual resplendence of Guru Arjan Dev glowed forth from his *Naam*-illuminated humility. This was, indeed, the crowning feature of the Guru's holy personage. It is said that the most difficult task which the Fifth Master had to perform as the author-compiler of the *Adi Granth* was to obtain from Guru Amar Das's elder son, Baba Mohan, a maternal uncle of Guru Arjan Dev, the two *Pothies* (Tomes of the sacred *Bani*) that had been compiled during the lifetime of the Third Master Guru Amar Das (1479-1574). Being of a mystical cast of mind, Baba Mohan was sparing of granting audience to anyone. He refused to see Bhai Gurdas who had been sent by Guru Arjan Dev to fetch these *Pothies*. Bhai Buddha, one of the oldest disciples of Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), founder of the Sikh Faith, was similarly turned away by Baba Mohan from his door. Then, Guru Arjan Dev went personally to obtain from him the two volumes of the sacred *Bani*.

On seeing the Guru, Baba Mohan said to him in banter, "Why have you grown such a long beard?"

"To dust the feet of saints like you," was Guru Arjan Dev's prompt reply.

The overwhelming eloquence of the Guru's humility disarmed Baba Mohan who readily parted with the treasured *Pothies*.

Since humility is a cardinal virtue in the *Bani* of Guru Arjan Dev, as indeed of the entire sacred verse enshrined in the *Adi Granth*, it should be in order to dilate upon its concept in some detail. The Fifth Master's life is a paragon of humility, a Divine endowment, whose Beauty is the Splendour of Truth. In this sense, one could speak of humility as the aesthetics of the Spirit which expresses itself as a way of exalted life. Humility is the unselfconscious blossom of the human soul seen as the colour and fragrance of inspired spontaneity (*Sahj*). By contrast, self-conscious humility can never become humility by any stretch of imagination or cunning or trickery. It is vanity because one knows that being humble pays as a socio-ethically recognised index of spiritual life!

The importance of humility has been highlighted in his *Bani* by Guru Arjan Dev using metaphor and diction of compelling charm. He does not sanction arrogance in any form whatsoever, not even as a sense of pride in one's spiritual activities. His unqualified censure of vanity is beautifully expressed in the following lines from *SUKHMANI*

*Anik tapasya karei ahankar
Narak surag phir phir avtar.*

*He who harbours vanity in his many austerities
Between hell and heaven forever transmigrates.
And Guru Arjan Dev goes on to proclaim with the finality of the
Commandment the spiritual reward of unalloyed humility as deeply self-fulfilling.*

*Sarab ki rein ja ka mana hoye
Kauh Nanak ta ki nirmal soye*

*Whose heart has become transformed as everyone's doormat
Regain shall he his pristine glory, saith Nanak*

In the prevalent High-Tech terminology, humility may be called the super-conductor of higher life. In man-God relationship, spiritual power is transmitted from the Over-Self to the human heart only when the ego-alloyed mind does not offer any resistance whatsoever to this natural flow.

I experience a strange delight in contemplating the spiritual symbiosis between Guru Arjan Dev's inspired *Bani* and his inspiring Life. Both are palpably charged with the incredible power of humility which can melt even the most obdurate of human beings.

When Babur was exhorted by Guru Nanak Dev to give up drinking he promised to do so if he would be successful in the battle of Deccan. His victory deepened his faith in the Holy Guru whose blessings he then sought for the establishment on a firm footing of the Mughal Empire in India. In his infinite graciousness Guru Nanak Dev put in the hands of the founder of the Mughal dynasty seven pinches of dust symbolising that Babur's empire would last for seven generations. A Sikh who was watching this strange dispensation of beneficence reminded the Guru that the Mughals, despotic as they were, would play havoc if they continued to rule the country for such a long time. Guru Nanak Dev smilingly replied that if they did so, the Mughal Empire would be decimated in India by seven sacrifices corresponding to the gift of a seven-generation dynasty he had bestowed on the Mughal Emperor.

As ordained by the founder of the Sikh Faith, the Fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev, became the first martyr to shake the foundations of the mighty Mughal Empire. The six martyrs who followed him in the lineage

of martyrdom were: Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Master, the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh (the Tenth Master), and his mother, Mata Gujri. As the 'Prince of Martyrs' and 'Prophet of Peace', Guru Arjan Dev's life was an inspired compact of sublime sacrifice and beatific bliss born out of his sweet submission to the Divine Will.

Guru Arjan Dev played a pivotal role in the development of the Sikh Faith by giving a definitive form to the exemplary work that his four predecessors had done. It is pertinent to observe that a new religion can be founded only when the following three things are established in the first place: *Granth* (scripture), *Tirath* (place of pilgrimage or worship) and *Lippi* (script). The Fifth Master's contribution is thus incomparable in so far as he fulfilled for the Sikh Faith two of these three imperatives: one, as the author-compiler of *Adi Granth* and two, as the architect-builder of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. In short, the Sikh Faith acquired from Guru Arjan Dev the unique sign and symbols of a distinct spiritual entity.

Born at Goindwal on 15 April 1563, Guru Arjan Dev was the youngest of the three sons of the Fourth Master, Guru Ram Das. He was endowed with a deeply religious temperament and quintessential by immeasurable compassion, humility and mercy. Giving the Sikh movement a definite direction, a comprehensive perspective and a pragmatic programme, he made the new faith coeval with the whole gamut of existence, thereby raising its magnificent edifice on values which would know no death or change. Guru Arjan Dev adorned the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak Dev from 1581 to 1606.

The compilation of the *Adi Granth* (the Primal Book) was Guru Arjan Dev's epoch-making achievement. The writing of the sacred volume was completed sometime in 1604. Less than two years of the mortal life of the Guru remained at the time when he was to wear the crown of martyrdom at the hands of the bigoted Mughal Emperor, Jahangir. With a prophetic insight into what the future held in store for him, the Guru completed two grand projects with unshrinking labour to impart two distinctive features to the new faith: the holy Temple that must serve as the centre of its devotion, and the Holy Scripture which must enshrine the timeless spirit of its divine message.

According to the extant recension of *Adi Granth* to which the *Bani* (literally, Sacred Word) of Guru Tegh Bahadur was added at Guru Gobind Singh's command in 1705-06 at Damdama Sahib. Out of this total the largest number (2312 verse-units) is the magnificent contribution of Guru Arjan Dev. He incorporated in the *Adi Granth* compositions of Muslim *Sufis* (mystics) like Sheikh Farid and Bhikhan, along with those of the *Bhaktas* (saints), the so-called Shudras such as Kabir, the weaver; Ravidas, the cobbler; Sain, the barber; Sadna, the butcher.

Guru Arjan Dev arranged the selected compositions in thirty different *ragas* (musical modes or patterns). A precise method was followed in the setting of the verse-units. Placed first in the sequence were *Shabads* by the holy Gurus in the order of their succession. Then were added *Chhands* [any of several poetic forms or modes], *Vars* [Ballads], etc. by the Gurus. The compositions by the Gurus in *Ragas* were followed by those of the *Bhaktas*. Immense labour was expended on the preparation of the huge volume whose present-day standard version runs into 1430 pages. The first copy of the *Adi Granth*, which was transcribed by Bhai Gurdas under the supervision of Guru Arjan Dev, is preserved by the family of the descendants at Kartarpur.

The Holy Book was installed at Harmandar Sahib with appropriate ceremony. Sikhs came in large numbers to pay obeisance to the *Adi Granth*. Baba Buddha was appointed the first *Granthi* (reader-custodian). Guru Arjan Dev enjoined on the Sikhs to revere the Holy Book as contents are spiritual poetry [language of prophesy], the vision of the cosmic order and exhortation to the higher life. In that respect, it is a unique scripture among the source books of World Religions. It remains unique in consisting solely of



the meditations of God-inspired men who have communicated the Divine Word in a spirit of deep humility and compassion for humankind.

According to Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, ‘Granth’, which is derived from a Sanskrit word, implies, like the ‘Koran’ [correct transliteration is ‘Quran’] and the ‘Bible’ a book—Book par excellence, the embodiment of divine utterances and spirit of the Gurus. Unlike some other scriptures, it is neither history nor mythology, nor a collection of incantations.

The Golden Temple, or *Sri Hari Mandir* (or *Harmandar*) *Sahib* (the Lord God’s Temple) or *Darbar Sahib* (the Court of the Venerable Lord) is the sacred shrine of the Sikhs. It is paragon of religious architecture, symbolising devotion, love, peace, and universal brotherhood. The holy Temple stands for all that is sublime and noble in the Indian religious tradition.

The idea of creating a place of pilgrimage was conceived by Guru Amar Das, the Third Master. This was to continue the practice of founding new centres for Sikh congregations—a tradition which had been established by his predecessors. The place was discovered by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master, during one of the itineraries undertaken by him in search of a suitable site for establishing a new Sikh centre. He found the present site in a jungle to the west of Sultanwind village. It is bounded by the villages of Sultanwind, Tung, Gumtala and Gilwali. Existing on the site was a pond whose water had been known to have curative properties. Though its idea was mooted by Guru Amar Das, the execution of the project was left to Guru Ram Das. Arrangements of funds for the purpose and their control were entrusted to Baba Buddha.

While the holy tank was under construction, Guru Arjan Dev thought of building a shrine in its midst, and conceived the architectural design of the holy Temple that was destined to become an all-time spiritual Marvel of Sikh Architecture. The object of Guru Arjan Dev in planning the structure of Sri Harmandar Sahib in the midst of the *Amrit Sarovar* (Pool of Nectar) was to combine human life’s spiritual and temporal aspects, thereby bringing about a new synthesis of the varied strands of Indian philosophic thought.

The construction of the holy shrine was carried out under the direct control and supervision of Guru Arjan Dev. He was assisted by Baba Buddha, Bhai Gurdas, and other prominent Sikhs available on the site.

The tank and the temple, when completed, presented a beautiful sight. It became a spot of unparalleled beauty, splendour, and glory.

Guru Arjan Dev commemorated the historic achievement in the ecstasy of high poetic inspiration:

*I have seen all places; but there is none
Other like thee,
For thou were established by the Creator-
Lord Himself
He blessed thee with Glory
Ramdaspur is thickly populated
Unparalleled and supremely beautiful
He who takes a dip in the Tank of Ram Das,
Is cleansed of all his mortal sins*

Guru Arjan Dev gave the temple an appropriate epithet, Hari Mandir, in which the One Formless Supreme Being, *Ik Oankar*, *Akal Purakh* of Guru Nanak Dev's revealed vision should be lauded and worshipped—but never any deity, visible or invisible. The Golden Temple, now the centre of a great concourse of pilgrims every day, and the holiest of the holy of the Sikh Faith, is to Sikhism what Mecca is to Islam, Jerusalem is to Judaism and Christianity, and Bodh Gaya is to Buddhism.

Guru Arjan Dev undertook a tour of Punjab to disseminate the tenets and message of the Sikh Faith. He rationalised the institution of *Masands* who, as an efficient cadre of local leaders, kept the Guru's growing following united. The Guru ordained that every Sikh should voluntarily donate for religious purposes a tithe, *Daswandh* [tithe] or one-tenth of his income raised by the sweat of one's brow. These pious Sikhs looked after the congregations in far-flung parts of the country, and collected offerings and donations thus made for the Guru's treasury. The *Masands* led the Sikhs to the Guru's presence on special days such as Baisakhi and Diwali. Guru Arjan Dev persuaded Akbar to remit the land revenue for the year when Punjab was in the grip of drought and famine.

The essential message of Guru Arjan Dev's *Bani* is meditation on *Naam*. The Guru has lucidly expatiated on the concept of Brahm Giani, or *Naam*-enlightened soul. According to him, such enlightenment or spiritual stature can be attained only through meditation on the Lord God's Name by the Holy Guru's grace. Guru Arjan Dev set a fine personal example by living up to his own lofty ideal of *Brahm Giani*. All his holy utterances are steeped in mind-purifying humility, moving compassion and palpable tenderness. He seeks God's grace for the fulfilment of all kinds of human needs and obligations during workaday existence, including man's psycho-spiritual quest for Divine Communion.

Guru Arjan Dev's *Sukhmani* is a masterpiece of sacred devotional *Bani*. The sense of the title has a beautiful ambiguity which would yield both these meanings: Jewel of Bliss, and Joy of Heart. An extensive text sets forth in twenty-four *Ashtapadis* (8-stanza cantos) the fundamentals of Sikh mysticism, cosmic view of life, devotion, and pragmatic spirituality. Using simple diction, Guru Arjan Dev has sought to make life's spiritual rhythms part of the heart-throbs of a creedless humanity—universally liveable from here to eternity. In stanza after stanza, *Sukhmani* enunciates those principles which were revealed to the holy Gurus in their deep meditations over long spells of inspired surrender of the 'self' to the Primal Presence.

The structure of *Sukhmani* follows a uniform pattern. Each *Ashtapadi* (canto) opens with a *Sloka* (couplet or quatrain) which enunciates the theme of the canto following. Each canto has eight (*Ashtth*) stanzas (*Padas*) of ten lines set in the *Chaupai Chhand* which was commonly employed in mediaeval Hindi-Punjabi religious and philosophical literature for the poetic delineation of profound themes. The language of *Sukhmani* is simple Braj Hindi which, in grammatical idiom, is close to *Khari Boli*, and Punjabi.

Sukhmani's effect on the mind of the dying or the diseased or the grief-stricken has been observed to be miraculous. It is like an inspired lullaby, sung unto universal faith to invoke the Primal Presence that the embodied 'self' may transcend the trying travails and the gnawing conflicts of a life encaged in mortal anxieties.

Guru Arjan Dev has used 24,000 letters in the composition of *Sukhmani's* 24 *Slokas* and 24 *Ashtapadis*, this figure denoting the number of breaths a human being normally takes during the cycle of 24 hours. According to Baba Nand Singh of Nanaksar, a great devotee of Guru Nanak Dev, *Sukhmani Bani* is a formidable force in itself and its intrinsic might a sure safeguard against the evils of *Kaliyuga* (The Iron Age). His prescription is that *Sukhmani* should be recited mentally (not vocally) by keeping the tongue still to invoke the power which Guru Arjan Dev's unique *Bani* possesses. He has further claimed that anyone who follows this prescription and recites each stanza in one breath shall have the breath become part of an eternal life. In



short, there is so much in *Sukhmani* that a seeking devotee can discover for the spiritual emancipation of his mortal life.

Guru Arjan Dev's spiritual revelations are as profound as they are diverse. In an onrush of significant spiritual utterances, he spontaneously unravels the great secrets of creation with a matching felicity of expression, refreshing metaphor, and evocative imagery. Some of the most fascinating dimensions of his inspired outpourings are: psychology, sociology, mysticism, science, and cosmology. Here are a few specimens which should delight the readers. These have been culled from *Sukhmani*.

PSYCHOLOGY

Jab dhaarai kouo bairi meetu
Tab lagu nehchalu naahi cheetu
 So long as man is ensnared by enmity and friendship
 Never can his mind find equipoise or solace

Psychology is the science of the mind (the psyche). The mind is a complex of hopes, memories and fears, which are all relationship of one kind or another. Love and hate are not abstract, but exist in relation to some object or person. The question is not, therefore, whether it is a good relationship or a bad one. The grim truth is that it binds. And it is precisely this human bondage which causes so much misery and suffering to the mortals. Nobody has poeticised this psychological truth better than Guru Arjan Dev.

PHILOSOPHY

Sangi na chaalasi terai dhana
Toon kya laptaavaih moorakh mana
 Worldly wealth shall not accompany thee on the journey beyond
 Why thou art so entranced by it, O my foolish self!

Philosophy literally means love (Phile) of wisdom (Sophia). Guru Arjan Dev has revealed so poetically the plain truth about the futility of man's acquisitive instinct for material possessions!

SOCIOLOGY

Beej mantra sarab ko gyanu
Chauh varna maih japai kouo Namu
 The seed-utterance is available to anyone
 From among the four castes: 'Tis the recitation of the Holy Name

Guru Arjan Dev's concept of social reality is not one of erudite theorising or idle speculation about the elusive equality among people of different endowments. It seeks to bring within the reach of common man the highest that the human mind can conceive and the soul aspire to. It is the Lord God's Holy Name—the ultimate extirpator of all social discrimination.

MYSTICISM

Jab aakaru ihu kachhu na dristeta
Paap pun tab kehte hota
 When no form was visible, at that time
 Who was the author of evil or good?

The twenty-first *Ashtapadi* of *Sukhmani* presents the most remarkable portrayal of what is essential beyond the realm of the visible form: the Abstract Principle of Truth. Matchless is the imagination, incomparable the insight, and beautiful the expression which the Holy Guru has displayed in the poetic delineation of the why, what, where and how of God's enchanting creation. I first discovered the unique charm of this *Ashtapadi* when I was a schoolboy. Even after forty years of familiarity with it, this canto has lost none of its open freshness of a rose blossom, and the same eerie majesty of a star-spangled sky.

SCIENCE

Kayi baar pasriyo paasaar
Sada sada ik Ekankar
Many times the universal expanse has occurred:
 Yet each time at the end (and before)
 Abides the Sole Supreme Being

Astrophysicists and space-scientists are still quarrelling about the origin of the universe and its end in spite of the highly sophisticated instruments which they have invented to decipher the mystery of creation. According to some calculations, the universe must have been created and destroyed three or four times. Guru Arjan Dev's emphasis on "many times" gains a curious significance, more so when one realises that he used no instruments for his scientific observations. The point to appreciate is that an instrument, however ingenious an invention it may be, can never be greater than its inventor—the human mind. The Holy Guru's revelation also brings into focus the common error which all scientists unwittingly commit. They dissociate the 'product' from the 'process' from the 'first cause' for the sake of so-called objectivity of observation. But Guru Arjan Dev never loses sight of the Cause of all causes, the Sole Supreme Being. And, unlike Scientists, he views the universe as an act of instant creation—a spontaneous manifestation of the Unattributed Primal Man—and its dissolution as a similar Divine sport.

COSMOLOGY

Naam ke dhaarei saglei jant
Naam ke dhaarei khand brahmand
 All beings are by the power of the Name sustained
 By the Power of the Name are sustained continents and universe

Guru Arjan Dev has formulated an amazing concept of the cosmos. The word 'Naam' here implies the Divine might which no scientific instrument can ever measure. A scientist's view of the cosmos is limited by the instruments which he uses to observe and measure it. He can thus never transcend the infirmities of the



‘measurable’ to contemplate the mighty power of the ‘immeasurable’. There can be no doubt about the power of the Word. The doubt creeps in when one fails to measure its power. But the fact remains that a whole era can be sustained by the power of a single word. The so-called modern age thrives on the power embodied in the word ‘democracy’. That such a power is irrepressible was recently demonstrated in Romania’s formidable uprising against the political strait-jacket of Communism. Yet if someone wanted to measure that power, would it be possible? No. Not at all. Not because the instruments to measure it have not yet been invented, but because such a power as the collective might of people bent on breaking the shackles of political expediency is, indeed, immeasurable. Considered in this light, Guru Arjan Dev’s cosmology should inspire the seeker to contemplate the essence beyond the object to savour the immeasurable might of the Sole Supreme Being whose Holy Name spells power and power alone: the power that sustains the skies, the continents and the universe.

Containing as it does the *Bani* of Sikh Gurus and of Hindu and Muslim saints, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is a unique Scripture. It is secular in its spirit, cosmopolitan in its outlook, and universal in its vision of an ideal world order. At once timeless and creedless, it addresses itself to the Family of Man as one indivisible community privileged to strive for God-realisation through the Guru’s grace. Its basic tenet is that human life is an endowment for man that he gets after a gruelling cycle of eighty-four lakh births and rebirths in the lower forms of living matter.

Guru Arjan Dev’s magnificent contribution lies in his matchless tolerance to incorporate in the *Adi Granth* the *Bani* even of the so-called low-caste saints like Kabir (a weaver), Ravidas (a cobbler), Sain (a barber), and Sadna (a butcher). Thus, when one pays obeisance to the Holy Book, one also bows to the “lowliest” of God-men in one’s quest for the exaltation of a *Maya*-marooned spirit. Oddly enough, this must have been the reason that *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* became a puzzle for those who had never known a religious book of this kind before. Complaints were, therefore, made to the Mughal Emperor that the Book was derogatory to Islam and other orthodox religions such as Hinduism. When he was travelling through Punjab, Akbar sent for Guru Arjan Dev. The Guru deputed Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas to see the ruler with the *Adi Granth*. The Holy Book was opened at random, and read from a spot pointed out by Akbar. The *Shabad* (hymn) was in praise of the Almighty Father. So were the others which were read out subsequently.

Extremely pleased with the spiritual contents of the Holy Book, Akbar made an offering of fifty-one gold *Mohars* to the *Adi Granth*. He presented to Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas robes of honour, and sent a third one through them for the Guru. Akbar visited Guru Arjan Dev at Goindwal on his way back to Delhi. He partook of food at the *Langar* (community kitchen) and beseeched the Guru to give him spiritual guidance. This was what Babur had exactly done two generations earlier when he called on Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Arjan Dev recited to him the following *Shabad* from the *Adi Granth*.

Someone invokes Rama, another Khuda
 One man worships Gosain, another Allah
 Some speak of the cause of causes
 Others of the Benevolent
 Some talk of the Extender of Mercy
 Others of the Merciful
 Some bathe at the Hindu sacred places
 Others go on pilgrimage to Mecca

*Some perform the Hindu worship
 Others bow their heads in the
 Mohammedan fashion
 Some read the Vedas
 Others the Muslim books
 Some wear white, others blue
 Some call themselves Hindus
 Others Musalmans
 Some aspire to the heaven of the Hindus
 Others to the heaven of the Mohammedans
 But he who recognises God's will, says Nanak
 Knows the secret of the Lord God*

Akbar's successor, Jahangir, who ascended the Mughal throne in 1605, was not as liberal as his father. He had not taken kindly to the Sikh Faith and felt alarmed at its growing influence. In his *Tuzuk* (Memoirs), he wrote: "So many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Muslims, too, had been fascinated by the Guru's ways and teachings ... For many years the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or that he be brought into the fold of Islam."

Detractors of the new-fangled Sikh Faith now had their long-awaited opportunity. Among them was a Hindu official of the Mughal viceroy of Lahore named Chandu Shah. A campaign of slander was started and the Emperor ordered the Guru to be arrested. To quote again from the Emperor's Memoirs: "I fully knew his heresies, and I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with torture."

For five days the Guru was subjected to extreme physical torment. He was seated on red-hot iron plates and burning sand was poured over his person. He was dipped in boiling water. Mian Mir, the Guru's Muslim friend, came to see him and offered to intercede on his behalf. But the Guru forbade him and enjoined him to find peace of God's Will (*Bhana*).

It may be recalled that Mian Mir had earlier been invited by Guru Arjan Dev to lay the foundation-stone for the Golden Temple at Amritsar. The sight of the Guru in a hair-raising condition of barbaric torture was too much for the Muslim Sufi to bear. He is reported to have said that if he had the permission of the Holy Preceptor he would destroy the city of Lahore with his supernatural powers. At this curious lamentation of Mian Mir, as the legend has it Guru Arjan Dev asked him to look at his index finger—which he had raised pointing heavenwards while chanting:

*Tera kiya meetha lagei
 Naam padarath Nanak mangei.
 Thy Sweet will be done, O Lord, and Nanak entreats
 Thee for the gift of Thy Holy Name*

His tormentors escorted Guru Arjan Dev to the Ravi River after they were satisfied that they had inflicted enough torture on the person of the Guru. According to one popular account, when it was decided to wrap



and stitch the holy personage in a cow's raw hide, Guru Arjan Dev himself asked to be taken to the river for a bath. At any rate, a dip in the river's cold water was more than the blistered body could bear. In a state of deep *Naam*-entranced meditation, the Guru breathed his last peacefully—in a strange stillness of prayer to the Sole Supreme Being for having helped him fulfil his life's holy mission. The end, which came on 30 May 1606 actually marked the beginning of a new era in the history of the world—an era of curious insights into dormant powers of the human spirit; an era of enlightened belief that the body perishes only in order to underscore the immortality of man's soul; an era of the grim truth that eternal life is sustained only by the martyrdom of God-intoxicated personages; above all, an era that shall know no end—from here to eternity, for it is steeped in the Infinite Mercy of All Men's Common Father: *The Good Lord God*.

When it is too hot in the year, and anguish of the soul appears as blisters on my mortal frame, something within impels me to remember what had happened of Guru Arjan Dev nearly four hundred years before. I suddenly acquiesce into a state of prayerfulness contemplating the eerie majesty of the Holy Guru's sweet submission to the Divine Will (*Bhana*). Nay, I am delivered into a rebornness of exalted humanity—the matchless grandeur of man's undying spirit whose psycho-spiritual quest is reunion with its Creator: The Sole Supreme Being.

May the grace of Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of Martyrs and the Prophet of Peace, make us strong in the Lord and help us seek and find the sweetness of each dispensation of his sublime *Bhana* despite our frailties that are countless.

Let us resolve on his Martyrdom Day to learn from the unique example of Guru Arjan Dev the time-honoured virtue of sacrifice in the pursuit of higher life which the Fifth Master has so graciously placed within the reach of every earnest seeker of truth.

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Satta and Balwand were court poets in the service of Guru Arjan Dev who after having held this prestigious position for a very long time became vainglorious thinking the distinguished recognition of *Guru-Ghar* [Abode of the Spiritual Preceptor] was due to their hymn-singing without which it would be deserted by the devotees [*Sangat*]. They uttered some sacrilegious words against Guru Nanak's mission and left in a burst of rage against the Guru's counselling and attempts at reconciliation. However, afterwards they faced many hardships, suffered ailments, and became bankrupt until the benevolent guru pardoned them on the intervention of Bhai Lagha. Subsequently on their reinstatement both brothers sang *Vaars* in praise of all the Gurus beginning with Guru Nanak. These Bhattas were staunch Brahmins whose lineage could be traced to Pahoiye on the banks of River Saraswati from which they drew their surname "Saraswat" Brahmins known for their biding interest in learning and erudition. *Swaiyyas* [poetic genre] composed by the Bhattas eulogise the first five Gurus. Six Bhattas have composed 22 *Swaiyyas* showering praises on Guru Amar Das which have been incorporated in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Note: This article was published in The Sunday Tribune in mid-1980s, and I dedicated it to my father, Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti [03 January 1905 – 18 September 1993], who initiated my spiritual quest even when I was a mere schoolboy distracted by adolescent distractions which he dispersed with his faith, love, and light. He was a self-taught professional of amazing versatility: architect, artist, and sculptor, wood carver, well versed in Indian Classical Music, wrestler, and an adept political analyst with an uncanny foresight that seldom failed. He had retired from Medical College Amritsar, and was a pioneer medical artist of India. Two historic Sikh Gurdwaras were designed by him: Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hassan Abdal (now in Pakistan) and Takht Sri Kesgarh, Anandpur Sahib in Punjab.

The kind of intelligence that God ordains

The beneficiary receives his inner light
 But yet He himself out of reach remains
 The Immutable Creator in mystic delight
 [Guru Arjan Dev]

A SELECTION OF ASHTPADIS FROM SUKHMANI SAHIB

I have attempted the rendering in English poetry of a few *Ashtapadis* from Sukhmani Sahib. I feel blessed to share them with you.

First Ashtapadi; Pauri-1

By repeated remembrance of the Lord find tranquillity
 Worry and anguish shall be dispelled from your body
 Remember Him in praise; He pervades the Universe
 His Name is chanted variously by devotees countless
 Vedas, Puranas and Smritis—all of them are sanctified
 When to their contents Lord's Holy Name is applied
 He who has lodged Him in his soul even a wee bit
 O what glory possesses he; it is hard to describe it
 Those who yearn only for a fleeting glimpse of Thine
 Nanak: I cannot describe their glory with power mine

Second Ashtapadi; Pauri-1

Where mother, father, children, friends nor siblings are by your side
 There with you, O my mind, only the Holy Name shall abide
 Where Death's horrible Messenger threatens to crush you
 Only the Lord God's Holy Name shall accompany you
 Where there are many obstacles of enormous mass
 There the Lord's Name alone shall ferry you across
 Even by countless good deeds you could not be saved
 Your countless sins would by Lord's Name be removed
 O my mind, chant *Naam* by the Guru's grace
 Nanak: Earn joys aplenty and proceed apace



Sixteenth Ashtapadi; Pauri-5

The *Naam* is the Support of all creatures as get reported
 By the *Naam* are the earth and solar systems supported
 By the Naam's support Smritis, Vedas, and Puranas continue to exist
 By the Naam's support knowledge, meditation, and listening persist
 The skies and the nether worlds are propped up Naam
 The *Naam*, indeed, supports many a world and realm
 The Naam supports towns and regions of the universe
 One invokes Naam by listening and gets ferried across
 By Naam's grace God draws the devotee to His station
 Nanak, reaching the fourth state, they attain salvation

•

TU THAKUR TUM PAI ARDAAS

You're our Lord, to you we always pray
 This body and soul are your outlay
 You're our parents; we your progeny
 In your grace there are joys aplenty
 No one knows the extent of your being
 Higher than the highest is God beyond seeing
 The world is held together by your power thread
 Your will dispenses people's butter 'n' bread
 You alone know your state's price
 Nanak, your servant, is a perpetual sacrifice
 Tuesday: 10 January 2017; 8:50 p.m.







GURU HAR GOBIND

Unmatched Harbinger of Spiritual-Temporal Holism

[Monday, 19 June 1595 - Saturday, 19 March 1644]

Writing on Guru Har Gobind Sahib and his epoch-making contribution to the development of *Sikhi* [Punjabi name for the Sikh Faith] requires an extended introduction to pin down its historic grandeur and perennial significance. The Sikh Faith built on the sound footing of Guru Nanak Dev's *Revelation* is a class apart from World Religions.

It is not only the youngest religion of the world but also holistic and humanist. It couldn't have been born earlier because the historical conditions did not require or permit its genesis before the fifteenth century which, curiously enough, is marked by two landmark events in the world – Renaissance in the West and *Bhakti* Movement in India.

Conflict between Spirituality and Materiality: At the advent of Guru Nanak Dev [1469-1539 CE] fundamental facts and ingredients of life were frozen in separate categories, so much so that 'spirituality' was sought by denying 'materiality'. We in India are quite familiar with the much-applauded traditional division of life into four *Ashramas*: Brahmacharya (student), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (retirement) and Sanyasa (renunciation). Guru Nanak Dev dedicated his entire life

remedying this malaise, which had created schizophrenics. He sought to do so by his personal example through heart-to-heart dialogues with the commoners and the clergy across India and abroad.

“SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB” – THE LIVING GURU

Guru Nanak Dev has recorded his *Revelation* in 974 hymns [*Dhur ki Bani*] which have been included in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [The Sikh Bible]. The Guru’s revelation is at variance with the spirit of other faiths in a fundamental way. In his *Shabd*s he is merely describing what, according to his own confession, he is being shown by the Merciful Father, Lord God, and *not* creating a new metaphysics. By his reiterative assertion he underscores the perennial virtue of ‘Humility’ which he has made the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith.

Sacrifice as Covenant of Divine Love: “*Jau tau prem kheilan ka chao, sir, dhar tali gali meri aao*” is Guru Nanak Dev’s exhortation that places on the devotee a premium no less than the sacrifice of his life as a test of his claims of devotion. The Sikh Gurus as well as innumerable Sikh devotees thus inspired set by their own willing martyrdom historic examples worthy of emulation.

Guru Nanak Dev’s Fearlessness: Guru Nanak Dev has mentioned “*Nirbhau, Nirvair*” as two, among illimitable, inalienable attributes of “*Karta Purakh*” [The Creator Lord] mentioned in the *Mool Mantra* [Seed Proclamation] of *Japuji*. These two attributes are inseparably interrelated and have psycho-spiritual significance not yet properly grasped by scholars of various genres. *Fearlessness* is the chief constituent of man’s moral fibre by which he becomes a “*Gurmukh*” [Guru-Ward Oriented Human Being]. The seeming fearlessness exhibited by the egotist [“*Manmukh*” or Mind-Ward Oriented Man] is at best foolhardiness with its attendant dread and desperation. A *Gurmukh*’s fearlessness is an imperturbable composure architected by wholesomeness in which his Body, Mind, and Soul have found their original alignment. It is this fearlessness that was demonstrated by Guru Nanak Dev when he pronounced Babur [Lion] as “*Jaabir*” [Tyrant] in public, and it was this fearlessness that was admirably carried forward by his successors in its unalloyed form as should be clear from the following accounts.

GURU HAR GOBIND AS A LIVING EXAMPLE OF “NIRBHAU”-“NIRVAIR”

Guru Har Gobind was a living example of Guru Nanak Dev’s *Revelation* to have fully imbibed the attribute that God is “*Nirvair*” [without animosity]. It means that only the “fearless” can ever be “*Nirvair*” because by instinct they take up the gauntlet only in self-defence against unprovoked threats. Guru Nanak Dev’s *Mool Mantra* is thus not a philosophic averment or creedal statement for debate or discourse or dissent. It is a divine primer which tells you that a true Sikh would spontaneously imbibe these attributes of God when chanting His Holy Name becomes a habit of the mind. However, this happens only when He presents this most precious gift to the devotee as “*Gurprasad*”, grace as sacrament of the spiritual preceptor. The word “grace” which has the Arabic word “*Rehmat*” as its equivalent means “the underserved mercy of God”. That is what makes God’s Will truly inscrutable: “*Kiv sahchi-aaraa ho-ee-ai kiv koorhai tutai paal/Hukam raja-ee chalnaa naanak likkhi-aa naal*” [How, then, to be Truthful, this guile! How smash it?/Nanak, “Submission to His Edict-Fiat Who’s Master of His Will”/Is the inviolable Divine Writ/The one Revealed in Original]

HUMILITY AS SPIRITUALLY CLEANSED RECEPTACLE OF GRACE

“Submission to God’s Edict-Fiat” highlighted above comes only from an unconditional practice of “Humility”. Like his predecessors Har Gobind, installed as Guru at the tender age of 11, became *fearless* and thus *free*

from animosity. This is clearly shown by Guru Har Gobind's historic example of having befriended Emperor Jahangir despite the tragic fact that it was on his imperial order that his father Guru Arjan Dev had been tortured to death.

FEARLESSNESS IS UNARMoured SPIRITUAL MIGHT

America is the best modern example to illustrate the solemn fact that without being fearless in the first place you can never be free from animosity. If America were a truly superpower it should be *fearless* and thus *free from animosity* but its erratic behaviour in international relations shows it off as a fear-afflicted bully. Scared in the heart of hearts it is pumping more and more money into its army budget. Situated at a distance of 10,337 kilometres from North Korea, America yet dreads the former's ability to hit its mainland by ballistic missiles.

Allama Iqbal [I regard him to be the greatest poet of all time] has expressed this sublime idea in a matchless beautiful couplet.

Kafir hai to shamsheer pe karta hai bharosa
Momin hai to be-tegh bhi larhta hai sipahi
 The infidel banks on the sword's power for the fight
 The believer fights unarmed on the Holy Word's might

After the death of Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, his son Humayun succeeded him, but he was soon ousted by Sher Shah. He ran for his life back to Kabul. On his way he went to Khadur to seek Guru Angad Dev's blessing. When Humayun reached the house, Guru Angad was saying his prayers, and did not notice the royal visitor's presence. Thus in a fit of anger, he drew out his sword to attack the Guru. Seeing what the king was about to do, the Guru smiled and said, "You are brave enough to draw your sword to kill or frighten peace-loving people. Why didn't you use it in the battlefield, from which you have come running like a coward? Your sword did not work where it should have worked, but now suddenly you seem to have become a brave fighter?" Humayun felt ashamed, and beseeched the Guru's pardon. "I am very sorry, Sir," he said, "I really lost my head due to your inattention. You know that Guru Nanak Dev was so gracious as to bless my father, Babur, who eventually became the king of Delhi."

GURU KA LANGAR: So integral is the principle of *Guru Ka Langar* in Sikh socio-spiritual services that even Emperor Akbar on visiting the Third Master Guru Amar Das had to first sit and partake of food in *Pangat* lined up with commoners sharing simple foods cooked by the Sikhs who months before might have hailed from any of India's condemnable castes. The *langar* started by Guru Nanak Dev was a truly revolutionary idea that by its intrinsic spiritual potency sought to demolish Brahmanical notions of genetic supremacy to divide the country's populace into rigid castes purported to have divine sanction. Akbar was so impressed by the service rendered by the community kitchen to all people regardless of their religions that he offered a large *Jagir* as a contribution to its maintenance.

When President Nasser of Egypt visited the Golden Temple he was so touched to see so many Kashmiri Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs sitting together on floor mats to eat in the *langar* that his party left all the money they were carrying with them as a contribution to the running of the community kitchen.



Prince of Martyrs: Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of Martyrs, breathed his last on 30 May 1606 at Lahore after prolonged torture of the most barbaric kind perpetrated on him on the orders of the bigoted Mughal Emperor Jahangir. His martyrdom was a living, if unsettling, testimony to the invincible power of Guru Nanak Dev's revelation that was recorded in black and white for the emancipation of future generations of the entire world. The Fifth Master's unprecedented sacrifice was a living affirmation in divine dispensation as God's Edict-Fiat that Guru Nanak Dev exhorted all Sikhs to accept, abide by, uphold, and extol by personal example—even at the cost of their lives.

Validation of Faith by Personal Example: Guru Arjan Dev validated how this esoteric “Game of Love” ought to be accomplished as an ultimate act of willing martyrdom when he made his now-famous historic proclamation “*Tera kiya meettha laagey, Naam padaarath Nanak maangey*”. Right from his early childhood Guru Arjan Dev was a serene and prodigious child of healthy body. One day while playing he reached the quarters of Guru Amar Das and tried to climb on to his bed but Mata Bhani stopped him from doing so. Meanwhile, Guru Amardas arrived there and said, “Son, you want to take my place right away? This you may get only when the time will be ripe for it.” He then picked him up with affection and said, “*Dohita bani ka bohitha*” [My grandson (daughter's son) is the one who will spread the wisdom of *Gurbani*].

GURU HAR GOBIND

Guru Har Gobind, the Sixth Master of the Sikh Faith, was born to Guru Arjan Dev and Mata Ganga on Thursday, 19 June 1595, at Guru Ki Vadali, near Amritsar, in Punjab province. When he was growing up relations between the rulers and the Sikhs were strained. Mughal Emperor Jahangir had Guru Arjan Dev arrested and brutally tortured when Har Gobind was a young boy of 11. Foresightedly, however, Guru Arjan Dev entrusted his spiritual education and martial training to Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha, respectively.

Guru Har Gobind was married at Baba Bakala in district Amritsar. He had vast areas of land there where a Gurdwara and Baoli (stepped well) stand in his memory. Before Guru Arjan Dev left for the site of martyrdom on the bank of River Ravi, he instructed his only son in these words, “Protection of the faith now lies in the wielding of arms until the tyrants are completely extirpated.” He thus succeeded his father and became the Sixth Master of the Sikhs as Guru Har Gobind at the tender age of 11. However, his early life was far from peaceful. As a child, Guru Har Gobind had escaped being poisoned by his uncle, and from the bite of a cobra thrown in his way. He also survived a virulent attack of smallpox, and grew up to be a tall, well-built, handsome youth.

Investiture Ceremony: After the Martyrdom of his father, Guru Har Gobind instructed Baba Buddha, who had been appointed Head Priest of Sri Darbar Sahib at Amritsar by Guru Arjan Dev, to read the *Adi Granth* [Primal Book] and the *Raagis* [baptised musicians of the holy shrine] to sing *Shabdas* [hymns from the Holy Book]. The ceremony lasted for ten days, and after the final rites had been performed, the investiture ceremony was begun. Baba Buddha placed before Har Gobind the traditional *Saili* [Ribbon of Renunciation] that originally Nanak had worn it, and then given it to his spiritual successor Angad. From him it had been passed on to Guru Arjan Dev through Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das. Har Gobind saluted the *Saili* but put it aside and told the aged savant to give him two swords to wear as emblems of Spiritual and Temporal authority—*Piri* and *Miri*—that combined *Bhakti* [Devotion] with *Shakti* [Power].

INJUNCTION FOR HIS FOLLOWERS

He told his followers: “In the Guru’s house, spiritual and temporal powers shall be combined. My rosary shall be the sword-belt and on my turban I shall wear a *Kalgi*”. The *Kalgi* [plume] was regarded as an ornament for the turban which was worn by the Mughal and Hindu rulers of the era as a token of regal honour. The subjects under the Mughal rule, regardless of their social status, were forbidden horse-riding and the wearing of turban with a *Kalgi*. However, when bestowed with *Guruship*, the Sixth Master ordered all his disciples to wear swords, to keep horses, and to make arms because he was determined to take them through an ordeal of blood and fire conceding to their own wishes. Thus when the command went forth, the Sikhs were already prepared, and began bringing offerings of arms—arrows and swords and shields and bows to the Guru. He encouraged wrestling, fencing, horse riding, hunting of wild animals, and other martial sports among the Sikhs. He persisted in driving home the fact that exhibiting moral weakness was a sin—and to stand up to fight oppression and tyranny was an exalted virtue. Whatever he himself did and exhorted his disciples also to follow suit was a vivid, if subtle, challenge to the Imperial might that sought to crush dissent and personal liberty of all non-Muslim subjects.

MIRI-PIRI – AN UPDATE OF DEGH-TEGH

It should now be easy to appreciate that the concept of “*Miri-Piri*” was an update of the proclamation “*Degh* [Cauldron] *Tegh* [Sword]” that was prevalent during the time of the first five Gurus of Sikhi to befittingly meet the challenges of the changed politico-historical and socio-cultural milieu. Practical application of *meditation* in tandem with *martial arts* for the promotion of “*Miri-Piri*” was accomplished by Guru Har Gobind in the building of *Akaal Takht* [Throne of the Timeless Lord] on the premises of *Sri Darbar Sahib* [Court of Lord God], respectively, as the seat of temporal might as a logical extension of spiritual power. As a constant reminder of this new psycho-spiritual dispensation he had two *Nishan Sahibs*—unmistakable emblems of Sikhi—installed on the site.

Many readers or devotees may not know what I have pointed out in my third doctorate on “*SRI HARMANDAR SAHIB – Architecture, Engineering, and Aesthetics*” [Panjab University, 2008] that from the *Akaal Takht* where Guru Har Gobind dispensed justice in exercise of the temporal power [*Miri*], the Golden Temple, the holiest of holy shrine of the Sikh Faith, is clearly visible, but when you are in the *sanctum sanctorum* [the seat of spiritual power or *Piri*] you cannot see the seat of temporal might. There is an awesome significance of this little-known fact: Justice cannot be done and dispensed aright if you lose sight of spiritual reality but in the realm of the spirit the temporal might is subsumed in the unicity and self-sufficiency of Lord God who, according to Guru Nanak Dev, is “*Saacha Sahib(u) saach(u) naaye bhaakhyia bhaaou apaar(u) - Japuji*” [True is the Lord, true His justice (because) infinite love is His language].

AKAAL TAKHT – ARCHITECTURAL SYMBOL OF MIRI-PIRI

The construction of the *Akaal Takht* opposite *Sri Darbar Sahib* was an additional challenge, this time direct though subsumed in architectural design, to the tyrannical Mughal rulers of Delhi. Guru Har Gobind seated on the *Akaal Takht* would hear pleas and supplications of the commoners and dispense justice, not merely administer law. In his newfound role he soon became popularly known as *Sachcha Paatshaah* or the True King. He also issued from the *Akaal Takht* many *Hukamnamas* [Originally, Guru’s Written Orders; now in *Shabda* read as part of *Ardaas* or Sikh Prayer] Commands sent to the Sikhs; subsequently to all his devotees.



He wrote *Vars* or ballads of heroism which were sung by the *Dhaadis* [balladeers] to the accompaniment of *Sarangi* [Indian classical music stringed instrument]. Guru Har Gobind employed two Muslim bards Natha and Abdullah to sing his compositions standing at the entrance to the *Akaal Takht* with a view to infusing heroic spirit into Sikh congregations.

First Seat of Temporal Power: The Akaal Takht was the first Takht to be established in the history of Sikhi. This sanctified place continues to the present day to be the centre of all socio-political deliberations, and is an established nucleus of the community's power. According to Cunningham, "The genial disposition of the martial apostle led him to rejoice in the companionship of a camp, in the dangers of war, and in the excitements of the chase." With the light of the spirit revealed by Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Har Gobind melded the lustre of the sword—creating a compelling combination of *Shaant* and *Veer Rasas*, which, according to ancient Indian theory of aesthetics, are flavours of imperturbable Pacificism and Dauntless Heroism, respectively. He deployed the power of worship in tandem with the might of the warfare to fight the menace of Mughal oppression and tyranny. He was also the inventor of the musical instrument *Taaos* [Arabic word for peacock]. One day watching a peacock entranced in song and dance, he wished to make an instrument to mimic the sound of the charming bird, thus creating the *Taaos*. The instrument is thus an audio-visual reproduction of the voice-and-form of peacock which is a bird of the pheasant kind.

Bhai Gurdas whose sacred literature was blessed by Guru Arjan Dev as the "key" to *Guru Granth Sahib* has appreciatively portrayed Guru Har Gobind in one of his *Vars* thus: "The five gurus, namely, Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, and Guru Arjan Dev were blessed with fullness of truth, contentment, compassion, righteousness, and patience. The Sixth Master, Guru Har Gobind was a Great Guru. Guru Arjan Dev infused his light into the persona of Har Gobind whereby the Sodhis' dynasty flourished. The great warrior-guru fearless and benevolent spiritual preceptor as he was became the punisher of all tyrants."

Tenets of the Sikh Faith: The basics tenets of the Sikh Faith had been well defined by its founder Guru Nanak Dev. The groundwork for its propagation was conscientiously done by his three immediate successors: Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, and Guru Ram Das. The Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith Guru Arjan Dev furthered the mission of putting it on a solid footing. As ordained by his predecessors, Guru Nanak Dev through Guru Ram Das, he accomplished the gigantic task of building Sri Harmandar Sahib [another traditional name for the Golden Temple] where his father Guru Ram Das had constructed a clay tank of nectar [*Amrit Sarovar*]. In the letter and spirit of Guru Nanak Dev's revelatory proclamation that "I am neither Hindu, nor Muslim...", Guru Arjan Dev invited Mian Mir, a Muslim Saint from Lahore, to lay the foundation-stone of the holy shrine, which is now the sixth most favourite site for tourists and pilgrims from India and abroad. The doors on all four sides of the building signified its acceptance of all the four castes and every religion. Contrary to the requests of the congregation, the floor of Sri Harmandar Sahib was kept lower than the surrounding area as a pragmatic metaphor for "as water flows downward so would God's blessings for the seekers of truth." Concurrent with the construction of the holiest of holy shrine of Sikhi was the making of the City of Amritsar with its spiritual status, civic amenities, and public gaiety. I call it the Vatican City of the Sikh Faith.

Many Communities United: Members of many Punjabi tribes such as Khatri, Jatt, Rajput, Tarkhaan, Chamaar, Arora, Kamboj, Saini, etc. mainly from Hinduism and a few also from Islam readily converted to Sikhi. Due to the Sikh Faith's universal-timeless message and its enormous popularity, even Muslim *pirs* became followers

of Guru Arjan Dev, and even Hindu saints, yogis, siddhas became Sikhs. For the first time the new-fangled religion became the prominent and popular faith of mediaeval Punjab, notably, Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and Nakka regions.

Habitats Founded: During his period Guru Har Gobind founded many villages, towns and cities, and constructed numerous wells in the Punjab region. Peace and prosperity once again returned to this historic province. However, although the masses living in Punjab were happy with this development yet the Mughal rulers in Delhi felt progressively insecure, threatened, and perturbed.

How the Gurus dealt with Jealousy: Along with the Five Inner Foes: Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, and Pride, Jealousy is a perennial enemy of Man that does not let him grow into a human being. Its presence is so ubiquitous that even the households of the Sikh Gurus were not free from it. Two examples should suffice to show how the Gurus who were innocent victims of it survived its fatal attacks. Datu, one of Guru Angad Dev's sons, proclaimed himself as Guru at Khadur, and proceeded to Goindwal to confront Guru Amar Das whom the Second Master had made his successor. Burning with jealousy he kicked Guru Amar Das so hard that he fell off the platform on which he was seated. However, the victim's reaction was disarming. Rather than say anything harsh in anger, he started caressing Datu's foot saying, "My bones are hardened with age and must have hurt you!"

Other Factors that Compelled Use of Armoury: Among several factors other than Guru Arjan Dev's execution that led Guru Har Gobind to take to the sword was the unfair trouble caused by Baba Prithi Chand (1558-1618 CE). He was the eldest son of Guru Ram Das (1534-81) and Mata Bhani born in 1558 at Goindwal. Disappointed by his haughty nature, Guru Ram Das chose his youngest son Arjan (1563-1606 CE) as his successor. His second son Mahadev had become an ascetic. Angered and jealous Prithia tried everything to harm Guru Arjan. The birth of his son in 1595 aggravated Prithia's hostilities and he hatched conspiracies to get the baby Har Gobind poisoned. When this plot failed he established a separate sect at Hehar, the native village of his wife. He also spread his influence in the Malwa region where he founded a village named *Kottha Guru*.

Another Trick: Prithi Chand tried another trick. He misled the Sikhs by composing hymns in the name of Guru Nanak. As noted before, there was an atmosphere of perturbation due to a haunting sense of insecurity of the Mughal rulers at Delhi. Therefore, when he was repeatedly unsuccessful, Prithia instigated Sulhi Khan, a Mughal commander, to lead a force against Guru Arjan. It suited Sulhi Khan and the conspiracy of the Guru's internal enemy preyed upon his mind so much that he took up arms against him without any provocation whatsoever. He was, however, accidentally burnt alive in a brick kiln before he could attack the Guru. Prithi Chand thus became evermore desperate and joined the detractors of the Sikh Faith who frequently carried complaints against the Guru to the Mughal officials at Lahore and even to Prince Salim. It was Prince Salim who, after accession to the throne as Mughal Emperor Jahangir, had ordered the execution of Guru Arjan in 1606. The Sikhs derisively called Prithi Chand and his followers "Minas" (literally, hypocrites). Prithia died at Hehar in April 1618.

Sulhi Khan's Pitiably Perishing: Prithi Chand sought to intimidate and discredit Guru Arjan Dev by forging an alliance with the Government functionaries hoping that the official intervention would force Guru Arjan Dev to make room for his elder brother. Tyranny and oppression were to be let loose. Prithi Chand approached



his patron Sulhi Khan, who readily agreed to demand a rich tribute from Guru Arjan Dev and also to indulge in an orgy of loot and plunder to strike terror in the Guru's heart. Guru Arjan Dev has shared the impending disaster with his Sikhs who put their heads together to evolve a strategy so as to frustrate the danger. In a hymn composed in *Rag Asa* (*Adi Granth*, p. 371), he recounts various suggestions put forth by his disciples. Someone suggested that a letter should be sent to the tyrant requesting him therein to desist from such a course. One proposal recommended sending a delegation for advising him to see reason. Still another suggestion called for patience and restraint. Guru Arjan Dev listened to all but relied on Lord's grace for protection and safety. This was obviously done to inculcate self-confidence among the Sikhs and to reinforce their trust in divine dispensation.

However, the Guru *finally* prayed to God for help and Sulhi Khan died in fire which is considered an unclean end for a Muslim. Sulhi Khan and his horse were burnt alive when the frightened horse along with the rider rushed into a burning brick-kiln. The holy city of Amritsar providentially escaped the painful experience of vandalism contemplated by the impious deceased. Guru Arjan Dev mentions this incident in one of the hymns and thanks God for providing deliverance and relief from the disaster called Sulhi Khan. "The Lord eliminated the evil called Sulhi Khan. Nothing could abide with him – his progeny, friends, and wealth. Leaving behind his brothers and relations, he was reduced to dust."

GURU HAR GOBIND'S ORDER TO THE MASANDS

The Guru issued an order to the *Masands* that he would be pleased with those who brought offerings of arms and horses instead of money. A *Masand* was a representative and collector of tithe in Sikhi. He was an officially appointed missionary minister representing the Sikh Guru, who baptised converts to Sikhi, and collected *Daswandh* ("one-tenth" of one's income, or tithe) as an offering to the Sikh community and religious establishment. A *Masand* forwarded the collected money to the Sikh Guru. The building of the Akaal Takht on a high platform was a symbolic reminder that a Sikh present there should not forget that spiritual height warranted the discharge of his mandatory social obligations.

Apotheosis of "Saint-Soldiers": Guru Har Gobind wanted his followers to be "Saint-Soldiers", persons of high self-culture, incorruptible morality, spiritual exaltation; above all, ever ready to measure swords with demoniacal forces. Baba Buddha on seeing the Guru in military harness politely remonstrated with him. Guru Har Gobind was forthright: "In the Guru's house religion and worldly enjoyment shall be combined - the cauldron to feed the poor and the needy, and the scimitar to smite the oppressors." Several warriors and wrestlers came to the Guru for service. He enrolled fifty-two heroes as his bodyguards and this security staff formed the nucleus of his future.

Painde Khan's Treachery: With the Imperial hordes continually hunting the Guru, Painde Khan, once his trusted general, abandoned him only to reappear as leader of the Mughal army. He uttered profane words on encountering the Master who calmly replied, "Painde Khan, why use foul words when you are armoured; I give you the freedom to strike first to vent your wrath?" When he missed two attacks Painde Khan grew angry and desperate and furiously dealt a deadly blow that the Guru successfully parried and, in return, struck his own under which the treacherous Khan fell. As he lay dying, he repented his disloyalty. The Guru took him in his arms, and readmitted him to grace. However, Painde Khan's death is a pathetic episode in Guru Har Gobind's life.

CHANDU SHAH – THE UNPROVOKED ENEMY

Emperor Jahangir was regularly informed of the dare-devil deeds of the Guru. Chandu Shah, the arch-enemy of the Sacred House, sped up his campaign of slander and hatred to convince the powers-that-be that the fast-building evidence was symptomatic of the Guru's mood for rebellion. Guru Arjan Dev's refusal to pay the fine imposed on him was remembered, and Guru Har Gobind was at last summoned by the Emperor to Delhi. After careful consideration the Guru agreed to go to Delhi and assigned the secular duties of Sri Harmandar Sahib to Baba Buddha and its spiritual duties to Bhai Gurdas.

Holy Shrine's Sacrosanctity Preserved: He instructed, "The Harmandar is spiritually dedicated to God's service, wherefore it should forever be revered. It should never be defiled with any impurity of the human body. No gambling, wine-drinking, sensual behaviour with women, or slander, should be allowed therein. Then he came, and saw, and conquered Delhi by the dint of his God-gifted spiritual majesty and charming persona. He began living in Delhi as the Emperor's guest. Whenever Jahangir went out on hunting sprees, there was a separate tent and camping ground for the Guru. Those who object to the Guru's royal dress and love of hunting should remember that this was his demonstration of the concept of *Miri-Piri* as Pragmatic Spirituality—supported by physical workouts.

When it was time for Jahangir to visit Agra he invited the Guru to accompany him. He consented to go only after repeated persuasion. When they both arrived in Agra, the Guru was received with great rejoicing by the people. Seeing increasing friendship between the Emperor and the Guru, Chandu said to himself, "The Guru will take revenge on me whenever he finds an opportunity. I shall only be safe if by some means I succeed in breaking this friendship, or better having him imprisoned, and so shall I direct all my efforts to achieve that end."

Swami Ramdas Samrath: While visiting Srinagar the Guru had a discourse with Swami Ramdas Samrath, a great spiritual teacher who would later go on to coach **Shivaji**, the founder of the Maratha Empire. Swami Ramdas asked the Guru, "*You are seated on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak, a great Saint. You are wearing arms and maintain troops and horses. You allow yourself to be addressed as Sachcha Padshah, the True King. What sort of a saint are you?*" Guru Har Gobind replied, "*I display royalty only from the outside; inwardly, I'm detached like a hermit. Guru Nanak had not renounced the world. He had only renounced Maya (illusion and ego).*" **The Swami was impressed with the idea and changing his teachings based on Hindu renunciation he trained Shivaji on the *Miri-Piri* Principle.**

Jahangir Saved from Lion's Attack: Once when Guru Har Gobind was hunting with Emperor Jahangir they stopped to spend the night at Bhamtipura village. The latter was requested by the villagers to save them from a lion that had turned a man-eater. On the following day when musket men were trying to drive the lion towards the hunting party, the beast suddenly charged head-on at the Emperor. Jahangir and his soldiers fired their guns and arrows at the charging beast, but to no avail. The lion was almost upon the emperor when Guru Har Gobind jumped between Jahangir, raised his shield and deflected the lion's charge to the side, as he brought his sword down that cut up the beast in two. Jahangir began admiring the Guru for having saved his life. **In an aura of sudden illumination he realised that not only did Guru Har Gobind possess spiritual strength but was physically powerful also.**



Bandi Chhod: This episode led Jahangir to release the Guru from unfair imprisonment at Gwalior where on his insistence the emperor had to set free 52 Rajas with him. This earned him the famous title of *Bandi Chhod* [Liberator of the Bondaged]. Guru Har Gobind fought five defensive battles in his lifetime against Mughal chieftains and won all of them. His war strategy was to challenge the Mughal Generals and fight with them directly so as to avoid bloodshed of the masses. Even then many brave Sikhs and Mughal soldiers were killed because no General wanted to face the Guru alone. The battles fought by the Guru are: Battle of Amritsar; Har Gobindpura [original name, Ruhela]; Gurusar; Kartarpur; and Kiratpur. Gurdwara Dam-Dama Sahib was built by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia to commemorate the place where Guru Har Gobind had rested after winning the Battle of Har Gobindpura.

Longest Guruship: Guru Har Gobind had the longest tenure as Guru, lasting 37 years, 9 months and 3 days. His lifetime achievement was the laying of sound foundation for transformation of the Sikhs into “Saint-Soldiers”. In reply to the four questions of Jahangir, disciple of Hazrat Shah Ruknuddin Tola, Guru Har Gobind had said: (1) The woman is the honour of a man; (2) A son is the mark of a man; (3) Money is transient; and (4) A sage is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim.

Crucial Link in the Chain of Succession: Guru Har Gobind’s life and work provides a crucial link in the succession of Guruship beginning with Guru Nanak Dev and ending with Guru Gobind Singh. With unparalleled foresight and divine wisdom the Tenth Master declared *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as the “Living Guru” thus ending the lineage of human Gurus. “The Guru’s spirit,” he said, “will henceforth dwell in the Granth and the Khalsa. Where the Granth is with any five Sikhs representing the Khalsa, there the Guru will be.” The Word enshrined in the Holy Book was always revered above everything else by the Gurus and the Sikhs alike as of divine origin. It was thus only through the Revealed Word that Guruship could be made everlasting as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh.

The Upshot: Standing at Number Six among 11 Gurus [the last and everlasting being *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*] Guru Har Gobind represents the spiritual pivot around which the Sikh Faith revolves. His father’s martyrdom was a historic testimony to Guru Nanak Dev’s injunction “*Jau kau prem khelan ka chao...*” and an un rebuttable episode that spiritual might hinging its operation exclusively on Pacificism does not work and by an inner “divine right” must be clubbed with temporal power. It is an irony of history that just as his father Guru Arjan Dev willingly embraced martyrdom, his son Guru Tegh Bahadar in the future would follow in the footsteps of his grandfather to defend Hinduism by laying down his life.

An All-Encompassing Life: Guru Har Gobind’s contribution is not thus confined to the Sikh Faith founded by Guru Nanak Dev. It was the historic rejuvenation of somnambulant Hinduism that had permitted the country’s enslavement by its own self-induced schizophrenia. Iqbal who, in my considered opinion, is the greatest poet of all time, extolled Guru Nanak Dev’s advent sky high in his poem on the holy personage:

“*Phir utthi aakhir sadaa tauheed ki Punjab se
Hind ko ik mard-i-kaamil ne jagaaya khwaab se*”
At last from Punjab arose again the Voice of Monotheism
A Perfect Man awakened India from her somnambulism

Consummation of Guru Nanak Dev's Faith: In Guru Har Gobind's life and work were encapsulated all that was true and eternal until his death besides nursing the young plant of the Sikh Faith until its future blossom in the birth of the Khalsa, with Guru Gobind Singh declaring Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru. Its culmination was the making of history the like of which does not exist in the annals of humankind especially in its consummation in the decimation of the Mughal Empire whose unbridled tyranny and mass-scale killings and conversions would have turned Bharat into a theocratic Islamic State by relegating it to a mere chapter in history books.

Truth's Ultimate Triumph: Guru Har Gobind's life is a convincing testimony of the fact that unconditional and unshakable faith in Lord God's Will and Edict-Fiat makes its beneficiaries absolutely fearless and inviolably free from animosity by virtue of which the Gurus themselves gained complete control over Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Pride, and Jealousy. Holistic Humanism that was born with the advent of Guru Nanak Dev became Pragmatic Spirituality and attained an amazing altitude of glory and magnificence at the hands of Guru Har Gobind. It was this all-important take-off point from which the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh would eventually transform the Sikhs [simple saints] into Singhs [valiant warriors] to "Saint-Soldiers" to scale the highest heaven without disconnecting their soul-consciousness from God-remembrance or loosening their faith's grip from off the lap of Mother Earth. His was a phenomenal life the like of which does not exist in world's recorded history.







GURU HAR RAI

Founder of Ayurvedic Herbal Medicines Hospital

[Thursday, 31 January 1630 - Thursday, 06 October 1661]

Seventh of the Ten Masters of the Sikh Faith, Guru Har Rai was born to Baba Gurditta and Mata Nihaal Kaur at Kiratpur Sahib founded by his grandfather Guru Har Gobind, on 31 January 1630. He was the fourth one in the Sodhi lineage of Guruship that had begun with Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master. He grew up to be a very soft-hearted boy. Once when he was on a walk with his grandfather his robe was caught in a rose bush as a result of which a few roses were snapped off from their stems. He became so distressed at the sight of the fallen flowers that he started crying whereupon Guru Har Gobind advised him to be careful to avoid harm to plant life.

Extending the tradition founded by his grandfather whose favourite he was and who gave him the name “Har Rai”, he maintained a cavalry of 20,000 as his personal guard. He was married to Mata Kishan Kaur [also referred to as Mata Sulakhni] daughter of Daya Ram of Anoopshahr (Bulandshahr) in present-day Uttar Pradesh. They had two sons: Ram Rai and Har Krishan, and daughter Sarup Kaur. Even though he had a short life of 31 years [he died on 06 October 1661] he made many significant contributions to the Sikh Faith. Before his death he named his younger son Har Krishan as his successor. For conscientious propagation of the Sikh Faith he travelled and spread Lord God’s message among the masses in Lahore, Sialkot, Pathankot, Samba, and Ramgarh, to name only a few places. He further developed the *Manji* system founded by Guru Amar Das and established 360 Manji seats. He also worked hard to improve the *Masand* system instituted by his predecessors which had become corrupt by his time.

He established both an Ayurvedic hospital and research centre besides a zoo at Kiratpur Sahib because his compassion encompassed the welfare of both human beings and that of animals. He often went on hunting but never killed any animal. In fact, he used to capture sick and injured animals, bring them home and place them in the zoo that he had founded. There the animals would be given due care and released in the wild after they had fully recovered. The only animals he killed were the ones which were seriously ill or in terrible pain with no scope for recovery. In such cases, he would kill them and relieve them from their misery.

Several people suffering from a variety of maladies flocked to the Ayurvedic hospital hoping for a cure. Once the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's eldest son Dara Shikoh who had been poisoned with tiger whiskers suffered incurably. Many reputed *hakeems* (Arabic for Physicians) and physicians tried to cure him but to no avail. In desperation, Shah Jahan sought the help of the Guru and requested him to send a suitable medicine. Guru Har Rai sent back with the Emperor's messenger some rare herbs which were available only in his research centre. The prince was soon cured of the mysterious illness and Shah Jahan offered a *Jagir* [Land and villages given by the government as a reward or fee for services rendered] as a token of royal gratitude, which was declined by the Guru. He demonstrated that even inimical actions of others ought not to dictate those of a Sikh out of vengeance, and like a sandalwood tree perfumes the axe which fells it, the Guru returned good for evil.

In the truest spirit of Guru Nanak's Revelation, he did not muster any sense of discrimination, and even helped in the recovery of Shah Jahan from an almost fatal illness despite the hostility the Mughals had shown to his predecessors. Guru Har Gobind nominated him as his successor. On assuming charge of Guru Nanak's Spiritual Ministry at 14, he continued with the military tradition of maintaining a strong army even though he never indulged in any direct political or armed conflict with the Mughal Empire.

Dara Shikoh [also spelled as Dara Shukoh] was the heir-apparent to the Mughal throne, but was threatened by his younger brother Aurangzeb who planned to kill him and take his place. This forced the fugitive prince to seek the Guru's help for protection against Aurangzeb. With the use of tactics, the Guru helped Shikoh escape safely from the hands of Aurangzeb's armed forces. In keeping up with his pacifist principles, the holy personage ensured that no weapons were deployed.

Dara Shikoh (20 March 1615 – 30 August 1659) was the eldest son and heir-apparent of the fifth Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. He was favoured as a successor by his father and his older sister Princess Jahanara Begum, but was defeated and later killed by his younger brother, Prince Muhiuddin (later, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb), in a bitter struggle for the imperial throne. Having developed friendship with Guru Har Rai, Dara Shikoh devoted a lot of time and energy to finding a common mystical language between Islam and Hinduism. Towards this goal he completed the translation of 50 *Upanishads* from their original Sanskrit into Persian [Iranian] in 1657 so that they could be studied by Muslim scholars.

Dara Shikoh's translation is often called *Sirr-e-Akbar* [The Greatest Mystery]. In the introduction, he boldly states his hypothesis that the work referred to in the Holy Qur'an as the "*Kitab al-maknun*", or the *Hidden Book*, is none other than the *Upanishads*. His most famous work, *Majma-ul-Bahrain* [The Confluence of the Two Seas], was also devoted to the revealing of mystical and pluralistic affinities between Sufic and Vedantic metaphysics. The book was authored as a short treatise in Persian in 1654-55. The library established by Dara Shikoh still exists on the grounds of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, Kashmiri Gate, Delhi, and after renovation has been run as a museum by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Guru Har Rai founded three missions and stressed the importance of *Langar*, insisting that no visitor should ever be turned away hungry. He advised the Sikhs to earn their livelihood by the sweat of their brow. He stressed the importance of early-morning worship and the reading of scripture, implying that whether or not words could be understood, hymns benefited the heart and soul. He counselled Mughal rulers to govern

mercifully without oppression, confine their sex life to their own spouses, abstain from drink, and be always available to their subjects. He suggested that they should conscientiously attend to the people's needs and provide wells, bridges, schools, and places of worship.

As a youth, Har Rai received training in martial arts and acquired great prowess with weapons and horses. Although Guru Har Rai maintained a militia of 2,200 men at arms he managed to avoid confrontation with the Mughals. However, he was unwillingly drawn into the intrigue of succession when the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's heirs fought over his throne and the eldest, Dara Shikoh, appealed to the Guru for help. He thus incurred the displeasure of his ruthless younger brother, Aurangzeb, by detaining his army when he was chasing Dara Shikoh. Meanwhile, the Guru counselled Dara Shikoh that only a spiritual kingdom is everlasting. However, Aurangzeb eventually took over the throne.

After Aurangzeb had imprisoned his father Shah Jahan, had elder his brother, Dara Shikoh, put to death, he finally wrested the Mughal throne. Fearing Guru Har Rai's growing influence, Aurangzeb was goaded by his courtiers into accusing the Guru of lending support to Dara Shikoh. Thus the Mughal Emperor summoned him to his court. Not trusting the treacherous ruler, the Guru refused to comply, and sent his elder son, Ram Rai, instead. Before he left, the Guru blessed and counselled him that he must not yield to pressure from Aurangzeb and alter any words of *Adi Granth*. Ram Rai was well received by the Mughal ruler. He not only satisfactorily responded to all of Aurangzeb's concerns and queries but also impressed him with his cleverness. As a result, he was asked to stay on as a state guest for some period. One day, after prodding by some of the Ulema, Aurangzeb asked why Guru Nanak had criticised Islam in *Salok "Mitti Musalman Ki"*. Ram Rai satisfied the assembled Muslim scholars by saying that the line had been copied incorrectly and that the correct writing was "*Mitti Baieemaan Ki*", and not "*Mitti Musalman Ki*" as was written in *Adi Granth*.

Though Ram Rai was well blessed with occult powers his father strictly instructed him to do no more than explain the Guru's position to his host. However, he had the audacity to go against what Guru Har Rai had pointedly told him not to do at any cost. Furthermore, he performed miracles for Aurangzeb's entertainment, which is against the tenets of the Sikh Faith. It was a deliberate attempt to please the Ulema, and to curry the emperor's favour.

When Guru Har Rai heard of Ram Rai's misadventure, he forbade him from ever returning home. *Gurbani* is God's Sacred Word received in Revelation and cannot be subjected to any modifications by anyone possessed of temporal powers. Miracles although recognised as real by the Sikh Faith are strictly forbidden because their exposition or display is considered self-willed arrogance that challenges and competes with God's omnipotence. In this light, by way of punishment, Guru Har Rai superseded Ram Rai by appointing his younger son Har Krishan as his successor.

Though Ram Rai managed to please Aurangzeb, Guru Har Rai forbade all Sikhs from ever associating with him. The Mughal Emperor gave Ram Rai a Jagir of four villages in the Doon area where he died in 1787. Because of Ram Rai's Dehra, *Duun* came to be popularly known as Dehradun.





G. S. SONAM SINGH
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GURU HAR KRISHAN

[Friday, 07 July 1656 - Sunday, 30 March 1664]

Guru Har Krishan, youngest of the Ten Sikh Gurus, was the Eighth Master of the Sikh Faith to adorn the Spiritual Ministry of Guru Nanak Dev on 7 October 1661, succeeding his father and the Seventh Master Guru Har Rai, at the age of 5. He was born to Krishan Devi (popularly known as Mata Sulakhni) and Guru Har Rai on 7 July 1656 in Kiratpur Sahib that had been founded by his grandfather Guru Har Gobind on the Shivalik foothills. He contracted smallpox in Delhi during the epidemic while attending to those stricken with it and died on 30 March 1664 before reaching the age of 8. He is also known as Bal Guru [Child Guru], and sometimes spelled as Hari Krishan Sahib in Sikh literature. His father supported Shah Jahan's son Dara Shikoh who had Sufi inclination rather than the youngest son of the zealot Sunni named Aurangzeb when the two had entered into armed conflict for succession to the Mughal throne.

This is why after Aurangzeb had won the war of succession in 1658, he summoned Guru Har Rai in 1660 to explain his support for Dara Shikoh. Guru Har Rai sent his elder son Ram Rai as his representative. Aurangzeb held the 13-year-old Ram Rai as hostage, questioned him about a verse in the *Adi Granth* the emperor had been convinced by Muslim priests and scholars disparaged Islam. The teenager cleverly changed the word "Musalman" [follower of Islam] to "*Beimaan*" [dishonest/infidel] to appease Aurangzeb instead of standing by inviolable sacrosanctity of the Sikh scripture. For his father-Guru this was an unpardonable act of blasphemy of the highest order for which he excommunicated him from the Sikh Faith. This is how the younger Har Krishan was picked up to be the Eighth Guru. **However, the**

profounder message of far-reaching consequence was the upholding and consecration of the divine trait of FEARLESSNESS, as previously dilated upon in this treatise. To dread the might of powers-that-be for a possible punishment and instead to take recourse to telling lies to curry favours is, in the Sovereignty of the Sikh Faith, an unpardonable blasphemy.

Aurangzeb saw in Ram Rai's excommunication the right opportunity to have him on his side against his father, and, therefore, patronised him with land grants in *Duun* region of the Himalayas. A few years after Guru Har Krishan had assumed the Spiritual Ministry to play the role of Sikh leader, the Mughal Emperor summoned the young Guru to his court, with an apparent plan to replace him with his elder brother Ram Rai as the Sikh Guru. However, Har Krishan contracted smallpox when he arrived in Delhi and his meeting with Aurangzeb was cancelled. On his deathbed, Har Krishan uttered "Baba Bakale", and he died on 30 March 1664. In Sikh tradition, his somewhat cryptic utterance is interpreted to mean that his successor would be his grand-uncle [Baba] who lives in Bakala village in Punjab state. His was the shortest Spiritual Ministry, lasting only two years, five months, and 24 days.

Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was not pleased to hear about the growing fame of Guru Har Krishan. He sent a servant of Raja Jai Singh of Amber who arrived with his message to appear before him. Guru Har Krishan agreed to go with him to Delhi. They travelled through Ropar, Banur, and Ambala. Along the way, he spread the Holy Word among those who had come to see on him.

