

**Sikh Faith - An Epitome
of Inter-Faith
for Divine Realisation**

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

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of Inter-Faith
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ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੇਸ਼ਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥
Sarab dharam meh(i) sr-aisatdharam(u)
Har(i) ko Naam(u) jap(i) nirmal karam(u). (266)

(Among all the religions, the supreme religion, in reality, is to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion; imbibe spiritual love with full faith; render selfless service to humanity; so as to eradicate ego completely and thus merge with Him)

Iqbal Singh (Baba)

Publication Bureau
The Kalgidhar Trust, Gurdwara Baru Sahib

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This book was first released
at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib, New Delhi
on 9 February, 2014

First Edition :

February 2014 1100 copies

Second Edition :

November 2014 5000 copies

Reprint :

November 2017 5000 copies

Revised :

August 2018 5000 copies

ISBN :

978-93-5321-387-9

Price :

Rs. 500/-

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Printed at:

Printwell, 146, Industrial Focal Point, Amritsar

ISBN 978935321387-9



9 789353 213879

Saint Attar Singh Ji once said:

"The simplest and direct meanings are Guru Nanak Dev's, as He came to show a clear cut path to mankind, groping in darkness; and not to show His grandiose learning by quibbling on words."

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Preface

Sikh Faith is an epitome of Universal Faith for the Spiritual uplift of humanity. Guru Granth Sahib - the holy Scripture contains divine Hymns only of six Sikh Gurus and eighteen divine sages from both the high castes (Brahmins, Kings, Kshatriyas etc.) and the lower castes like cobblers, weavers, butchers etc. Contributions from five Muslim sages and eleven Bhattas (Bards) belonging to upper class Brahmins make it an inter-faith divine scripture.

Guru Granth Sahib has only one divine message for the whole of the humanity, i.e., how to become Divine. The Divine has created the whole universe and pervades everywhere. The persons with divine outlook see Him as One in all and all in One and develop an approach of spiritual brotherhood. All religions show us the different ways to reach one destination, which merge with the Divine within. Guru Granth Sahib teaches humanity how to become God-conscious and create spiritual brotherhood in the universe. If somebody studies Guru Granth Sahib in depth, he would realize that this is the spiritual guide for the entire mankind.

When a Sikh devotee bows in reverence before Guru Granth Sahib, he doesn't bow before the divine hymns of only the six Sikh Gurus, but also bows to the divine hymns of those saints, who initially followed their own spiritual path whether Hindu, Muslim or of any other faith and belonging to low or high caste. The Sikh devotee, in fact, is paying respect to the holy Scripture, which is inter-faith in itself and thus has a universal message for the entire humanity.

Guru Granth Sahib contains the Divine hymns of Sikh Gurus and other saints who initially followed their spiritual faith according to their caste, creed and religion and later they became spiritually enlightened. The table below mentions the contribution of the divine hymns of those Sikh Gurus and the saints:



The Divine Hymns of Six Gurus (Divine Masters) of the Sikhs

S. No.	The Divine Master	No. of divine hymns recited	No. of Ragas
1	Guru Nanak Dev	974	19
2	Guru Angad Dev	63 Slokas	In Vaars (Odes)
3	Guru Amardas	907	17
4	Guru Ramdas	679	30
5	Guru Arjan Dev	2218	30
6	Guru Teg Bahadur	116	15

The Divine Hymns of 05 Muslim Saints

S. No.	Saint	Hymns	Residents of	Caste	Period
1	Bhagat Farid	116	Multan	Muslim	1173-1266
2	Bhagat Kabir	535	Uttar Pradesh	Muslim Weaver	1398-1518
3	Bhagat Bhikhan	2	Uttar Pradesh	Muslim by Faith	1480-1573
4	Rababi Balwand	5	-----	Muslim by Faith	-----
5	Rababi Satta	3	-----	Muslim by Ffaith	-----

Continued....

The Divine Hymns of 24 Hindu Saints

S.No.	Saint	Hymns	Residents of	Caste	Period
1	Bhagat Jaidev	2	Bengal	Brahmin	1201-1273
2	Bhagat Trilochan	4	Maharashtra	Vaish	1267-1335
3	Bhagat Namdev	61	Maharashtra	Calicographer	1270-1350
4	Bhagat Sadna	1	Sindh	Butcher	1270-1350
5	Bhagat Ramanand	1	Tamil Nadu	Gaud Brahmin	1366-1467
6	Bhagat Ravidas	40	Uttar Pradesh	Cobbler	1378-1529
7	Bhagat Sain	1	Rajasthan	Barber	1390-1440
8	Bhagat Dhanna	4	Rajasthan	Jat	1415-1475
9	Bhagat Pipa	1	Rajasthan	Rajput	1426-1562
10	Bhagat Surdas	1	Uttar Pradesh	Brahmin	1478-1573
11	Bhagat Parmanand	1	Maharashtra	Brahmin	1483-1593
12	Bhagat Beni	3	Bihar	Brahmin	-----
13	Baba Sunder	6	-----	Kshatriya	-----
Divine Hymns of 11 High Class Enlightened Hindu Saints -Brahmins - (Bhatts)					
14	Bhatt Kalsahar	54 Hymns		Brahmins	
15	Bhatt Gaayand	13 Hymns		Brahmins	
16	Bhatt Bhikha	2 Hymns		Brahmins	
17	Bhatt Kirat	8 Hymns		Brahmins	
18	Bhatt Mathura	14 Hymns		Brahmins	
19	Bhatt Jalap	5 Hymns		Brahmins	
20	Bhatt Salhh	3 Hymns		Brahmins	
21	Bhatt Bhall	1 Hymns		Brahmins	
22	Bhatt Bal	5 Hymns		Brahmins	
23	Bhatt Harbans	2 Hymns		Brahmins	
24	Bhatt Nall	16 Hymns		Brahmins	

As such, the Shabad Guru (the Divine 'Word'), i.e., Guru Granth Sahib should be visualized as the true Guru of the whole humanity to realize the divine within to obtain salvation in this very life.

The reader would be surprised to know that different Names of God conceptualized by seekers after Truth for reciting to get salvation have been incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib and are mentioned in the table given below :

The Names of God recited by different saints mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib

Divine Name	No. of Times	Divine Name	No. of Times
Hari	8344	Narayan	89
Ram	2533	Antarjami	61
Prabhu	1371	Jagdish	60
Gopal	491	Satnam	59
Gobind	475	Mohan	54
Parmatma	324	Allah	46
Karta	228	Bhagwan	30
Thakur	216	Nirankar	29
Daata	151	Krishna	22
Parmeshwar	139	Waheguru	13
Murari	97	Wah Guru	3

The readers must know the fact that in the holy Scripture Guru Granth Sahib, the Name Ram as recited by the Hindus has been incorporated 2533 times, Allah - the Divine Name as recited by the Muslims 46 times, while the Divine Name Waheguru, as recited by the Sikhs has been incorporated only 13 times.

It is amply clear from the above tables that whosoever has an urge to tread the divine path, would seek the divine truth by reading and reciting Guru Granth Sahib with full love and devotion.

Thus, the message is clear that the seeker after Truth, who follows the path of his religion with full love and devotion would reach the same destination, i.e., to see One in all and all in One - the Divine Realm.

The Noble laureate Bertrand Russell has rightly remarked, 'The Humanity should not be deprived of such Divine Message of Guru Granth Sahib which is for the whole Mankind to share.'

Guru Granth Sahib has amply clarified that the whole humanity that belongs to different castes, creeds, and religions has been created by the all-pervading One, i.e., the Divine, which is the only source of creation of the whole universe. The lucky ones, who follow the divine instructions in letter and spirit would merge with Him and would get salvation in this very life. Those, who follow the instincts of their mind, under the influence of five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and ego would wander miserably in the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Guru Granth Sahib clearly proclaims that this universe has been created and destroyed many a time and there exist countless suns, moons, earths and galaxies in the whole cosmos. But the present day science, still groping in the dark could not explore this fact, even up to a tinge of details of His Creation till date.

God, therefore, can be realized only through love, faith and devotion as explained in this book. An earnest seeker after Truth would be benefited after reading this book. Certain key terms and ideas have often been repeated (a bit too often, some readers might feel), in order to emphasise and inculcate the spiritual values. Scholars of spiritual philosophy would of course already be well versed with these topics. While writing this book, some discrepancies might have appeared, for which the author offers his sincere regrets and would be grateful if these are brought to his notice.



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Union with the Divine (God)

The sole purpose of human life is to merge with the Divine. "O Man! You have been blessed with the human body to realise the Divine within, for getting self-realisation by shedding your ego completely". The main hurdle in realising the Divine within is the ego, which consists of five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Man has to eradicate his ego by reciting the Divine Name and by serving humanity selflessly. In fact, we can achieve this aim of life by merging with the One in accordance with His grace. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Divine Master has amply clarified this objective in His Divine hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

Bha-ee paraapat(i) maanukh d-ai-hureeaa. Gobind milanh kee eh t-ai-ree baree-aa. (12)

(O Man! God has blessed you with the human body to realise the Divine within, in this very life.)

That is why human beings are considered supreme among all the species on earth. All forms of creation, ranging from inert matter to plant and animal species, have the potential to merge with the Almighty Lord, and escape the cycle of birth and rebirth. However, in order to do so, they must first be born as human-beings. They must then submit themselves completely to the Divine and tread the spiritual path with faith, love and devotion. The Divine Law governs this spiritual cycle.

Another version of the creation of the Universe has been explained by Guru Gobind Singh in the following verse:

ਜਬ ਉਦਕਰਖ ਕਰਾ ਕਰਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਜਾ ਧਰਤ ਤਬ ਦੇਹ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥

ਜਬ ਆਕਰਖ ਕਰਤ ਹੋ ਕਬਹੂੰ ॥ ਤੁਮ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਤ ਦੇਹ ਧਰ ਸਭਹੂੰ ॥

Jabb udkarakh karaa Kartaaraa. Prajaa dharat tabb d-ai-h apaaraa.

Jabb aakarakh karat ho kab-hoon. Tumm m-ei milatt d-ai-h dhar sabh-hoon.

(Chaupae Sahib)

(When the Divine wanted to create the manifestation, it came into existence with one spoken word of the Divine. This is called the 'Bing Bang theory' by the present day scientists. In the next stanza Guru says: When the Divine wanted to wind up the manifestations of the Universe, the same merge in Him.)

According to Guru Arjan Dev :

ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਰਿਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥

Ka-ee baar pasr-e-o paasaar. (276)

(Many a times, the Divine Lord created the Universe and destroyed the same, but, He alone pervades under all these circumstances.)

The scientists are groping in the darkness to know when the world came into existence. They are trying to predict the period of evolution by analyzing the fossils according to their own notions and experimentation to deduce meaning.

No one, except the Divine, can know how and when this Universe came into being. However, in the light of the Divine Hymns (Gurbani) of Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, we have made a humble attempt to explain the creation of this Universe for students of spirituality.

Undoubtedly, it is very difficult for a mortal to explain when the Divine came into being. A verse in Guru Granth Sahib, however, makes it clear:

ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੁ ਉਪਾਇਓਨੁ ਤਦਹੁ ਹੋਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ॥

Aapnhaa aap(u) upaa-e-on(u) Tadah(u) hor(u) na koe. (509)

(When the Divine Lord Himself pervaded, there was nothing else, except Him.)