When the Guru was near Panjokhara, a Sikh implored him, "Sangats are coming from Peshawar, Kabul, and Kashmir. You kindly stay here for a day so that they may have the privilege of seeing you, Master." The Guru agreed and halted there. In that village lived a Brahmin, Lal Chand, who was proud of his high caste and erudite learning in the scriptures of Hinduism. Calling on the Guru he spoke derisively, "I am told that you occupy Guru Nanak's seat in his Spiritual Ministry. But what do you know of the country's ancient religious books?" Chhajju Ram, an illiterate, dark-skinned village water-carrier, happened to pass by at that moment. Guru Har Krishan asked Dargah Mall to call him. As Chhajju Ram came, the Guru enquired if he would explain to Lal Chand the gist of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which is the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*, one of India's most famous epic poems. The untaught country simpleton astonished everyone by his cogent commentary on the world-famous sacred scripture of Hinduism. His vainglory shattered the Pandit and he fell at the Guru's feet. Then both he and Chhajju Ram became Guru Har Krishan's disciples and travelled with him up to Kurukshetra. Interestingly, Lal Chand entered the fold of Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa, and was baptised as Lal Singh. His psycho-spiritual transformation was total, for he embraced a hero's death fighting in the battle of Chamkaur on 7 December 1705.

In Delhi, Guru Har Krishan was put up in Raja Jai Singh's bungalow which is now the site of Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Spacious was the residence "designed to suit all the seasons of the year". The Sikhs of Delhi started coming in groups to see the Guru. They came chanting hymns from the *Adi Granth* bringing along offerings of many kinds. It is said that Guru Har Krishan visited the emperor's court on 25 March 1664 when the Mughal ruler had planned a trial. He had two large trays laid out for the Guru. One of these displayed ornaments, clothes, and toys. The other had in it a holy man's cloak and cowl. Both were presented to the Guru who accepted the latter offering. Aurangzeb was readily convinced of his holiness. He thought he would invite him again and see him perform a miracle. Guru Har Krishan guessed what the emperor had in his mind. He told himself that he would not see his face again. He believed that no one should attempt a miracle and disturb God's law. Guru Har Krishan knew how his father had punished Ram Rai, his elder brother, for showing feats in Aurangzeb's court.

The Rani had devised her own test, and asked her husband, Raja Jai Singh, to bring the Guru to the ladies' residence. Bal Guru accepted the invitation. At the entrance to the inner chambers of the palace, he was received by the Raja's servants with honour and royal ceremony. As he stepped inside, the ladies, in their costly jewels and clothes, bowed in reverence. He walked past all them acknowledging their greetings. As he came near the one dressed modestly in a maid's coarse homespun attire, he stopped, and said, "*You are the Rani. Why should you have dressed yourself in a maid's garments?*" Astounded, the Rani bent her head in homage.

Authentic literature with more details of Guru Har Krishan's life and times is scarce and not well recorded. At any rate, the noteworthy point is that the light of divinity can shine on anyone regardless of age and other centuries-old criteria. It is a rare gift of Lord God that he bestows on His chosen ones. A vast majority of people, however, confuse the advent of wisdom with advancing years. Nothing is farther from the truth. Unless it happens by God's grace old age hardens into an abomination of unquenched lust and abhorrent criminality as a result of countless sins having been piled up in the human psyche. Sins are committed by delinquent desires and nefarious notions, but by virtue of their extreme subtlety cannot be detected, much less punished. On the other end of the scale of human offensiveness are crimes of all sorts and sizes which because they are gross in nature are found out and punished by law of the land. *Psychologically, no action takes place unless first planned and approved by the Mind but, ironically, the poor Body that is a mere vehicle takes all the beating for it!*







GURU TEGH BAHADAR

[Thursday, 01 April 1621 - Sunday, 24 November 1675]

MARTYRDOM CONSUMMATED IN LIFE ETERNAL

The author's write-up is readable more for his faith than mere knowledge and skill.

—Editor, *ADVANCE*, October-December 2000

Ever since *ADVANCE* [Official English Journal of the Punjab Government] had asked me to write on the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs, I have been getting feverish flashes of anxiety and experiencing a mounting sense of insufficiency to rise to the occasion. The fact that I have published over six hundred articles on diverse subjects, themes and issues, this strange phenomenon (which never happened before in my case) has aggravated my perplexity. To my experience it is both easy and difficult to write on subjects of historical import. Easy, because the facts are already known and can be handled in the write-up with facile readiness for effective communication. Difficult, because if one is to present a fresh interpretation there is a lurking risk of fictionalizing or of distorting the facts when one attempts to prove one's point against existing rationale of the subject-matter. The present topic assumes heightened delicateness in the context of the recent controversy that the Holy Preceptor who has earned the unique title: Guru Tegh Bahadar, *Hind di Chaadar* (Shield of India) did not sacrifice his life for a faith not his own (contrary to the widely accepted view that he, indeed, did so). Thus, what follows is not a routine write-up, but an ardent expression of feelings authenticated by my personal experience. I will, therefore, like to begin at the beginning—which is a sure way

of setting to rest all controversies because everything, including ideas which moved [move] the world, are purest at the source. And, oddly enough, it is the fate of all great truths to begin as heresies and to end as superstitions.

When, at the age of 10, I lost my mother, I was initiated into the sacred scripture by my father who had an unshakable, undiminished faith in Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Granth Sahib. As the situation demanded my first lesson was in *Vairag* [renunciatory longing for reunion with Lord God] such as is most beautifully portrayed by Guru Tegh Bahadar in the following *Shabad*:

Sorath Mahalla 9 [*Pritam jaan lahu man mahi...* SGGS, p. 634]

*Let this fact, friend, sink in your mind's depths
The whole world is enmeshed in self-seeking interest
And nobody cares for another's needs
In prosperity everyone seeks your company eagerly
And you are surrounded by self-seekers on all sides
But as soon as you fall on evil days
Everyone departs never to come close again
Forever indulgent of love, the lady of the house
Is deeply attached to her spouse
But the moment his soul leaves his mortal frame
She shuns it and in dread runs away, crying: "Ghost! Ghost!!"
In such strange ways of the world
It's only sane to love
Him, for, Nanak, in the long run
Nobody, save God, abides by man*

I did not need any metaphysics to appreciate the eternal import of the hallowed hymn. The harrowing experience, which had cast gloom over the household, was poignant enough to give me a first-hand experience of a piercing grief. And soon I memorised the *shabad* and would regularly recite it every evening during my rooftop strolls. The impact of Guru Tegh Bahadar's piquant portrayal was deepened manifold when my father stressed the fact that the Ninth Guru's Bani is full of *Vairag*. Without the aid of ontological meanderings, I was enabled to figure out that *Vairag* is total disenchantment with the ways of the world made grave by sheer gravity of an inconsolable personal grief, especially when one is abandoned by friends and relatives alike to suffer all alone! Indeed, if such a mishap does not occur in one's own life, the terse truth of Guru Nanak's proclamation "pain is divine medicine and pleasure worldly disease" can never be squarely seen. In my case, the Guru's rare sacrament of *Vairag* has been my soul's favourite delicacy during the past fifty two years. *Vairag* is a state of mind in which disillusionment impels a direct encounter with truth whereby one can readily jettison the ephemeral for the sake of the eternal on the soul's ascent to *Sachch Khand* (Realm of Truth). Another transferring effect of *Vairag* is the shift in focus it forces the mind to make from the body to the soul. Body consciousness, that is Ego, thus surrenders to the polite, but persistent, power of Humility, which is the highest virtue applauded by Guru Nanak Dev.

The *shabad* cited above shows that, by virtue of its author's mystic absorption in the Holy Name, he had little use for his mortal frame except as an instrument through which the Divine Will shall find its foreordained consummation. This viewpoint has the historical support that the holy personage had meditated for over two decades and was extremely reluctant to move from *piri* (spiritual estate) to *miri* (temporal power) as demanded by his ascent to Gurudom after his predecessor's untimely departure from this world.

I am also convinced that Guru Tegh Bahadar's birth (1621 CE) in Amritsar, the Vatican City of the Sikhs founded by his great-grandfather, had marked him out as a spiritual heir to the martyrdom of his grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of Martyrs. That his was an active, and not a passive spirituality, is corroborated by another fact. When Tyaga Mal (Guru's original name) was eleven years old, he was married to Mata Gujri. And, at barely 14 years of age, he fought a battle alongside his father, Guru Hargobind, against the Mughal army led by Kale Khan, which had attacked the Sikhs. The enemy suffered a crushing defeat. The young Tyaga Mal, true to his father's epoch-making philosophy of *Miri-Piri* (temporal-spiritual) duo fought a *Dharmyudh* [Crusade] like a lion. It was in appreciation and recognition of the young warrior's extraordinary display of valour that Guru Hargobind renamed him as Tegh Bahadar (The Knight of the Sword). Contemplating the Guru's unusual name, I have received a revelation. The name "Teg Bahadar" carries an unmatched psycho-spiritual holism in the three letters, namely, 'T', 'G', and 'B'. These stand for Truth (Satyam), Goodness (Shivam), and Beauty (Sundaram), which the Indian Rishis had identified as the Mystic Trinity.

At this juncture, allusion to Guru Nanak Dev's cardinal exhortation is necessary:

*If you yearn to play the game of love
Come to my place with the offering of your head
Must your resolve this path to tread
Embrace martyrdom sans favour or dread* (SGGS, p. 1412)



Also, as enjoined by Sikh Faith's Prophet-Founder, Guru Nanak Dev, the Ninth Guru was leading a normal householder's life. Other details of the Guru's biographical portrait should be in order at this point. After the eighth Guru, Har Krishan, the "child Guru", told his followers that his successor would be found in the village of Bakala later renamed Baba Bakala because Guru Tegh Bahadar was his predecessor's grandfather (Baba), a deputation went there and found 22 claimants to Guruhood. Bhai Makhan Shah, a wealthy Sikh merchant, sought out Tegh Bahadar, who he realised, displayed none of the greed and self-aggrandisement of the 21 pretenders. Makhan Shah was overjoyed when he discovered that only Tegh Bahadar could divine what he had vowed in the far distant place, on the high seas, in his prayer to the Guru for saving his ship from sinking in the storm. This is what led him to proclaim Tegh Bahadar as the Ninth Guru.

The bigoted Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's religious persecution of the Hindus, including their mass-scale conversion to Islam, was crossing all limits. Guru Tegh Bahadar ran afoul of the Mughal authorities by giving aid and shelter to some Hindu holy men from Kashmir who had been ordered by Emperor Aurangzeb to accept Islam. At the Guru's behest, however, the Hindus sent a word to the Emperor that they would accept Islam if the Guru took lead to become a Muslim. The Guru was arrested and confined to the fortress in Delhi. Rivals at court, wishing to harm him further, accused him to having worldly desires.

On Aurangzeb's orders the Guru was asked either to embrace Islam or face martyrdom. Guru Tegh Bahadar refused. As he recited the Japuji (the most important Sikh scripture), the executioner decapitated him (1675 CE). While from the worldly point of view, it was a facile fulfilment of Guru Nanak Dev's faith-testing/life-taking injunction quoted earlier, Guru Gobind Singh has made an apt observation with soul-stirring terseness (*Bachittar Natak*):

*A valiant war waged he for Dharma's sake
And gave his head, but not his hallowed faith*

It is pertinent to point out that the sacrifice of one's life to uphold the freedom of human conscience is by no means an act of frenzied impulse. It springs from a rare combination of tranquillity of mind and certainty of moral worth. The mystical intuition that brings about such offbeat qualities of head and heart is flame of *Brahm-Gyan* (divine knowledge). In my view, such an enlightened insight has in its sweep *Trilok* (heaven, this world, nether regions) and *Trikal* (past, present, future). It is a fitful flash of realisation which lays bare the secret and significance of forelife, this life, and afterlife, in palpable Time-Space Continuum. It may be conceded that one so blessed with such divine knowledge is totally free from all forms of fear, including that of death. In Slok Mahala 9, Guru Tegh Bahadar has himself dwelt on this curious conundrum:

*He who never terrorises anybody
Nor winces before another's threat
Says Nanak: hark, O Mind!
Should alone the true knower's title get!*

Allama Iqbal, Poet of the East, has summed up the subject with great succinctness and lyrical beauty:

*Kafir hai to shamsheer pe karta hai bharosa
Mommin hai to be-tegh bhi ladta hai sipahi
The Infidel is he who banks on the might of the sword
But a true soldier, driven by Faith, Fights even unarmed*

How very true in the present case! The mighty Mughal Empire tumbled down—sceptre and crown—despite its formidable imperial power and was consigned to dust forever. But Guru Tegh Bahadar's swordless combat triumphed to raise an Empire of Faith which has ever since been growing from strength to strength—beyond decay and destruction.

In the light of the foregoing exposition, Guru Tegh Bahadar's martyrdom for the protection of a faith, *not* his own appears to be too self-evident a fact of history to be controversial.

May God bless those who must yet think otherwise!



To my 20-year-old article reproduced above I am adding the following information to give it a semblance of completeness.

Guru Tegh Bahadar was the youngest of the five sons of the Sixth Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Har Gobind. He was born in the early hours of 01 April 1621. As the news of his birth spread at daybreak, Sikhs hurried to the presence of the joyous father to offer their felicitations. He himself went to see the newborn, accompanied by Bidhi Chand and Jetha. As he caught a glimpse of him, he prophesied thus: “Of my five sons, he shall be elevated to Guru Nanak’s Spiritual Ministry. He shall protect the weak and hapless, and relieve them of their distress. This shall be the hallmark of his blessed life!” His birthday celebrations went on for several days and much charity was distributed among the needy.

He was brought up in the approved Sikh lifestyle and, as a young boy, was placed under the tutelage of Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas for training in martial arts and learning in matters spiritual, respectively. The former supervised his training in archery and horsemanship, and the latter taught him old classics. Tyaga Mal made rapid progress and his precocity showed early promise of mastery in both fields. Apart from his formal education he gave evidence of profoundly mystical temperament by his prolonged spells of seclusion and contemplation. This dimension of his genius scaled depths of *Vairag* as embodied in his superbly sublime Bani enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

The father’s soulful prophesies continued and gladdened the heart of Mata Nanaki, unseen. But she often wondered how her son, by temperament withdrawn and humble and unstirred by worldly ambition, would fulfil his father’s fond aspirations. However, one thing that had become crystal clear from the time of his birth was that Tyaga Mal was Guru Har Gobind’s favourite—someone rare cut out to make history whom mighty events awaited in the future.







GURU GOBIND SINGH

[Tuesday, 05 January 1666 - Sunday, 07 October 1708]

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, on the occasion of tercentenary (300th anniversary) celebrations of the Birth of Khalsa, I was invited to write an article for the Special Number of Punjab government's official magazine *Advance*. After much disappointment from search for reference material in the libraries I went to the then-ongoing Chandigarh Book Fair where I was lucky to stumble upon a book titled "*Sahib-e-Kamaal* Guru Gobind Singh" by Daulat Rai. Published by Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust [Regd Office: Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar] I found that this wonderful Biography originally written in Urdu had been competently abridged and sensitively translated by Prof Surinderjit Singh.

Dr Dewan Singh writes in his Foreword for Daulat Rai's stated Biography of Guru Gobind Singh: "*Sahib-e-Kamaal*" (which means a Perfect-Man): "Daulat Rai, now a very popular and famous name in Sikh circles, was a man of deep thinking and impartial religious conviction. Though an Arya Samajist himself, he was completely free from religious bias. Though he wrote in 1901 AD when the Punjab was seething with inter-religious wrangling and communal friction of an invidious nature, he was a rare person who evinced in his *Biography of Guru Gobind Singh* a highly patriotic and national feeling by transcending all parochial limitations."

Who was Daulat Rai?

Daulat Rai, an Indian historian of note was, according to Dr Dewan Singh, a man of considerable insight and acumen, who rose much higher than the ordinary class of hagiographers and was thus able to grasp and understand the real historical situation obtaining in India and during the turbulent times of Guru Gobind Singh.

I can vouch that I haven't read anything of this kind on Guru Gobind Singh in my whole life. It has moved me to the very marrow of my bones. Unless otherwise stated, therefore, the quotes in the following paragraphs are drawn from this source—whose literary richness and spiritual inspiration I am unable to match. This essay is my humble offering to the matchless versatile genius of Guru Gobind Singh. I am availing this opportunity to pay my profound tribute to Daulat Rai whose work is among very few treatises on the subject which are truly inspired by divine grace.

Guru Nanak's Unique Faith

The unique Sikh Faith founded by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 AD) saw its climax in the founding of The Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699 AD by the last spiritual successor of the Founder, 10th Guru Gobind Singh. The choice of the day for the hallowed act brings out the great significance of Baisakhi in terms of the pre-eminent events in Sikh history which had taken place on this day: (1) Guru Nanak started his missionary travels (*Udasis*), (2) The digging for the *Baoli* (stepped well) at Khadur Sahib was undertaken—and water was also filled, and (3) Guru Har Krishan passed away.

Biographical Sketch

According to Dr Dewan Singh, "Guru Gobind Singh figures in world history as a great leader of men, a versatile genius of the highest order, a God-man and mystic par excellence, a redoubtable warrior and adept strategist, a fearless revolutionary, a classical Hero of Carlylian description, a powerful poet and patron of poets, a unique religious law giver and champion of the downtrodden, a relentless defender of faith and an all-sacrificing martyr for the cause of suffering and persecuted humanity. In fact, it is impossible to encompass and delineate in words all the facets of his highly charismatic and remarkable personality."

Guru Teg Bahadar was on a tour to Bengal and Assam, when a son was born to Mata Gujri at Patna on Saturday night of 17-18 Poh of 1723 Bikrami (corresponding to December 1666 AD). In deference for the Guru's wishes, the son was named Gobind Rai. When he grew up to boyhood, his favourite pastime was to divide his playmates into two groups pitting one against the other in mock battles. He had a marked fondness for the sling, and the bow and arrows. The future Guru (Spiritual Preceptor) was fearless from his very childhood. Besides receiving formal instruction in religious matters, he was trained in warfare and horse-riding. He subsequently acquired proficiency in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, and his mother tongue, Punjabi. He spent his spare time in hunting and travelling.

Spiritual Stature

Guru Gobind Singh ascended Guru Nanak's spiritual throne at the age of 9 in 1675 AD when his illustrious father Guru Tegh Bahadar's martyrdom earned him the unique title of "*Hind di Chaadar*" (India's protective sheet-cover). Guru Gobind Singh was a true anchorite and an impassioned patriot. He was an embodiment of all-round perfection: a poet, a spiritual leader, a religious and social reformer, a far-sighted planner, a wise counsellor, a redoubtable warrior, and a superb general—above all, "an unflagging champion of his people, an

unrivalled martyr of his country”. He deeply imbibed the Divine Attributes delineated by Guru Nanak in his *Mul Mantra* (the Creedal Statement), notably, “without fear, without enmity”. These traits imparted to the Guru an invincible valour and an unshakable steadfastness.

Guru Gobind Singh had fought many an historic battle (*Dharma Yudhas*) between 1689 and 1703 AD. Drawing his readers’ attention to one unprecedented battle, Daulat Rai exhorts them to “visualise the valiant stand taken by the Guru and his forty Sikhs against the Imperial hordes at Chamkaur. The entire History of the world cannot offer its peer”.

He pays an eye-opening tribute to the Guru in soul-stirring words: “A man blessed with such a heart had not taken birth in India (among Hindus) for thousands of years...His patriotic fervour boiling over contrasted with the chilling cowardice and utter despondency of the people...It was the spark of nationalism and the fighting instinct of a Kashatri...In the heart of Guru Gobind Singh was lit the spark of nationalism which all earlier Hindu reformers including Krishna, Ramachandra, Shankaracharya and Ramanuja had lacked...Their (the Hindus) existence was like the flickering light of a dying lamp. The flickering light was about to be extinguished by the stream of intolerant fanaticism let loose by Aurangzeb when Guru Gobind Singh shielded it with his hands and saved it from extinction (being extinguished)... The Hindus were like a lamp without oil... **He (Guru Gobind Singh) was the first man to think of nationalism and to foster feeling of nationalism among the Indian people...**” (Emphasis added)

Respite for Reflection

The 14-year-long period (1675-1699 AD) of spiritual leadership gave Guru Gobind Singh the much-needed opportunity to study at first hand the prevalent situation and to size up the formidable might of the Mughals, and the invidious intrigues the Hill Rajas repeatedly planned and implemented in pursuit of selfish motives *against* the larger national interest vis-à-vis the abject helplessness, pitiable plight, and deep-rooted psycho-emotional-spiritual weakness of the Hindus. It was a self-imposed exile into the tangled forests of the national psyche beset with confusion, cowardice, casualness, and cantankerousness. He thought up with incredible foresight a master plan for the masses’ moral rejuvenation, social upliftment, spiritual illumination, and physical health. He carefully fixed his priorities—and aimed his first shot at the removal of the causes responsible for disunity, despondency, and debility among the Hindus. These will be briefly dealt with to show how they form the all-important ground for the birth of the Khalsa.

Religious Reform: Carl Jung, a co-researcher with Sigmund Freud—father of modern psychology, has held that religious sentiment among the peoples of the world is the most formidable, forceful, and durable of all human emotions. According to him, it is saner to deploy Religion to effect the desired changes in human society than to write it off as primitive passion in a fit of pseudo-scientific temper. Guru Gobind Singh instinctively took up religion as his first priority. “From the very beginning”, says Daulat Rai, “the Hindus have held the Dharma as supreme, a pious binding duty nearer to the heart than everything else.”

The Indian Psyche Emasculated by “isms”

But over the centuries, the many “isms” like polytheism, pantheism, and monism—with their plethora of rituals, rites, myths, and conflicting religious practices developed ever-widening sectarian differences which eventually led to disunity, friction, and animosity among the Indian masses. The position of religious sects and sub-sects had worsened, with their numbers rising to thousands—but leading to the dark alleys of



blind-faith exclusivism. It should be noted that in a state of such wide-spread conflict, anyone trying to prove the supremacy of his cult must invariably distort the truth—and use fair means or foul to gain one-upmanship over his adversary, whether real or imaginary just doesn't matter! Obviously, all sorts of malpractices and superstitions creep into the system whose very purpose of spiritual illumination gets self-defeated.

IK Oankar as Revitalising Force

[IK is printed in upper case to emphasize the irreconcilable Unicity (Indivisible Oneness) of GOD in Guru Nanak's Revelation]

Guru Gobind Singh corrected this massive malaise by preaching Guru Nanak's gospel of *IK Oankar*, (One Supreme Being) and forcefully rebutted the plurality of godhead, forbade idolatry, censured the custom of observance of obsequies (*Shradhs*), denounced the concept of *Avataras*, condemned *Tirath Yatra* (pilgrimage) and bathing at holy places, criticised the religious garbs as dresses of deceit—and drew people away from “small, slimy, stagnant and filthy fountains to the shores of the infinite Ocean of (One) Lord-devotion.”

One must read Guru's *Tav-Prasad* (i) *Kabit*, written in the language of the masses, to contemplate “the beauty of his gospel, the depth of his Lord-devotion and the extent of richness of his thought.” The ground for national unity, integrity, and patriotism was thus prepared by the Guru with spot-light spiritual illumination, thereby restoring to the individual human person the organic completeness of an awakened, self-sufficient, inner life.

Consequently, he was able to effect sweeping changes in the religious sphere.

Social Reform: Guru Gobind Singh set out to restructure the social set-up with similar single-mindedness and dedication. In the four-tier society of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras—in which vertical movement was forbidden, thanks to Manu-code that had made it a legal binding that the high castes could press the Shudras into menial service (as an act of *Prabhu's* (God's) prescription) but the food cooked by them was not to be touched. Made irrevocably applicable among the Indian society—on the analogy of the human Body with Brahmin representing the head, the Khatri the arms, the Vaishya the stomach, and the Shudra the feet—under the Brahmins the observance and hold of Manu's injunctions had been tightened to an inhuman degree. The Shudras were thus the perennial victims of this heinous social injustice. To wit, “If a Shudra talks of religious matters to a Brahmin, molten lead or boiling oil should be poured in his mouth and ears”. [Manu-Code, Chapter VIII [272].

“The atonement for the killing of a Shudra is the same as that for killing of a cat or a dog or a frog or a lizard or other animals.”

Daulat Rai writes, “*The farsighted and sagacious Guru held it imperative to lift the low castes to the level of the high ones, so that the former could regain their sense of dignity and manhood and work for national reconstruction instead of just doing menial chores for the high castes. During the days of Brahmanic ascendancy and the Kasharin reign the plight of the Shudras was very miserable. They were treated at par with cattle and beasts of burden, though they were the original inhabitants of the country. There is no doubt that they were worse off than the ancient slaves that were bought and sold like animals and than even under Muslim oppression.*”

The Postulates of Equality, Fraternity, and Liberty

Proclaiming the essential equality, fraternity, and liberty of all human beings (as their birthright) in his succinct tenet, “The caste of all mankind is only one: Humanism”, Guru Gobind Singh felt it necessary that “the Hindus who had become slaves mentally and physically, should be jolted out of their miserable stupor. The sad plight of the Hindus in the political field was largely responsible for this predicament.”

Daulat Rai highlights that “Guru Gobind Singh took up the challenge and created such a virile, upright and one-God-loving people like the Sikhs who were ever ready to lay down their lives for their country, people and Dharma, who always came to the succour of the needy, the tyrannised and the down-trodden. He changed cowards into men of great courage, uncowed by the Muslim might. He surveyed the country and selected the people and the area where he was to put into practice his grandiose schemes. The selection of the area was determined by the kind of men inhabiting therein.”

The Guru’s Tenets

Guru Gobind Singh sought to establish (and succeeded in doing so) two basic principles: (1) universal brotherhood without any distinction, and (2) the spirit of self-sacrifice for others without demur. It was crystal clear to him that “The feeling of brotherhood can only dawn after the annihilation of all (man-made) artificial barriers between man and man. The baneful caste-system introduced by Manu and followed with a vengeance by the Brahmin had to be nullified.”

Founding the Khalsa

For Guru Gobind Singh, this unprecedented historic event was like home-coming from a 14-year-long (self-) exile to the unignorable native truth of the entire 17th-century situation of Mughal-ruled India. He decided to establish the Khalsa: the Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers, welded by the steely sense of oneness in total surrender and devotion to *Wah-e-Guru, Akal Purakh*—and imbibing His attributes of fearlessness and rancour-freeness, filled with the fiery ideal of self—sacrifice for the protection and welfare of others. Such an Order of Ever-Ascendant Spirits (*Charhdi Kala*) alone could demolish the centuries-old barriers of caste and creed, high and low, man and woman, thereby paving the way for the advent of nationalism, and the unity and integrity of India.

Fraternity of the Fearless...

The Khalsa, as the Fraternity of the Fearless, the Forceful, and the Formidable, alone could bring about the downfall of the foreign rule of bigotry and tyranny. Accordingly, on the Baisakhi of Samat 1756 (1699 AD), Guru Gobind Singh gathered his Sikhs in great numbers from across the entire length and breadth of the country at an open place at Anandpur Sahib. A huge tent and an enclosure had been set up in the field. The remaining account of the ceremony and events is too well known to need recounting. However, it is necessary to underscore the two-fold purpose in the strange manner the Guru acted in inviting volunteers, at the point of a blood-dripping sword, from among the massive congregation.

Twin Criteria for Motivating Volunteers

The first aim was to *test* if the Sikhs had the mighty mettle to sacrifice their all for the protection of their Dharma and the love of their land. The second was to *show* to all those assembled there that only men like the *Panj Piaras* (the Five Beloveds) could successfully undertake the stated uphill task without demur. The five willing volunteers, who readily placed themselves—body, mind and soul—at the service of the Guru were: (1) Daya Ram, a Khatri from Lahore; (2) Dharm Chand, a Jat from Delhi; (3) Himmatt Rai, a Potter from Jagannath Puri in Orissa; (4) Mokham Chand, a Tailor from Kathiawar in Gujarat; and (5) Sahib Chand, a Barber from Mysore.



Administering the *Amrit*

The *Amrit* was administered to the Five Beloveds thus: five times the Guru took out five handfuls of *Amrit* and made the Five partake of them, while the six of them (including the Guru) shouted “*Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*” [The Khalsa belongs to the Wondrous Guru (GOD) whose Victory also rests with Him]. The Five Beloveds were, then, asked to administer the *Amrit* to the Guru. This ceremony was termed “Pahul”, and the consecrated casteless Brotherhood of Saint-Soldiers was conferred the unique title of “The Khalsa”, and their Dharma called the Khalsa Panth. Their birth-castes were finally dissolved into their new spiritual birth by adding the suffix “Singh” (Lion) to their first names. The women on being inducted into the Khalsa fold are given the surname “Kaur” (Lioness).

The Guru as a Real-Life Hero

Hindu Mythology is full of myths built around heroes who attained to such high ideals as human imagination can ever conjure up. To make them emerge as ultimate victors in their mythical forays, these heroes were endowed with superhuman powers—with matchless virtuosity in the martial arts of archery, sword-fighting, horse-riding, disc-wielding, etc. The capacity to save *Dharma* at all costs was often praised skyhigh. But all this glorious story-telling sprang from what I call “Faith Fiction” (Mythology), not historical situations and facts. In my considered opinion, therefore, Guru Gobind Singh is the first and foremost Real-Life Hero in History who has *actually* achieved whatever was best in the entire Indian tradition. The Guru’s unparalleled virtuosity in the stated martial arts is well known—as also the unprecedented glory that he brought to the Khatri Dharma by the overwhelming eloquence of his personal example, with his life consummated in Martyrdom. What is even more amazing is the fact that he empowered the lesser mortals also to perform extraordinary Heroic feats. History tells us that at the incredibly unequal battle of Chamkaur, Sahibzada Ajit Singh (barely 18 years of age), along with his five Singhs, put 150 soldiers of the tyrants to external sleep with the brisk strokes of their swords—before attaining to Martyrdom!

Divine Endowments

Guru Gobind Singh’s outstanding qualities were rare divine endowments. The most truly exceptional was that, despite many epoch-making achievements to his credit, the Guru considered himself no better than an ordinary mortal. This humility filled his heart with overbrimming love for everyone, and gave him an unshakable belief in the Brotherhood of Man. That is why, despite being an arch enemy of the cruel and despotic Mughal rulers, he was loved and adored by the ordinary Muslims. The carrying of the Guru on a cot raised high by two Muslims, to a place of safety, when the Imperial army was desperately looking for him, is a memorable testimony of this signal fact. His *Dharma* drew its awesome strength from Lord Akal’s Edict-Fiat as discernible in the Cosmic Moral Law. Guru Gobind Singh, unlike other reformers known to History, fought single-handedly on all the four fronts: the social, political, religious, and military—always remaining at the vanguard in each. But he never resorted to any subterfuge (like deceit, duplicity, intrigue, or treachery) in any of his actions in any of these fields.

Greatest Miracle

Unlike the old prophets he never claimed any revelations for his *Bani*, did not believe in miracles, nor did he claim to perform any supernatural deeds. But yet he performed one of the greatest miracles of all times: The transmuting of cowards into heroes, and the uplifting of the downtrodden of centuries-old oppression to the acme of Manhood.

Classic Contributions

The Guru's succinct prayer, in my translation below, exalts the Founder of the Sikh Faith Guru Nanak's Pragmatic Spirituality to glorious heights of practical ethics.

Grant me, O God, this signal benefaction
That I may never swerve from righteous action
Free from fear in fighting any adversary
And by sheer resolve achieve my victory
Steeled by Thy Power, my mind doth speak
Greedily, in favour of my own mettle
That when life's honour be at stake
I may fain die fighting in battle

This brings the Founder's Edict to a climax in which one's thought, word, and deed find their celestial consummation—and constantly remind one that the ideals of Sikhi perfectly fulfilled in The Khalsa demonstrate that it is a non-sectarian, non-ritualistic, Faith of Divinised Ethics in Action, which transcends all Mythology, Metaphysics, the Muse, or mere Mysticism (the religion of the elite). With the overwhelming eloquence of his own life, Guru Gobind Singh made evident the value of Human Rights and the inalienable principles of Democracy, Social Justice, Equality, and Liberty: Firstly, when he himself got baptised by taking *Amrit* from the *Panj Piaras*, and, secondly, by declaring at the massive congregation that

By their grace have I attained a position that kings covet
Millions of poor like me, otherwise, rot here in neglect

Poet *par Excellence*

In Poetry, too, the Guru excels. According to late Dr Mohan Singh 'Diwana'—a scholar par excellence, a great metaphysical poet, an insightful critic, and a venerable mystic—Guru Gobind Singh invented 200 metres (that regulated succession of certain groups of syllables—long and short, stressed and unstressed) in which poetry is usually written. Also, the Guru has coined 2000 absolutely new names for Lord Akal. According to Daulat Rai, "His poetic faculty, with its facility of phrase and fecundity of imagination, is one of the special traits of the Guru. His writings have the universality of appeal as they touch the tender strings of the human heart with the lyrical strains of the Cosmic Brotherhood of Man, as they fill one with martial feelings, arouse the martial spirit and prepare for a life of purposeful action."

Graphic Description

His graphic descriptions of the gory battle scenes, bring out alive the battlefield itself before one's eyes, with the neighing of horses, the groaning of the wounded dying, the shrieking of violent death, the clashing of weapons, and the clamour of war". The Guru was a magnanimous patron of literary arts. He had kept 52 poets and 50 writers in his court for transcribing the entire ancient literature. "The poet Mangal", writes Sant Waryam Singh, "was given Rs 60,000 of those times for translating a chapter of the Mahabharata and he was given so many gifts that the Guru sent 200 soldiers, with still more gifts, to carry them home to the poet".



Incomparable Mission, Matchless Means

The following quotes have been culled from the magnificent book “*Sahib-e-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh*” by Daulat Rai to highlight some of the essential features of Guru’s incomparable mission and the matchless means that he deployed to achieve it as an unprecedented fact of Indian history.

- The Guru always stressed that all his actions were done in obedience to the Will of his Lord. Unlike the old prophet he never claimed any revelations for his *Bani* (writings) or that the Word of God was revealed unto him.
- The Singhs should discard all rites and rituals of the Hindus, but should respect the latter’s Temples and religious feelings and defend their Dharma and country when endangered.
- The Brahmins were the originators of all religious ills. They had forbidden the non-Brahmins from studying Vedas and Shastras. They laid down various injunctions in Shastras...to perpetuate their pre-eminence, dominance and self-acquired authority over others. (However, the Guru made knowledge both intelligible and accessible to all the people regardless of their caste and heredity).
- Diplomacy and deceit are the heart and soul of warfare, but the Guru abhorred them. Unlike Shivaji the Guru was not a deceitful person. He considered it below his dignity as a preceptor to resort to ruse and duplicity...and used only physical skill and prowess as instruments of success.
- Undoubtedly he (Ramachandra) proved a true Kashatri warrior and killed Ravana who had forcibly taken away his wife, a great deed of personal revenge! (But) no one can aver that patriotism or nationalism of any kind was involved in his war against Lanka.
- But the task before Guru Gobind Singh was comparatively far more stupendous, important and critical. In patriotic fervour he leaves Krishna far behind. Similarly his deeds far excel those of Shankaracharya.
- They (his countrymen) were spineless, cowardly, hypocritical, and busy in harming and accusing one another, sans unity, determination and sense of honour.
- His (the Guru’s) patriotic fervour boiling over contrasted with the chilling cowardice and utter despondency of the people.
- Human mind staggers to take in the situation, what a man the Guru (Gobind Singh) was!
- He (the Guru) needed (and created) a band of devoted Sikhs, courageous, well versed in warfare, and eager to succour the oppressed as a religious duty. Such people were difficult to find in the Hindu society of his time.
- In the heart of Guru Gobind Singh was lit the spark of nationalism which all earlier Hindu reformers including Krishna, Ramachandra, Shankaracharya, and Ramanuja had lacked.
- He (the Guru) gave the people in general and the Hindus in particular the lesson of unity and nationalism.
- He (the Guru) inculcated the noble qualities of selfless service and self-sacrifice in his people. He was the first man to think of nationalism and to foster feeling of nationalism among the Indian people.

The Guru’s Unique Injunctions

Far from attempting to be a deity as an object of worship he forewarned the Sikhs against such impious indulgence in very strong and discouraging words.

*Jo ham ko pamesar uchre hai
Te sabh narak kund maih pare hai
Whosoever calls me God, Beware!
He shall languish in hell’s pit forever*

The Guru goes on to add to make known to the people the divinely-ordained purpose of his advent into this world.

*Main hau Param Purakh ko daasa
Dekhan aayo jagat tamaasa*
Regard me as a mere servant of the Supreme Lord
Who's come to watch the drama of the mortal world

While expressing his gratitude for his Sikhs he paid a rare tribute to the people's intrinsic power as king-makers. In doing so he enunciated the Directive Principle of Democracy such as has hitherto eluded even the best of philosophers and political scientists. This timeless-universal concept has been beautifully captured in his own inimitable style.

*Inhi ki kripa se saje ham hain
Nahi mo so gharib karor pare hain*
By their grace have I attained an exalted position
Otherwise millions of poor like me lie in derision

The Guru in Poet Goya's Eyes

Bhai Nand Lal Goya (1643-1713 AD), who wrote outstanding poetry in Persian and was one of the 52 poets in employment at Anandpur Sahib, had the rare honour of watching Guru Gobind Singh very closely. In his masterly composition titled *Ganjnama* (The Tome of Treasures) he pens down his soulful impressions of the Guru's personality such as has not been chronicled by any poet or writer of the time. I have picked up the following couplet that sums the subject both beautifully and succinctly.

*Sahib-e-ikleel Guru Gobind Singh
Zill-e-haq tazleel Guru Gobind Singh*
Overtly, Guru Gobind Singh is a king, though
Covertly, he lies humbled in God's shadow

WL McGregor Quote

At this juncture, it may not be out of place to quote WL McGregor to get an outsider's view to substantiate the averments made above. "If we consider the work which (Guru) Gobind (Singh) accomplished, both in reforming his religion and instituting a new code of law for his followers, his personal bravery under all circumstances; his persevering endurance amidst difficulties, which would have disheartened others and overwhelmed them in inextricable distress, and lastly his final victory over his powerful enemies by the very men who had previously forsaken him, we need not be surprised that the Sikhs venerate his memory. He was undoubtedly a great man."



The End Nears

Describing the passing away of the Guru on the 15th of Kartik of Samat 1765, Daulat Rai poignantly writes: “Guru Gobind Singh bathed himself, dressed and armed himself, said his prayers and heard *kirtan* (hymn-singing). Then he stretched himself on his bed and listening to the recital of Bani from Guru Granth Sahib (The Sikh Bible) breathed his last uttering the last words, “*Wah-e-Guru-Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah-e-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*”. Thus he poured the final *Ahuti* of his body into the Sacrificial Fire which he had lit for the psycho-spiritual cleansing and betterment of the Hindus.

The Sun Sets

On that day was set the special sun of the Hindus whose light had enabled them to see clearly with their own eyes, whose warmth had brought spring into their withered garden with its wilted plants supporting drooping twigs and leaves, and whose élan vital had engendered fresh sprouts of creative optimism in their dead souls.

Daulat Rai delivers the final punch

“This Sun had set in the darkness of death. That lightning singing patriotic songs in the storm clouds of hope disappeared, the downpour of the soothing rain of nationalism that was helping to cool the burning hearts of the Hindus and to extinguish the fire of acrimonious dissensions sweeping across the country, was driven away by the tempest of Death...”

The Sunset Illuminates the Inner life

This sun, *this* Special Sun, has undoubtedly set in the outer, phenomenal, world, but it has risen in the inner, noumenal, world—on the psycho-spiritual firmament of The Khalsa, to always light the path of Human Destiny, from Here to Eternity, with God-Inspired Faith, embodying Love, Hope, Fraternity, and Liberty.

Concluding Remark

If this essay motivates my readers to look for and read Daulat Rai’s marvellous biography “*Sahib-e-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh*” to know him fully my labour of love would be absolutely fulfilled.



DEH SHIVA BAR MOHE IHE...

Grant me, O God, this signal benefaction
That I may never swerve from righteous action
Free from fear in fighting any adversary
And by sheer resolve achieve my victory
Steeled by Thy Power, my mind doth speak
Greedily, in favour of my own mettle
That when life’s honour be at stake
I may fain die fighting in battle

•

Guru Gobind Singh famously kept a White *Baaj* (Falcon), and is reverently remembered by the Sikhs as *Baajaan Chittyaan Waaley* [Keeper of the White Falcon]. A **falcon** is any of nearly 60 species of hawks of the family *Falconidae* (order *Falconiformes*), diurnal birds of prey characterized by long, pointed wings and swift, powerful flight. According to Harman Singh, the White (Purity) *Baaj* represents the traits of the *Khalsa* (Arabic for Unadulterated or Pure) that he enumerates as: (1) It cannot be enslaved, (2) It is fiercely independent, (3) It flies high but keeps its sight low (Humility), (4) It is always on the move, and unattached, (5) It is never lethargic, (6) It flies against wind, (7) It is Fearless (Divine Trait), and it is Royalty Personified [King of the Sky].

Here are a few more traits of the Falcon: It hunts its own food; it sits atop the heist peak; and it does not build its own nest.

•
 As has he received the gift of his brain
 So does Thy work Man tends to explain
 But Thy creation can never be explicated
 How the cosmos was originally created
 [Guru Gobind Singh]





SECTION-II
MISCELLANY
OF SUPPORT
MATERIAL

ZAFARNAMA

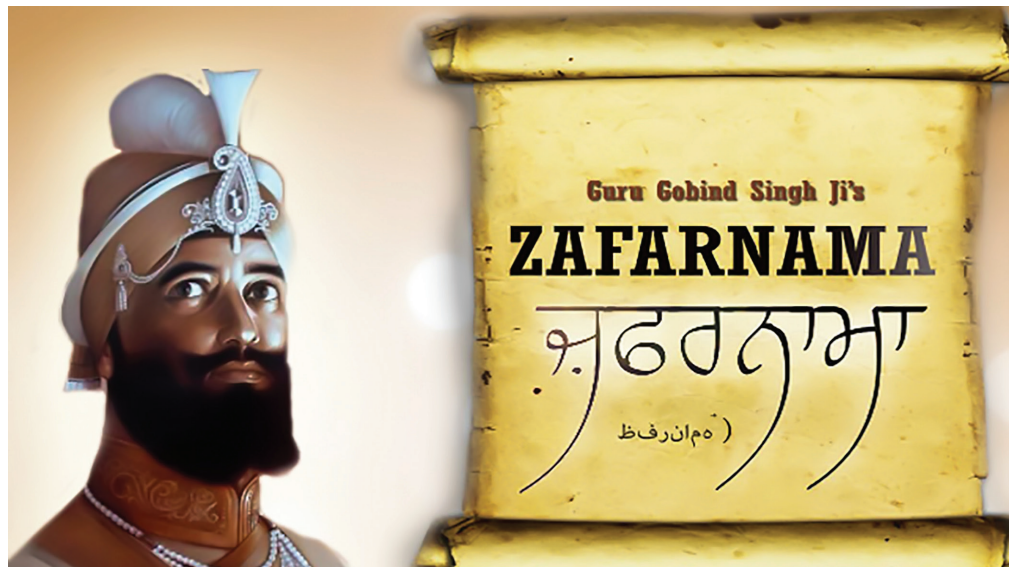
(The Epistle of Victory)

The Lord is One and His Word is True

The Victory is of the Lord

THE SACRED UTTERANCE OF THE TENTH SOVEREIGN

GURU GOBIND SINGH



ZAFARNAMA [Epistle of Victory] was written in Persian verse addressed to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and sent to him after the battle of Chamkaur. The Guru chastises, shames, and reprimands the Emperor for his deceit and unbecoming conduct. He reminds Aurangzeb how he and his henchmen had broken their oaths taken upon

the Holy *Qur'an*. He stresses in this famous historic document the crucial fact that despite his multiple sufferings the Mughal forces did not succeed in their mission of either capturing or killing him. Therefore, he had won a moral victory over the Emperor who had broken all his vows pretending to be a devout Muslim.

In the 111 verses of this notice, Guru Gobind Singh rebukes Aurangzeb for his weaknesses as a human being and for his savage excesses as an emperor. The Tenth Master reaffirms his self-confidence and his unflinching faith in Divine Dispensation even after suffering extreme personal loss of lives of his father [Gur Tegh Bahadar], mother [Mata Gujri], and all his four sons [Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh, and Baba Fateh Singh].

Of the 111 verses, the maximum numbers of 34 verses are paeans to the glory of God; 32 deal with Aurangzeb's invitation for the Guru to meet him and the Guru's refusal to meet the Emperor; instead the Guru had asked Aurangzeb to visit him; 24 verses narrate the events in the Battle of Chamkaur that had been fought on 22 December 1704; 15 verses reprove Aurangzeb for breaking his promise made by swearing on the Holy Quran and conveyed to him by the royal agents; in verses 78 and 79, Guru Gobind Singh had also warned Aurangzeb about the resolve of the Khalsa not to rest until the evil perpetrated by him was destroyed; and 6 verses praise Aurangzeb.

One of the most quoted verses from the *Zafarnama* is verse 22:

*Chu ka raaz hameh heelate dar guzasht
Halal ast burdan b-shamsheer dast*

When all strategies of reconciliation fail on the sworn word
It is one's religiously sanctioned right to pick up the sword



ZAFARNAMA in English line-by-line translation

Verses 1 to 12

The Lord is perfect in all faculties. He is Immortal and generous. He is the Giver of victuals and Emancipator.1.

He is the Protector and Helper; He is Compassionate, Giver of food and Enticer.2.

He is the Sovereign, treasure-house of qualities and Guide; He is unparalleled and is without Form and Colour.3.

Through His Generosity, He provides Heavenly Enjoyments to one without any wealth, falcon, army, property, and authority.4.

He is the Transcendent as well as Immanent; He is Omnipresent and bestows honours.5.

He is Holy, Generous, and Preserver; He is Merciful, and Provider of victuals.6.

The Lord is Generous, the Highest of the High; He, the Preserver, is Most Beautiful.7.

The Lord is Omniscient, the Protector of the lowly; He, the Friend of the poor, is the Destroyer of the enemies.8.

He is the Source of all virtues, keeper of *Dharma*; He knows everything and is the Source of all Scriptures.9.

He is the Perfect Being and Treasure of Wisdom; He, the All-Pervading Lord, is Omniscient.10.

The Lord of the Universe knows all the sciences and breaks the knots of all complications.11.

He, the Supreme and Most High, Supervises the whole world; He, the Sovereign of the Universe, is the Source of all Learning.12.

Verses 13 to 18

I have faith in your oaths; the Lord Himself is the Witness.13.

I have not an iota of faith in such a person, whose officers have relinquished the path of Truth.14.

Whosoever puts faith on the oath of Quran, he is subjected to punishment on the final reckoning.15.

He, who comes under the shade of the legendary Huma, a very brave crow cannot harm him.16.

He, who takes refuge of the fierce tiger; the goat, sheep, and deer do not go near him.17.

Even if I had taken an oath on Quran in concealment, I would not have budged an inch from my place.18.

Verses 19 to 41

How could forty famished persons fight on the battlefield, on whom ten lakh soldiers made a sudden attack.19.

Your army breaking the oath and in great haste plunged in the battlefield with arrows and guns.20.

For this reason, I had to intervene and had to come fully armed.21.

When all other methods fail, it is proper to hold the sword in hand.22.

I have no faith in your oaths on the Quran; otherwise, I had nothing to do with this battle.23.

I do not know that your officers are deceitful; otherwise, I would not have followed this path.24.

It is not appropriate to imprison and kill those who put faith on the oaths of Quran.25.



The soldiers of your army, clad in black uniforms, rushed like flies on my men.26.
 Whosoever from them came near the wall of the fort, with one arrow
 he was drenched in his own blood.27.
 None dared to come there near the wall; none faced then the arrows and destruction.28.
 When I saw Nahar Khan on the battlefield, he was greeted with one of my arrows.29.
 All those boasters who came near the wall were dispatched in no time.30.
 Another Afghan, with a bow and arrow, came on the battlefield like a flood.31.
 He shot arrows heroically, sometimes in senses and sometimes in madness.32.
 He made several attacks and was drenched with last.33.
 Khwaja Mardud hid himself behind the wall; he did not enter the battlefield like a brave warrior.34.
 If I had seen his face once, one of my arrows would have dispatched him to the abode of death.35.
 Many warriors wounded with arrows and bullets died in the battle on both sides.36.
 The darts were showered so violently that the field became red like poppy flowers.37.
 The heads and limbs of the dead were scattered in the field like the
 balls and sticks in the game of Polo.38.
 When the arrows hissed and bows tinkled, there was a great hue and cry in the world.39.
 There the spears and lances provided a dreadful sound and the warriors lost their senses.40.
 How could bravery ultimately withstand in the field, when only forty were surrounded by
 innumerable warriors? 41.

Verses 42 to 70

When the lamp of the world veiled itself, the moon shone in brightness during the night.42.
 He, who puts faith on the oaths of the Quran, the True Lord gives him the guidance.43.
 There was neither any harm nor injury; my Lord, the Vanquisher of the enemies,
 brought me to safety.44.
 I did not know that these oath-breakers were deceitful and followers of Mammon.45.
 They were neither men of faith, nor true followers of Islam; they did not know
 the Lord nor had faith in the Prophet.46.
 He, who follows his faith with sincerity, he never budes an inch from his oaths.47.
 I have no faith at all in such a person for whom the oath of the Quran has no significance.48.
 Even if you swear a hundred times in the name of the Quran, I shall not trust you any more.49.
 If you have even a little of faith in God, come to the battlefield fully armed.50.
 It is your duty act on these words, because for me, these words are like the Orders of God.51.
 If the Holy Prophet had been there himself, you would have acted on them with all your heart.52.
 It is your duty and a binding on you to do as bidden in writing.53.
 I have received your letter and the message, do, whatever is required to be done.54.
 One should act on his words; the speech and action should correspond.55.
 I agree with the words conveyed by the Qazi, but if you promise to come on the right path.56.
 If you want to see the letter containing oaths, I can send you the same immediately.57.
 If you come yourself in village Kangar, we can meet each other.58.

Do not bring in your mind the danger of coming there; because the Brar community acts according to my orders.59.

We can talk to each other in this way; kindly come so that we may have direct talk.60.
Your saying that I may bring for you a very fine steed of one thousand rupees and get this area as a fief (*Jagir*) from you, you may keep this thing in your mind.61.

I am a man of the Sovereign of Sovereigns and His slave; if He permits me,
I shall present myself there.62.

If He permits me, then I shall be present there in person.63.

If you worship One Lord, you will not cause any delay in this work of mine.64.
You should recognize the Lord, so that you may not talk ill or cause injury to anybody.65.

You are the Sovereign of the world and you sit on the throne, but
I wonder at your ill acts of injustice.66.

I wonder at your acts of impiety and injustice; I feel sorry at your sovereignty.67.
I wonder very much regarding your faith; anything said against truth brings downfall.68.

Do not be rash in striking your sword on the helpless; otherwise, the
Providence will shed your blood.69.

Do not be careless; recognize the Lord, who is averse to greed and flattery.70.

Verses 71 to 75

He, the Sovereign of Sovereigns, fears none; He is the Master of the earth and heavens.71.
He, the True Lord, is the Master of both the worlds; He is the Creator of all the creatures of the universe.72.

He is the Preserver of all, from ant to elephant; He gives strength to the
helpless and destroys the careless.73.

The True Lord is known as `Protector of the lowly`; He is carefree and free from want.74.

He is Unassailable and Unparalleled; He shows the path as a Guide.75.

Verses 76 to 88

You are restrained by the oath of the Quran; therefore, fulfil the promise made by you.76.

It is appropriate for you to become sane and do your task with sincerity.77.

What, if you have killed my four sons, the hooded cobra still sits coiled up.78.

What type of bravery it is to extinguish a few sparks of fire and fan the flames.79.

Listen to this well-said quotation of Firdausi: "The hasty action is the work of Satan".80.

I have also come from the abode of Your Lord, who will be the witness on the Day of Judgement.81.

If you prepare yourself for the good action, the Lord will give you an apt reward.82.

If you forget this task of Justice, the Lord will forget you.83.

The righteous should tread the path of Truth and virtue, but it is still better to recognize the Lord.84.

I do not believe that a man who recognizes the Lord injures the sentiments
of others through his action.85.



The True and Merciful Lord does not love you, though you have unaccountable wealth.86.
 Even if you swear a hundred times by the Quran, I shall never trust you.87.
 I cannot come to you and am not prepared to tread your path of oaths;
 I shall go, wherever my Lord will ask me to go.88.

Verses 89 to 94

You are king of king, O fortunate Aurangzeb; you are a clever administrator and a good horseman.89.
 With the help of your intelligence and the sword, you have become the master of *Deg* and *Tegh*.90.
 You are the acme of beauty and wisdom; you are the chief of chiefs and the king.91.
 You are the acme of beauty and wisdom; you are the master of the country and its wealth.92.

You are most generous and a mountain on the battlefield; you are like angels wielding high splendour.93.
 Though you are the king of kings, O Aurangzeb, you are far from righteousness and justice!94.

Verses 95 to 111

I vanquished the vicious hill chiefs, they were idol-worshippers and I am idol-breaker.95.
 Look at the time-cycle, quite undependable; whosoever it pursues, it brings his decline.96.
 Think of the power of the Holy Lord, which causes one person to kill lakhs of people.97.
 If God is friendly, no enemy can do anything; the generous action proceeds from the Merciful Lord.98.
 He is the Emancipator and the Guide, who causes our tongue to sing His Praises.99.
 In troubled times, He withdraws the faculty of sight from the enemies; He releases without injury the oppressed and the lowly.100.
 He, who is truthful and follows the right path, the Merciful Lord is Graceful towards him.101.
 He, who surrenders his mind and body to Him, the True Lord is Graceful towards him.102.
 No enemy can ever beguile him, on whom the Merciful Lord showers His Graces.103.
 When one man is attacked by lakh (100,000), the Generous Lord gives him protection.104.
 Just as your hopes lie in your wealth, I depend upon the Grace of the Lord.105.
 You are proud of your kingdom and wealth, but I take refuge in the Non-Temporal Lord.106.
 Do not be careless about this fact that this *Sarai* (resting place) is not the permanent abode.107.
 Look at the time-cycle, which is undependable; it gives a fatal blow to everything of this world.108.
 Do not oppose the lowly and helpless; do not break the oaths taken on the Quran.109.
 If God is friendly, what the enemy can do, though he may be inimical in many ways.110.
 The enemy may try to give a thousand blows, but he cannot harm even one hair, (if God is friendly).111.

[SOURCE: Internet – The original has been severely edited by this writer to meet the stringent standards of UK English]



SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

[Installed in *Sri Harmandar Sahib*: Monday, 10 September 1604.]

World's youngest religion, the Sikh Faith founded by Guru Nanak Dev [1469-1539 CE], has the unique distinction of having non-human *Eternal Living Guru* [Spiritual Preceptor] residing in the Holy Book called *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* following the lineage of Ten Human Gurus. Its original version was compiled by the Fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev [1563 - 1606 CE], and is called *Adi Granth*. Guru Gobind Singh [1667 - 1708 CE] who consummated Guru Nanak's spiritual mission in the founding of *The Khalsa*, the Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers in 1699 CE] was the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith. He added one *salok* [also spelled *sloka* or *salok* or *slok*], *dohra*, Mahala 9, *ang* [page] 1429 and all the 115 hymns of his father Guru Tegh Bahadar. This second rendition that eventually earned the honorific title of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh as the sovereign inviolable authority putting an end to the lineage of human gurus. After the Guru's death in 1708, Baba deep Singh and Bhai Mani Singh prepared many hand-written copies of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS] for distribution among the ever-growing population of Sikhs.



SGGS is a standard, authentic scripture with absolutely no scope for interpolations, which has 1,430 *Angs* (literally, 'limbs' – in the sense of book this word translates into pages) and 6,000 *Shabads* (hymns). However, this number varies with different scholars such as 5894 or 5877. Unlike what is popularly believed by the laity as well as the Sikh and other scholars poetry in SGGS is the Language of Prophecy, not verse as deployed in works of secular literature. The word 'compositions' commonly used for *Shabads* is also a misnomer because composing a poem involves flights of imagination, control over language, knowledge of prosody, and the craft of literary creativity. If this be taken as 'correct' usage then the works of Bulle Shah, Ghalib, Iqbal and many other so-called Sufi Saints would qualify for entry in SGGS, but they are not there because Guru Arjan

Dev, the Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith, who compiled SGGS, studiously kept such ‘poetry’ out of the Sikh Bible. The Holy Word [*Shabda*] as contained in SGGS is like a volcano eruption in an afflatus of Revelation that transcends the known praxis of wide-spread forms of meditation because it is sacrament [God’s grace]; *not* something called into being by deep, sustained thinking as in Philosophy or wild flights of imagination as in Mythology or ratiocinative cerebration as in Logic or romantic fancies as in Poetry or uncommunicative monologues as in Mysticism. The contents of SGGS are distinguished by the irrefutable fact that each *Shabad* [hymn] carries a prescribed *Raga* [Indian classical musical modes].

The best proof that Prophet Nanak gave of his Revelation was his declaration: “O, Lord—all Thy Names are soul-uplifting, lovable, and adorable.” Then, he spontaneously demonstrated his love of Language as the most beautiful human creation inspired by divine dispensation. In his *Bani* he freely used Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit words, among others, to communicate God’s Holy Word to the illiterate and the learned alike. Interestingly, the key words that the Sikhs utter in religious services and daily prayers innumerable times are either Arabic or Persian: *Hukm* [Edict-Fiat] and *Sahib* [Lord] are Arabic; *Raza* [Will] is Persian. The unique significance of this historic breakthrough in the choice of language for scripture can be grasped by looking at World Religions which have *not* used for the sake of professed purity of their scripture any word from any other language.

The bulk of the Sikh scripture is divided into thirty-one *Ragas*, with each *raga* used in SGGS subdivided according to length of the *Shabad* and its author. The hymns in the scripture are arranged primarily by the *Ragas* in which they are read, recited, or sung. SGGS is written in the Gurmukhi script even though there are various languages, including *Lahndi* [Western Punjabi], *Braj Bhasha*, *Khari Boli*, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Arabic, Persian [Iranian]. Copies in these languages often have the generic title of *Sant Bhasha* [Saints’ Language], which has the unique distinction of being the People’s Language unlike Sanskrit that the Brahmins had dubbed as *Deva Bhasha* – Language of the Gods that intentionally and deliberately kept the wisdom of the Vedas, Upanishads, and other sacred literature of *Sanatana Dharma* [now called, if erroneously, Hinduism] out of the reach of the masses condemned as low castes to sustain and maintain Brahmanical hegemony.

SGGS contains the *Bani* [Word] of the Sikh Gurus: Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh. The Tenth Master added one *Sloka* in Mahala 9, *Ang* 1429. It also contains, among others, the *Bani* of Sants [Indian Saints], such a Ravidas, Ramananda, Kabir, and Namdev, besides that of Muslim Sufi saints, Bhikan, and Sheikh Farid.

SGGS is a holistic compendium of the concrete and abstract, the mundane and celestial, that spells out a unique vision of a World Order uncompromisingly based on Divine Justice for all human beings regardless of caste, colour, creed, nationality, and ethnic eccentricities without oppression of any kind. While it acknowledges and respects the scriptures of Hinduism and Islam, it does not imply moral or spiritual reconciliation with either of these religions. It is installed with fervent ceremony in a Sikh Temple, *Gurdwara* [Literally, Gateway of the Guru], and all Sikhs bow or prostrate before it on entering such a temple. SGGS is unique in that it is revered as the Sovereign, Eternal, and *Living Guru* of the Sikh Faith for guidance and edict-fiat for all matters temporal and spiritual.

During the Spiritual Ministry of Guru Nanak Dev, collections of his holy hymns were compiled and sent to distant Sikh communities for their use in morning and evening prayers. His successor Guru Angad Dev [1504 – 1552 CE] began collecting his predecessor’s *Shabads*, and this tradition was continued by the third and fifth Gurus as well. Working on this project, the Fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev, detected that pretenders to Guru Nanak Dev’s Spiritual Ministry were releasing among the new-fangled Sikh community what were their own writings forged with anthologies of the previous Gurus. Therefore, in order to safeguard the




original *Bani* [Revealed Word] he began compiling an authentic sacred scripture for the Sikh community to prevent spurious writings from gaining legitimacy and currency.

When Guru Arjan Dev finished collecting the Bani of his father-and-predecessor, he convinced Guru Amar Das's son Mohan to part with the collection that he had in his possession of the Bani the first three Spiritual Preceptors. In addition, he sent disciples across India to find and bring back any previously unknown religious writings of theirs. He also invited members of other religions and contemporary religious leaders to submit their writings for possible inclusion in SGGS. The Guru pitched a tent by the side of Ramsar Tank in Amritsar and started the task of compiling the Holy Book. Having selected authentic hymns he asked Bhai Gurdas to be his scribe.

While the holy hymns were being put together Mughal Emperor Akbar the Great received a complaint that the *Adi Granth* contained passages vilifying Islam. Therefore, while on his northern travels, he stopped *en route* and asked to inspect what was being compiled. Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas brought him a copy of the *Adi Granth* as it then existed. After choosing three random passages that were read out to him, Akbar decided that the report submitted to him concerning this matter was false.

In 1604, *Adi Granth* was completed and ceremoniously installed at Sri Harmandar Sahib [now popularly known as Golden Temple], with Baba Buddha as the first *Granthi*, or designated reader of the Holy Book. Guru Arjun Dev dictated that unlike the Hindu scriptures, the *Pothi* Sahib could be open to reading by anyone of any caste, creed, or sex. Guru Arjun Dev furnished the following Epilogue [*Mundawani*] for the Holy Book:



*In the salver there are three things
Truth, contentment, and reflection
The ambrosial Name of God is added to it
As the Sustainer of everything in the cosmos
He who digests and enjoys it shall be saved
Precious is this gift that must not be abandoned
It should ever remain dear to one's heart
The world's dark ocean can be crossed
By clinging to Lord's feet, Nanak
It is He who dwells everywhere*

Since communities of Sikh disciples were spread all over northern India, copies of the Holy Scripture needed to be made for them. The Sixth Master added the tunes of 9 out of 22 Vars. The Seventh and the Eighth Masters did not have their own Bani. At Damdama Sahib in 1704, during his one-year respite from the heavy fighting with Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in which the Khalsa had earlier been unavoidably engaged, The Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh and Bhai Mani Singh added Guru Tegh Bahadar's *Bani* to *Adi Granth* to create a definitive sacred compendium.

It is noteworthy that Guru Gobind Singh did not add his own Bani to the Holy Book. Found in *Sri Dasam Granth*, his Bani forms part of Sikhs' daily prayers. Sikhs consider *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as the sovereign, eternal *Living Guru*, the infallible Spiritual Preceptor as much for the Sikhs as for the entire humankind. Its

place in Sikh devotional life is based on the fundamental principles that Bani [the Revealed Word] is Guru [metaphorically 'Word-in-Flesh'], and Guru is Bani.

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh conferred the title of "Guru of the Sikhs" upon the *Adi Granth* [The Primal Holy Book of the Sikh Faith]. The event was recorded in a *Bhatt Vahi* (a bard's scroll) by an eyewitness, Narbud Singh who was a bard at the Rajput rulers' court associated with the Sikh Gurus. A variety of other documents also bear testimony to this historic proclamation by the Tenth Master. Thus, despite some aberrations, Sikhs since then have accepted *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred scripture, as their Sovereign, Eternal, Living Guru, a breathing embodiment of the Ten [human] Gurus.

Guru Angad Dev had modified and standardised Gurmukhi [literally, from the Guru's Mouth] script in the 16th century and the entire *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was written in it. According to the Sikh tradition and the *Mahima Prakash*, an early Sikh manuscript, Guru Angad Dev had taught and spread the Gurmukhi script at the suggestion of Guru Nanak Dev as immediate successor of the founder of the Sikh Faith. *Gurmukhi* descended from the *Landa* script and was used from the outset for compiling the Sikh scriptures. The Sikhs hold the *Gurmukhi* script in the highest esteem. It is the official script for writing Punjabi in the Indian State of Punjab. The *Adi Granth* was originally written without any spaces or breaks, and is the precursor of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The original master copy of the Holy Book still exists today and is kept at Kartarpur, which is a town about 15 kilometres north-west of the city of Jalandhar, Punjab, India.

Sikh Gurus considered divine worship through *Shabad kirtan* [singing paeans to Lord God's glory using the *Ragas* of Indian classical music as the best means of attaining the state of *vismaad* [joyous wonder] which eventually results in communion with Him. SGGS is divided by *Ragas* into 1,430 pages known as *Angs* (limbs) in the Sikh tradition. The pages are written with a landscape orientation. According to one scholar, there are 19 lines of text per page. However, many pages with headlines (starting with new raag) have less than 19 lines per page. Total number of lines is 26,852. Total number of words is 398,697.

Guru Nanak Dev, in my assessment based on my comparative study of World Religions, is the Greatest Prophet so far, and the only one to have used Numeral 1 to represent the inviolable sovereignty of Lord God. Inspired by this core idea I make bold to interpret the meaning of the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, which 1430, by using the mystic significance attached to each number. Number 1 is the *Sargun* [Manifest Immanence with multiple attributes] of Lord God, Zero that represent His *Nirgun* state [Secret Transcendence with no attribute]. Interestingly, Computers that have revolutionised technological advancement in the world operate using the binary language. They store data and perform calculations using only zeros and ones. A single binary digit can only represent True (1) or False (0) in Boolean logic. However, multiple binary digits can be used to represent large numbers and perform complex functions. The word 'False' in this context can be interpreted to mean that for the scientist anything that cannot be accessed and deciphered does not either exists or is untrue. Guru Nanak Dev has proclaimed an un rebuttable lucidity that both God's Will [*Reza*] and His Edict-Fiat [*Hukm*] are inscrutable. Therefore, it stands to reason to believe that in His transcendence [Zero/Unmanifest state] He cannot be known because in such a case none other Himself exists. The meaning assigned to Zero in the Computer Language should thus be read in this light.

Now, let us look at the significance of each Number that figures in the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, 1430. This I am doing because of my interest in and study of Numerology.

Number 1 represents the Sun. It stands for creation, creativity, strong individuality, inventiveness, and positivity. Indeed, these are some of God's countless divine attributes.



Zero [0] is the only number that represents all that is, including all potential. Separation does not exist. Indication that separation is possible does not exist either. This is so very true of God's Unimaginable Uniqueness.

Number 4 [Uranus] is a no-nonsense number with a heads-down approach to life and work. It is extremely dependable, and lends a great amount of stability to a person or situation. Number 4 is dedicated to advancement. These properties are clearly discernible in the universe and its functioning.

Number 3 [Jupiter] has a tendency to thrive in an upbeat and engaging atmosphere. Its energy is youthful and positive and it has an incredible zest for life. It dances from one enjoyable experience to the next, eager to interact with others along the way. The prized skill of the Number 3 is communication and it uses this talent to build a wide and interesting circle of friends, lovers, and kindred spirits. Number 3 has childlike innocence, and is highly original and embraces unique thinking and creative expression. This number is artistic, and its curious nature allows it to convey abstract ideas and find solutions that others may miss. This is a veritable echo of God as a matchless creator and communicator, and conservator. Jupiter or *Brihaspati* is the *Guru of Devas* [gods and goddesses] in Hindu mythology. This fits our case like a glove. SGGS is the Living Guru for the entire humankind.

The sum total of all the digits in 1430 is **Number 8**. Symbolising infinity, it deals with the recycling path of cosmic energy. Number 8 resonates with authority, self-confidence, inner strength, and mystical wisdom, besides unconditional love for humanity and unremitting desire for global peace. In digital clocks, Number 8 consists of seven bars, which can be removed to create other Numbers Zero and from 1 to 9. For example, remove the middle bar and Number 8 becomes Zero. Remove five bars from top, bottom, middle, and sides, and it becomes 1, and so forth. Belonging to Saturn, Number 8 stands for thought and reflection [*Vichaar*]. For its association as the sum of the digits 1, 4, and 3, it is crucial because it presents both the spiritual and material worlds, and, more importantly, *Vichaar* that is enjoined upon all followers of the Sikh Faith as a mandatory psycho-spiritual workout in order to become *Sachiar* [Truthful]. The terminal digit Zero of the Number 1430 in relation to the manifest world denotes 'cosmopolitanism', which is a key feature of the Sikh Faith's *Ardaas* [Prayer] entreating Lord God for *Sarbat da Bhala* [general weal of the entire humanity].

In the light of this exposition, my inference of the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, 1430, is like this. Between Number 1 [*Waheguru's Sargun Saroop*] and Zero [His *Nirgun Saroop*] are Number 4 [endless advancement implying evolution] and Number 3 [guided unseen by God's Revealed Word (Gurbani) as the Spiritual Preceptor]. If you dispassionately look at what I have stated you will instantly recollect what Guru Arjan Dev has proclaimed in the *Mundawani*. The upshot of all this ratiocinative cerebration is that it is God, who plays His *Lila*, Divine Sport, encompassing the *Brahmanda* [Cosmos] and *Pind* the body of each individual human person. Why He does so nobody knows or can know but He does it all the same, we humans participate in His *Lila* while enjoying the mind-boggling spectacle as speechless spectators. I urge the readers to read Guru Arjan Dev's *Mundawani* and contemplate its contents. They will be pleasantly surprised to find a barely audible echo of my interpretation in the Guru's proclamation.

The Holy Book can be categorised into two sections:

1. Introductory Section consisting of the *Mool Mantar*, *Japji*, and *Sohila*—the Bani of Guru Nanak Dev.
2. Bani of Sikh Gurus followed by that of the *Bhagats* [who know only One Lord God and worship Him and none other] is collected and arranged according to the chronology of *Ragas* or Indian classical musical modes.

The word *Raga* means ‘colour’; more specifically, the emotion or mood produced by a combination or sequence of select pitches or notes of which an octave consists called *Sargam*, with each note bearing its name: Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni... . A *raga* is composed of a series of melodic units based upon a definite scale of the seven primary notes or *Swaras*. Each mode uses certain notes in what is called *Sargam* which provides structure followed by *Chalan* [prescribed movement of notes] embellished by ornamentation. *Ragas* are associated with times of the day, seasons, and year. There are 31 main *Ragas* in the Sikh tradition, divided into 14 *Ragas* and 17 *Raginis* (minor or less definite *Ragas*), 31 *mishrat* [compounded] *Ragas* in 17 *taalas* [drum-beats]. Within the *raga* division, the hymns are arranged in order of the Sikh Gurus and Sikh Bhagats with whom they are associated.

The *Ragas* in the order in which they appear in SGGS are: Sri, Maanjh, Gauri, Asa, Gujri, Devagandhari, Bihagada, Vadhans, Sorath, Dhanaasri, Jaisri, Todi, Bairaari, Tilang, Suhi, Bilaval, Gaind, Ramkali, Nut-Narayan, Mali Gauri, Maru, Tukhaari, Kedaar, Bhairo, Basant, Saarang, Malhaar, Kaanda, Kalyan, Prabhati, and Jaijawanti. In addition, there are 22 compositions of *Vars* (traditional ballads). Nine of these have specific tunes, and the rest can be set and sung to any tune.

Ragas such as Megh, Hindol which create jubilant mood, Jog that conjures up melancholy, and Deepak that builds up an atmosphere of restlessness were deliberately kept out of SGGS in view of the quintessentially contemplative mood of *Gurbani* that has an ineluctable divine orientation.

We humans instinctively identify ourselves with our bodies and names and surnames as societal necessity; indeed, everything that makes for the complexity, profundity, and immensity of our lives in fulfilment of our instinct for gregariousness because ‘Man is a social animal, as Aristotle had put it with unmatched succinctness. It is this misplaced identification that I call “Ego”. From an innocent and seemingly harmless kinship, however, “Ego” turns into a psycho-emotional disease that affects everything of which Society is a sickly sum total. When it assumes the form of vainglory “Egotism”, or, as it is traditionally called “*Ahamkaar*” or “I-Making”, it becomes so formidable and stubborn that no worldly power, including the many varied praxis connected with ‘Yoga’ and ‘Meditation’, can evict it from the mind, much less kill it. Therefore, the first unique feature and attribute of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is that Guru Nanak as Prophet of the Sikh Faith ushered into the mortal world what is essentially ‘sovereign and eternal’: *GURBANI* that holy utterance of the *Guru* or the Spiritual Preceptor.

There would not have been any *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* if Guru Nanak Dev were not there, in the first place. And Guru Nanak Dev did not create it as new poetry, philosophy, mythology, or mysticism, as is widely but erroneously believed and propagated. He received it from Lord God in his Revelation and said what he did as His “Word” [*Shabda*] grounded in the Holy Name. The fact that he did not take any credit for it showed his Humility that he eventually chose to make the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. His proclamation “*Shabda Guru Surt Dhun Chela*” [‘The Holy Word is the Spiritual Preceptor and the Soul Consciousness Listening to It in uplifting Trance is the worthy Disciple] says it all by politely discountenancing all genres of *HUMAN Gurus*. Centred herein is the little-known source of the sovereignty of *Gurbani* as a whole that every one of the Founder’s successors [without his exhortation or injunction] chose to use *his* name ‘Nanak’ in his divine utterances. Viewed in this existentialist light, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* spontaneously assumes the unique stature and status of the Sovereign, Eternal, and *Living Guru* such as no scripture of any World Religion possesses.