Since eternity, there has been but one invisible Divine Reality. Says Guru Nanak Dev:

ਅਰਬਦ ਨਰਬਦ ਧੰਦੁਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਧਰਣਿ ਨ ਗਗਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥

ਨਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਨ ਚੰਦੁ ਨ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਇਦਾ ॥

ਖਾਣੀ ਨ ਬਾਣੀ ਪਉਣ ਨ ਪਾਣੀ ॥ ਓਪਤਿ ਖਪਤਿ ਨ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣੀ ॥

ਖੰਡ ਪਤਾਲ ਸਪਤ ਨਹੀ ਸਾਗਰ ਨਦੀ ਨ ਨੀਰੁ ਵਹਾਇਦਾ ॥

Arbad narbad dhundhookaaraa. Dharanh(i) na gagna hukam(u) apaaraa.

Naa dinn(u) r-ei-n(i) na chandd na sooraj(u) Sunn samaadh(i) lagaa-e-daa.

Khaanhee na baanhee paounh na paanhee. Opat(i) khapat(i) na aavanh jaanhee.

Khandd pataal sapat nahee saagar Nadee na neer(u) vahaa-e-daa. (1035)

(There was, then, no earth and no sky. It was only the limitless Divine Order that prevailed. There was neither day nor night; neither moon nor sun. He, the Divine, alone existed in the form of spiritual bliss. There was neither any creation nor speech, neither air nor water, neither destruction nor transmigration, since no life existed then. There were no planets, no oceans and no rivers flowing into them.)

In His Divine composition Japuji Sahib, Guru Nanak Dev reveals:

ਕੀਤਾ ਪਸਾਉ ਏਕੋ ਕਵਾਉ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਹੋਏ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਆਉ ॥

Keetaa pasaaou eko kavaaou. Tis t-ai ho-e lakh dareeaaou. (3)

(The Divine Lord created the Universe with the Divine Order. Then, innumerable rivers and oceans came into existence.)

and

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥
ਦਿਵਸੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਦੁਇ ਦਾਈ ਦਾਇਆ ਖੇਲੈ ਸਗਲ ਜਗਤੁ ॥
ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਬੁਰਿਆਈਆ ਵਾਚੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਹਦੂਰਿ ॥
ਕਰਮੀ ਆਪੋ ਆਪਣੀ ਕੇ ਨੇੜੈ ਕੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥

Pavanh(u) Guru paanhee pita Maataa dharat(i) mahatt(u).
Divas(u) raat(i) du-e daaee daa-e-aa Khai-l-ei sagal jagatt(u). (8)
Chang-e-aaeaaa bur-e-aeaeaa Vaach-ei Dharam(u) hadoor(i).
Karmee aapo aapnhee K-ai n-ai-rh-ei k-ai door(i).

(Voice of the Divine persons, conveying the Divine thoughts of truthful living through Divine words to humanity for establishing permanent peace and spiritual brotherhood in the world, is carried through air, which acts as a medium. Since the Divine 'Word' is conveyed to mankind through air, which acts as a carrier of sound waves, it is thus called 'Guru'. Water, the agent of all creation is the Father and the Earth that produces and nurtures all that feed mankind, the Mother. Day and night are the male and female nurses. The day makes man play his part in this drama of the world and night, like a female nurse, and puts him to sleep to be fresh after rest. The good and evil actions leave their impressions instantly on human mind. Good actions, like meditating on the Divine Name, lead one closer to the Divine within, while the evil actions take one farther and farther away from the holy path till one gets engrossed in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride.)

Another Divine verse in Guru Granth Sahib, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev reiterates the same point:

ਸਾਚੇ ਤੇ ਪਵਨਾ ਭਇਆ ਪਵਨੈ ਤੇ ਜਲੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਜਲ ਤੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣੁ ਸਾਜਿਆ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਮੋਇ ॥

Saach-ai t-ai pavnaa bha-e-aa Pavn-ei t-ai jal(u) ho-e.
Jal t-ai tribhavanh(u) saaj-e-aa Ghat(i) ghat(i) jot(i) samo-e. (19)

(The Divine Lord created air and from air came water, which in turn gave rise to the entire Universe in which He Himself pervades. Thus, the Divine Lord was manifested in the whole Creation.)

The entire creation is broadly divisible into three classes:

1. **Inert Matter** : This class consists of suns, moons, stars, planets (including earth), oceans, rivers, mountains, rocks, boulders, stones and minute particles like grains of sand, etc.

It is known as the material lifeless class, whose sole purpose under the Divine Order is to sustain, nurture and serve the plant kingdom, which is superior to the inert matter.

2. **Plant Kingdom** : This class of matter ranges from the lowest forms of life,

like fungi to short-lived plants like food crops, shrubs and bushes, fruit trees-tall and long living trees providing timber, etc. As per the Divine Order, the plant kingdom depends upon inert matter for its sustenance and propagation. This class of species not only nourishes and sustains the highest category - the animal kingdom - but also helps to keep the environment clean and pollution-free.

- 3. Animal Kingdom :** This class comprises minute amoebae, insects, reptiles, birds (large and small), carnivores like cats and dogs, small herbivores like rabbits, and large herbivores like cows, buffaloes, elephants, etc. Human beings also belong to this class, but are considered superior to all other animals due to the fact that they have been bestowed with spiritual wisdom by the Divine Lord. This enables them to merge with Him by reciting His Divine Name.

The above classes comprise 8.4 million species, which according to Indian philosophy, are caught in the cycle of birth and rebirth. All the lower species are destined to serve man, who has been blessed with the Divine Wisdom by the Almighty Lord to enable him merge in Him by treading the Divine Path with full love, faith and devotion. Whenever a species in the hierarchy of the animal kingdom faithfully serves the lower categories in its own class by following the Divine Order, it would be born into a higher species of the animal kingdom in its next birth. Over successive births, it would keep evolving into a higher and higher form of life, until eventually taking birth as a human being. Guru Arjan Dev stresses in the following hymn that man, with his superior intellect, has to take care of all the species under the Divine Law and has always to be prepared to perform his duties, so that the wheels of the Divine Administration roll on smoothly. It is, therefore, vital for man to perform his Divine Duty for welfare of the whole Creation of the Divine Lord:

ਅਵਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ ॥ ਇਸੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਕਦਾਰੀ ॥

Avar jon(i) t-ai-ree panihaaree. Is(u) dhartee meh t-ai-ree sikdaaree. (374)

(All creations of the Universe are your slaves and you are sovereign on this earth.)

The whole manifestation of this Universe has been created by the Divine (God). When He wanted to create it, He first of all created air, which then created water under the Divine Law, and from water, all the inert matter came into existence - right from a grain of sand to different types of rocks, mountains and the highest peaks. Water makes the ocean in which due to sedimentation many layers of matter are formed. In the order of the Divine, due to many earth quakes, the sediments of the ocean came out and became huge mountains. The glaring example of this is the Himalyan region in which we find different layers of rocks in the form of sedimentation of sand.

On the rocks in the ocean, bacteria, Protista evolved. Due to many earth quakes, rocks and mountains were formed, which in turn gave rise to the plant and animal kingdom, including the human beings. The Divine Order is termed by the present day science as mutations and further evolution (Fig. 7A). However, it is difficult to explain how nature has accomplished all these processes. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth divine Master, has amply clarified:

ਕਈ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਕੀਨੋ ਬਿਸਥਾਰ ॥ (੨੭੭)

Ka-ee jugat(i) keeno bisthaar.

(Due to many ways and means, the Divine created this manifestation.)

However, God-conscious persons, who have completely merged with the Divine within, can perceive this entire phenomenon due to their Divine Wisdom.

When a human being comes into existence, he has the option to shape his future through his association with good or bad persons. This is a very crucial period for a person to shape his destiny. All divine persons, initially belonging to different faiths followed their religious holy books, which laid emphasis on association with divine persons. This inspired them to tread the Divine Path, and ultimately, they also became Divine. If any person, with full determination, keeps company of the God-conscious persons, who are already treading the Divine Path, then he would become a student of spirituality, i.e., Sikh. If a Sikh continues to keep company of these spiritual persons, he becomes Sanmukh (closer to perceiving the instruction of the Divine). With the intensification of this holy practice, he becomes Gursikh, i.e., closer to Guru, the Divine Master, to follow His divine instructions in letter and spirit. By reciting the Divine Name vigorously, and following the instructions of the Divine Order, in letter and spirit, with full faith, he eradicates his ego completely and becomes Gurmukh, which means, he ultimately reaches the Divine Realm and becomes One with the Divine by losing his identity completely.

On the other hand, if a person falls into bad company, he becomes Manmukh, a person who follows the instincts of his mind, which consist of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. This indicates his slipping towards hell. However, if by the stroke of destiny, he comes in contact with a divine person, and follows his instructions in letter and spirit, and starts reciting the Divine Name, he can also improve his state of mind and can become a divine person.

On the other hand, if he still follows the instincts of his mind and keeps company of evil-minded persons or atheists (non-believers of the Divine Power), and follows his mind's evil instinct, then he will definitely fall into the chain of non-believers of God (Nastiks). With the passage of time, as a result of the bad company, he becomes most egoistic, having animal instinct (Sakat). After death,

he would take birth in the species of the animal kingdom, with which he was more attached during his human life. The Guru has amply clarified these life-stages, but unfortunately egotistic persons fall prey to these habits. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Master, defines the doctrine of evolution of life with some concrete examples:

ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਭਏ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਾ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਜ ਮੀਨ ਕੁਰੰਗਾ ॥
 ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਪੰਖੀ ਸਰਪ ਹੋਇਓ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਹੈਵਰ ਬ੍ਰਿਖ ਜੋਇਓ ॥
 ਮਿਲੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ ਮਿਲਨ ਕੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥ ਚਿਰੰਕਾਲ ਇਹ ਦੇਹ ਸੰਜਰੀਆ ॥
 ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਸੈਲ ਗਿਰਿ ਕਰਿਆ ॥ ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਗਰਭ ਹਿਰਿ ਖਰਿਆ ॥
 ਕਈ ਜਨਮ ਸਾਖ ਕਰਿ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥ ਲਖ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਜੋਨਿ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਇਆ ॥
 ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਭਇਓ ਜਨਮੁ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਭਜੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ॥
 ਤਿਆਗਿ ਮਾਨੁ ਝੂਠੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰਹਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਪਰਵਾਨੁ ॥
 ਜੋ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੋਆ ਸੁ ਤੁਝ ਤੇ ਹੋਗੁ ॥ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੂਜਾ ਕਰਣੈ ਜੋਗੁ ॥
 ਤਾ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਜਾ ਲੈਹਿ ਮਿਲਾਇ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇ ॥

Ka-ee janam bha-e keet patangaa. Ka-ee janam gaj meen kurangaa.

Ka-ee janam pankhee sarap ho-e-o. Ka-ee janam haivar brikh jo-e-o.

Mil(u) Jagdees milan kee baree-aa. Chirankaal eh d-ai-h sanjaree-aa.

Ka-ee janam s-ei-l gir(i) kar-e-aa. Ka-ee janam garabh hir(i) khar-e-aa.

Ka-ee janam saakh kar(i) upaa-e-aa. Lakh chaouraaseeh jon(i) bhramaa-e-aa.

Saadhsangg(i) bha-e-o janam(u) praapat(i). Kar(i) sewa bhaj(u) Har(i) Har(i) Gurmat(i).

Tiaag(i) maan(u) jhooth(u) abhimaan(u). Jeevat mareh dargeh parvaan(u).

Jo kichh(u) ho-aa su tujh t-ai hog(u). Avar(u) na doojaa karnh-ei jog(u).

Taa milee-ei jaa l-ei-h(i) milaa-e. Kahu Nanak Har(i) Har(i) gunh gaa-e. (176)

(O human being! You have attained life in human form after going through the life-cycle of 8.4 million species. Now you have been blessed with a human life with the Divine Wisdom to merge with the Almighty Lord, from whom you have been separated for an immeasurable time. So you should not miss this opportunity. You have passed through several lives, such as inert matter like rocks and mountains. You spent many a life in the plant kingdom. Likewise, you remained in the life-cycle of the animal kingdom as worm, insect, elephant, fish and deer. You also have lived the life of birds, snakes, horses and oxen. You have kept wandering through 8.4 million forms and now you have been blessed with human life after many life times. You should join the holy company and practice the Divine Wisdom as enunciated by the Almighty Lord by rendering selfless service and by meditating on the Divine Name with utmost devotion. Shed falsehood, false praise, arrogance, etc. so that after shedding ego completely, you would be showered with the blessings to merge with the Almighty Lord. The way to self-realisation in this very life is by shedding the ego completely. By doing so, you will

attain the divinely formless state in this very life. All these divine virtues are obtained only by the grace and blessings of the Almighty Lord, with the help of and in the company of divine persons.)

The Divine Lord is the Creator of this Universe and His Divine Power is the source of Creation of all matter. With His Divine Power, He pervades the Universe. Scientists, engaged in atomic research, have discovered that the minutest particles in matter are the quark, the meson and the leptons. Even they are bound to acknowledge that these fundamental particles of matter must have originated from some hidden source of Divine Power.

Science broadly describes the process of origin of matter as following:

Quarks, mesons and leptons combine together to form protons and neutrons, which in turn combine to form the nucleus of the atom, around which electrons orbit. Various combinations of these atoms form molecules that further combine in various ways to form visible matter, from which the three classes of Creation - inert matter, plant species and animal kingdom, including human beings - have come into being. It is clear that the hidden Divine Creative Force that gave origin to the quark, the meson and the lepton, is the basis of all matter.

The same energy is the source of the entire Universe and is ingrained in its minutest particle.

It is thus evident that this Divine Power (God) is the source of all Creation and is Omnipresent as described in figure-7B.

Under the Law of Conservation of Energy, the sum total of energy in the Universe is constant. In other words, the destruction of any form of matter may change its appearance, but the atoms comprising it don't get destroyed. They merely get rearranged to form a new molecular entity. Says Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master:

ਜਿਮੀ ਜਮਾਨ ਕੇ ਬਿਖੈ ਸਮਸਤਿ ਏਕ ਜੋਤ ਹੈ ॥

ਨਾ ਘਾਟਿ ਹੈ ਨ ਬਾਢਿ ਹੈ, ਨ ਘਾਟਿ ਬਾਢਿ ਹੋਤ ਹੈ ॥

Jimee jamaan k-ai bikh-ei Samasat(i) ek jot h-ei.

Na ghaat(i) h-ei na baadh(i) h-ei, Na ghaat(i) baadh(i) hoat h-ei.

(Akāl Ustat: Line 166)

(The indestructible Divine Power that creates the matter, neither diminishes nor increases, nor is it destroyed.)

The real aim of human life is to strive to imbibe spiritual virtues. To achieve this goal, man has been blessed with wisdom, so that he can meditate on the Divine Name, root out his ego, and merge with the Supreme Being. Keeping this aim in mind, he should carry out his worldly responsibilities honestly, with utmost toil, as

if he were performing his divine duty as per the Will of God. Such devotion would enable him to merge with the Divine in this very life.

Those who meditate on the Divine Name with love and devotion, reach the goal of human life. They rise above all temptations and realise the Divine within. Their faces shine with divine glory and they lead many more to this divine goal and free them from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

However, instead of utilising the Divine Wisdom to tread the spiritual path, man gets entangled in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Instead of striving towards the spiritual goal, he gets engrossed in worldly comforts. With his limited egoistic knowledge, he tries to search for the Divine Truth, but without much success. Entrapped in worldly attractions and lustful pleasures, he fails to realise that the Divine Lord resides within him and gives him the power to perform all his worldly duties. He tries to find this Divine Truth with the help of his limited egoistic intellect, but in vain, for, the Divine Truth cannot be realised through reasoning and logic. It can only be realised by shedding the ego completely and by complete submission to the Will of the Divine Lord. This stage can only be attained by being in the company of divine persons and following their holy instructions in letter and spirit.

Those, who meditate on His Name with worldly aims (Sakaar Vaasana), attain them in the next human birth. But those, who go on meditating and singing His praises without any personal desire, and depend wholly on His grace, get the gifts of self-realisation and freedom from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

A vast majority of mankind is materialistic. They utilise their intellect and energy to acquire worldly possessions, which take man further away from the goal of attaining Divine Wisdom.

Some scientists are engrossed in research to find out the origin of the Universe. These scientists, through their discovery of the fundamental particles of matter, try to find the Divine Truth underlying all matter. However, God, who is Invisible and Formless, cannot be attained in this way. Using their intellect, scientists combine various particles of matter and discover new molecules. Driven by ego and the five vices, these scientists generate atomic energy, and use this energy to have control over their fellow beings. These discoveries are contrary to the Divine Law and have potential to destroy the Universe. Thermo-nuclear weapons are a glaring example of such inventions that have become the greatest threat to the Universe. This dangerous trend does not stop here. Through scientific research, man has not only succeeded in making poisonous and chemical weapons, but also has attempted to clone nature's Creation. Under this greed and for getting false fame, man has

attempted to disturb the harmony and balance of nature and has sown the seeds of his own destruction.

Guru Arjan Dev states:

ਪਰਮਾਣੋ ਪਰਜੰਤ ਆਕਾਸਹ ਦੀਪ ਲੋਅ ਸਿਖੰਡਣਹ ॥
ਗਛੇਣ ਨੈਣ ਭਾਰੇਣ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਾਧੂ ਨ ਸਿਧੁਤੇ ॥

Parmaanho parjantt aakaaseh deep lo-a sikhandnheh.

Gachh-ai-nh n-ei-nh bhaar-ai-nh Nanak binaa Sadhu na sidh-h-tai. (1360)

(Man, through the use of occult power, may acquire a form as minute as the nucleus of an atom and may fly across the Universe with the blink of an eye. Even then, he cannot realise the Divine Truth without the spiritual discourses imbibed by him in company of the God-conscious persons and the life of that man cannot be called a great success.)

Besides scientists there are philosophers, who try to use their egoistic intellect to discover the Formless and Invisible Almighty. These men delve into complex philosophies, pore over religious texts, weave their own theories and get so entangled in them that they waste their entire life in such worthless philosophies. But truly speaking, the Creator has never been the subject of intellect. Guru Amardas enlightens:

ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਬੇਦ ਵਖਾਣਹਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹ ਸੁਆਇ ॥

Parh(i) parh(i) Pandit b-ai-d vakhaanheh(i) Maa-e-aa moh suaa-e. (85)

(Driven by attachment and greed, religious scholars constantly read and recite the spiritual books for materialistic gains.)

There is yet another category of people, who try to reach God through their actions, that are controlled by their ego and with the use of occult powers, achieved through the practice of pseudo-religious skills, pseudo-meditation and craftiness; without full devotion, love and affection for realising the Divine within. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies this phenomenon in a divine Hymn:

ਮੋਨਿ ਭਇਓ ਕਰਪਾਤੀ ਰਹਿਓ ਨਗਨ ਫਿਰਿਓ ਬਨ ਮਾਹੀ ॥
ਤਟ ਤੀਰਥ ਸਭ ਧਰਤੀ ਭ੍ਰਮਿਓ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਛੁਟਕੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
ਮਨ ਕਾਮਨਾ ਤੀਰਥ ਜਾਇ ਬਸਿਓ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਵਤ ਧਰਾਏ ॥
ਮਨ ਕੀ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਉਤਰੈ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਜੇ ਲਖ ਜਤਨ ਕਰਾਏ ॥
ਕਨਿਕ ਕਾਮਿਨੀ ਹੋਵਰ ਗੋਵਰ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਦਾਨੁ ਦਾਤਾਰਾ ॥
ਅੰਨ ਬਸਤ੍ਰ ਭੂਮਿ ਬਹੁ ਅਰਧੇ ਨਹ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਹਰਿ ਦੁਆਰਾ ॥
ਪੂਜਾ ਅਰਚਾ ਬੰਦਨ ਡੰਡਉਤ ਖਟੁ ਕਰਮਾ ਰਤੁ ਰਹਤਾ ॥
ਹਉ ਹਉ ਕਰਤ ਬੰਧਨ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਿਆ ਨਹ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਾ ॥
ਜੋਗ ਸਿਧ ਆਸਣ ਚਉਰਾਸੀਹ ਏ ਭੀ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ॥

ਵਡੀ ਆਰਜਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜਨਮੈ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਰਾਹਿਆ ॥

Mon(i) bha-e-o karpaatee Rah-e-o nagan phir-e-o bann maahee.
Tatt teerath sabh dhartee bhram-e-o Dubidhaa chhuttk-ei naahee.
Mann kaamnaa teerath jaa-e bas-e-o Sirr(i)karvat dhraa-e.
Mann kee m-ei-l(u) na uttar-ei eh bidh(i) J-ai lakh jatan karaa-e.
Kanik kaam(i)nee h-ei-var g-ei-var Bahu bidh(i) daan(u) daataaraa.
Ann bastar bhoom(i) bahu arp-ai Neh milee-ei Har(i) duaaraa.
Poojaa archaa bandan dandout Khatt(u) karmaa ratt(u) rehtaa.
Haou haou karat bandhan meh par-e-aa Neh milee-ei eh jugtaa.
Jog sidh aasanh chaouraaseeh Ai bhee kar(i) kar(i) rah-e-aa.

Vaddee aarjaa phir(i) phir(i) janm-ei Har(i) siou sangg(u) na gaheaa. (641)

(Attempting to attain self-realisation, some of them observe vows of silence, receive food on their bare hands and wander in the forests with feigned simplicity. They visit pilgrimages and wander the whole earth in search of the Divine Truth but their ego is not subdued. Rather, the ego increases because of consciousness of their hard penances, due to which they are filled with pride. They dwell at the holy places trying to attain Eternal Truth and for the same reason, they may place their head under the saw, so that their body may be put through torture, even then their ego is not rooted out. They may give away abundantly in charity - gold, horses and elephants, food grains; clothes, land etc. This may give them worldly fame, but all this does not help in attaining the Divine Truth. They may remain engrossed in empty rituals, adorations and bondages and may perform complete prostrations and master the eight yogic exercises.

If all these rituals are devoid of the divine devotion, they increase their ego manifold that leads them deeper into worldly bondages. That is why they do not realise the Divine Truth despite performing these pseudo-rituals for many years. They may go on performing the 84 yogic postures and having mastered all these, driven by their ego, they may prolong their lifespan, but they cannot escape the cycle of birth and rebirth. In the end, self-realisation for them remains an unattainable dream if they lack complete love and devotion for the Divine.)

The recitation of holy texts and other holy scriptures of all religions, merely for gaining pseudo-knowledge to give sermons to the people for fame and wealth, are not acceptable to the Divine Lord for getting Divine Wisdom. Similarly, yogic postures and exercises carried out for merely maintaining body health, to perform the worldly affairs, to accumulate wealth and not for treading the Divine Path to realise the Divine within, are not acceptable to God for bestowing self-realisation. When such persons work miracles with the aim of attracting a large following and gaining fame and wealth, they never realise the Divine Wisdom within. Even after

performing all these deeds, one is not able to renounce the five vices, rather he becomes more egoistic. According to the Divine Law, ego can only be eradicated completely after reciting the Divine Name and treading the Divine Path with full love and devotion to realise the Divine within.