Let me give you the example of two *Bhaktas* [also spelled as ‘*Bhagats*’] or Saints, whose *Bani* is featured in SGGS. Bhagat Namdev’s impassioned innocence and childlike approach cast in profound and pure emotion compelled a stone image to turn into God who had to perforce graciously accept the milk that he had offered. Bhagat Dhanna’s persistent pleadings, supplications, and eventual resolve to fast unto death left no choice with



the Lord but to manifest from out of an idol into a living deity. The stance taken by these two *Bhagats* was not inspired by *Patthar Drishti* or Stone *Bhavana* [Emotion]. It was *Bhagwan Drishti* [Divine seeing] and Soul *Bhavana* that transformed a mere stone into God Incarnate! This being the case, a true and restless lover of God entranced in divine madness does not look upon SGGS as a Holy Book. With proper orientation of mind armed with Divine *Drishti* and *Nirankar* [God without Attributes] *Bhavana* such a devotee worships it with his body, mind, and soul with undiminished love until the Living Lord speaks to him face to face. In sharp contradistinction, maddened by the vagabond thrills of maverick worldly ambition, Man turns a living deity into a manmade idol [a mere stone] in the abracadabra of rites and rituals, while, on the other hand, someone else with his being stirred up by divine love transforms the very same idol into a living deity.

On the occasion of the installation of *Adi Granth* at the Golden Temple, Guru Arjan Dev told the *Sangat* [holy congregation] that the *Adi Granth* was the embodiment of the Guru, and should be treated in the same manner as they respected him. When Guru Arjan Dev first completed the *Adi Granth*, he placed it upon his own bed and slept on the floor by its side. Those who bow and prostrate before *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* are not idolaters; they do so in front of a *Living Guru* who is the manifest embodiment of Lord God without attributes [*Nirankaar*]*—Shabda-in-Flesh*.

GURBANI, as the Scripture of the Sikh Faith, exhorts all of us to imbibe the unique virtue of conscientious denial of creature comforts heroically made for a lifestyle that consumes minimal material resources of all kinds, which are indispensable for our mortal subsistence. When our expectations of admiration from fellow beings of what we do get sacrificed in the game remain unfulfilled we feel hurt to the point of an utter disillusionment, especially when the players involved are our own blood relations. This point is precisely one of self-realisation by which we accept stoically that *disillusionment* is the price in terms of a perennial pain caused by the denial of evanescent pleasures of workaday existence in favour of the Bliss of Life Eternal. God promises this rarest of rare gifts and grants it for our huge sacrifice (often culminating in death) when we tread the Path of (uncompromised) Righteousness! However, this new orientation of mindset comes about from a change-over from worldly wanderlust (loafing around on a horizontal plane) to an otherworldly ascent warranting vertical climb in red-alert focus. It is the soul's lonesome journey set apart by the transplantation of consciousness (*Surt*) from the temporal turf of Materialism to the spiritual soil of Divinity (*Shabda*).



Raags (Ragas) used in the *Gurbani* of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

The 60 Raags (musical moods) of *Siri Guru Granth Sahib* in order of appearance:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Asa | 21. Devgandhari | 41. Nut |
| 2. Goojri | 22. Bihagra | 42. Mali Gaura |
| 3. Gauri Deepakee | 23. Vadhans | 43. Maru |
| 4. Dhanasri | 24. Vadhans Dakhani | 44. Maru Kafi |
| 5. Gauri Poorabi | 25. Sorath | 45. Maru Dakhani |
| 6. Siri | 26. Jaitsri | 46. Tukhari |
| 7. Majh | 27. Todi | 47. Kedara |
| 8. Gauri Guarairree | 28. Bairarri | 48. Bhairo |
| 9. Gauri | 29. Tilang | 49. Basant |
| 10. Gauri Dakhani | 30. Tilang Kafi | 50. Basant Hindol |
| 11. Gauri Chaitee | 31. Suhee | 51. Sarang |
| 12. Gauri Bairagan | 32. Suhee Kafi | 52. Malhar |
| 13. Gauri Poorabi Deepakee | 33. Suhee Lalit | 53. Kanra |
| 14. Gauri Malva | 34. Bilaval | 54. Kaliyan |
| 15. Gauri Mala | 35. Bilaval Dakhani | 55. Kaliyan Bhopali |
| 16. Gauri Majh | 36. Gound | 56. Parbhathi |
| 17. Gauri Sorath | 37. Bilaval Gound | 57. Parbhathi Bibhas |
| 18. Asavari | 38. Ramkali | 58. Bibhas Parbhathi |
| 19. Asa Kafi | 39. Ramkali Dakhani | 59. Parbhathi Dakhani |
| 20. Asa Asavari | 40. Nut Narayan | 60. Jaijavanti |



Mishrat Raag

This Raag is produced when two separate Raags are combined to create a new one. For example, Raag Gauri has 12 variations: one is the original form of Raag Gauri, and the further 11 all contain the main identity and characteristics of Gauri as their foundation and are then influenced by a secondary Raag.

Raag and Raagini

Sri Guru Granth Sahib contains no *Shabad* that has the definition ‘Raagini’ in the title. All *Shabads* clearly state ‘Raag’ (also spelled as Raga), and consequently there are not 31 Raags and 28 Raaginis in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as is sometimes claimed, but 60 Raags of equal and independent status. [Source: Raj Academy]

Note: Those interested in details of this important subject should access <https://www.rajacademy.com/guru-granth-sahib>. The authors have done a marvellous job and given little-known information that would enrich the devotees’ perception and understanding of *Gurbani*.

**RECURRENCE OF CERTAIN WORDS IN SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

• Gobind	745
• Thakur	216
• Ram2533	
• Gopal	491
• Narayan	85
• Allah	49
• Khuda	17
• Wah-i-Guru	13
• Wah-Guru	3
• Parbrahm	324
• Kartar	220
• Hari8345	

**OTHER PARTICULARS OF SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

• Pages [called ‘angs’]	1430
• Letters	1024000 [out of these 24000 belong to Sukhmani Sahib]
• Languages	13
• Raag	31 [a detailed on this subject is featured in this book]
• Gurus whose Bani is featured in it	6
• Saints whose Bani is featured in it	3
• Bhagats whose Bani is featured in it	15
• Bhattas whose Bani is featured in it	11
• Prakash [Message of Enlightenment]	1





CHAAR SAHIBZAADEY

Four Sons of Guru Gobind Singh

The Ninth Master of the Sikh Faith Guru Tegh Bahadar founded in June 1665 the city of Anandpur Sahib. He had previously lived in Kiratpur, but unprovoked hostility with Ram Rai, the eldest son of the Seventh Master Guru Har Rai as well as other sects of the Sikh Faith, forced him to move to village Makhoyal. Anandpur Sahib, sometimes referred to simply as Anandpur (literally, “City of Bliss”), falls in Rupnagar district (erstwhile Ropar), situated on the edge of Shivalik Hills, in the state of Punjab. Located near the Sutlej River, the city is one of the most sacred places of the Sikh Faith. This is where the last two Masters, Guru Tegh Bahadar and Guru Gobind Singh, had lived. When, in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth (Commonwealth of Pure Souls), the city assumed an enduring historic importance, and has since been home to Gurdwara Kesgarh Sahib, which is famous as one of the Five Takhts (Seats of Temporal Power) of the Sikh Faith. The city is also an important pilgrimage centre besides being the venue of the largest annual Sikh gathering that witnesses festivities steeped in religious fervour during Hola Mohalla in the spring season.



Under the inspiring leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, the city of Anandpur Sahib flourished, with its population swelled by artists, poets, merchants, and devoted Sikhs. With the establishment of the Khalsa Panth, the human spirit assumed its most beautiful form, with more than eighty thousand coming together under the banner of the Khalsa. Unfettered by the shackles of the retrograde prejudices of caste, creed, colour, and calling those who had been repressed and oppressed for centuries by the notorious caste system experienced an unparalleled exaltation of the human spirit.

Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, Guru Gobind Singh's four sons, reverentially addressed as *Sahibzadas*, lived with their parents in the city of Anandpur, and assumed the personage of saints supported by the skills of soldiery, scholarship, and a statesmanship under the tutelage of their illustrious father. Every evening they would gather their friends to practise the arts of swordsmanship and archery. As their martial skill grew so did their father's love and pride of their father

in their accomplishments. The two eldest boys got baptised and admitted to the Khalsa Brotherhood.

The unprecedented happenings in Anandpur alarmed the Mughal rulers and met their disapproval. The Sikhs were growing in both strength and numbers, which stirred fear in the mind of Emperor Aurangzeb concerning the destabilisation of his tyrannical rule in Northern India. He, therefore, commanded that his generals put an end to the Khalsa and raze the city of Anandpur. This led to unprovoked hostilities. The first attack on Anandpur Sahib was made in the winter of 1695. The Guru called his 17-year-old son Ajit Singh and told him to hold the part of the city known as Kesgarh. He dispatched other generals to defend the other forts around the city while Bhai Daya Singh guarded the northern ramparts of the Anandpur Fort. The valiant Sikhs defended the city with zeal and zest and inflicted a decisive defeat on the Mughal army. But this victory only hardened the Emperor's resolve on whose orders other wars followed between 1700 and 1704, the last one ending in a prolonged and barbarous siege of the city.

The Muslims along with the treacherous Hindu hill rajas tactically surrounded the city to cut it off from outside supplies. The Mughal strategy was to tighten the noose of siege on the city to break the defending Sikhs' will and resolve. With the food supplies exhausted, therefore, the Sikhs suffered greatly and food was rationed to a quarter pound of corn a day. The Sikhs left the fort at night whenever they could and took supplies from the

enemy's camp. Yet even this was not enough. The inhabitants of Anandpur were dying of starvation. The Khalsa stripped the bark off the trees and baked it into bread. They ate all the leaves and flowers that grew within the city walls. The situation was desperate.

According to Shanti Kaur Khalsa, *"The siege was bitter for the Sikhs, but costly to the imperial armies as well. They were quickly exhausting the resources of the local area. But more importantly, through their lack of results, they were losing credibility with the Emperor in Delhi. The enemy generals formed a plan to induce the Guru to leave Anandpur by trickery."*

Aurangzeb sent a message to the Guru assuring him a safe passage if he and his army would leave the city. He sent a signed copy of the Koran and pledged upon its pages that his promise was genuine. The Guru knew it was a trap and that the Mughals would ambush them, but on the repeated requests of his family and advisors, Guru Gobind Singh agreed to leave the fort."

Left with no alternative, Guru Gobind Singh, his family and followers left the fort of Anandpur Sahib, on December 20, 1704, under cover of the darkness of a night ravaged by fierce storms. The Panj Pyare (the Five Beloved Ones of the Guru) and other brave and devoted warriors accompanied the Guru as the front and rear guards. As they all reached the bank of the Sirsa River, they sat for the Morning Prayer and *Asa di Var* at dawn. Thereafter, they plunged their horses into the freezing cold river-water.

The imperial army committed breach of trust by violating their promise and attacked the Sikhs from behind when they were in midstream. There was hard fighting in the darkness and cold rain. One of the Panj Piaras Bhai Sahib Singh and hundreds of brave Sikhs were killed in the battle. All of the Guru's baggage, including the holy manuscripts of the *Adi Granth*, were lost forever in the churning waters of the river Sirsa. Something even more unfortunate occurred. Guru Gobind Singh was separated from his family in the course of the battle. Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur made their way to Delhi, and stayed there in the protection of the Sikh Sangat. The Guru's mother Mata Gujri accompanied by the two younger Sahibzadas made her way alone over rough, uncharted terrain in utter darkness.

At sunrise, Guru Gobind Singh and his two older sons, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh, rode together with a group of forty Sikhs with the Mughal army in their hot pursuit. They took shelter in a small mud fort at Chamkaur, and fortified it in preparation for battle. The Guru posted his men strategically on the roof, doors, and windows. It was the firm resolve of each of the forty Sikhs to fight to the last drop of blood as the enemy posted a hundred thousand troops on the horizon.

Six Sikhs went out from the small fort of Chamkaur to guard against the advance of the enemy as a delaying tactic. They devised a new pattern for fighting. Two Sikhs moved together back to back into the enemy ranks and fought fiercely wielding their swords. With four arms and four legs, covering all directions, they were like a whirling ball of strength and steel. Their brave resistance holding off the advancing troops amazed the Mughal soldiers. Swirling and slashing their swords, though few in number these valiant Sikhs wrought mighty destruction amongst the enemy ranks. The strategy of calculated combative resistance against the huge army worked wonders because it could not capture the mud fort during the entire day. When the first group succumbed to the overwhelming odds, six more Sikhs emerged, including the brave Panj Piara Bhai Mohukam Singh. As the third group formed, Panj Piara Bhai Himmat Singh begged permission to fight and the Guru granted it with his the blessings.

The Guru's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh, who was then 17 years old, bowed and placed his head on his father's feet and besought his blessings to go forth and fight the enemy. Guru Gobind Singh, knowing full well that this was their last meeting on earth, smiled and as an eternally loving father granted permission to his first born to enter the battlefield. Baba Ajit Singh took with him five brave Sikhs and charged out from the safety of the fort.



He fought with a fierce fury and saw the Mughal soldiers fall beneath his unsparing sword. When his quiver was exhausted of arrows and his sword was broken, Ajit Singh impaled the enemy with his spear. However, when his spear snapped, the enemy made a fresh attack and mortally wounded him.



At the Battle of Chamkaur (Above, Below)

soldiers. It is written that Baba Jujhar Singh made his way through the Mughal army with a fierce unrelenting resolve like a crocodile through a stream. The enemy fell like rain in the monsoon until Baba Jujhar Singh and his five Sikhs also succumbed to the formidable power of overwhelming numbers.

Panj Piara Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, and three Sikhs came to Guru Gobind Singh and petitioned him to leave the fort and let them stay back and deal with the enemy. Their contention was that if at least the Guru survived, the seed of Sikh Faith would live on to flourish. The Guru was reluctant to leave his men in the heat of battle, but the Sikhs insisted, “Beloved Master, we are not making a request, we are five Sikhs. By the power that you had vested in us on Baisakhi Day, we are pronouncing “Gurmatta” which you cannot disobey. You must leave this place right away.”



Bowing to their command, the Guru replied, “Wherever five Sikhs of mine assemble, their collective stature shall be the highest of the high, and whatever they then do shall carry the authority of the entire Khalsa.” Saying this, the Guru walked around them three times and laid his plume and crest before them.

Sant Singh, who happened to be the Guru’s look-alike, dressed up in his clothes, and waited in an upper room for the enemy soldiers. Two Panj Piaras Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh planned to leave the little make-shift fort with Guru Gobind Singh, left separately and walk towards a star that the Guru had pointed out in the night sky until they met again. The Guru took his bow and shot two arrows at the Turkish sentries who were holding torches. Instantly they dropped their lights, and plunged onto the battlefield into total darkness. In the confusion that followed, the Guru and his companions quietly left the fort.

The Guru, fighting from the rooftop, said, “O God, it is Thou who sent him and he has died fighting for his faith. I have given back the trust that Thou had reposed in me.”

Baba Jujhar Singh, the Guru’s second son aged 14, on seeing his brother’s brave fight could not restrain himself and asked his father’s permission to join the battle. He took five more Sikhs with him and like his brother before him, wrought havoc among the seasoned enemy

In the morning, the Mughal army mounted a full assault on the little fort of Chamkaur. Sant Singh who was in charge of the battle along with his companions inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. However, the vastly superior numbers of the Mughals eventually prevailed, and they succeeded in scaling the fort-walls and killed the Sikhs who had been fighting from within. The Mughals found the Guru's look-alike Sant Singh who was wearing the plume and dress of Guru Gobind Singh and thought they had finally killed the Guru. It was not long before they realised that Guru Gobind Singh had once again outsmarted them.

During the crossing of the river Sirsa when the Mughal armies ambushed the Guru, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh (9) and Baba Fateh Singh (7), were separated from the group in the confusion. They walked through the rugged jungle with their holy grandmother Mata Gujri until they came to a small village where they took shelter. An old servant of the Guru's household named Gangu heard that they were there and came to meet Mataji. With sweet words he requested that they go with him to his village. Though he expressed his concern his heart was malicious with betrayal. Cold, wet and alone, Mata Gujri gratefully went with Gangu to his house. For the award of a few gold coins, Gangu conveyed their whereabouts to the Mughal army. At dawn, a loud banging came on the door and the soldiers of the evil-minded governor Wazir Khan came to escort the holy family to Sirhind. As they travelled through the city, people thronged to see them pass, offering words of encouragement and admiration. They shouted curses at the Brahmin for his betrayal and were shocked at the depravity of the Mughal governor.

In Sirhind, they were imprisoned in a tower that was unbearably cold in the month of December, appropriately called Tthanda Burj. It was a barren cell with neither cots nor mats; just a pile of straw for mattresses. Mata Gujri knew that the Guru's love and blessings were with them, but yet awful anxiety for the safety of her young and innocent grandsons gnawed at her heart.

In the morning, the soldiers came to take them to be produced before Wazir Khan. When they came to the door of the Wazir's palace, the huge gates were closed and only the wicket gate was open. The soldiers roughly pushed them in through it, but to do so they would have to bend over and duck down to enter. Baba Zorawar Singh saw the evil trickery of Wazir Khan and said, "Brother, wait. See what this evil man is doing? We have to bend our necks and bow our heads to enter through this little opening. We are the sons of the Tenth Master and we shall never bow our heads before such a wicked man!"

Even though the tension in the air was strong, Baba Fateh Singh laughed out aloud. With a mischievous look, he turned his back to the door and scooted through it with his back while Zorawar Singh followed suit close behind. Wazir Khan was furious when he saw that he had been outsmarted by a seven-year-old boy.

When they stood before Wazir Khan, even he was struck with their sublime resplendence. He offered to spare their lives if they would willingly convert to Islam. If not, he declared aloud, he would have them killed. Baba Zorawar Singh said in a loud voice, "My father is Guru Gobind Singh, my grandfather is Guru Tegh Bahadar, and my great-grandfather is Guru Har Gobind. Death means nothing to me. Our death will fan the flames to drive out all the tyrants from this land." Their unexpected bravery and unnerving impudence inside the court shocked the governor! However, the worst he could do to swallow his barbaric arrogance was to order them tortured and killed, interred alive in a brick wall. This weird method was adopted on the advice of his Brahmin Suchanand and the Qazi because according to the Holy Quran shedding the blood of the innocent and the unarmed is an unpardonable sin, and via this they would achieve their sinister aim and deceptively fulfil the exhortation of Islam!

To execute the imperial orders, a soldier led away both the Sahibzadas out of the court. A large crowd had gathered and they expressed their shock at the imminent murder of innocent children. "What crime have they



committed?” cried one. “How cruel and inhuman!” another exclaimed. “They are the brave sons of their brave father!” said another.

The Sahibzadas were brought to a spot where a brick wall was being raised. (Below) Both of them were made to stand side-by-side. They started reciting Guru Nanak Dev’s Japji Sahib while the wall went up around them brick by brick. When it reached their chest-level, they were again offered the ‘gift’ of life if they would convert to Islam. Lifting his head high, Baba Fateh Singh said, “We shall not give up our faith. We have taken the *Amrit* [specially prepared sacred drink for the Khalsa baptismal ceremony] of the double-edge sword, so what do we care for death?”

The wall went higher and higher until both Sahibzadas became unconscious. At the tender age of 7 and 9, the two brothers breathed their last. Tears flowed from the eyes of the onlookers who watched this ghastly tragedy – more horrible even for this regime that had earned the dubious distinction and notoriety for the most brutal persecutions. The shocked spectators cried out in dismay, “What cruelty! Who shall answer and make amends for this heinous crime?” Mata Gujri breathed her last on hearing the heartbreaking news of her grandsons’ barbaric murder. A wave of anguish gripped the country as the reports of Sahibzadas’ martyrdom spread like wild fire.



Shaheedi of the Chotte Sahibzade: Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji who were bricked alive at Sirhind by the Mughals.

In the basement of Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, the wall which was constructed on 11 December 1705 is still in existence though with certain changes. The pilgrims who had visited this sacred place more than six decades ago tell that at that time the original wall which was made of small Sirhindi [the popular name is Nanakshahi Bricks] bricks laid with lime mortar was in existence and the crack which occurred on one side of the wall while the masons were constructing it, was also visible. The place where the bodies of Mata Gujri [mother of Guru Gobind Singh] and the younger *Sahibzaadey* [Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh] lay overnight is known as Bimangarh. Three shrines near Sirhind are dedicated to their memory:

As Guru Gobind Singh was told of the death of his young sons, he received the dismal tidings with solemn composure and unshaken fortitude. He took an arrow out of his quiver, thrust it into the ground, pulling out a bush, and coolly declared, **“Such a tragedy will not go unnoticed at the Lord’s Court. Like this weed bush, the Mughal rule would be uprooted.”**

Guru Gobind Singh wrote a heart-rending letter to Aurangzeb, known as the “Zafarnama” [Epistle of Victory]. He chastised the Mughal Emperor for his heartless cruelty, his falsehood, and his deceit; explaining the Sikh code of warfare, while exposing Aurangzeb for his depravity and unscrupulous morality.

Guru Gobind Singh, whose creativity is unmatched, wrote, “When you swore an oath on Prophet Muhammad and called the Word of Allah to witness, you should have kept your promise. If the Prophet himself were present here, I would make it my special duty to inform him of your treachery. Even though my four sons

were killed, the Khalsa remains eternally alive like a coiled snake. What brave deed is it to quench your despotic thirst by extinguishing a few sparks of life? You are merely stoking a raging fire.

“Regarding your treacherously forced battle at Chamkaur,” the Guru wrote, “what could forty men do when a hundred thousand swarmed the small battlefield? At your behest, the oath-breakers attacked the defending heroes with swords, arrows, and muskets. I myself was locked in combat and I fought to the hilt true to the letter and spirit of my credo that **‘When all peaceful means of reconciliation have been tried and have failed, it is just and righteous to take to the sword!’** ...Any soldier of yours who advanced beyond his defences to attack my position, miserably fell tasting his own blood. However, those troops of yours who had committed no aggression were honourably spared from any injury at our hands.

“Many were killed on both sides by indiscriminate showers of arrows and bullets ...Men, the bravest of the brave, fought with all their heart. But how could merely forty succeed against an enemy of overwhelming numbers?”

When Aurangzeb received the Zafarnama, he was aghast with the revelation of the naked truth of what evils he had committed. Fearing God’s judgement, he pledged to meet Guru Gobind Singh, but Aurangzeb died before that could come to pass.

After long weeks of travelling, the Guru stopped and set up camp in Talwandi Sabo on 20 January 1706. He ordered that the top of a sand hill be levelled; took off his armour, and sat down to rest. This city that he founded earned its renown as Damdama Sahib, the resting place. The Guru stayed there for nine months free from any disturbance.

As the news of the Guru’s stay there spread, Sikhs from all over came to pay obeisance. The place that was once an abandoned forest soon came alive with the tram-beats of the pilgrims’ caravans in the midst of ambient chanting of *Gurbani*. Poets and men of literary attainments once again surrounded the Guru reminiscent of the days at Anandpur Sahib. The Sikhs were ecstatic to be in the blessed presence of their Guru once again. The *Amrit* baptismal ceremony was started to be conducted daily and the Sikhs’ camp grew in number. Large numbers of Sikhs came to see the Guru after a long separation, the interregnum having been marked by heart-rending, harsh, and painful events. But these dreadful and violent days showed no trace on the Guru’s resplendent face. His eyes’ radiance was undimmed; the divine glory of his being was unscathed.

Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur came from Delhi and joined the Guru at Damdama Sahib. They wept this reunion was, however, attended by showers of tears when they learned of the fate of the young Sahibzadas. The Guru consoled them by saying **“Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Fateh Singh have laid down their lives for truth and righteousness, and attained liberation. So, why should the mother of such heroes shed? Your sons have gone with honour to the realm of bliss. Having conscientiously completed Akal Purkh’s assignment, they have now returned to His home. Therefore, accept God’s Will as the best of divine gifts. Instead of your four children, I present you all my Sikhs as equally brave and worthy sons!”**

Shanti Kaur Khalsa pays her tribute in these words, *“The Khalsa had survived the hardest of times and sprang back to life like spring water bubbling up from the ground. Under the inspiration of the Tenth Master, the Sikhs grew in strength and conviction, taking their place as the light of the world. The remembrance of the beautiful and brave Sahibzadas stays with the Khalsa through all times. Their bravery strengthens us, their sacrifice inspires us and their love of Guru guides us. Their young lives set the example against which all other actions are judged.”*





BABA BUDDHA

(6 October 1506 - 8 September 1631)

BABA BUDDHA is a unique personage in *Sikhi*, and is reverently regarded as an epitome of the New Faith just as Guru Har Gobind had described him at the time of his death. “Bura”, as he was originally named, was the only son of Bhai Suggha, a Hindu Jatt of Randhawa clan, and Mai Gauran who had been born into a Sandhu family. He was a contemporary of the first six Sikh Gurus and had personally performed



the investiture ceremony of five of them, from the second to sixth. He was one of the earliest disciples of Guru Nanak Dev and, by his blessings, a prime figure in early Sikhism. It is said that in his childhood, he was blessed with a long life by Guru Nanak, who had named him Buddha (revered old man) on being impressed by his precocious queries related

to spirituality when he was 9. It is important to note that though the English spelling is same as of the founder of Buddhism, the letter 'd' is pronounced hard Baba *Buddha* [The Wise Old Man] and soft in The *Buddha* [The Enlightened One].

Baba Buddha was born in 1506 AD in village Kathu Nangal (District Amritsar). He met Guru Nanak for the first time in 1518 AD when the Guru had visited his village. He impressed the Guru as having old head on young shoulders and won the appellation of "Buddha" (old). In 1604 AD, Baba Buddha became the first Granthi (priest of the Golden Temple and in that capacity completed the first *paath* (recitation) of the *Adi Granth*.

Guru Arjan Dev had no offspring from his first wife Mata Ram Devi who had died issueless. He was then married to Mata Ganga who at his behest went to Baba Buddha to ask for a boon. The old seer crushed an onion on his palm and predicted that she would beget a son who would grow up as "*Dal Bhanjan Gur Soorma*" to break the enemies' heads like he had presently done, and destroy the barbaric oppressors. Har Gobind was born to live up to this prophecy.

When Baba Buddha passed away in 1631 CE aged 125 years at village Ramdas (District Amritsar) Guru Har Gobind performed the last rites. Two shrines stand at Ramdas in memory of Baba Buddha: *Gurdwara Tap Asthan*, which was the residence for the family and *Gurdwara Samadhan* where he was cremated. So much respected was Baba Buddha among the Sikh masses that after the execution of Guru Arjan and when Guru Har Gobind was in the prison in Gwalior, the affairs of the community, among other responsibilities of the Sikh Faith, were left in the hands of Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas.

The Sikh masses were extremely restive when, at the orders of Jahangir, Guru Har Gobind was interned in the Gwalior Fort. Baba Buddha would lead a band of Sikhs to Gwalior and return after going round the fort with reverence. Mohsin Fani writes that Sikhs could be seen in batches any time on the Grand Trunk [popularly known as GT] Road, on their way to Gwalior.

Earlier, Baba Buddha had played an important role in the development of Sikh institutions. He had devoted himself zealously to tasks such as the digging of the Baoli [Step-Well] at Goindwal under the instructions of Guru Amardas and the excavation of the sacred tank at Amritsar under the supervision of Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev. When Guru Har Gobind built the Akal Takht as the highest seat of Temporal Power of the New Religion, the first platform was built by Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas with no involvement of a third person after the corner stone had been laid by the Guru.

Guru Har Gobind was called to village Ramdas after Baba Buddha had premonition of death. On receiving the message he promptly reached the place and made obeisance to him in the manner he had himself done to Guru Nanak Dev. On Guru's request, Baba Buddha explained to him the sublime teachings of the first five Gurus.





BHAI GURDAS

(1551- 23 September 1637)



In Sikhi, Bhai Gurdas is a much honoured Sikh scholar, missionary, and master litterateur who is also respected for his Sikh way of life. It was under the supervision of the Fifth Master Guru Arjan Dev that he penned the first copy of Sikh Scripture, which was then called the *Adi Granth*. However, the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon it the title of “Guru Granth” and it has thus been called by this nomenclature ever since, and revered as the Eternal Guru by Sikhs all over the world. Bhai Gurdas was also responsible for various writings in his own right which have gained much respect in the

Sikh community. His *Vaaraan* have been referred to by Guru Arjan Dev as the “Key” (“Kunjee”) to Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Sahib is also responsible for composing “*Kabit Savaiye Bhai Gurdas*”.

Bhai Sahib was born at Goindwal, Punjab, in 1551 in a Bhalla Khatri family. His father was Bhai Ishar Das and his mother Mata Jeevani. He was the nephew of the

Third Master, Guru Amar Das. Bhai Gurdas was a first cousin of Mata Bhani, daughter of Guru Amar Das and mother of Guru Arjan Dev.

Bhai Gurdas, who was the only child of his parents, lost his mother when he was barely three and his father when he was 12. He had spent his early years at Goindwal and Sultanpur Lodhi. At the former place, he had the opportunity of listening to many men of knowledge and spiritual attainment who kept visiting the town which fell on the Delhi-Lahore road. At that time the city was the religious centre of the Sikhs.

Bhai Gurdas later proceeded to Varanasi where he studied Sanskrit and the Hindu sacred literature; subsequently, he was initiated into the Sikh Faith. He was then sent as Sikh Guru's missionary to spread *Guru Nanak Bani* for which purpose he made extensive visits to Agra, Lucknow, Varanasi, Burhanpur, Rajasthan, Jammu, and the Chamba Hills, spreading After Guru Ram Das's demise in 1581, Bhai Gurdas returned to Punjab where he first went to Goindwal and thence proceeded to Amritsar to pay his obeisance to Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Ram Das's successor. He eventually made Amritsar his home and through his devotion to the tenets of the Sikh Faith and love of learning carved for himself a pre-eminent position among the Guru's major disciples.

When Guru Arjan Dev compiled the *Adi Granth* containing the hymns of the preceding Gurus along with his own and those of select saints and Sufis, Bhai Gurdas inscribed the entire sacred text. Though the original copy of the Holy Book was once bequeathed to the Ninth Master Guru Tegh Bahadur, it was, after an attempt on his life, returned at the Guru's behest to Dhir Mal, the elder son of Baba Gurditta and a grandson of Guru Har Gobind. Though many Sikh devotees hope that the original *Bir* [Volume] as inscribed by Bhai Gurdas would one day be assigned to the love and care of the *Panth* [literally, 'Path', used for the Sikh/Khalsa Commonwealth], the original *Granth* is still in the possession of the family of Dhir Mall's descendants at Kartarpur in Punjab State's Jalandhar district. Some Sikhs have pointed out with unexpected relief that if the *Adi Granth* had been in the library of the *Darbar Sahib* [one of the original names of Golden Temple, Amritsar] during 1984's Operation Blue Star, the Original *Bir* would have been most likely lost in the fires that destroyed so many priceless treasures of Sikh History.





HOLY BOOKS OF WORLD RELIGIONS

H *INDUISM*: Hinduism is an Indian religion and *dharma*, or a way of life, widely practised on the Indian subcontinent and parts of Southeast Asia. It has been called the oldest religion in the world, and some practitioners and scholars refer to it as *Sanatana Dharma*, “the eternal tradition”, or the “eternal way”, beyond human history. Scholars regard Hinduism as a fusion or synthesis of various Indian cultures and traditions, with diverse roots and no founder. This “Hindu synthesis” started to develop between 500 BCE and 300 CE, after the end of the Vedic period (1500 BCE to 500 BCE), and flourished in the mediaeval period, with the decline of Buddhism in India that was stage-managed by Right-Wing Hindus with Brahmanical mindset.

The Vedas are considered the earliest literary record of this planet and were written on the banks of the River Saraswati. According to Dr Mayank Vahia, a scientist working at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, who has written a report in *DNA India*, there is only one river that lies between the Yamuna and Sutlej rivers; in India, it is called the Ghaggar, and as it moves into Pakistan, it becomes the Hakra. Although its river-bed stands dry today, the ground surveys and satellite clearly indicate that it was once a huge river. The Saraswati civilisation was the oldest in the world and flourished on the banks of the river Saraswati from 9000 BCE to 4000 BCE, till the river became non-perennial, due to a tectonic shift blocking the river’s mouth at the Himalayan Glacier. The Vedas hold the original scriptures of

Sanatana Dharma (Hindu) teachings, and contain spiritual knowledge encompassing every possible aspects of Indian life. Vedic literature with its philosophical maxims has stood the test of nearly 11,000 years of time and is the highest religious authority for the Hindus. However, the world is waking up to these books written 7000 years ago.

Hinduism has survived unremitting onslaughts throughout the course of its chequered history primarily by virtue of its catholicity—the psycho-spiritual resilience to absorb, without losing its own primordial entity, all kinds of influences, including those of the relentless invaders, and making them their own. Unfortunately, in my view—which I dare say is any time superior to the one held by any non-Hindu scholar worldwide—the Right-Wing Hindu outfits in the India of today, blinded by fanaticism and myopic outlook, have lost sight of this beautiful and bountiful legacy —catholicity, resilience of spirit, and Holistic Humanism (my coinage)— to gain meagre short-term political advantage.

BUDDHISM: Buddhism is an Indian religion attributed to the teachings of the Buddha, born as prince Siddhartha Gautama, and also known as the *Tathāgata* (“Thus-Gone”) and *Sakyamuni* (“Sage of the *Sakyas*”). Early texts have his personal name as “Gautama” or “Gotama” (Pali) without any mention of “Siddhartha”, (“Achieved the Goal”) which appears to have been used as a kind of honorific title when it does appear. The Pali word ‘Tipitaka’ (*Tripitaka* in Sanskrit) is the name given to the sacred scriptures of the Buddhist *Dhamma* and is made up of two words; *ti* meaning ‘three’ and *pitaka* meaning ‘basket’. The word basket was given to these writings because they were orally transmitted for some centuries (from about 483 BCE) in the way a basket of excavated earth on a construction site might be relayed from the head of one worker to another.

The *Tipitaka* was written on palm leaves in the Pali language around 100 BCE and takes up more than forty volumes in an English translation, roughly about 20,000 pages. The three parts of the Tipitaka are the *Sutta Pitaka*, the *Vinaya Pitaka*, and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. It is the largest sacred book of any of the great World Religions. It is also known as the Pali Canon since the language used for it is Pali and to better differentiate it from the *Mahayana Tripitaka* (only difference of one letter ‘r’).

To my reckoning, the Buddha was the first religious leader in human history to make stringent use of Reason to address problems both mundane and spiritual encountered by all and sundry during workaday existence. His approach is studiously so logical that I call him the “First Formula Man” to have appeared on the globe. He cool-headedly identifies the problem, clear-headedly states it; and, then, holistically solves it beyond all doubt.

JAINISM: Jainism is an ancient religion belonging to the *Sramana* tradition. Jainism is a heterodox Hindu religion, founded in the 6th century as a revolt against Hinduism. Its most striking features are the exaltation of saints or holy mortals, called *Jinas*, above the ordinary Hindu gods, and the denial of a supreme being and of the divine origin and infallibility of the Vedas. Jainism that believes in immortality and the transmigration of soul occupies a position intermediate between Brahmanism and Buddhism, and has some things in common with each.

In most of the religions, there is one main scripture book. Hinduism has Gita and four Vedas, Christians have the Bible, Muslims have Quran, Persians have Avesta, and Sikhs have *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and Buddhists have three *Pitakas*. Likewise, Jains have their own scriptures called *Agamas*, also called the *Jain Shrut*. However, they do not have one main scripture but many and are, therefore, called the people of books that include the biographies of Jain Tirthankaras. *Tirthankara* means a victor or conqueror, and is a title given to great Jain teachers such as Mahavira [literally, The Great Hero]. *Agamas* are texts based on the discourses of the *Tirthankara*. The discourse delivered in a *Samavasarana* (divine preaching hall) is called *Shrut Jnana* or *Gyan*, and comprises eleven *Angas* [Limbs] and fourteen *Purvas*.



The earliest versions of Jain Agamas known were composed in *Ardhamagadhi Prakrit*. *Agama* is a Sanskrit word which signifies the ‘coming’ of a body of doctrine by means of transmission through a lineage of authoritative teachers. They are humans who achieve enlightenment via asceticism. It is read in the eight day long festival called Paryushan. Lord Mahavira’s preaching was orally compiled by his disciples into many texts, and transferred from *Acharyas* (gurus) to the disciples over the course of about one thousand years.

In olden times, monks strictly followed the five great vows of Jainism. Even religious scriptures were considered priceless possessions and thus jealously guarded by never documenting knowledge of religion. Also, during the course of time many learned *Acharyas* (elder monks) compiled commentaries on various subjects of the Jainism. Around 500 CE, which was one thousand years after Lord Mahavira’s *Nirvana* (death), Jain *Acharyas* realised that it was extremely difficult to keep memorizing the entire Jain literature compiled by the many scholars of the past and present. In fact, significant knowledge was already lost and the rest polluted with interpolations, modifications, and errors. Hence, as known to them, they documented the Jain literature in book-form.

The most striking thing about Jainism is unremitting denial of material needs of mortal existence to minimalistic requirements that liberates the mind from unending wants created by uncontrolled craving. To my knowledge and experience, what we call ‘freedom’ does not belong to politics, economics, or sociology. It is quite simply an unsparing reduction of needs and in the resulting self-discipline learning to be happy.

CHRISTIANITY: Christianity is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, who is also known by the Christians as Jesus Christ. It is the world’s most populous religious group, comprising a majority of the population in about two-thirds of the countries in the world. Its followers affirm that Jesus is the Son of God, the *Logos* [In the Sikh Faith, it is *The Shabda* or the ‘Revealed’ Word], and the saviour of humanity. The Old Testament had prophesied Christ’s advent as the Messiah, and it is chronicled in the New Testament. Christianity and its ethics have played a primary role in the shaping of Western civilisation.

The scriptures of all major World Religions were written after the death of their founders. It is said that The Bible was written by about 40 men in about 1600 years—dating from 1500 B.C. to about A.D. 100. These men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21), not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:13). The first translation of The Bible was done in Greek. However, in July of 1604, King James I of England appointed approximately 50 of the best Bible scholars and linguists of his day to the task of translating a new version of the Bible [originally written in Hebrew] into English. The work took seven years. Upon completion, it was presented to King James I in 1611, and soon thereafter it became the standard Bible for English-speaking Protestants, even though it is a revision of the Bishop’s Bible of 1568.

The original title of the “King James Version” [KJV] was “The Holy Bible, containing the Old Testament, and the New Testament: Newly translated out of the Original tongues: and with the former Translations diligently compared and revised, by his Majesties special Commandment. The earliest recorded date that it was called the “King James Version” or “Authorized Version” was in 1814 CE. ‘Christianity’ is a beautiful name and retains its pristine glory because other Religions lose theirs as soon as they use the suffix “ism” with titles. Early statements of essential beliefs of Christianity were the Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed.

Unlike all other religions of the world that carry the suffix “ism”, Christianity has the divine distinction of having a unique sovereign name. To be a Christian is to be like “Christ”, a veritable personification of Compassion by virtue of which God’s love is dispensed among peoples of the world.

ISLAM: Islam is an Abrahamic monotheistic religious group teaching that there is only one God (Allah) and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. It is the world's second-largest religion and its followers are most commonly known as Muslims who make up a majority of the population in 50 countries. Islam teaches that God is merciful, all-powerful, and unique, and has guided humankind through prophets, revealed scriptures, and natural signs.

The Holy Book's history refers to the oral revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad and its subsequently written compilation into a sacred manuscript. It spans several decades and forms an important part of early Islamic history. According to Muslim belief and Islamic scholarly accounts, the revelation of the Quran began in 610 CE when the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad in the cave Hira near Mecca, reciting to him the first verses of Sura Iqra (al-`Alaq). Throughout his life, Muhammad continued to have revelations until before his death in 632 CE. The Quran's present version was first compiled into book format by Zayd ibn Thabit and other scribes under the third caliph Uthman. For this reason, the Quran as it exists today is also known as the Uthmanic codex.

According to Professor Francis Edward Peters (1927), what was done to the Quran in the process seems to have been extremely conservative and the content was formed in a mechanical fashion to avoid redactional bias. Prophet Muhammad was unlettered and this fact which, in my considered opinion, is the most authentic evidence that scholars of all genres tend to ignore, that spiritual knowledge can be had only through Revelation that God grants to chosen few messengers—and can never be had in school, college, and the university.

In this context, it is crucial to note that when The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, Arabic was not a literary language at all—and I dare say that even today all the best scholars of Arabic language worldwide cannot together produce the like of this Holy Book. 'Islam' too has its unmatched intrinsic beauty—because it appends no 'ism' after it. The very name says everything about the Grand Faith: Surrender to the Will of Allah. Similarly, the term "Musalman" is awesome: It is a compounding of two words—'Musallam' and 'Imaan', which means 'Full Faith'.

ZOROASTRIANISM: A monotheistic faith (i.e. a single creator god), Zoroastrianism, also called Mazdayasna, is one of the world's oldest religions that remains active. It is centred in a dualistic cosmology of good and evil and an eschatology predicting the ultimate destruction of evil. Ascribed to the teachings of the Iranian-speaking prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra), it exalts a deity of wisdom, Ahura Mazda (*Wise Lord*), as its Supreme Being. Major features of Zoroastrianism, such as messianism, judgment after death, heaven and hell, and free will have influenced other religious systems, including Second Temple Judaism, Gnosticism, Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism.

With possible roots dating back to the second millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism enters recorded history in the 5th century BCE. The most important texts of the religion are those of the *Avesta*, which includes the writings of Zoroaster known as the Gathas, enigmatic poems that define the religion's precepts, and the Yasna, the scripture. The full name by which Zoroaster addressed the deity is: Ahura, The Lord Creator, and Mazda, Supremely Wise.





GOLDEN TEMPLE

Marvel of Sikh Architecture

Golden Temple is the popular name of *Sri Harmandar Sahib* or *Sri Darbar Sahib*. It is revered as the holiest of holy shrines of the Sikh Faith, and is most visited place of worship in the entire world. The shape of the holy shrine is a square joined to a semi-hexagon, symbolising, respectively, the Absolute [i.e. Being] and the Relative [i.e. Becoming] aspects of Truth which, according to the Sikh scriptures, is the Primary Attribute of God. The crowning feature of the Holy shrine dome is elliptical which, despite its very low height, can be seen from all the sides without obstruction. Its low height denotes ‘Humility’ [Literally, Guru’s Utterances] by the Sikh Gurus as the mainstay of meditation [*Dhyan*], which is a conjoining of the consciousness [*Surt*] with the Sacred Word [*Shabda*].

The sacred ‘*Amrit-Sarovar*’ was developed by preserving the existing *Zizyphus jujube* trees or *Beris* along with the water-pond that is believed to have had curative properties. The result is that the entrance to the holy shrine is from the *west* unlike in Hindu temples [*Mandirs*] in which it is always from the eastern side. Fullest reverence was shown to the low-lying site which was developed to be accessed by moving downstairs 2-3 storeys suggesting that the Spirit World is negotiated by a devotee’s deliberate self-abnegation and unremitting effort of will grounded in love of the divine. Such seismographic delicacy of perception and palpable sensitivity to Nature’s architecture makes the Golden Temple perhaps the most environment-friendly creation in the world.



In contrast to the foregoing places of worship of other Faiths, *Sri Harmandar Sahib* is a unitary shelter primarily for the installing of *Guru Granth Sahib*, which all the Sikhs are enjoined upon to revere as a *living* spiritual preceptor (*Guru*). It also provides space for the *Raagis* (baptised hymn-singers) and the congregation without any discrimination of caste, colour, creed, or sex. Its circumambulatory (*Parkarma*) is meant for walking round about the *sanctum sanctorum* in contemplative reverence for the Holy *Guru*. Unlike in other places of worship, *Sri Harmandar Sahib* has four doors signifying that the Sikh Faith is open to anyone who seeks to be *Guru*-guided on the path of socially-beneficent spirituality. Whereas all other historical places of worship are elevated on high podiums, the Golden Temple is much lower than its surroundings so that the devotees have to climb down more than a floor-height to have access to the shrine. That the construction and development of the *Amrit-Sarovar* antedates that of the sanctuary, the proclamation of the Sikh Faith on the foundation of *Dharma*, the Cosmic Moral Law, gains an added significance. The implication is that this world is *not* *Maya* (i.e. illusory), and that human life is spiritually committed to socially-beneficent action which is the *immanent* aspect of Divinity. No wonder why *Guru Nanak* has made Humility the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. *He proclaimed that Humility along with (politeness) is the quintessence of all virtues and qualities, and demonstrated it by identifying himself with the lowliest of the lowly.*

The primacy of the Concept of *Sri Harmandar Sahib* is derived from the delineation of God's Divinity enshrined in His primary attribute: Truth. Thus, Truth with its Omnipresence over four *yugas*, and before the birth and after the death of Time, becomes the Building Design principle of the Holy Shrine, and its Plan automatically assumes the geometrical shape of a **Square**. Just as this expresses the FORM of God's Transcendence, His Immanence is depicted by the **semi-Hexagon**. The two are linked by a covered passage

symbolising the tutelage of the *Guru* (Holy Preceptor), without whose willing indulgence the experience of the ultimate Reality is absolutely impossible.

- **Architecture of *Sri Harmandar Sahib* is neither a derivation from, nor an adaptation of, any other place of worship in terms of its Concept, Cardinal Principles, and Space dimensions.**
- The Holy Shrine is a refreshing new addition to the repertory of Religious Architecture of the World.
- **The significance of the elliptical dome lies in its visual appeal as a symbol of Humility, which is the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith.**
- Its appropriateness of use for expressive purposes is an absolutely original enterprise.
- The inverted lotus on the dome of the Holy Shrine suggests a cerebral collection of the five senses and their *internalisation* into Reflection (*vichar*) whose cultivation is an essential discipline for a seeker of Truth.
- **The cuboid of the *Sachch Khand*, crowned by the inverted lotus of the elliptical dome, is a beatific vision, architecturally speaking, of God's Divine Essence.**
- It is a Form that transforms the corporeality of the building materials into an exalted experience of ethereality.

The **FORM** of *Sri Harmandar Sahib* is closest to elementary geometry: a cuboid integrated with a prism of half-hexagon. A completely unadorned Form would be austere, a mere Mass, appropriate to the nature of Space for *Sachch Khand*. However, its Surface has been livened up by bas-relief in repoussé work to extend *Ik Omkar's* Unchanging Transcendence [Truth] into Progressional Immanence [Beauty]. This has been achieved by the exercise of an utmost restraint, to symbolise “simple living and high thinking” as a prerequisite to a Life of the Spirit as delineated and prescribed in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

In the Building Design of *Sri Harmandar Sahib*, the Spirit of Architecture has been caught in a billowing breath of devotion, in total surrender to God, Who in His own sweet Will, joyously filled the architect's heart, completely cleansed of egotism, as a worthy receptacle of His Grace. This architecture is thus a Religion of Feeling concretised in the elements of Space, Structure, and Form—at once Universal and Timeless, like God's Own Immanent Divine Creativity: an Architecture in which Religion dwells as a Living Force to reunite souls, wandering on the wasteland of *Maya* (illusion), with the Logos or God's Word (*Shabda*).

The Golden Temple built in 1604 CE is an incomparable specimen of Sikh Architecture which represents the best and the finest in the late 16th-century style of decorative and building arts. It is the manifest architectural representation of *Sach Khand* [Realm of Truth] where, according to Guru Nanak Dev, Lord God dwells. It urges the soul to have *Darshan* of Beauty as the Splendour of Truth—God's Primary Attribute. *Darshan* is thus the sublime ceremony of acquiring sight or vision of the Divine Being so that the devotee receives the virtue, uplift, blessing, etc. For this purpose, Guru Arjan Dev as the architect of Golden Temple had far-sightedly created the *Darshani Deorhi* [Viewing Gateway].

The *Darshani Deori* is connected through the causeway to the Holiest of Holy Shrines of the Sikh Faith—*Sri Harmandar Sahib* [Lord's Temple] or *Sri Darbar Sahib* [Lord's Court]. As soon as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*

[The Sikh Bible or The Holy Book of the Sikh Faith] is taken for *Sukh Aasan* (for Rest at Night) to *Akaal Takht Sahib*, the gates of *Darshani Deori* are closed from inside. This takes place in a highly sacrosanct ceremony during which The Holy Book is escorted in a special *Palki* [Palanquin]. *Sewadars* (attendants) on duty will allow only devotees with special permission from the Gurdwara authority for taking part in the night *Sewa* that involves the cleaning and washing of the *Sanctum Sanctorum*.

Every morning devotees gather in front of the gate of *Darshani Deori*, recite the *Shabads* (hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*,) till the gates are opened for the day. On one side of the *Darshani Deori* there is a room meant for the booking of *Akhand Patth* [Continuous recitation of The Holy Book], *Raagis* [Qualified baptised hymn-singers] perform at the holy shrine; and on the other side is a room for keeping the Palanquin. The singing of the hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is called *Keertan* [singing paeans to the Glory of Lord God].

Darshani Deori was beautified with marble and fresco-work during the reign [1799-1849 CE] of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The main doors of the *Deori* are decorated with silver sheets on one side and on the other with beautiful inlay ivory work.

- **GOLDEN TEMPLE** is adored as the holiest of holy shrine of the Sikh Faith because it was designed by the Fifth Master Guru Arjan Dev. Its concept and related parameters come from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and is thus the manifest form of **Sach Khand** in which **NIRANKAR** has His abode just as the **SHABDA** dwells as the Revealed Word in Flesh in The Sikh Bible.
- The **HOLY SHRINE** was meant to be viewed from the *Darshani Deorhi* [Viewing Gateway] but the Management has covered the causeway and cut off the sacred view. The outer space of the Golden Temple has been developed as an Italian piazza. The Gateway to the Holy City of Amritsar carries a replica of the sacred dome.
- These examples show the little-known **SACRILEGE** committed by both the client and the architect out of sheer ignorance of the tenets of the Sikh Faith. They have together turned a hallowed Place of Pilgrimage into a harrowed Tourists' Centre.
- **I appeal with all the moral force at my command to the powers-that-be to take immediate steps to restore the pristine glory of the Holiest of Holy Shrine that has assumed the enviable status of being the most visited sacred place of worship in the world.**
- In my Third PhD earned in 2008 on *Sri Harmandar Sahib*, I have established through research and illustrated analysis of Places of Worship of World Religions spread over 45 centuries that as an artistic creation of Divine inspiration, it is a Marvel of Religious Architecture among other Places of Worship which exist on the globe. It expresses the unicity of *Ik Omkar* [One and Only One Lord God] and His divine Immanence; the Holy Shrine inspires the devotees to follow the Path of Truth; besides goading and guiding their soul-consciousness (*Surt*) to reunite with The Source, via The Logos (*Shabda*): The Primal Person (*Akal Purakh*), whose Essence (*Nirgun Saroop*) is Transcendent and Might (*Quadrat* as manifestation of His *Sargun Saroop*) Immanent, as the life-breath of the entire cosmos.





KHALSA

The Circadian Apotheosis of Divinity

Crucial to the origin and development of Modernism in the world were three things that surfaced to cause the necessary breakthrough during the Renaissance in Europe: (1) new discoveries (both geographical and scientific), (2) invention of gunpowder, and (3) invention of the printing press. The scientific discovery, that the universe is helio-centric, not geo-centric, shook the very foundations on which religions of the world, notably, Christianity, are raised. The discovery of America, among other new countries, meant that there are continents and peoples worth capturing. The gunpowder would come handy in the fulfilment of an avaricious capturing-spreed. The printing press would turn out literature to disseminate the ideas, ideals, and ideologies of the capturing masters. In a nutshell, all this boiled down to one basic fact: religion as an “opium of the masses” could no longer afford to remain passive, escapist, monastic, and other-worldly. Above all, God—the hero in various forms of different religions of the world and believed to be the creator of all that exists—must respond to the changing scenario of the human society. Notions of a disinterested, even an ineffective, God still persist with a haunting discomfiture in all world religions—and, as late as 1860 CE, TH Huxley was forced to defend Charles Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, as propounded in his bombshell thesis “Origin of Species”, as his “bulldog” against Bishop Samuel Wilberforce at the meeting at Oxford University of the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

It is my firm conviction that Guru Nanak's advent in 1469 CE was an historic event of far-reaching consequence, thrown up in the world by Providence, to fill the vacuum that the breakaway modernist sensibility created in the firmament of existing religions. At any rate, it cannot be denied that a worthwhile life is not possible to live *without* ultimate convictions—for even the sceptic is *convinced* that everything is doubtful! Guru Nanak's Bani, the Revealed Word, posits an evolutionary development of religion, which only reached monotheism considered to be the highest form of religious belief—after a long period of purification. The Guru's Revelation is all-encompassing—while satisfying the scientific temper, it acknowledges God (Ik Oankar) as an Active Principle of “Creative Mysticism”—in palpable immanence in the three-pronged act of creation, operation/preservation, and destruction, encompassing countless universes, persons, objects, places, events, etc. By the irresistible power of his Pragmatic Spiritualism, Guru Nanak puts man in the service of mankind as an active agent through which *Wah-e-Guru* (God, the Wondrous Spiritual Preceptor) carries out His (Inscrutable) Will—by generous dispensations of Grace and Mercy. By so doing, the Guru awakens man to the intrinsic responsibility and accountability he must own and shoulder as an individual human person. He thus holisticises man into a humble servitor, but conscious and grateful, who willingly gives up pursuit of personal salvation for the sake of the many-splendoured “Game of Love” which, in total surrender and life-sacrifice, rewards the seeker (the soul-bride) with the Divine Husband's endowments of *Sat* (Truth, as unchangeable steadfastness and fortitude), *Chit* (Consciousness, of one's assigned place in the Scheme of Things), and *Anand* (Bliss, of socially-beneficent action fulfilled in motiveless service).

The seed sown by Guru Nanak in the fertile soil of divinised ethics (with its insistence on good moral conduct as the only convincing demonstration of being a *Gurmukh*, God-oriented), promptly struck root and rapidly grew into a full-grown tree of Pragmatic Spiritualism which fructified in the establishment of the Khalsa, as a Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers. The intervening events, which nurtured its need, nascence, and nature, must be mentioned. The boon and beauty of the “Game of Love” was first demonstrated by Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of Martyrs, who, during the ruthless tortures and atrocities perpetrated on his person at the behest of Mughal Emperor Jehangir, savoured the honeyed sweetness of God's Edict-Fiat (*Bhaana*) as a rare dispensation of Divine Grace. His son, Guru Hargobind, thus, felt impelled to bring out the hitherto unmanifest dimension of Guru Nanak's New Faith self-defence against unprovoked aggression by taking up arms. This far-sighted initiation of the *Miri-Piri* (a meditative melding of the temporal or secular and the spiritual or religious powers within the selfsame Faith) concept was a crucial stage in the development of the Sikh Ideal of Total Man (*Mard-i-Kaamil*).

The “Game of Love” wrought a steely icon of Pragmatic Spiritualism in the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadar, who, unlike his illustrious grandfather, laid down his life voluntarily—for the preservation of Hindu Dharma which was threatened with total extirpation at the hands of the bigoted and barbarian Aurangzeb, the self-styled promoter of Islam. The Guru left a message for his nine-year-old son, Gobind Rai, which read: “As willed by the *Akal Purakh* (The Immutable Being) I am leaving for Delhi to lay down and sacrifice my life for religious freedom. You are to see that my body is not put to disgrace and that it is cremated properly and with all due honours. I am bequeathing the Leadership of the Faith to you. You should carry it out gloriously, even if it would cost your life...” [Ref: Saints of India, Part III, p.78].

Guru Nanak's unique Faith saw its climax in the founding of the Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699 AD by Guru Gobind Singh, the last spiritual successor of the Founder. The choice of the day for the hallowed act brings out the great significance of Baisakhi in terms of the pre-eminent events in Sikh history which took place on this day: (1) Guru Nanak started his missionary travels (*Udasis*), (2) The digging for the *Baoli* (stepped well) at Khadur Sahib was undertaken—and water was also filled, and (3) Guru Harkrishan passed away. But before



the concept and the spiritual/secular details of the Khalsa are delineated, it is imperative to know something about its Founder, Guru Gobind Singh.

According to Dr Dewan Singh, “Guru Gobind Singh figures in world history as a great leader of men, a versatile genius of the highest order, a God-man and mystic par excellence, a redoubtable warrior and adept strategist, a fearless revolutionary, a classical Hero of Carlylian description, a powerful poet and patron of poets, a unique religious law giver and champion of the downtrodden, a relentless defender of faith and an all-sacrificing martyr for the cause of suffering and persecuted humanity. In fact, it is impossible to encompass and delineate in words all the facets of his highly charismatic and remarkable personality.”

Biographical Sketch

Guru Tegh Bahadar was on a tour to Bengal and Assam, when a son was born to Mata Gujri at Patna on Saturday night of 17-18 Poh of 1723 Bikrami (corresponding to December 1666 AD). In deference for the Guru’s wishes, the son was named Gobind Rai. When he grew up to boyhood, his favourite pastime was to divide his playmates into two groups pitting one against the other in mock battles. He had a marked fondness for the sling, and the bow and arrows. The future Guru was fearless from his very childhood. Besides receiving instruction in religious matters, he was trained in warfare and horse-riding. He subsequently acquired proficiency in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, and his mother tongue, Punjabi. He spent his spare time in hunting and travelling.

Personality

Guru Gobind Singh ascended Guru Nanak’s spiritual throne at the age of 9 in 1675 AD when his illustrious father’s martyrdom earned Guru Teg Bahadar the unique title of “*Hindi di Chaadar*” (India’s protective sheet-cover). Guru Gobind Singh was a true anchorite and an impassioned patriot. He was an embodiment of all-round perfection: a poet, a spiritual leader, a religious and social reformer, a far-sighted planner, a wise counsellor, a redoubtable warrior, and a superb general—above all, “an unflagging champion of his people, an unrivalled martyr of his country”. He deeply imbibed the Divine Attributes delineated by Guru Nanak in his *Mul Mantra* (the Creedal Statement), notably, “without fear, without enmity”. These traits imparted to the Guru an invincible valour and an unshakable steadfastness. Daulat Rai exhorts his readers to “visualise the valiant stand taken by the Guru and his forty Sikhs against the Imperial hordes at Chamkaur. The entire History of the world cannot offer its peer.” Dr Dewan Singh writes in his Foreword for Rai’s biography of Guru Gobind Singh: “*Sahib-e-Kamaal*” (which means a Perfect-Man): “Daulat Rai, now a very popular and famous name in Sikh circles, was a man of deep thinking and impartial religious conviction. Though an Arya Samajist himself, he was completely free from religious bias. Though he wrote in 1901 AD when the Punjab was seething with inter-religious wrangling and communal friction of an invidious nature, he was a rare person who evinced in his *Biography of Guru Gobind Singh* a highly patriotic and national feeling by transcending all parochial limitations.” Published by Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust [Registered Office: Bazar Mai Sewan, Amritsar]—this Biography in Urdu has been competently abridged and sensitively translated by Prof Surinderjit Singh. I can vouch that I haven’t read anything of this kind on Guru Gobind Singh. It has moved me to the very marrow of my bones. I am lucky to have stumbled upon it at the recent Chandigarh Book Fair—while looking for reference material for this article. Unless otherwise stated, therefore, the quotes in the following paragraphs are drawn from this source—whose literary richness and spiritual inspiration I am unable to match.

“A man blessed with such a heart had not taken birth in India (among Hindus) for thousands of years...His patriotic fervour boiling over contrasted with the chilling cowardice and utter despondency of the people...It

was the spark of nationalism and the fighting instinct of a Kashatri...In the heart of Guru Gobind Singh was lit the spark of nationalism which all earlier Hindu reformers including Krishna, Ramachandra, Shankaracharya and Ramanuja had lacked...Their (the Hindus) existence was like the flickering light of a dying lamp. The flickering light was about to be extinguished by the stream of intolerant fanaticism let loose by Aurangzeb when Guru Gobind Singh shielded it with his hands and saved it from extinction (being extinguished)...The Hindus were like a lamp without oil... He (Guru Gobind Singh) was the first man to think of nationalism and to foster feeling of nationalism among the Indian people..."

The 14-year-long period (1675-1699 CE) of spiritual leadership gave Guru Gobind Singh the much-needed opportunity to study at first hand the prevalent situation and to size up the formidable might of the Mughals, and the invidious intrigues the Hill Rajas repeatedly planned and implemented in pursuit of selfish motives *against* the larger national interest vis-à-vis the abject helplessness, pitiable plight, and deep-rooted psycho-emotional-spiritual weakness of the Hindus. It was a self-imposed exile into the tangled forests of the national psyche beset with confusion, cowardice, casualness, and cantankerousness. He thought up with incredible foresight a master plan for the masses' moral rejuvenation, social upliftment, spiritual illumination, and physical health. He carefully fixed his priorities—and aimed his first shot at the removal of the causes responsible for disunity, despondency, and debility among the Hindus. These will be briefly dealt with to show how they form the all-important ground for the birth of the Khalsa.

Religious Reform: Carl Jung, a co-researcher with Sigmund Freud—father of modern psychology, has held that religious sentiment among the peoples of the world is the most formidable, forceful, and durable of all human emotions. According to him, it is saner to deploy Religion to effect the desired changes in human society than to write it off as primitive passion in a fit of pseudo-scientific temper. Guru Gobind Singh instinctively took up religion as his first priority. "From the very beginning", says Daulat Rai, "The Hindus have held the Dharma as supreme, a pious binding duty nearer to the heart than everything else." But over the centuries, the many "isms" like polytheism, pantheism, and monism—with their plethora of rituals, rites, myths, and conflicting religious practices developed ever-widening sectarian differences which eventually led to disunity, friction, and animosity among the Indian masses. The position of religious sects and sub-sects had worsened, with their numbers rising to thousands—but leading to the dark alleys of blind-faith exclusivism. It should be noted that in a state of such wide-spread conflict, anyone trying to prove the supremacy of his cult must invariably distort the truth—and use fair means or foul to gain one-upmanship over his adversary, whether real or imaginary just doesn't matter! Obviously, all sorts of malpractices and superstitions creep into the system whose very purpose of spiritual illumination gets self-defeated.

Guru Gobind Singh corrected this massive malaise by preaching Guru Nanak's gospel of Ik Oankar, (One Supreme Being) and forcefully rebutted the plurality of godhead, forbade idolatry, censured the custom of observance of obsequies (*Shradhs*), denounced the concept of Avatars, condemned *Tirath Yatra* (pilgrimage) and bathing at holy places, criticised the religious garbs as dresses of deceit—and drew people away from "small, slimy, stagnant and filthy fountains to the shores of the infinite Ocean of (One) Lord-devotion." One must read Guru's *Tav-Prasad* (i) *Kabit*, written in the language of the masses, to contemplate "the beauty of his gospel, the depth of his Lord-devotion and the extent of richness of his thought." The ground for national unity, integrity, and patriotism was thus prepared by the Guru with spot-light spiritual illumination, thereby restoring to the individual human person the organic completeness of an awakened, self-sufficient, inner life. Consequently, he was able to effect sweeping changes in the religious sphere.



Social Reform: Guru Gobind Singh set out to restructure the social set-up with similar single-mindedness and dedication. In the four-tier society of Brahmins, Khatris, Vaishyas, and Shudras—in which vertical movement was forbidden, thanks to Manu-code that had made it a legal binding that the high castes could press the Shudras into menial service (as an act of *Prabhu's* (God's) prescription) but the food cooked by them was not to be touched. Made irrevocably applicable among the Indian society—on the analogy of the human body with Brahmin representing the head, the Kshatriya the arms, the Vaishya the stomach, and the Shudra the feet—under the Brahmins the observance and hold of Manu's injunctions had been tightened to an inhuman degree. The Shudras were thus the perennial victims of this heinous social injustice. To wit, "If a Shudra talks of religious matters to a Brahmin, molten lead or boiling oil should be poured in his mouth and ears". [Manu Code, Chapter VIII [272]. "The atonement for the killing of a Shudra is the same as that for killing of a cat or a dog or a frog or a lizard or other animals."

Daulat Rai writes, "The farsighted and sagacious Guru held it imperative to lift the low castes to the level of the high ones, so that the former could regain their sense of dignity and manhood and work for national reconstruction instead of just doing menial chores for the high castes. During the days of Brahmanical ascendancy and the Kasharin reign the plight of the Shudras was very miserable. They were treated at par with cattle and beasts of burden, though they were the original inhabitants of the country. There is no doubt that they were worse off than the ancient slaves that were bought and sold like animals and than even under Muslim oppression." Proclaiming the essential equality, fraternity and liberty of all human beings (as their birthright) in his succinct tenet, "The caste of all mankind is only one : Humanism", Guru Gobind Singh felt it necessary that "the Hindus who had become slaves mentally and physically, should be jolted out of their miserable stupor. The sad plight of the Hindus in the political field was largely responsible for this predicament."

Daulat Rai highlights that "Guru Gobind Singh took up the challenge and created such a virile, upright and one-God-loving people like the Sikhs who were ever ready to lay down their lives for their country, people and Dharma, who always came to the succour of the needy, the tyrannised and the down-trodden. He changed cowards into men of great courage, uncowed by the Muslim might. He surveyed the country and selected the people and the area where he was to put into practice his grandiose schemes. The selection of the area was determined by the kind of men inhabiting therein."

Guru's Tenets: Guru Gobind Singh sought to establish (and succeeded in doing so) two basic principles : (1) universal brotherhood without any distinction, and (2) the spirit of self-sacrifice for others without demur. It was crystal dear to him that "The feeling of brotherhood can only dawn after the annihilation of all (man-made) artificial barriers between man and man. The baneful caste-system introduced by Manu and followed with a vengeance by the Brahmin had to be nullified."

Foundation of the Khalsa

For Guru Gobind Singh, this unprecedented historic event was like home-coming from a 14-year-long (self-) exile to the unignorable native truth of the entire 17th-century situation of Mughal-ruled India. He decided to establish the Khalsa: the Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers, welded by the steely sense of oneness in total surrender and devotion to *Wah-e-Guru, Akal Purakh*—and imbibing His attributes of fearlessness and rancour-freeness, filled with the fiery ideal of self—sacrifice for the protection and welfare of others. Such an Order of Ever-Ascendant Spirits (*Charhdi Kala*) alone could demolish the centuries-old barriers of caste and creed, high and low, man and woman, thereby paving the way for the advent of nationalism, and the unity and integrity of India. The Khalsa, as the Fraternity of the Fearless and the Forceful, alone could bring about the downfall of

the foreign rule of bigotry and tyranny. Accordingly, on the Baisakhi of Samat 1756 (1699 AD), Guru Gobind Singh gathered his Sikhs in great numbers from across the entire length and breadth of the country at an open place at Anandpur Sahib. A huge tent and an enclosure had been set up in the field. The remaining account of the ceremony and events is too well known to need recounting. However, it is necessary to underscore the two-fold purpose in the strange manner the Guru acted in inviting volunteers, at the point of a blood-dripping sword, from among the massive congregation. The first aim was to *test* if the Sikhs had the mighty mettle to sacrifice their all for the protection of their Dharma and the love of their land. The second was to *show* to all those assembled there that only men like the *Panj Piaras* (the Five Beloveds) could successfully undertake the stated uphill task without demur. The five willing volunteers, who readily placed themselves—body, mind and soul—at the service of the Guru were : (1) Daya Ram, a Khatri from Lahore; (2) Dharm Chand, a Jat from Delhi; (3) Himmat Rai, a Potter from Jagannath Puri in Orissa; (4) Mokham Chand, a Tailor from Kathiawar in Gujarat; and (5) Sahib Chand, a Barber from Mysore.



The Guru was immensely delighted at the volunteers' valiant offer, and addressing the congregation, said, "During the time of Guru Nanak, only Bhai Lehna passed the gruelling test of Sikhism and he was exalted as Guru Angad Dev. But during the present terribly trying time, five courageous Sikhs have not only passed the test but also come out in flying colours." The message was that what the Five Beloveds had done, they all

could do. The Guru had successfully sown the seed of self-sacrifice in the minds of the Sikhs. Now he turned to its germination, growth, and blossoming into wholesome action. The Five Beloved were then prepared for baptism at the Guru's court that he held in the fort of Kesgarh. He dressed the Five in a special uniform and armed them with weapons. Having also done so for himself, he asked for water from the river flowing below. This water was poured in a steel receptacle to which sugar-puffs (*patashas*) were added. Guru Gobind Singh himself recited the Five Banis and stirred the contents all the while with his Khanda (double-edged sword). He called the preparation *Amrit* (Elixir of Life or the Eternal-life-giving Nectar). The *Amrit* was administered to the Five Beloveds thus: five times the Guru took out five handfuls of *Amrit* and made the Five partake of them, while the six of them (including the Guru) shouted "*Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*" [The Khalsa belongs to the Wondrous Guru (GOD) whose Victory also rests with Him]. The Five Beloveds were, then, asked to administer the *Amrit* to the Guru. This ceremony was termed "Pahul", and the consecrated casteless Brotherhood of Saint-Soldiers was conferred the unique title of "The Khalsa", and their Dharma called the Khalsa *Panth*. Their birth-castes were finally dissolved into their new spiritual birth by adding the suffix "Singh" (Lion) to their first names. The women on being inducted into the Khalsa fold are given the surname "Kaur" (Lioness).

The Khalsa Tenets

The uniqueness of the Khalsa Dharma lies in the following tenets:

1. Partaking of the *Amrit* in the same manner as administered by the Guru.
2. Fixing of the suffix "Singh" (Lion) and "Kaur" (Lioness) to the first names of the baptised male and female Sikhs, respectively, in place of their surnames.
3. The *Panj Piaras* shall represent the Guru at the "Pahul" ceremony.
4. The baptised shall wear the five K's (*Kakkas*) on their person : unshorn hair (*Kes*), steel sword (*Kirpan*), shorts (*Kachha*), steel bracelet (*Kara*), and comb (*Kangha*) in the hair dressed into a top-knot (*joorha*).
5. The baptised shall eat together from the same vessel as equal brethren of the Khalsa Commonwealth, without distinction of high and low, as their previous castes, creeds, and surnames stand nullified.
6. The Khalsa Dharma is a spiritual rebornness for the baptised and, therefore, all of them shall start life anew.
7. The temporal and spiritual (*Miri-Piri*) powers of the Khalsa shall be totally attributed to steel and it shall thus be their bounden duty to keep weapons of steel and gain proficiency in their martial use.
8. The Khalsa who dies on the battlefield or takes part in *Dharam Yudh* [Holy Crusade for the Protection of Religious and Political Freedom] and destroys his enemy, who is never disheartened though vanquished, shall attain a high stature.
9. The Khalsa shall not wear a *Janeu* (sacred thread of the Hindus).
10. Liberation can be attained only through the Khalsa Dharma.
11. The Khalsa shall discard all rites and rituals of the Hindus, but respect their places of worship as well as religious feelings and defend their Dharma when endangered.
12. It is the bounden duty of the Khalsa to destroy the enemy of the people.
13. The Khalsa shall worship the Lord through truthful actions and pray to One Formless Akal only and not to any of his creations.
14. They shall bow before the Guru Granth Sahib only and not before any man, tomb or grave.

15. They shall hold Guru Nanak as their spiritual guide and Supreme Lord, venerate all his successors and obey their injunctions.
16. They shall occasionally take a bath in the holy *Sarovar* (Pool) at Amritsar, the main *Tiratha*. (Place of pilgrimage) of Sikhs.
17. They shall accost each other with “*Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*” and discard all other forms of greetings.
18. They shall not use tobacco.
19. The baptised shall hold Khalsa as the repository of God’s Divine Power.

The foundation of the Khalsa was a fulfilment of Guru Gobind Singh’s long-cherished mission as a complete consummation of Guru Nanak’s Revealed Word. The Message of Love for the whole world and an active concern for the amelioration of the human condition. However, the high castes, Brahmins and *Khatri*s, present in the congregation at Anandpur Sahib, staged a walkout as a protest of disapproval for the Guru’s master-stroke with which he instantly erased the stigma of social inequality and injustice. They dubbed it as an unwarranted interference in their Dharma, and created a furore in favour of status quo: the caste-ridden social system wallowing in hollow rites and rituals and unsavoury religious practices. Guru Gobind Singh promptly addressed the assembly and unequivocally declared that he had obeyed the Mandate of *Wah-i-Guru* which enshrines the upliftment of the lowly and the down-trodden as a bounden duty of religious practice. He prophesied: “Those whom the high castes spurn now shall be my heirs after my death and become the equals of the highest”, and clinched the issue in utter disregard of the outbursts of the high and mighty. There is glaring evidence that the Guru’s prophecy is now taking shape in the country!

The Many-Splendoured Khalsa

To authenticate the Khalsa as a living embodiment of his God-willed mission, Guru Gobind Singh declared with characteristic eloquence thus: “I left my utterly blissful state of God’s worship and assumed a physical form in order to propagate and perpetuate the ideal of the Khalsa in the world. Today I have transformed you into my image to disseminate this ideal for universal happiness and to dispense the gift of perfect knowledge (of *Akal Purakh*) in the world. Like the perfect *Satguru* (True Spiritual Guide) you have the capacity to bestow the gifts of Divine Name (*Sat-Naam*) and knowledge upon the people.” He then issued the following Edict that sums up his timeless-universal vision of the Khalsa:

“The Khalsa is my family whole
 Through the Khalsa am I liberated
 The Khalsa is my body and soul
 From the Khalsa is my life generated
 In the Khalsa rightly dwell my honour and glory
 The Khalsa is my goal, the only one
 Forever shall the Khalsa abide with me
 The Khalsa is my duty and action
 The Khalsa holds the secret of my inmost being
 The Khalsa is my perfect *Satguru*
 The Khalsa is the Saint-Soldier (in all his doing)
 The Khalsa is my knowledge and wisdom true




My thoughts are always focused on the Khalsa
 The Khalsa's glory is beyond words, hence
 My one tongue can't fully describe the Khalsa
 The Khalsa's description defies my intelligence
 There's not an iota of untruth
 in what I have sought to express
 The Lord Most High, Guru Nanak is my witness"
 -[*Sarb Loh Granth*]

Other injunctions of the Guru from the same source are also noteworthy.