Using occult powers, the ascetics, with occult powers (Siddhas) at Achal Batala of Gurdaspur district in Punjab, transformed themselves into fearsome demons, but they were unable to frighten Guru Nanak Dev. They performed many miracles before the Guru, but He remained calm, serene and prayed to the Divine Lord to bestow His wisdom upon them. He merely smiled and took pity on them. He wondered how they had strayed from the Divine Path and were drifting aimlessly towards the material world by performing these futile miracles. They had pseudo-knowledge and were misinformed into believing that by merely performing these miracles, they could become Divine and merge with the Divine Lord. According to spiritual science, miraculous powers are negatively co-related with the Divine Wisdom. Bhai Gurdas, a divine scholar, who served as a scribe to Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master describes in his Odes (Vaars) the deeds of the Yogic adepts (Siddhas):

ਸਿਧਿ ਬੋਲਨਿ ਸਭਿ ਅਵਖਧੀਆ ਤੰਤ੍ਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਕੀ ਧੁਨੋ ਚੜ੍ਹਾਈ ।
ਰੂਪ ਵਟਾਏ ਜੋਗੀਆ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਾਘਿ ਬਹੁ ਚਲਿਤਿ ਦਿਖਾਈ ।
ਇਕਿ ਪਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਕੈ ਉਡਰਨਿ ਪੰਖੀ ਜਿਵੈ ਰਹੈ ਲੀਲਾਈ ।
ਇਕ ਨਾਗ ਹੋਇ ਪਉਣ ਛੋੜਿਆ ਇਕਨਾ ਵਰਖਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਵਸਾਈ ।
ਤਾਰੇ ਤੋੜੇ ਭੰਗਰਿਨਾਥ, ਇਕ ਚੜਿ ਮਿਰਗਾਨੀ ਜਲੁ ਤਰਿ ਜਾਈ ।
ਸਿਧਾ ਅਗਨਿ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਬੁਝਾਈ ।

Sidh(i) boalan(i) sabh(i) avkhadheaaa Tantar mantrar kee dhuno charhaaee.

Roop vataa-e jogeaaa Singh baagh(i) bahu chalit(i) dikhaaee.

Ik(i) par(i) kar(i) k-ei uddran(i) Pankhee jiv-ei rah-ei leelaee.

Ik naag ho-e paounh chhorh-e-aa lknaa varkhaa agan(i) vasaee.

Taar-ai torh-ai Bhangarnaath, Ik charh(i) mirgaanee jal(u) tar(i) jaaee.

Sidhaa agan(i) na bujh-ei bujhaaee. (Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1, Pauri 41)

(The Siddhas performed many miracles trying to frighten Guru Nanak Dev to make Him their disciple. Through Yogic discipline, they had accumulated occult powers. Some transformed themselves into tigers and started roaring at Guru Nanak Dev. One of them became a bird and began circling overhead. Another converted into a snake and started hissing menacingly, while another rained fire-balls. One of them, Bhangar Nath, plucked some stars from the sky, and another, sitting on top of the skin of a doe, floated on water. None of them was able to frighten Guru Nanak Dev, who simply smiled and took pity on them for using occult powers, which is against the Divine Law.)

Among the hypocrite Siddhas, there was also a true Seeker, named Bhartharee. He was a former king, who, having renounced his kingdom, had set out in search of the Divine Truth and had joined the Siddhas. It is said that in the company of these Siddhas, Bhartharee, through occult powers, had prolonged his life to about 1400 years. Since he had been sincerely striving to realise the Divine Truth for many years, he was blessed with sincere devotion and wisdom, and unlike the other Siddhas, could perceive the Divine in Guru Nanak Dev. He left the company of the Siddhas and became a disciple of Guru Nanak Dev, spending the rest of his life in truthful living in service of the true Master at Kartarpur Sahib (now in Pakistan).

Even now, the descendants of King Bhartharee's clan, who are called Mian Hindu Rajputs, have divine regard and reverence for Guru Nanak Dev.

Many God-conscious child-saints like Dhruva, Prehlad, Ashtavakra, etc. and other saint-souls like King Janak, Vashisht Muni, and in medieval times, Ramanand, the Gaur Brahmin; Ravidas, the cobbler; Kabir, the weaver; and Farid, the Muslim Sufi saint, acknowledged as divine persons in Guru Granth Sahib, did not undertake any severe Yogic disciplines to attain the Divine Wisdom, but followed the simple and straightforward path of meditation, reciting the Divine Name with complete love and devotion. This shows that mastering yogic postures, without Divine Love and complete faith, might be beneficial only for preserving health and prolonging life and showing miracles to the common man, with an aim to induce them to become their followers, but these occult powers are negatively correlated with spirituality.

Ritual acts and yogic postures performed under the influence of ego are of no use on the path of Divine Realisation. People involved in such futile actions waste their time and energy because God-realisation is the subject of love and devotion:

ਕੋਟਨ ਮੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੋਉ ਨਾਰਾਇਨੁ ਜਿਹ ਚੀਤਿ ॥

Kotan m-ei Nanak ko-oo Naaraain(u) jeh cheet(i). (1427)

(Rare are the blessed persons, among countless souls, who have the utmost faith, love and devotion for the Almighty Lord and a strong desire to become One with Him.)

The greater the devotion a Seeker has for God-realisation, the more motivated he will become to tread the Divine Path, meditate on His Divine Name, sing His praises and realise the Divine within:

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਮਰਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਮਰੀਆ ॥

Jeevan mukat(i) so aakhee-ei Mar(i) jeev-ei mareea. (449)

(That person is called divine, who has attained salvation in this very life by shedding his ego completely by reciting the Divine Name with love and devotion.)

The journey towards God-realisation continues beyond death into successive lives until the goal of merging with the Divine within, i.e., salvation is attained.

While treading the Divine Path, the more one meditates on the Divine Name, while constantly contemplating the presence of God within and eradicating the ego completely, the sooner will he realise the Divine within by His grace. Those blessed souls, who have accumulated spiritual capital from previous lives, will tread the spiritual path untiringly, offering their wealth, body and mind in service of the Almighty. Abiding by His Will, they will attain the Divine Wisdom to merge with Him in this very life by treading the Divine Path of recitation of the Divine Name with full love and devotion.

God can be realised only through faith, love and devotion. The contents of this book are a gist of the divine teaching of the God-realised persons, which might go a long way to help the Seekers to tread the Divine Path to obtain salvation, the ultimate goal of life. Certain key terms and ideas have often been repeated - a bit too often (some readers might feel) - in order to emphasise spiritual understanding. Scholars of spiritual philosophy would, of course, already be well-versed in these topics. While writing this book, some discrepancies might have occurred, for which the author offers his sincere regrets and would be grateful if these are brought to his notice.



The Divine Lord (God)

The Timeless One

The Divine Lord (Akal Purakh) is the only One, who is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Destroyer of the Universe. He pervades everywhere. He is the Divine, the Formless and the Timeless and is the only Eternal Truth. All else, whatever is seen by the human eye is, in fact, illusion. The whole Universe is governed under His Divine Will. He, being the Divine, is Supreme and none else in the Universe can replace and compete with Him. As such, His Divine Law governs the whole Universe. Being the Supreme One, He is without fear and enmity because none else is His competitor. He is self-existent and everlasting. He is realised within and without by the grace of Guru, the Divine Master, who had already realised Him and merged with Him by shedding his ego completely.

He is beyond praise and is beyond the power of expression. His Creation is boundless and His gifts countless. No human eye can see the end of His vast creation. No one can realise His infinite plan in one's mind, and no human intellect can visualise the limits of His created Universe and its vast expanse.

Many people are trying with all their might to solve the riddle of His Creation, but all their efforts are in vain. No one can fully realise the limits of His boundless creation. The more one tries to put it in words, the more he finds that it is beyond all expression. He is the Sole Master of His Creation and pervades the loftiest spheres of the Universe; and is beyond the power of the human mind and intellect. He dwells in the super conscious aura of the congregation of God-conscious persons.

His Name is great and wondrous, and by meditating on it one can realise Him and be one with Him. If one becomes as high as the Divine Master, only then can he know Him.

The Almighty Lord is the fountain of Universal Love. Anyone, who submits himself completely to him by shedding his ego, by reciting His Divine Name with utmost love and devotion, perceives His Divine Love. He loses his identity and merges with the Divine, the Divine father of the whole universe, completely. Suns, moons, planets and stars in the Universe and time, as measured by their movements, are all under His command. He being the Almighty, is the embodiment of spiritual bliss, and expression of the Divine Truth, which is beyond time, which in fact, is

under His control. According to their deeds, all living beings wander in the cycle of births and rebirths under His Divine Law.

Initially, ancient civilisations like Egyptian, Greek and Roman flourished, as long as they followed the Divine Law in letter and spirit. However, they deteriorated when the ego of the ruling class gained the upper hand by ignoring the Divine Law. The rulers declared themselves as the Almighty, and thus became His competitors. It is a spiritual Law that as long as the Divine Order and its principles are followed, civilisations prosper. But when ego of the rulers runs riot, it creates an imbalance and destroys the harmony of Nature. As per the Divine Law, the civilisations are then doomed to perish.

Guru Nanak Dev defines the attributes of the Divine Lord in the credal statement of Guru Granth Sahib:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

**Ik Onkaar Sat(i) Naam(u) Kartaa Purakh(u) Nirbhaou Nirveir(u)
Akaal Moorat(i) Ajoonee Saibha-n Gur Parsaad(i). (1)**

(There is but One all-embracing and all-powerful Divinity, Who manifests Himself first in the shape of the sacred word, and then through the whole created Universe.

He is One in all and all in One. He is the Eternal Reality and His name Satnam is also Eternal. He is the Creator, and has the power of independent self-creation. He permeates the whole Creation. He is the only male element in the Universe and all else is female. He is above all fear, and is free from all thoughts of enmity. He is immortal, free from birth and rebirth, and can be realised in every created thing.

He is self-existent. The whole Universe is dependent for its existence on Him, but he is self-existent, the Generator of all, without any one to generate Him.

He can be realised by the grace of the Guru, the Teacher, who is God-conscious and sees Him both, within and without.)

Whoever recites His Divine Name with full faith, love and devotion, is blessed by the all-knowing Supreme Being and becomes Divine. Guru Ramdas, the fourth Sikh Guru humbly submits:

ਅੰਤਰਜਾਮੀ ਪੁਰਖ ਬਿਧਾਤੇ ਸਰਧਾ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਪੂਰੇ ॥

Antarjaamee Purakh Bidhaat-ai Sardhaa mann kee poo-r-ai. (13)

(O Divine Lord! Having the power of knowing of the inner-self of every creature, and of the whole world, kindly fulfil my intense desire to merge in Your Divine Bliss.)

Guru Nanak Dev explicitly clarifies:

ਆਖਹਿ ਮੰਗਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦੇਹਿ ਦਾਤਿ ਕਰੇ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ ॥

Aakheh(i) mangeh(i) deh(i) deh(i) Daat(i) kar-ai Daataar(u). (2)

(Countless persons filled with illimitable love and reverence call Him by various Names and beg from Him all kinds of gifts. He bestows upon them all.)

He is merciful and forgives all sins, showers blessings equally on all; but he whose receptivity of mind is ready due to eradication of his ego completely, by reciting the Divine Name, gets all the bounties of the Divine. Guru Arjan Dev reveals:

ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਰਾਖੇ ਗੁਰ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ॥

ਕੰਠਿ ਲਾਇ ਅਵਗੁਣ ਸਭਿ ਮੇਟੇ ਦਇਆਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਬਖਸੰਦ ॥

Har(i) jann raakh-ai Gur Govind.

Kantth(i) laa-e avgunh sabh(i) m-ai-t-ai Da-e-aal Purakh Bakhsandd. (681)

(O Merciful Lord! You bless everyone, who follows Your Divine Principles. The devotee sheds his ego completely by having full affection and devotion for You. It is Your Divine Principle that You ignore all the shortcomings of Your devotees and shower Your Blessings on them, so that they tread the Divine Path to merge with You.)

Then O Sikh! The searcher after Truth! Meditate on His Name, who is:

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥

Aad(i) Sach(u) jugaad(i) Sach(u).

H-ei bhee Sach(u) Nanak hosee bhee Sach(u). (1)

[Who was real and self-existent before all Creation, who was real through all ages (Yugas); who is real and true now and who shall be true and self-existent for all times to come.]

The whole manifestation is the physical frame of the Divine, but He is beyond any attributes, is formless and pervades the whole Universe. Still He is beyond imagination, and is present in a state of equipoise (Sehaj) in every element of the Universe. Guru Arjan Dev says:

ਸਰਗੁਨ ਨਿਰਗੁਨ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧੀ ਆਪਿ ॥

ਆਪਨ ਕੀਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਜਾਪਿ ॥

Sargunn Nirgunn Nirankar Sunn samaadhee aap(i).

Aapan keeaa Nanakaa Aap-ai hee phir(i) jaap(i). (290)

(He has created the whole manifestation and pervades everywhere, in whom the divine persons are completely merged by recitation of His Divine Name.)

Whoever wants to dwell in the Divine Realm (Sachkhand) has to attune his mind with the Divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru) by reciting the Divine Name with love and devotion after shedding his ego completely. Guru Nanak Dev reveals:

ਸਚ ਖੰਡਿ ਵਸੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ॥

Sach khandd(i) vas-ei Nirankar(u). (8)

(Sachkhand, the realm of the Eternal Truth, is all-embracing. The whole Creation is in Him and He is in His Creation. This is the final goal, i.e., the Divine Stage.)

The state of the Divine Realm is full of Spiritual Bliss. Guru Nanak Dev further explains:

ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕੈ ਦੇਸਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਾ ਸੁਖਿ ਲਹਿ ਮਹਲੁ ॥

Nirankar k-ei des(i) jaah-e taa sukh(i) laheh(i) mahall(u). (595)

(Whoever attains the spiritual, formless state by shedding his ego completely, becomes Divine and enters the realm of the Eternal Truth, where there is everlasting bliss.)

In Gurbani, this state of spiritual bliss (the formless state), in which the Supreme Being fully manifests, is called the realm without worry and sorrow (Begampura Shehar). Ravidas attained this spiritual sphere and merged with the Supreme Being. The seeker can enter this Divine Realm, which is within the body, by eradicating his ego completely through meditation on the Divine Name with full love and devotion. However, while doing so, he must always perceive the presence of the Divine within.

On reaching Begampura, one always remains in a state of spiritual bliss, free from all worries. There is no more apprehension, anxiety, tension and suffering. Expounds Ravidas:

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥

ਨਾਂ ਤਸਵੀਸ ਖਿਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਮਾਲੁ ॥ ਖਉਫੁ ਨ ਖਤਾ ਨ ਤਰਸੁ ਜਵਾਲੁ ॥

Begam Pura shehar ko naaou. Dookh(u) andoh(u) nahee tih(i) thaau.

Naan tasvees khiraaj(u) na maal(u). Khaouf(u) na khataa na taras(u) javaal(u). (345)

[The dweller of this worry-less state of mind (Begampura Shehar) fears no one, remains in a worry-less state, completely free from worldly miseries; nor is he burdened by the anxiety of any future scarcity. He is always in a state of spiritual ecstasy.]



Body, Mind and Soul

The entire expanse of the Universe is the physical frame of the Supreme Being. Having created the Universe, He pervades everywhere. Guru Angad Dev enunciates:

ਇਹੁ ਜਗੁ ਸਚੈ ਕੀ ਹੈ ਕੋਠੜੀ ਸਚੇ ਕਾ ਵਿਚਿ ਵਾਸੁ ॥

Eh(u) jagg(u) Sach-ei kee h-ei kotthrhee Sach-ai kaa vich(i) vaas(u). (463)

(This cosmos is home of the Divine Lord, within which He pervades.)

Even so, within the body of every living creature, pervades the Divine Being as soul (Atma). Under the Divine Will, man has been created as a combination of body, mind and soul. As long as Atma, the Divine Spirit, provides conscious energy to the body, it remains alive, and when the Divine withdraws this, it dies.

Besides this Divine Energy, there is another source of energy in the body, which is negative in nature and is known as 'mind'. It comprises of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. In fact, mind is a form of ego. This is also known as the subtle body, which keeps the physical body in a state of constant wavering. Mind is unaware of the Divine Power, which gives energy to the body. The pursuit of worldly desires causes ego to further inflate, and prevents body from remaining in the Divine Order. As a result, the body and mind are weakened and they fall prey to sufferings and diseases. When the mind is unaware of the Divine Force within the body, it suffers immeasurably due to involvement in worldly affairs.

Body

Guru Nanak Dev explains the body as:

ਪੰਚ ਤਤੁ ਮਿਲਿ ਇਹੁ ਤਨੁ ਕੀਆ ॥

Panch tatt(u) mil(i) eh(u) tann(u) keeaa. (1039)

(Human body is formed by the combination of five elements - air, water, fire, earth and sky.)

He further expounds:

ਬਿੰਦੁ ਰਕਤੁ ਮਿਲਿ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਸਰੀਆ ॥

Bind(u) rakat(u) mil(i) pind(u) sareeaa. (1026)

(The union of the sperm and the egg in the mother's womb results in the birth of a new creature.)

Within the fertilised ovum in the mother's womb, the Omnipresent Almighty Lord is always present in the form of soul (Atma). Under the Divine Law, a subtle

body (mind/ego), released from the dead body of a person, remains wandering in the cosmos. Under the same Divine Law, according to the previous birth's attachment, it enters into the fertilised ovum and thus the development of the foetus starts with the combination of mind and the soul (Divine). Soul gives the divine energy that enables the cells to multiply. As the cells multiply, the soul and mind pervade new cells and ultimately form the foetus.

Guru Amardas enlightens in the following Hymn:

ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਗੁਫਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਰਖਿ ਕੈ ਵਾਜਾ ਪਵਣੁ ਵਜਾਇਆ ॥
ਵਜਾਇਆ ਵਾਜਾ ਪਉਣ ਨਉ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਪਰਗਟ ਕੀਏ ਦਸਵਾ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਰਖਾਇਆ ॥
ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੈ ਲਾਇ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਇਕਨਾ ਦਸਵਾ ਦੁਆਰੁ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ ॥

Har(i) jeeou gufaa andar(i) rakh(i) k-ei Vaajaa pavanh(u) vajaa-e-aa.

Vajaa-e-aa vaajaa paounh naou duaar-ai pargat(u) kee-ai Dasvaa gupat(u) rakhaa-e-aa.

Gurduaar-ei laa-e bhaavnee lknaa dasvaa duaar(u) dikhaa-e-aa. (922)

[This body is the abode of the Divine (the soul), which keeps it alive by providing breath. It has nine outlets, which are called the nine gateways. These are two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth, genital and anus. Through these outlets, the mind goes towards the worldly affairs. The tenth 'door' remains secret from the mind and this is the Divine Realm, which is blissful and free from all worries. The holy tune of the mind, while meditating on the Divine Name, sheds its ego completely and merges with the the divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru) residing within the body and thus entering the tenth 'door', where Divine Bliss pervades.]

The development of the human body is explained through another verse by Guru Nanak Dev:

ਪਉਣੈ ਪਾਣੀ ਅਗਨੀ ਕਾ ਮੇਲੁ ॥ ਚੰਚਲ ਚਪਲ ਬੁਧਿ ਕਾ ਖੇਲੁ ॥
ਨਉ ਦਰਵਾਜੇ ਦਸਵਾ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥ ਬੁਝੁ ਰੇ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਏਹੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥
ਕਥਤਾ ਬਕਤਾ ਸੁਨਤਾ ਸੋਈ ॥ ਆਪੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ਸੁ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਹੋਈ ॥

Paounh-ei paanhee agnee kaa m-ai-l(u). Chanchal chapal budh(i) kaa kh-ai-l(u).

Naou darvaaj-ai dasvaa duaar. Bujh(u) r-ai giaanee eh(u) beechaar(u).

Kathtaa baktaa suntaa soee. Aap(u) beechaar-ai su giaanee hoee. (152)

[Within the physical body (composed of the five elements - air, water, fire, earth and sky), exists the subtle body or the mind, which keeps the former in a state of perpetual instability. The body has nine outlets, through which the wavering mind goes out into the world. But there is also a hidden tenth door in the body, (hidden to mortal eyes). The Seeker can reach there only after meditating on the Divine Name with full faith, love and devotion, and thus ego is completely eradicated. This is the only way that a person merges with the Divine. In this stage, he realises that soul (Atma), which is one with the Supreme Soul (Parmatma), is the only reality. It is the driving force behind all functions of the body

including divine thinking, hearing and reciting the Divine Name, etc. When ego is eradicated completely, the same mind becomes Divine. A person, whose mind has merged with the Divine, is called the divine person (Brahmgyani).]

As already explained, the ovum from the mother unites with the sperm from the father, to form the embryo, in which the Supreme Being pervades as soul. In the embryo, enters a subtle body (mind), i.e., ego, which was previously wandering in the cosmos. As the cells of the embryo multiply rapidly to form the foetus, the soul and the mind pervade each one of them. In other words, the soul and mind are present in every cell of the embryo. During this process of embryogenesis (growth and development of the foetus), mind does not wander, but remains attuned with the Divine within. It does not develop the egoistic consciousness while the foetus is growing within the womb. This has been clearly delineated by Bhagat Beni, the Hindu Saint, in His Divine Hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਰੇ ਨਰ ਗਰਭ ਕੁੰਡਲ ਜਬ ਆਛਤ ਉਰਧ ਧਿਆਨ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗਾ ॥

R-ai nar garabh kundal jabb aachhat Urdh dhiaan liv laagaa. (93)

(O Man! When you were coiled upside-down in the cradle of the womb, you were attuned with the Divine.)

As soon as a child is born, the surrounding environments induce him to forget God, on whom his mind had been completely focused when he was in the womb. The saint further clarifies:

ਗਰਭ ਛੋਡਿ ਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਮੰਡਲ ਆਇਆ ਤਉ ਨਰਹਰਿ ਮਨਹੁ ਬਿਸਾਰਿਆ ॥

Garabh chhod(i) mrit mandal aa-e-aa Taou Narhar(i) mann-hu bisaar-e-aa. (93)

(O Child! After leaving the womb, as you entered this mortal world, you forgot the Divine Lord.)

As a child grows, his ego starts developing and dominating over him as determined by the sum total of the deeds of his previous births. But ego of a divine child (who is destined for spiritual greatness) remains feeble and does not overpower him.

A child's mind is drawn towards virtuous or evil deeds in accordance with the actions performed in his previous births. The whole phenomenon has been explicitly explained by Guru Nanak Dev in the following Hymn:

ਪਹਿਲੈ ਪਿਆਰਿ ਲਗਾ ਬਣ ਦੁਧਿ ॥ ਦੂਜੈ ਮਾਇ ਬਾਪ ਕੀ ਸੁਧਿ ॥

ਤੀਜੈ ਭਯਾ ਭਾਭੀ ਬੇਬ ॥ ਚਉਥੈ ਪਿਆਰਿ ਉਪੰਨੀ ਖੇਡ ॥

ਪੰਜਵੈ ਖਾਣ ਪੀਅਣ ਕੀ ਧਾਤੁ ॥ ਛਿਵੈ ਕਾਮੁ ਨ ਪੁਛੈ ਜਾਤਿ ॥

ਸਤਵੈ ਸੰਜਿ ਕੀਆ ਘਰ ਵਾਸੁ ॥ ਅਠਵੈ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਹੋਆ ਤਨ ਨਾਸੁ ॥

ਨਾਵੈ ਧਉਲੇ ਉਭੇ ਸਾਹ ॥ ਦਸਵੈ ਦਧਾ ਹੋਆ ਸੁਆਹ ॥

Pahil-ei piaar(i) laggaa thanh dudh(i). Dooj-ei maa-e baap kee sudh(i).