(1) "The true Khalsa is one who experiences
 The ecstasy of self-realisation
 There is no difference between God, I, and him."

(2) "The Khalsa is Lord Akal's own army
 The Khalsa has taken birth by Divine Ordinance
 So long as the Khalsa maintains his identity
 I shall grant him all my magnificence
 When he strays and treads another path
 He shall be deprived of all my faith."



The Khalsa Emblem: It consists of two *Kirpans* (swords) which represent the Miri-Piri ideal. The *Khanda* is a two-edged sword which stands for a single master-stroke that destroys the five formidable inner foes: Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, and Pride, and the outer enemy (of *Dharma*). The quoit symbolises the Eternity-Infinity concept; it is a weapon of Lord Akal as a Saviour of Humanity from the sinning *Manmukhs* (Ego-Entrapped Individuals). It also denotes God's self-existent completeness, and the cyclicity of Time (*Kaal*) that renews by destroying and reabsorbing. The use of steel as a metal that performs miracles is significant. Guru Gobind Singh was once asked about the existence of miracles. He replied that man is a powerless creature, all miracle-making lies with the Creator. However, three things in world are miracles in themselves: steel, strength, and wealth. Steel (in the form of weapons) grants crowns, and helps man gain honour and liberation through a heroic death on the battle-field. Strength (physical, moral, and intellectual) enables man to achieve dominance in any sphere. The survival is of the fittest; the weaker must go to the wall. The weaklings are slaves of the mighty and are humbled and humiliated. Wealth wins over everybody, everywhere, at all times. The poor have no relatives, no friends. Wealth empowers a man to attain honour and respect, and to fulfil his desires.

Khalsa's Uniqueness: The Khalsa marks the historical development and the logical consummation of Guru Nanak's vision of Total Man as documented in his Revealed Word (Bani). It exalts the common man to a level of spiritual sovereignty where he becomes self-sufficient and entranced by *Naam-Simran* through *Shabad* (Guru's Word), imbibes the virtue of all virtues: Humility. Enriched by the inexhaustible source of an illumined inner life, he offers his all in the "Game of Love" to the Guru and looks forward to martyrdom while fighting on the battle-field as a champion of the down-trodden. Guru Gobind Singh consummates all these rare

virtues in the person of the Khalsa by making the individual human person a veritable repository of rare Divine Dispensation. The Khalsa subsumes all the four castes to make man total: Brahmin (teacher), Khatri (fighter), Vaishya (trader), Shudra (tiller)—thereby synthesising the head, arms, stomach, and feet of the caste-ripped Body into a seamless organic whole. Furthermore, treating the Body as a marvellous compounding of the five elements: Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Ether—the Guru transmutes them into rare traits embodied in Guru Nanak’s Pragmatic Spiritualism. The Khalsa has thus the ground-bound, life-affirming, fullness of Earth as a tiller; the burning zeal of Fire as a soldier of *Dharm Yudh*; the coolness of water as a saint; the Wuthering heights of Air that a possessor of Guru-imparted knowledge can scale; and the subtlety of Ether that his God-inspired spirituality can muster. On assumption of Khalsahood, no man ever remains a beggar. By the Benediction of *Wah-i-Guru*, he becomes a benefactor of mankind. The Khalsa way is thus unique in terms of Circumspection—its watchfulness to guard against relapse into vice by staying away from the path shown by the Guru; Circumjacency—it encompasses all that is lying around; Circumincession—it acknowledges and respects reciprocity of all forms of existence; Circumvallation—it builds ramparts of protection around the under-privileged and the down-trodden; and Circumpolarity—it treats Guru’s Word as an infallible Pole around which it must rotate to keep in good shape the magnetic charisma of its inimitable, unmistakable, identity.

The Guru as a Real-Life Hero

Hindu Mythology is full of myths built around heroes who attained to such high ideals as human imagination can ever conjure up. To make them emerge as ultimate victors in their mythical forays, these heroes were endowed with superhuman powers—with matchless virtuosity in the martial arts of archery, sword-fighting, horse-riding, disc-wielding, etc. The capacity to save Dharma at all costs was often praised sky high. But all this glorious story-telling sprang from what I call “Faith Fiction” (Mythology), not historical situations and facts. In my considered opinion, therefore, Guru Gobind Singh is the first and foremost Real-Life Hero in History who has *actually* achieved whatever was best in the entire Indian tradition. The Guru’s unparalleled virtuosity in the stated martial arts is well known—as also the unprecedented glory that he brought to the Khatri Dharma by the overwhelming eloquence of his personal example, with his life consummated in Martyrdom. What is even more amazing is the fact that he empowered the lesser mortals also to perform extraordinary Heroic feats. History tells us that at the incredibly unequal battle of Chamkaur, Sahibzada Ajit Singh (barely 18 years of age), along with his five Singhs, put 150 soldiers of the tyrants to external sleep with the brisk strokes of their swords--before attaining to Martyrdom!

Divine Endowments

Guru Gobind Singh’s outstanding qualities were rare divine endowments. The most truly exceptional was that, despite many epoch-making achievements to his credit, the Guru considered himself no better than an ordinary mortal. This humility filled his heart with over-brimming love for everyone, and gave him an unshakable belief in the Brotherhood of Man. That is why, despite being an arch enemy of the cruel and despotic Mughal rulers, he was loved and adored by the ordinary Muslims. The carrying of the Guru on a cot raised high by two Muslims, to a place of safety, when the Imperial army was desperately looking for him, is a memorable testimony of this signal fact. His Dharma drew its matchless strength from Lord Akal’s Edict-Fiat as discernible in the Cosmic Moral Law. Guru Gobind Singh, unlike other reformers known to History, fought single-handedly on all the four fronts: the social, political, religious, and military—always remaining at the



vanguard in each. But he never resorted to any subterfuge (like deceit, duplicity, intrigue, or treachery) in any of his actions in any of these fields.

Unlike the old prophets he never claimed any revelations for his Bani, did not believe in miracles, nor did he claim to perform any supernatural deeds. But yet he performed one of the greatest miracles of all times: The transmuting of cowards into heroes, and the uplifting of the downtrodden of centuries-old oppression to the acme of Manhood.

Classic Contributions

The Guru's succinct prayer, "Lord, grant me this boon that I may never desist from doing virtuous deeds...," exalts Guru Nanak's Pragmatic Spirituality to glorious heights of practical ethics that works for everybody, everywhere, all the time, with equal efficacy. This brings the Founder's Edict to a climax in which one's thought, word and deed find their celestial consummation—and constantly remind one that the ideals of Sikhism fully realised in the Khalsa demonstrate that it is a non-sectarian, non-ritualistic, Faith of Divinised Ethics in Action, which transcends all Mythology, Metaphysics, the Muse, or mere Mysticism (the religion of the elite). Guru Gobind Singh demonstrated, with the overwhelming eloquence of his own life, the value of Human Rights and the inalienable principles of Democracy, Social Justice, Equality, and Liberty: First, when he himself got baptised by taking *Amrit* from the *Panj Piaras*, and, then, by declaring at the massive congregation that "I am installed at this coveted position by their grace/Otherwise, the like of me, rot in neglect by the millions."

In Poetry, too, the Guru excels. According to late Dr Mohan Singh 'Diwana'—a scholar par excellence, a great metaphysical poet, an insightful critic, and a venerable mystic—Guru Gobind Singh invented 200 metres (that regulated succession of certain groups of syllables—long and short, stressed and unstressed) in which poetry is usually written. Also, the Guru has coined 2000 absolutely new names for Lord Akal. According to Daulat Rai, "His poetic faculty, with its facility of phrase and fecundity of imagination, is one of the special traits of the Guru. His writings have the universality of appeal as they touch the tender strings of the human heart with the lyrical strains of the Cosmic Brotherhood of Man, as they fill one with martial feelings, arouse the martial spirit and prepare for a life of purposeful action. His graphic descriptions of the gory battle scenes, bring out alive the battlefield itself before one's eyes, with the neighing of horses, the groaning of the wounded dying, the shrieking of violent death, the clashing of weapons, and the clamour of war". The Guru was a magnanimous patron of literary arts. He had kept 52 poets and 50 writers in his court for transcribing the entire ancient literature. "The poet Mangal", writes Sant Waryam Singh, "was given Rs 60,000 of those times for translating a chapter of the Mahabharata and he was given so many gifts that the Guru sent 200 soldiers, with still more gifts, to carry them home to the poet".

Concluding Remark

I have been pursuing a hobby I invented by the name of de-acronym-isation 30 years ago. An acronym is a word formed from the initial letters of other words, as radar [American codeword, from radio detection and ranging, appropriately a palindrome word—that reads alike backward and forward]. De-acronym-isation is thus a process of reversal—one forms words from each letter of a given word. Using this technique, I have figured out new ways of looking at the uniqueness of the Khalsa. It may seem far-fetched, even outlandish, to many, but few may be able to ignore its refreshing outcome. So, here goes:

K-H-A-L-S-A means Kaleidoscopic, Humanitarian (*Jagat Tamaasha*), Altruistic (selfless service for the welfare of people), Love-filled, Society (founded on the Mandate) of Akā (The Immutable Supreme Being). The *Panj Piaras*, coming from different castes and callings, represent:

Khatri: new ideals of weaponry (*Shaster*) and warfare (*Dharam Yudh*)

Jat: new lifestyle of self-help, exalting dignity of labour (*Kirat*).

Tailor: new dress of an unmistakable identity (*Vaster*).

Barber: new coiffure of unshorn hair (The Mark of Natural Manhood).

Potter: new vessels of steel (*Sarb Loh*).

The place from where the Five Beloveds of the Guru came give me material for exploring another dimension of the Khalsa. This is an acronym coined by combining the underlined letters: Mysore, Orissa, Gujrat, DELhi, LAHore: MOGDELAH. After de-acronym-isation, it expands into Moral Orders of Guru's Divinity Empathised into Love of All Humanity.

The upshot is that the KHALSA is Life's never-ending celebration -- in the Circadian Apotheosis of Divinity, for *this* life is God's most precious gift to Mankind. To end this article, in a befitting manner, let me draw upon the writings of the illustrious Daulat Rai whose inspired style I cannot match. Describing the passing away of the Guru on the 15th of Kartik of Samat 1765, he poignantly writes:-

“Guru Gobind Singh bathed himself, dressed and armed himself, said his prayers and heard *kirtan* (hymn-singing). Then he stretched himself on his bed and listening to the recital of Bani from Guru Granth Sahib (The Sikh Bible) breathed his last uttering the last words, “*Wahe-Guru-Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*”. Thus he poured the final *Ahuti* of his body in the Sacrificial Fire which he had lit for the betterment of the Hindus. On that day was set the special sun of the Hindus which had enabled them to see clearly with their own eyes, whose warmth had brought spring into their withered garden with its wilted plants supporting drooping twigs and leaves, and engendered fresh sprouts.

“This Sun had set in the darkness of death. That lightning singing patriotic songs in the storm clouds of hope disappeared, the down pour of the soothing rain of nationalism that was helping to cool the burning hearts of the Hindus and to extinguish the fire of acrimonious dissensions sweeping across the country, was driven away by the tempest of Death...”

This sun, *this* Special Sun, has undoubtedly set in the outer, phenomenal, world, but it has risen in the inner, noumenal, world—on the psycho-spiritual firmament of the Khalsa, to always light the path of Human Destiny, from Here to Eternity, with God-Inspired Faith, Love, and Hope.





FIVE TAKHTS



Takhat Sri
Keshgarh Sahib



Takhat Sri
Damdama Sahib



Takhat Sri
Harmandir Sahib ji



Akal Takht



Takhat Sri
Hazur Sahib

The Persian word *Takht* means a throne or seat of authority. It is used for the Seat of Temporal Authority in the Sikh Faith. There are Five Takhts associated with five gurdwaras that have a historical significance for the Sikhs. The first and foremost established by Guru Har Gobind in 1609 is named 'Akal Takht' (the Throne of the Timeless Lord). Forming an integral part of the Golden Temple

premises it is located opposite the gateway of the holiest of the holy shrine in Amritsar. The two architectural monuments situated on the same spot testify to the cardinal principle of the Sikh Faith that the Spiritual and the Mundane are integral subjective-objective realities.

1. AKAL TAKHT symbolizes the Temporal Authority that dispenses justice on matters concerning deviance from the regimen or wilful violation of the Faith's Tenets during workaday existence. It is located on the premises of *Sri Harmandar Sahib*, known worldwide as the Golden Temple of Amritsar, which is the seat of Spiritual Sovereignty of the Sikh Faith for guidance on steadfast treading of the Path of Righteousness.

That the Takht is a real Seat of Temporal Authority, not a ceremonious remembrance, is shown by the example of Akali Phoola Singh in his capacity as the Jathedar of Akal Takht who showed with no fear or favour how the diktat issued from there applied equally to the pauper and prince. It was an order or decree that he imposed by virtue of the power vested in him by the Guru and he exercised it without popular consent. Akali Phoola Singh earned rare fame for his historic decision as the Jathedar of Akal Takht to whip Maharaja Ranjit Singh in front of the Akal Takht after he had married a Muslim danseuse and thus become a *Patit* (apostate). A **Jathedar** is an ordained leader of the clergy and leads a Takht. Akali Phoola Singh was born on 14 January 1761, in a village Sarinh, which is in the present-day district of Sangrur in Punjab.

On the occasion of his investiture ceremony as the Sixth Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Har Gobind wore two swords on his person symbolising the temporal [*Miri*] and spiritual [*Piri*] power bestowed by Lord God. He regularly held court for dealing with matters of military strategy and political policy. Later on, *Sarbat Khalsa*, the Sikh Nation as a whole, established the tradition of discussing and deciding matters of peace and war and also settled disputes among various Sikh groups.

In earlier days, all Sikh warriors sought blessings here before going to battlefields. During the 18th century while Sikhs were fighting a guerrilla war in the forests they used to gather at the Akal Takht on special occasions such as Baisakhi. Here the community used to hold general meetings and decide on resolutions. The Akal Takht is the oldest of the Five Takhts. The *Sarangi* [rebeck] singers used to sing ballads of the Gurus and Sikh warriors at the place. Their distinguished services to the Sikh Faith were recognised by presenting *Siropas* [Robes of Honour] to them. In December 2010, the Deccan Odyssey Train, chartered from the Government of India, was inaugurated with the aim of facilitating an uninterrupted pilgrimage trip across Four Takhts, with a flight by the devout and sightseers to the Fifth Takht, Patna Sahib. A special train named *Panj Takht Special Express* starting from Delhi for the pilgrimage of Five Takhts was flagged off on 16 February 2014.

A unique feature of the layout of the two historical monuments deserves special mention because it is a perennial pointer of the hallowed holism of the Sikh Faith in which the Body, Mind, and Soul find a happy and healthy melding. Though the Akal Takht is sited right opposite Sri Darbar Sahib, the holy shrine is visible from the seat of Temporal Authority, suggesting that even in mundane matters that are the building blocks of everyday life spiritual supervision is indispensable for right decision-making. However, the Akal Takht cannot be seen from the Seat of Spiritual Sovereignty because this realm has an autonomous state that stands in no need of mundane mulling. Those who are earnest to grasp the unique divinity of the Sikh Faith ought to comprehend this covert truth. No Society can do without the simultaneous presence of Religion [faith that leads to meditation in the pursuit of salvation] and the State [politics that compels



manipulation to gain mortal supremacy]. It should thus be obvious that keep politics clean and healthy spiritual instruction and command must be available on hand.

2. TAKHT SRI KESGARH SAHIB is situated at Anandpur Sahib. It is the birthplace of the Khalsa, which was founded here by the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith Guru Gobind Singh on the historic occasion of Baisakhi [that celebrates the harvest season in Punjab state] in 1699. Some of Guru Gobind Singh's weapons are displayed here. I take pride in sharing the information that this historic monument was designed in the mid-1930s by my father Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti [03 January 1905 - 18 September 1993], a self-taught professional endowed with amazing versatile creativity.
3. TAKHT SRI DAMDAMA SAHIB is situated in the village of Talwandi Sabo near Bathinda in Punjab state. Guru Gobind Singh had stayed here for about a year in 1705 after fighting battles against Mughal atrocities. Since this was a period of no battles the place was named Damdama [Resting Place] and the final edition of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* also known as the Damdama Sahib Bir was compiled by Bhai Mani Singh as dictated by Guru Gobind Singh. Before leaving to visit Sikh *Sangats* [congregations] in the Deccan, the Guru named Talwandi Sabo *Guru ki Kashi*. However, Damdama Sahib's fame rose after it became one of the Five Takhts of the Sikh Faith. Baba Deep Singh, a profoundly respected martyr [*Shaheed*] of the Sikh Faith was installed as the first Jathedar (Head) of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib this Seat of Temporal Authority. He penned additional copies of the Adi Granth and sent them to the other four temporal seats.

This title was given because of the intense literary activities that Guru Gobind Singh engaged in during his stay here (the compilation of Sikh scriptures). It is said that one day Guru Gobind flung a handful of reed pens over the heads of the congregation (*Sangat*), saying: "Here we will create a pool of literature. No one of my Sikhs should remain illiterate." The Damdamey Wali *Bir* as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is sometimes called was completed here. The Guru dictated the entire text to one of his disciples named Bhai Mani Singh. It was at this time that the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Master of the Sikh Faith and father of Guru Gobind Singh, were added to the stated *Bir*. The Punjabi word 'Bir' translates into English as a volume or recension (of Sikh scripture) as well as corpus (of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*).

4. TAKHT SRI PATNA SAHIB is situated in Patna city which is also the capital of present-day Bihar State. Gobind Rai [later on, Guru Gobind Singh] was born here in 1666, and spent his early childhood here before moving to Anandpur Sahib. Besides being the Guru Gobind Singh's birthplace, Patna has historic significance because it had been visited by Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Here also stayed Mata Gujri, mother of Guru Gobind in the house of Salis Rai Jauhri.
5. TAKHT SRI HAZOOR SAHIB is located in Nanded, one of the historical places in Marathwada region of present-day Maharashtra State. Situated on the north bank of River Godavari in the south-eastern part of Maharashtra, it borders the States of Telangana and Karnataka. Besides being a town of great antiquity it is famous for Sikh Gurdwaras. In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh (the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith) came to Nanded, and made it his permanent abode. He taught the Sikhs that they must not follow any *human guru*, and worship *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as their Eternal Living Guru. A monument has been constructed at the place where Guru Gobind Singh had left the mortal world to merge with Lord God's divine essence. The memorial is named Angettha Sahib, monument raised over the place of cremation. The Takht has been constructed around the Angettha Sahib, and the two together are known as *Takht Sach Khand Sri Hazoor Abchal Nagar Sahib*.



CHANDU SHAH, the Governor of Lahore

Chandu Shah was a wealthy banker and revenue officer at the Mughal court in Lahore. He turned against Guru Arjan Dev when he turned down Chandu's proposal of marriage of his daughter. His family priest suggested that Guru's son Har Gobind. Cut to the quick, Chandu Shah could do nothing except mock Guru Arjan as a beggar who subsisted on offerings from his followers.

Thus, Chandu and other enemies of Guru Har Gobind learned of the Guru's military preparations, and claimed that Guru Har Gobind was not only converting Muslims to his faith, he was raising an army to avenge his father's death. With this false rumour, they tried to convince Emperor Jahangir that Har Gobind posed a major threat to his kingdom.

The Emperor decided to investigate for himself, and invited Guru Har Gobind to Delhi where he treated the holy personage with utmost courtesy. Jahangir discussed religious matters with him and found that the Guru's principles and beliefs posed no threat whatsoever to him or his kingdom.

This encouraged the Emperor to invite Guru Har Gobind, as a friendly gesture of hospitality, to go with him on a hunting expedition. As they rode along into the thick forest, a ferocious tiger suddenly showed up. When the Emperor saw that the tiger was about to pounce on him, he called out to the Guru to save him. Guru Har

Gobind, with shield and sword in hand, jumped off his horse, ran in front of the Emperor, and with one stroke of his sword killed the tiger. After that spine-chilling incident, Jahangir considered him a true friend, and often invited Guru Har Gobind to go hunting with him.

In the year 1606, the Fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev, was captured by Mughal Emperor Jahangir and imprisoned in Lahore Fort. Part of the reason was the fact that he had blessed Jahangir's rebellious son Khusrau, and part because of his growing influence in Northern India and fast conversions to the Sikh Faith. He perceived an imminent threat in these developments to the orthodox Muslim clergy as well as the Hindu élite.

After imprisoning the Guru, Emperor Jahangir demanded Rs Two lakh as a fine plus elimination of all texts from the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh Holy Book that Guru Arjan Dev had compiled, such as could be 'offensive' to Hindus or Muslims.

But the Guru was unrelenting and refused to delete anything from the *Adi Granth*, which infuriated the Mughal emperor to condemn him to be tortured to death. Famously, the Guru was made to sit on a burning hot plate while hot sand was poured over his disrobed person. It is said that when Guru Arjan Dev was allowed to take bath in River Ravi on 30 May 1606, he never returned. It is here that Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore memorialises the place of first martyrdom of the Sikh Faith.

"So far as Har Gobind knew or thought of philosophy as a science, he fell into the prevailing views of the period: God, he said, is one, and the world is an illusion, an appearance without a reality," wrote J.D. Cunningham, the first British historian to document Sikh history, in his book titled *History of the Sikhs*. However, unlike other Sikh Gurus who are fondly remembered for their spiritual insights, Har Gobind, the sixth Guru, is additionally credited for spearheading the militarisation of the Sikh Faith.

Guru Har Gobind was appointed as his father Guru Arjan Dev's successor after Mughal Emperor Jahangir executed him. Historians maintain that Jahangir was threatened by the growing strength of the Sikh community and so he summoned Guru Arjan Dev to Lahore. Pre-empting that he would never be able to return, Arjan Dev appointed his 11-year-old son, Har Gobind, as the next Guru on 25 May 1606.

Over a month after his father's execution, Guru Har Gobind revealed himself in front of his devotees on 24 July 1606. He wore a saffron gown and a *Chooridar Pyjama*, along with a turban and an aigrette pinned on it. He also donned a belt that held two swords from his waist. Dressed up in unusual attire, he addressed the congregation thus, "My rosary shall be the sword belt and, on my turban, I shall wear the emblem of royalty."

Melding of Temporal Power with Spiritual Might

The swords worn by Guru Har Gobind represented his patent credo of *Miri-Piri* that explained thus, "The first sword, *Miri*, symbolises Temporal Power, while the second sword, *Piri*, represents Spiritual Might."

Historical accounts reveal that Guru Har Gobind emerged as both a spiritual teacher and a military leader. J.D. Cunningham, who also served as a British officer in India, wrote in his book, "The temper and the circumstances of Har Gobind both prompted him to innovation; he had his father's death to move his feelings... Har Gobind grasped a sword, and marched with his devoted followers among the troops of the empire, or boldly led them to oppose and overcome provincial governors or personal enemies."

Guru Har Gobind emphasised the need to develop a warrior spirit in the Sikh community because it was undergoing persecution from the Mughal rulers. In light of this threat, he mobilised an army and named it *Sant Sipahis* (Saint Soldiers). Cunningham's book informs that he had a stable of 800 horses while "three hundred mounted followers were constantly in attendance upon him, and a guard of sixty matchlock-men secured the safety of his person, had he ever feared or thought of assassination".



Akal Takht facing Sri Harmandar Sahib

Establishing the Akal Takht

Apart from extending Sikh traditions through militarisation, Guru Har Gobind also established the *Akal Takht* (Supreme Seat of Temporal Authority) directly opposite Sri Harmandar Sahib in Amritsar. The *Takht* emerged as a common space where Sikhs from all walks of life could share their grievances and discuss questions about their faith.

Sikh devotees also received *Hukamnamas* (Spiritual Decrees from the Holy Book) from their Gurus at the Akal Takht. This timely and farsighted action by the Sixth Master initiated the formation of ‘Wholeness’ in the Sikhs by combining the Temporal Power with Spiritual Might in the same person. It was unprecedented in Indian history and is yet unsurpassed in the entire world. In my third doctorate on the Golden Temple [2008] I have pointed out how from the Akal Takht the holiest of holy shrine of the Sikh Faith is visible but from Sri Darbar Sahib, the Akal Takht cannot be seen. There is a profound psycho-spiritual significance of this architectural principle that has hitherto eluded scholars of all genres. When mundane matters of conflict or controversy are deliberated upon at the Akal Takht, the palpable presence of *Wah-e-Guru* must be borne in mind as He alone has the absolute power to issue edict-fiats to guide the mortals’ journey on the Path of Righteousness. However, seated in the ambience of the presiding Lord as a Living Guru represented by the Holy Book, the individuals as well as the congregation are already in the Creator’s supreme presence and stand in no need of anything or anyone else. This unique virtue is also reflected in the new title of the Sikh as a Saint Soldier. The Guru’s devotee is a Saint first; a Soldier next. Guru Har Gobind revealed and formed the other dimension of the Sikh as Guru Nanak had intended—to make them self-sufficient in every sense of word, including the wherewithal to ensure total security of his own person. It is thus no wonder that during the Spiritual-Temporal reign of Guru Har Gobind, the Sikh army managed to defeat Emperor Jahangir’s successor, Shah Jahan. The Guru fought three battles against the Mughal army during Shah Jahan’s rule. His modest army with its temporal power and spiritual might was thus able to get the better of the mighty Mughal forces.





GURDWARA JOTI SAROOP AND DIWAN TODAR MAL

Direction This historic Gurdwara is situated at a place where the bodies of Mata Gujri, the mother of Guru Gobind Singh and of his two younger sons, Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh, were cremated by Diwan Todar Mal on 13 December 1705. According to journalist Surinder Bhardwaj of *The Tribune*, “Diwan Todar Mal Jain of Sirhind, a local businessman, was an ardent follower of the Sikh Gurus. His richness could be gauged from his lavish haveli “*Jahaz Maha!*” [The Ship Palace]. Constructed just outside the Mughal Governor Nawab Wazir Khan’s palace, Diwan Todar Mal’s haveli boasts of a grand reception area to receive and entertain guests and an aesthetically laid-out landscape design complete with a pool and fountains.

“Little did he know that fate would bring him to a point where he would have to choose between his faith and fortune. And he sacrificed his fortune at the altar of faith. At the end of 1704 CE the young Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were captured and bricked alive by Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind. When nobody had the courage to cremate the Sahibzadas, Diwan Todar Mal risked his life and took possession of the bodies.”

The magnificent *Jahaz Mahal*, now in ruins and pitiable neglect of heritage by the powers that be, is situated on the eastern side of Sirhind-Ropar Railway Line just one kilometre away from Fatehgarh Sahib. Diwan Todar Mal was a true Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh who rendered him historic service in the dark days when many Sikhs had betrayed and deserted the Guru.

Diwan Todar Mal sold all his belongings and bought 78,000 gold coins to buy 2 metre x 2 metre of land where bodies of the younger Sahibzadas and Mata Gujri, mother of Guru Gobind Singh, were cremated. This is the costliest plot on earth till date. According to today's value of gold, the estimated value of four square metres of land today would be Indian rupees 400 crores [US \$ 5,24,22,920.00]. This contribution of Diwan Todar Mal shall be held in the highest esteem in the annals of the Sikh Faith. It demonstrates the awesome power of the universal-timeless divinity that Guru Nanak's Revelation has brought to the notice of the world in the unprecedented act of beneficence performed by a Hindu for the Sikh Faith.

Let us not confuse Diwan Todar Mal's name with that of Raja Todar Mal (1 January 1500 – 8 November 1589) who was the Finance Minister (*Wazir-i-Khazana*) of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Akbar the Great and was one of the Navaratnas at his court.

To perpetuate the memory of the noble-minded Seth, a road in Sirhind town and a hall in Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib have now been named after him.

The villain of the nerve-shattering story was Wazir Khan (died 1710 CE, real name Mirza Askari). He was Governor of Sirhind, administering a territory of the Mughal Empire between the Sutlej and Yamuna rivers. Sirhind, a Mughal town with a tragic past, is the older name of Fatehgarh Sahib. It is situated on the Delhi-Lahore Highway, and has a population of about 60,851.

In this story is ingrained timeless truth that Guru Nanak's Revelation brought as a priceless divine gift for the general weal of the entire Humankind. Its Pragmatic Spirituality found its full consummation in Guru Gobind Singh founding the Khalsa in 1699. It is only now that we can see how the Guru and the Sikhs had to fight with unremitting dedication and unflinching resolve to cure the Indian psyche of its centuries-old pathogenic sickness that had flourished as discrimination and prejudice within each religious group and within different religious communities in the country. The Guru not only succeeded in creating a caste-less society in which both men and women lived as equals but also one in which Human Rights were upheld and practised as divinely dispensed prerogatives and privileges for each individual.

The following famous *Shabad* of the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh highlights the Sikh Faith's central tenet in celebration of Humanity as God's most beautiful creation on Planet Earth:

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੇਉ ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ 'ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥

*Hindu turk koou raafajee imaam saafee
Maanas kee jaat sabai ekai pehichaanabo*

Someone is a Hindu and another a Muslim, yet another is Shia and someone a Sunni
However, recognize the entire *Homo sapiens* species as one and only human race
(Sri Dasam Granth, page 51)

Note: Raafajee is a follower of Ali, and is called Shia; others are Imam-Shafi or adherents of the Prophet Muhammad or Sunni.



The Master went further to state that not only is there no difference between one Muslim and another Muslim but also in God's eyes, there is no difference between a Hindu and a Muslim.

In the following Shabad he highlights and upholds the inalienable equality of the two major religious groups of India's northwestern the region:

ਦੇਹਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ ਪੂਜਾ ਐ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੇ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ ॥

Dehra maseet soyi poojaa au nivaaj ooyi maanas sabai eaek pai anek ko bhramaao hai

The temple and the mosque are the same; there is no difference between
Hindu worship and Muslim prayer

All human beings are the same, though their different appearances create the illusion of being unlike
(Sri Dasam Granth, page 51)

In the light of this brief exposition, anyone practising discrimination on the basis of skin colour, feature, or socio-cultural idiosyncrasies is committing a sacrilege. It goes without saying that those who proclaim that Sikhs are a distinct race are insulting their *Gurus* and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* which the Tenth Master had declared to be an Eternal Guru. In my considered opinion, the Sikh Faith is NOT a Religion in the sectarian sense of the word. It is a divinely ordained Path of Righteousness treading which with sustained fervour and unalloyed humility is the only way to become a *Sachiar*. Only a *Sachiar* has the prospect of qualifying for a higher life of the spirit until God casts His glance of grace to merge his consciousness in Divine Effulgence.

A Timeless-Universal Lesson for All Seekers of Truth

The example of Diwan Todar Mal embodies a timeless-universal lesson for all seekers of Truth. Of course, there are numerous other cases too that point to a similar inference but go unnoticed because we seldom see them in the light I am attempting here. The Sikh Faith is not a theology of the known kind such as other religions profess and preach. There are three familiar terms whose significance is much deeper than meets the eye or ear: *Sahjdhaari*, *Kesdhaari*, and *Amritdhaari*, which, indeed, are the three stages of acquiring the Guru's perfect discipleship. *Sahjdhaari* may belong to any religion such as Hinduism or Islam but if he out of his own inner conviction orients his thinking towards Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism he slowly and steadily becomes a Sikh. At the second stage, he feels the urge to sport unshorn hair and qualifies as a *Kesdhaari*. Final stage comes when his conviction has become a habit of the mind and acquired unconditioned spontaneity because his thoughts, words, and deeds are in perfect alignment as result of his Guru-ward oriented consciousness (*Surt*) by virtue of which it has savoured the elixir of immortality (*Amrit*). He then without fear or favour gets baptised to become *Amritdhaari*, and leads of a life of utmost simplicity upraised on honest Subsistence (*Kirat* or Ergonomic Economics), *Seva* (Altruistic Sociology), and *Simran* (Meditation on the Holy Name).

By jettisoning the dead load of mundane knowledge, a *Sahjdhaari* acquires a receptivity that pines for the Guru's attention. He has become an ardent Lover of Truth. A *Kesdhaari* becomes a Sikh, an eager and eternal learner with arrogance of acquired knowledge dropped from his mind. He is the Upholder of Truth. The dawn of Humility as a result of heightened receptivity bends his Body to perform selfless *Seva*, with *Surt* fixed on the Divine. An *Amritdhaari* becomes a *Khalsa* (purged of all forms of worldly grime caused by Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, and Pride) to acquire the status and stature of a Saint-Soldier (*Sant-Sipahi*). He loves Truth, upholds Truth at all costs, and protects Truth even by laying down his life—as Lord's veritable Soldier.

Ingrained in this celestial Game of Love is an adamant urge along with a fervent resolve to protect the hapless and the helpless against the belligerent barbarity of the high and mighty.

The foregoing inference is drawn from my conviction that all that happens anywhere in the universe is caused by God's Edict-Fiat (*Hukam*). That is why the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh had coined the salutation *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh* (The Khalsa belongs to Lord God and, therefore, the Khalsa's Victory is also His).

Following his Revelation, Guru Nanak's Testament was, *"I was a wandering minstrel out of job; the Lord has employed me in His service. To begin with, He commanded that I should sing His praises night and day. The Master summoned the jobless bard to His True Court where He clothed me with the robes of His true honour and eulogy. Ever since, my ambrosial food has been the True Name. Whoever under the Guru's instruction takes this diet to their satisfaction, obtains peace. I, the minstrel, am spreading the Lord's glory by singing the Guru's hymns. Nanak, by praising the True Name, I have realised the Perfect Lord."* (Guru Nanak, Pauri, page 150)

It is important to note that right from the beginning, the Guru called himself God's Servant charged with the lifelong responsibility and a clear-cut task to spread the Light of Divine Love by singing paeans to God's eternal glory, which he accomplished with unmatched precision and completeness in utmost Humility. This is the reason why when asked by the Siddhas he told them that God was his Guru. I call Humility the least-resistance power-line that transmits divinity in full voltage, as it were, to guide and support mortals' adventure in the Realm of Truth in which likeness embraces likeness effortlessly. It is a matter of orienting Consciousness towards God and diligent and sustained psycho-spiritual workouts to lodge *Surt* in the *Shabda* that is an embodiment of all attributes of God in His *Sargun Saroop*.

Reflecting upon it in the light of this exposition, you will find the Guru's key proclamation to be true in letter and spirit: *"If there is one God, then there is only His way to attain Him, **not** another. One must follow that way and reject the other. Worship not him who is born only to die, but Him who is eternal and is self-absorbed in the whole universe."* It, therefore, follows from the foregoing averment that there is no room at all for a human mentor or any ritual or ceremony except resolute practice of the three-prong formula of *Kirat Karo*, *Vand Chhako*, and *Naam Japo*. This is what makes a person *Sachiar* properly qualified to receive God's grace by which the beneficiary receives salvation if the Lord so wills.





MITTAR PYAREY NOON HAAL MUREEDAAN DA KEHNA

This *Shabad* is sung in Gurdwaras by *Ragis* and *Kirtanias* as *Kirtan*. This is a prayer that Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master of the Sikh faith, had made to God during his moments of utter aloneness in Machhiwara jungle that was infested with thick wild growth and thorny bushes. He was plunged into this inhospitable environment after the final battle of Chamkaur. The phrase “*Mittar Pyarey Noon*” implies that the invocation is addressed to Lord God [*Waheguru*—Hail the *Guru* that is God].

Several paintings under the umbrella-title of “Calendar Art” exist on the subject such as the above. They depict Guru Gobind Singh resting alone on rough ground, barefooted, and injured. Ordinarily, such popular artworks carry the caption *Mittar Pyarey Noon*. The four lines of this soulful poetic supplication are believed to describe the unfortunate and challenging situation into which the Guru was forced.



ਮਿਤ੍ਰ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਨੂੰ ਹਾਲ ਮੁਰੀਦਾਂ ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਤੁਧੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਰਜਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਓਢਣ ਨਾਗ ਨਿਵਾਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਸੂਲ ਸੁਰਾਹੀ ਖੰਜਰੁ ਪਿਆਲਾ ਬਿੰਗ ਕਸਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਯਾਰੜੇ ਦਾ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੱਥਰੁ ਚੰਗਾ ਭੱਠ ਖੇੜਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਰਹਿਣਾ ॥੧॥੧॥

*Mittar Pyare Nu Haal Mureedaan Da Kehna
 Tudh Bin Rog Rajaayean Da Odhan Naag Nivasaan Dey Raihna
 Sool Surahee Khanjar Pyala Bingg Kasaayean Da Saihna
 Yararhey Da Saaoon Saththar Changa Bhatth Kheriayaan Da Raihna*

Tell the beloved friend of His devotees' pitiable predicament
 Without you, life is like being wrapped in quilts in duress
 It is akin to living with cobras coiled around
 Crucifix is the decanter; and by cup dagger is meant
 When butchers torture animals they can't their pain express
 We prefer deathbed on our Beloved's ground
 To the enemy's torturous luxury of being burnt alive



Though the followers of certain religions, notably, Hinduism, perform *havans*, hold *yagyas*, and offer charities for spiritual attainment, they can never realize Godhead without the divine power of devotion. All forms of religious rituals end in smoke without the entranced absorption of consciousness in *NAAM* [God's Holy Name].

“Only those who have loved shall attain the Lord,” Guru Gobind Singh declares.

Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur came from Delhi and joined the Guru at Damdama Sahib. They wept copious tears on hearing the fate of the young Sahibzadas. The Guru consoled them by saying **“Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Fateh Singh have given their lives for truth and righteousness and have obtained liberation. So why should the mother of such heroes weep? Your sons have won honour and attained to that eternal state of bliss. Having performed the work of the Akal Purkh, they have now returned home to Him. Therefore, accept God’s Will as the best of all gifts. Instead of your children, I present you with all my Sikhs as brave and worthy sons.”**

*In putran ke sis per vaar diye sut char
Chaar mooye to kya hua jeevat kai hazar*

For the Khalsa’s Family the sacrifice of my four sons has tiny worth
The death of four matters little when thousands more have taken birth

The Guru’s eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh who was then 17 years old, placed his head on his father’s feet and beseeched permission to go forth and fight the enemy. Guru Gobind Singh knew that this was their last meeting on earth. Smiling, that eternally loving father blessed his son to enter the battlefield. Baba Ajit Singh took with him five brave Sikhs and charged out of the safety of the fort fired by the zeal to protect Righteousness and Freedom against sacrilege by the self-avowed enemy. He fought with fierce fury and the Mughal soldiers fell beneath his powerful strokes. When his arrows were spent up and his sword was broken, Ajit Singh fought the enemy with his spear. When his spear too snapped, the enemy made a fresh attack and mortally wounded him.

The Guru, fighting from the rooftop, paid his gratitude to the Almighty Father thus, *“O God, it is Thee who had sent him here and he has laid down his life fighting for the faith. The trust Thou had reposed in me has been restored to Thy care.”*

Baba Jujhar Singh, the Guru’s second son aged 14, on seeing his brother’s brave fight, could not restrain himself and entreated his father to let him plunge into the stormy battle. The youth took five more Sikhs with him and like his elder brother before him, wrought havoc among the seasoned enemy soldiers. It is recorded that Baba Jujhar Singh glided through the Mughal army like the lithe locomotion of a crocodile through the stream. The enemy fell like rain in the monsoon until Baba Jujhar Singh and his five Sikhs also succumbed to the attacks of overwhelming numbers.

When the battle was getting bloodier and intenser, two of the *Panj Pyarey* Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh, along with three Sikhs came to Guru Gobind Singh and entreated him to leave the fort and let them stay back to fight the enemy. Their plea was that the Guru must survive so that the young tree of the Sikh Faith lives on to bloom and fructify. The Guru was reluctant to leave his loyal saint-soldiers in the midst of the fierce battle, but the Sikhs insisted with unwavering resolve, “Beloved Guruji, we are not making a request, we are Five Sikhs. By the power that you had vested in us on Baisakhi Day, we are issuing a “*Gurmatta*” [Divine Command] which must be obeyed. You ought to leave this place forthwith.”

The Guru had no choice but to concede and replied in testimony to their unambiguous grasp of God’s Edict-Fiat in these words, **“Wherever my Five Sikhs are assembled; they shall be the highest of the high. Whatever they think, say, and do shall carry the authority of the Khalsa.”** Saying this, the Guru walked around them three times and laid down his plume and crest in deference to their ineluctable order.

Guru Gobind Singh's younger sons named Baba Zorawar Singh (9) and Baba Fateh Singh (7) were interred alive in a brick wall. When he was informed of their death, he listened unfazed with an emotionless face. He took out an arrow from the quiver and thrust it into the ground; then pulling out a bush, he said, **“Such a heart-rending tragedy will not go unnoticed at God’s Court. Like this weed, the Mughal Reign will soon be extirpated.”**

Having lost his four sons who are remembered with utmost love, admiration, and reverence as *Chaar Sahibzaadey* [Four Princes of the Spirit], Guru Gobind Singh wrote ‘*Zafarnama*’ [Epistle of Victory] in Persian to Aurangzeb. In this historic letter, he chastised the bigoted Mughal Emperor for his brutality, savagery, tyranny, and cruelty, as well as his falsehood and his deceit. While explaining the Sikh code of warfare he laid bare the emperor’s corrupt morality. He wrote, “When you had sworn and taken an oath on Prophet Muhammad and called the Word of God to witness, you ought to have kept your promise. If the Prophet himself were present here, I would have made it my bounden duty to inform him of your treachery. Even though my four innocent sons have left this world fighting for Righteousness and Freedom, the Khalsa remains behind like a coiled snake. What brave deed have you done in smothering a few sparks of life? You have only stoked the fire into destructive fury.

“As to the battle at Chamkaur,” the Guru added, “what could forty men do when a hundred thousand swarmed around them? The oath-breakers attacked them with swords, arrows, and muskets. I myself was locked in combat and I fought to the utmost of my ability. *When all peaceful means have been tried in vain to achieve in a civilised way, it is righteous and just to draw the sword!* Any of your soldiers who advanced beyond his defences to attack my position, instantly dropped dead in the pool of his own rushing blood. But your troops who committed no aggression, received no injury at our hands. *Many were killed on both sides by the blitzkrieg of arrows and bullets...Men, the bravest of the brave, fought with all their heart. But how could forty of even such phenomenal heroes succeed against an enemy of countless numbers?*”

When Aurangzeb received the *Zafarnama*, he was aghast at the naked truth of having committed the gravest of sins. Scared of God’s judgement, he pledged to meet with Guru Gobind Singh, but died before the intended tryst came to pass.

After long weeks of travelling, however, the Guru stopped and set up camp in Talwandi Sabo on 20 January 1706. He ordered the top of a sand hill to be levelled, took off his armour, and decided to take rest. The city he thus founded became known as Damdama Sahib [Place of Rest], and he stayed there undisturbed for nine months.





ARCHITECTURE OF PEACE:

The Kartarpur Land Port Building

The Terminal Building is an evocative example of holistic architecture that has modern built-form with roots in the Revelation of Guru Nanak Dev. **Kartarpur Corridor** pays palpable homage to the Great Guru by allowing visa-free border crossing to devotees from India to visit **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib** in Kartarpur, Pakistan. It is a holy shrine for the Sikhs. Situated in Kartarpur, Narowal District of Pakistan, the historic Sikh pilgrimage is 120 kilometre from Lahore and lies only 3 kilometres from the Pakistan border with India. The Gurdwara was built to commemorate the site where Guru Nanak had settled after his missionary odysseys and took to farming to earn his livelihood. Guru Nanak founded the Kartarpur town by Ravi River in 1504, ploughing the fields and setting up a community kitchen, or *Langar*, to which he contributed the crop yielded by his own hard work as a tell-tale example of earning an honest livelihood and sharing it with others. The following points highlight the historic significance of the holy shrine.

- Gurdwara Darbar Sahib was the place where Guru Nanak is believed to have assembled the Sikh community and lived there for 18 years until his death in 1539 CE.
- It is also the place where the Sikh community's second Guru, Bhai Lehna, later named Angad, hailed from.
- The holy shrine is also believed to have a few copies of the original *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.
- The original structure of the holy shrine was once destroyed by floods.

- It is the second holiest site of the Sikh Faith after *Gurdwara Janam Asthan*, which is the birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev located at Nankana Sahib, Pakistan.



Pakistan has graciously agreed that it will not carry out any commercial activity or build any structure on 104 acres of land surrounding Gurdwara Darbar Sahib (above, left) on which Guru Nanak had done farming for 18 years.

The Land-Port Terminal Building, (above, right) **Kartarpur Corridor**, was designed by Ar Gurpreet Singh Shah of the Delhi-based *Creative Group*, founded by his father Ar Charanjit Singh Shah. It was inaugurated on 9 November 2019, by the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, celebrating Guru Nanak's 550th Birth Anniversary. *“Our impulse is to sensitize our designs towards passive strategies of green architecture. Not only do we try to derive our inspiration from nature, but also we let the building breathe with nature,”* explains the architect.

The design concept, expressed in the contemporary idiom, originates from Khanda, the Double-Edged Sword, and an ethico-spiritual symbol of Saint-Soldiers of the Khalsa founded in 1699 by the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith Guru Gobind Singh. The gateway that is Gateway, the crowning feature of the port, is composed of five petals which symbolize the Five Vows of the Sikh Faith.

In the context of this book, I must say something about Ar Prof CS Shah. I call him a “Wonder Man” in whom, by God’s grace, Body, Mind, and Soul are perfectly aligned and coordinated in the form of an inexhaustible source of CREATIVITY that happens only by SAHJ [unconditioned spontaneity] such as can be discerned in the Built Environment which “Creative Group” brings forth from its blessed studios.





MEANINGS OF NUMBERS IN THE LIVES OF THE TEN SIKH GURUS

Though the Sikh Faith discountenances such ideas I cannot resist the temptation of dealing with the significance of numbers in the lives of the 10 Gurus that point to certain strange facts. Those unfamiliar with Numerology might be provoked to pronounce a hasty judgement on my notion—and they have a right to do so. However, I would like to remind them that I hold Guru Nanak Dev to be the greatest Prophet who not only gave new direction to religious discourse but also uplifted religion from out of the quagmire of superstitions, myths, prejudices, and communalism to connect the soul *directly* with Lord God through the Revealed Word. So far he is the first and last Messenger of God to prefix Number 1 to **Oankar** to offer the Sacred Formula rooted in Pragmatic Spirituality that extends its outreach from places of worship to serve on a platter to the teeming millions for their psycho-social amelioration. According to Plato, “Numbers are the highest degree of knowledge. It is knowledge itself.”

In the light of this brief exposition, I would like to point out that the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is 1430 which has a profound spiritual significance. Number 1 and 0, respectively represent Lord God’s manifest [*sarguna*] and transcendent [*nirguna*] attributes. Even when God chooses to become manifest He remains *one* without an equal. Zero [*shunya*] is thus His Self-absorbed state of

Samadhi [deep meditation]. Number 4 signifies completion in Pragmatic Spirituality. Number 0 is the mother of existence. Everything comes from this void, this inexplicable, dark, eternal womb. Nobody has 0 as their life path or destiny number – this number is the number of the Universe itself. We are all children of 0. Number 3 means wisdom, creativity, and mysticism. The total of the digits is Number 8 that has two four's symbolising the pragmatic and the spiritual worlds; in other words, Pragmatic Spirituality. For my second PhD done in 2000. I had coined the term “Creative Mysticism” as a substitute for “Religion” which the so-called modern world looks down upon as something superstitious and antagonist to Humanity as a whole. Thus, declaring **Sri Guru Granth Sahib** as the **Guru Eternal**, the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh had not only ended the lineage of human spiritual preceptors but also reiterated the significance of Ik Oankar as propounded by Guru Nanak Dev. Ever since *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* has been hailed and worshipped as non-human Eleventh Guru—Sovereign, Eternal. In Numerology, Number 11 is called the First Master Number and recognised to possess the most spiritual vibrations with the paramount mission of serving humankind.

Taking all the months in which all the Ten Gurus were born and died the month of August is missing. The month of August bears the Number 8 which is called the Number of Saturn that represents Death. Its absence from the history of the Sikh Gurus signifies that there is no death for them. **They shall eternally live.**

The Spiritual Ministry of the Ten Sikh Gurus lasted 239 years five months and 22 days or 87469 days which digits, when added laterally, total up to 34 or Number 7 that represents Spirituality.

Guru Nanak's birthday, 15 April 1469, was a Thursday, and the 105th day of the year that fell in the 16th week of the year. Thursday is Jupiter, in Hindu mythology, is *Brihaspati* who is the Guru [Spiritual Preceptor] of Devas [gods], personification of piety and religion, the chief offerer of prayers and sacrifices, represented as the *Purohita* [Priest] of the gods with whom he intercedes for men. He is the Lord of planet Jupiter. He is of *Sattva Guna* [Purity as a quality of *Prakriti* or Nature] and represents knowledge and teaching. He is often known simply as “Guru”.

Guru Nanak Dev's Birth Number and 105th day of the year to which it relates have both Venus Number i.e. 6 which stands for creativity, cosmopolitanism, and compassion. His birth in the 16th week denotes Neptune or Number 7 which represents Spirituality. His Destiny Number is 30. Number 30 stands for awesome ambition, the inextinguishable burning desire that led him to travel for nearly three decades to different parts of the world to spread the Holy Word revealed to him by God in Bein River for the amelioration of the human condition regardless of caste, creed, colour, and ethnic eccentricities.





UNNOTICED SPARKS AND SPARKLES OF DIVINITY IN NANAK BANI

NANAK BANI is a veritable compendium of divine utterances of the multiform message that he had received from Lord God in his Revelation. It is not by any stretch of imagination a rehashing of the prevalent religious thoughts of Hinduism and Islam as hordes of scholars have shown it to be. From my study of World Religions for my second doctorate earned in 2000, I have inferred that the most convincing way to settle the differences, which are often brought into discourse to establish originality, is to study their cosmology. My aim or intention is not to drag the reader into fruitless debate because I strongly and stubbornly believe that religion is not a matter of debate as scholars of all genres mindlessly engage in or religious leaders get involved in when confronted with the embarrassing questions that scientists irreverently pose. I have clarified this crucial point in mind once and for all that science's approach and achievement is in 'experiment' as against religion that abides in the personal experience that is the most convincing evidence of the existence of matters esoteric, above and beyond the scope of science. Science cannot study that which it cannot see and measure and experiment with. But the scientists like religionists are obstinately arrogant and pronounce judgement on a subject that they cannot deal with.

Let us now look at what Hindu Cosmology is all about. “Cosmology is a subject which deals with the origin of the universe, its existence, development and extinction.” It is a study of universe as a whole, its history and origin.

The Puranas present an elaborate mythical cosmography. The old tripartite universe persists, but it is modified. There are three levels—heaven, earth, and the netherworld—but the first and the last are further subdivided into vertical layers. Earth consists of seven circular continents, the central one surrounded by the salty ocean and each of the other concentric continents by oceans of other liquids. In the centre of the central mainland stands the cosmic mountain Meru; the southernmost portion of this mainland is *Bharatavarsha*, the old name for India. Above the earth there are seven layers in heaven, at the summit of which is the world of *Brahman (Brahmaloka)*; there are also seven layers below earth, the location of hells inhabited by serpents and demons.

Myths of Time and Eternity: The oldest texts speak little of time and eternity. It is taken for granted that the gods, though born, are immortal; they are called “Sons of Immortality.” In the Atharaveda, Time appears personified as creator and ruler of everything. In the Brahmanas and later Vedic texts there are repeated esoteric speculations concerning the year, which is the unit of creation and is thus identified with the creative and regenerative sacrifice and with Prajapati (“Lord of Creatures”), the god of the sacrifice. Time is an endless repetition of the year and thus of creation; this is the starting point of later notions of repeated creations.

ISLAM defines heaven as *Jinnaan* (plural of *Jannat*), the paradise where good people rest after leaving their earthly body. The Holy Quran describes it as ‘gardens of pleasure’, where those who do good deeds during their lifetime are rewarded after death.

The Quran calls hell ‘*Jahannum*’. It is a place of blazing fire and painful torments. It is described as a landscape of pits with boiling water and fire to physically torture one’s spirit.

The Seven Heavens are: *Adan, Firdaus, Na’im, Mawa, Khuld, Maqaam, and Salaam*.

The Seven Hells are: *Jahannum, Ladah, Saqar, Al-Hutamah, Al-Hawwiyah, Saeer, and Jaheem*.

Names and Colours of Seven Skies, according to Islam, are: *Rafi* (Water-like), *Qaydoom* (Bronze), *Madoon* (Brass), *Arfaloon* (Silver), *Hayoon* (Gold), *Aroos* (Garnet), and *Ajma* (White).

In Numerology, SEVEN is the number of completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual). It derives much of its meaning from being tied directly to God’s creation of all things. The Numeral 7 is also important in Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.

In Christianity, God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made “the heaven and the earth” and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus, He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with the responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was “very good,” declaring the glory of God.

In sharp contrast, Guru Nanak in his Revelation says that there are countless worlds, netherworlds, and skies, which instantly flowed from His one utterance. He stresses that nobody can ascertain either the extent of the universe or the time of its creation. As Creator of everything, including Space and Time, God dwells both in his creation and at the same time remains aloof from it. As such He exists, and remains forever unchanged, in eternal youth, and unfading beauty. Besides, He is the Protector and the Destroyer—and the three activities even though they are constant and beyond imagination in scale and diversity do not tire Him



to take rest as humans do. He discountenances the idea of heaven and hell, and of salvation as preached in other religions. He says that living in God's will (*Raza*) and in unquestioned edict-fiat (*Hukm*) become *Sachiar* (a truthful, righteous, virtuous person) and thus lead a life free from fear, ill will, and a host of psychopathic vices. However, if God casts his glance of grace upon him that person is blessed with salvation here and now (*Jiwan Mukht*).

Citing this example of the Sikh Faith is not to compare one faith with others but to show how through the centuries religious revelation has become progressively more complex and comprehensive. To my mind, like life has witnessed, Religion also has Evolution though it is above and beyond the influence of "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" doctrine of Darwinism. Natural selection is a mechanism of evolution. Organisms that are more adapted to their environment are more likely to survive and pass on the genes that aided their success. This process causes species to change and diverge over time. Natural selection is one of the ways to account for the millions of species that have lived on Earth.

Both these concepts suggest the presence of a force—natural selection does it covertly; survival of the fittest, overtly. But Guru Nanak discountenances this idea. According to him, nobody has the power to act as one or other and this dictum applies to all and sundry that includes the high and mighty and low and weak.

Many scholars including Sikh researchers and historians say that *Gurbani* has its source in the Vedas and the Upanishads. The Vedas, meaning "knowledge," are the oldest texts of Hinduism. They are touted to have always existed and are thus not manmade. At the same time, it is also said that these sacred texts were revealed to Saptrishis [Seven Rishis or Seers]. However, according to Colonel Tilak Raj who is a brilliant scholar of Sanskrit and an accomplished Hindi poet, "The traditional Vedic scholars' claim that the four Vedas called Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva contain revealed knowledge and are eternal is not true. They are considered as the earliest and the ultimate source of knowledge and the highest authority in matters of religion by orthodox Hindus. They believe that the Vedas are the sacred heritage not only of the Hindus but also of the whole world. These books contain the divine, infallible knowledge revealed to seers (Rishis) with the main aim of first enlightening them and then, spreading that knowledge to others so that they may live a happy life in this mundane world and be able to realise the eternal bliss. There are 414 seers (Rishis) in the Rig Veda alone." To my mind, this dispute cannot be resolved by any means whatsoever because for many centuries the Vedic texts were transmitted orally such as were derived from the ancient Indo-Aryan culture of the Indian Subcontinent until finally being written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE.

At any rate, the moot point is that in *Santana Dharma* [now, erroneously called Hinduism], Brahman is an abstract principle of truth, understood to be both that which grows and that which causes other things to grow. It is the omnipresent and eternal source of all that exists in the universe, and is present in everything; every person, every molecule, and every atom. *Brahman* is a Sanskrit word that refers to the highest universal principle, also called the ultimate or absolute reality. It is a central concept in the *Upanishads*, ancient scriptures that make-up the doctrine of *Vedanta* philosophy. In Sanskrit, Brahman is defined as *Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Brahma* ["that which never changes," "knowledge," and "infinity"]. The word Brahman is derived from the Sanskrit root *brh*, meaning "to grow or expand".

Before proceeding further, I would like to point out the difference between Philosophy and Revelation because these are two terms widely used by scholars and researchers as well as historians writing about *Gurbani* in utter ignorance of their meaning and usage. I am convinced such writers do more disservice than service to the cause of authentic and useful scholarship by messing up meanings and motives. Perturbed by prevalent confusion I had studiously researched and spelled out meaning and the making of Mythology, Poetry,

Philosophy, and Mysticism [as the religion of the élite], and convincingly shown how Gurbani as received [not composed] by Guru Nanak is none of these things. He has simply described what God had in His sweet will chosen to reveal to him. [those interested to learn more about this crucial subject should read my Book titled “*CREATIVE MYSTICISM – Guru Nanak’s Pragmatic Spirituality*” based on my second PhD earned in 2000]. For the purpose of this write-up, suffice it to deal with only Philosophy and Revelation.

PHILOSOPHY is the study or creation of theories about basic things such as the nature of existence, knowledge, and thought, or about how people should live. Its components are Premise, Arguments, Inferences, and Conclusion. Premise is an idea or theory on which a statement or action is based. Argument is a statement or series of statements for or against something. Inferences are steps in reasoning, moving from premises to logical consequences. Conclusion is a judgement or decision reached by reasoning. Reasoning is the process of thinking about something in order to make a decision. Reasoning is logical, thoughtful thinking. Arguing academically (which will include the process of reasoning) is when you pick a side and persuade your audience.

REVELATION [*ILHAAM*], in religion and theology, is the revealing or disclosing of some form of truth or knowledge through communication with a deity or other supernatural entity or entities. A revelation can be considered valid only for the original recipient, with all else being hearsay. Not many scholars know, much less acknowledge, that the Sikh Faith is truly the only religion based on Revelation of its founder Guru Nanak. He confesses to being a humble but blessed recipient of Revelation from Lord God. The texts of other World Religions such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc. were recorded after the death of their founders. In the case of Islam, Prophet Muhammad’s *Ilhaam* has two-fold historic significance: (i) That Revelation can occur to even the illiterate because Prophet Muhammad is called *al-Nabi al-Ummi* the most common meaning of which is “the unlettered prophet”. The expression refers to Prophet Muhammad’s inability to create a major literary work such as the Quran, and (ii) That what we humans call Knowledge is actually a compendium of diverse skills of many grades and genres; real Knowledge is essentially divine such as can be had only through Revelation whose beneficiary God chooses by His own sweet will that is inscrutable.

Muslims believe that the Word of God was revealed to Prophet Muhammad by the archangel Gabriel in Arabic, who said, “*Recite in the name of thy Lord ...*” (Sura 96). These revelations were subsequently collected and codified as the Qur’an (literally “recitation” in Arabic), the Holy Book of Islam. As the source of Islamic faith and practice, the Qur’an describes the relationship between an almighty and all-knowing God and his creations. The Qur’an also maintains that all individuals are responsible for their actions, for which they will be judged by God, and so it provides guidelines for proper behaviour within the framework of a just and equitable society.

Preachers and scholars hold various views on the stated subjects because they are blind. Their ignorance makes them quarrelsome, wrangling, and disputing because each one is unyielding in self-asserting that reality is thus and thus, and no other.

Aristotle thought that Philosophy begins in wonder. Etymologically, Philosophy is “Love of wisdom”. Some philosophers have called it the “Dear Delight of Understanding”. However, wonder is something children do quite well. The so-called adults or mature persons have lost the precious natural gift to inappropriate education and soul-stifling conformity imposed by the high and mighty whose one-point agenda is to anyhow lord over, rule, and have unceasing fun at the cost of countless innocent lives. It does not matter to them that as Guru Nanak says Human Life [*Durlabh Deh*] itself is a priceless Gift of God. Nanak



Bani is in a class apart as a record of the Guru's Revelation. In other words, it is not a product of ratiocinative cerebration as Philosophy invariably is. That is precisely the reason why Aristotelian wonder—a feeling of amazement and admiration, caused by something beautiful, remarkable, or unfamiliar—gets transformed into 'joyous wonder' [*Vismaad*] in Guru Nanak Bani [Divine Utterances]. *Vismaad* is a rapturous stirring of the soul when the mind unexpectedly has an out-of-the-blue encounter with Beauty, the Splendour Truth. Truth is the primary attribute of God, and means that He actually exists, and is not a figment of imagination as umpteen forms of Mythology make Him to be.

Let me now revert to the subject as indicated by the caption of this write-up. People who have interest in Gurbani know the *Mool Mantra* (Seed incantation) that introduces Guru Nanak's primary Bani called "JAPUJI" received by him in his Revelation. The sacred text of the Holy Book of the Sikh Faith, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, begins with it, using the Numeral One (1). Such devotees are most likely to be familiar with the popular notion that *Mool Mantra* is the expansion, deliberation, and exposition of the Japuji while the entire contents of the 1430-page Holy Book are the expansion, deliberation, and exposition of the Japuji. To me it appears to be something else. It is the cryptic Numeral One (1) that says it all in a language that is free from the confusion, contradictions, and controversies of scripts because numbers have a language of their own that is completely free from such things and celebrate the sovereignty of neutrality. Thus, IK, which is the Punjabi word for Numeral One (1) is everything that Guru Nanak's Revelation has brought forth as a time-less-universal scripture for all peoples of the world. God is ONE without a second; all in all—and His manifest form [*Sargun Saroop*] with all its bewildering complexity and heart-beguiling beauty, ever-changing, self-renewing panorama of colourful immensity—is the Supreme Reality, Self-Existing, before Time, during Time, and after Time. Therefore, in my considered opinion, the word *Oankar* coined by the Guru is an expansion, deliberation, and exposition of the Numeral One. The *Mool Mantra* that follows enumerating His Attributes until the word *Saibhang* performs the same function as done by *Oankar*.

The phrase *Gurparsad* (i) is crucial in the proper comprehension of the divine message. But it is popularly interpreted to mean that God can be realised by the grace of the Guru. Guru Nanak has clearly stated that his Guru is God Himself, and no book or human being. He has also expressed his utter humility time and again—indeed, made humility the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith—and here the reference is to God, the Guru. However, my interpretation is that he is saying: The foregoing creed/credo, I have proclaimed by the Grace of Guru who is God Himself. The next word is "JAP(U)" [Meditative Repetitive Recitation of *Mantra* or the Master Word]. JAP(U) is a mystical formula or prayer. It means *contemplating His Glory by a ceaseless Chant* of the following *Mantra*:

Truth was He before the birth of Time
 Truth has He been since Time He bore
 Truth is He, Nanak, even now sublime
 And Truth shall He be evermore

In my view, Guru Nanak here is reiterating the root significance of the word *SAT(U)* that he has used soon after *Oankar*. The word *Sat(u)* means that God exists ACTUALLY, not as a figment of imagination, and He exists because He is Self-Created (*Saibhang*). This being axiomatic it follows that God is also the Creator of Time, Space, Matter, and Energy and, therefore, free from the rigours of change. As such He remains in the selfsame,

unchanged form in unageing Youth, and unfading Beauty [*Sahib Mera Neet Nava...My Lord is Forever New*]. To underscore the divine message of this unnoticed sparkle Guru Nanak has the stated attributes of God with the use of Time as the Metaphor because Time causes birth, growth, decay, and death. However, in doing so, he has revealed the fourth dimension of Time that belongs exclusively to God.

The familiar and in continual use worldwide in the history of humankind are the three dimensions or segments called past, present, and future. The fact remains that Time is one organic whole vested with the power to create, maintain, and destroy. God existed before He had caused the birth of Time as we know it. However, in Guru Nanak's Revelation, Time in both human life and that of the universe as a living force is only PRESENT because what is PAST is only notional and virtual, not real in terms of palpable human experience. We humans for reasons of convenience have split Time notionally into Past, Present, and Future. In this unnoticed sense, the entire span of human life conventionally considered to be three scores and ten [70 years] is PRESENT on the Cosmic Scale.

Our PAST was a previous life, and FUTURE would be life after death. That is why Guru Nanak has called *Aadmi* [MAN] *Ik Dami*, a creature who has claim over only a single breath because the one breath that he exhales does may not come back—only the one still in his lungs is real. Therefore, chanting this *Mantra* is the most succinct and efficacious meditative, repetitive recitation of the expanded yet condensed *Mool Mantra* that says it all: God was there before Time started running its course according to His Edict-Fiat [*Hukm*]; He was still there during what we call Past, He yet exists very much in the here and now called the Present, and will be there in the time to come [Future]. The *Mantra* as an embodiment of Divinity and Grace is a holistic chant that keeps the devotee alert, focused, and receptive to the jibes/vibes that meditative, repetitive recitation create in the Consciousness [*Surt*] so that it eventually gets installed in the *Shabda* [the Sacred Word] as a prerequisite to making the beneficiary a devotee of God.

The *Mool Mantra* as a blessed embodiment of *Sargun* God's key attributes carries an extremely subtle message. An earnest seeker can imbibe only two attributes: Fearlessness and Freedom from Enmity. In the entire universe created by Him, God alone is *Nirbhau* and *Nirvair* in that order. No one else, even the mightiest of monarchs is without fear. Fear is a universal-timeless emotion that man has in his DNA as a result of having evolved from Animal Life. You must watch programmes on Discovery and other channels how all animals including the lion that is supposed to be the King of Beasts is mortally scared just as other animals which are afraid of it—eternally.

FEAR is the only common inheritance that each species has even though it was originally implanted by God in their brains as a life-saving immaterial device. It works in them 24x7 during the entire course of their lives. As is now well established and well known, ancient Man was a Hunter who often died as a prey. Although he evolved to a higher form of Life he yet carried the eternal feat of the previous animal life in his DNA and it is still there, following him as his own shadow. Suffice it to say that unless one is free from Fear one can never be without Enmity. And as the fifth Master Guru Arjan says in *Sukhmani Sahib: Nirbhau japey sagal bhau mitey...* meditative repetitive recitation of the Name of God who alone is fearless extirpates all fear from the mind of the devotee.

I am sharing some examples from the lives of the Sikh Gurus to illustrate the point that you must grasp to tread the Path of Righteousness...

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

While addressing a gathering, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a function in Lucknow to celebrate the 550th Prakash Parva (birth anniversary) of Guru Nanak Dev pointed out how the founder of the



Sikh Faith had valiantly stood against the Mughal Emperor Babur at a time the country was facing an invasion and religion was under threat of extirpation, and a large section of the Indian society was gripped by fear over how to save their religion, how to save their sisters and daughters.

“At a time when all were mortally afraid because of the atrocities perpetrated by Babur, it was Guru Nanak who had the courage to call him ‘Jabar’”, he said. Maintaining that the country would never forget the sacrifices of the Sikh Gurus, Adityanath said, “Around 550 years ago, when the country was facing foreign invasion, religion and truth were being destroyed, in that period, Guru Nanak Dev had paved the way for the welfare of humanity through his divine light. Religion was being destroyed... At that time, Guru Nanak came as a ray of hope.”



Humayun was the eldest son of Mughal Emperor Babur, who was the king of Delhi. When Babur died, Humayun became the king. He was lazy and weak. So, one of his officers, named Sher Shah revolted against him. In the battle that ensued Humayun was defeated and Sher Shah became the king of Delhi. Humayun had to run away to save his life.

On his way to Lahore, passing by Khadur where Guru Angad Dev lived, he sought the Guru's blessing to regain his kingdom. On arrival he found his host busy teaching students who did not notice Humayun's presence. He did not like waiting, “How dare the Guru show no respect to the king!” Thus, in a fit of rage, he drew out his sword to kill the Guru.

In the meantime the Guru had accomplished his task and was ready to listen to the king. Seeing what his royal guest was about to do, he smiled and said, “You are brave enough to draw your sword to kill or frighten the peace-loving people. Why didn't you use it on the battlefield, from which you have come running like a coward? Your sword was powerless, but now suddenly you seem to have become a brave fighter.”

Humayun felt ashamed. He begged the Guru's pardon. “I am very sorry, Sir,” he said, “I had really lost my head. You know that Guru Nanak was kind enough to bless my father, who became the king of Delhi. I am no good, because I've lost the throne to Sher Shah. Your blessing alone can make me the king once again. Please have mercy on me and bless me.”

The Guru kept quiet for some time. “My blessing has no magic”, he said smilingly. “To be a king means to be kind, just and helpful to the people. If you promise to be so, you will be a king with God's grace. Be patient and always remember God, who grants all wishes.”

Humayun hurried away to Persia (now, Iran) with dogged determination to act upon the Guru's Advice.

After a few years, he gathered his soldiers and also received help from the king of Persia. He came back to India with a very large army and this time, he and his soldiers fought very bravely. Humayun won the battle and became the king of Delhi once again. Humayun was full of gratitude towards the Guru and he wanted to do him a favour, but by that time Guru Angad Sahib had left the human body, Guru Amar Das had become the Third Master of the Sikh Faith. The Guru sent a message reminding the king to be kind, just, and helpful and to the people and to respect holy men. Sometime later, Akbar, the son of Humayun, visited Guru Amar Das and offered help for the Guru's *Langar*, Community Kitchen.

It is pertinent to close this episode with Guru Angad Dev's quote: “*The Lord can make the blind see clearly; He treats man as he knows him, no matter what one may say. Where the truth is not seen, know that pride is strong there. Nanak, how shall a man buy anything if he likes it not?*”



On the royal order of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith, was brutally tortured and sentenced to death because he had refused to stop preaching the message of God as started by the founder Guru Nanak Dev. The Guru was forced to sit on a burning hot iron sheet while boiling hot sand was poured over his body. After enduring unrelenting torture for five days, the Guru was taken for a bath in the river Ravi. As thousands of people watched he entered the river, never to be seen again.

Accordingly, on the 16th of June of every year since 1606, the Sikhs commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. He is reverently called the Prince of Martyrs. Before the arrest, torture, and martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the Sikhs had nothing to do with weapons or violence, as all the Sikh Gurus had taught them the value of compassion, love, dedication, hard work, and worship of one God, besides the commitment to peace and harmony for all the peoples of the world.

FREEDOM FROM ENMITY

Guru Har Gobind began to hold *Diwan* (Court) twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. The Sikhs used to come in large numbers. They would learn the meaning of life and true ways of living it. The Guru's Darbar (Court) looked splendid and everyone who came to see it went away profoundly impressed. The Guru and the Sikhs were the friends of the people, Hindus and Muslims alike. The Sikhs addressed the Guru as *Sachcha Patshah* (the True King).

In spite of his great power and popularity, the Guru would not claim even an inch of land. With the help of his faithful Sikhs he had the Akal Takht (the Throne of the Immortal Lord) build at Amritsar. As described in a separate article, it was here that the Guru and the Sikhs would discuss all matters concerning the Sikhs and the country and make decisions. Soon after the Guru also had a castle named Loh Garh (the fort of steel) built at Amritsar.

Emperor Jahangir did not like this policy of the Guru. Driven by a lingering suspicion, he sent for him to come to Delhi and explain all about his ideas and intentions. During an extended meeting, the two exchanged notes on a number of questions about God and kingship.

Jahangir: *Could you tell me the difference between the Hindu god, Parmeshar, and the Muslim god, Allah?*

Guru Har Gobind: *I don't see any difference between the two. I see only ONE God. Truth is His name. He is the Creator, all merciful, and the Lord of us all.*

Jahangir: *What do you think of our world?*

Guru Har Gobind: *God created it. It is He who looks after the world, and He will destroy it. There are millions of worlds like ours; they surround this world on all sides. Nobody can know the exact number. The number could be given if man had the power to count them. Only the Creator knows the number of worlds and their sizes. We only need to know that our Lord is great - How GREAT! He alone knows.*

Jahangir: *O Guru, tell me who are better - the Hindus or the Muslims?*

Guru Har Gobind: *God created light and all are born from it. We cannot say who is good and who is bad. The Creator is in the creation and the creation is in the Creator. The world goes on as the Lord wills. All the people are the children of the same God and so they are all equal.*



Jahangir: *Who is a good ruler?*

Guru Har Gobind: *God is the only perfect ruler. His laws are just and flawless. A king must always be just, kind, and helpful to his people. He should make sincere efforts to remove all the sufferings of his people and to look after all their needs.*

Impressed by the Guru's ideas very much, Jahangir made friends with him. The Guru became the Emperor's royal guest, and they would often go for hunting together. One day, Emperor Jahangir and Guru Har Gobind were out in the forest for hunting. The Emperor was accompanied by many of his noble men. There were many more helping to drive the game animals towards the royal party. Some nobles of the royal party were riding elephants and horses. The Emperor and a few of his bodyguards were standing on the ground when suddenly a tiger rushed forward and made horses and elephants tremble with fright.