**Teej-ei bh-e-aa bhaabhee b-ai-b. Chaouth-ei piaar(i) upanee kh-ai-d.
Panjav-ei khaanh pee-anh kee dhaat(u). Chhiv-ei kaam(u) na puchh-ei jaat(i).
Satav-ei sanj(i) keeaa ghar vaas(u). Atthv-ei krodh(u) hoaa tann naas(u).
Naav-ei dhaoul-ai ubh-ai saah. Dasv-ei dadhaa hoaa suaah. (137)**

(As the child starts growing, in the first stage, he loves the mother's milk. In the second stage, he gets attached to his parents. In the third stage, he begins to relate with his siblings and other relatives. In the fourth stage, he gets involved in playful activities. In the next stage, he develops greed for delicious food. In the sixth stage, lust overpowers him and he starts getting attracted towards the opposite sex. In the seventh stage, he gets married, raises a family, accumulates wealth, and builds a house - luxurious or simple - according to his status. In the eighth stage, he is overpowered by anger and worries. His body turns worn-out and easily falls prey to various diseases. In the ninth stage, he grows old and his hair turn grey, his breathing becomes strained and his body grows weak and suffers from various diseases. In the tenth stage, his life comes to an end.)

The subtle body (mind) leaves a person's physical body as soon as the Divine within him withdraws the conscious energy. Depending upon his past deeds, the released subtle body migrates to a destined sphere of the cosmos as the physical body is burnt to ashes. The destined sphere of the subtle body of the cosmos is decided according to his good or bad deeds performed during his lifetime. The subtle body of the spiritually inclined persons hovers around the places of worship, while those of the egoistic, wicked, sinners and cruel persons hover around crematoriums and in places where evil deeds are performed.

Seekers after Truth, treading the spiritual path, have an intense urge to meet the Divine within. While going about their worldly affairs, they remain in divine discipline, as their outlook and way of living become pious. They mould their lives according to the teachings of the Divine Scriptures. They remain happy, healthy and are unlikely to suffer from diseases like diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer, heart ailments, etc. that afflict mankind. Spiritually inclined persons are not attracted towards the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - which are the root causes of disease, pain and suffering.

Deeds performed by a person in his previous life motivate him to perform similar deeds in the present life. This pattern, however, can be changed by associating with good or bad company. Generally, those destined for spiritual life, from their very childhood start associating with pious and devout persons, which spur them on their chosen path. Gradually, they get rid of the vices as they tread the Divine Path. When the divine tune of the mind (spiritually higher mind) meditates on the Divine Name with full faith, love and devotion, it merges with the Divine within,

and gains divine knowledge of the whole Universe. In Gurbani, the body has been called a Divine Temple, in which the divine tune of the mind has to become the disciple of the Divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru). Guru Amardas has clarified it in the following Hymn:

ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਏਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹੈ ਗਿਆਨਿ ਰਤਨਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

Har(i) mandar(u) eh(u) sareer(u) h-ei Giaan(i) ratan(i) pargat(u) ho-e. (1346)

(This body is the temple of the Divine Lord, in which the divine jewel of spiritual wisdom is revealed.)

Mind

Mind or subtle body consists of various stages of ego. It can be divided into the higher mind and the lower mind. The former is called the divine tune (Buddhi), which works through consciousness [Surt(i)] to tread the Divine Path, while meditating on the Divine Name. After death, the body is cremated, buried or cast in flowing water, but the subtle body or the mind is not destroyed. In fact, it wanders in the cycle of birth and rebirth, taking a different physical form each time, depending on the deeds performed in previous lives. Liberation from endless cycle of rebirths through self-realisation comes when the Seeker recites the Divine Name with full faith, love and devotion and becomes one with the Divine within. In the Sikh way of life (Gurmat), self-realisation is supposed to be attained not after death, but in the present life itself, after shedding the ego completely, as defined by Guru Ram Das in the undermentioned divine Hymn:

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਮਰਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਮਰੀਆ ॥

Jeevan mukat(i) so aakhee-ei Mar(i) jeev-ei mareeaa. (449)

(Those, who shed their ego completely and remain attuned with the Divine within, attain self-realisation in this very life.)

In fact, the mind (strictly speaking, the lower mind) is ego and is made up of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Excessive indulgence in these vices inflates ego. On the other hand, Buddhi is the spiritual tune longing to seek the Divine Truth. It is a magnificent spiritual power, which enables the mind to be attuned to the Divine and finally merge with it.

The higher mind or the spiritual tune of mind (Vivek Buddhi) will be awakened and inspired to perform spiritual deeds if it continues to be associated with the divine persons and follows their divine teaching with true devotion. However, if an individual associates with worldly and sinful persons, by and by, he will get engrossed in the five vices. His bad deeds will cause him to suffer physical ailments, weakening both, his body and willpower. He will start slipping into hell and will wander forever

in the cycle of birth and rebirth, till he gets divine company to get liberated. Guru Arjan Dev warns such a person of the impending miseries, in the undermentioned divine Hymn:

ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਤੇ ਭੁਲਿਆਂ ਵਿਆਪਨਿ ਸਭੇ ਰੋਗ ॥
ਵੇਮੁਖ ਹੋਏ ਰਾਮ ਤੇ ਲਗਨਿ ਜਨਮ ਵਿਜੋਗ ॥

Paramesar t-ai bhul-e-aan Viaapan(i) sabh-ai rog.

V-ai-mukh ho-e Ram t-ai Lagan(i) janam vijog. (135)

(They, who forget the Divine Lord are gripped by all sorts of miseries. Those, who are awfully engrossed in the worldly pleasures and forget the Divine Lord are bound to be separated from Him and undergo reincarnation, over and over again and suffer in their lives according to their deeds, committed in various births.)

Soul - the Divine within (Atma)

The Divine pervading within the body is called soul (Atma). It is the Divine Power within the body, which gives it life and enables it to perform actions. It is the same Divine Power, which pervades the Universe and is known as Universal Soul/God (Parmatma). As soon as the body ceases to get the Divine Power from the soul, it dies. The combination of body, mind and soul is life, and when this combination ends, life ends. In the same way, all actions in the Universe are carried out under the command of the Universal Soul, which, in other words, is known as Divine. As and when the Divine withdraws its power, life ends. Guru Nanak Dev describes the situation thus:

ਕਾਇਆ ਹੰਸਿ ਸੰਜੋਗੁ ਮੇਲਿ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ ॥

Kaa-e-aa hans(i) sanjog(u) m-ai-l(i) milaa-e-aa. (139)

(Destiny has brought together and united the body and the soul.)

ਕਾਇਆ ਹੰਸ ਥੀਆ ਵੇਛੋੜਾ ਜਾਂ ਦਿਨ ਪੁੰਨੇ ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਏ ॥

Kaan-e-aa hans theeaa v-ai-chhorhaa Jaan dinn punn-ai m-ai-ree maa-e. (579)

(O my mother! The body and the soul are separated when one's days in this life end, and thus breath is withdrawn from the body, according to the Divine Order.)

Soul in the body, and the Universal Soul pervading the Universe, are one and imperishable. In common language, it is called God, the Divine and the Almighty, who is all-powerful and virtuous. If the mind, under the influence of divine persons meditates on the Divine Name, it merges with the Divine within. It then becomes all-powerful and a source of all the virtues; hence, it becomes immune to the worldly worries and miseries. When the spiritually inclined part of the mind, Buddhi, becomes one with the Divine, the true aim of human life is achieved. Such a person becomes divine or a saint, and thus starts motivating other Seekers to tread the Divine Path as per the Divine Law.

On the contrary, a person, who indulges in a lustful life and the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - brings sufferings upon himself. Yet, there is hope even for such a person. He can mitigate his miseries if he honestly tries, and continues to have association with divine persons, who would inspire him to meditate on the Divine Name with full love and devotion:

ਸਰਬ ਰੋਗ ਕਾ ਅਉਖਦੁ ਨਾਮੁ ॥

Sarab rog kaa aoukhad(u) Naam(u). (274)

(Recitation of the Divine Name is the panacea for all the miseries.)

As already stated, inside the womb, the mind is fixed on the Divine Lord. However, after coming into this world, a person gets involved in worldly affairs and his tune of mind detaches him from the Divine within. Craving for worldly pleasures is aroused, and the mind is engulfed in worldly illusions. It then easily falls prey to the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Thus, there is a correlation between indulgence in the five vices, and cravings - both feed each other. An endless cycle is set on roll, leading to dreadful wars and tampering with people's natures to fulfil their ever-insatiable desires. This process creates an imbalance in nature in the form of natural calamities like earthquakes, storms, floods, tsunamis, global warmings, famines, dreadful diseases and wars, which in turn create chaos on the planet. Therefore, the root cause of all this turmoil is cravings, which arise when mental harmony is disturbed:

ਲਿਵ ਛੁੜਕੀ ਲਗੀ ਤਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਅਮਰੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

Liv chhurhkee laggee trisnaa Maa-e-aa amar(u) vartaa-e-aa. (921)

(When, one's tune of mind is detached from the Divine within, the first thing that arises is the craving for worldly pleasures.)

The detachment from the Divine results in dangerous repercussions:

ਜਿਥੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੀਐ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ॥ ਸੇ ਅਸਥਲ ਸੋਇਨ ਚਉਬਾਰੇ ॥

ਜਿਥੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਜਪੀਐ ਮੇਰੇ ਗੋਇਦਾ ਸੇਈ ਨਗਰ ਉਜਾੜੀ ਜੀਉ ॥

Jith-ei Naam(u) japee-ei Prabh pjaar-ai. S-ai asthal so-e-n chaoubaar-ai.

Jith-ei Naam(u) na japee-ei m-ai-rai Go-e-daa S-ai-ee nagar ujaarhee jeeou. (105)

(Where Seekers recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion, those beautiful mansions, become places of peaceful living. But where Name of my beloved Divine Lord is not chanted with complete love and devotion, even the very towns crumble down and are rendered barren.)

Bhai Gurdas, the poet-saint, who served as a scribe to Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master, describes the above scene of pain and turmoil through one of his Odes (Vaars):

ਧਰਤੀ ਉਪਰਿ ਕੋਟ ਗੜ ਭੁਇਚਾਲ ਕੰਮਦੇ ।

ਝਖੜਿ ਆਏ ਤਰੁਵਰਾ ਸਰਬਤ ਹਲੰਦੇ ।

ਡਵਿ ਲਗੈ ਉਜਾੜਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਭ ਘਾਹ ਜਲੰਦੇ ।
ਹੜ ਆਏ ਕਨਿ ਬੰਮੀਅਨਿ ਦਰੀਆਉ ਵਹੰਦੇ ।
ਅੰਬਰਿ ਪਾਟੇ ਥਿਗਲੀ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ਕਰੰਦੇ ।
ਸਾਂਗੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਾਬਤੇ ਸੇ ਵਿਰਲੇ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

Dhartee uppar(i) kot garh bhu-e-chaal kamand-ai.

Jhakharh(i) aa-e taruvaraa sarbat haland-ai.

Dav(i) lag-ei ujaarh(i) vich(i) sabh ghaah jaland-ai.