Everyone saw the tiger leap straight towards the Emperor and his party. Bullets and arrows were showered from all sides but they went to the right and left of the tiger. There were loud shouts of distress and shrieks of mortal fear for help from all sides. The Emperor begged the Guru to save him. He at once dismounted from his horse and, with his sword and shield, jumped quickly into the narrow space between the Emperor and the tiger. Just as the tiger was about to spring upon the Emperor, Guru Har Gobind struck it a powerful blow with his sword. The tiger fell to the ground and the Guru delivered a final blow to kill it. The Emperor and the royal party were amazed at the Guru's skill and bravery. They thanked him for his help in time of grave danger.

GURU NANAK'S UNCONVENTIONAL FORMULA FOR WHOLESOME LIVING

Rehras Sahib [the Sikh evening prayer, the word 'Rehras' is a Punjabi-ised version of the Persian phrase *Raah-i-Raast* (Path of Righteousness)] begins with: *Dukkh Daroo Sukkh Rog Bhaiya*...which translates into

Grief becomes the remedy
Happiness turns into malady

The so-called learned who have scientific temper would be quick to disagree, even mock at the idea because their secular knowledge fortified by arrogance has closed the doors of their consciousness to the realm of the Spirit World. To them, it strikes as a paradox hard to understand, harder to swallow. However, when you see it in the context of Gurbani, which is a compendium of paeans sung by evolved souls to the glory of God, a glowing flicker of understanding will dawn on you. What the Guru is saying is simply this: Only in grief do you remember God; never in happiness when you are drunk with the evanescent pleasures of celebration of life without knowing what it means. This is because everything flows from the selfsame single source: God, the Creator. Therefore, the implication is that unless you remember Him, living is a sickness, and because it is only in grief that you remember Him what you believe to be an ailment gets transformed into a rich dose of bubbly psycho-spiritual health. Happiness causes forgetfulness, spiritual amnesia, and thus soon in its shadow the malady catches you. Furthermore, to be always happy accrues from treading the Path of Righteousness.

GEMS AND JEWELS FROM JAPUJI

1. Guru Nanak takes up the four major ways (which the lesser saviours claim to be efficacious: (a) ceremonial piety through purification ablutions, (b) speech-fasting: (*Maun Vrat*) i.e., self-imposed silence, (c) gastric

fasting and over-indulgent acquisition, covering the entire gamut from sickening starvation to sumptuous satiation, and (d) proud pedantry, empty erudition, or winsome worldly-wisdom—or, worse, the massive might of Metaphysics. Guru Nanak demystifies all the four categorically as superficial and misleading; then, poses the question: How to demolish the impregnable wall of illusion, how to be *sachiar*? The Guru answers it with disarming simplicity, using six words: *Hukami razai(n) chalna, Nanak, likkhya naal*. God's Inviolable Writ is lodged within the seeker's Mind for ready guidance and obedience. The operative principle of His (Inscrutable) Will (*Raza*) is the Edict-Fiat (*Hukam*) whereby the Path of Truth is fore-ordained for the seeker. And since this *Hukam*, which the seeker must unconditionally, willingly, and happily obey through thick and thin, lies within his own heart, he cannot/need not be beguiled or misled—unless he himself lets go under the exigencies of utmost privation or Ego-directed pursuit of ambition and carnal pleasures [Pauri-1].

2. All Creation is the expression of God's Edict-Fiat and that total Law and Order (as against Lawlessness and Chaos or Disorder) prevails through it, Eternally and Infinitely. The one, who knows (and has imbibed) this Truth, lives in utmost Humility in God's Immeasurable Grand Scheme of Things. He stresses the point that accepting this truth is not an easy task because it has deceptive simplicity. Then he shows how to test whether you have grasped and absorbed its significance for practical application during workaday existence. This is how to do it: "*Nanak Hukamai je bujhai to haumai kahai na koi*". It means that if you truly know God's Edict-Fiat (Hukm) you will never indulge in the life-wasting sport of *I-am-ness* or Ego [Pauri-2].
3. Guru Nanak reveals something indispensable to the grasp of the divine import of his Creative Mysticism: God alone is the True Lord whose justice too is true, and his language is infinite love. To my mind, Love is the only script-less language that is timeless-universal and, above all, disputations caused by the sickness of ethnic eccentricities and the chronic disease of patriotism. The validity and veracity of my averment can be readily tested by watching how the carnivores like the big cats respond to human love. The curious sense of belonging awakened by love works wonders despite the fact that neither the lion nor man understands each other's language that is poles apart (Watch DISCOVERY TV or ANIMAL KINGDOM TV).
4. What I have stated here should gain significance when I tell you that I had posed this simple question to the best of scholars and linguists: *Guru Nanak had travelled far and wide in regions where the languages were incomprehensibly varied but he knew only Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. With this formidable handicap how did he communicate with strangers whose languages he had no idea about?* Nobody had any answer to my question until on repeated reading of Japuji with attendant deep reflection I stumbled upon this gem of his Creative Mysticism: God's language is infinite love.

In his continued sharing of the secret and mystery revealed to him, Guru Nanak, through Creative Mysticism, disentangles the two questions of "Good Life" and "Salvation", of existential significance to all human beings. Good deeds *can* (and do) beget "Good Life" i.e., life of virtuous fulfilment, but *not* "Salvation". Salvation can be earned *only* by God's Grace. The metaphor, in the first case, is vesture, the Body, which the soul must "wear" through its endless evolution to a fuller, deeper, broader, and higher life—birth after birth. "*Mokh Dwar*" is the metaphor for Salvation, the door of *Mukti*, which can be entered only if God so Wills.



The prevalent four methods, discountenanced in *Pauri-1*, are rejected again, by an implicit reiteration. To my knowledge, no other religious leader has stated the problem of Salvation (and its solution) with such disarming simplicity, crystal clarity, unswerving conviction, and creative consistency. By doing so, Guru Nanak subtly underscores the invaluable virtue of Humility when he proclaims: “*Nanak evai(n) janai sabh(u)aape sa(ch)chiar(u)*.” “Nanak, let it thus be known that the True One is All-in-All (in Himself, by Himself, for Himself).”

As God is the Sole Benefactor for all creatures what shall we present that His court shows up, what shall we utter from the mouth that evokes His love (by implication, none of these need be done). Just reflect on the grandeur of His Being in the ambrosial (pre-dawn hours i.e. (from 3 to 5 a.m.) Since there is no simultaneity on the globe the stated time serves the purpose well wherever the devout may be on planet earth at the time of meditation. [Pauri-4]

5. Idolatry has been Hinduism’s mainstay. In sharp contrast, Iconoclasm is Islam’s fundamental tenet. The Muslims, in pursuit of this principle, razed hundreds of Hindu temples, idols and icons as invaders-rulers of Hindustan saying that they were *but-shikan* (idol-breakers), not *but-prast* (idol-worshippers). Desecration was their way of saying (in barbaric, brutal terms) what Guru Nanak has proclaimed (not merely said/stated) in such a *civilised* way. Because God’s likeness can never be shaped under any circumstances, by anyone whosoever, where is the question either of “making” His idol (*but*) or of “breaking” it. *Untainted is He, in Formless Self-Existence—Infinitely, Eternally*. [Pauri-5]
6. Guru Nanak is the only World Prophet who points out the awesome inadequacy of human language in communicating the divine received message in Revelation to the learned and the lay alike. He states the problem in his own inimitable way. Using the word countless to paint a picture of God’s creation in its bewildering immensity, he readily confesses even saying *Asankh* is a veritable burden on the mind; then hastens to add that without using the words coined by human beings I cannot sing paeans to the glory of God, much less meditate on the Holy Name. [Pauri-17]
7. With utmost civility and persuasiveness, Guru Nanak completely explodes the centuries-old Hindu Myth that a Bull supports the Earth on its horns, and when it shifts the load to the other horn there is earthquake. With characteristic finality, and utmost clarity, which is a hallmark of his Creative Mysticism, the Guru has shown how, deploying the familiar metaphor of the Bull. He says that this bovine is the Bull of Dharma [Cosmic Moral Law] that is the son of Compassion holding [not merely supporting] the Universe by the strings of Contentment. One who realises this Truth is instantly enlightened and knows that the Mythical Bull (of Hindu Mythology) cannot carry the enormous loads of the world. And he goes on to show why? Earths are there beyond this globe, and yonder there more and more—what Power holds all these worlds aloft. Surely, a mere Bull cannot because the Bull must need another earth to stand on for carrying the burden of *this* one. Here, as elsewhere Guru Nanak on the immeasurable strength of his Revelation Guru Nanak uses what I call the Logic of the Soul [not of the Intellect] that quietly runs through all his divine utterances. No intellectual, however formidable his mental power, can refute the Guru’s axiomatic proclamations. This is so because his Bani is a compendium of description of what God Himself in His mercy and grace shown him as directly and clearly as Hubble Telescope can never do.
8. His comment on hygiene of various kinds; Body, Mind, and Soul is revealing. Just as dirt can be washed clean with water you can cleanse grime using soap. But mind deeply soiled by sins can be laundered only

when dyed with the colour of the Holy Name. This should explode the popular myth in Hinduism that bathing at places of pilgrimage renders one sinless. Also, Yoga as much-hyped detergent for the purification of mind does not avail at all. There are examples galore to show the veracity of this averment. The so-called Indian Yoga Guru Ram Dev is foul-mouthed, a glib irresponsible talker, and the one who has committed a sacrilege in dragging Maharishi Patanjali, author of one of the Six Shastras, into the dirty trade of commercial profiteering.

9. Another gem of the Guru is that the virtuous and the vicious are not mere words. They are as real as your breath because what you habitually do and do it repeatedly leaves an imprint upon your mind so profound that you carry it to the next life whose merit or demerit would be determined by the intent and content of your deeds done here and now. [Pauri-20]

Guru Nanak stresses the fact that the merit of pilgrimage, asceticism, compassion, and charity is as insignificant as a sesame seed. However, he who hearkens and absorbs in his Mind the Divine message with loving adoration and Faith firm-fixed takes a holy bath at the pilgrimage-centre within him thereby purifying his soul. The second averment renders the rituals unnecessary and makes spiritual adventure an autonomous field in which everything desired for a higher life is attainable within your-SELF. Furthermore, he underscores the indispensability of virtues while making it crystal clear that all virtues belong to God, confessing he has none of these by wish or choice; then, points out that without imbibing virtues no worship or devotion would avail, and you must not be under the illusion that ritualistic activities endlessly engaged in would make you spiritual. [Pauri-21]

10. God's Attributes are invaluable, and so also is the Commerce in them ... The Vedic and Puranic texts tirelessly dwell on Him, and many a pedant makes erudite commentaries. Brahmas and Indras attempt [the Mythical milkmaids and the celestial cowherd], Shiva, and the Supreme Yogis, and also countless Buddhas created by God. Demons and deities pay obeisance to Him. Sages and Seers too adore Him. All attempt to utter His Greatness. Many hold learned discourses on Him, and others too venture evermore. Still more strive but depart from the world, unsuccessful. If God were to create as many more to sing panegyrics to Him evermore—woefully off the mark would they yet be. *His Stature is as great as it pleases Him to assume.* The italicised averment interpreted scientifically means what the scientists call the expanding universe whose creation is the manifest form of *Sargun Saroop* [God with attributes] as its Creator. [Pauri 26]
11. In Pauri 27, two salient points should be noted: One, Guru Nanak has drawn the seeker's attention to the Prologue of the Japuji: **Truth was He before Time was born; Truth was He when Time began to run its course; Truth is He even now; and Truth shall He be evermore.** *The second point brings out the Quintessence of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism.* Continual remembrance of the Holy Father is the Soul's staple diet. Just as the Body subsists on what it is *materially* fed—regularly, the human soul also needs to be fed. Only its food is different. It is a feeding by way of replenishment of Psycho-Spiritual Energy by repeatedly returning to The Source, much in the manner of an Electrical Circuit. Elsewhere, the Guru has proclaimed this truth employing the Metaphor of food (i.e., in this case, Spiritual Diet): I hunger after the True Name. Remembering I live; forgetting I die (i.e., my soul shrivels and decays) *aakhaan jeevaan, visarai mar jaon, (SGGS, p.349).*
12. In Pauris 28 and 29, Guru Nanak explicates the theme of transformation of the ritual austerities of Yoga into the ethical-spiritual qualities worthy of attainment by a genuine seeker. In Pauri 28, he takes on the Yogis, Hindu ascetics, who practise the Yoga system, consisting in the withdrawal of the senses from external



objects and entailing long continuance in unnatural postures, tedious breathing techniques, etc. Yoga (from, Sanskrit, meaning *union*) is a system of Hindu philosophy developed by Patanjali (fl. 2nd century BCE or 5th century AD), showing the means of emancipation of the soul from further transmigrations/incarnations, and union with the Supreme Being.

13. The verse reads as under:

Let contentment by the earrings
Modest your begging-bowl and pouch
Smear your Mind with the ashes of contemplation
From realisation of mortality, fashion your quilt
And keep your mortal frame virgin-chaste
Let Faith firm-Fixed in God be your code and staff
Make the Brotherhood of Man your Yogic sect
Thus gaining victory over *your* self
May you conquer the whole world
Salutations to the Primal Lord, Who
Through all Time ever remains
Immaculate, Eternal, Immortal
Attired in Immutability (Japuji: Pauri 28)

The lure of the mortal world that produces an impression of immediacy and concreteness so overwhelming that even the high and mighty cannot resist the temptation of pouncing upon to possess it. The case of Alexander the Great is a convincing historic example. The young Macedonian military genius, driven by the stormy craving to conquer the entire world, forged an empire stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to India, died in Babylon, in present-day Iraq. His conquests included Anatolia, Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Gaza, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and Bactria. He extended the boundaries of his empire as far as Taxila, India (now Pakistan), but died at the age of 33.

In the highlighted two lines above (Japuji: Pauri 28) Guru Nanak has stressed a little-known but inviolable truth that the world can be conquered only by someone who first gains victory over the 'mind'!

Acquisition of occult powers to perform miracles was deemed to be the exclusive object of prolonged prayers and self-mortifying penances by Naths and Yogis. Guru Nanak categorically disapproves of them as ignoble, impious, and vainglorious exercise, diverting Man as they do from his life's true goal, which he is seeking, in all Humility, Communion with God.

Pauri-29 deals with the stated theme, and the verse reads as under:

Let enlightenment be your diet, compassion the dispenser
Let in each heart divine Melody reverberate
God is the True Master
It is He who holds sway over the whole Universe
Misguided ambition fires the craving
For miraculous powers

*The celestial system of the universe is regulated by
The twin-principles of union and separation*

The noteworthy point in the first six lines is that the Guru has dispensed with need of rituals and unnatural asceticism besides the observance of austerities to acquire supernatural powers, and instead made

God-remembrance an autonomous psycho-spiritual workout. It warrants a burning desire in the heart, and the soul's hunger for merger with the Supreme Being before death destroys the *Durlabh Deh* [precious human vesture]. A genuine seeker would take the subtle hint and focus more on Jap(u) than the rigmarole of acquiring ceremonial piety.

The *italicised* two lines require an interpretation using the terminology of science. The universe runs on the two opposed principles of attraction or pull and repulsion or contraction. It applies with an equal punch to both animate creature and inanimate things. For instance, every object in space exerts a gravitational pull on every other, and so gravity influences the paths taken by everything travelling through space. It is the glue that holds together entire galaxies. It keeps planets in orbit. You must have noticed that placing a suitcase on a luggage rack in bus/train/aeroplane involves doing work against gravity. The stored energy is released if the suitcase falls off the rack. In terms of human relationships, the principles are 'union' and 'separation'.

14. Here is another Hindu myth that the Guru explodes with characteristic courteousness and refinement of manner. The Mythical Goddess Maya (literally: figuratively, the creative mutable principle of the Universe) is believed to have given birth to the "Holy Triad"—Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva—the Hindu Gods of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction, respectively. The Myth is so widespread in Indian Society, and so deeply ingrained in Hindu psyche, that it is well nigh impossible to explode it—much less dislodge it. Following the dictates of his Revelation grounded in God's Irreconcilable Monarchy, as the One and Only One Primal Person, Guru Nanak hands out the Divine Knowledge as Sacrament of Grace to the earnest seeker. Dilating on this theme, the text of this *pauri* reads as under:

The immanent *Maya* in union with the Primal Person
 Conceived and delivered the accepted three Regents:
 The Creator (Brahma), the Preserver (Vishnu), and the Judge (Mahesh)
 [But this is the great pervasive illusion, in fact]
 For, all that there is what God Himself ordains
 Without being seen, He sees all at work
 This, indeed, is the Wonder of all wonders!



A palpable picture of the Ultimate Reality emerges. That God is Himself All-in-All and, in His Unchallengeable-Unchangeable Sovereignty, He does not need any assistants, regents, or agents to perform the Fundamental Divine Functions of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. For one thing, He has empowered the universe to be a self-regulating/self-monitoring Autonomous Cosmic System under the Sovereignty of His Own Will. For another, He *sees* too, without being Himself seen, everything, and everyone, at work—, which is a Wonder of all wonders. The point underscored is God's Indivisible, Self-Existent Being that neither brooks, nor has, any Rival Power of any kind. [*Pauri-30*]

15. Guru Nanak confronts the prevalent belief that this world is *Maya* i.e., *unreal*—something illusory to be shunned. This is the bane of Hinduism that has reinforced the Indians' subtropical lethargy into casting off all initiative and endeavour to live off other people as spongers/parasites/scroungers—by the dubious sanction of their faith. The Guru's Logic of the Soul endorses the empirical observation through which all and sundry—and every kind of theistic and atheistic belief—sense, perceive, and cognise Objective Reality. This common-sensic view should put aside Mythology and Metaphysics, at best, as necessary evils—even besetting sins of ignorant, misguided minds.

16. In such a scheme of Creative Mysticism, expounded on the basis of palpable Revelatory, Awakened-Soul *seeing*, there cannot be/need not be any room for speculation or Myth-making. It, therefore, renders both the Premises (i.e., The First Cause) and the Conclusion (i.e., Its Natural Effect) autonomously Real. Guru Nanak, holding God to be One and true, without a second, from the very proclamation of *The Mool Mantra*, tirelessly reiterates it with the electrifying force of Emotion-Reason-Intuition that neither Mythology nor Metaphysics can ever hope to match—much less outdo. Because The Creator is Perennially True/Real, all His Creation must necessarily be True/Real, too. Hence, the Guru's tenacious insistence on *Naam*-contemplation Action [as Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression] of souls evolving towards a fuller, deeper, broader, and higher life. The text of the *pauri* reads as follows:

In the countless worlds created by Him
 Lord's seat and His stores abide
Inexhaustible are His treasures
[Though these were raised just once]
 God with concern and compassion oversees
 The Universe He created in His Own Likeness

The italicised two lines, interpreted scientifically, suggest the *Law of Conservation of Mass* [Pauri-31]

17. Having discountenanced, in the previous Pauris, all known and imaginable ways of attaining Communion, Guru Nanak underscores the exclusive efficacy of singing panegyrics to God to receive His Grace as Sacrament on the salver of Humility. By using the Monumental (Architectural) Scale, which is the opposite of human scale, he had shown the seeker the wondrous Bounty, Beauty, Diversity, and Mystery of All Creation as God's Manifest-Will. At this stage, now, he introduces another theme of fundamental import to the devotee. He pins down the almost-impossible task of winning over God to receive His Grace. Thus, employing the mesmeric tool of Monumental (Architectural) Scale, once again, he demonstrates the overwhelming task ahead that entails astronomical figures in devotional utterance of the Sole Name of the Lord of the Universe (*Ek Naam Jagdish*). By implication, this is God's Holiest Name, *Ik Oankar*. With it, Guru Nanak has launched his Bani in the *Mool Mantra*.

18. The verse reads as under:

If Man' one tongue were to become a hundred thousand
 Nay, even twenty times more
 If each such tongue were to utter Lord's Holy Name
 A hundred thousand times each instant
 Such may then be the Stairs of Devotion, to ascend
 To attain Communion with Him
 That may impel even worms to emulate
 Those thus ascending on hearing of Heaven's
 Impeccable Glory
 By Divine Grace alone, Nanak, one may attain to God
 Vainglorious is all bragging of the charlatans (Japuji: Pauri 32)

The point to be noted is the Veto-Power that Divine Will has and, therefore, despite the titanic effort which the devotee is called upon to make, he must yet in all humility await God's Grace for Communion with Him. Man's wilfulness cannot *will* God's Will to yield. Hence, there is the need for his psycho-spiritual pliancy.

Let us look at the enormity of the numbers suggested in the first lines. $1,00,000 \times 20 \times 1,00,000 = 20^{10}$. If you chant the *Mantra* 100 times per minute it will take you 3805 years to complete the count i.e., nearly 40 lives. But if you persisted in the herculean exercise without doing anything else [no eating, no ablutions, no work, no sleep] you surely will have become GOD! [Pauri-32]

19. Guru Nanak takes up the theme of Mortal Might to impress upon the seeker the absolute indispensability of Humility as the Quintessence of Loving Adoration of Lord God. That, without his virtue being there, in the first place, Divine Communion is impossible to attain. The Guru, therefore, enumerates in this *pauri* various forms of Power that Man may acquire, but be quite helpless in the face of God's Omnipotence. The Guru thus conjures up a context in which to reveal to the seeker the enormous inequality that exists between Man and God in terms of Absolute Might. By the queer Logic of the Soul, Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism gently persuades the seeker *not* to waste his precious life in Ego-fancied combats with The Almighty Father. The charming amiability of the Guru's unique approach comes alive in the innocent challenge that he throws to the arrogant, self-centred individuals: *Jis(i) hath(i) jor(u) kar(i) veikhai soi.*

Neither speech nor silence within Man's power lies
 Neither the will to ask, nor the urge to give
 Neither life nor death on Man's striving depends
 Not even power or pelf by Man's endeavour comes
 Nor awareness nor knowledge nor reflection
 Neither by his power nor praxis
 May he achieve deliverance from worldliness
 He who thinks high of his temporal power
 Shall come to grief before God's Might
 In this respect, Nanak, no Man is in himself high or low



Concisely, this *pauri* sets out the theme of Man's foreordained Duty to surrender his "Self" to Divinising by God's Inexorable Will, "*Raza*", propounded by Guru Nanak in the first *pauri* of Japuji. By his Egocentric toiling man achieves nothing to exalt his Soul because ultimately all lies in Divine Will, whereby what man proposes God disposes in many inscrutable ways [Pauri-33].

In this, and the following three *Pauris*, Guru Nanak is guiding the seeker to the final stages of his Spiritual Pilgrimage. Again, the Guru employs the Monumental (Architectural) Scale to capture the immensity of the highest regions of Psycho-Spiritual Reality, which his Creative Mysticism scales with matchless virtuosity. He takes the Universal-Timeless values of Truth (*Satyam*), Beauty (*Sundaram*), and Goodness (*Shivam*), cast in the palpable Earthiness of Utility, the fourth value that I have identified as created by the Modern Age of Science and Technology. Needless to say that the last-mentioned value becomes sanctified through a subliminal touch with *Ik Oankar*, God's Manifest-Divinity, propped, sustained, and regulated by His Holy Name [*NAAM*] as the Directive Principle of All Creation. The text reads as under:

God created Night and Day, Seasons and Occasions
 Air, Water, Fire, and the Nether Regions
 And, in their midst, installed the Moral Inn: Earth
 Wherein dwell beings and species
 Of myriad hues, forms, and lifestyles

Of names many an illimitable
 All creatures on their actions are judged
 At the Divine Court of Justice
 As True as the Sovereign Judge
 Wherein are seated His Own Elect in Matchless Majesty
 Whom His Glance of Grace marks with
 Ultimate Approval
 There the genuine from fake are sifted
 Nanak, you shall know God's True Judgement
 When you get there in the times to come

Ethics, *Dharma*, the Cosmic Moral Law, is the ineluctable Matrix of Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, whereby he insists that life is a rare and difficult *performing* art which can be aesthetically appreciated and artistically (re-)created only by living it fully, deeply, and inspiredly. He has given all the technical knowhow, ethical knowwhat, and spiritual knowwhy in his own unique way delineating a Path of Life, grounded in constant connection with The Source, *Ik Oankar* [through the Holy Name-Reciting], and spontaneously extending it into Extrovert (Altruistic) Progression made possible by Seva or Service to Humankind. Although, during such pilgrimage, the seeker can certainly feel the Spiritual Metamorphosis within the marrow of his bones, the final test of its success will be consummated when God marks the Purified Soul with His Ultimate Approval. Truth shall be minted, and quality-marked, only when the Soul has become malleable into Imperturbable Humility through the heat of enthusiasm for doing socially-beneficent work sustained by uninterrupted God-Remembrance. In its incomparably forthrightness, simplicity, authenticity, and live-mass-media telecast from The Source, Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism offers, without ceremony and discrimination, an intelligible, do-it-yourself, Pragmatic Spirituality in these words: Work, Worship, Welfare; then, Wait and Watch, fully involved in the vicissitudes of Life in self-surrender to receive Divine Grace. Until that comes to pass, the seeker so disposed will yet stand to gain. He will certainly have earned a better life: fuller, deeper, broader, and higher before God quality-marks him as *Jiwan-Mukt* (emancipated in this *very* world). [Pauri-34]

20. The *pauri* begins with the concluding statement on the contents of the previous one. The Guru says: Such is the Order of the Realm of Righteous Action, the first of the Realms in ascending order of the Soul's Spiritual Pilgrimage: *Dharma Khand*. From here, he goes over to enunciate the law of the next one: the Realm of Enlightenment, or *Gian Khand*. The text of the *Pauri* is as follows:

Such is the order of the Realm of Righteous Action
 Law of the Realm of Enlightenment now follows:
 Countless forms of Air, Water, and Fire therein dwell
 Innumerable are there Krishnas and Shivas
 Innumerable too are Brahmas fashioning universes
 Of various forms, hues, and aspects
 Many are the fields of endeavour there
 Many the celestial mountains
 Many the sermons delivered to Dhruva
 Numerous are the Indras, spheres of Sun and Moon
 Numerous the contents and lands
 Many the accomplished Yogis, enlightened ones
 And supreme ascetics

Many the incarnations of the Goddess
 Many are the species of gods, demons, sages
 Many oceans bearing the jewels
 Many are the modes of creation, many the forms of speech
 Many the lines of kings and sovereigns
 How numerous are the Revealed Scriptures
 And their followers
 There is no end to their count, Nanak

A noteworthy point is that even Myths and Mythology have not been able to capture the infinite diversity of gods and goddesses, demons and ascetics, and all the paraphernalia that goes with Myth-making, a perennial pastime of the human Mind in which Imagination has the *freest* play. Guru Nanak's method of deploying the tools of simultaneity and juxtaposition, in the use of Monumental (Architectural) Scale, as applicable to the Architectonics of Divine Creation, Preservation, and Destruction, is truly unique.

The foregoing fact makes the Guru's Creative Mysticism an all-time classic of Pragmatic Spirituality.

His delineation of the Many via-à-vis The One Sole Creator, in Mind-boggling detail, has a compelling beauty before whose Resplendent Immensity the Soul has no choice but to *surrender*. This is the most crucial point in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, for it is from here that the seeker would view, in the euphoria of psycho-aesthetic enchantment, the spiritually-uplifting Spectacle of God's Eternal-Infinite Divinity—before he is re-absorbed, if He so Wills, into The Source.

Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism is a Holistic Itinerary, Ethical Atlas, and Spiritual Guide for the Vagabond Soul that urges it to retrace its steps to undertake its homeward journey into the Realm of the Spirit. Slowly and steadily, it retrieves the seeker from the fake inducements of the Worldliness of Mammon into a Pilgrimage where more and better fulfilments await his ever-hungry SELF [Pauri-35].

In this *pauri*, Guru Nanak concludes in the first two lines, his narrative of the Realm of Enlightenment, which is the next higher level to the Realm of Righteous Action. From here, he goes on to the next level: The Realm of Spiritual Endeavour.

21. The text reads as under:

Ethereal Effulgence blazes forth
 In the Realm of Enlightenment
 In that sphere reign mystic melody, sublime visions
 Aesthetic wonder and creative joy
 Beauty is the muted speech
 Of the Realm of Spiritual Endeavour
 Sculpted there are forms of enchanting exquisiteness
 Its resplendence beggars all description
 Woe betokens the one who ventures to describe them
 Fashioned there are soul-consciousness
 Sensibility, Mind, and Intellect
 Forged therein too is the vision
 Of gods and super-naturalists

It should be pointed that Guru Nanak, here, reiterates what forms the Matrix of his Creative Mysticism: an unremitting effort on the part of the seeker, because Life is an exclusive Performing Art that is validated, authenticated, and consummated by *actual* living (and not by merely speculating or philosophising as an



armchair luxury, or in discourses engaged in seminars!). Thus, in his five-tiered staircase, he has put Endeavour (*Saram*) in the middle, and higher than Knowledge and Morality. Thus, his Creative Mysticism is *not* a Religion of Monasticism or of Sensual Indulgence. It is Pragmatic Spirituality of *mid-stream* involvement, *not* Mythology or Metaphysics or Mysticism of escape from the imperatives, exigencies, and vicissitudes of an intensely lived experience. Those researchers, revivalists, and rationalists, who have shown Guru Nanak's New Faith: Creative Mysticism, to be a syncretisation of Hinduism and Islam, have unfortunately taken the husk for the grain. *In this Bani, there is a persistent, if mute, plea for taking a fresh, holistic look at the Guru's Revelation as something straight from the Oven.* Moreover, before long, if his Grace is upon them, it may impel them to change their evaluation for their good—and the general weal of the Entire Human Community. The psychokinetic Kinship of Humankind beckons them to new horizons of aesthetic enchantment, transcending the sensory, perceptive, and cognitive experience [Pauri-36].

Having prepared the seeker—with his Mind scrubbed clean of Egotism, through the massive milling of the previous 36 *Pauris*—Guru Nanak convinces him from his Revelation that the former's Soul is a suitable and sanctified salver for receiving the Sacrament (of Grace). He, therefore, takes the seeker to the next higher level: the Realm of Grace (*Karam Khand*). Now, read on:

Might speaks of the Grandeur of the Realm of Grace
 Nothing else avails there
 Where heroes of supreme might abide
 Their hearts fired with God's Love
 Minds sewn seamlessly in his adulation
 In Lord's Praise mystically absorbed
 Indefinable is their exquisite beauty
 Death touches them not, nor does anyone swindle them
 In whose Minds does God dwell
 Devotees from all the worlds assemble there
 Cherishing His Love, enraptured in Eternal Bliss

As explicated in Guru Nanak's Creative Mysticism, the ultimate aim of the Soul's entire pilgrimage, is to transcend the experience of *Dharma* (Righteous Action), *Gyan* (Enlightenment), *Saram* (Spiritual Endeavour), and *Karam* (Grace), and to enter *Sach Khand* (the Realm of Truth) to abide there Eternally in the Divine Presence of *Ik Oankar*. The Dispensation of Grace is the unpremeditated, inscrutable operation of God's Edict-Fiat. So awesome is its Majesty and Mystery that Guru Nanak says: "*Its expression is as hard as it is to put words into the mouth of steel!*"

All the same, Guru Nanak takes the seeker to the Most High and Exalted of all Realms.

Just read on the remaining part of the verse:

The Realm of Truth is where The Formless One abides
 Whence He unceasingly creates, showers Grace, and
 Oversees
 Countless orbs, regions, and firmaments there
 Extend infinitely
 Far exceeding in number all count
 Worlds upon worlds abide there, and countless forms too
 His Edict-Fiat sustains all these

His Infinite Creation God watches over
 In Blissful Progression
 And reflects upon All, Eternally
 So hard is its description, Nanak
 That it's like putting words
 Into the mouth of steel [Pauri-37]

22. Just as during his unprecedented Discourse, Guru Nanak has placed certain *Pauris* of crucial importance at certain intervals, in the exposition of the Japuji, he puts this particular *pauri* (38) right at the end. This is by careful design, *not* by accident, the concluding part of his Japuji is a reiteration of his New Faith which is grounded in *Dharma*, The Divinely-Ordained Cosmic Moral Law—and has nothing to do, it can never be overstressed, with either Mythology or Metaphysics or Mysticism or innumerable other-worldly “Paths” of Salvation and God-Realisation. This *pauri* re-stresses Guru Nanak’s Impeccable Religiosity in which, unlike any known religious leader of the world, he proclaims in unequivocal terms, *ad infinitum*, that “*Truth is the Highest of all forms of Reality, but Higher than Truth is Truthful Living*” (The ineluctable *Dharma* of a *Sachiar*). In doing so, Guru Nanak reaffirms the most important Cardinal Principle of his New Faith by drawing the seeker’s attention back to where he got him started on his soul’s Pilgrimage. In this way he completes the Circuit of Psycho-Spiritual Energy—between the Source and the Seeker *via* the Guru (the Transformed): “*Kiv sachiara hoiai kiv koorhai tutai paal(i)*”—How to demolish the Wall of Illusion (i.e., Ego-Centrism) and How to be purified [to become worthy of The True One’s Divine Grace]? Therefore, here, the Guru shows the seeker the way of purging his self of the dross of Ego. This is to prepare him mentally-morally-bodily so that he lets go spontaneously (*Sahj*) everything in self-surrender before God’s Will for his Soul’s transfiguration from a Matter-Bondaged Existence to a Spirit-Liberated Reality.
23. All through the Discourse, Guru Nanak’s emphasis always has been on the individual human person—an innocent, beguiled, and misguided psychokinetic entity—in existential need of path finding for Salvation and God-Realisation. This is truly exceptional, and speaks volumes for his Creative Mysticism.



The verse, employing the metaphor of Mint, reads as under:

Make Continence the smithy, Perseverance the goldsmith
 Let Reason be the anvil, and Knowledge furnish the tools
 God’s fear is the bellows, penance the heat and fire
 Loving devotion the crucible, to forge the Immortal Vision
 In such true Mint coin the Holy Word
 Such a rare deed falls to their lot
 On whom is bestowed the Divine Grace

Blessed are they, Nanak, who are fulfilled by His Glance of Grace. In the concluding couplet, Guru Nanak, once again, as several times before, leaves the last and final judgement of God’s Inscrutable Will [Pauri-38].

The finale to the Japuji is a *Sloku* authored by Guru Angad, the First Spiritual-Heir to Guru Nanak’s Revelation. For centuries has this been an integral part of Sikh Faith’s most widely recited Bani of the First Masters. It is, therefore, incumbent to conclude the explication of Japuji with it for the stated reason. Another reason is that Guru Angad’s *Sloku* is the most concise, succinct, and stupendous of all summaries of, and commentaries on, Guru Nanak’s Japuji.

Epilogue (Sloku)

Air is the vital force (subtle as the Guru)
 Water is the Progenitor
 The Good Earth, Mother of All
 Day and Night are nurses, caressing the entire Creation
 The Righteous Judge reckons merit and demerit of
 Everyone
 His approval or rejection comes from each one's own
 Actions
 Those who, meditating on God, have earned merit
 Through an unremitting moral endeavour
 Saith Nanak, Their faces irradiate Divine Light
 Through them, many shall find their final release

As especially enshrined in Japuji, Guru Nanak's Bani substantiates the fact that Religion, grounded in *Dharma* (The Cosmic Moral Law), is the Architecture of total human consciousness, integrating Soul, Mind, and Body, in the individual as an active agent of Pragmatic Spirituality. Taking a cue from this realisation, I have in my second PhD on Nanak Bani conjured up a high-rise building. I call it 38-storey high "Skyscraper of the Soul" erected on the four mighty pillars of four dimensions of Time: *Adi Sach, Jugaad Sach, Hai Bhi Sach; Nanak, Ho Si Bhi Sach*. Therefore, Man is inspired, goaded, and guided to commence his Vertical Journey *Pauri* by *Pauri*. It requires that he develop his determination, strength and stamina by *creative* and *holistic* participation in daily living as a responsible-accountable householder, *not as* an ascetic retired to the forests aimlessly wandering in search of truth. In other words, the Sikh Faith that he has opted to follow and live by is a Religion of active and total involvement in the mundane and spiritual aspects of workaday existence, *not* an escape from it as many religions profess under the garb of purifying renunciation in the delusory pursuit of Salvation (*Mukti*).

Good deeds can certainly beget a better life as one desires to live in the mortal world, but Salvation can be had only by God's grace.

24. Before closing this Section let me share with you two more gems from Guru Nanak's Revelation. *Paapaan baajhon hovey naaheen moyaan saath na jaayi*

Without sinful indulgence wealth cannot be accumulated but ironically when man departs from this world the Mammon refuses to go with him, and human life, a priceless gift of God, is laid waste. I call this axiomatic truth revealed by Guru Nanak, the simplest and immortal universal THEORY OF ECONOMICS. You will grasp its cover significance if you look at it closely with sustained analytical discernment.

You may be at any level of employment or family business honestly earned wealth cannot be superfluous. Your so-called savings begin to expand when you stash ill-gotten money in Swiss banks such as innumerable filthily rich people of world have done, including India where discourses on honesty are held *ad nauseum* and it is hammered into our injured bleeding heads that this country belongs to Rishis, Munis, and Gurus.

Viewed from another angle, the problem becomes crystal clear. There are innumerable economists [the largest number dwells in America] who have been awarded the Nobel Prize for their valuable contribution. I keep wondering with a lingering discomfort about what kind of unusual work they have done when nobody's theory is able to control inflation worldwide.

In the mid-1980s, I posed this question in the Panjab University Senate as a Fellow, but not even the most learned don could answer it.

Then, I made this mind-boggling statement to everyone's surprise. The problem never gets solved because it does not belong to the discipline of Economics; it dwells in the field of Ethics where GREED loiters around untamed in utter nonchalance!

25. *Ghaal khaayey kichh hathon dey; Nanak, raah pachhaaney sey.* In all religions, there are umpteen ways that profess to help you find your way about in the labyrinth of countless infirmities and indiscretions to which the human mind is a constant prey. But yet none of them avails when it comes to discover and valiantly tread the Path of Righteousness.

It is common knowledge that priests, gurus, and other religious leaders are themselves victims of GREED besides the four other inner foes; namely, Lust, Anger, Attachment, and Pride.

Guru Nanak shows here a flawless, sure-shot course of action.

He who earns his living by the sweat of his brow and shares his honest earnings with the underdog alone knows the way because this, no other, is the only WAY!

The Upshot

At the scale of nanotechnology, as it were, Guru Nanak has likened the world to a water pond. In this psycho-spiritual-material water-body, the self-willed and the conceited [Manmukhs] are frogs who subsist on mud and filth, happy in the darkness of ignorance; the blessed souls called the Gurmukhs are lotuses in untainted purity and spiritual glory while the Jigyasus (Earnest Seekers of Truth) are big black bees (Bhanwaras) that fly in from various directions to savour the ambrosia such as the Gurmukhs constantly relish.

This is no Metaphysics, much less Mythology, not even Poetry of the secular kind, nor Mysticism intelligible only to the elite. It is Gurprasad, Sacrament from the Divine Source, which the Ego-free souls can readily partake of—without doubt, debate, or religious wrangling.





THE SUBLIME SACROSANCTITY OF SEWA

The word ‘SEVA’ means “to serve, wait or attend upon, honour or worship”. It is usually translated in English as ‘Service’. God pervades His Creation. Therefore, service rendered to His creatures, amongst whom also dwells Humanity, (i.e., God within Man) is indeed considered a form of worship. In fact, in the Sikh Faith, no worship is conceivable without Sewa. The Sikh is forbidden from serving anyone apart from God (“Serve you the Lord alone: none else must you serve’ (SGGS, page 490). This means that whomsoever we serve in this material world, our actions must be aimed at serving *Waheguru* [Lord God] through him. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon a Sikh to render Sewa with the highest sense of duty since thereby he or she would be worshipping the Lord.

Sewa in the Sikh Faith is imperative for the attainment of spiritual life. It is the highest penance. It is a means to acquiring the highest merit. The Sikh prays to God for granting him a chance to perform Sewa. Says Guru Arjan, the Fifth Master, “*I beg to serve those who serve You*” [SGGS, page 43], and “*I, your servant, beg for Sewa of Your people, which is available through good fortune alone*” [SGGS, page 802]. According to Guru Amar Das, the Third Master, “*He who is turned towards the Guru finds repose and joy in Sewa.*”



Three types of *Sewa* are sanctioned in the Sikh way of life: that which is rendered through the corporal instrument (*Tann*); that rendered through the mental faculties (*Mann*) and that through the material means (*Dhan*). The first of them is considered to be the highest of all and is imperatively prescribed for every Sikh. “Accursed are the hands and feet that engage not in *Sewa*.” (Bhai Gurdas, *Vaaraan*, 27.1)

Ironically, in traditional Indian society that remained for centuries under the stranglehold of Brahmins’ self-serving scriptural exhortations, any work

involving corporal labour was considered mean and low; thus, relegated to the so-called lowest castes. By sanctifying menial work as an honourable religious practice of the highest order, the Sikh Gurus established the dignity of labour, a concept then almost unknown to the Indian society. Not only did the Gurus sanctify it, they also institutionalized it, e.g., service in *Langar* (Guru’s Community Kitchen - see above) and serving the *Sangat* (Sikh congregation, a social mix of high and low castes) in ways such as by grinding corn, fanning the *Sangat* to soften the rigours of a hot day, and fetching water by drawing it from the well.

“I beg of You, O, Merciful Lord, make me the slave of Your servants ... Let me have the pleasure of waving fan over them, drawing water (from the well) for them, grinding corn for them, and of washing their feet,” prays Guru Arjan [SGGS, page 518].

Sewa through the mental faculties (*Mann*) lies in contributing one’s talents—creative, communicative, managerial, etc.—to the corporate welfare of the community and humankind in general. It also lies in sharing the pain of others. Response to the pain of others is a *sine qua non* of the membership of the Brotherhood of Man. That is why the Sikh prayer said in unison ends with a supplication for the welfare of one and all. *Sewa* of this kind is motivated not by the attitude of compassion alone, but primarily to discover practical avenues for serving God through man.

Sewa through material means (*Dhan*) or philanthropy (*Daan*) was particularly sought to be made non-personal. The offerings (*Kar Bheta*) made to the Gurus and the *Daswandh* (tithe or tenth part of one’s honest earnings) contributed by the Sikhs went to the community coffers. Personal philanthropy can be debasing for the receiver and ego-enhancing for the giver, but self-effacing community service is ennobling. *Sewa* must be so carried out as to dissolve the ego and lead to self-transcendence, which is the ability to acknowledge and respond to that which is other and higher than the self. *Sewa* must serve to indicate the way in which such transcendence manifests in one’s responsiveness to the needs of others in an impersonal and selfless way.

The Sikh is particularly enjoined upon to render *Sewa* to the poor. “The poor man’s mouth is the Guru’s charity-box”, says the *Rahitnama* [Sikh Code of Conduct] of Chaupa Singh. The poor and the needy are, therefore, treated as legitimate recipients of *daan* (charity) and not the Brahmin class which had traditionally reserved this privilege for themselves. Even in serving the poor, one serves not the person but the light of *Waheguru* in that person. This, thus, is the Sikh ideal of *Sewa*.

In the Sikh way of life, *Sewa* is considered the prime duty of the householder, the family-man opposed to an ascetic. “God is not served in that home in which men of God are not served. Such mansions are graveyards



where ghosts alone abide”, says Kabir [SGGS, page 1374]. The Sikhs are ordained to be householders without exception, and Sewa is their bounden duty. In Sikh Faith, the polarity of renunciation is not with attachment, but with Sewa.

True Sewa in the Sikh Faith ought to be performed without desire (*nishkaam*), in humility (*nimarta*), with purity of intention (*hirda shudh*), with sincerity (*chit lae*), and in utter selflessness (*vichon aap gavae*). Such Sewa for the Sikh is the doorway to here-and-now dignity as well as to *Mukti* (liberation). “If one earns merit here through Sewa, one will get pride of place at Lord’s Court hereafter” [SGGS, page 26].

Another form of voluntary service that has become famous throughout the Sikh World for its socio-ethical distinction is called *Kar Sewa* (Service from Voluntary Labour). It is a socio-cultural principle of the Sikh Faith which makes it truly a religion I call “Pragmatic Spirituality”. To begin with, the construction work of the Golden Temple complex was completed with *Kar Sewa* rendered by people of all shades and sensibilities. It is enjoined upon all Sikhs to observe three injunctions with undiminished zeal: (a) Earn by honest, hard work (*Kirat Karna*), (b) Share the fruits thereof with the under-privileged (*Vand Chhakna*), and (c) Constant contemplation of the Holy Name (*Naam Japna*). Thus, the completion of the sacred project warranted a celebration steeped in prayers of thanks-giving to the Lord God. The following *Shabad* sprang spontaneously from Guru Arjan Dev’s soul on such a unique occasion:

God Himself hath come to fulfil the task of the saints
 Yea, He Himself hath come to do the work.
 And, now blessed is the earth, the Tank and the nectar with which it is filled.
 Perfect is the blessing of God, and all our wishes are fulfilled.
 And our victory resounds through the Universe, and all our woes are past.
 Eternal is our perfect Lord, the Purusha, whose praises the Vedas and the Puranas sing.
 And Nanak contemplates the Lord’s Name. Thus doth God manifest His innate Nature.
 By bathing in the tank of Ram Das
 All the sins that man committeth shall be done away,
 And he shall become pure by his ablutions.
 The perfect Guru hath given us this boon.
 When we meditate on the Guru’s instructions,
 God bestoweth all comfort and happiness,
 And causeth the whole cargo to cross over safely.
 In the association of the saints uncleanness departeth,
 And the Supreme being abideth with us.
 Nanak by meditating on the Name.
 Hath found God the primal Being
 (Quoted by PS Arshi)

Since *Amrit-Sar(ovar)*, or Pool of Nectar, is a very important component of the Golden Temple complex, it is necessary to say something about its maintenance. This has always been done by *Kar Sewa*. The *Kar Sewa* rendered for the desilting of the tank in the summer of 1923 was a memorable event in the history of the Holy Shrine. Undertaken by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) the project was inaugurated with gold spades and silver baskets after the *Ardaas* (invocative prayer addressed to Lord God) had been performed

and prescribed religious ceremonies observed. Thousands of Sikhs from India and abroad came to partake of the consecrated operation that *Kar Sewa* involved. It was a massive gathering of the Sikh *Sangat* drawn from all ranks and classes. The desilting operation was completed in 22 days (June 17-July 8). The whole scheme was executed in accordance with the plan. The Holy Tank was properly desilted; repairs of the substructure carried out, and the flooring tiles were laid. The *Sarovar* was refilled with water on 9 July 1923. A similar event took place on 31 March 1973.

To sum it up, permit me to share with you my own naïve understanding of S-E-W-A: It stands for **Sublime Empathy** for the **World's** all-round [physical, moral, metaphysical, and spiritual] **Advancement**.



Kar Sewa of Amrit Sarovar, Golden Temple, Amritsar, 2004 (This I saw while preparing measured drawings of the Holy Shrine for the PhD I eventually earned in 2008)



Kar Sewa of Amrit Sarovar, Golden Temple, Amritsar, 1923





STRINGENT RESTRAINT ON PERFORMANCE OF MIRACLES

During his stay in Delhi, **Guru Nanak** came across some people who were mourning the death of their elephant. He asked them what the cause of their suffering was. They said their elephant had died and the animal's owner who had employed them as its caretakers would no longer need their services, the only source of their livelihood. The Guru Nanak took mercy on them saying the elephant was not dead but sleeping. On hearing this, they went near the animal and found that it slowly came back to life. They all made obeisance at Guru Nanak's feet.

The news travelled fast of this event and even the Emperor, Sikander Shah Lodhi came to know about this holy man who had won the admiration of all the Hindu and Muslim divines of Delhi. When one of the Emperor's favourite royal elephants died, he sent for Guru Nanak asking to revive his elephant too. But the Guru refused to oblige him. Smiling, he humbly said that he was nobody; life and death were in God's hands. However, his words left the Emperor upset and enraged, and consequently the Guru was promptly imprisoned.

While in the lockup, his over-brimming compassion for the prisoners' suffering had great moral and spiritual influence on the prison officials. They informed the Emperor that Guru Nanak was not a worshipper of idols (as Hindus are) and that as a Saint he was greatly respected by all the people including Hindus and



Muslims. While he was in jail, a great earthquake shook Delhi on 03 July 1505. According to one chronicler, “The Mountains were overturned and lofty edifices dashed to the ground”. The living thought that the Day of Judgement had come. Prone to superstitions, many thought this was because the new Faqir Nanak, who had been imprisoned by the Emperor, had cursed the King and the Empire. This calamity scared the Emperor who immediately ordered his release. However, on the Guru’s insistence, many other prisoners were set free as well.

Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Har Gobind, was appointed by Baba Sri Chand, the aged son of Guru Nanak, to succeed him as head of the *Udasi* [An organised religious division of Sikh or Hindu monks] Sect that he had founded. He proved worthy of the founder’s choice, and left a permanent mark on the history of the Udasi Sect. He is best remembered for having reinvigorated missionary activity by establishing Udasi preaching centres. Baba Gurditta died at Kiratpur on 15 March 1638. As the legend goes, he had resurrected earlier on that day a cow which he had inadvertently killed on his hunting spree. Guru Har Gobind, it is said, admonished him for thus displaying his supernatural powers by performing a miracle. Baba Gurditta, overtaken by remorse for causing annoyance to his father, quietly retired and betook himself to a lonely place outside Kiratpur Sahib where he quit his mortal frame. A *dehra* now stands there to commemorate the spot. Baba Gurditta had two sons Dhir Mall, and Har Rai who was his grandfather as the Seventh Master of the Sikh Faith in 1644.

Guru Har Krishan, Eighth Master of the Sikh Faith and the youngest Guru, made the trip from Kiratpur Sahib to Delhi by way of Panjokhara, passing through Ropar, Banur, Rajpura, and Ambala. Along the way he healed many lepers, comforting them with his own hands. Overcome by his high-caste birth a proud Brahman priest named Lal Chand approached the young Guru and challenged him to give a discourse on the *Gita*. The holy personage responded by asking one Chhajju, who happened to pass by, to accomplish the task for him. The illiterate water-bearer humbled the Brahmin with flawless recitation and insightful exegesis of the Sacred Scripture of the Hindus. The pedantic priest stood dumbfounded by Chhajju’s astonishing depth of intellectual knowledge and spiritual insight into scripture (world-famous Holy Book of Hinduism) such as only the most learned and well-versed of priests could ever possess.





QUINTESENCE OF SIKH GURUS' CONTRIBUTIONS

1. **GURU NANAK** made a proclamation that had (continues and shall continue to have) profound socio-cultural, and politico-spiritual ramifications. He heroically denounced the caste system prevalent in Hinduism, and discountenanced rituals and taught that priests were of no importance in acquiring inner spiritual awakening. He was concerned about making every individual human person self-sufficient and autonomous in both the mundane and spiritual realms. That is why he distilled his Revelation into the simplest language, above and beyond the ontological meanderings of metaphysics, and devised a priceless three-prong Formula for all Inhabitants of the Mortal World.

Earn thy livelihood by the sweat of thy brow
Then, share thy earnings with the less fortunate
Spiritual endeavour lets your inner being grow
This way thou should on the Holy Name meditate

- (i) *KIRAT KARO*: Honest Earning is an antidote to corruption.
- (ii) *VAND CHHAKO*: Sharing ensures socio-economic equality.
- (iii) *NAAM JAPO*: Chanting God's Holy Name cleanses the mind of worldly dross.

Guru Nanak weaned the mass psyche from dependence on false promises of paradise in the other world and showed how to get involved with the mind-transforming

dynamics of social, economic, political, and spiritual concerns and aspirations of Humankind during workaday existence. He stressed the need for acquiring wholesomeness entailing Body, Mind, and Soul so that each individual human person regardless of birth, upbringing, and background could tread the Path of Righteousness to eventually become fully self-reliant to the point of being a benefactor rather than a beggar. Furthermore, he demonstrated how the much-sought salvation can be had here and now as *Jiwan-Mukta*.

Recognising the body as the indispensable vehicle of Pragmatic Spirituality instituted *Langar* as voluntary societal service, and built Gurdwara not merely as a place of worship but also as an example of collective living that fulfils man's instinct for gregariousness and an ambience inspiring higher life.

Having made Humility as the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith he looked for it in his successors as a necessary psycho-emotional qualification for admission to the Spiritual Ministry. It is common knowledge that Humility is the most difficult quality to acquire, and millions fail the test because it cannot be inherited and in its sublimest form of absolute purity is the rarest Gift of God; no wonder his own sons and several other immediate followers miserably failed it. I have tried to capture in a sonnet given below:

IT IS ONLY IN HUMILITY (TOTAL SURRENDER OF EGOTISM) THAT MAN TRULY BOWS, AND PAYS THE PRESCRIBED RELIGIOUS OBEISANCE TO THE PERENNIAL AND PRESIDING PRESENCE OF LORD GOD.

When in Humility, Man bows, he's paying obeisance
 To the manifest forms of God in the world around
 The whole globe for him becomes a place of worship, hence
 His Mind stands firmly rooted in spiritual ground
 Lack of arrogance isn't Humility, it's a class apart
 It is the super-conductor of high-voltage psychic current
 Received by an eager Mind which's now ready to start
 Straightening up for its eventual spiritual ascent
 Humility is a heightened state of self-amnesia
 No one would be humble if he knew he's one
 Forever will he be a stranger to the Utopia
 Upraised on Earth by God's Will as it's in Heaven
 God's second gift to Man is the endowment of Humility
 Without which he remains earth-bound devoid of Divinity



It is noteworthy unlike what the teeming millions fear in Humility, and suicidal lack of identity and self-esteem, it works the other round. When Guru Nanak's immediate successor passed the formidable test in flying colours it was the triumph of Humility but he as he was taught by the Great Guru accepted the Shabda as his Divine Mentor, not the human guru, and took his name for his own as the benefactor's *equal*.

Guru Nanak stressed *ad infinitum* the importance of the little-known fact that all virtues belong to God, which is not a concept but a living truth. It thus makes it incumbent upon all seekers to imbibe virtue by a diligent and unremitting practice of Pragmatic Spirituality during workaday existence as a *sine qua non* of dailiness. In order to drive home the fact he went to declare that without imbibing virtues all seeking, however earnest, is a mere sham.

By repeatedly point out the futility of wearing certain kinds of robes and other symbolic ornament he discountenanced the ways of Yogis and Siddhas, and drew their attention to the inner life that glows by the cold splendour of Truth and makes the practitioner Whole—a veritable psycho-emotional organism that lives by the diktat of God's Edict-Fiat. Once such a state of mind is achieved what you wear boils down to mere clothing against the vagaries of weather and for providing bodily privacy in public. This is why he has rejected all forms of rituals and rites; indeed, made anything ulterior to the motive absolutely useless, thereby making God-remembrance [*Naam Japna*] everything, including, fasting, bathing on places of pilgrimage, etc.

Sach sunaisi sach ki bela... is a succinct exhortation by Guru Nanak, which captures the quintessence of Time-Space Continuum such as nothing else, does. As we know and can readily experience to validate it in all forms of human interactions there are events that occur during workaday existence IN Space, THROUGH Time. In this context, the Guru's primal proclamation at the beginning of the *Mool Mantra* gains an added significance. The word *Sat/Sach* has many connotations, but the most important of all is that it is God's Primary Attribute, which means that He *really* [not as a figment of imagination as in Mythology] *exists*, and forever remains in the selfsame form. It is so because he is out of the jurisdiction and transforming effect of Time-Space Continuum because this is his own creation. It implies that TRUTH is a Living Force, not a subject of ontological meanderings as in Metaphysics. Obviously, Truth as an embodiment of a certain event has a fixed Space and Time, and ought to be spoken there and then or here and now because after that it would be only academic, something dead and consigned to the past. This averment has another covert element to it. *Nirbhau/Nirvair* or Free from FEAR/Free from ENMITY are the cardinal Attributes of God [in His *Sargun* Form]. Therefore, Speaking the Truth when the Time is Right [True] is a divine echo of the stated traits. Guru Nanak on innumerable occasions had demonstrated it in his own life how it should be LIVED, not merely debated or discussed. He had called *Babur* [Tiger] a *Jabar* [Tyrant] on his face, which eventually brought the founder of the Mughal Empire in India on his knees. In other words, in the Guru's heroic utterance of Truth blazed forth as God's attribute of 'Fearlessness', and in the selfsame act removed 'Enmity'.

According to Science, from walking on the street, to launching a rocket into space, to sticking a magnet on your refrigerator, physical forces are acting all around us. But all the forces that we experience every day (and many that we do not realise we experience every day) can be whittled down to just four fundamental forces, namely, Gravity, the Weak Force, Electromagnetism, and the Strong Force. These are called the four fundamental forces of nature, and they govern everything that happens in the universe. However, Guru Nanak has named all of them *NAAM* [The Holy Name of God] as he has identified in his Revelation. He has gone a step further to stress that *NAAM* is a hyperlink between Mind and God that enable the seeker to access the database of all Divinity so that the soul may find its way back home.

In computing, a hyperlink is an element in an HTML (Hypertext Mark-up Language) document that links to either another portion of the document or to another document altogether. Viewed in the context of the computer jargon, the Guru has distilled the Language of Pragmatic Spirituality to its fundamentals. It saves the earnest seeker from getting lost in the labyrinth of ontological meanderings of metaphysics that lead to either a fraudulent sense of achievement or hapless frustration. The reason is that your psycho-spiritual workout boils down to installing your consciousness in the core of the *Shabda* (The Sacred Word) that has nothing at all to do with ratiocinative cerebration. However, despite its deceptive simplicity to achieve the intended result from this endlessly repetitive exercise is well-nigh impossible. Only the luckiest on whom falls the glance of God's grace eventually succeed.

According to Khushwant Singh, "His life was mostly spent in bringing Hindus and Muslims together. His personal success in this direction was remarkable. He was acclaimed by both communities. When he died,

his body became a subject of dispute. The Muslims wanted to bury him, the Hindus to cremate him. Even to this day, he is regarded in the Punjab as a symbol of harmony between the two major communities. A popular couplet describes him:

*Guru Nanak Shah Fakir.
Hindu ka Guru, Musalmaan ka Pir*

Guru Nanak is the king of many a mendicant
He is a Hindu's preceptor; a Muslim's saint

Guru Nanak delivered the divine message contained in his Revelation by the power of personal examples; in other words, he preached what he actually practised. His example provided to the earnest seekers instant illumination to recognise and tread the Path of Righteousness with unflinching faith in Divine Dispensation. He sat between Mardana (a Muslim) and Bala (Hindu) and called them 'Bhai' (Brother), and the deeply ingrained enmity between the two religions was gone!

It is widely believed that through bloodshed came change, and whether it was for better or worse, there is no denying the importance of such pivotal movements in the history of Humankind.

- In the American Revolution (1765-1783) throughout the course of the war, an estimated 6,800 Americans were killed in action, 6,100 wounded, and upwards of 20,000 were taken prisoner.
- In the French Revolution (1789-1799) at least 40,000 people were killed.
- The Chinese Revolution (1911): The Cultural Revolution damaged China's economy and traditional culture, with an estimated death toll ranging from hundreds of thousands to 20 million. Mao Zedong in 1958, launched the Great Leap Forward that aimed to rapidly transform China's economy from agrarian to industrial, which led to the deadliest famine in history and the deaths of 15–55 million people between 1958 and 1962.
- The Russian Revolution began in 1917 and ended with a bloody civil war that lasted until around 1922/1923. There were an estimated 7 to 12 million casualties during the war, mostly civilians.

In the background of the above examples, it should be easy to appreciate the Bloodless Revolution that Guru Nanak as a prophet brought about with incredible *Sahj* (unconditioned spontaneity). The Jatts of Punjab became sovereign overnight under the banner of the newfangled Sikh Faith because they were Shudras according to the regimen of Brahmanical Caste System as tribals. In modern times they have become rulers actually, and are in the majority community in the Province of Five Rivers (*Punjab*). There is much more to this averment as you can discern in the following texts.

According to Santokh S. Anant, Jatts, Rajputs, and Thakurs are at the top of the caste hierarchy in most of the north Indian villages, surpassing Brahmins. Assigning *Vaishya Varna* to Jatts, he notes that they perform the dual duties of *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* (soldiering and agriculture) in the Punjab region. Kishan Singh says that a serious contradiction afflicts the Jatt farmer of the Punjab. He has unflinching faith in Guru Gobind Singh,



yet at the same time he is imbued with traits typical of a Jat. There are two sides to the Jatt's known traits. One has a positive effect in the sense that it saves him from feeling inferior; and the other side is negative. It makes him overbearing and arrogant which is a disease. *A Jatt's negative traits can be suppressed only through the true spirit of Sikhism* [emphasis added].

Historian Irfan Habib has argued that Sikhism did much to uplift the social status of Jatt people, who were previously regarded in the Punjab as being of *Shudra* or *Vaishya* status in the Hindu ritual ranking system of *Varna*. The Jatt people are a community of traditionally non-élite tillers and herders in Northern India and Pakistan [before India's Partition in 1947, the region was one united Punjab]. Initially, some Jatts started to follow the teachings of Guru Nanak, which did much to remove social barriers raised to them by *Savarna* caste society. Jatts were previously indifferent towards deep religious affairs. While followers important to Sikh tradition like Baba Buddha were among the earliest significant historical Sikh figures and significant numbers of conversions occurred as early as the time of Guru Angad (1504-1552), the first large-scale conversions of Jatts is commonly held to have begun during the time of Guru Arjan (1563-1606). Baba Buddha was a Randhawa Jatt, and was granted the rarest honour of conferring Guruship to Guru Nanak's successors in historic coronation ceremony until the time of the Sixth Master Guru Har Gobind.



2. **GURU ANGAD** is notable for systematizing the institution of langar in Gurdwaras where visitors from near and far could get a free simple meal in an ambience of communal harmony and congenial camaraderie. He formulated the rules and the training method for volunteers (*Sewadars*) who operated the kitchen, emphasising the fact a Gurdwara is a place of rest and refuge, they should always be polite and hospitable to all visitors.

Guru Angad visited other centres established by Guru Nanak for extending the outreach of the Sikh Faith. He set up new centres thereby strengthening its foundation.

A great patron of wrestling, the Guru started a *Mall Akhara* (wrestling arena) system where physical exercises, and martial arts were taught, where wrestling was taught including refrain from the use of tobacco and other narcotics. He stressed the importance of acquiring and maintaining a good physique akin to the dictum of 'a healthy mind in a healthy body'. He founded *Mall Akharas* in many villages including a few in Khadur. Typically, the wrestling was done after daily prayers along with other sports. Guru Amar Das made it mandatory for all visitors (from any caste, creed, ranking, social status) to Gurdwaras to first partake in Langar (a free communal meal) before seeing the Guru (*First Pangat, then Sangat*). When Emperor Akbar visited the Guru, he too first sat as a commoner in the Langar, and then had a meeting with the Guru. He continued Guru Nanak's mission of abolishing the caste system, and uplifted the status of women and gave them equality with men. He strictly prohibited practices such as *Sati* (the burning of the wife on her husband's funeral pyre), *Parda* (veil to cover the face), and encouraged widow remarriage. He established a system of *Manjis* (literally, cots) for administering and managing the growing *Sikh Sangat* [Literally, a congregation or holy company of disciples].

As a young man I used to wonder why one cannot see even in the light of hundred moons and thousand suns, a famous averment made by Guru Angad. However, as I grew up to take up firsthand study of *Gurbani* that my father had been hammering into my mind since my childhood began to strike root, grow, and blossom.

Finally, it dawned upon me that the Guru was alluding to spiritual illumination that only a true God-guided preceptor could provide.

“Je Sau Chanda Ugwe Suraj Chareh Hazaar
Eite Chanan Hundian, Gur Bin Ghor Andhaar”
Hundred moons and thousand suns may spread their lustre
Yet there will be pitch darkness without a spiritual preceptor

Upholding the inalienable virtue of Humility Guru Angad did not choose any of his two sons, Dasu and Datu, as his successor.

When it came to the test of unquestionable parameters of Seva he let the elderly Amar Das do it. It may sound paradoxical, but it is, indeed, the only valid test of equality that same laws and rules are applied without fear or favour to ‘prince and the pauper alike’ transcending concerns and measures of age, social status, economic position, or any other manmade condition. Amar Das persuaded Guru Angad Dev’s daughter Bibi Amro to introduce him to her father and, in 1539, Amar Das, at the age of sixty, met the Guru when he was 35, and became a Sikh, right away dedicating his entire life to him.



3. **GURU AMAR DAS** wrote and compiled hymns into a *Pothi* (book) that ultimately helped create the *Adi Granth*. He organised the Punjab state into administrative districts for the spread of the new faith and encouraged the Sikhs to undertake missionary work. He created gender equality among women and men, and laid the foundation for an ideal community by removing evil social evils like *Sati*, Foeticide, *Purdah*, etc.

As a child, one day the child Arjan found his way to the bed of his maternal grandfather Guru Amar Das who was then resting. His mother Bibi Bhani ran to prevent him from climbing the bed and disturb her father, but he had already awakened the Guru, who proclaimed, “Let him come to me; he is ‘*Dohita Bani ka Bohita*: my grandson shall be the *Boat of Gurbani* and ferry humankind across the ocean of the material world.” But growing up Arjan was always well aware that despite his maternal grandfather’s prediction, it was service (*Seva*) to the *Sangat*, not their lineage, which had bestowed Guruship on Guru Nanak’s immediate predecessors, Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. With this in mind, he indulged in *Seva* with utmost humility and undiminished most ardency. Bibi Bhani had obtained a boon from her father that from her husband Guru Ram Das onwards Gurudom would stay within the Sodhi clan. It is not without reason that she is that luckiest and the most blessed woman that had ever lived on the globe: her father, husband, and son were all Gurus—Third, Fourth, and Fifth Masters of the Sikh Faith. Furthermore, Guru Amar Das’s prophesy turned out to be true. Guru Arjan Dev contributed over 2,218 *Shabads* to a total of 5894 compositions enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru Amar Das has revealed the true meaning of marriage to a Sikh couple in these words: “*They are not said to be husband and wife who merely sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies.*”

Guru Angad Dev’s two sons, Dasu and Datu, were not reconciled to Guru Amar Das succeeding their father as Guru. But whereas Dasu had soon realized his error and acknowledged Guru Amar Das as true inheritor of



Guru Nanak's spiritual legacy, Datu remained hostile. He took to yogic practices to attain supernatural powers and thereby to create a following of his own. One day he went to Goindwal and gave vent to his pent-up anger and malice by kicking Guru Amar Das as he was sitting amid his disciples after the evening service. While the congregation was stunned, the Guru was unperturbed and quietly turned round, grasped Datu's foot and reverently caressing it sought his forgiveness saying, "*Pardon me, my Master's son! Let me massage your tender foot as it may have been hurt by my age-hardened bones.*" However, instead of ashamed by the Guru's disarming and unexpected humility, Datu flew into a rage, called him a usurper and commanded that he quit Goindwal whereupon Guru Amar Das quietly left for his native Basarke.

This is a classic example to convincingly show that Humility is benediction, *not* acquisition—pulsates as life divine through the warp and woof of Body, Mind, and Soul as an Organic Whole, not independent entities mysteriously held together. The other unsettling inference is that despite the tall claims of its protagonists Yoga does not even remotely alter the mindset corrupted by the five inner foes: Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, and Pride, and the Yogi too like any commoner remains their helpless victim.



4. **GURU RAM DAS**, Bhai Jetha before he was installed as the Fourth Master, strengthened the organisational structure of the newfangled Sikh Society. He is the master planner of the Holy City of Amritsar that was originally called Ramdaspur. The city's buzzing markets and the gentle *Amrit Sarovar* surrounding the Golden Temple all came together when he invited merchants and artisans from other parts of India to settle in this new town with him. It is noteworthy that the city was planned to grow around the nucleus that was then only a Holy Tank.

The Guru also strengthened the institution of *Langar* (community kitchen) and *Manjis* (missionary centres), established by father-in-law Guru Amar Das, in order to consolidate the foundations of a minority Sikh community in the face of powerful Mughal Empire and the hegemonic Brahmanical traditions that had created a breeding ground for dirty politics in which the masses brainwashed by the highest caste mindlessly continued to oppose the historic socio-cultural reforms initiated by Guru Nanak and admirably developed by his two successors..

Orphaned at the tender age of seven, Bhai Jetha used to earn his living by selling boiled grams at his maternal native village Basarke. As noted in *Sukhmani Sahib*, Guru Arjan Dev's assertion concerning the miracles that God performs in His divine sport (*Lila*), comes alive in the example of Guru Ram Das.

Khin maih neech keet ka-o raaj
In an instant, He transforms the lowly worm into a king
Paarbrahm gareeb nivaaj
The Supreme Lord is the Patron of the humble being
Jaa kaa darisat kachhoo na aavai
Even he whom nobody has ever seen
Tis tatkaal daih dis paragtaavai
Gains fame at once in directions ten

He was the first Sodhi to become Guru after whom Gurudom never went out of his clan.

Guru Ram Das created the hymns of Marriage Rites called the *Laavaan* consisting of four nuptial rounds that the bridegroom and the bride circumambulate around *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* while the sacred lyrics are sung by baptised hymn-singers called the Ragis.

The four nuptial rounds were written by Guru Ram Das for his own wedding. They explain the Journey of the Souls towards the Almighty Father. Through them, he exhorts us to do the duties that married life prescribes. The Guru tells step by step the life-partners-to-be what they ought to do. *Laavaan* is a compendium, as it were, of the entire *Gurbani* which, when listened with an alert, focused mind, casts a hypnotic spell with instant spiritual illumination and psycho-social transformation of the blessed beneficiary. An attempt is made in the synopses that follow to capture the divinity enshrined in *Laavaan*.

Synopsis of First Nuptial Round

- Commit to righteousness. Always be Truthful and tread the path of *Dharma*.
- Renounce sinful actions. Never consider treading on the path of falsehood and deception.
- Remember, meditate and embrace God and recite His *Naam*.
- Only by good fortune real peace is obtained and Lord seems sweet to the mind.
- Worship the One *Waheguru* and all your sins will vanish.
- With these principles onboard, together you begin the first stage of marriage.

Synopsis of Second Nuptial Round

In the second round, the Guru asks the partners to advance further towards meeting the True Guru whose Divine Being embodies the spiritual destiny of all humans:

- The Guru leads you to meet the True Guru, the Primal Being, the Enlightener
- Only have fear of the Fearless God and no one else, live in *Hukam*;
- And thus all the filth of your own ego will disappear from your mind.
- With humility before the Lord, sing His praises and both of you feel His presence within.
- Perpetual bliss will gather and you will feel on top of the world;
- You will see God everywhere, deep within you and outside; always sing of Him in joy;
- In the second round, the divine music (*Anhad-Shabad*) will resonate.

Synopsis of Third Nuptial Round

In the third round, the Guru says that the partners' minds are filled with "Divine Love":

- There is great anticipation and expectation in the minds of these cosmic travellers;
- In the company of saintly people the mind acquiesces and calms down.
- Meeting the Sadh Sangat (Holy Congregation), which is obtained only by good fortune;
- Path of *Sahaj* (Unconditioned Spontaneity) is found. The Guru instructs that you together chant the Lord's Sacred Word,
- Recite *Gurbani* and sing the glorious praises of the Lord. The *Naam* will vibrate and resonate within your hearts;
- In this state of bliss your unique destiny will be realized as He had inscribed "upon your foreheads".
- Knowing your future destiny; divine love will be awakened within you.



Synopsis of Fourth Nuptial Round

In the fourth and final round, the Guru says that following these instructions, the partners' minds in utter peacefulness will have found the Lord:

- The Lord is found and calmness engulfs your minds; deep peace dwells within.
- God's Will seems sweet to these *Gurmukhs* (God-Oriented Souls); they will be perfectly happy and satisfied with their lives.
- You will lovingly focus your consciousness on the Lord day and night.
- All your desires will be fulfilled; all your mind's desires will bear fruit; and complete contentment will be achieved.
- The Souls will blend together and experience *Waheguru* and only the True *Naam* will occupy their hearts and minds.

Guru Ram Das's form of grovelling self-abnegation is Humility par excellence. Guru Nanak had portrayed himself as the lowliest among the lowly and of the lowest imaginable caste as an expression of Humility. The Fourth Master of the Sikh Faith used the words worms and insects to paint a hallowed picture of self-abasement as the highest of virtues. He did not stop there and often appended the word "Jee" as an enhanced salutation for Lord God. In Indian culture, this suffix is invariably added to a person's name or status as a mark of respect. At any rate, its politeness sounds sweet and pleasant.

When Guru Nanak's son Baba Sri Chand called on Guru Ram Das he was shocked because with his yogic gaze he saw his father's image in the Fourth Master of the Sikh Faith. With this revelation, he spontaneously proclaimed, "You are the image of my father ... you have the light of my father, but your beard is much longer than his! Why are you sporting such a long beard?" In utter humility, Guru Ram Das submitted, "I have grown my beard so long to easily wipe the dust off the feet of saints like you," and he actually bent over to rub it over Sri Chand's feet. Taken by surprise, Sri Chand jumped back and confessed, "Even after so many years of 'tap' (penance and severe austerities) I haven't been able to achieve such agile grace and humility. I have never seen such humility before. You are the blessed soul adorning the throne of Guru Nanak. You are the King of Yoga!"



5. **GURU ARJAN DEV** designed the four doors for a Gurdwara, proclaiming that *"My faith is for the people of all castes and all creeds from whichever direction they may come and to whichever direction they may bow."*

He collated and compiled the hymns of his predecessors and other contributors into the Holy book then called *Adi Granth* that contains his 2218 *Shabads* including Sukhmani Sahib in a total of 5894. It is said that a new religion is raised on three primary pillars: *Granth* [Holy book], *Tirath* [Pilgrimage Centre], and Language. Guru Arjan Dev's achievement is outstanding in that he has contributed two out of the three components of the Sikh Faith.

Furthermore, he developed the Holy City of Amritsar as a Centre of Excellence, and reinforced the Structure of Sikh Society by introducing the *Masand* system. He founded many villages, towns and cities and constructed numerous wells in the Punjab region.

The Sikh Faith was fast becoming a popular and majority religion in Majha, Doaba, Malwa, and Nakka regions of Punjab in an ambience of peace and prosperity. However, ironically, though the masses were happy with this psychosocial, economic, and spiritual development, the Mughal rulers in Delhi were alarmed and perturbed. This they demonstrated by torturing the Guru to death. Guru Arjan Dev thus became the first Sikh Guru to be martyred, and is revered as *Shaheedan-da-Sartaaj*, or the Prince of Martyrs as a living testimony to the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's divine exhortation *Jau Tau Prem Khelan Ka Chao* Sir Dhar Tali Gali Meri Aao [If euphoria of playing the game of love excites you, Enter my street with your head on your palm].

Guru Arjan Dev has shown the true way of meditation in Sukhmani Sahib:

Sing paeans to Lord God's glory, saint friend
With an absolutely alert and concentrated mind

After stoically bearing the most brutal torture at the behest of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir for five days Guru Arjan Dev left the mortal world on the sixth day and a timeless divine utterance that testifies to Guru Nanak's prescription for laying one's life for playing the sport of love. It also validates the Founder's recipe for becoming a *Sachiar* [a truthful, righteous, virtuous person] by walking in the Will of God smilingly, and without demure.

Tera kiya meettha laagey
Har Naam padaarath Nanak maangey
Whatever You do tastes so sweet to me
Nanak begs for the wealth of Holy Name



6. **GURU HAR GOBIND** raised a strong army according to the instructions of his father Guru Arjan Dev, Prince of Martyrs, and imparted a martial character to the Sikh Faith. Until the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the Sikh Faith had been passive, but Guru Har Gobind was compelled by the Mughal tyranny to stand up against violent injustices against the Hinduism and the new-fangled Sikh Faith. At his investiture ceremony to take up the leadership as the Sixth Master, Guru Har Gobind is believed to have defiantly borne two swords, symbolizing his twin authority as temporal (*Miri*) and spiritual (*Piri*) head of the community. He founded Kiratpur, and it was here that the Seventh and Eighth Masters were born and brought up. It was also here that the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh along with his followers received the sacred head of the Ninth Master Guru Sri Tegh Bahadar, brought from Delhi with great devotion and reverence by Bhai Jaita in 1675.

He started devoting time to regular military training and the teaching of martial arts, himself becoming an adept swordsman, accomplished wrestler, and ace horse rider. Even in the face of stiff opposition, he enlarged and strengthened his army and fortified his cities. In 1609, he built the *Akal Takht* ("Throne of the Immortal Lord God"), and fort named "Lohgarh" near Amritsar. He deftly boosted the morale of his followers and

instilled in them the will to fight against oppression and injustice. Emperor Jahangir viewed the build-up of Sikh power as a threat to the Mughal Empire and had Guru Har Gobind jailed in the fortress of Gwalior.

This is the same prison where another 52 kings had been incarcerated by Jahangir. Hari Das was the superintendent of jail for the royalty. This notorious jail had a reputation that no inmate had ever come out of it alive. The Guru did not take food for three days, which alarmed Hari Das who had become his devotee because the food from the state exchequer was not earned with honest labour, but was provided by the proceeds from tax money collected by the state. Therefore he will not eat food sourced from it. He asked his Sikhs to go to the city of Gwalior and earn money by labouring with their own hands and prepare food from that earning. Interestingly, Hari Das acceded to this request and permitted Sikhs incarcerated with the Guru to earn their money. The 52 royal prisoners, leading a hopeless, miserable life had found new hope because of the Guru's support, encouragement, and counselling. They started following Guru Har Gobind in spending time in devotional singing and meditation. This transformational feat is well beyond the normal human endeavour and only an enlightened soul can perform.

Through the good offices of Mian Mir who had laid the foundation of Sri Harmandar Sahib at Amritsar along with Wazir Khan, Governor of Punjab, Jahangir was convinced to release the Guru. The emperor sent Wazir Khan to Gwalior to personally deliver the message of release, but he refused to avail it. He told the messenger that his stay in prison had provided succor to other inmates and improved the quality of their lives, which makes him quite happy in their company. The governor had to make three trips back and forth, negotiating release terms until Guru Har Gobind agreed to leave if all the prisoners were also set free. Jahangir stipulated a counter condition that only those incarcerated rulers who hold to Guru's gown's tassel could be released in anticipation that these rulers being Rajputs will not accept such a humiliation of acceptance authority over them.

Guru Har Gobind got a special gown stitched with 52 tassels and all the 52 rulers came out with the Sixth Master, each holding one tassel of his made-to-order unconventionally long gown. For this historic act he was hailed as "*Bandhi Chhorh*" – The Liberator of the Incarcerated. As he snapped their fetters the Guru provided succor to his royal prison inmates. His example is unmatched true in letter and spirit Guru Nanak's spiritual global prayer "*Sarbat da Bhala*" flowing from a prisoner setting his own terms and conditions for his own release that embodied an incredible altruistic aspect. On his arrival in Amritsar, he was greeted with showers of flower petals and sprays of fragrances that climaxed in the illumination of the entire town lighting of whole town in the evening. Ever since that occasion, this day is annually celebrated as 'Deewali' when the entire complex of Sri Darbar Sahib is aglow with festive lighting and celebratory fireworks. Illumination of every home symbolises the light that shines in the body and darkness of ignorance is dispelled by spiritual fluorescence.

Bhupinder 'Bo' Singh writes, "In order to get a better picture on how the jail authorities develop their persona, let us look for clues in the book: "*The Lucifer Effect*" by Philip Zimbardo. In the summer of 1971, social psychologist Prof Zimbardo randomly assigned some male college students to play role of prisoners and guards in a mock prison he built in a basement at Stanford University. The students had been prescreened for their mental health balance and lack of criminal records. In exchange for the participation, they were paid \$15 a day.

"It is interesting to know that how this low key experiment turned into hell. The guards took to their duties with an unanticipated appetite of the psychologists running the study. The guards asserted their authority by banging doors; belittling inmates verbally, abusing them, humiliating them, and keeping them awake at night. In fact within thirty-six (36) hours of the experiment one of the "prisoners" broke down and had to be released. Even Zimbardo, who designed the experiment, became a captive of his own grand design. Operating as prison superintendent he forgot that he was a psychologist doing a study. True like an autocratic ruler, he would not

abandon the project despite the calls. Eventually it had to be ended by 6th day as prisoners became increasingly depressed and guards became sadistic (see link: <https://www.prisonexp.org/>).

“How we went about testing these questions and what we found may astound you. Our planned two-week investigation into the psychology of prison life had to be ended after only six days because of what the situation was doing to the college students who participated. In only a few days, our guards became sadistic and our prisoners became depressed and showed signs of extreme stress. Please read the story of what happened and what it tells us about the nature of human nature.” ~ Professor Philip G. Zimbardo

“The main point that this study established was even the good people with doctorates in psychology can collaborate in doing evil things to others. Zimbardo contends in his book that it is not few bad apples that ruin other apples, but the barrel is what does it i.e. the prisons are toxic. Imagine the prison conditions then, as today almost 350 years later, the results of reforms and improvements in quality of life have resulted in significant improvements in prison environment. Now if we look at what Guru Ji did in Gwalior from that time frame perspective, we can see a miracle taking place. Guru Ji not just transformed the ruthless jail superintendent whose charge included 52 imprisoned rulers into a compassionate, devoted and a service-oriented person but the quality of life of inmates as well. Those prison inmates, leading a hopeless, miserable life had found new hope because of support, encouragement and counseling provided by Guru Ji. They started following Guru Ji spending time in devotional singing and meditation. This transformational feat is well beyond the normal human endeavor and only an enlightened soul can perform.”

It is pertinent to point out that in the Mock Prison Experiment making each and every prisoner a hapless victim of psychopathic disease caused by prolonged confinement had absolutely no effect on the Guru whose mind had taken refuge in the *Shabda* [The Holy Name]. Much to the contrary, his ebullient spirituality couched in *Miri-Piri* with characteristic divine exuberance had tremendous power to restore the pitiable mental and moral conditions of 52 Rajas to normal all-round health, and put them back on their feet to resume their royal role as compassionate leaders of the subjects of their respective principalities. It is another matter though that their descendants have since long forgotten the new lease of life that Guru Har Gobind had bestowed on them because gratitude was missing from their lives' agenda.



7. **GURU HAR RAI**, an extremely sensitive child, had bitterly wept when his cloak accidentally knocked down some petals and he profoundly felt that he had hurt the rose bush. Elevated to Guruship at 14, in deference to the wishes of his grandfather, he did not disband the existing army Guru Har Gobind had established. He kept 2,200 mounted soldiers at all times. Although he personally never indulged in any direct political or armed conflict with the Mughal Empire, Guru Har Rai always personally remained a man of peace while encouraging and endorsing the military spirit of the Sikhs. He went hunting, not to kill animals, but to care for them in a beautiful zoo he had established at Kiratpur Sahib. He also established an Ayurvedic herbal medicine hospital and research centre there.

Dara Shikoh, Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's eldest son and heir apparent, was taken seriously ill, poisoned by his brother Aurangzeb, who aspired to the throne. The best royal physicians said his only hope for recovery was if he could be given certain medicines they did not have at hand.



Coaxed by his advisers that the Sikh Guru possessed healing powers and had rare medicines, Shah Jahan sent a humble request for treatment of his son. The special medicines were given to the Emperor's messenger with the addition of a pearl that was to be ground up into powder and added to the potion. The Sikhs asked Guru Har Rai why he was helping the son of Shah Jahan who belonged to the enemy camp that had fought with both his great-grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev, and his grandfather, Guru Har Gobind.

The Guru's reply was disarming: "*Behold, with one hand man breaks flowers and with the other offers them, but the flowers perfume both hands alike. The axe cuts the sandal tree, yet the sandal perfumes the axe. We ought, therefore, to return good even when others treat us badly.*"

The medicines saved the life of Dara Shikoh, and the Mughal Emperor wholeheartedly thanked the Guru, and vowed that he would never again cause him any annoyance, much less do harm.

This episode once again testifies to the Truth as revealed by Guru Nanak in the *Mool Mantra* that those entranced by the divine love elixir of *Naam* never nurse any grouse, much less harbour enmity against anyone.



8. GURU HAR KRISHAN was installed as the Eighth Master at 5. Popularly known as the *Bal Guru* (Child Spiritual Preceptor) is reverently remembered in the Sikh tradition for declaring "Baba Bakale" before his death. His declaration identified as his successor his granduncle Guru Tegh Bahadur who had been meditating incognito in village Bakala for many years.

His father Guru Har Rai had supported the moderate Sufism-influenced Dara Shikoh instead of the conservative Sunni Muslim Aurangzeb when the two brothers were engaged in a war of succession to the Mughal Empire throne. After Aurangzeb won the succession war in 1658, he summoned Guru Har Rai in 1660 to explain his support for the executed Dara Shikoh. Guru Har Rai sent his elder son Baba Ram Rai to represent him. Aurangzeb kept the 13-year-old Ram Rai as hostage, questioned Ram Rai about a verse in the *Adi Granth* because he claimed that it disparaged the Muslims. Ram Rai changed the verse to appease Aurangzeb instead of standing by the Sikh scripture. The Guru viewed this as an act of sacrilege for which he excommunicated his elder son, and nominated the younger Har Krishan as his spiritual successor.

Sikh Gurus were epitome of Humility that Guru Nanak had made the Cardinal Principle of the Sikh Faith. In his book *Sikh Religion, Volume -4*, McAuliffe has noted one famous episode from the life of Guru Har Krishan. Once on the way to Delhi from Punjab, Guru Har Krishan was stayed at Panjokhara, near present-day Ambala, where Gurudwara Panjokhara Sahib now stands. A very learned pundit by the name of Lal Chand, noting that the Guru's name was similar to that of Lord Krishna, came visiting with the intent to test him on his knowledge of Bhagavad Gita by asking the meaning of a few *Shalokas*. Guru Har Krishan, with the intention to cure him of his pride, said that Lal Chand was asking did not need a guru to answer because anyone could accomplish that task. On hearing this, Lal Chand brought a mute and ignorant water carrier named Chhajju. The Guru placed his stick on Chhajju's head, and as McAuliffe writes, "The Brahman and the water carrier accordingly began to discuss, and the latter gave such learned replies that the former stood in astonished silence before the Guru!" The pundit begged Har Krishan's pardon for his arrogance and became the Guru's disciple.

One of the most famous Sikh temples in North India, Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, was at that time the residence (*Bangla* is Indic term for bungalow) of Raja Jai Singh of Delhi. He humbly requested the Guru to come to Delhi so that he and the Sikhs may have his Darshan.

Because of his young age, the Rani was apprehensive about the Guru's spiritual powers and wanted to test them firsthand. Therefore, disguising herself as a maid, she sat amongst the lady attendants of the royal household. However, the Guru instantly identified her and sat on her lap, proclaiming, "This is the Rani!"

It was during his stay that the pandemic of smallpox and cholera had spread in the city of Delhi. When people learned of Guru Har Krishan's presence there, they went to him for shelter and protection. He contracted smallpox in 1664 while he was attending upon the people infected by the deadly disease. He died before reaching his eighth birthday.

SEVA in this example testifies to the fact that it has nothing to do with one's age or formal learning. It springs automatically from the artesian wells of empathy that its base in God's universal-timeless grace and benevolence as divine stamp of his Omnipresence, Omniscience, and Omnipotence.



9. **GURU TEGH BAHADUR** is remembered with profound devotion and reverence as the champion of human rights that have their crowning glory in religious freedom. His example is unmatched in recorded history as a hero who laid down his life to protect the *Tilak* and *Janeau* of the Hindus who were killed *en masse* by the bigoted Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb because he desired their forcible conversion to Islam. He taught by personal example how to gain liberation from attachment, fear, and dependence, and stressed the fact that strength should be gained through truth, worship of One God, knowledge, and sacrifice.

The present-day Right-Wing Hindutva Protagonists are propagating lies and misinformation that Guru Tegh Bahadur was a Hindu and himself sported *Tilak*; therefore, his sacrifice has no historic significance because he did it for saving his own faith i.e. Hinduism. This pathogenic perception in satanic disregard for the facts of history once again reveals the ugly side of Brahmanical mindset whose best contribution to India that is Bharat has been a thousand years of slavery under all genres of foreign invaders and rulers, including the Slave Dynasty. Slave dynasty, (1206–90), line of sultans at Delhi, India, that lasted for nearly a century. Their family name was Mui'zzī. The Slave dynasty was founded by Quṭb al-Dīn Aibak, a favourite slave of the Muslim general and later sultan Muhammad of Ghūr ... When Muhammad was assassinated in 1206, Quṭb al-Dīn Aibak seized power in Lahore. Can there be anything more shameful than the stigma of having been slaves of slaves for a century?

His father Guru Har Gobind conferred on him the title *Tegh Bahadur* (Mighty of the Sword) after he had shown an exceptional valour in a battle against the Mughals.

Guru Tegh Bahadur meditated in solitude for 26 years, 9 months and 13 days. However, he was not a recluse and attended to family affairs as its head. Revered as a principled and fearless warrior, he was a learned spiritual scholar and a divine personage. He was brought up in the Sikh culture and trained in archery and horsemanship. He was also taught the ancient Indian classics such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Puranas.

Conscientiously treading Guru Nanak's Path of Righteous and Pragmatic Spirituality while living in the thick of workaday existence, Guru Tegh Bahadar exhorted the Sikhs to fulfil their longing for God in a Householder's Life: "Why go to search forests (to find God). He, who dwells in all hearts but remains ever pure, pervades thy heart also. Just as fragrance fills the rose and reflection the mirror, the Lord pervades all without a



break; search Him inside thee. The Guru hath revealed this knowledge that the Aum pervades inside and outside. Saith Nanak, without knowing thyself the scum of doubt will not be removed.”

Guru Tegh Bahadur founded the city of Anandpur which later became a throbbing centre of the Sikh Faith.



10. GURU GOBIND SINGH: Among his notable contributions to the Sikh Faith are founding of the Khalsa (Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers) in 1699, introducing the Five Ks. These are the five articles of faith that the Sikhs baptized to enter the Khalsa Fold mandatorily wear at all times. He is credited as the author of the Dasam Granth, [The Tenth Holy Book] selected hymns from which form sacred part of everyday Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals.

Panj Pyare is the collective name given to Five Men of Maverick Mettle named (1) **Daya Ram** (*Khatri*), a shopkeeper of Lahore, Punjab; (2) **Dharam Das** (*Jatt*) from Hastinapur (today's Meerut in Uttar Pradesh); (3) **Mohkam Chand** (*Chhimba*), a tailor from town (now city) Dwarka, Gujarat; (4) **Himmat Rai** (*Kumhar*), a water-bearer from town (now city) Puri, Orissa; and (5) **Sahib Chand** (*Nai*), a barber from town (now city) Bidar in Karnataka, responded to Guru Gobind Singh's call for voluntary sacrifice by cheerfully offering their heads to him. These five men were the first Sikhs of the Khalsa (The Commonwealth of the Pure) as understood in modern parlance and verified written history. They were baptized by the Guru until then Gobind Rai who, in turn, was baptized by the Five Chosen Ones. They were renamed by attaching the suffix 'Singh' (Lion) in place of their second names, the Tenth Master became Guru Gobind Singh. He set an unmatched example of equality between the Guru and the Disciples by obliterating traces of their castes and psycho-social identities, and each was hailed as a 'Lion'. They are fondly remembered and revered as the *Panj Pyare* [Five Beloved of the Guru].

It is important to note that the First *Piara* [Guru's devoted volunteer] who got up to offer his head to Guru Gobind Singh for immediate sacrifice without an iota of fear was Bhai Daya Singh *signifying the fact that the right and lasting foundation of Dharma* (Cosmic Moral Law) is *Daya* (compassion). This was readily corroborated by the Second *Piara* Bhai Dharam Singh. The Third *Piara* who rose to volunteer was Bhai Himmat Singh, denoting that where *Daya* and *Dharma* are present, *Himmat* (courage, valour) spontaneously manifests itself. The Fourth *Piara* was Bhai Mohkam Singh, revealing the fact that when *Daya*, *Dharma* and *Himmat* commingle, they become *Mohkam* (Arabic for firm, strong, determined). The Fifth *Piara* was Bhai Sahib Singh whose name and inclusion in the Khalsa Brotherhood symbolized that where there are *Daya*, *Dharma*, *Himmat*, and *Mohkam*, there is *Sahib* (Arabic for Lord, Master, Owner; metaphorically, *Waheguru* that stands for 'Hail the Guru'). In the light of this brief exposition, it cannot be overemphasised that Guru Nanak, as the Founder of the Sikh Faith, had declared that God was his *Guru*. The Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh reiterated this ineluctable truth in his proclamation: "He who is the selfsame ONE Incarnation—He alone is my *Guru*".

The truth revealed in the incontrovertible lives of the Ten Masters of the Sikh Faith shows that the seminal contents of Guru Nanak's Revelation have come full circle: God is ONE, and everything flows from Him—and He alone, not a Human, is the *Guru*. Treading this sublime Path of Righteousness is like playing the Game of Love that warrants the ambitious player cannot escape making detour to the Divine Playfield with his head on his palm. This is both a maverick metaphor and turbulent truth as exemplified in the dauntless offering their heads to the Guru without demur. The ultimate inference that in the sequence in which the *Panj Piaras* (Five

Beloveds of the Guru) volunteered was accident at all as can be discerned in their diverse castes and places from which they had hailed. It was the earthly execution of God's Divine Master Plan. That is why Guru Gobind Singh created the most apt slogan which is both a prayer and a celebration of victory: *Waheguru Jee Ka Khalsa; Waheguru Jee Kee Fateh* [The Khalsa belongs to Lord God and its victory is His Victory].

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa during the historic and monumental *Divan* [religious congregation/royal court] at Anandpur Sahib on March 30, 1699 (Gregorian calendar skipped 11 days in 1752. Therefore, in the present times, Baisakhi occurs near 13 April every year). The *Panj Piaras* formed the nucleus of the Khalsa. They were First Five volunteers to receive *Khandey di Pahul* [the ceremony of initiation, rites, and baptism] performed by the use of the double-edged sword.

MADHO DAS: Mesmeric Metamorphosis of Mindset

Among Guru Gobind Singh's many landmark contributions to Humankind is the mind-boggling transformation of a Bairagi Sadhu, Madho Das, into Banda Singh Bahadur who became a formidable Sikh warrior as a commander of the Khalsa army. Born Lachhman Dev, he left home at the age of 15, to become Bairagi Sadhu, an ascetic who had renounced the world and was thus given the name Madho Das Bairagi by his Guru Janaki Das. He established a monastery at Nanded, on the bank of the river Godavari where in September 1708 he was visited by Guru Gobind Singh. When the occult powers that he had acquired as an ascetic did not work on him he surrendered to the Guru as his *Banda* [a bondsman, a servant, a slave] who baptized him into the Khalsa Brotherhood, and gave him the new name of Banda Bahadur [Literally, The Gallant Slave]. I keep wondering what Guru Gobind Singh must have told him that he turned out an almost invincible warrior from a timid withdrawn human who had deserted the world because he was unable to bear the loss of life when he had accidentally killed in the hunt a pregnant doe, and was overcome with lingering remorse.

He came to Khanda in Sonapat in present-day Haryana State, raised a fighting force, and led the consequential freedom struggle against tyranny and injustices of the Mughal Empire. The bravery of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, the first army leader of the Sikh Faith, is worthy of being engraved in golden letters in the history of the world because it is a very example of how a single person can stand against insurmountable odds for the sake of righteousness and justice.

I am reproducing excerpts from a report published in the Hindu to give my readers some idea of the valour and victory of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.

Bahadur deserves better...

RV Smith

When Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh gurus, visited Nanded, he was accosted by the Yogi who tried to prove that he was superior. His name was Madho Das and some people regarded him as a man who could perform miracles. Madho Das tried his best to overawe the guru. But all his efforts, lasting several days, came to nought and even his occult powers could not help him. Acknowledging defeat he prostrated himself before Guru Gobind Singh as his Banda or slave. The guru lifted him up and embraced him. Madho Das became a Sikh and came to be known as Banda Singh.

The guru sent him all the way to Punjab where, along with other soldiers of the Panth, he fought those who were persecuting the Sikhs. In 1709 Banda launched his campaign, taking over from Bhai Mani Singh, the high priest. He and his Tat Khalsa of 40,000 men subdued a vast part of Punjab after defeating Wazir Khan, Governor of



Sirhind. Eventually Emperor Bahadur Shah-I himself led the royal forces against him and Banda had to retreat to the fort of Lohgarh and later to the hilly tract. From here he made lightning raids on the Mughals and resisted all their attacks for five years. At last his valiant force was surrounded by imperial troops and he had to surrender in 1715. That was in December that year and he was brought to Delhi on the assurance that he would be treated with respect.

However, the promise was not kept by Emperor Farrukhsiyar who put him in an iron cage. From March the next year, his followers began to be executed. Within seven days hundreds of them met their death with a smile on their lips. Eventually Banda's turn came and he was taken in a procession around the Qutb Minar. Farrukhsiyar asked him what sort of death he preferred and the brave Banda replied the type that the Emperor himself would wish to die. He also predicted that it would be cruel too and come sooner than later. Banda was at first tortured and then killed. His little son was also executed along with him. It is said that the child's heart was wrenched out and he was made to swallow it. Banda and his son met their end in June 1716. But his prophecy came true three years later when Farrukhsiyar was murdered by the Sayyid Brothers of Barha, who have come to be known as the "King Makers". After more than 250 years of Banda's martyrdom a shrine was built in his memory. Few know its history and most people just pass by it, taking it for another Gurdwara. But the memorial deserves better appreciation and perhaps a better construction than Barapullah (or its flyover) to honour a valiant soldier. [Source: Internet]

"All modes of redressing the wrong having failed, the drawing of sword is pious and just," writes the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Gobind Singh, in *Zafarnama [Epistle of Victory]*. It was addressed to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb whose bigotry, brutality, and savagery witnessed in forcible en masse conversion of the Hindus had crossed all limits of rationality. It was a poetic argument for upholding human rights and socio-political justice written in the form of a letter to Aurangzeb after the Battle of Chamkaur in the 18th century.

Mittar pyarey noon haal mureedaan da kehna

The above *shabad* is sung in Gurdwaras by *Ragis* and *Kirtaniyas* as *Kirtan*. This is a prayer that Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master of the Sikh faith, had made to God during his moments of utter aloneness in Machhiwara jungle that was infested with thick wild growth and thorny bushes. He was plunged into this inhospitable environment after the final battle of Chamkaur. The phrase "*Mittar Pyarey Noon*" implies that the invocation is addressed to Lord God [*Waheguru*—Hail the *Guru* that is God].

Several paintings under the umbrella-title of "Calendar Art" exist on the subject such as the following. They depict Guru Gobind Singh resting alone on rough ground, barefooted, and injured. Ordinarily, such popular artworks carry the caption *Mittar Pyarey Noon*. The four lines of this soulful poetic supplication are believed to describe the unfortunate and challenging situation into which the Guru was forced.

ਮਿਤ੍ਰ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਨੂੰ ਹਾਲ ਮੁਰੀਦਾਂ ਦਾ ਕਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਤੁਧੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਰੇਗੁ ਰਜਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਓਢਣ ਨਾਗ ਨਿਵਾਸਾਂ ਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਸੂਲ ਸੁਰਾਹੀ ਖੰਜਰੁ ਪਿਆਲਾ ਬਿੰਗ ਕਸਾਈਆਂ ਦਾ ਸਹਿਣਾ ॥
 ਯਾਰੜੇ ਦਾ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੱਥਰੁ ਚੰਗਾ ਭੱਠ ਖੇੜਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਰਹਿਣਾ ॥੧॥੧॥

*Mittar Pyare Nu Haal Mureedaan Da Kehna
Tudh Bin Rog Rajaayean Da Odhan Naag Nivasaan Dey Raihna
Sool Surahee Khanjar Pyala Bingg Kasaayean Da Saihna
Yararhey Da Saaoon Saththar Changa Bhatth Kheriayaan Da Raihna*

Tell the beloved friend of His devotees' pitiable predicament
Without you, life is like being wrapped in quilts in duress
It is akin to living with cobras coiled around
Crucifix is the decanter; and by cup dagger is meant
When butchers torture animals they can't their pain express
We prefer deathbed on our Beloved's ground
To the enemy's torturous luxury of being burnt alive

Though the followers of certain religions, notably, Hinduism, perform *havans*, hold *yagyas*, and offer charities for spiritual attainment, they can never realize Godhead without the divine power of devotion. All forms of religious rituals end in smoke without the entranced absorption of consciousness in *NAAM* [God's Holy Name].

“Only those who have loved shall attain the Lord,” Guru Gobind Singh declares.

Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur came from Delhi and joined the Guru at Damdama Sahib. They wept copious tears on hearing the fate of the young Sahibzadas. The Guru consoled them by saying **“Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Fateh Singh have given their lives for truth and righteousness and have obtained liberation. So why should the mother of such heroes weep? Your sons have won honour and attained to that eternal state of bliss. Having performed the work of the Akal Purkh, they have now returned home to Him. Therefore, accept God's Will as the best of all gifts. Instead of your children, I present you with all my Sikhs as brave and worthy sons.”**

*In putran ke sis per vaar diye sut char
Chaar mooye to kya hua jeevat kai hazar*

For the Khalsa's Family the sacrifice of my four sons has tiny worth
The death of four matters little when thousands more have taken birth

The Guru's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh who was then 17 years old, placed his head on his father's feet and beseeched permission to go forth and fight the enemy. Guru Gobind Singh knew that this was their last meeting on earth. Smiling, that eternally loving father blessed his son to enter the battlefield. Baba Ajit Singh took with him five brave Sikhs and charged out of the safety of the fort fired by the zeal to protect Righteousness and Freedom against sacrilege by the self-avowed enemy. He fought with fierce fury and the Mughal soldiers fell beneath his powerful strokes. When his arrows were spent up and his sword was broken, Ajit Singh fought the enemy with his spear. When his spear too snapped, the enemy made a fresh attack and mortally wounded him.



The Guru, fighting from the rooftop, paid his gratitude to the Almighty Father thus, ***“O God, it is Thee who had sent him here and he has laid down his life fighting for the faith. The trust Thou had reposed in me has been restored to Thy care.”***

Baba Jujhar Singh, the Guru’s second son aged 14, on seeing his brother’s brave fight, could not restrain himself and entreated his father to let him plunge into the stormy battle. The youth took five more Sikhs with him and like his elder brother before him, wrought havoc among the seasoned enemy soldiers. It is recorded that Baba Jujhar Singh glided through the Mughal army like the lithe locomotion of a crocodile through the stream. The enemy fell like rain in the monsoon until Baba Jujhar Singh and his five Sikhs also succumbed to the attacks of overwhelming numbers.

When the battle was getting bloodier and intenser, two of the *Panj Pyarey* Bhai Daya Singh, and Bhai Dharam Singh, along with three Sikhs came to Guru Gobind Singh and entreated him to leave the fort and let them stay back to fight the enemy. Their plea was that the Guru must survive so that the young tree of the Sikh Faith lives on to bloom and fructify. The Guru was reluctant to leave his loyal saint-soldiers in the midst of the fierce battle, but the Sikhs insisted with unwavering resolve, “Beloved Guruji, we are not making a request, we are Five Sikhs. By the power that you had vested in us on Baisakhi Day, we are issuing a “*Gurmatta*” [Divine Command] which must be obeyed. You ought to leave this place forthwith.”

The Guru had no choice but to concede and replied in testimony to their unambiguous grasp of God’s Edict-Fiat in these words, ***“Wherever my Five Sikhs are assembled; they shall be the highest of the high. Whatever they think, say, and do shall carry the authority of the Khalsa.”*** Saying this, the Guru walked around them three times and laid down his plume and crest in deference to their ineluctable order.

Guru Gobind Singh’s younger sons named Baba Zorawar Singh (9) and Baba Fateh Singh (7) were interred alive in a brick wall. When he was informed of their death, he listened unfazed with an emotionless face. He took out an arrow from the quiver and thrust it into the ground; then pulling out a bush, he said, ***“Such an offbeat tragedy will not go unnoticed at God’s Court. Like this weed, the Mughal Reign will soon be extirpated.”***

Having lost his four sons who are remembered with utmost love, admiration, and reverence as *Chaar Sahibzaadey* [Four Princes of the Spirit], Guru Gobind Singh wrote ‘*Zafarnama*’ [Epistle of Victory] in Persian to Aurangzeb. In this historic letter, he chastised the bigoted Mughal Emperor for his brutality, savagery, tyranny, and cruelty, as well as his falsehood and his deceit. While explaining the Sikh code of warfare he laid bare the emperor’s corrupt morality. He wrote, “When you had sworn and taken an oath on Prophet Muhammad and called the Word of God to witness, you ought to have kept your promise. If the Prophet himself were present here, I would have made it my bounden duty to inform him of your treachery. Even though my four innocent sons have left this world fighting for Righteousness and Freedom, the Khalsa remains behind like a coiled snake. What brave deed have you done to smother a few sparks of life? You have only stoked the fire into destructive fury.

“As to the battle at Chamkaur,” the Guru added, “what could forty men do when a hundred thousand swarmed around them? The oath-breakers attacked them with swords, arrows, and muskets. I myself was locked in combat and I fought to the utmost of my ability. ***When all peaceful means have been tried in vain to achieve an objective in a civilised way, it is righteous and just to draw the sword!*** Any of your soldiers who advanced beyond his defences to attack my position, instantly dropped dead in the pool of his own rushing blood. But your troops who committed no aggression, received no injury at our hands. *Many were killed on both sides by the blitzkrieg of arrows and bullets...Men, the bravest of the brave, fought with all their heart. But how could forty of even such phenomenal heroes succeed against an enemy of countless numbers?*”

When Aurangzeb received the *Zafarnama*, he was aghast at the naked truth that he had committed the gravest of sins. Scared of God's judgement, he pledged to meet with Guru Gobind Singh, but died before that came to pass.

After long weeks of travelling, however, the Guru stopped and set up camp in Talwandi Sabo on 20 January 1706. He ordered the top of a sand hill to be levelled, took off his armour, and decided to take rest. The city he thus founded became known as Damdama Sahib [Place of Rest], and he stayed there undisturbed for nine months.

It is pertinent to point out that armed resistance in the war against the tyranny and injustices of the high and mighty on the hapless and helpless teeming millions has been a recurring event in Hindu Mythology as well as Indian history. Buddhist texts mention that he killed ninety-nine half-brothers and only spared his full brother Tissa. Hundreds of loyalist officials were also killed; Ashoka is said to have personally decapitated five hundred of them. Having consolidated his power, he was finally crowned emperor in 270 BC.

The two great Epics in which Hindus take undiminished pride—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—are sore reminders of hypocrisy, such as grotesquely displayed by 'Mahatma' Gandhi, because the bloodiest of wars are their discomfiting themes. Many *vanaras* [monkeys] were killed and injured in the Great War, over a million *vanaras* were said to be killed in action while some were forced to flee, and some lost their limbs while some were decapitated. But after the defeat of Ravana, they were all brought back to life by Indra on the request of Lord Rama. Everyone is still aware of the war of Mahabharata. This is a poem that no one can forget. This war took place between the Kauravas and the Pandavas and millions of people were killed in it. About 1 billion 66 million warriors were killed in this war.

Indra, in Hindu mythology, is the king of the gods. He is one of the main gods of the Rig-Veda and is the Indo-European cousin of the German Wotan, Norse Odin, Greek Zeus, and Roman Jupiter ... Indra is strengthened for those feats by drinks of the elixir of immortality, the soma, which priests offer to him in the sacrifice.

In Christianity, CRUSADE means each of a series of mediaeval military expeditions made by Europeans to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. In a broader sense, it is also a vigorous campaign for political, social, or religious change.

Similarly, in Islam, there is JIHAD that means a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty. It is also: a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline. By extension, Jihad is a crusade for safeguarding a principle or faith.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on Sikhism

- Once in a public lecture in Baroda (now Vadodara), MK Gandhi said that he who picks up weapons is not a spiritual leader and Guru Gobind Singh was nursing delusions in fighting battles.
- Perturbed by this statement, Principal Ganga Singh went to Gandhi's ashram in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) to show him the truth but he was reluctant to debate. Alternatively, he asked the learned Sikh to give him his arguments. The following is a brief but revealing dialogue between the two:

Principal Ganga Singh: "You consider Gita your mother. Gandhi used to address Bhagavad Gita by this sentimental title wherever he went. We Sikhs respect Gita as much as we respect the sentiment that you have for your *Granth*. Therefore, tell me the place where Gita was proclaimed.



“It was in battle. During Mahabharata, the Pandyas refused to fight initially. Arjun said that he couldn’t fight the other side because they had his step brother (?) And his guru, they were his *apne*, his own. Then Lord Krishna told him when you get infection on your body, you remove it with medicine and what not. It’s the same thing. And that is what led to Mahabharata.”

Mahatma Gandhi: “Mahabharata was an internal battle. It wasn’t real. (He used to go around saying that too).”

Ganga Singh “If Mahabharata wasn’t real, then you believe Lord Krishna wasn’t physically real too? He wasn’t external and internal too.” **Principal asked Gandhi to say this in public.**

Then the misinformed and misdemeanoured ‘Mahatma’ Gandhi had to apologize in a *Mahasabha* (Giant Assembly) for recanting what he had said about Guru Gobind Singh.

Dr BR Ambedkar, Architect of the Indian Constitution [who has observed him from close range and assessed his machinations], in a 1955 BBC interview, had said, “*Gandhi was never a Mahatma; I refuse to call him a Mahatma.*”





GOD IN *SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB*

PROLOGUE

This is a very tough subject because of its complexity, comprehensiveness, and nature and script that no known method can do full justice in deference to the scriptures of all world religions provoking reactions that would lead to acrimony and unintended communal rancour. I have tried my utmost to confine this enquiry to the field of Science and the commonest dissent that exists between it and Religion. At the outset I would stress that both Science and Religion are two among scores of ways of apprehending objective reality [Matter] vis-à-vis the subjective views of matter esoteric which are accepted to belong to Spirituality. For me, the word Religion itself carries the profoundest of meaning and ready answer. It connotes an attempt at Re-uniting with the Logos [The Word] whatever praxis a seeker of truth may opt to follow and deploy in the psycho-spiritual adventure. In other words, here in this thinking and approach lies the Big Bang that belongs to Religion just as Big Bang hypothesis does to Science.

The **Big Bang** hypothesis, accepted worldwide by the Scientists, states that all of the current and past matter in the Universe came into existence at the same time, roughly 13.8 billion years ago when all Matter was compacted into a very small ball with infinite density and intense heat called a **Singularity**. It is ironical that Scientists accept this hypothesis but shy away from Guru Nanak's mystical 'Singularity' that he proclaims by attaching the Numeral '1' to God's name by which he begins to share his Revelation: *Ik Oankar*.

INFERENCE

My inference is that all and sundry without any exceptions suffer from the same psycho-emotional disease called 'conditioning'. Therefore, unless Scientists voluntarily shed their cerebral obstinacy in favour of cardiac stubbornness, moral life to the world gone hay wire cannot be restored. On the other extreme, Religionists ought to cast off willingly their cardiac stubbornness to adopt cerebral obstinacy to infuse sense into faith without which the centuries-old cold war between Science and Religion cannot be ended for the all-round well-being of Humankind. In other words, it is high time that Scientists become 'Saintists' and Religionists transform themselves into 'Reasonalists' so that all people inhabiting the globe find ready peace becoming of the *Homo sapiens* that means 'Man, the wise'.

MARRIAGE BETWEEN REASON [SCIENCE] and EMOTION [RELIGION]

There is nothing to be ashamed of in attempting a synthesis called a balanced workout of the Brain using both its hemispheres in order to bring about a happy marriage of Reason [Left Brain] and Emotion [Right Brain] for the well-being of the entire Humanity. This is the only way to ensure that everyone is a beneficiary of what collective life has to offer in terms of technological and psycho-spiritual advancements.

BLIND FAITH

Both the Religionist and the Scientist suffer from Blind Faith. The former believes in the omniscience of Religion to show the way to our ultimate destination through the dark corridors of Time that run through uncharted terrains of Space. The latter believes in the omnipotence of Science to solve all imaginable problems to the benefit of all and sundry. However, nothing of this kind has so far happened in either case. In my view, Blind Faith is not so much a matter of Ignorance as it is of Inertia—an enormous constitutional lethargy that prevents an individual to sit up to ASK rather than sit back to be TOLD. This requires an active initiative. Unfortunately, initiative cannot be delegated. It is something you either have or you do not have. It can neither be inherited nor loaned.

As a victim of inertia even a very fit and healthy individual finds it painful to think for himself. The world-famous American industrialist Henry Ford had the last word on the subject: "*Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it.*" So long as the two opponents stick tenaciously to their viewpoints there can be no peace because it is both the cause and the sustenance of cerebral belligerence. In the circumstances, I urge both sides to examine their lives critically for their own sake to see if they are using both the Brains [Left and Right Hemispheres] in a balanced way.

PREREQUISITE TO THE STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

The next requirement is that we should have a working knowledge of what happens in four major fields of human endeavour: the Humanities, Art, Science, and Technology apart from an understanding of cultures besides the different languages used in *Gurbani*. Furthermore, we should be familiar with the many callings, trades, occupations, and trades we customarily follow as a means of livelihood because apt metaphors that we encounter in the Holy Utterances are drawn from these sources. Be that as it may, Guru Nanak's proclamations spring from his Revelation [*Ilhaam*] in the form of psycho-spiritual axioms that require no proof in the sense of a lab-experiment validation. At any rate, it is helpful to remember that Einstein's world-famous equation $E=mc^2$ did not carry the proof that Matter and Energy are inter-convertible. It needed an Oppenheimer, Father of the Atomic Bomb, to prove it.



KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES

Written in the *Gurmukhi* script, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS] has used various languages, including Lahndi (Western Punjabi), Braj Bhasha, Kauravi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Arabic, and Persian. Copies in these languages often have the generic title of *Sant Bhasha*. As the name implies, the Saints' Language underscores the catholicity of the Holy Book [SGGS]. Anyone desirous of studying *Gurbani* must of necessity learn these languages in the original [not in translation] to make correct interpretation of the sacred utterances. The *shabads* or hymns as they are called deploy spontaneously Poetry as the Language of Prophecy. It is not poetry as a form of literary art. It is amazing how poetry of the kind in which such utterances are made come naturally to the blessed person to whom God reveals His message. This is the reason why in ancient times a beneficiary of God's grace was called a *Rishi*—a person who is capable of spontaneously expressing in poetry the kind of mystical experience that he has had. It should be obvious that such poetry is neither taught nor learned in universities. SGGS is full of marvellous examples to illustrate this point. Think of Bhagats like Kabir, Namdev, Dhanna, et al. They did not possess the resources to receive formal education in a school, a college, and a university. Yet their mystical utterances are amazingly profound and talk of realms well out of the learned reach of what we may call the Secular Poets.

An American writer, historian, and philosopher Will Durant has said in praise of Philosophy: *Philosophy... is the front trench in the siege of truth. Science is the captured territory*. He holds Philosophy to be superior to Science. In this light, a philosophic approach to the study of *Gurbani* to find out what it has to say about God warrants an extraordinary caution.



EXPERIENCE versus EXPERIMENT

It is a healthy yearning to use the platform named GLZ [*Gurbani* Learning Zone] for sharing your views with fellow humans in an aura of open-minded interactive multilateral discourse on a subject whose validity and proof are available only in individual EXPERIENCE rather than in Laboratory EXPERIMENT. I entreat everyone participating in the discussion to exercise restraint on diction, consciously holding back the urge to gain one-upmanship, to obviate the creation of acrimony as a misadventure in piety. Both the intent and endeavour should be to pool experiences rather prove the other fellow wrong.

To my understanding and experience, the study of Religion, especially talking about God, is both the easiest and the toughest thing to do. The reason is that when we are casual we just blurt out an opinion which, according to Socrates, is something that lies between Ignorance and Knowledge. It is an absolute Freedom of Expression no constitution of the world has ever granted/can ever grant. The other extreme is beset with insurmountable difficulties because the existence of God cannot be proven for or against. In other words, your view of God is as good as mine or as anyone else's because we are dealing with something that cannot be seen and thus remains immeasurable all the time—and the cold war with occasional hot-headed bloodshed goes on and on, interminably. In this light, let me confess that what I am going to say though is different, it certainly is not the last word even when taking recourse to the so-called scientific method that insists on Evolution. Because as long the universe may last, things along with opinions and viewpoints will unavoidably keep changing too. Therefore, in my opinion [I do not mind to be branded 'self-opinionated' in Socratic terms], the saner course is that we take the trouble exercising utmost patience of delving deep into what the author of a given idea must have undergone circumstantially, ideologically, or in any other way.



THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ‘CONCEPT’ OF GOD IN *GURBANI*

Adopting this approach even if you do not agree with me, I would look at Guru Nanak’s *Japuji*. When I do so the first thing which strikes me is that it is inappropriate to say that *Gurbani* has a ‘concept’ of God. A concept of anything or an ‘ism’ is at best a mental construct that can never be universal limited as it is by the individual’s heredity, environment, and circumstance. What Guru Nanak is sharing is not a concept, it is a description of God as Divine Being that He himself shows unto him—for doing which he appropriates no credit whatsoever to himself. This is clear to me from the very beginning when he terminates the *Mool Mantra* by *Gur-Prasada*. The popular and widespread interpretation is that God as described can be accessed by the Guru’s grace. The word ‘Guru’ as a spiritual preceptor is the Lord Himself which Nanak has later shown in his divine utterances. Therefore, unless we first arrive at what Nanak has said about the Guru it is premature, even farfetched, to force our meaning on the proclamation.

NEED TO RELATE WHAT YOU READ HERE TO YOUR VIEWS AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SUBJECT DURING WORKADAY EXISTENCE

I would urge the readers to read what follows, reflect on it in the light of the brief exposition that I have given, then relate it to their own viewpoint to see if it clicks or conflicts with a long-held opinion. It is here that we ought to exercise Guru Nanak’s incomparable civility in discourse on matters esoteric by virtue of which he never made anyone involved in the dialogue feel small and sheepish. I need hardly stress the basic, though always ignored, fact that there would have been no *Gurbani* without Guru Nanak’s advent in the first place. Therefore, the first crucial thing to note and remember is that God as described by Guru Nanak is not a concept or an abstract principle of truth or an imaginary character. He is a Divine Being, Self-Existent, who Himself performs the three primary functions of creation, preservation, and destruction, without any assistants or lieutenants.

Further on the Guru has highlighted the futility of the age-old praxis in the understanding of Godhead, and shown Time to be quadripartite rather tripartite [past, present, and future]. This part of his Revelation is crucial because it effortlessly points to the existence of God before Time. Incidentally, Time, as the Scientists know it, is only a chronometric measure. *Gurbani* attributes to it as God’s own three-pronged powers of creation, preservation, and destruction. We know Time by its manifestations, more readily in the birth, growth, decay, and death of living things. To some extent, it is similar to electricity that we see in lighted lamps, working fans, moving motors, and a host of other gadgets, but have never/can never experience it directly. Try it, and you will die of electric shock.

While at it, Guru Nanak clears the centuries-old confusion regarding who to worship. After giving various attributes of God he highlights His existence as Primary, ineluctable reality. God alone dwells in or presides over the four segments of Time; therefore, no one else is worthy of worship. In other words, the Creator, not his creatures, should be worshipped.

Now we come to what Guru Nanak has shown in the working of the Universe by using two words: *Reza* [Persian], and *Hukm* [Arabic]. *Reza* is Will; *Hukm* is Edict-Fiat. God’s Will is inscrutable, and Edict-Fiat is the operative part of His Will. Further on, he has used one word for both words “*NAAM*” [Name].

FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS AS INSTRUMENTS OF STUDY OF *GURBANI*

Here I am sharing with you certain fundamental ideas which I had developed and used to advantage in my study of *Gurbani*, and fondly hope that it will help you in some way. *Gurbani* is none of these things:

philosophy, poetry, mythology, and mysticism as commonly understood. Philosophy works on a premise, arguments, and inference which are indisputably intellectual tools. Use of words like ‘concept’ in the study of *Gurbani* is patently erroneous. Poetry is a literary art form whose creation and criticism are governed by literary methods and standards. To talk of *shabads* [hymns] as the compositions of Gurus and Bhaktas is fallacious. It is not Mythology because the function of mythology as story-telling was to explain complex concepts, but it has ended up as engaging tales which when heard intoxicate you to the point of psycho-spiritual numbness. Nobel Laureate TS Eliot has called Mythology the purest creation of the human imagination, which *Gurbani*, in my assessment, is decisively not. Mysticism has been called “religion of the élite”. It thus remains confined to the experience of the individual—incommunicable and, therefore, of no use to the masses.

HUMAN FACUTIES

We should also be well versed with the faculties we use in the study of *Gurbani* because without such knowledge mishaps happen beyond control. These are Reason, Emotion, Imagination, and Intuition. Each performs a specific cerebral function, and has its own patent limitations. **Reason** cannot explain how a breast-fed infant survives when a bus falls into a ravine and everyone is dead. **Emotion** can feel but its effectiveness is limited to firsthand human contact. Only thought not feeling can be transmitted. Therefore, feeling must be translated into the language of thought for communication across the seas. This is similar to a television camera that turns the light and sound of live action into pulses of electricity which is transmitted from the television station in waves, and is then received by your television. Your TV reverses the process by turning electromagnetic waves back into light and sound, allowing you to see the images. **Imagination** I have found to be an only true liberator. Even when you are imprisoned it sets you free by taking you on self-chartered flights into realms beyond the reach of aircrafts. No wonder Einstein has declared Imagination superior to Knowledge. However, it has its limitations. Nobody can imagine that anything can exist outside Time-Space Continuum. But that is precisely what *Gurbani* says that God alone has the power to do. Hollywood filmmakers have tried to the hilt but yet happily failed to come up with the image of a creature that does not have the features of a human being, however distorted and contorted! To my mind, **Intuition**, the fourth faculty, is the offspring of all the other three faculties.



LEFT and RIGHT BRAINS

Here is another piece of information which should be useful to you to figure out your potentialities and limitations as a seeker of truth. It comes from Roger Wolcott Sperry, an American neuropsychologist and neurobiologist who won the 1981 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine for his work with split-brain research. He has demonstrated through laboratory experiments that the right and left hemispheres of the human brain perform very different cerebral functions. Dominant Left Brain [Reason] makes you mostly analytical and methodical in your thinking, while with the dominant Right Brain [Emotion] you tend to be more creative or artistic.



MOOL MANTRA
[THE SEED-WORD]

ੴ

[IK OANKAR]

G-O-D [Generator-Operator-Destroyer]

IS

ONE

All-Inclusive, All-Pervasive

Truth, the Unchanging Reality

Transcendent Being

One may Name Him thus

Intrepid, Uninimical

Imperishable Icon

Beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death

Self-Existent

By the Grace of God, the Guru

This Creed is proclaimed

*

Contemplating His Glory by a ceaseless Chant

**

Truth was He before the birth of Time

Truth has He been since Time He bore

Truth is He, Nanak, even now sublime

And Truth shall He be evermore

PAURI-ONE

A life-time of ablutions can't purify

Nor sustained spells of silence qualify

Nor endless feasting of the worlds satisfy

Nor a hundred thousand wits ever grasp it?

How, then, to be Truthful; this guile! How smash it?

Nanak, "Submission to His Edict-Fiat Who's Master of His Will"

Is the Inviolable Divine Writ, the one Revealed in Original!

[Excerpted from my research thesis that earned me my second PhD in 2000]

**COMMENTS ON ESTABLISHED SCIENTIFIC TERMINOLOGY
POPULARLY USED IN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSES**

Out of scores of items that require defining/redefining to enable correct interpretation of the contents of *Gurbani* I have selected only the key ones. Each concept/idea is followed by my comment in order to share

with you how I look upon these widely used terminology woven around philosophic and scientific postulations their significance vis-à-vis the message of *Gurbani*. Let me hope that it will help you understand the Holy [Revealed] Word in a fresh way.



When examining events, people naturally seek to explain why things happened. This search often results in CAUSE and EFFECT reasoning, which asserts or denies that one thing causes another, or that one thing is caused by another. The effect always happens at some point in time after the cause.

COMMENT: *Gurbani* has clearly and repeatedly stated that God Himself is the maker of the First Cause, the First Cause itself, and also the effect that it eventually yields. At least to this extent those who believe they are possessed of scientific temper must appreciate that the divine utterances are all-encompassing, not merely the product of one or more or all human faculties that I have named as Reason, Emotion, Imagination, and Intuition. To my inference, an exclusive and excessive use of Reason produces heedless arrogance of which Stephen Hawking was a pitiable victim. More than a Scientist, he was speculator who any learned Pandit from India would outclass. However, Stephen kept “Hawking” his wares in the dark streets of Time uninhabited by any living beings. Thus when he received no response his hawks would progressively get louder until it was a shrill, high-decibel outcry that he heard as an echo, and mortal dread attacked the marrow of his bones to force his mouth shut. On the other extreme, anyone becoming a victim of superabundant Emotion turns into a ‘fanatic’—a fellow who doubles up his pace when he has lost his way and forgotten the destination.



ENERGY is the power *derived* from the utilisation of physical or chemical resources, especially to provide light and heat, or to work machines. There are different forms of energy like chemical energy, electrical energy, heat energy, light energy, mechanical energy, and nuclear energy.

COMMENT: Energy as power is *derived* from a source outside itself. It belongs to something or, in religious parlance, it is the divine power of God, the Creator. Therefore, those who are tempted to use the term ‘energy’ as a substitute for God, in my opinion, do whatever they will but malign the Revealed Word we call *Shabda Guru*.



MATTER is a physical substance that occupies Space and has mass. Law of Conservation of Matter is a fundamental principle of classical physics which states that Matter can neither be created nor destroyed in an isolated system.

COMMENT: Guru Nanak has proclaimed in *Japuji* that God poured something in all the countless realms He created but only once, and they have not run out of that original material. In other words, it is the Law of Conservation of Matter stated in religious parlance.



The **UNIVERSE** is all existing Matter and Space considered as a whole. It is believed to be at least 10 billion light years in diameter and contains a vast number of galaxies. It has been expanding since its creation in the Big Bang about 13 billion years ago. The widely accepted theory for the origin and evolution of the universe is the Big Bang model, which states that the universe began as an incredibly hot, dense point roughly 13.7 billion years ago.

COMMENT: Guru Nanak says that neither Mulla nor Pandit knows the genesis of the universe because if they did, their religious books would have recorded the date. God alone knows it because none other than Him was there on the scene constituted of Time-Space Continuum which was in fact His own creation. The Scientists have these conjectural figures which mean very little because if I say the Big Bang occurred 10 billion not 13.7 billion years ago no scientist can prove me wrong. At any rate, *Gurbani* says that God assumes as large a stature as He wills, which Scientist call the expanding universe. *Gurbani* has pronounced two states of Godhead: the *Nirgun* [without attributes] and *Sargun* [with attributes]. In the former case, He is Self-Absorbed, which means that Space, Time, Matter, and Energy are subsumed in what we may call God's Unmanifest Divine Form.



What we call **NATURE** encompasses the phenomena of the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features, and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations.

COMMENT: Guru Nanak has used the Arabic word 'Qudrat' for Nature, which means the Might of God [*Qaadir*]. What I have never been able to reconcile with is the elusive acceptance of the Scientists that Nature is a grand power, and all rules of the phenomenal world are derived from it by enunciating the Laws of Nature. Therefore, it stands to reason to assert that the Scientists have not read *Gurbani*, but yet jump to the obstinate conclusion that there is no God when *Gurbani* says Nature is God's Divine power. Their insistence lowers their esteem in my eyes because they turn out to be most irrational creatures who pronounce judgement without collection and comprehension of facts they abhor.



TIME is the continued sequence of existence and events that occurs in an apparently irreversible succession from the past, through the present, into the future.

COMMENT: Time's definition by the Scientists is both inadequate and misplaced because what they are pointing out are the ways in which Time can be used as a measure including one of Space as you will encounter in the term that follows. *Gurbani* tells us that Time is *KAAL* that carries and deploys God's Divine Powers to bring about **CHANGE** that the Scientists have accepted to be the Nature's Changeless Law of Change. That is precisely the reason why Guru Nanak needed to say God is *AKAAL* i.e., beyond the influence of vagaries of Nature because he is the Creator of all these things.



SPACE is a term that can refer to various phenomena in science, mathematics, and communications. In astronomy and cosmology, space is the vast 3-dimensional region that begins where the earth's atmosphere ends. Space is usually thought to begin at the lowest altitude at which satellites can maintain orbits for a reasonable time without falling into the atmosphere. This is approximately 160 kilometers (100 miles) above the earth's surface. Astronomers may speak of interplanetary space (the space between planets in our solar system), interstellar space (the space between stars in our galaxy), or intergalactic space (the space between galaxies in the universe). Some Scientists believe that space extends infinitely far in all directions, while others believe that space is finite but unbounded, just as the 2-space surface of the earth has finite area yet no beginning nor end.

COMMENT: Space as the Cosmic Void is a precondition for anything to exist. I wonder how the Big Bang hypothesis is accepted without realising that without Space being there in the first place the 'Singularity' could not have existed. It confounds confusion when I read what the Scientist themselves say about the conundrum: *Space* is the gap between *matter*, so without *space*, *all matter* is in one place. But *matter* has energy, so it will move. *Without space* it cannot move, so it cannot have energy.



DARWINISM is a theory of biological evolution developed by the English naturalist Charles Darwin and others, stating that all species of organisms arise and develop through the NATURAL SELECTION of small, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce. "Survival of the fittest" is a phrase that originated from Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution as a way of describing the mechanism of NATURAL SELECTION. In Darwinian terms the phrase is best understood as "Survival of the form that will leave the most copies of itself in successive generations."

It is interesting to note that in an attempt to convey his scientific ideas to the British public, Darwin borrowed popular concepts, including "survival of the fittest," from sociologist Herbert Spencer, and "struggle for existence" from economist Thomas Malthus, who had earlier written about how human societies evolve over time.

COMMENT: Darwinism is a flawed theory because it presupposes the existence of 'creation' as basis for 'evolution' without acknowledging the discomfiting fact as an alibi for the scientific temper. If we take up the world-famous averment "Survival of the fittest", we will encounter that the evolutionists define it as the natural process by which organisms best adjusted to their environment are most successful in surviving and reproducing **what** is called NATURAL SELECTION. This is another conundrum not easy to decipher. In this pet scientific phrase the word 'natural' means existing in or derived from nature; not made or caused by humankind, 'selection' connotes the action or fact of carefully choosing someone or something as being the best or most suitable.

My quandary is that the organism desirous of evolution equipped with these uncanny powers ought to opt for something perfect and exceptional. But as we see in daily life there are innumerable human beings, animals, and birds that are deprived of these enviable attributes. The question, therefore, arises what happened that they are still far from achieving these lifetime distinctions which could well become the envy of other organisms involved in the same game. Even a more nerve-shattering teaser is: *If Evolution is all that the scientists say it is why the animals representing the lower forms of life are still around when we have over seven billion members of the Homo sapiens species already sitting on a higher plane of evolution.* Interestingly, though not at all known to the Scientists and only to a few inspired scholars, *Gurbani* has recorded several stages of Evolution until the



wandering soul qualifies to receive what is called “*Durlabh Deh*” [Priceless Mortal Frame in human birth] as a reward for righteous actions.

There is a glaring difference between the Darwinian notion of ‘Evolution’ and what *Gurbani* says about it. The Scientists bluntly denounce that there is no such thing as ‘Creationism’. Everything is a product of ‘Evolutionism’. However, they have no answer to the questions I have posed above, and this one: Why do they claim themselves to be Scientists when they do not fulfil the conditions that they have laid down for being one? Examine the following text that typifies who a Scientist is:

The word scientist is a general term, used to describe someone who researches and examines various aspects of the physical world in order to attain a better understanding of how things work and function. There are many specializations of ‘scientist’, and depending on which field of study one chooses to follow, the work can vary greatly. Each scientist, however, follows ‘the scientific method’, which is a strict set of rules that ensure all new discoveries are factual and not just speculation.

It will be readily seen that the so-called Scientists do follow, or worse still follow only ‘selectively’ the ‘scientific method’ that denounces ‘speculation’ in no uncertain terms. But yet this is what they precisely do. They pronounce a judgement without any compunction of conscience that all religions are humbug, and the product of inferior minds. Any argument in favour of Religion meets a Scientist’s heedless arrogance!

To my understanding, **Evolution** as in *Gurbani* delineates a basic function of the Divine Sport [*Leela*] as a play of reward and punishment. The soul that does good work as prescribed in the scriptures gets a vesture of a higher life up in the evolutionary ladder or receives punishment by demotion to a lower stage.

I want to share another curious case concerning the topic under discussion. The Scientists say that a Dolphin has a brain superior to a human being’s. Its sexual temper is akin to that of human beings i.e., it is perennial, not seasonal like other animals’. It can mimic any human voice with an amazing precision and likeness. Yet, it still dwells in its watery habitat whereas human beings have ventured out into outer space and even landed rovers/explorers on the Mars. Why? My reason is that the Dolphin did not develop its arms and hands without which even ‘*Durlabh Deh*’ does not avail. Hands are loyal servants of the Brain [the hardware of the human computer that has Mind as its self-upgrading software], and turn ideas into objects as extensions of the human capacity limited by its anatomy and physiology. For example, when the cupped hands could carry only limited water, many containers were invented, and an overhead water-tank made of PVC has a capacity of 3,000 litres.

Why the Dolphin did not opt for a better life makes the proposition of ‘Natural Selection’ suspicious in my view.



THEORY OF EVERYTHING [TOE], final theory, ultimate theory, or master theory, is a hypothetical, singular, all-encompassing, coherent theoretical framework of Physics. Finding a TOE is one of the major unsolved problems in Physics. It is expected to fully explain and link together all physical aspects of the Universe.

COMMENT: Einstein struggled all his life developing a TOE but failed. However, *Gurbani* already has one: It says that *NAAM* is the mainstay of everything that exists—living beings, stars, galaxies, and what have you.



According to RICHARD BUCKMINSTER FULLER [the American genius whose like does not exist], “*Einstein shattered the Newtonian cosmos ...In the famous first law of dynamics, Newton had said that a body persisted*

in a state of rest or constant motion except as it was affected by other bodies; he was assuming that the normal condition of all things was inertia. Einstein realized that all bodies were constantly being affected by other bodies, though, and this meant that their normal condition was not inertia at all but continuous motion and continuous change. The replacement of the Newtonian static norm by the Einsteinian dynamic norm really opened the way to modern science and technology, and it's still the biggest thing that is happening at this moment in history."

COMMENT: *Gurbani* says that "the entire universe is on the move ... in Lord's fear is the sun and in Lord's fear is the moon. They move myriads of miles without an end." The Universe is a dynamic system, not a static set-up.



GOD'S DIVINE SPORT CALLED *LEELA*

GOD plays the Divine Sport at His own sweet Will, as is manifest to the spiritually discerning souls in His triune Act of Creation, Preservation, and Destruction. The ancient Indians had aptly named it *LEELA*. For this purpose, which is inscrutable to the grandest of human geniuses, the Lord created every individual human person a unique being so that inequality at all levels throughout the innings of the Divine Sport may persist unresolved by its own inner force. His preference was for diversity rather than identicalness. This God maintains with incomparable ingenuity as interlinked creation by the imperative of uniformity by which we recognise the *Homo sapiens* species as distinct from other forms of life. Inequality perennially exists in gender, skin colour, stature, social privileges, material acquisitions, intelligence, potentialities, initiative, attitude, desires, dreams, enterprise, outlook, and a host of other things. Interestingly, though perennially mysteriously, the *Leela* got going and still is going as much as it shall go on by its own innate power and parameters. This impels all humans to play their foreordained roles unimpeded. The apparent purpose is to invent innumerable occupations and engage in them in the drunken stupor of being alive. Among these vocations, the chief one seems to be to work out a system in which humans may grant equality to fellow beings. As we can see from personal experience, this aim remains unfulfilled despite all the high-sounding names we humans give to human ventures in the pursuit of Humanity's collective well-being and prosperity. Among such names, political nomenclatures are the easiest to identify, named the socialistic pattern of society, democratic socialism, parliamentary democracy, presidential system of democracy, and so on. The innumerable mishaps that we humans have created and rejoiced in throughout the chequered course of our history that we had invented to solve the problem have turned out to be a ridiculous fiasco—e.g. all philosophies, all poetries, all arts, all sciences, all religions, all humanities, and what have you. In the lurid light of this discomfiting revelation, I can draw only one inference. Just because the problem is irresolvable God's *Leela* continues in a self-renewing conundrum while He stays absorbed in it or aloof from it untainted giving every human the reason to run their leg of the race in commingled feelings of delight and trepidation.



THE STEPHEN HAWKING SYNDROME

I am citing this case because this Scientist was the most vocal about his atheism, and repeatedly denied that a divine being called God ever existed or needed to exist. His was a characteristic case of total acceptance of the omniscience of Science which, in my considered opinion, was something abhorrently 'unscientific' because he

had formed such notions without firsthand study of Religion—and the dogged obstinacy with which he stuck to them portrayed him to be irritably irrational. I urge you to read the following brief sketch about him so that you are mentally prepared to grasp the import of my comments.

Stephen William Hawking CH CBE FRS FRSA (8 January 1942 – 14 March 2018) was an English theoretical physicist, cosmologist, and author who was director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge at the time of his death. ... Hawking was born in Oxford into a family of doctors.

“There is no God,” wrote Stephen Hawking, as reported by CNN. “No one directs the universe.”

If there was ever anything before the universe and its physical laws — God or otherwise — Hawking didn’t particularly care, because there *was no way to study it* [emphasis added]. Just because there is no way to study is no rationale to condemn a system that cannot be seen, observed, measured, and experimented with by the instruments methods known to Science.

Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis or ALS in 1963, when he was just 21 years old. ALS is one of several types of motor neuron diseases. It gradually and inexorably paralyzes patients, usually killing within about four years. Most patients with the condition die within five years and, according to the Motor Neuron Disease Association, average life expectancy after diagnosis is 14 months. However, he survived for 55 years with the incurable condition.

“His survival is longer than most,” said Dr Jeffrey Elliott, chief of the neuromuscular disorders section at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. “I think part of his longevity may have been because he had a slowly progressive form. Probably it was also due to the exclusive nursing and medical care that he received.” Hawking received round-the-clock medical care, at first from a wife who gave up her career ambitions to tend to him, and later from a team of nurses. He was told when diagnosed that he likely would not live long — but he beat the odds.

According to the ALS Association, half of all people affected with ALS live at least three or more years after diagnosis. Twenty percent live five years or more; up to 10 percent will live more than 10 years. People diagnosed when they are young, as Hawking was, live for longer for reasons that are not well understood. It may be that a different cause of the disease shows up in young adults.

COMMENT: As you must have noticed that despite his birth in a family of doctors nobody could diagnose, much less prevent, the hopeless medical condition which he spent 55 years of his life gathering all the bitterness that sprang from ALS and Medical Science’s abject inability to come to his rescue. Interestingly, while the same community of doctors had declared that he would be alive for a very short period failed to explain how he somehow lived for 55 years. The alibis that the experts offered smack of utter ignorance that covers up awful human infirmity and helplessness forced upon us mortals by what the Scientists would call Mother Nature. The point that I am trying hard to drive home is that anyone and everyone is free to form opinions and express them for or against the existence of God but the Universe runs in the manner it does not by human wishful thinking but a power that belongs to God alone. However hard we may struggle with all our resources and forces pooled we can never explain the whys and wherefores of the Divine Sport [*Leela*]. Therefore, I find solace in a natural reaction that spontaneously springs from all-round surrender which yields what *Gurbani* has named *VISMAAD* [Joyous Wonder].

THE UPSHOT

In the ultimate analysis, as rightly and repeatedly asserted in the Holy Book, it is God Himself in His *Sargun Saroop* who stages the divine play on the stage of Time-Space Continuum with conscious creatures such as

we humans are as extensions of His own materials, methods, and designs. His Drama is sustained by a sense of separateness caused by EGO [which I define as Body-Consciousness] giving all mortals the illusion that they are important independent characters in it and experience pleasure and pain really. To highlight this little-understood enigma *Gurbani* calls Ego a serious disease that carries its own remedy in its entrails. As an architect, I pin it on orientation of the consciousness on the basis of which *Gurbani* has classified humans into 'Manmukhs' [Mind-Oriented] and 'Gurmukhs' [*Shabda*-Guided]. The problem arises from the fact that Mind works on the data collected by the five senses from the outside world of Matter, which is then processed by the hardware of the human computer, the Brain. The suggested orientation directs the Mind inwards towards The Source, which dwells deep within the mortal frame, *Durlabh Deh*.

Referring to the Big Bang [which *Gurbani* also mentions] I would say that the original sound generated was heard by god-men and they named it *Shabda*. Now to access the Realm of Truth [*Sach Khand*] we need to chant the *Shabda* to re-create the original sound [*Dhun*] so that (soul)-Consciousness [*Surt*] comes to be ensconced in the Holy Word to access The Source. The entire play is one of consciousness, which is why Guru Nanak insists that once such re-absorption takes place the seeker becomes God in the same way as a drop becomes the ocean, doing away with the need to define, describe, and disseminate the experience.

However, in the case of Stephen Hawking, we should take compassionate view of his pitiable lifelong, incurable condition. His embittered comments on the existence of God that eventually ended up in acrimonious disillusionment sprang from the irreconcilable fact that if He did exist—and possessed all the countless qualities of head and heart that all devotees worldwide believe He has—it was Undivine on His part to have put the celebrity Scientist to a gruelling test that meant lifelong torture apparently for no fault of his.

Gurbani exhorts all of us to imbibe the virtue of conscientious denial of creature comforts for a lifestyle that consumes minimal material resources of all kinds. When expectations of admiration from others of what we do sacrifice in the game that benefits them remain unfulfilled we feel hurt to the point of an utter disillusionment when the players involved are our own blood relations. This is the point of self-realisation by which we accept stoically that disillusionment is the price in terms of pain for denying the fleeting pleasures of workaday existence for the Bliss of Life Eternal that God promises and grants for such a huge sacrifice when we tread the Path of (uncompromised) Righteousness! This comes about from a change-over from worldly wanderlust to otherworldly advancement, which is a journey set apart and defined by transplantation of consciousness from the temporal turf to the spiritual soil. Guru Nanak calls pain *Daroo* [Remedy], and Pleasure a *Rog* [Malady]. The reason that nobody ever remembers God wallowing in luxury. But everyone remembers Him when in pain. And this is the crux of psycho-spiritual dictum because without pain the wayward consciousness cannot be oriented God-ward.

In conclusion, I would humbly submit that what I have shared here is your choice to read or not to read. Even when you read it you do not have to agree with me. Just the same you must give *Gurbani* a fresh look to partake of its perennial relevance and richness to make your life worthy of the human vesture that you have providentially received as a priceless divine gift. Be that as it may in my case it is glaringly true: the more I know of Science and innumerable other fields of human endeavour, the deeper my faith in *Gurbani* grows.

At any rate, do have an attentive look at my decoding of the three-letter abbreviation GLZ.

You are at full liberty to hold on to your own views of *Gurbani* vis-à-vis the human predicament but let GLZ become Godly Love at its Zenith. Let GLZ remain *Gurbani* Learning Zone. Let it not turn into Grievous Laceration of Zen just because my understanding of the Sacred Word is at variance with yours.



PS: Anyone desirous of a direct communication with me on the hallowed subject is welcome. Write to me on my email address given below, giving your bio-sketch, and I will promptly respond to begin an ongoing dialogue: ashokathegreat1938@gmail.com



AFTERWORD

GOD has no caste, no colour, no creed, and no form
 With the one He is pleased He shares this secret
 Others in pedantic arrogance quarrel about norm
 Wallowing in the cesspool of misery and regret

•

GOD cannot be lost; He is omnipresent
 In arrogance, however, He can be forgotten
 Remembering Him, the soul is in ascendant
 Forgetting Him, all the virtues get rotten

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I have shared with you these two quatrains that I have written inspired by *Gurbani*. The human quandary is that if GOD has no caste, no colour, no creed, and no form—some of the attributes we mortals need to see and recognise fellow beings—how can we ‘see’ God? Also, when God is everywhere why is it not possible to ‘see’ Him? Guru Nanak has shown through his Revelation that remembering God we begin to imbibe the virtues which are entirely His and of His making, and stressed the fact that without acquiring virtues all forms of worship and ascetic and other ritualistic practises are totally fruitless. The other thing that the Guru has lain bare is that however hard you may try you cannot know Him unless it is His own sweet will to grant this rarest of rare favours, the ultimate sacrament. And when it happens it is *Sarwan Darshan* that entails the conversion of Sound Waves [formed by *Shabda-Surt Sadhna*: an illimitable psycho-spiritual workout of trying to lodge the Consciousness in the domain of the Sacred Word] into Light Waves. To explain this impossible-to-explain phenomenon, I have drawn upon the example of the mantis shrimp (*Odontodactylus scyllarus*) that is cited below in the hope that it may help you, at least in deepening your wonder at the inexplicable incalculable Divine Creation we know as *Leela*.

“Sonoluminescence” turns a loud sound into an emission of light. The mantis shrimp which uses a sonic shock wave to help catch its prey explains this phenomenon best. The shrimp squeezes out jets of water from its claws which travel at such a fast speed that the water “cavitates” inwards. In other words, the negative pressure causes the liquid water to be pulled apart into bubbles of water vapour. When these water bubbles collapse into themselves, this remarkable event emits a flash of light. The light flashes that are produced are extremely short, lasting only 100 picoseconds. However, they are of surprisingly high energy, at almost ten times hotter than the temperature on the sun.

In the Sikh Faith, this exposition assumes the form of Creative Mysticism and stresses the point that when *Shabda Guru* achieves its enormous strike on the Surt [Soul-Consciousness] the extremely loud sound thus generated turns into light and the rarest of rare beneficiaries has *Sarwan Darshan* (son et lumière) i.e. experiencing God as a sound-seeing encounter.





RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND THE UNIVERSE

The word UNIVERSE, encompassing the whole world, cosmos, the totality of existing things, is, in my opinion, Uni + Verse i.e. One Poem. However, the words “cosmos” and “universe” are used synonymously as they refer to the same concept of world or nature. “Cosmos” denotes a whole harmonious and orderly system that is governed by natural law while “universe” is everything that exists including time and space, matter, and the laws that govern them. You need a musical mind, a poetic sensibility to explore and appreciate the incredible complexity, bounty, and beauty of the universe, by using both the Left and Right Hemispheres of Brain for a balanced approach to investigation, analysis, and inference. The reason is simple: just as the Universe is one integrated Whole its study requires wholesomeness of tools and methods which only a Whole Mind can provide. My averment finds its echo in Albert Einstein’s quote, *“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.”* Be that as it may, among the innumerable ways and means of apprehending the universe with an insatiable urge to unravel its mystery, Religion and Science have pride of place in the midst of a ceaseless war of words between their proponents and followers.