Harh aa-ai kan(i) thammee-ann(i) dareeaaou vahand-ai.

Ambar(i) paat-ai thiglee koorh-e-aar karand-ai.

Saang-ei andar(i) saabat-ai s-ai viral-ai band-ai.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 35, Pauri 21)

(During an earthquake, millions of forts on earth are jolted and crumbled; during a storm, all the trees swing wildly and some of them get uprooted; during fire, grasslands and forests are burnt; who can obstruct the flood of the flowing river? Only those who are adept in gossiping can boast to do the foolish task of sewing the torn sky like a cloth. Rare are the godly people, who follow the Will of God, and remain completely poised during chaos.)

When these calamities create chaos, the Almighty Lord sends a divine person on the earth. He starts a spiritual revolution by motivating the suffering mankind to perform good deeds and recite the Divine Name. This leads to spiritual brotherhood and divine peace in the world. Thus, the company of God-conscious persons is of utmost importance to help Seekers in getting rid of their ego, and bringing about harmony, peace and love, among mankind. In the divine company of such a person, the divine tune of the higher mind (Buddhi) motivates ego (the lower mind) to perform good deeds and meditate on the Divine Name with full love and devotion:

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਜੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਰੰਗੁ ਮਾਣੁ ॥

Mann toon jot(i) saroop(u) h-ei Aapnhaa mool(u) pachhaanh(u).

Mann Har(i) jee t-ai-r-ei naal(i) h-ei Gurmatee rangg(u) maanh(u). (441)

[O my mind! You are embodiment of the Divine Light; recognise your origin (the Divine within). You are a part of the Divine Kingdom, from which you have been separated, and got engaged in lustful misdeeds. Now you have been given a chance to merge with the Divine within, by meditating on the Divine Name. The Divine Lord is within you and by following the Guru's Teaching, you would enjoy His Divine Bliss.]

As stated earlier, the body of a person is a temple of the Divine Lord. If the mind is engrossed in vices, then this 'temple' gets polluted and becomes the abode of evil actions (hell). However, if a Seeker keeps his association with the divine

persons and meditates on the Divine Name, then his body becomes the abode of the Divine. The Seeker submits himself before Obedience (Raza), Order (Hukam) and Will (Bhaanha) of the Supreme Being, and thus his body becomes the temple of the Divine.

Each individual emits vibrations according to his state of mind. When a weak-minded person comes in contact with the vibrations of a spiritual person, the former's state of mind gets elevated. God-fearing persons emit holy vibrations and divine persons (God-conscious persons) emit Aura (spiritually charged vibrations). These vibrations have a salutary effect on any person, who comes in contact with them. In short, every individual emits vibrations - good or bad - which affect the persons who come under their influence. Hence, if all the members of a family meditate on the Divine Name, the total vibrations produced by them will turn the house into an abode of divine peace (heaven). On the other hand, if the members of a family have negative thoughts and take to evil deeds, they will emit bad vibrations and their house will become an abode of evil souls (hell). Similarly, a village, city, province or a country becomes heaven or hell, depending upon what sort of vibrations the majority of the people living there emit and spread out.

When we say that a particular village, city, province or a country is thriving in the age of Truth (Satyug), we mean that its citizens have complete faith in the Divine and are living truthfully in total harmony with each other, i.e., there is spiritual brotherhood. On the other hand, if majority of its people are selfish and given to all types of vices, the same village, city, province or that country would become a place of turbulence and strife (hell). Therefore, everyone should strive to tread the Divine Path so as to promote peace, harmony and brotherhood in the world.

The Almighty Lord is benevolent, merciful and gracious and does not mean to harm anyone. The truth is that by our own negative thinking, we invite or bring misery, suffering, worry, curses, riots, battles and wars upon ourselves. Thus, all of these are man-made miseries and not curses of the Divine. These are not invoked as per the Divine Law and thus, these are the outcome of our own deeds performed against the Divine Will. The desire to accumulate wealth, the lust for power and other cravings create bad vibrations, which in turn, disturb nature's harmony.

When all these negative forces are diminished to a great extent, even stone-hearted persons would get inspired to give up vices like lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride; and would become good human beings. Many of them become motivated to tread the spiritual path and with the passage of time, they become Divine, i.e., one with the Divine Lord. While emitting the divine vibrations, they

turn the same region, from a place of strife (hell) to an abode of peace (heaven).

Under the Divine Law, whenever in a society, the upright and the holy persons outnumber the unholy and the evil-minded persons, the miseries start diminishing and there is divine prosperity all around. But the opposite is also true. Such situation is thus explained in Guru Granth Sahib:

ਸਾ ਧਰਤੀ ਭਈ ਹਰੀਆਵਲੀ ਜਿਥੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਬੈਠਾ ਆਇ ॥

ਸੇ ਜੰਤ ਭਏ ਹਰੀਆਵਲੇ ਜਿਨੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਦੇਖਿਆ ਜਾਇ ॥

Saa dhartee bha-ee hareeaavlee Jith-ei m-ai-raa Sat(i)guru b-ei-thaa aa-e.

S-ai jantt bha-e hareeaavl-ai Jinnee m-ai-raa Sat(i)guru d-ai-kh-e-aa jaa-e. (310)

[That land, where my Divine Master (Guru) sits, becomes heaven due to His divine vibrations. Those beings, who behold my True Guru (the divine teaching), are spiritually rejuvenated.]

As already explained the whole Universe comprises of three entities:

1. Material framework and its manifestations
2. Ego, the Negative force
3. The Divine, pervading everywhere.

1. The Material Framework : The material framework of the Universe consists of:

- (i) Inert matter, i.e., earth, which includes sand particles, rocks, mountains, streams, rivers, and oceans.
- (ii) Plant Kingdom
- (iii) Animal Kingdom, including mankind.

The entire manifestation of the matter together comprises the framework. Though created under the Divine Will, it is, in fact, not true according to the spiritual outlook, but an illusion. The body of an individual is the temple of the Divine Lord, in which He pervades in the form of the soul, which too is formless, being part of the Universal Soul (God).

According to Guru Tegh Bahadur:

ਜਗ ਰਚਨਾ ਸਭ ਝੂਠ ਹੈ ਜਾਨਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮੀਤ ॥

Jagg rachnaa sabh jhooth h-ei Jaan(i) l-ai-hu r-ai meet. (1429)

(The whole Universe is an illusion and thus unreal.)

and

ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਿਮਾਨ ਹੈ ਸਗਲ ਮਿਥੇਨਾ ॥

Drisat(i)maan h-ei sagal mith-ai-naa. (1083)

(According to the Divine Law, all that is seen is, in fact, an illusion and not real.)

All Sikh Gurus and other divine persons have conveyed the same message to the masses:

The scientific explanation of matter is as follows :

If a devoted scientist wants to know the reality of the matter, his vision would go first towards atom (that forms molecules) and with different arrangements and combinations of molecules matter is seen. An atom is invisible to the mortal eye.

The devoted scientist would go in the direction of the composition of the atom which is further formed by sub-atomic particles, i.e., electrons, protons and neutrons. According to the latest research, these are formed by quarks, mesons and leptons, which can be seen only through very sophisticated microscopes. Scientists, through experiments, have also discovered the very particle of an atom that they have named as Higgs-Boson or the God-particle. In the end, the scientists exclaimed with excitement, that it is all energy, energy and energy only, which might be part of some Divine Power.

2. Ego : Mind is a form of ego. All religions of the world teach us that each individual has to choose one out of the two paths - one leading towards divine bliss and peace (heaven), and the other towards pain and sufferings (hell). But, the concept of heaven and hell varies in each religion. The mind of all creatures, taken together, constitutes the mind of the Universe. Different regions and countries of the world become hell or heaven in varying degrees depending upon the state of mind of the majority of the people living there. Similarly, individual persons have different states of awareness, whether good or bad, according to the condition of their minds.

If a person, under the influence of his egoistic mind, persistently performs bad deeds, he slips down towards pain, suffering and hell, in due course of time. On the other hand, a person who has developed the divine wisdom, always performs good deeds for humanity and reaches the sphere of the divine realm, and gets rid from the cycle of birth and rebirth. But the state of mind of a person is not irreversible. It can be changed depending upon the company he keeps. Even an evil person can become Divine, by keeping company of divine persons. As such, he starts meditating on the Divine Name with complete faith, love and devotion.

Those, who have conquered their ego become true recipients of the Divine Grace. They become one with the Eternal Divine and their mind is filled with divine power, which enables them to conquer the five vices. Whatever they say comes to pass. Their words and actions become forceful and radiant with spiritual power. An ordinary person cannot reach that region of spiritual power.

3. The Divine : The Supreme Being has created the whole Universe including all the creatures. He pervades everywhere as the Supreme Divine Lord. He also exists in every creature in the form of soul (Atma), constituting the divine reality, which gives energy to all the creatures existing in this world. As such, Atma and

Parmatma are one, meaning the divine soul of an individual and the Universal Divine Soul are one and the same, and there is no difference.

All divine scriptures of the world shed light on the above three entities. Likewise, each hymn of Guru Granth Sahib sheds light on one of these three entities, i.e., matter, mind or the Divine. The Divine Theme, which all the divine scriptures urge, is that a person should leave the negative path and tread the spiritual path, while performing good deeds for attaining peace of mind and ultimately self-realisation.

According to the Divine Law, matter is an illusion. The whole of creation is the manifestation of the Divine. No one can describe them, as they are infinite. There are worlds beyond worlds and creations beyond creations. The whole system is governed by an Eternal Law. The Lord (Eternal Divine) dwells in His Creation and revels in its glory.

The Role of the Mother in Building the Character of her Child

Depending upon the sum total of its past deeds, the subtle body of a person after death migrates to its destined place in the cosmos. Based upon its past deeds, a free-floating subtle body (Suksham Shareer) enters into a newly fertilised ovum, and in due course of time, is reborn as a new-born infant. During the process of fertilisation (union of ovum and the sperm), the Almighty Lord in the form of soul (Atma) is already there. During this union (fertilised egg), a subtle body (mind) rushes in. This fertilised egg then develops into an embryo. Thus, God, as soul and mind, as subtle body, co-exists in the embryo. Within the womb of the mother, the cells of the embryo go on multiplying to form the foetus. The multiplication of these cells and the subsequent growth and development of the foetus attributes to the Divine Power of the soul, which is present in every cell. Mind too, in the form of a subtle body, pervades in every cell. As soon as the fertilised egg embeds itself inside the womb, the role of the mother starts. She has to nourish her growing embryo not only with food, but also with positive spiritual waves. Traditionally, therefore, as soon as a woman conceives, she should start a nutritious diet and should start reciting Divine Hymns and meditating on the Divine Name, thus generating spiritual waves. It is a fact that if a pregnant woman fills her mind with spiritually uplifting thoughts and has a healthy nutritious diet, her growing foetus will be benefitted immensely, both physically and spiritually. On the other hand, if her thoughts are negative and she eats Tamasic food, the physical growth of the foetus is impaired and the spiritual development of the foetus is harmed. As already mentioned, the growth and development of the embryo within the womb is profoundly influenced by the actions - good or bad - of the mother.

Even today, wise young women during their pregnancy, eat simple nourishing vegetarian food, recite the divine Hymns, meditate on the Divine Name and read life-stories of the divine persons, saints and spiritual heroes, who toiled relentlessly and selflessly to lead mankind along the path of divine peace. Recent scientifically authenticated research has confirmed that the thoughts and actions of a pregnant woman have profound effect in moulding the character of the child, she would eventually give birth to.