Since I have identified the problem on the strength of my ongoing self-education I see the centuries-old conflict between Religion and Science as aimless shooting in the dark dungeon of minds that refuse illumination of any kind because it holds out threats to their self-assertions which spring from utter ignorance and inertia. My stress on this unfamiliar point must be highly provocative to those accustomed to the dubious luxury of their comfort zones. Thus, it is only by a queer quirk of fate that some soul somehow self-awakened trespasses into uncharted domains by the formidable force of the spirit of free enquiry. Statements that spring from such unexpected sources are accepted as axiomatic gems of human genius. Though unsuspected and unknown, this is an irony of far-reaching consequence to tell you that two of the most famous and universally acknowledged averments/findings are welcome guests in the territory of Science even when they come from those who belong to the enemy camp: Religion.

First, the “**Big Bang Theory**” that stands accepted as the leading explanation about how the universe began. At its simplest, it says the universe as we know it started with a small singularity, and then inflated over the next 13.8 billion years to the cosmos that we know today. But it comes from Georges Lemaitre, (1894-1966), Belgian cosmologist, Catholic priest. Scientists hail him as the Father of the Big Bang Theory, because he has convincingly explained that the expansion of the observable Universe began with the explosion of a single particle at a definite point in time.

The second is “**Genetics**”, the gift of Gregor Johann Mendel (1822-1884). Hailed as the “Father of Modern Genetics”, he was a meteorologist, mathematician, biologist, Augustinian friar and abbot of St. Thomas’ Abbey in Brno, Margraviate of Moravia. A friar is a brother and a member of one of the mendicant orders founded in the twelfth or thirteenth century. Through his receptive hosting of his resilient mind, and by the quirk of some phenomenon hard to pin down much less define, Religion and Science had a happy marriage in his being giving birth to an incredible discovery of **Genetics**. By instinct, we know well in the heart of hearts that Reason (*ratio*) can never be ultimately alien or antithetical to Faith (*fides*), for God, the Creator of the Universe, is *The Source* of everything animate and inanimate, including Reason and Faith. In this sense, a disproportionate overtaxing of the aims and abilities of human nature as the basis for all social, ethical, and political realities can and has led to “totalitarian systems which have been disastrous for humanity”. Yet the answer to these challenges is never a flight into the “feeling and experience” of unmitigated fideism, with no relationship to rational reflection. Religion and Science have their own intrinsic avidity to shake hands for an eternal camaraderie, the ongoing war of words between their vituperative votaries notwithstanding.

Apart from being a social animal, Man is an untiring tool-making animal. These tools are broadly of two types: power tools (motors) and shaping tools like chisels and hammers. It goes without saying that mental tools of a progressively higher efficiency and precision are warranted as much in their invention and manufacture as in their illimitable uses. I have identified them as four human faculties, namely, Reason, Emotion, Imagination, and Intuition. Reason engages in the process of drawing logical [not sentimental] inferences. Emotion is one of the three groups of the phenomena of the mind—feeling, distinguished from cognition, and will. Imagination is the faculty of forming images in the mind. Intuition immediately perceives the truth of things without reasoning or analysis. You study the working of these four faculties in four major fields of human endeavour: the Humanities [thinks], Art [expresses], Science [explores/discover], and Technology [invents both processes and products]. Furthermore, their working is made precise and efficient by an applied use of Theory, Practice, Research, and Pedagogy.

To my knowledge and experience, unless you are *convinced* of their existence in the first place, you would not put your heart and soul in using them to your best advantage. In fact, life is not possible without ultimate convictions. *Even the sceptic is convinced that everything is doubtful.* Needless to say that tools required in

different fields have different category names. For example, farmer's tools are called implements; the tools of architects, doctors, engineers, et al, are known as instruments; the tools of a carpenter and a mason go by the name of tools, and tools for fighting and killing are named weapons. Historically, the weapon was an "engine" and its maker an "engine-er". This word gradually got transformed into its current form, "engineer". No wonder that the branch of engineering called "Civil Engineering" came into existence only in the mid-19th century. Earlier, it was only "Military Engineering"—an occupation best suited to the dubious activities of the Dark Ages, of killing and conquering.

In the light of the foregoing exposition, it may be acceded that whatever else they are able to achieve Religion and Science are two major tools of apprehending the Universe which in India was classified centuries ago into two categories: the Inner World of Mind, and the Outer World of Matter. These two are respectively referred to as the Subjective World and the Objective World. Based on the assumption, not yet refuted, human life consists of Body, Mind, and Soul. In scientific parlance, I look upon Mind as the software [socio-cultural artefact] of the human computer with its hardware which is the Brain [genetic endowment]. Mind is a mediator between the Body and Soul. Brain's primary tool is Consciousness. If inclined towards the Body it is worldly, and ruled by the goal of success, and craves creature comforts that only Science can provide. Mind's leaning towards the Soul introduces it to Spirituality that would lead to eventual self-realisation made possible by Religion.

The Mind's perennial struggle between Pleasure [Bodily] and Peace [Mental] weaves the warp and woof of what the ancient Indians had named *Lila* [Divine Sport] brought into play by God as the Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer of the Universe. According to Guru Nanak, who founded the Sikh Faith on the strength of his Revelation, God does it with the use of two tools: *Reza* [Will] and *Hukm* [Edict-Fiat]. Scholars of all genres mistake the two as synonymous, which the two words certainly are not. *Reza* is Persian [Iranian], and *Hukm* is Arabic. Will is inscrutable in an absolute sense. *Hukm* can be deciphered in its working in Nature in a limited way because it is the operative principle of God's *Reza*. Guru Nanak has adopted the Arabic word 'Qudrat' for Nature which literally means God's manifest might. Ironically, Science accepts Nature but denies the existence of its owner: God. Guru Nanak's Hallowed Holism is the divine prescription. It flows from Creative Mysticism into Pragmatic Spirituality. His exhortation is: Earn thy livelihood by the sweat of thy brow; share your earnings with the poor; and meditate on the Holy Name. And by God's grace you will attain *Sahj*—a state of unconditioned spontaneity—in which your Body, Mind, and Soul are in perfect alignment, and your thoughts, words, and deeds engage in socially-beneficent activities as a habit of the mind, in a long stillness of prayer and thanksgiving to Our Creator, the Almighty Father.

To my understanding, the conflict between Religion and Science and their irresolvable contradictions occurs at this point. Scientist accepts Nature as the chief Resource for exploring and understanding everything possible about the Universe. Religion beckons everyone to the unknown beyond the reach of Science. The problem at the bottom is between Emotion and Reason, and neither the followers of Religion nor the proponents of Science are willing to study at firsthand the potentialities of the opponent's discipline that they doggedly abhor. Rather than make bold to step forward to find out they prefer to stick to their guns in mutual hatred borne out of FEAR of their fiercely guarded citadels. Therefore, I interpret this curious position like this: *Religion does not open out to avoid embarrassment just in case Science calls the bluff and it loses its followers. In this sense, its diffidence and self-guard is irreligious. On the other hand, Science calling all sorts of names the people's beliefs without personal study, analysis, and assessment is downright unscientific by its own objective norms and measures.* Added to this quandary is the problem of lack of evidence and proof in carrying the day against the perceived enemy.

By its very nature and scope, **Religion** based on faith is associated with the Inner World whose worth can be validated only by **Experience** that narrowly belongs to an individual human person. In sharp



contradistinction, **Science** deals with the Outer World by observation, hypothesis, measurements, and lab **Experiment** whose success makes it universal and accessible to all human beings. The patent perceptions of the two are made tedious by an utter imbalance in the use of requisite tools that their proponents do not even notice. For example, Religion's exclusive use of Emotion is as precariously out of balance as that of Science which makes a sole use of Reason. Why, because the other three faculties of Emotion, Imagination, and Intuition are left out as either irrelevant or unnecessary. This conundrum has been brought to light by the landmark discovery of Roger Sperry who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1981 for his research leading to the defining of two independent cerebral functions of the human brain as Left Hemisphere [Reason] and Right J Hemisphere [Emotion]. I doubt whether all Scientists know about this remarkable discovery, much less use it to sharpen their wits and **upgrade** their mental tools. Inherent in this averment of mine is the inescapable embarrassment that both sides do not know the limitations of their chief tools. The limitation of Emotion is that it cannot explain the use of centrifugal force for primary drying in the washing machine is rational, scientific, and far more efficient than squeezing the washed laundry for achieving the same goal. Reason is handicapped in explaining how a newborn baby remains the only survivor when a bus falls into a ravine and rescue had taken place 24 hours later, the claims of scientists that Reason is superior to Emotion notwithstanding.

Isaac Newton seems to have had the last word in underscoring the limitations of Reason in this quote: *Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who sets the planets in motion.* Another quote of his comes in handy to put off those who ask questions only for the sake of asking questions much in the manner of a child who does so question after question in utmost nonchalance without bothering for the answer to any of them: *I can calculate the motion of heavenly bodies but not the madness of people.* Albert Einstein's quote echoes my wayward averment that you need to be musical in order to understand the Universe. He says, *If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.* The fact that he holds Imagination to be superior to Knowledge means that he is eager to underscore the indispensable need to use faculties other than Reason in a sensible apprehension of the Universe.

Historians call the idea 'warfare thesis'. This conflict thesis is a historiographical approach in the history of Science that originated in the 19th century with John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White which maintain that there is an intrinsic intellectual conflict between **Religion** and **Science** and that it inevitably leads to hostility. It portrays an inevitable conflict between Religion and Science despite the widespread though unexamined notion which forms the basis for a majority of scientists and believers that Science and Religion can live in harmony. Taking as its starting point the most famous of all such conflicts, the **Galileo** Affair, the 'warfare thesis' argues that religious and scientific communities exhibit very different attitudes to knowledge. Scripturally-based religions not only claim a source of knowledge distinct from human Reason but are also bound by tradition, insist upon the certainty of their beliefs, and are resistant to radical criticism in ways in which Science claim an open-minded enquiry. If traditionally-minded believers perceive a clash between what their Faith tells them and the findings of modern Science, they may as well do what the Church authorities did in Galileo's time. They may attempt to close down the Science, insisting that the authority of God's Word trumps that of any 'merely human' knowledge. In such inevitability, it is incumbent upon those of us who value Science to keep an eternal vigil to ensure that such a mishap does not occur. This perennial exigency also puts an unavoidable responsibility on those whose lives are guided by the Gospel Truth of Scriptural prescriptions and doctrinal exhortations.

Roger Bacon, who is often credited with formalizing the scientific method, was a Franciscan friar. A friar is a brother and a member of one of the mendicant orders founded in the twelfth or thirteenth century; the term distinguishes the mendicants itinerant apostolic character, exercised broadly under the jurisdiction of a superior general, from the older monastic orders' allegiance to a single monastery formalized by their vow of stability. The most significant orders of friars are the Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians, and Carmelites.

To my understanding derived from lifelong auto-didacticism spread over 55 disciplines, this is a patent conflict between Emotion and Reason. It springs from ignorance made tedious by the closed-mindedness of the followers of Religion and the arrogant proponents of Science. The irony is that this supercilious ignorance has preserved through millions of years since the advent of *Homo sapiens* species on planet earth what I call the 'Original Fear' inherited by human beings. It is akin to Christianity's 'Original Sin' that reveals the tendency to evil supposedly innate in all human beings, held to be inherited from Adam in consequence of the Fall. The concept of Original Sin was established by the writings of St Augustine in Christian Theology. Be that as it may, it is now well known and widely accepted without arguments and counter-arguments that humans evolving from the apes had to perforce live in the jungles that had an everlasting inhospitable environment by which our remote ancestors were permanently kept on their toes just to survive anyhow. This is not a thesis but a well-established living reality that to begin with our ancestors were hunters who lived on the precarious edge of life that showed no signs of surviving until the following morning.

Sigmund Freud [1856-1939], the Father of Modern Psychology, has stated the problem most succinctly by using only two terms, namely, *Libido* and *Mortido*. Libido is aspiration for creativity and art or merely the desire to live. But everything that moves is restricted and cannot be endless. Mortido is the power restricting Libido; it is aspiration for death or aspiration for endless life out of the bounds of the mortal Body. Throughout his life, man suffers these formidable powers in an inner warfare. The ongoing fight between the two, alternatively, called by Freud the Life Wish and the Death Wish, reinforces the **Original Fear** inherited from the inhospitable environment of the jungles. Ironically, despite the awesome developments made by Science [and Technology], there is no invention in sight that can extirpate this persistent malady from the human psyche—the FEAR of Death. The persistence of the Original Fear through the chequered course of human history has made it a Universal Emotion.

As we can see in retrospect, our ancestors taking to agriculture to lead a settled life **free from fear** began by marking and safeguarding their little communities against other little communities which though human too were perceived to be a potential threat to their own survival. Therefore, while man began as a social animal, he soon started developing tools for his survival through agricultural as well as tools to ensure safety and security to wage a war in defence against the intruders' attacks. This fear is so deeply ingrained in the human psyche that it has become second nature of all and sundry, including the high and mighty. The recent example is that of Donald Trump, the president of the world's only superpower, who dreaded Kim Jong-Un, dictator of a much smaller nation, North Korea. The latter said publicly that America was his country's biggest enemy. The result was that Trump had to go to meet Kim in a first in-person meeting in 66 years at the border since the two nations had signed the truce over the Korean War in 1953. It goes without saying that because there is FEAR there is threat perception from a virtual enemy who can become real if left unguarded. From this potential menace spring notions of dislike, hatred, and animosity regardless of the 'scientific' fact that all peoples inhabiting the globe belong to the same *Homo sapiens* species. This is a clear though unacknowledged case of Emotion overpowering Reason. The resulting unfounded worry has no solution in Science despite the fact that we have Psychology as the Science of Mind and behaviour that includes the study of conscious and



unconscious phenomena, as well as feeling and thought. **Take me seriously for my word when I say assert that psychologists and psychiatrists themselves are nursing a fear of losing their livelihood if there were not enough mental patients!**

Ironically, **Guru Nanak** [1469-1539], the greatest and the only Prophet of the World with ‘scientific temper’, has stated the problem with unmatched succinctness in *Mool Mantra* of Japuji that is the primary statement of his Revelation which draws its sacrosanct material directly from *The Source*: Lord God. He attaches the Numeral ‘One’ before ‘Oankar’ [Punjabi word for the Lord, embodying the three functions of creation, sustenance, and destruction] which God performs all by Himself. Guru Nanak goes on to proclaim that Truth is the Primary Attribute of God, which means that He exists *actually*, not as a figment of imagination. Then, he names His other attributes: Primal Person who is the Creator; followed by His most important trait—Without Fear, followed by ‘Without Animosity’, thereby underscoring the little-known truth that nobody could be free from enmity unless he is *free* from FEAR, in the first place. But since FEAR is a universal Emotion, it follows that Animosity among peoples of the world is universal, too.

The never-ending acrimonious debate between votaries of **Creationism** and **Evolutionism** typifies the Fear that I have briefly dilated upon. Creationism is the belief that the universe and living organisms originate from specific acts of divine creation, as in the biblical account, rather than by natural processes such as evolution. Evolutionism is a term used to denote the Theory of Evolution. Revelation, in my definition, is psycho-spiritual MUTATION [not a slow gain of evolution] leading to an instant psycho-spiritual illumination. In Biology, mutation is the cause of changes in the genetic sequence and creates diversity among organisms. Though both sides are to blame, I would attribute more blame to the Scientists because they are supposed to be the exclusive practitioners of Rationality. My reason is that there can never be any Evolution if there were no Creation, although how creation had occurred in the first place is a debatable issue.

Bhagat Kabir [1440-1518], a weaver by caste and calling, had stated six centuries ago what Science now seems to accept as true. His 292 *shabads* [hymns] are included in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. It echoes a crucial statement recorded in the Bible: *Let there be light* (Genesis 1:3) which shows God’s power and creativity during the creation. I have rendered Kabir’s *Shabad* into English verse:

God first created light, all creatures are therefore the siblings of Nature
 Having sprung up from one light the world imparts to them equal stature
 O creatures do not let doubt mislead you into delusion
 The Creator and His creation dwell everywhere as ONE
 It is the same clay that the Artist has fashioned in great diversity
 Nothing is wrong with any pot’s clay or with the Potter’s artistry
 The True Lord abides in everyone and by His command all events occur
 Discerning His edict-fiat and knowing the Lord man enjoys His favour
 Allah is invisible, He is ineffable; but the Guru has gifted me jaggery
 Saith Kabir, my doubt is gone; I have seen the Immaculate in divinity

According to the Taittiriya Upanishad that forms part of the Yajur Veda [one of the Four Vedas], the highest goal of human life is to know the Brahman, for that is truth. *Hindu* texts describe four *Yugas* (world ages) in a Yuga Cycle—*Krita* (*Satya*) Yuga, *Treta* Yuga, *Dwapara* Yuga, and *Kali* Yuga, a total duration of 43, 20,000

years out of which each Yuga is assigned a period, respectively, in the ratio of 4:3:2:1. To begin with, the Bull of *Dharma* has four legs which it loses progressively until in the Kali Yuga it stands most precariously on only one leg—hence the unceasing upheaval that you experience in the giddy tumble from novelty to novelty erroneously identified with progress. The four legs are named Austerity, Purity, Compassion, and Truthfulness. The word Dharma variously translates into Duty, Righteousness, etc. However, I have interpreted it as Cosmic Moral Law according to which Egotism destroys Compassion. Drugging destroys Austerity. Lust destroys Purity. Deceit destroys Truthfulness. Now that we humans are pitifully stationed in Kali Yuga what we call progress ushered in by Science is actually a total murder of the stated values proclaimed by Religion. In other words, what Religion once taught is all gone, and frivolous rituals upgraded by its continuators with an eye on cashing them in world markets are the dubious trenders and trend-setters. Their one-point agenda is to hold sway over the minds of all and sundry by the mesmeric mystique of rituals kept alive by untenable stories from ages long dead. Thus, the TV Gurus have a heyday and, with their ever-expanding real-estate acquisitions, they roll in luxuries undreamt of in previous eras. It is pertinent to state that with all the incredible creature comforts made available by Science worldwide, we at the level of the Body are living in Heaven while our minds are posited in Hell. An exact opposite of the current position once was when in the Satya Yuga the Body was in Hell the Mind was a citizen of Heaven.

It should be obvious that Science observes much greater AUSTERITY than the best self-avowed ascetic in Indian religious history in keeping at bay sentiment that easily gets tainted in attachment to the values flouted and fouled by humans themselves. Values, therefore, belong to the jurisdiction of Religion, their creator and sustainer. Ironically, however, even though the Scientists view with undiminished disdain the teeming millions who happen to be staunch believers of many different faiths, their own first names are drawn from religious dictionaries. Isaac and Albert, for example, respectively, mean “He laughs/will laugh” and “Noble and bright”. Be that as it may, it requires no debate to settle the moot point that without Science the basic needs of the Body cannot be fulfilled; food, clothing, and shelter [and innumerable other desires], and all these are developed and made available in the Outer World of Matter. Their counterparts such as hunger for truth, craving for immortality, acquisition of self-realisation, etc. can be met only from within the Mind, the Subjective or Inner World. Interestingly, because the Soul cannot do without the Body in furthering its spiritual interests Gurbani [Word of God] calls it rare vesture. From this position it should be easy to see the interdependence of Religion and Science, their apparent animosity perpetuated by their mindless practitioners notwithstanding. Inherent in this relationship are two opposed though complementary dimensions of the same Reality: *Religion deals with the Immeasurable and Science with the Measurable made known to humans through Experience and Experiment, respectively.*

Before closing this ‘outlandish’ note, I want to share two things I have named (1) Religious Profanity, and (2) Scientific Fallacy. **Religious Profanity** consists in the insistence of the leaders of the faith that their followers abandon Reason in order to mindlessly engage in rituals and maintain unexamined belief in mythology that remove real-life problems from the scene to make their job easy to sustain and exercise control over the gullible masses to their exclusive advantage. **Scientific Fallacy** has its roots in the contradictions that Scientists knowingly or unknowingly nurture and perpetuate despite the fact their ancestors had at their lives’ risk freed the discovered truth from the capricious clutches of the Church centuries ago. Ptolemy’s concept of geocentric universe was taken over by Copernicus’ and Galileo’s findings to the contrary. However, the worldwide use of the silly terms ‘sunrise, sunset, sun path’ persists with dogged tenacity. Everyone knows, and it is taught in schools from primary classes onwards, that day and night are formed by the rotation of the earth around its own axis while the sun remains [or is assumed to be] stationary. Even more fraudulent is the concept of **Four Human Races** that contradicts Science’s own original findings that the *Homo sapiens* species first appeared



on the African continent from where humans migrated to places all over the globe. Through the course of the millennia the climate and environment of their adopted habitat had its inexorable effect and the inhabitants' persona changed in skin colour, stature, and features. *Scientists unwittingly categorised them into Caucasian/White, Mongoloid/Asian, Negroid/Black, and Australoid.*

There is a need to examine and know the limitation of the four human faculties. However fertile Imagination you may have you cannot use it to visualise that God, Creator of the Universe, could exist beyond or without *Time-Space Continuum*. By the same token, the best of Hollywood filmmakers cannot think up characters without the use of human form and features, and they helplessly achieve their aim by a ludicrous distortion of the form and features, and call the resulting weird shape ALIEN. According to **Dialectical Materialism**, Intuition is the daughter of information. The more information you have gathered and the more efficiently you readily use it will enhance your Intuition manifold. Dialectic Materialism is a philosophical approach to reality derived from the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For Marx and Engels, materialism meant that the material world, perceptible to the senses, has objective reality independent of mind or spirit.

To conclude this essay, permit me to share with you my somewhat idiosyncratic definitions of Religion and Science, followed by a Sonnet on the Mysteries of the Universe

RELIGION = Rigorous Empathy created by Love to Inspire in the Guts Inward Odyssey for realising Noumena

- RELIGION = Reason, Empathy, and Love whereby an Individual Grants Individuality to Others Naturally
- RELIGION = Realisation that, in Effect, Love Is God's Identity and Omnipresent Noumenon
- SCIENTIST = Searching Constantly for Inner evidence (i.e. principles) of the External world and its Natural working independent of Theological dogmas/doctrines or any individual's Insinuations for the sake of Self-evident Truth
- SCIENCE = Sensibility with Child's Inquisitiveness, Enthusiasm, and Native Concept-forming Expertise
- SCIENCE = Sense and Curiosity Investigating and Evaluating everything Natural, Commonplace, and Extraordinary

MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE CAN BE UNKNIT, BUT NOT GOD'S SECRETS

Mysteries of the universe can be unknit, but not God's secrets
 Science accomplishes the former task with manmade tools
 But a Scientist attempting the latter has eventual regrets
 From the failure of Theories, and bankruptcy of Schools
 The knowable cannot remain a secret to the Mind for long
 Though as soon as it becomes known it loses all charm
 Such knowledge is limited to the facts of right and wrong
 And the good it carries also embodies a sure harm
Dharma makes the Mind a-thirst for the Knowledge of God
 In which each step of knowing makes ever-increasing Bliss
 By it is fuelled one's search against Life's many an odd
 For, one's convinced by experience: there's nothing like this
 But his inability to grasp God's secrets makes Man wonder
 As his Bliss deepens evermore in joyous self-surrender





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Does Consciousness Exist Outside of the Brain?

Is consciousness actually a property of the universe like gravity or light?

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Source: Benjavis Ruangvaree Art/Shutterstock

The prevailing consensus in neuroscience is that consciousness is an emergent property of the brain and its metabolism. When the brain dies, the mind and consciousness of the being to whom that brain belonged ceases to exist. In other words, without a brain there can be no consciousness.

But according to the decades-long research of Dr Peter Fenwick, a highly regarded neuro-psychiatrist who has been studying the human brain, consciousness, and the phenomenon of near-death experience (NDE) for 50 years, this view is incorrect. Despite initially being highly incredulous of NDEs and related phenomena, Fenwick now believes his extensive research suggests that consciousness persists after death. In fact, Fenwick believes that consciousness actually exists independently and outside of the brain as an inherent property of the universe itself like dark matter and dark energy or gravity.

Hence, in Fenwick's view, the brain does not create or produce consciousness; rather, it filters it. As odd as this idea might seem at first, there are some analogies that bring the concept into sharper focus. For example, the eye filters and interprets only a very small sliver of the electromagnetic spectrum and the ear registers only a narrow range of sonic frequencies. Similarly, according to Fenwick, the brain filters and perceives only a tiny part of the cosmos' intrinsic "consciousness."

Indeed, the eye can see only the wavelengths of electromagnetic energy that correspond to visible light. But the entire EM spectrum is vast and extends from extremely low energy, long wavelength radio waves to incredibly energetic and ultra-short-wavelength gamma rays. So, while we can't actually "see" much of the EM spectrum, we know things like X-rays, infrared radiation, and microwaves exist because we have instruments for detecting them.

Similarly, our ears can register only a narrow range of sonic frequencies but we know a huge amount of others imperceptible to the human ear exist nevertheless.

When the eye dies, the electromagnetic spectrum does not vanish or cease to be; it's just that the eye is no longer viable and therefore can no longer filter, be stimulated by, and react to light energy. But the energy it previously interacted with remains nonetheless. And so too when the ear dies, or stops transducing sound waves, the energies that the living ear normally respond to still exist. According to Fenwick, so it is with consciousness. Just because the organ that filters, perceives, and interprets it dies does not mean the phenomenon itself ceases to exist. It only ceases to be in the now-dead brain but continues to exist independently of the brain as an external property of the universe itself.

What's more, according to Fenwick, our consciousness tricks us into perceiving a false duality of self and other when in fact there is only unity. We are not separate from other aspects of the universe but an integral and inextricable part of them. And when we die, we transcend the human experience of consciousness, and its illusion of duality, and merge with the universe's entire and unified property of consciousness. So, ironically, only in death can we be fully conscious. (Emphasis added)

This is not to be taken as joining God or a creator because the cosmic consciousness that Fenwick describes did not create the universe but is simply a property of it. Obviously, despite his impressive body of research into this subject, there is no current way to empirically establish the validity of Fenwick's cosmic consciousness hypothesis. Ultimately, it aligns more with faith than science. Thus it seems the answer to the question in this post's title is "No." There is no empirically established explanatory framework for understanding how consciousness can exist independently and outside of the brain.

Recall the old riddle, "If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, does it still make a sound?" Well, it seems the answer is "No." Because sound is the conscious perception of sonic or acoustic stimuli that requires a sense organ to experience. Without an ear to hear and a brain to interpret the stimulation there will be only molecular vibrations but no sound, per se. In the same vein, all of the energies and biophysical phenomena that the brain experiences as consciousness do indeed exist independently and outside of the brain (e.g., physics, chemistry and quantum events). But the wondrous experience of consciousness itself seems to require a brain to give rise to it and a brain-based mind to perceive it.

Remember: Think well, Act well, Feel well, Be well!



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Baba Sri Chand

[1494-1643 CE]

Baba Sri Chand was the elder son of Guru Nanak Dev. Sri Chand had a reputation of saintliness, and was respected and liked by one and all. Bibi Nanaki, elder sister of the Guru, adopted him and brought him up as her son. He grew up to be a renunciative Yogi, and founded the still-surviving Udasi Sect. He was a Baal Jogeeshwar who lived to be 149 years old, but always looked like a young boy of 12. He was one of the world's greatest acknowledged Yogis. Sri Chand had mastered the techniques of *Yoga* at a very young age. According to United Nations' declaration, June 21 has since been celebrated as World Yoga Day.

Baba Sri Chand remained devoted to his father, and established the Udasi order. He travelled far and wide and spread awareness of Guru Nanak's divine message. He was held in high esteem by the successor Sikh Gurus. Baba Mohan, the eldest son of Guru Amar Das and the person who is best known as the custodian of Guru Sahib's *Pothis* (*Shabads* or hymns in manuscript form) from which Guru Arjun Dev compiled *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, also became a recluse, possibly influenced by Sri Chand.

Since Guru Nanak had chosen Bhai Lehna as his worthy successor, an impression has since been created that his approach to religion, diagonally opposed as it was to his father's, Baba Sri Chand preferred to stay away from the Sikh Faith in protest. This is far from true. The choice was determined by the signal fact that Guru Nanak was promoting a householder's life as a fit means of God-realisation whereas his son's chosen lifestyle was one of renunciation that commended strict aloofness from the trials and tribulations of workaday existence.



When Guru Nanak chose Guru Angad Dev as his successor, Baba Sri Chand got angry at his decision. To this, the Founder of the Sikh Faith asked Baba Sri Chand to start his own path as an Udasi Guru because his ways were different from those of Sikhi. However, years later he realised his unsuitability, he paid a visit to the presiding Fourth Master Guru Ram Das who instantly won him over by his disarming humility. Baba Sri Chand stayed on at Pakkhole Randhawe with retinue of disciples who like him had shunned the householder's life in favour of practising austerities and asceticism.

When Baba Sri Chand called on Guru Ram Das he was shocked because with his yogic gaze he saw his father in the Fourth Master of the Sikh Faith. He spontaneously proclaimed, "You are the image of my father ... you have the light of my father, but your beard is much longer than his! Why are you sporting such a long beard?" In utter humility, Guru Ram Das answered, "I have grown my beard long so that I can wipe the dust off the feet of the saints like you," and he *actually* bent over to rub it over Sri Chand's feet. Taken by surprise, Sri Chand jumped back and confessed, "Even after so many years of 'tap' (penance and severe austerities) I haven't been able to achieve this grace and humility. I have never seen such humility before. You are the blessed soul adorning the throne of Guru Nanak. You are the King of Yoga!"

After Guru Nanak left Nankana Sahib, however, Sri Chand stayed back in Dera Baba Nanak and maintained the Guru's temple. Subsequently, having established the Udasi Order, he travelled far and wide to spread the Sikh Faith. With his disciples Baba Sri Chand travelled throughout the length and breadth of India, initiating many as Udasin (literally, indifferent, stoic) sect who functioned as itinerant teachers and established missionary centres at different places in the country and beyond.

Through these *Udasins* (literally, disenchanted by the ways of the world) Guru Nanak's word was spread on the length and breadth of the land. Baba Sri Chand's own main centre was at Barath, eight kilometres southwest of Pathankot in Gurdaspur district of Punjab State. However, he kept lifelong contact with the Gurus succeeding his father, all of whom held him in high esteem.

In 1626, when Guru Har Gobind proceeded to found the town of Kiratpur in the lower Shivalik Hills, he had the prescribed ceremony performed by Baba Sri Chand.

In deference for Baba Sri Chand's desire, the Sixth Master Guru Har Gobind gave his son Baba Gurditta to him for adoption. After his death at the age of 149, Baba Gurditta succeeded Baba Sri Chand as Head of the Udasi Order. The Udasin lovingly protected and maintained the historical shrines of Anandpur, Hazoor Sahib, and Amritsar for over a hundred years after Guru Gobind Singh's demise. They established schools of learning to nurture and spread the Sikh Faith. Centres of Sikh Pilgrimage established by Baba Sri Chand in Afghanistan and Iraq were not called *Gurdwaras*; they were known as *Dharamsaals* named after him. Incidentally, the word '*Dharamsaal*' was coined by Guru Nanak to replace the until-then-prevalent name '*Ramasaal*' to impart to it a universal connotation. Ever since that time, the word has been in common usage to mean a public rest-house or shelter in the Indian subcontinent. Just as *Sarais* or inns are for travellers and caravans, *Dharamsaals* are built for pilgrims travelling to pilgrimage sites.



Bhai Ghanaiya (1648 - 1718 CE)

Forerunner of Red Cross

Bhai Ghanaiya was born in a Dhamman Khatri family of Sodara near Wazirabad in Sialkot district (now in Pakistan) and his father was a wealthy trader. The village was named *Sau-Dara* as it was said to have 100 doors and pathways leading to it. He was the Ninth Master Guru Tegh Bahadar's Sikh who founded Sewapanthi of the Sikhs (Order of the Brothers).

From a very young age Bhai Ghanaiya had compassion and a desire to help others. He used to keep coins in his pocket so he could give them to anyone he saw who was in an unfortunate position. The locals were astonished at the compassion and thoughtful nature of someone so young. As he grew a little older he began to help the poor in other ways. He would wait on the paths of the village and on sighting a poor person carrying a heavy load would offer to carry it for him for a few miles. He would do this every day, carry the heavy weight poor people were forced to carry on their heads for many miles back and forth from the village. When Bhai Ghanaiya's mother found out she was worried that people would think poorly of a rich trader's son doing such menial labor. But Bhai Ghanaiya was adamant, insisting that he was unable to see the others' suffering and would do anything in his power to alleviate some of their hardships even for a few hours. After his father's death, Bhai Ghanaiya took over the family business. While trading one day he came across Bhai Nanua, a devotee of Guru Tegh Bahadar. Bhai Nanua was a loving Sikh who woke at the prescribed ambrosial hour daily to recite *Gurbani*. One morning Bhai Ghanaiya sat with Nanua and was captivated with the *Shabads* that he heard him recite, nay, his

soul was stirred to the point of mulling the reality of death and importance of *Naam Simran*. Although he had carried out many good deeds he realized that he had missed the meaning and purpose of life that he could grasp only by God-remembrance as *Gurbani* taught.

When Bhai Ghanaiya asked Bhai Nanua to let him know the Mantra of the world he directed him to visit Guru Tegh Bahadar, following which he immediately left. His quest ended when he met the Ninth Master and received initiation as a Sikh at his hands. Thenceforth he stayed there and continued to serve the *Sangat* as the designated water carrier for every need. He also looked after the Guru's horses as a syce for stable. While he was grooming the horses one day, Guru Tegh Bahadar visited Bhai Ghanaiya and blessed him that his future lifelong job would be the service of humanity. Ghanaiya established a Dharmshala at Kavha village in the present Attock district of Pakistan which he eventually turned into a preaching centre.

His special mission was selfless service of humanity with no distinction of nationality, caste or creed. In 1704/5, he was on a visit to Anandpur Sahib when the city was attacked by a joint force of Hill Rajas' troops and their Mughal allies.

During the frequent sallies and skirmishes between the Sikhs and the enemy around Anandpur Sahib, Bhai Ghanaiya with his *mashk* (Persian for leather bag for carrying water) was regularly seen serving water to quench the thirst of the dying and the wounded soldiers.

He did this unprecedented selfless service with love and devotion without any discrimination, giving water to friends and foes alike. His acts of compassion stirred up stern criticism amongst his fellow Sikhs, and they complained to Guru Gobind Singh, pointing out that Bhai Ghanaiya was serving water to the fallen Hindu and Mughal attackers.

They were especially annoyed because the city had been surrounded; stopping the supply of food and water, and here was Bhai Ghanaiya sharing what little water they had in store. They had tried to stop him many times, but Bhai Ghanaiya would not pay them any heed.

The Guru summoned Bhai Ghanaiya to explain his benevolent actions on the battlefield.

He said, "*These brave Sikhs are saying that you go and serve water to the enemy and they recover soon to fight back- Is this true?*"

Bhai Ghanaiya humbly replied "*Yes, my Guru, what they say is true. But Maharaj, I saw no Mughal or Sikh on the battlefield. I only saw human beings. And, ... Guru Ji, ... They all have the spirit of the selfsame God - Guru Ji, have you not taught us to treat all God's people without discrimination?*"

The Guru was very pleased with the reply, and affirmed that Bhai Ghanaiya had fully and correctly grasped the profundity of the divine message, and smiling blessed Bhai Ghanaiya. He declared, "*Bhai Ghanaiya, you are absolutely right, you have imbibed the true spirit of Gurbani.*" He then told the Sikhs who had complained that Bhai Ghanaiya had understood the deeper message of the Gurus' teachings correctly and that they all would have to strive to learn such lessons from the priceless words of *Gurbani*.

Guru Gobind Singh then also gave Bhai Ghanaiya some medicinal balm and said, "*From now on, you should also put this balm on the wounds of all who need it.*"

Then, turning to the *Sangat*, the Tenth Master said, "*Sadh Sangat, Bhai Ghanaiya is a God-fearing saintly soul. His impartial and non-biased behaviour towards others has led him to achieve Sahj-Avastha. Let him carry on with his mission. Many more will follow in his footsteps in the years to come and keep the tradition of Nishkam Sewa alive.*"

To have respect for every human person is a fundamental pillar of the Sikh Faith and a strong message reaffirmed and advanced by Guru Gobind Singh.



Bhai Ghanaiya died in 1718 CE while listening to *Asa Di Vaar*. Before leaving the mortal world, he established a Dharamsaal that provided water, food, and shelter to those who were less fortunate. He started a trade of rope-making so they could use this income to run the Dharamsaal without relying on the donations of others.

His example, as a forerunner of the present-day Red Cross, is a tribute to the universal message of compassion and kindness to all. While the world hails Henry Dunant as the first humanitarian at the service for the care of war victims, the Sikh Faith produced Bhai Ghanaiya, more than 100 years before the inception of the Red Cross. In 1901, Dunant was awarded the first-ever Nobel Peace Prize for his role in founding the International Red Cross Movement and initiating the Geneva Convention.

Ironically, no one in India knows about Bhai Ghanaiya, not even all the Sikhs. However, his example stands in no need of any awards and honours; only sincerest emulation, and widespread practical application for the sake of Humankind!





BHAI NAND LAL GOYA

Born at Ghazni in Afghanistan in 1643, Bhai Nand Lal Goya was an outstanding Persian and Arabic scholar who wrote poetry in both these languages that could be classed as truly mystical. He moved to the city of Multan after losing his parents at 19. Impressed with his scholastic talents and personality, the Nawab of Multan appointed him as his 'Mir Munshi' (Revenue Officer). At the age of 45, Nand Lal left the service and set out in pursuit of peace. At last he reached Anandpur Sahib where he wanted to test Guru Gobind Singh before accepting him as his master. He rented a small house and started living quietly in it and made up his mind that he would go to the Guru only when he beckoned him. When the Guru did not call him for some time Nand Lal became very restless. He recorded his disquiet and unease in the following verse

*“How long shall I patiently wait?
My heart is restless for a vision of thee,
My tearful eyes, says Goya,
Have become flooding streams of love
Flowing in a passionate affection towards thee.”*
(Bhai Nand Lal – Translation from the Internet)

At last when called, Nand Lal had a holy vision of the Guru seated in a trance with his eyes closed. On this encounter he burst into verse to express his wonderment:

*“My life and faith are held in bondage,
By His sweet and angelic face;
The glory of Heaven and earth,
Is hardly worth,
A hair of His golden looks.
O! How can I bear the light,
Shed by the piercing glance of His love,
To ennoble and enlighten life,
A glimpse of the Beloved is enough.”*

(Bhai Nand Lal – Translation from the Internet)



After a short while the Master opened his eyes and smiled as he looked towards Nand Lal. By mere opening of his eyes, he enabled Nand Lal to see the Divine. His one glance of Grace opened the spiritual eye of Nand Lal who bowed down, saying, “Lord, my doubts are dispelled. I have experienced the Truth. The doors of my heart are opened and I have attained peace.”



Thereafter, Nand Lal (Left) continued to live at Anandpur Sahib in the service of the Tenth Master. One day the Guru commanded him, “You left your home and renounced the world; such a renunciation is not acceptable to me. Go back and live in the world, work for your living and serve the humanity; but remain unattached to Maya (Mammonism), keeping God alive

in your mind.” Nand Lal asked, “Whither shall I go, O Master?” The Guru replied, “To whichever direction your feet carry thee.”

Bhai Nand Lal bowed and left Anandpur Sahib, and after a few days he reached Agra, the city of Taj Mahal where Prince Bahadur Shah Zafar was holding his court in which there were poets, scholars, and artists patronized by the prince. Nand Lal was soon recognized at Agra as a great scholar which earned him a high office and emoluments from the prince. It is said that Emperor Aurangzeb had to send a letter to the King of Persia and Nand Lal’s draft of that letter was deemed as the most suitable. Upon this Aurangzeb sent for Nand Lal and after an interview he remarked to his courtiers that it was a pity that such a learned man should remain a non-Muslim. Aurangzeb told Prince Bahadur Shah to convert Nand Lal to Islam by persuasion, if possible; otherwise, by force. This news leaked out, and Bhai Nand Lal with the help of Ghiasuddin, his Muslim admirer and follower, escaped from Agra one night, and fled to Anandpur Sahib, the only place where such refugees could find safe asylum under the divine umbrage of Guru Gobind Singh.

Enjoying the blissful life at the Master’s feet at Anandpur Sahib, Bhai Nand Lal then settled down to a routine of a devoted disciple. He presented to the Guru a Persian work called *Bandagi Nama* in praise of God, a title which the Guru changed to *Zindagi Nama*, or ‘Bestower of Life Eternal’. The following few extracts are from that work:

*“Both worlds, here and hereafter, are filled with God’s light;
the sun and moon are merely servants who hold His torches.*

.....
They that search for God are ever civil.

(Bhai Nand Lal – Translation from the Internet)

“The many Persian compositions of Bhai Nand Lal have been written to be recited, read aloud and studied. Like crystals, they sparkle with all the colours of the rainbow and each sentence contains worlds upon worlds of poetic treasures. As we hold these crystals in our hands, they capture us with their mystery. Transparent and clear they open doors to the wonder of inner spaces and longing for the beloved Satguru.

It is for this reason that Alexander Von Humbolt, who translated some of Bhai Nand Lal Goya’s works in “The Pilgrims Way” said that “Goya was among the Masters who could put in verse what he felt deep within, and like the entirety of his Self laid at the sacred feet of the great Guru, the Beloved. And no doubt, those who surrender the self, master the world.”



EXEMPLARY *SAHJDHAARI* SIKHS

I am giving examples which, from my personal knowledge and experience of interaction with them, corroborate my averments with a flourish of finality. They are the US-settled Bhai Dr Harbans Lal, and PL Kler who lives in Mohali (Punjab).

Dr Bhai Harbans Lal

This write-up is excerpted from Harpal Singh Buttar's article published in the July 2013 issue of *The Sikh Review*, that was brought out in celebration of Harbans Lal's vision and life-long community service.

Bhai Harbans Lal is known, and admired by scientists, interfaith organizations, and his Sikh community around the world.

As an academician, Dr Lal retired in the year 2000 as Professor and Chairman, Department of Pharmacology and Neuroscience, University of North Texas Health Science Center, Dallas, USA. In academic circles, he is known for his research in the areas of Behavioral Medicine, Substance Abuse, and on Prolongation of Healthy Life Span through Nutritional Interventions.



In 2005, a two-hour television interview with Dr Lal on his discoveries in the medical field was featured in the Archives of the American College of Neuro-psycho-pharmacology. Since his school days, Bhai Harbans Lal has been active in promotion of Sikh interests. In 1946, he was appointed as a Circle Organizer, and then inducted in the Executive Committee of the All India Sikh Students Federation, the organization that elected him as its national President in 1954. He was the Founder President of the All India Sahjdhaari Sikh Organization inaugurated in 1952 by Speaker of the Indian Parliament, Sardar Hukam Singh. The same year, Master Tara Singh honoured him with the presentation of a ceremonial Kirpan and asked him to serve as an adviser to Shiromani Akali Dal.

Masjid Imam W. Deen Muhammad awarded him “The Ummah Award” in recognition of lifelong contributions to foster interfaith understanding. Unity Day, USA, representing 14 faith groups, honored him with a Life Achievement Award for promoting unity among faiths in America.

Comment: Bhai Harbans Lal is a *Sahjdhaari* but as his many distinguished awards show he has been a super Sikh who has lived a life treading the Path of Righteousness as *Gurbani* exhorts. His transformation has been complete as reflected in personal, professional, and social life. He has been engaged in *Sewa* of far-reaching significance that has created a psycho-social ambience of good will, camaraderie, and proactive humaneness.

Those interested in knowing further details about Dr Lal’s laudable contribution can find a wealth of information on the Internet.

PL Kaler

PL Kler retired in 1996 as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests from Punjab Government service. His interest in *Gurbani* was awakened in 1972 and has since grown from strength to strength. To use a metaphor from the Sikh Scripture, Kler’s mind has been dyed in the colour and light of *Naam*. He has done over five hundred readings of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, a herculean task few among those who claim to be true Sikhs have ever performed. The crowning glory of this divine madness is that every year in the month of December he does the reading of the Holy Book and on the concluding day asks for the *Hukamnama* [Divine order from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*] after the ceremonial *Ardaas* [prescribed Prayer]. He prints the divine diktat on cards that he sends out to all and sundry as New Year greetings.

When I view his readings of the Holy Book with reference to my performance of having read it only once in my life taking four years to accomplish the sacred task I cannot help marvelling at his count. Another noteworthy feature of his devotion is what he displayed to my wonderment. On my request he delivered a lecture on *Trees in Sri Guru Granth Sahib* in the Monthly Interaction Programme of First Friday Forum, which I had founded in October 1999. Its purpose is to disseminate latest information on subjects of diverse societal interests deploying the voluntary service of experts from many different fields of human endeavour. They speak from personal experience, not from the book, on a pre-assigned subject in a jargon-free language that the laity can easily understand.

Kler surprised me by his comprehensive study of the subject from his repeated readings of the Holy Book. This was made possible by his expertise in arboriculture; he could understand from the varied names that the subject was trees. I can corroborate this averment from my own experience. I had long ago identified two *Shabads* from out of Guru Ravidas’ 40 that have found pride of place in the Sikh Bible. One is on Architecture, and the other on Town Planning. I could recognise these only because of my professional background as an

architect. A similar example comes from the case of Bachan Singh Bachan who is a brilliant geographer by profession, and has held the post of Secretary of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC). He has authored a remarkable book on the subject of *Ecology in Sri Guru Granth Sahib* on the strength of his authentic knowledge of the discipline of Geography..

The inference from these two cited cases is that in order to be a true Sikh [*Shishya* or Disciple of the *Shabda Guru*] it is, in essence, a matter of the inner life than the donning of religious symbols externally. In other words, a Sikh thinks, speaks, and acts like a soul inspired by God's Edict-Fiat as couched in the Holy Book. This distinguished state of mind he acquires by Sahj, unconditioned spontaneity, over long years of surrender of his 'Ego' [*Haumain*] to the Guru, *Shabda*, the Spiritual Preceptor. If this were not the case, the divine message that Guru Nanak had received in Revelation could never have been timeless and universal.





DEBATE BETWEEN SWAMI DAYANANDA AND GIANI DITT SINGH

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (12 February 1824 – 30 October 1883) was the founder of the Arya Samaj, a reform movement of the Vedic Dharma. As a philosopher and social leader he was the first to give the call for *Swaraj* as “India for Indians” in 1876, a call later taken up by Lokmanya Tilak. Denouncing the idolatry and ritualistic worship, he worked towards reviving Vedic ideologies.

Giani Ditt Singh was born on 21 April 1853 at village Kalaur in the district of Fatehgarh Sahib, the India State of Punjab. Having moved from one centre of learning to another, Ditt Singh acquired an in-depth knowledge to hold discussions with eminent religious scholars like Swami Dayanand ‘Saraswati’, and others. A sampler that urges introspection on the futility of such dubious debates is furnished here for the cool-headed grasp and gumption of the readers.

“Arya Samaj” established as an institution initially worked towards the removal of casteism and ritualism. This welcome initiative among the 19th-century Hindus was inspired by the tell-tale example of the Sikh Faith founded by Guru Nanak though as the wont of Brahmanical mind they do not acknowledge it. Ironically, however, they make sure to sell their authorship by public condemnation of precedent knowledge introduced in the sick Hindu society by the Sikh Gurus. The result was that the movement though started with a clarion call ended with a hopeless whimper,

managing about 30,000 followers who are largely huddled together in the area of its origin in Gujarat. Be that as it may, Giani Ditt Singh along with Bhai Jawahar Singh joined this movement the torch-bearer of which was Swami Dayanand. However, the Giani soon discovered that the Arya Samaj founder's belief in the supremacy of Vedas was overwhelming as was the similar assertion made by the Muslims regarding the Holy Quran.

The Swami did not believe in the existence of any other religion apart from Hinduism. As if that was not enough he extended his sick views into abusive commentary on the religions that, indeed, were there, have been there for centuries, and are still around with absolutely no signs of disappearing from the face of the globe. With characteristic Brahmanical arrogance and self-opinionation, he developed and disseminated a narrow parochial approach to the study of the multi-cultural and multi-religious societies of the world. Provoked by the popular psychopathic propaganda of the Hindu herald, Bhai Jawahar Singh and Giani Ditt Singh together planned to set things right—at least for the coming generations.

In 1877, during a religious gathering at Lahore, erstwhile capital of the Punjab State, Giani Ditt Singh visited Swami Dayanand along with Bhai Jawahar Singh “to know his mind and to know his ideals”. In the course of the discussions, a situation of questions and answers arose with Swami Dayanand on the receiving end. This historic dialogue though not known to many scholars is quoted below in the words of Giani Ditt Singh.

The questions were posed by Giani Ditt Singh and the answers were given Swami Dayanand Saraswati.

“Q: Who is the Creator of this universe?”

A: The Lord (*Ishwar* is Sanskrit word for Lord)

Q: Does the Lord create the universe from Himself or from something else?

A: How can the Lord create the universe from Himself? He is without form (*Nirakaar*). He creates the world from four atoms.

Q: Where from does the Lord bring these atoms?

A: The Lord joins the atoms floating in the sky and creates the universe.

Q: How many atoms help making this universe and how does the Lord create the universe around them? Can you explain—sequentially and systematically?

A: The atoms of earth, water, and air waft around freely in the air, and the Lord mixes them as required to create the universe, e.g., he creates earth from earth atoms, water from water atoms, fire from fire atoms, and air from air atoms.

Q: Did these four elements exist earlier than the Lord or were they created by the Lord?

A: How could the Lord who was non-existent create solid elements from His soul? The elements of these four atoms existed already; the Lord only united to create the universe.

Q: From your statement, the Lord appears to be like a mason who collects and joins bricks, sand, lime, and wood, etc., to make a house. He is not a creator of atoms but creator of a structure from these items? ... He is like a woman who cooks food from various items already available?”

A: These irreverent comments enraged Swami Dayanand. However, the dialogue continued but, at the end, he said angrily, “Go and tell him that you (Gyani Ditt Singh) have won and Swamiji has lost.”



This showed the shallowness of Swami Dayanand's knowledge. Gyani Ditt Singh held three such discussions with Swami Dayanand with the same results. The details of these discussions are available in his book *Sadhu Daya Nand Naal Mera Sambad* [My discussion with Swami Dayanand]. The Swami [conferred the honorific title of 'Saraswati'] stood exposed in all these discussions. By this unexpected victory, Giani Ditt Singh made a great impression on the congregation which instantly won him popularity and wide acceptability.

Being one of the founding members of the Singh Sabha of Lahore, Giani Ditt Singh made the Singh Sabha a forceful movement through his speeches and writings. As an educator, he not only helped in the setting up of Khalsa College, Amritsar, but also wrote textbooks for the students of the Sikh institution. Author of around 50 books, a major forum for his writing was the *Khalsa Akhbar* [Khalsa newspaper], in which he wrote on current issues. Giani Ditt Singh was an editor of this prominent Punjabi newspaper of the time.

Giani Ditt Singh wielded a powerful pen and was equally at home in prose as well as in verse. He wrote books and pamphlets on Sikh theology and history as well as on current polemics. He died at Lahore on 6 September 1901. The loss was mourned widely by the Sikhs.

A 15-member memorial committee was formed with Arjan Singh Bagarian as chairman. Notable memorials honouring his name were Giani Ditt Singh Khalsa Boarding House in Lahore and Bhai Ditt Singh Library opened at Sikh Kanya Mahavidyala Ferozepur by Bhai Takht Singh, one of his former students and a close friend. Giani Ditt Singh Memorial International Society, Chandigarh, is regularly organizing functions in his memory.

In the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, the society released a book, *'Bhai Ditt Singh Giani: Jeevan, Rachna Te Shakhshiat'* authored by Dr Karnail Singh Somal, who was also born in village Kalaur. Karnail Singh had through his work, more than 100 years after the death of Giani Ditt Singh, attempted to take the reader back into the latter-half of the 19th century to elucidate events and personalities that helped shape Giani Ditt Singh's way and view of life.





EPILOGUE

Guru Nanak Dev, in my assessment based on my comparative study of World Religions, is the Greatest Prophet so far, and the only one to have used Numeral 1 to represent the inviolable Sovereignty of Lord God. Inspired by this core idea, I make bold to interpret the meaning of the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* [SGGS], which is 1430, by using my knowledge of the mystic significance attached to each number in Numerology.

Number 1 is the *Sargun* [Manifest Immanence with multiple attributes] of Lord God; Zero represents His *Nirgun* state [Secret Unknowable Transcendence without attributes]. Interestingly, computers that have revolutionised technological advancement in the modern world operate using the binary language. They store data and perform calculations using only zeros and ones. A single binary digit can only represent True (1) or False (0) in Boolean Logic. However, multiple binary digits can be used to represent large numbers and perform complex functions. The word 'False' in this context can be interpreted to mean that for the scientist anything that cannot be accessed and deciphered does not either exist or is untrue.

Guru Nanak Dev has proclaimed with an un rebuttable lucidity that both God's Will [*Reza*] and His Edict-Fiat [*Hukm*] are inscrutable. Therefore, it stands to reason to believe that in His transcendence [Zero/Unmanifest State] He cannot be known because in such a case none other than Himself exists. The meaning assigned to Zero in the Computer Language should thus be read in this light.

Now, let us look at the significance of each Number that figures in the total 1430.

Number 1 represents the Sun. It stands for creativity, strong individuality, inventiveness, and positivity. Indeed, these are some of God's divine attributes.

Zero [0] is the only number that represents all that is, including all potential. Separation doesn't exist. Indication that separation is possible also does not exist. How very true of God's Uniqueness!

Number 4 [Uranus] is a no-nonsense number with a heads-down approach to life and work. It is extremely dependable and lends a great amount of stability to a person or situation. Number 4 is dedicated to advancement. These properties are clearly discernible in the universe and its functioning.

Number 3 [Jupiter] has a tendency to thrive in an upbeat and engaging atmosphere. Its energy is youthful and positive and it has an incredible zest for life. It dances from one enjoyable experience to the next, eager to interact with others along the way. The prized skill of the Number 3 is communication and it uses this talent to build a wide and interesting circle of friends, lovers, and kindred spirits. Number 3 has childlike innocence, and is highly original and embraces unique thinking and creative expression. This number is artistic, and its curious nature allows it to convey abstract ideas and find solutions that others may miss. This is a veritable echo of God as a matchless Creator, Communicator, and Conservator. Jupiter or *Brihaspati* is the *Guru* of *Devas* [gods and goddesses] in Hindu mythology. **This fits our case like a glove. SGGS is the Living Guru for the entire Humankind.**

In the light of this exposition, my inference of the total number of pages of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, 1430, is like this. Between Number 1 [*Sargun Saroop* of *Waheguru*] and Zero [*Nirgun Saroop* of *Waheguru*] are Number 4 [endless advancement implying Evolution] and Number 3 [guided unseen by God's Revealed Word (*Gurbani*) as the Spiritual Preceptor (*Guru*)].

If you dispassionately look at what I have stated, you will instantly recollect what Guru Arjan Dev has proclaimed in the *Mundawani*. The upshot of all this ratiocinative cerebration is that it is God, who plays His *Lila*, Divine Sport, encompassing the *Brahmanda* [Cosmos] and *Pind* the body of each individual human person. Why He does so nobody knows or can know but He does it all the same, and we humans participate in His *Lila* while enjoying the mind-boggling spectacle as speechless spectators, in the drunken stupor of ignorance and inertia.





SECTION-III
POETIC
RENDERING

Asa Mehla-1: Guru Nanak's hymn

One and all without exception call Thee incredibly great on hearsay
 However, only he who has seen Thee could tell Thy stature immense
 Even reckoning doesn't avail, for Thou from description remain far away
 Those who succeed in knowing, get absorbed in Thy quintessence
 O my awesome Lord, Thou are unfathomable
 An ocean of excellences that is ineffable
 Nobody knows the infinite grandeur of Thy divine field
 All meditators put their heads together to attempt Thy measure
 Hard work of theologians, ponderers, and teachers did no answer yield
 All the Truth, all the penances, and the world's virtues entire
 All the Siddhas' joint powers and other beings' spiritual endowments
 Without Thy blessings nobody has ever had any great attainments
 The flow of potentialities that come from Thy grace can't be suppressed
 As such the helpless speaker is incapable of doing anything—unblessed
 Thy stores are stocked with Thy praises, power, and pelf
 He who is lucky to receive Thy gifts gets a fulfilled self
 Nanak, [so endowed, his gifts of virtues relishes]
 When the Lord with Truth his being embellishes

SWAIYAA

*Paa(n)e gahe jab té tumré tab té kó'oo aa(n)kh taré nehee aanyo.
 Ram rahim Puran Quran anak kahai mat eek na maneyo.
 Simrat shaastr badh sabh bohu bhedh kahai ham eik na janyo.
 Siree asipaan kripaa tumree kar(i), mai na kahyo sabh tohé bakhaanyo. (30)*

Ever since I had fallen at Thy feet my eye does not approve of anyone
 Ram-Rahim and Puran-Quran make various proclamations none I accept
 Smritis-Shastras-Vedas all tell many secrets but I have knowledge of none
 O, the Armed Lord, Thou have made this declaration of which I am bereft

DOHRA

*Sagal duar kao chhad kai gahiyo tuhaaro duar
 Baahin gahei kee laaj asi Gobind Das tuhaar
 (Dasam Granth, Epilogue to Rama Avatar, 864, page 254)*

After having abandoned all doors, Lord, I have taken refuge at Thy door
 Thy hand I hold as a last resort, save my honour, I am Thy humble servitor

*



MISCELLANEOUS SHABADS FROM GURBANI

ਰਾਗੁ ਗੁਜਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥ ਕਾਹੇ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਚਿਤਵਹਿ ਉਦਮੁ ਜਾ ਆਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਪਰਿਆ ॥

O mind, why's this worry about your wherewithal
When caring is God's own active habit concerning all
Before He created them amid rocks and stones
He had provided for each living being's survival
O Lord of souls, saved is the mortal who joins
The assembly of pious souls and is sure to gain
Coveted exaltation as deadwood turns green
None supports another among mothers
Fathers, friends, children, and spouses
For no one about others really bothers
Lord God alone this crucial cause espouses
Leaving their young chicks behind uncared
Flamingos fly hundreds of miles from home
Who teaches them to fend and feeds them
It's by meditation that they have well fared
All treasures and eighteen supernatural powers
The Lord facilely carries on the palm of His hand
Nanak is secure while Thy shadow upon him hovers
Yet Thy infinite expanse he can never understand

Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Page 10)

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ਮੁੰਦਾਵਈ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥ ਥਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੁ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ॥

Three things have been placed in the salver
These are truth, contentment, and reflection
Placed also is the nectar Name of the Master
That's everyone's support and foundation
He who eats and digests it receives salvation
No one should dispense with this priceless article
For it is worthy of owner's eternal care and vigil
Clinging to God's feet ferries one across effortless
The vast worldly ocean of ignorance and darkness

Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Page 1429)

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ਸਲੋਕ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥ ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾਤੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਮੈਨੇ ਜੋਗੁ ਕੀਤੇਈ ॥

I know not the favour that Thou have done to me
In having shaped me into valuable human commodity

Seeing me pitiably meritless God has on me taken pity
 I have been given the True Preceptor by gracious Thee
 Nanak, the Holy Name keeps my body-mind fresh eternally
Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Page 1429)

SLOK (U) MEHLA FIFTH

Adoring the inner preceptor, chanting the Name, knowing its import
 Seeing the Creator with eyes and listening to His Name with ears
 Whose minds are dyed in God's love alone can access His court
 Says Nanak, on whom God has showered His grace distinction bears
 Acknowledged in the world as exalted souls they play their rare part

ANAND

Having found the True preceptor, my mother, bliss has filled me
 Festivities have erupted in celebration of this tranquillity and poise
 Fairies' families have descended to sing panegyrics in cosmic melody
 Brethren! You too sing and keep in heart—these hymns of divine choice
 Saith Nanak, I have found bliss by the True preceptor's presence within me

O my mind! Always dwell by Lord God's side
 In this divine nearness lies the panacea for all grief
 All your tasks would succeed when you by Him abide
 The Lord is all in all; forgetting Him is lost all relief
 Says Nanak, hearken, my mind, this exhortation in brief

True Master! What haven't you got in Thy House?
 Everything is there but one gets it by thine grace
 He who in mind Thy adoration and Name chooses to house
 Dwells in divine hymnody having no music to face
 Says Nanak, of all wherewithal Thy house is the base

True Name is the permanent prop of my existence
 This Name-support has satisfied all forms of hunger
 Ease and joy lodged in mind have brought acquiescence
 I am a sacrifice to my Preceptor who has granted many a favour
 Says Nanak, hearken O saints! Love the Name, life's prop forever

Five melodies have struck in the heart by God rejuvenated
 Such a blessed heart always dwells in many a cosmic tune



The five foes are conquered, and fear of death is obliterated
 Only those receive this grace who Thou had blessed at dawn
 Says Nanak, in such a heart dwells joy ad cosmic music plays on

Hearken; O blessed ones, by meditative listening to Anand
 All longings are fulfilled; all mental wanderings come to an end
 The Transcendent Lord is found; by hearkening the True Utterance
 From all grief, disease, and remorse is granted deliverance
 Saints learn by befriending evolved souls to dwell in God's veneration
 By listening and reciting the Sacred Word all impiety faces decimation
 Says Nanak, mortals who surrender at the Lord's feet find sublimation

RAAG GOOJAREE, MEHLA FOURTH

O Thou Merciful Lord of the people, their caretaker
 To Thee, O True Primal Being, I offer my humble prayer
 A mere insect, a worm I am, and Thy refuge I entreat
 In Thy mercy, bless me with Name's Light, O True Preceptor
 Thou are my friend, the Divine Guide, enlighten me by Thy Name sweet
 The Preceptor's exhortations teach me that Name alone is my life's breath
 And singing panegyrics to the Lord's glory should be my Righteous Path
 Blessed are the servants of the Lord

With faith in Him they burn with a longing for the Lord
 Blessed by the Lord's Name the seekers' hearts satiate
 Joining the holy congregation their virtues radiate
 Those not so blessed are most unfortunate, one understands
 Fall into the Messengers of Death's retributive hands
 Those who have not been blessed with the True Preceptor's refuge
 Are cursed like those who have not sought the holy congregation
 They are humble servants of the True Preceptor of fortune huge
 With destiny inscribed on their foreheads for securing salvation
 Blessed are they who have become part of the sacred assembly
 For, Nanak, meeting them, obtains Name's illuminating tranquillity

GURU NANAK DEV'S AARTI

The sky is the salver with sun 'n' moon in it as lamps divine
 Countless stars in the galaxies as jewels 'n' pearls shine
 The wind from Malay mountains brings incense-bearing showers
 Air is waving the fly-whisk and all vegetation along with flowers
 Have become generous offerings to the effulgence of divine breath

Such is Thy lamp-worship, O Destroyer of life-'n'-rebirth
 Drum-beats from unstruck music create the heavenly symphony
 Thousands of eyes Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of forms Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of feet Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of noses Thou have, yet none at all
 These are the many miracles that together enthrall
 In every creature, the same divine light has its dwelling
 By its power, all of them have grasp 'n' understanding
 But such knowledge is gifted only by the spiritual preceptor
 True lamp-worship is to know that all happens by God's will
 Performing such an *Aarti* is to abide by it—moving or still
 O, God! The sap of Thy lotus feet is what my mind lusts after
 A burning desire for this juice is the cause of my daily thirst
 Nanak, the rain-bird is supplicating for Thy mercy's water
 Let it have its sojourn in Thy Name, feeding on pollen-dust

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ਜੁਧ ਜਿਤੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਦਾਨ ਕਰੇ ॥
 ਅਘ ਓਘ ਟਰੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਫੁਨਿ ਧਾਮ ਭਰੇ ॥
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁ ਬਿਦਯਾ ਲਈ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਸਭ ਸੱਤ੍ਰ ਮਰੇ ॥
 ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੇ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੇ ਸੇ ਗਰੀਬ ਕਰੇਰ ਪਰੇ ॥ ੨ ॥

Guru Gobind Singh

*Judh jitey inhee ke prasad(i) inhee ke prasad(i) su daan karey
 Agh ugh tarey inhee ke prasad(i) inhee kee kirpa phun dhaam bharey
 Inhee ke prasad(i) su bidya laiye inhee kee kirpa sabh satr marey
 Inhee kee kirpa ke saje ham hain nahin mo so gareeb karor parey*



By their grace have I battles won, and charities to others disbursed
 By their help have I overcome sorrows and with treasures my home filled
 I have gained my knowledge through their mercy, their help my enemies killed
 Their benevolence has exalted me; otherwise millions like me lie accursed





Guru Arjan Dev's *Sukhmani Sahib*, Ashtapadi 3, Pauri 6

Among all humans he is an exalted luminary
 He who has shed his egotism in Holy Company
 He who regards himself to be the lowliest
 He is reckoned to be truly the highest
 He whose mind has become the dust of others' feet
 Sees dwell in every heart Lord God's Name sweet
 He who eradicates all evil from his mind
 Perceives the entire world to be his friend
 He who deems pleasure and pain as of the same hue
 Says Nanak, "He is not affected by sin and virtue"



Kabiyo Baach Benti Chaupai [Prayer in Quatrain-form] is the wondrous work of the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith, Guru Gobind Singh. This scripture is one of the Five Banis recited every morning by the baptized Sikhs called the *Khalsa* [literally, The Pure] strictly according to the ceremony prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh who had founded the Khalsa in 1699 as a Commonwealth of Saint-Soldiers to fight against the Mughal Emperors' bigotry and tyranny on the Hindus who were mercilessly killed on resistance or forcibly converted to Islam. It also forms part of the Sikh evening prayer called *Rehras* [To my mind, this is the Punjabi-ised version of Persian expression '*Raah-i-Raast*' that mean the Path of Righteousness].



English Poetic Rendering

Guard us with Thy hands as shield
 Let my heart's desire be so fulfilled
 Let my mind on your feet focus
 Treat us as yours to sustain us (1)

Pray, all my enemies destroy
 Let me Thy protection enjoy
 On my household bliss Thou shower
 Treat all Sikhs as thy servants, O Creator (2)

I beseech Thee for my personal security
 Restrain Thou each 'n' every adversary
 With my wishes fulfilled gone are woes
 Now thirst for Thy worship fast grows (3)

Sans Thee may I never another adore
 Getting all my needs from Thee evermore
 Let all Sikhs and devotees Thy protection relish
 One-by-one my foes Thou demolish (4)

Protect me with Thy guarding hand
 Let me in no fear of death stand
 Be on my side and always guard
 Save me with thy protective sword (5)

Save me, O my dear saviour
 Beloved of saints, and their helper
 O Merciful, Thou are tyrants' destroyer
 Of fourteen worlds Thou are the master (6)

Right time saw Brahma's incarnation
 This was followed by Shiva's manifestation
 And then arose Vishnu another of the clime
 But all these are tricks of the Lord of Time (7)

The Lord of Time created Yogi Shiv
 Also Brahma who uttered the Vedas
 To the universe He did the shape give
 Him alone I salute in the cosmos (8)

The Lord of Time the universe fashioned
 As also the angels, demons, and spirits natural
 He alone knows the start and the end
 He alone is my preceptor spiritual (9)

To Him alone I make obeisance
 Creator of many an entity and substance
 To His devotees He grants calm silence
 He destroys enemies all at once (10)

Intimate Knower of our feelings all
 Anguish of every creature, good 'n' evil
 From ant to elephant; from gross to subtle
 He protects everyone and cares for all (11)



He is pained when saints are tormented
 And is happy when they are contented
 Everyone's agony He acknowledges and discerns
 He knows everyone's feelings, and concerns (12)

When the Creator projected Himself in creation
 Divine essence appeared in many a manifestation
 When He wills that the creation be dissolved
 Back into Him all forms are absorbed (13)

He created myriads of forms and bodies
 They talk of Him as they think what He is
 Yet from all of them He chooses to remain apart
 Such distinction the wise and the scriptures impart (14)

Formless, untainted, self-reliant, of primal worth
 Unblemished, endless, and free from birth
 Only a fool would boast of knowing Thy confines
 When Thy limits not a single Veda defines (15)

The fool treats and adores Him as a mere stone
 In ignorance, for the truth is known to God alone
 He knows Shiva the deity as the Eternal Lord
 Farthest from the secret of the Primal Lord (16)

According as his intellect has the power to imagine
 Everyone describes Thee according to his reckoning
 But the limits of Thy creation cannot be known
 Nor how Thou created the universe in the beginning (17)

You are One but countless are your creations
 As poor, wealthy king, or any other form
 You create beings in bewildering variations
 From egg, sweat, earth, and the sperm (18)

Somewhere as a king Thou joyously realise
 Somewhere as Shiva, collected and self-contained
 Then Thou perform miracles to mesmerise
 Yet ere time, in time, Thou have Thy 'Self' remained (19)

O Lord, now keep me under Thy protection

Let my followers flourish and enemies die or yield
 Let all evil doers meet their own destruction
 Let them lie vanquished on the battlefield (20)

O Lord of the Sword, grant them protection who seek
 Let their enemies writhe in pain till they are destroy'd
 Those falling at Thy feet, the mighty or the meek
 Ensure their afflictions and maladies are remov'd (21)

Those who meditate even once on Thee the Supreme Destroyer
 Let death never come near them and cause dread
 Let them always remain protected under Thy cover
 Let all their enemies and griefs lie instantly dead (22)

Bliss is obtained by Thy glance of grace
 Their sins are removed when Thou favour endow
 They possess rarest treasures among the human race
 No evil doer can even touch their shadow (23)

If even once Thou are by someone remembered
 The noose of death gets from his neck removed
 He who lovingly meditates on Thy Name
 Liberated from suffering spreads his fame (24)

O Lord of Sword, Thy protection I require
 I have been guarded with Thy hands on me lain
 At all times, Thou have been my support entire
 Save me from worldly wickedness and pain (25)





GURU NANAK - Mixed-Media Painting by the Author

HAIL! MONARCH OF LOVE-FILLED HEARTS

AN ODE TO GURU NANAK DEV

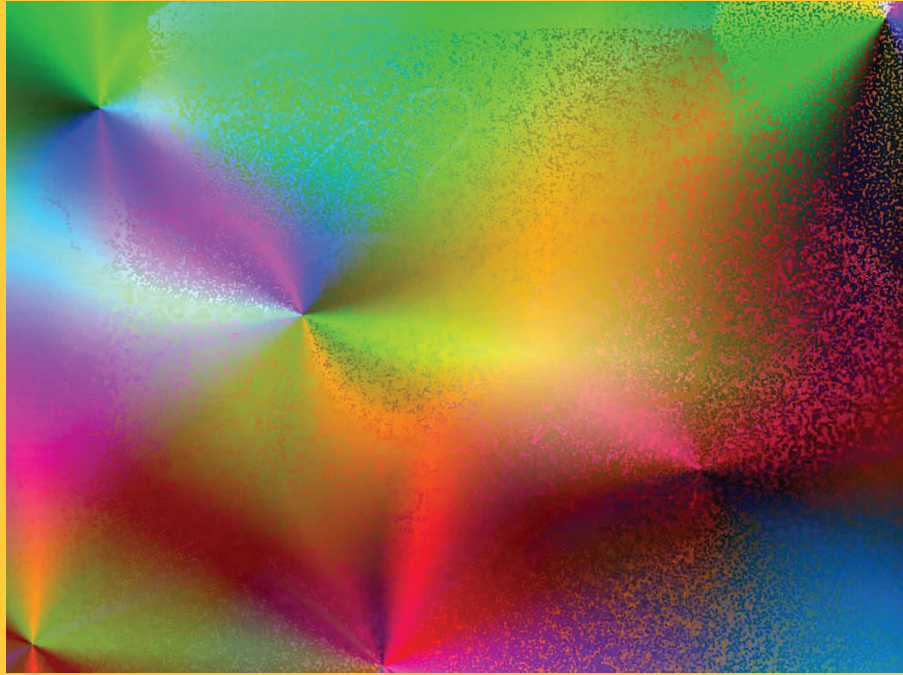
When they of the West were content with their Renaissance
You ushered in an Era of Enlightenment
Through offbeat odysseys into the realm of mind
When they discovered that the earth was not
The centre of the cosmos as hitherto known
You made known your vision that there were countless worlds
Where even “the sky was not the limit” to anything
While America was Columbus’ geographical find
You discovered many an unknown world
In the infinite cosmos within and without
When there was extinction of excellence
In literary culture and public virtue
You lighted the lamp of universal love.
When invaders paraded sans qualms of conscience
The self-destroying aspect of an unbridled egotism
You displayed the infinite power
Of humility, politeness, and simplicity
By the overwhelming eloquence of your own example

You shook up the masses from the age-old slumber
 Of their deep-rooted forgetfulness of God
 You exposed the hollowness of ceremonial piety
 Rites and rituals in “religious” life
 And prescribed the panacea for all human ills
 In the common man’s language—the Tenets of Timeless Faith
*“Earn thy living by the sweat of thy brow
 And with others thine earning share
 Always meditating on the Divine Name”*
 By travelling through the dark wilderness of uncharted regions
 You wended your way into the minds of one and all
 Beyond caste, creed, colour, and race
 As the Monarch of Love-filled Hearts
 Where esoteric erudition was a spent force
 Lying exhausted on the wasteland of speculative philosophy
 You paved the way for a New World Order
 With your pragmatic spirituality for everyday use
 By delinking workaday existence from the menace of
 Mythology, superstitions, cults, and customs
 You put it in touch with the process of history
 And also taught how to transcend it in daily life
 Through reverent love of all that exists
 By the power of your deeply inspired hymnody
 Anyone can now clasp the stars of heaven in one hand
 And hold the sap of life on earth in the other
 Salutations to You, O Apostle of Love
 Forever are we deeply indebted to You
 For revealing to us one simple fact
 That Truth comes within the reach of experience
 Only when purity of conduct is nurtured by
 Unconditioned spontaneity of an innocent heart
 That beats in tune with the Will of God
 The Holy Name signifies His manifest totality
 Immanent in both the created world
 And within the inmost being of the human soul
 Hail, *Guru, Waheguru, Waheguru!*



NOTE: I did this painting as visual version of the three basic tenets of the Sikh Faith founded by Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539): (1) Earn thy livelihood by the sweat of thy brow; (2) Share your honest earnings with the under-privileged; and (3) Meditate of the Holy Name. This painting along with my poem on the Holy personage was published in The Tribune.





DIGITAL PAINTING BY DR SS BHATTI

SAINT KABIR'S *Awwal Allah Noor Upaaya*,,,

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥
 ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਦੇ ॥੧॥
 ਲੋਗਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਨ ਭੂਲਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥
 ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸੂਬ ਠਾਂਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
 ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਅਨੇਕ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਜੀ ਸਾਜਨਹਾਰੈ ॥
 ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੇਚ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੇਚ ਕੁੰਭਾਰੈ ॥੨॥
 ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਸਚਾ ਏਕੇ ਸੋਈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਛੁ ਹੋਈ ॥
 ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ਸੁ ਏਕੇ ਜਾਨੈ ਬੰਦਾ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ ॥੩॥
 ਅਲਹੁ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਗੁੜੁ ਦੀਨਾ ਮੀਠਾ ॥
 ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਮੇਰੀ ਸੰਕਾ ਨਾਸੀ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਡੀਠਾ ॥੪॥੩॥



God first created light, all creatures are therefore the siblings of nature
 Having sprung up from one light the world imparts to them equal stature
 O creatures do not let doubt mislead you into delusion
 The Creator and His creation dwell everywhere as one
 It is the same clay that the Artist has fashioned in great diversity
 Nothing is wrong with any pot's clay or with the Potter's artistry

The True Lord abides in all and by His command events occur
 Discerning His edict-fiat and knowing the Lord man enjoys His favour
 Allah is invisible, He is ineffable; but the Guru has gifted me jaggery
 Saith Kabir, my doubt is gone; I have seen the Immaculate in divinity

SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB [Page 479]

ਆਸਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀਉ ਕੇ ਪੰਚਪਦੇ ੯ ਦੁਤੁਕੇ ੫
 ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
 ਪਾਤੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਮਾਲਿਨੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਜੀਉ ॥
 ਜਿਸੁ ਪਾਹਨ ਕਉ ਪਾਤੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਸੇ ਪਾਹਨ ਨਿਰਜੀਉ ॥੧॥
 ਭੂਲੀ ਮਾਲਨੀ ਹੈ ਏਉ ॥
 ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਜਾਗਤਾ ਹੈ ਦੇਉ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
 ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਾਤੀ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਡਾਰੀ ਫੂਲ ਸੰਕਰਦੇਉ ॥
 ਤੀਨਿ ਦੇਵ ਪ੍ਰਤਖਿ ਤੇਰਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਕਿਸ ਕੀ ਸੇਉ ॥੨॥
 ਪਾਖਾਨ ਗਢਿ ਕੈ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਕੀਨੁਹੀ ਦੇ ਕੈ ਛਾਤੀ ਪਾਉ ॥
 ਜੇ ਏਹ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਸਾਚੀ ਹੈ ਤਉ ਗੜ੍ਹਣਹਾਰੇ ਖਾਉ ॥੩॥
 ਭਾਤੁ ਪਹਿਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਲਾਪਸੀ ਕਰਕਰਾ ਕਾਸਾਰੁ ॥
 ਭੋਗਨਹਾਰੇ ਭੋਗਿਆ ਇਸੁ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਮੁਖ ਛਾਰੁ ॥੪॥
 ਮਾਲਿਨਿ ਭੂਲੀ ਜਗੁ ਭੁਲਾਨਾ ਹਮ ਭੁਲਾਨੇ ਨਾਹਿ ॥
 ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਹਮ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਖੇ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਰਾਇ ॥੫॥੧॥੧੪॥

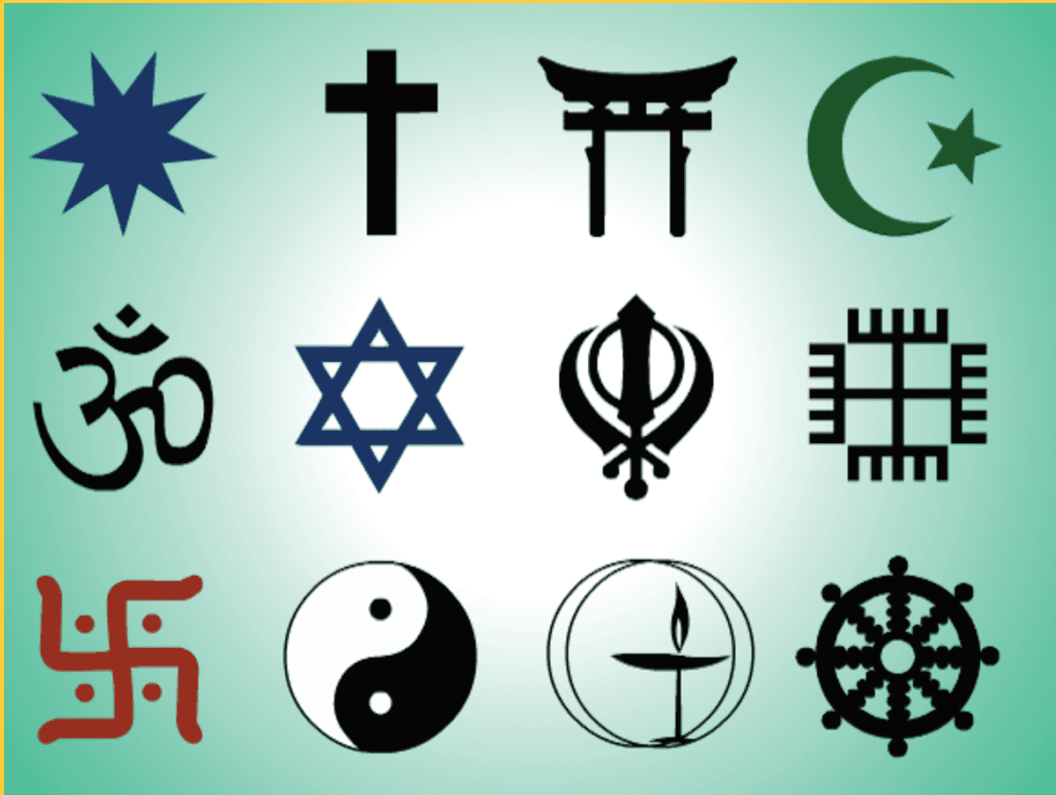




The she-gardener plucks leaflets; each has life is not to her known
The idol for which she is doing this work is just an inanimate stone
In this act the she-gardener commits a shocking mistake
Knowing not that the Lord is a Living God wide awake

Brahma is the leaflet, Vishnu the branch, Shankara the flower
Having killed these three deities, who is she serving this offer?
The sculptor places his feet on the stone to carve it into an idol
Were this stone a god it would have devoured the sculptor whole
Rice and beans, candies, cakes and cookies, the uncouth
Priest relishes them but puts ashes into the idol's mouth
The she-gardener is mistaken, the world errs, but I am not deceived
Saith Kabir, God protects me, I have the Lord's blessings as my feed

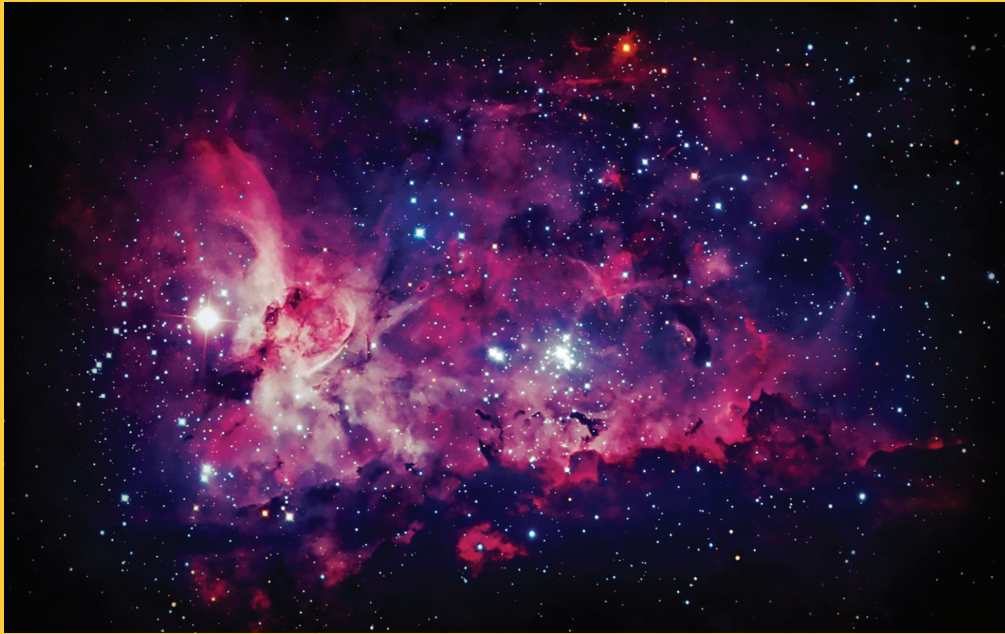




बिसर गई सब तात पराई
जब ते साध संगत मोहे पाई
ना कोई बैरी नहीं बेगाना
सगल संग हमको बन आई
जो प्रभु कीनो सो भली मानियो
यह सुमत साधु ते पाई
सब में रव रहिया प्रभु एक
पेख पेख नानक बिगसाई

All animosity of strangers has left me
Ever since I resorted to holy assembly
None is either an enemy or a stranger
I go along with all with healthy fervour
Whatever God does, accept it as good
Thus have I a Sadhu's counsel understood
The same One Lord everyone's life animates
From this insight for Nanak all joy radiates





GURU NANAK DEV'S AARTI

The sky is the salver with sun 'n' moon in it as lamps divine
 Countless stars in the galaxies as jewels 'n' pearls shine
 The wind from Malay mountains brings incense-bearing showers
 Air is waving the fly-whisk and all vegetation along with flowers
 Have become generous offerings to the effulgence of divine breath
 Such is Thy lamp-worship, O Destroyer of life-'n'-rebirth
 Drum-beats from unstruck music create the heavenly symphony
 Thousands of eyes Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of forms Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of feet Thou have, yet none at all
 Thousands of noses Thou have, yet none at all
 These are the many miracles that together enthrall
 In every creature, the same divine light has its dwelling
 By its power, all of them have grasp 'n' understanding
 But such knowledge is gifted only by the spiritual preceptor
 True lamp-worship is to know that all happens by God's will
 Performing such an *Aarti* is to abide by it—moving or still
 O, God! The sap of Thy lotus feet is what my mind lusts after
 A burning desire for this juice is the cause of my daily thirst
 Nanak, the rain-bird is supplicating for Thy mercy's water
 Let it have its sojourn in Thy Name, feeding on pollen-dust





JAPUJI

POETIC RENDERING

Translation was not taken very seriously and never considered 'creative' until the English poet and writer Edward Fitzgerald (31 March 1809 - 14 June 1883) published his English translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (London, 1859). He did the job with such consummate exquisiteness and trans-cultural understanding of the Persian and English languages that translation thenceforth began to be acknowledged as a work of literary art. All sceptics and cynics were silenced to speechlessness so much that since then there has hardly been an anthology of English poetry that does not feature his translation of the quatrains originally penned in Persian by the world-famous astronomer-poet of Persia [modern Iran].

As a teenager I was myself so deeply influenced by Omar Khayyam *via* Edward Fitzgerald that I wrote scores of quatrains in English, to begin with. Later on, when I got interested in Urdu, I learnt the language, its poetry, prosody, and criticism so studiously that over the next 50 years I mastered the art to produce over 3,000 *Rubaiyat* under my pen-name [*Takhallus*] *T'ameer Chandigarhi* [which denotes an architect who lives in Chandigarh].

Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademi has conferred on me the *Best Book of the Year 2019 Award* for my anthology of 1540 Urdu quatrains titled *Shu'oor-i-Bekhudi* [Knowledge of the Unconscious Self], and *Award of Recognition-2020* for Outstanding Contribution to English Literature/Language. The first award carried a

Citation and Cash Prize of Rs 25,000, and the second award a Citation and Cash Prize of 1,00,000. Since 1969, I have made the architectonics of creation, criticism, and translation a habit of the mind—and translated poetry in Urdu and Punjabi into English and vice versa.



Poetic Rendering in English of Japuji that follows is the result of such an exercise which I keep doing as a delightful pastime with undiminished passion. Interestingly, translation prods me on to explore the languages concerned and delve beneath their obvious differences down to their cultural and artistic nuances steeped in cosmic correspondences. Such a self-assigned task has been deepening my understanding of the Sacred Word when the subject happens to be Religion, Spirituality, and Mysticism.

Let me hope that the translation given here in metered and rhymed verse gives my readers enough excitement to look at Guru Nanak *Bani* in a new light and with heightened creedal fervour—inspiring them to reorient their soul-consciousness [*Surt*] towards Spiritual Journey via the Sacred Word [*Shabda*].





MOOL MANTRA

[THE SEED-WORD]

ੴ

[*IK OANKAR*]

G-O-D [Generator-Operator-Destroyer]

IS

ONE

All-Inclusive, All-Pervasive
Truth, the Unchanging Reality
Transcendent Being
One may Name Him thus
Intrepid, Uninimical
Imperishable Icon
Beyond the Cycle of Birth and Death
Self-Existent
By the Grace of God, the Guru
This Creed is proclaimed

*

Contemplating His Glory by a ceaseless Chant

**

Truth was He before the birth of Time
 Truth has He been since Time He bore
 Truth is He, Nanak, even now sublime
 And Truth shall He be evermore

PAURI-ONE

A life-time of ablutions can't purify
 Nor sustained spells of silence qualify
 Nor endless feasting of the worlds satisfy
 Nor a hundred thousand wits ever grasp it?
 How, then, to be Truthful; this guile! How smash it?
 Nanak, "Submission to His Edict-Fiat Who's Master of His Will"
 Is the Inviolable Divine Writ, the one Revealed in Original!

PAURI-TWO

His Edict-Fiat bears forth bodies, yet inscrutable remain
 His Edict-Fiat creates souls, and all status bestows
 By His Edict-Fiat are high and low, pleasure and pain
 By His Edict-Fiat one is set free, another comes and goes
 By His Edict-Fiat is life's bondage for one and all
 Those who know His Edict-Fiat, Nanak, are ego-free and humble

PAURI-THREE

Some who are so endowed, His might eulogise
 For some adorers, His blessings are what His power symbolise
 Some sing the praises of His beautiful virtues and traits
 Many another through metaphysics His nature contemplates
 Some sing of Him as the Author of life and death
 Some admire His power of infusing into the dead new breath
 Some sing of Him as the One so palpably near
 Some sing of Him as He who is distant, unclear
 There's no dearth of reckonings, or descriptions sane
 Millions, nay, countless have tried but in vain
 The Giver goes on giving, but out the takers tire
 In aeons of births getting what all they desire
 God runs the Universe by His Inexorable Decree
 In joyous progression, Nanak, He—The Carefree



PAURI-FOUR

Unchanging is the Sire, True His justice, His language love infinite
 We only ask and implore—and so graciously He gives it
 What can we offer the Giver for a glimpse of His court
 How prayers must be worded to melt His heart
 Meditate on the True Name's glory in the ambrosial hours
 Good deeds beget good life, but salvation His grace confers
 The Omnipotent is All-Holy, Nanak avers

PAURI-FIVE

Who can make His idol, who knows the norm
 He who's form, form-giver, yet beyond all form
 For him, who serves Him, all honour ensues
 Sing of Him, Nanak, that mine-field of virtues
 Sing and hearken, and, in heart, a longing nurture
 To let sorrows quit, and joys to enter
 Guru's Word is the mystic sound, the Vedas: It's all-pervasive
 Guru is God, Gorakh, Brahma, and Parvati: The Goddess
 Even knowing it, I couldn't have this Truth vouched
 How could the Ineffable in speech be couched
 May I, with Guru's grace, be ever so blest
 That this Benefactor-of-All I mayn't forget

PAURI-SIX

A holy bath takes he who earns His approval
 Sans God's sanction, all actions are offal
 Wherever, through all the worlds, have I sought
 Sans good deeds, everything comes to nought
 Gems and jewels in his mind can be found
 If the seeker hearkens The Word's mystic sound
 May I, with Guru's grace, be ever so blest
 That this Benefactor-of-All I mayn't forget

PAURI-SEVEN

A life as long as Yugas four
 Even ten times as much, if one were to get
 In all the nine continents be very well known
 Had countless followers at one's behest
 If one could earn a glorious name
 And highest honour as one's asset
 But if one were of His grace deprived



Hopeless, hapless, would one be, yet
 One amid a swarm of wriggling worms
 Forever confined to the filth of sin
 Nanak, He alone bestows virtue on the virtueless
 And endows the good with the wealth of goodness
 Who can think of anyone who ever could
 Bless the Lord Himself with immaculate good

PAURI-EIGHT

Hearkening bestows on the seeker all powers supernatural
 Hearkening reveals the secrets of the earth, the sky, and the Mythical Bull
 Hearkening unravels mysteries of isles, regions, nether lands
 Hearkening death's invincible power disbands
 Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression
 Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

PAURI-NINE

Hearkening gives the devotee the formidable powers of Trinity
 Hearkening, to the meanest, imparts Divinity
 Hearkening reveals the praxis, body's secrets, and the power of Yoga
 Hearkening equals the knowledge of Shastras, Smritis, and the Vedas
 Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression
 Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

PAURI-TEN

Hearkening unfolds the truth, knowledge, and bliss
 Hearkening equals ritual bathing at sixty-eight holy places
 Hearkening, all the honour of learning, begets
 Hearkening, one always easily meditates
 Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression
 Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin

PAURI-ELEVEN

Hearkening, one can through rivers of virtues wade
 Hearkening, one is a *pir* or an apostle made
 Hearkening, the blind find their path hurdle-free
 Hearkening, they fathom life's abyss easily
 Ever are His devotees, Nanak, in joyous progression
 Hearkening destroys all their pain and sin



PAURI-TWELVE

Who can talk of the unique bliss of sound belief
 All such trying shall always come to grief
 Where is the paper, the scribe, and where's the pen?
 The believer's state-of-mind beggars all description
 Holy is the Name of the Formless One
 Believed by few, to fewer known

STEP THIRTEEN

Awaken'd are the believer's mind, intellect, consciousness
 To the entire Cosmic Mystery does he gain access
 The believer in his life never cuts a sorry figure
 Nor does death even bother a staunch believer
 Holy is the Name of the Formless One
 Believed by few, to fewer known

PAURI-FOURTEEN

The believer's path is from obstacles free
 The believer shall be honoured exclusively
 The believer is never in sects and cults stranded
 The believer's faith is on Righteousness founded
 Holy is the Name of the Formless One
 Believed by few, to fewer known

PAURI-FIFTEEN

The doors of deliverance on the believer open
 The believer's kith and kin, too, get salvation
 Safe the believer lands, and, with him, an entire congregation
 When, from the cycle of births, the believer attains salvation
 Holy is the Name of the Formless One
 Believed by few, to fewer known

PAURI-SIXTEEN

Elect are they, among humans esteemed, who God prefers
 And, in His court, on them, high honour confers
 The God-loved are welcome at His door, and embellish His court
 The True One is their Guru on whom they have set their heart
 Man can't, do what he will, Creator's endless state fathom
 His Creation will forever remain beyond him
 On whose horns toils this earth, in *Dharma*, they say
 God's-Mercy-Begot, does infinite contentment display



The truthful alone may this secret know eventually
 That the Mythical Bull can't such staggering loads carry
 When there are earths beyond earth, many more beyond this world
 By whose power are they supported and into space twirled
 A myriad species are there, and their countless aspects
 Lord's ever-moving pen has scribed complete in all respects
 Who can write, who, for this staggering count, account
 Because most certainly this would be a mind-boggling count
 No one knows the limit of His powers divine
 How superb are all His forms sublime
 A single Word and Lo! Myriads of worlds came into being
 At His command rivers of life in millions started flowing
 I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise
 Nor am I suited to offer Thee a willing sacrifice
 What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action
 Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

PAURI-SEVENTEEN

Countless recite His Name, and countless love Him
 Countless adore Him, as countless penance
 Countless from the Scriptures and the Vedas recite
 Countless practise yoga, and remain saddened hence
 Countless devotees on His Excellence-Omniscience meditate
 Countless are pious souls, and countless in giving charity elate
 Countless crusaders brave the arch-enemies' weaponry
 Countless think in silence ceaselessly of Thee
 I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise
 Nor am I suited to offer Thee a willing sacrifice
 What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action
 Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

PAURI-EIGHTEEN

Countless fools see but mindlessly
 Countless thieves thrive on ill-gotten money
 Countless despots with their might oppress
 Countless cut-throats shed blood and suppress
 Countless are the sinners who depart in sinning
 Countless are the liars who're always lying
 Countless perverts subsists on ill-pretence
 Countless back-bite and burden their conscience
 Nanak, the lowliest of all the known lowly



After deep thought makes this humble homily
 I haven't got the power to fathom or surmise
 Nor am I suited to Thee for a willing sacrifice
 What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action
 Changeless is Thy nature, Ye Immutable, Formless One

PAURI-NINETEEN

Countless are Thy Names, Thy abodes countless
 Countless are Thy realms impossible of access
 Saying even countless is a burden like that of sin
 Yet without words one can't Name Him, much less adore Him
 Through words one gains wisdom, and sings of His mysterious ways
 Through the language of words one writes and his ideas conveys
 With words is destiny on everyone's forehead writ
 But who could on the Divine writer's forehead write it?
 As He ordains, so one's lot one would get
 Over the whole expanse of creation extends His Name
 Beyond His Name lies there not a single domain
 I haven't got the power to fathom or to surmise
 Not am I suited to Thee for a willing sacrifice
 What Thou approve of is alone a worthy action
 Changeless is Thy nature, Ye, immutable, Formless One

PAURI-TWENTY

Dirt-smear'd hands, feet, or the body
 Can be washed clean with water
 And if it be soiled laundry
 Clean would it with soap launder
 But when the mind is with the filth of sins smear'd
 By the dye of God's-Name alone can it be clear'd
 Mere saying makes nobody a saint or a sinner
 Deeds are man-making seeds whose account is kept by the Maker
 One must reap as one sows
 By His Edict-Fiat, Nanak, one comes and goes

PAURI-TWENTYONE

Pilgrimage, penance, mercy, and charity
 Give him a whit of fruit—but how proud is he!
 Who, hearkening, believes—and nurtures God's love
 Taken in the mind a holy dip to cleanse the inner core
 All virtues are Thine, no worth have I got

Yet, sans imbibing virtues, devotion is naught
 Self-Existent are Thou, and, among Thy creation
 Are Brahma, matter, and the Holy Word
 Truth, Beauty, and Eternal Love are Thine
 Our salutations to Thee, O Immaculate Lord
 What time was it, which era, what day, and date
 Which season, which month, when the cosmos Thou did create
 The Puranas would this corroborative evidence bear
 If the pundits has at all this secret known
 And the Qazi's knowledge in the Koran's exegesis find mention
 But the yogi, nor anyone else, knows the date, the month, or the season
 This exclusive secret is known, indeed, to none other than God
 The Lord-Creator of all creation
 How do I say it, how adore Him, how describe, how I know?
 There's no dearth of those, Nanak each cleverer than the rest
 Who claim to have this esoteric knowledge, though!
 Great is the Lord God, supreme His justice
 Whatever He ordains must come to pass
 Nanak, the egotist can only of this knowledge brag—at best
 But never shall he be welcome at His portals, alas!

PAURI-TWENTYTWO

Nether are the regions beyond numberless nether lands
 Countless are the skies beyond the heavens and The Sky
 Unfathomed is the depth of cosmos, unmeasured height
 The Vedas have in reckoning tired and so have I
 The Semitic texts speak of eighteen thousand spheres
 Yet point to one basic truth this paltry count must
 Everything springs from His Being—which, un-reckoned, one again swears
 Then, in a state of utter helplessness, returns to dust
 Therefore, Nanak, suffice it to say that all human futility shows
 That He is great—yes, but how great?—God alone knows

PAURI-TWENTYTREE

Adoring Him, as they do, the devotees are yet ignorant of His glory
 Can the rivers fathom it as they trail back into the sea
 Holding mounds of wealth and dominions vaster than the sea
 Even the mightiest emperors can't match a tiny ant's worth
 In whose heart has God's immaculate love taken birth



PAURI-TWENTYFOUR

There is no limit to God's unique virtues
 Nor any to their human reckoning
 Beyond all measure is His vast creation
 And endless is His act of giving
 No limit to the spectacles that He stirs
 And infinite are the melodies that He conjures
 No limit to the secrets that His mind bears
 No limit to the creation of unreachable spheres
 Beyond could are those who've vexed to reckon
 But no success has ever been achieved by anyone
 The more certain we are, the greater He's become
 Great is the Lord God, exalted His station
 Still higher than the most high is His Holy Name
 He who must ever venture to know his greatness
 Has to be as great as He, His stature to assess
 He alone knows His greatness, and He Himself can aver
 By His glance of grace, Nanak, He does His blessings shower

PAURI-TWENTYFIVE

Who could assize Lord God's grace
 That matchless Benefactor sans all avarice
 Of Him the world's high and might beg at His door
 Beyond all reckoning remains their staggering number
 How many are ill-fated, sinners, bad men
 Wallowing in evil whose lives sadly lessen
 How many are such who receive but deny
 How many fools and gluttons eat on the sly
 How many are those who forever starve and languish
 But this, too, is a gift, Lord, of Thine own sweet wish
 Willed by Thee is human bondage, and release ordained
 Foolish is he who with Thee fault does find
 With one blow of fate back he comes to his mind
 God alone knows what to give and Himself gives He
 Yet a rare one acknowledges this truth gracefully
 The boon of His adoration such power brings
 As makes His chosen one, Nanak, the King of Kings

PAURI-TWENTYSIX

Priceless are Thy qualities, Thy business is priceless
 Priceless are Thy warehouses, and Thy men of business



Priceless are the sellers and buyers in this enterprise
 Priceless are Thy rates, and priceless is the merchandise
 Priceless is Thy court, and priceless righteousness
 Priceless is every measure, and the deal struck priceless
 Priceless is Thy benefaction, and priceless Thy seal
 Beyond reckoning are Thy Commandments, beyond limit Thy weal
 Without an infinite yardstick the priceless can't be assessed
 The meek who do venture are with Thy adoration blessed
 On the pages of Holy Books, and through countless inscriptions
 Thy glory is set out in discourses, and descriptions
 Brahma and Indra of Thy glory ever sing
 Sing, too, all the Gopis and their Govind
 Isvra praises Thee and so, too, miracle men
 And how many Buddhas adore Thee can't be known
 Hymns of Thy praise are sung by many a god and demon
 And by seers and sages, devotees, and holy men
 How many are born to sing of Thy glory
 How many have come and gone helplessly
 If as many more were to sing Thy praises evermore
 No points in Thy reckoning could they ever score
 As He wills so His stature grows
 Nanak, His secrets only the True One knows
 He who claims to know them commits calumny
 Mark him not a boor, but a leader of many

PAURI-TWENTYSEVEN

What's His abode like, whence He does His business carry
 From where does He oversee and sustain all His creation
 Countless melodies are struck of a staggering variety
 And countless minstrels always sing in heady elation
 Many are the musical measures which praise Thee
 With celestial bards singing to the tunes in harmony
 Air, water, fire express Thy glory in charming music
Dharamraja's tunes are also profoundly mystic
Chitra Gupta keeps record of all actions human
 For *Dharamraja* to adjudicate thereon
 Sing of Thee *Isar*, *Brahma*, and *Parvati*
 All of them created and blessed by Thee
 Seated on his throne, Indra bows to Thee in singing
 Engrossed in the very midst of many a godling
 Miracle men sing of Thee entranced in *Samadhi*



The saints, in singing, fix their thoughts on Thee
 The celibate, the virtuous, and the contented—one and all
 Pay obeisance to Thee as do the valiant heroes too
 Scholars of the Vedas and the great sages extol
 Thee, O Lord, age aft age—the ages through
 Exalted, too, are Thou by bewitching maids
 From heavens, earths, and the nether hades
 Praised are Ye by all the gems Thou did create
 And so by the places of pilgrimage, in all sixty-eight
 By all the four modes of life-generation
 Thy Name is kept in external glorification
 All terrestrial regions and celestial spheres
 Thou all the cosmos forever reveres
 And in so doing are they themselves sustained
 They alone have the privilege of singing of Thy glory
 Who have first Thy choicest blessings obtained
 And thus deeply steeped abide in the love of Thee
 Just how many more, Nanak, also sing of God
 Are beyond my imagination's wildest flight
 He alone is eternal, unchanging Lord
 His Name remains true—beyond all spite
 He has authored all this vast creation, He
 Is, has always been, and forever shall be
 Having created beings of many hues and kinds
 As enchanting *Maya* of supreme physical beauty
 God looks after His grand handiwork, as He minds
 The cosmic business, and sustains it by His gracious decree
 Whatever pleases Him, happens—and has His nod
 King of Kings is the Sole Lord God
 And inviolable is His Edict-Fiat
 Nanak's own life is propped by it

PAURI- TWENTYEIGHT

Wear you the ear-rings of deep contentment
 And make dignity of labour your begging-bowl
 Let meditation be the holy ash to smear your physique
 Make intimation of morality the virgin whole
 And faith in One God the mendicant's staff
 Remember, none of the countless sects is exclusive-unique
 Except that the cult of love is the only true religion
 And triumph over the world is actually a mind self-won

Ceaseless salutation to Him is a devotee's holy gesture
 Who is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable
 And, in all ages, appear in unchanging vesture

PAURI- TWENTYNINE

Knowledge is out diet, dispensed by compassion
 Divine sound makes music in every breast
 God, the Absolute Master, holds sway o'er all creation
 Worldly riches and miraculous powers have a misleading taste
 Union and separation together run the universal industry
 The balance-sheet of good deeds and evil casts human destiny
 Ceaseless salutation to Him is a devotee's holy gesture
 He is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable
 And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

PAURI-THIRTY

The Primal Mother in wedlock with Brahma bore
 Three active regents: Creator, Provider, and Destroyer
 As the Lord God wills so He guides them all
 According to His sovereign edict-fiat
 While He watches o'er them, He remains invisible
 Mysterious! Isn't this marvellous act?
 Ceaseless salutations to Him is a devotee's holy gesture
 He is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable
 And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

PAURI-THIRTYONE

The Lord's seat and His stores in all realms exist
 Inexhaustible are they, though he filled them only once
 He watches o'er all creation as He does persist
 Nanak, just is God's dispensing munificence
 Ceaseless salutations to Him is a devotee's holy gesture
 He is the First Cause, Unhued, Beyond-Voice, Imperishable
 And, in all ages, appears in unchanging vesture

PAURI- THIRTYTWO

Were man's one tongue to multiply into one lakh, and thence
 Become twenty times over as many at that
 Were each tongue to move a hundred thousand times in utterance
 Of God's Holy Name, forever aiming at
 Unrelenting, uninterrupted, devotional remembrance



Treading this path, he would keep climbing His stairs
 Till his 'self' dissolves into Lord's quintessence
 Tales of saint's glorious ascent won't catch unawares
 Even the worms—to follow suit with devotion, thence
 Truth is revealed, Nanak, by God's own grace
 Though the self-avowed brag of alternative ways

STEP THIRTY-THREE

Speech can't compel nor silence ever force
 Begging doesn't avail nor is giving going to matter
 One may choose to live or to death take recourse
 Neither rule can succeed nor treasure nor mind's chatter
 Nor power can ever dwell in the consciousness
 Awakened by knowledge and contemplation
 Neither does it abide in the scheming duress
 Of accomplished escape from all creation
 God alone has the might which from His own hands flow
 In His eyes, Nanak, none is high nor any who's low

PAURI-THIRTYFOUR

Nights, seasons, occasions, and days, He made
 And air, water, fire, and the nether region
 Then, in the midst of them, He Himself laid
 Earth—as the mint of righteous action
 Where dwell creatures of many a shape and hue
 Their names are myriad, their numbers beyond mention
 All mortals are judged keeping their deeds in view
 True is the Creator, true His holy mansion
 There abide The Elect of God divinely charming
 There the Lord's gracious glance does His approval confirm
 There true from the false is sifted in final reckoning
 One's true worth will be known, Nanak, in the world to come

PAURI-THIRTYFIVE

The Realm of Righteous Action abides in the stated way
 Next is the Realm of Knowledge which enchants by its working
 There many forms of air, water, fire which hold sway
 There countless *Krishnas* and *Shivas* have their dwelling
 Numberless *Brahmas* are fashioning worlds, et al
 Of many a form, colour, and bodily-ware
 Many a karmic earth exists, many a mount celestial

Many a sermon is delivered to *Dhruva* out there
 Many are the Indras, many the spheres of moons and suns
 Many are the continents, and the lands galore
 Many are the accomplished yogis, supreme ascetics, enlightened ones
 Many are the incarnations of Mother Goddess evermore
 Many are the species of gods, demons, celibates
 Many are the oceans which gems produce
 Many a mode is there which creatures creates
 Many are the languages which they all use
 There is many a lineage down which kings descend
 Many are God's devotees engrossed in serving him
 But none of them, Nanak, knows any end

PAURI-THIRTYSIX

The Realm of Knowledge is where illumination holds sway
 And mystic melody reigns amid sublime visions and wonder
 Enchanting beauty pervades the Realm of Endeavour
 Where matchless forms are forged everyday
 So unique is their beauty that it beggars all description
 Whoever attempts it would be left speechless, ashamed of his antics
 Fashioned in that realm are absorption, wisdom, and mind's illumination
 Forged therein are the visions of innumerable gods and mystics

PAURI-THIRTYSEVEN

Might is the hallmark of the Realm of Grace
 Where no one lives except heroes of might supreme
 An endowment received through constant God-consciousness
 Many Sita-like heroines are there of surpassing esteem
 Those who are with God in constant communion
 Never suffer mortality or anybody's guile
 Dwell in there devotees assembled from many a dominion
 Cherishing true bliss in their hearts all the while
 The Realm of Truth is where God himself reposes
 And casts His gracious glance, always watching o'er
 That realm houses all the continents and universes
 Whose limits nobody can by any means even explore
 Abide in that realm all forms of worlds of creation
 Untiring a-whirl in submission to His will
 God sees them, enjoys them, in divine elation
 To describe its limits, Nanak, is a task uphill

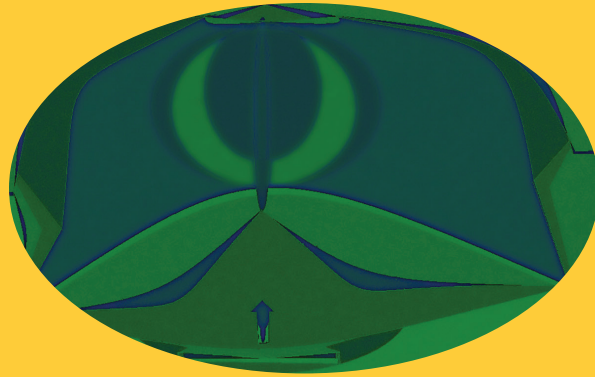




PAURI-THIRTYEIGHT

Let continence be the furnace, and patience the goldsmith
Intellect the anvil and knowledge the hammer
God's fear the bellows, austerity's-heat the fire
Fill the vessel of devotion with the Holy Name's nectar
In such a sacred mint forge them the divine Word
They who by His glance are so favour'd
Are in such hallowed task blissfully absorb'd
Only heirs to His grace, Nanak, get this unique award

•



EPILOGUE

[Sloku]

Air is the spiritual guide, subtle his worth
 Water like father sires everything
 That's borne by the great mother earth
 The whole world plays without tiring
 Looked after by day and night: the two nurses
 The court of moral law is forever
 Taking note of all virtues and vices
 Accountable for his own actions is each creature
 More by token, some are granted nearness (to You)
 Others, who are kept at bay, embroil
 Meditation on the Holy Name blesses humans' toil
 Their faces glow, Nanak, others with them are liberated, too

ALTERNATIVE RENDERING

EPILOGUE

[Sloku]

Subtle as the air is the path-finder, and water does sire
 Everything, borne by Mother Earth, the intellect
 Day and night engage this world entire
 As male and female nurses, in life's playful act
 All virtues and vices are accounted at the Court
 Of Cosmic Moral Law, whereby all mortals
 On the merit of their deeds, in the divine sport
 Move close to, or, away from, His portals
 Those, who meditate on the Holy Name, receive God's exclusive benefaction
 Deliverance illumines their faces, Nanak, even as they secure others' salvation





MY FATHER

[3 January 1905 - 18 September 1993]



My father, Sardar Balwant Singh Bhatti, was dark-complexioned with bold features, 167 centimetres tall, and agile of physique. He was slightly taller than me, with chest also broader—about 38 inches. He was tough as much of body as of mind, so much so that, as later circumstances in which the family was for long embroiled amply demonstrated, he could fight the entire world—psychologically speaking, as it were, singlehanded. His mother had died when he was a child—my grandfather did not remarry for he looked upon his son as precious possession he wouldn't want his stepmother to destroy. His tough upbringing

thus toughened my father's moral fibre into steely self-confidence that couldn't be shaken by life's psycho-emotional hurricanes and unending upheavals of the mortal world that beset families embroiling in penury. He had a personality aglow with radiating self-confidence you couldn't ignore or easily put off.

Brought up by my grandfather because my grandmother had died when he was a baby boy, my father grew up to be a tough-minded and clear-headed man

of amazing versatility: architect, painter, sculptor, draftsman, wood-carver, lathe-artisan, wrestler, carpenter, mason, and well-versed in Indian classical music [*Hindustani Sangeet*]. His determination to struggle through life was akin to swimming against the tide. His auto-didactic learning invested him with an intuition that rarely went wrong. Applied to everyday human transactions it meant character-reading to an amazing accuracy. He knew the world inside-out as if it were under his constant laser-like surveillance. He extended his wide-ranging perception to public affairs and his study of the Indian polity covered the British Raj and the country freed from the foreign yoke. This made him an exceptionally brilliant political analyst which occupation he enjoyed to the hilt because it assumed in the course of time a compulsiveness of comment that sometimes appeared to be uncalled for only to provoke the interlocutors into argumentative wrestling—a sort of outreach of his combative prowess as a brisk and talented wrestler.

When in Amritsar my father regularly took me to *Darbar Sahib* [popularly known as the Golden Temple and as the most visited sacred place throughout the world]. This was our evening walk coupled with pilgrimage. Spending an hour or so on the holy premises of the Sikh Faith's holiest of holy shrine was soothing for the nerves and uplifting for the soul. It was a profitable enterprise in which our sole investment was faith in Guru Nanak's cosmic view of life. My father often narrated anecdotes from the lives of the Ten Sikh Gurus besides telling me about other religions and the universality underlying their creedal statements. It was a healthy solemn education in inter-faith dialogue that finally invested me with open-mindedness and a resilience of spirit that is rarely acquired in formal baptism into one's chosen or inherited religion.

As a schoolboy I used to be taken to public *Kirtans* (hymns singing) on the premises of the Golden Temple, Amritsar. The one genre I then enjoyed, my father told me, was "*Prasang Kirtan*" in which the main *Ragi* (professionally-trained, baptised singer of hymns from *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Bible) would build up content by animatedly narrating anecdotes relevant to the *Shabad* (hymn) being sung so as to bring alive its relevance to the present milieu. When he shifted residence to Chandigarh in 1962, apart from long evening walks, he had a passion for attending *Kirtan Darbars* held at Sector 22 Gurdwara.

My father became a man of abiding convictions grounded in his profound faith in Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539 CE). As a conscientiously-trained wrestler he had acquired outstanding prowess which he morphed into a psychological weapon to vanquish his fierce foes that kept cropping up as human weeds with alarming frequency as much in the locality of his residence as at the workplace. He possessed his high self-esteem that he wouldn't barter for any material gain. Since he had grown up through extremely trying trials and travails which continued to blaze a trail as a signal against complacency he had an embittered temperament. He could not tolerate injustice and in self-defence often flew into a rage. With absolutely no support of either cash or counsel from my grandfather who only knew how to read *Gurmukhi* (customised script for the Punjabi language) enough to do his *Paatth* (daily recitation of *Gurbani* from *Gutka* or pocket edition of select verses from the Sikh Bible), my father learnt early in life that without formal education it was impossible to exist respectably. This foreknowledge and dedicated hard work helped him win a scholarship which, ironically, his father spent on paying the monthly rent of his shop and his house.

Alas! The blue prints and works featured in some publications, which were architectural designs of my father that I used to see as a schoolboy, were all washed away when our neighbourhood and other areas outside the walled city of Amritsar were suddenly flooded by a large breach in Upper Bari Doab Canal in 1955/56. People had to rush up to rooftops to save their lives without bothering per force to take of their belongings. Ten years earlier the roof of the two rooms of our rented house in Gali Number 3 in Kot Baba Deep Singh [erstwhile pre-Partition Kot Muhammad Shah] collapsed and my grandfather's collection of material concerning Occultism, among other belongings, was lost forever. I have a faint recollection of handmade encyclopaedic volumes



containing esoteric diagrams which were consigned to the debris. In those days the roofs of the economically weaker houses consisted of wooden beams with wooden joists topped by wooden planks which were covered with earth and finished with mud plaster reinforced with hay. This construction over the years progressively deteriorated until it collapsed without warning, ending in substantial loss.

My father's theory of economics revealed another facet of Economy. I bought a Lambretta scooter in black market for Rs 5,000 in 1968 when the same amount could get me a 10-marla (250 square yards) plot in Chandigarh. It now costs rupees five crore or fifty million Indian rupees! It should not be hard to figure out how the so-called filthily rich have enormous bank balances. Theirs is all ill-gotten money. Last and the Tenth Master of the Sikh Faith Guru Gobind Singh had declared that 'Money is the new supernatural power'. Money, *not* the hyper-hyped Yoga, has the power to move mountains, literally. Politicians in Punjab, as elsewhere throughout India, actually bulldozed whole hills to build private colonies. That's why, like your e-mail inbox has more Spam Mails, you have in India more Scam Money than honestly-earned livelihood—such is the heady lure of Mammonism that you stake everything including Morality to amass illegal wealth.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE) propounded an all-time, inflation-free Theory of Economics: You cannot amass wealth without resorting to unethical means but this God-damn thing doesn't go with you when you leave the mortal world. To underscore this point and to wean the vagabond mind from endlessly embarking upon misadventures on the Sahara of Mammon, Guru Arjun Dev proclaimed: *Greed is like putting more fuel into fire to extinguish it. Hunger for Money can never be satisfied without Contentment: a feeling of happiness or satisfaction with whatever you already have got!*

My father was a man of unwavering convictions and relentless resoluteness. This single trait made him pursue excellence in whatever he did [including wrestling] as a habit of the mind. And soon he emerged to be the strongest man in his village even though he had a medium build of 5 feet 6 inches height. At any rate, his grappling prowess reinforced his self-confidence manifold and gave him a grit that stood him in good stead in fighting the many battles of life to emerge triumphant—always, but without 'gold medals'.

My father unswervingly believed in the grace-showing divinity of Guru Nanak Dev, but never gave up well-planned action for advancement to avoid becoming a pitiable fatalist—as an overwhelming majority of Indians have all along been through the hoary course of human history. Therefore, his argument with my grandfather, on matters of blind faith and self-motivated self-improvement action, was something like this, "What more do you expect God to do for you? He has made you able-bodied, given you brains to think, hands to work, feet to walk—so that you use them to make a living!"

I would like to share three incidents from his life that demonstrate the power of the faith that my father had in divine dispensation. In his younger days when he was working in Baba Bakala as a drawing master he was told by someone that if he recited the *Mool Mantra* 1,00,000 times he would have *Darshan* (a face-to-face direct vision) of Guru Nanak. He undertook the pious exercise with boyish enthusiasm and continued with undiminished passion. He narrated to me that he was not aware when the prescribed count was reached but just the same one fine afternoon during his regular siesta Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith, showed up in his dream. Since he had wished to see Guru Nanak he spoke to the Guru thus, "We are told that Guru Nanak's spirit dwells in all the Ten Sikh Gurus but I am a doubting Thomas and would like to ascertain it firsthand ..." "Guru Arjan," he continued, "ran his right hand down his long beard, and lo! The next moment Guru Nanak appeared in blinding resplendence so powerful that I couldn't stand the sight of him and swooned to fall at his feet!"

The next incident relates to one averment made by Guru Arjan Dev in his famous Bani "*Sukhmani Sahib*" – *Prabh bhaavai bin saas ke raakhai...* [If God so wills He can keep alive anyone even without the breath of

life]. My father had gone to the Government Treasury in Chandigarh's City Centre to collect his monthly pension. When he was close to the building he suddenly suffered a massive heart attack in early 1982. He told us, "Before I fell unconscious I quickly remembered the stated divine utterance and told Guru Arjan Dev that I had believed it all my life, now it is your test to prove whether it is true or a mere poetic fancy!" As we later on learned nobody came forward to help the fallen old man fearing involvement in what they perceived could be easily attributed as murder. Just then my younger brother's classmate appeared on the unnerving scene as if from nowhere. Recognising my father he told the crowd "This is Bapuji, my uncle ... wouldn't you help?" And all the help swiftly poured in at lightning speed. He was rushed to the General Hospital in Sector 16 and admitted to the Emergency Ward. I was informed by my younger brother in the evening when I speedily called on my ailing father who had been put on oxygen and other medical gadgets. This brief account should leave no doubt in anyone's mind about the divine efficacy of total 'self-surrender' belief in divine dispensation that had been my father's staple diet throughout his long life. Subsequently, he survived two more heart attacks, and when he died on 18 September 1993 the attending Heart Specialist revealed that only 13 per cent of the heart organ was working and he had survived all these years on it by sheer willpower [which the doctor did not know was rooted in his patient's unwavering faith in Guru Nanak].

The third incident posed a challenge far more formidable than the previous two. It was taxing and testing of his trust and tenacity as much as of his dogged determination, unflinching devotion, sovereign strength and stamina to undertake it. The persistent family penury had opened my father's mind wide open to any suggestion from anyone that promised plenty if undertaken and conscientiously completed as prescribed. He was precisely in such a frame of mind when some pious soul had told him that if he recited 54,000 times in 18 days Guru Nanak's Japuji's 25 Pauri reproduced below in my English poetic rendering, immense benefit would accrue to him.



PAURI-TWENTYFIVE

Who could assize Lord God's grace
 That matchless Benefactor sans all avarice
 Of Him the world's high and might beg at His door
 Beyond all reckoning remains their staggering number
 How many are ill-fated, sinners, bad men
 Wallowing in evil whose lives sadly lessen
 How many are such who receive but deny
 How many fools and gluttons eat on the sly
 How many are those who forever starve and languish
 But this, too, is a gift, Lord, of Thine own sweet wish
 Willed by Thee is human bondage, and release ordained
 Foolish is he who with Thee fault does find
 With one blow of fate back he comes to his mind
 God alone knows what to give and Himself gives He

Yet a rare one acknowledges this truth gracefully
 The boon of His adoration such power brings
 As makes His chosen one, Nanak, the King of Kings



Note: This is the present-day image of *Dukh Bhanjani Beri* [Annuler of Griefs and Sorrows].
 It was not the same about nine decades ago when my father had chosen the sacred site
 for his psycho-spiritual adventure.

My father would go to the Golden Temple every morning around 2 a.m. and after taking his bath sit down under *Dukh Bhanjani Beri* [Annuler of all griefs and sorrows] and commence his psycho-spiritual workout only to leave the sacred premises when the temple clock struck two in the afternoon. And he completed the self-assigned divine task in 18 days. I do not know why I missed asking him what he had got in return [maybe at that time I was hardly possessed of the required orientation of mind to be curious enough spiritually to find out]. However, now after five decades when I recollect and reflect on it to know the answer, I realise that the promised benefit had flowed into my life to turn it upside down. My formal training in the profession of Building Design has been so transformed into the Architecture of Benedictory Divinity that a deep stirring within my being keeps me untiringly engaged in the exploration of the Spirit World. There is a sustained delight and exponential richness of consciousness whose value is not within the weak power of lesser mortals like me to assess.



MY GRANDFATHER

[1855 - 1945]



My grandfather Sardar Hira Singh was born in 1855, two years ahead of the famous Mutiny, which the Indian historians have likened to the First War of Independence. He hailed from village Gigewali [Tehsil Narowal, District Sialkot, now in Pakistan] where his cousin brother elder to him by about 15 years lived with his family and grandchildren. Their means of livelihood were small-holding farming and carpentry. None of the members of this large family was literate. As far as I can remember my father used to tell us that nobody survived the communal riots of 1947 Partition that led to creation of two independent nations: India and Pakistan.

My grandfather was of short stature, about five feet tall, but bent with age. Little attention was paid to correct posture those days with the result that most old men and women past the age of 65 were seen bent at the back. My granny wore round-rimmed spectacles and was regular with his *paatth* of *Sukhmani Sahib*, *Gurbani* of Guru Arjun Dev, and Fifth Master of the Sikh Faith. By virtue of his deep faith in divine dispensation, combined with his lifelong reading of *Gurbani*, he had acquired certain supernatural powers. People often came with their cows that had run dry,

seeking cure. He would mumble some *mantra* (a word, phrase or sound that is repeated again and again, especially during prayer or meditation) and then blow his breath over a ball of kneaded flour which was given to the sick cattle. Reportedly, the ailing animals returned to normal milk-yielding routine. He offered a similar cure for small children who were suspected to be under the evil influence of a curse. However, in these cases, prayer, *mantra*, and blessing of breath over the child's face was the spiritual remedy.

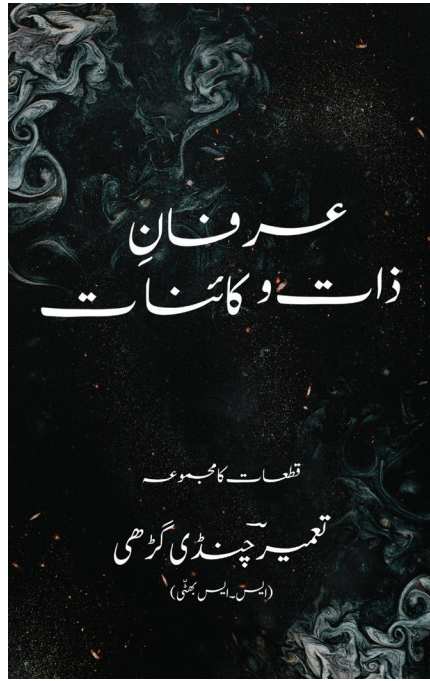
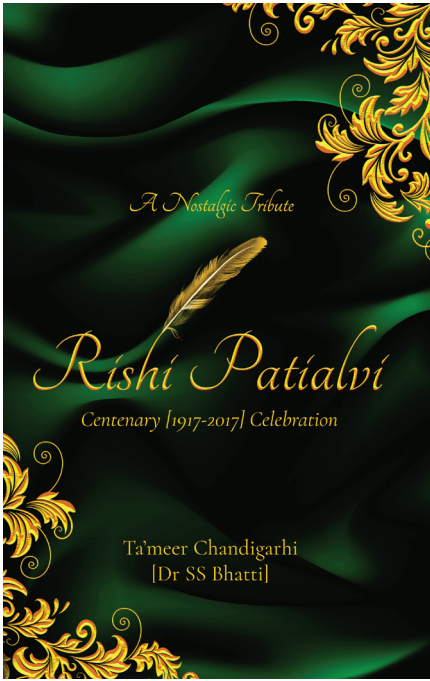
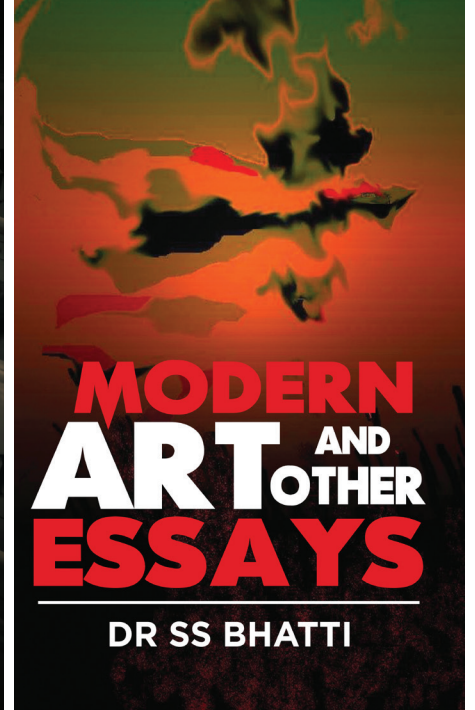
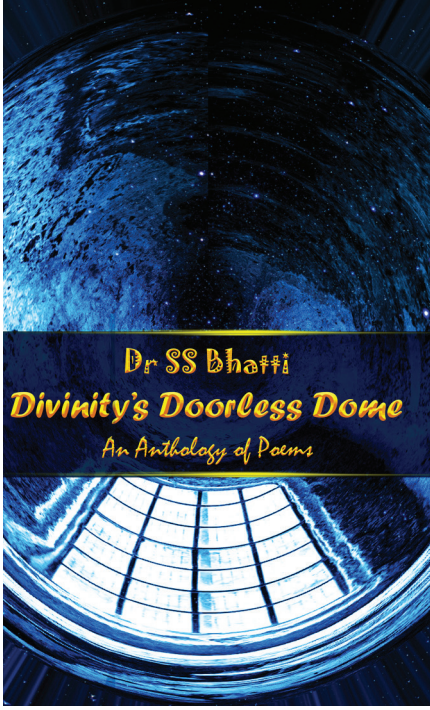
He had acquired another uncanny power the secret of which he wanted to pass on to my father. He said that it was possible to forecast your death 40 days in advance—and he explained that just as you have a shadow on Earth you have one on the Heavens. The difference is that the former you can see but the latter you cannot. The secret initiation teaches you how to see your shadow cast on the sky—which disappeared 40 days advance of your date of death.

My father refused my grandpa's offer by saying that he wouldn't like to have knowledge that scares him into giving up mortal activities so early before leaving this world. But sure enough, my granny demonstrated this truth when it came to his own case. While he was hale and hearty, he started thanking the visitors for calling on him and would conclude by saying "Now this *Mela* (fair) is going to close shortly!" When his rural nephews teased him in rustic mockery that they won't let him leave this world without getting him married again he would sternly rebuke them in a language generously spiced with the villagers' favourite invectives.

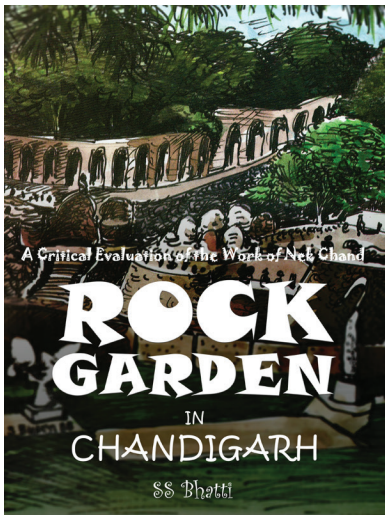
I have only a faint recollection of my grandfather because he died when I was barely seven. He was short-statured, sparsely-built, with deep faith in divine dispensation, and hunched by advanced age: he died at 90! I remember seeing some notebooks with esoteric diagrams and *mantras* which he kept as a precious treasure. I can say no more than this because my father continued cursing his father for not providing him the support that he had desperately needed to acquire formal education to become a qualified professional for which he had enormous potential. Since he never took alcohol in long life my grandfather was put in charge of the bottling section of the local brewery and winery. It was only towards the end of his life that my father's cousins from the village surreptitiously served him a drink and he contracted diarrhoea from which he did not recover and ultimately died.



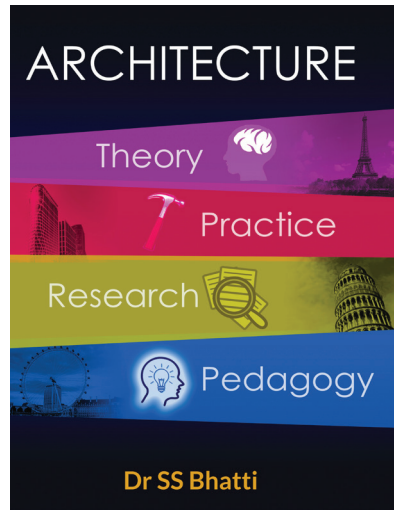
Some of the Books by the same Author



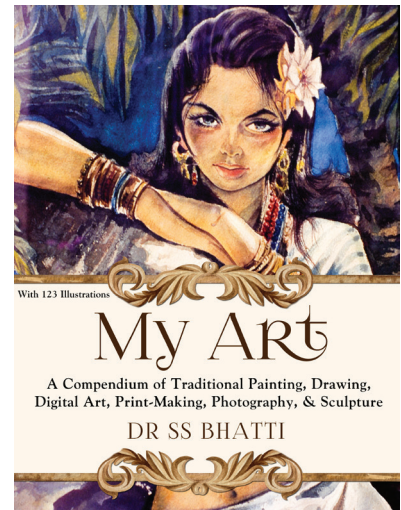
World's First Urdu Poetry
Book by an Architect



M Arch from The University of Queensland, Australia (1983) that made Rock Garden world-famous



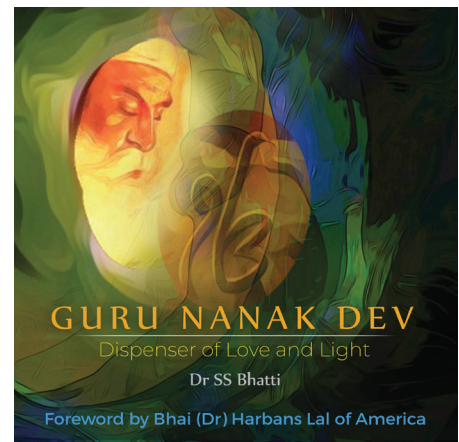
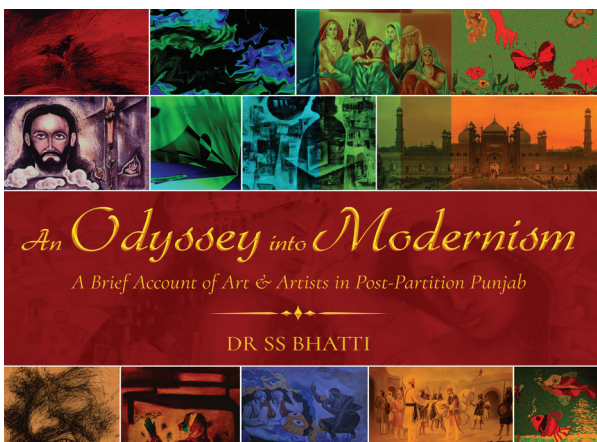
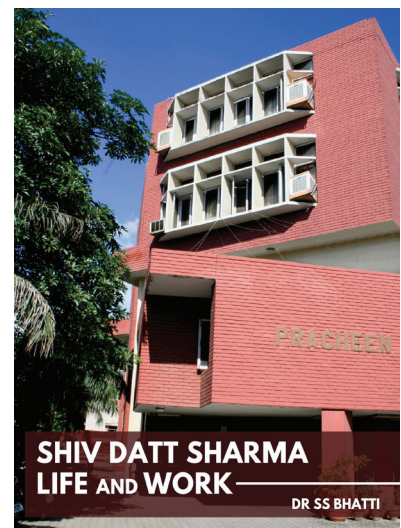
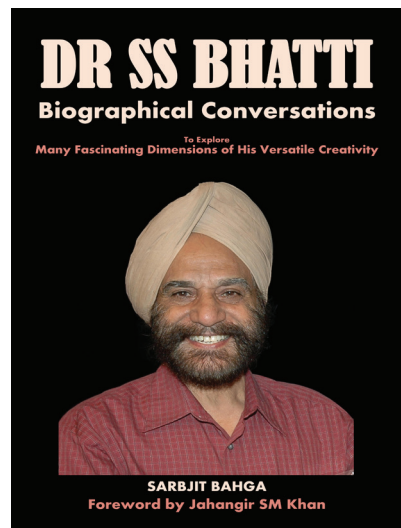
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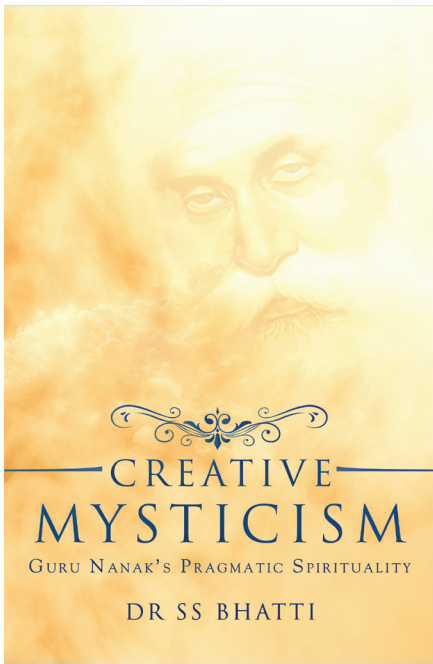
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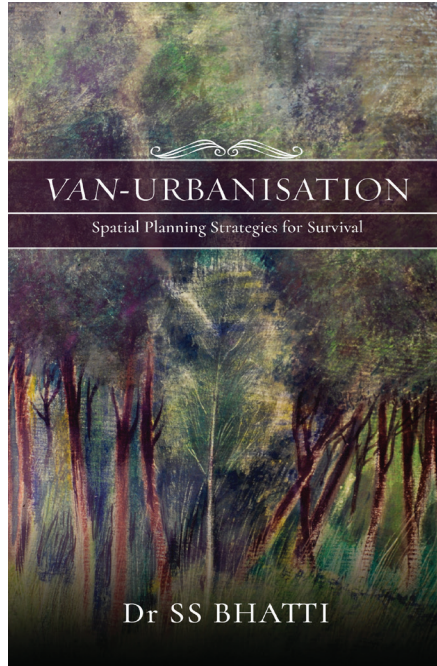
First PhD (1991)



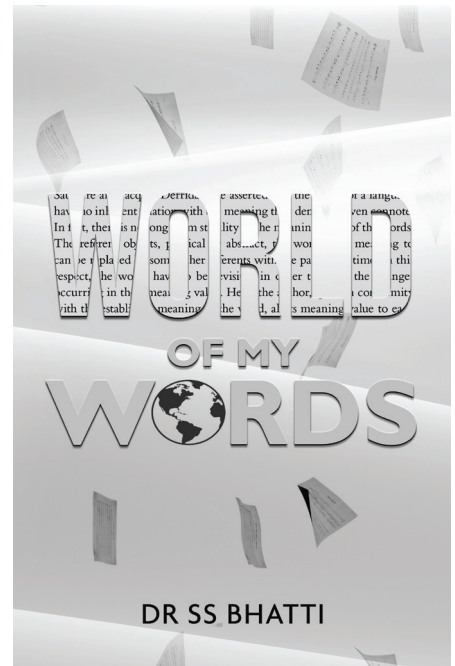
Celebration Guru Nanak's 550th Birth Anniversary



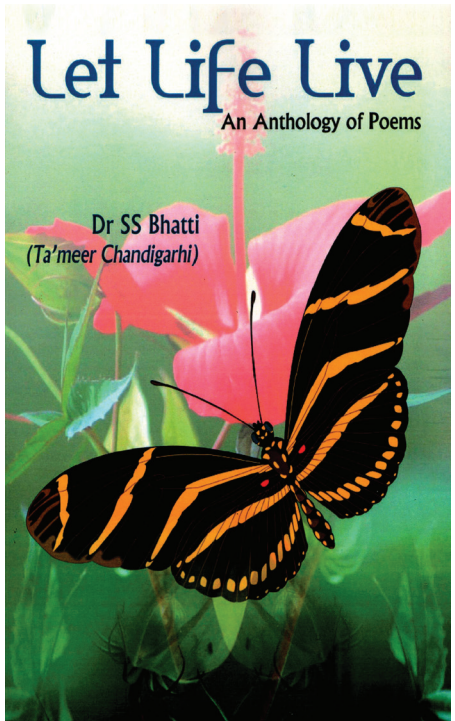
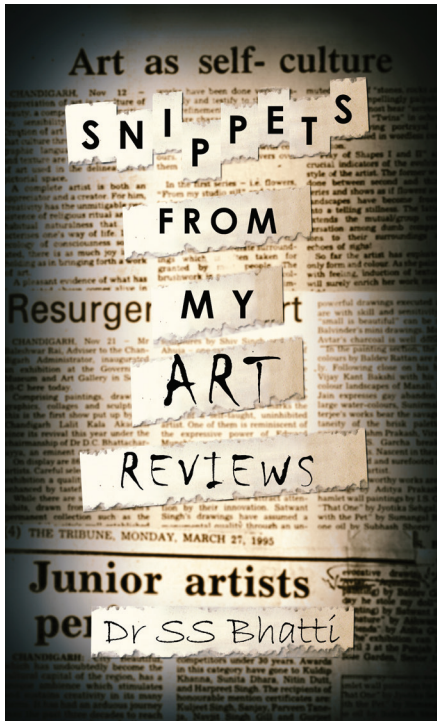
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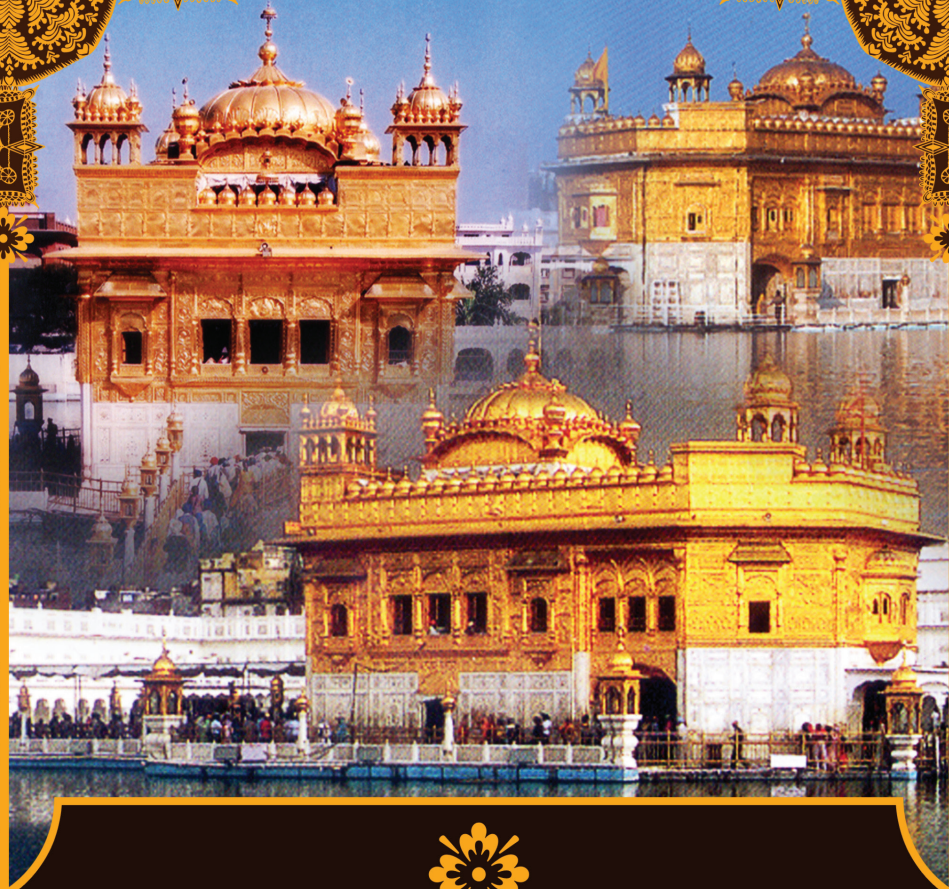


World's First Holistic Green Document



World's First English Dictionary by One Author

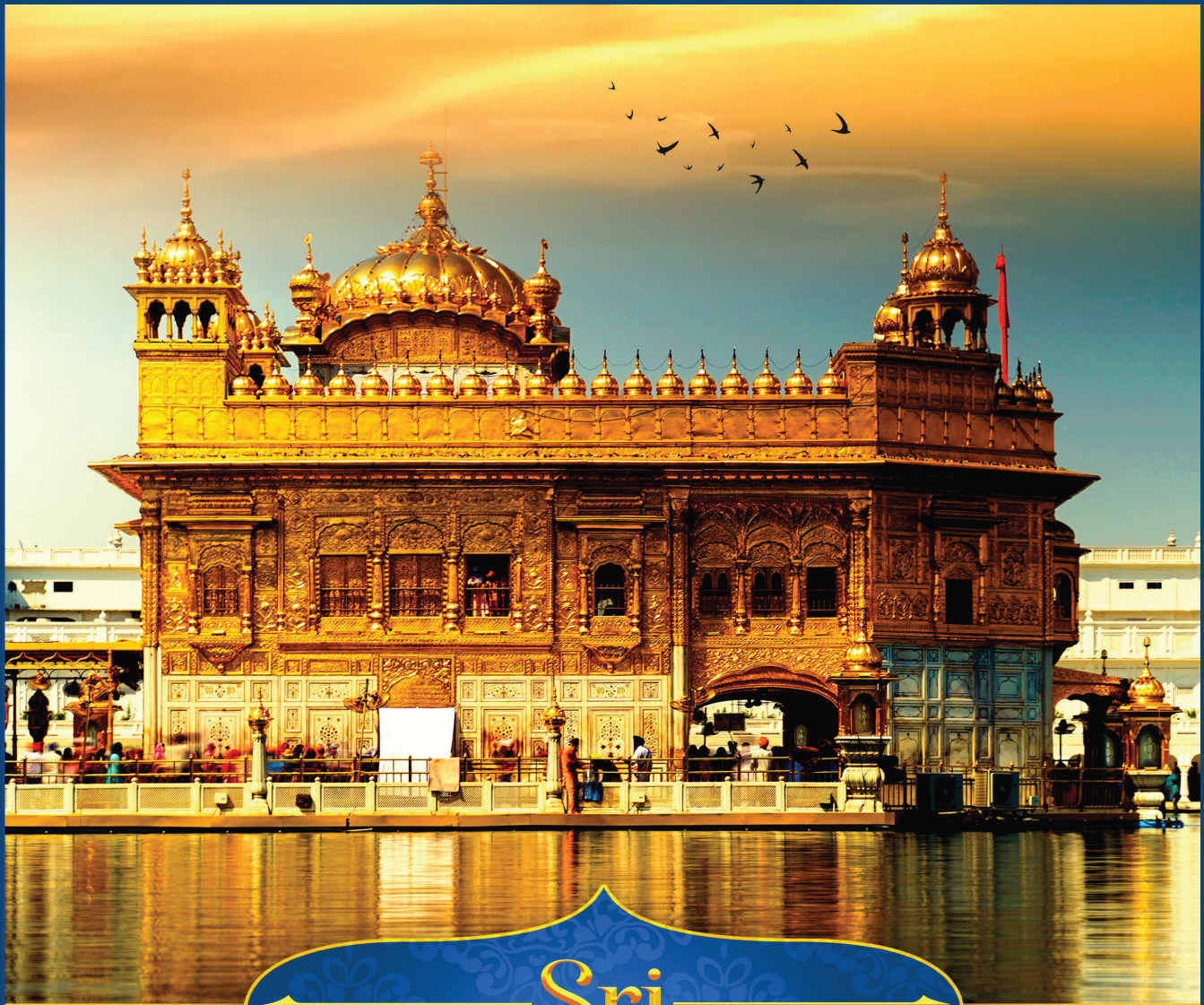




GOLDEN TEMPLE

MARVEL OF SIKH ARCHITECTURE

DR SS BHATTI



Sri
HARMANDAR SAHIB

ARCHITECTURE ♦ ENGINEERING ♦ AESTHETICS

GOLDEN TEMPLE, AMRITSAR

DR SS BHATTI

Third PhD (2000)