The actions of an infant reflect how much ego he carries. The more an infant cries, flails, flings about its arms and legs and appears restless, the more ego he is carrying over from his previous lives. Saints and divine persons, even in their infancy, always remain calm and hardly ever cry or get agitated, because they have only traces of ego or none at all. Everybody is drawn towards such a divine child as if pulled by a magnet. Egoistic or weak-minded children are easily influenced by their family environment. But strong-minded children, who are divinely inspired and are destined for spiritual uplift, influence others, rather than being influenced by them.

From the very beginning, the mother's role in the spiritual development of her child is of great importance. While cradling the child, she should recite Gurbani. As the child grows, she should narrate the life-stories of divine and enlightened persons, especially those who achieved spiritual greatness in their childhood like Dhruva, Prehlad, Guru Harkrishan (who became the eighth Sikh Guru at the tender age of five) and the four young sons (Sahibzadas) of Guru Gobind Singh. That is why, it is said that it is the mother, who shapes the destiny of her child. It is up to her, whether she grooms her child to become a brave hero or a saint. She, thus renders her service towards humanity. On the contrary, by neglecting her sacred duties, she turns her son into a thief, a dacoit or an evil-minded person, and ruins his life. Sadly, in the present era, mothers do not pay any attention to the spiritual uplift of their children.

As the child grows, good or bad company has a profound influence on his development. Even if he is born into a pious and devout family, he may stray from the righteous and spiritual path, if he falls into bad company. On the other hand, a child reared in an unholy atmosphere can rise to the heights of spiritual greatness, if by God's grace, he becomes associated with some noble and pious souls. Such a child would not only reform himself, but also play a positive role in leading his family and others along the spiritual path.

An adolescent child indulges in various types of vices according to the intensity of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - prevalent in him.

These are the result of the cumulative effects of all the selfish actions in the past in both, this life and in the previous lives. The more a person indulges in these vices, the more he inflates his ego. Thus, ego is positively correlated with indulgence in these vices. In other words, ego and the indulgence in vices feed each other. From a spiritual point of view, it is an established fact that every deed - good or bad - affects every cell in the body. Sensations received through the eyes, ears, nose, skin and lips together increase the intensity of sexual arousal. Young ones, blessed with divine willpower, will generally remain free from these vices. Whereas, persons with weak willpower, drawn by their basic instincts, will easily succumb to these.

The quality of thoughts (negative and positive) that the wavering mind is absorbed in, the food habits of an individual, and the surrounding environment, each affect his genetic constitution, and may even lead to epigenetics, shaping his future development accordingly. If an individual's genetic mutation is in the positive (Satvik) direction, positive thoughts always arise in his mind and if the environment is congenial and healthy, he will be strong, both physically and spiritually. However, if the genetic mutation is in the negative (Tamasic) mode, the individual will be physically weak and spiritually impoverished.

Physical and Sense Organs

Among the 8.4 million species on earth, which include plants, animals and human beings, the human being is Supreme, because only he is blessed with Divine Wisdom, which inspires him to meet the Divine Lord, while performing spiritual deeds:

ਅਵਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਪਨਿਹਾਰੀ ॥ ਇਸੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਸਿਕਦਾਰੀ ॥

Avar jon(i) t-ai-ree panihaaree. Is(u) dhartee meh t-ai-ree sikdaaree.(374)

(All creations of the Universe are Your slaves and You are Sovereign on this earth.)

Also, it is the human being, who has been given a chance to meet the Divine Lord in this life:

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

Bha-ee praapat(i) maanukh d-ai-hureeaa. Gobind milanh kee eh t-ai-ree baree-aa. (12)

(O man! This human body has been blessed by the Divine Lord. Thus, this is your chance to meet the Divine Lord.)

Guru Amardas reiterates that if the human being does not remember the Divine Lord, he is wasting his life:

ਏ ਸਰੀਰਾ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਇਸੁ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਆਇ ਕੈ ਕਿਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇਆ ॥

ਕਿ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਸਰੀਰਾ ਜਾ ਤੂ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਆਇਆ ॥

ਜਿਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਤੇਰਾ ਰਚਨੁ ਰਚਿਆ ਸੋ ਹਰਿ ਮਨਿ ਨ ਵਸਾਇਆ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਹਰਿ ਮੰਨਿ ਵਸਿਆ ਪੁਰਬਿ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਏਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ਹੋਆ ਜਿਨਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਿਉ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

Ai sareeraa m-ai-r-e-aa Is(u) jagg meh(i) aa-e k-ei Kiaa tudh(u) karam kamaa-e-aa.

Ki karam kamaa-e-aa tudh(u) sareeraa Jaa too jagg meh(i) aa-e-aa.

Jin(i) Har(i) t-ai-raa rachan(u) rach-e-aa So Har(i) mann(i) na vasaa-e-aa.

Gur parsaa-dee Har(i) mann(i) vas-e-aa Poorab(i) likh-e-aa paa-e-aa.

Kah-ei Nanak eh(u) sareer parvaanh(u) ho-aa Jinn(i) Sat(i)gur siou chitt(u) laa-e-aa. (922)

(O my mind! You have been blessed with the human body incoming to this world to tread the Divine Path, but what efforts have you made to achieve this goal? The Divine One has gifted you this body as a temple for meditation on the Divine Name, but you have been engaged in worldly pursuits, and thus have forgotten to perform the same for your self-realisation. However, with the grace of the Divine Master, you have been blessed with the divine company for imbibing the spiritual values, through which you would tread the Divine Path for attaining self-realisation, for which you were striving hard in the previous births.

In the end, the Guru says, "You should be highly grateful to the Divine Lord that you have been bestowed with the wisdom in your body which would motivate you to tread the Divine Path to realise the Divine within".)

Five organs, with the help of which a person performs deeds are hands, feet, mouth, genital and the anus and the five sense organs are eyes, tongue, nose, ears, and the skin. You perceive sight, taste, odour, sound and touch through these, and also get ensnared at times by the five vices. The fact is that all these ten organs have been gifted by the Almighty Lord to enable humanity to tread the spiritual path with full love and devotion, so that, a person would realise the Divine within to attain self-realisation.

Hands

The Almighty has gifted the human race a pair of hands, which enables him to earn a livelihood through honest means, and to render selfless service to humanity.

According to the Divine Law, all the human beings have been bestowed with these organs to render selfless service to humanity and to tread the Divine Path, to achieve self-realisation, otherwise they will be engrossed in accumulating worldly wealth and possessions, which are negatively correlated with self-realisation, and thus their services will be rendered useless. The Guru exhorts man:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

Ghaal(i) khaa-e kichh(u) hath-hu d-ai-e. Nanak raah(u) pachhanheh(i) s-ai-e.(1245)

(One, who toils hard to earn his livelihood and parts with one-tenth of his earnings, for the Divine Cause; Guru Nanak Dev says that, only then can one find the Divine Path to tread upon for attaining self-realisation.)

Hands can render great service to a person to tread the Divine Path:

ਤੇ ਹਸਤ ਪੁਨੀਤ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰੁ ਹਰਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਿੰਦੁੜੀਏ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਲੇਖਹਿ ਰਾਮ ॥

T-ai hasat puneet pavitar heh(i) m-ai-ree jindurhee-ai

Jo Har(i) jas(u) Har(i) Har(i) l-ai-kheh(i) Ram. (540)

(O my mind! Only those hands are sacred and sanctified, which motivate man to write the Divine Hymns and Praises of the Almighty Lord, for getting the divine blessings in the company of divine persons.)

Guru Nanak prays to God thus in the following hymn:

ਪਖਾ ਫੇਰੀ ਪਾਣੀ ਢੋਵਾ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਕੈ ਪੀਸਣੁ ਪੀਸਿ ਕਮਾਵਾ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਸਿ ਬੇਨੰਤੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਨ ਦੇਖਣੁ ਪਾਵਾ ॥

Pakhaa f-ai-ree paanhee dhovaa Har(i) jann k-ei peesanh(u) pees(i) kamaavaa.

Nanak kee Prabh paas(i) b-ai-nantee T-ai-r-ai jann d-ai-khanh(u) paavaa.(749)

(Give me strength to wave the hand fan for comfort of the holy congregation, carry water for them, and grind the grains for preparing food for the holy gathering, while reciting the Divine Name. Grant me association of the holy persons for treading the path of Divine Wisdom.)

On the contrary, if an individual uses his hands to indulge in vices, he strays away from the spiritual path and keeps on wandering in the endless cycles of birth and rebirth:

ਵਢੀਅਹਿ ਹਥ ਦਲਾਲ ਕੇ ਮੁਸਫੀ ਏਹ ਕਰੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਗੈ ਸੋ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਿ ਖਟੇ ਘਾਲੇ ਦੇਇ ॥

Vaddhee-eh(i) hath dalaal k-ai Musfee eh kar-ai-e.

Nanak agg-ei so mil-ei Je khatt-ai ghaal-ai d-ai-e. (472)

[Guru Nanak Dev condemns the go between, by using such harsh words as 'cutting his hands', if one motivates others to grab the money through unfair means (grabbing, looting, and taking bribes), and then giving the same in charity for getting pleasure of the Divine, which is totally against the Divine Law. However, the Guru further advises that we can get the blessings of the Divine only if we earn livelihood with honest toil, and part with some of it for rendering service to the downtrodden, who are treading the Divine Path.]

Guru Arjan Dev stresses in Sukhmani Sahib:

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਹਸਤ ਪਰ ਦਰਬ ਕਉ ਹਿਰਹਿ ॥

Mith-e-aa hasat par darab kaou hireh(i). (268)

(Those hands are useless and condemnable, which steal the wealth of others.)

Feet

ਚਰਨ ਸਰਨ ਗੁਰ ਏਕ ਪੈਡਾ ਜਾਇ ਚਲ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੋਟਿ ਪੈਡਾ ਆਗੈ ਹੋਇ ਲੇਤ ਹੈ ॥

Charan saran Gur ek p-ei-daa jaa-e chal.

Sat(i)gur kot(i) p-ei-daa aag-ei ho-e I-ai-t h-ei (Bhai Gurdas)

(If we have a sincere urge to get the blessings of the Guru to tread the Divine Path, and with this intention put forth a few steps to meet Him, He Himself would rush to receive us to help tread the Divine Path for attaining self-realisation.)

This shows that Divine Blessings are positively correlated with the urge of the mind to receive the blessings.

God has blessed every human being with a pair of feet to enable him to travel to his place of work to earn his livelihood honestly and with utmost toil, and later, to part with some of it as charity for the Divine Cause. Those feet are blessed, which take a person to places of worship to seek blessings of the divine persons and their spiritual advice to tread the Divine Path to merge with the Divine within.

Those feet are also blessed that take the Seeker to the holy congregation for reciting the Divine Name, to eradicate his ego, which goes a long way in perceiving the Divine within for getting rid of all his sins:

ਚਰਨ ਚਲਉ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ॥ ਮਿਟਹਿ ਪਾਪ ਜਪੀਐ ਹਰਿ ਬਿੰਦ ॥

Charan chalou maarag(i) Gobind. Miteh(i) paap japee-ei Har(i) bind. (281)

(With your feet, tread the spiritual path. Chanting the Lord's Name even for a moment, sins are washed away.)

In fact, those feet are blessed, which tread the Divine Path to attend the holy congregation for perceiving Divine Wisdom, to render selfless service to humanity and to motivate others to do the same for getting Divine Blessings. Such type of services motivate the devotee to recite Hymns and contemplate on the Divine Name honestly, with complete love and devotion. By doing so, all the sins of the past as well as of the present life would be eradicated completely, and one can become a saintly person.

Mouth

Mouth should be used only to eat simple, nourishing and healthy food to maintain a healthy body, which can endure hard work, not only to earn a livelihood honestly, but also to tread the long and hard journey along the spiritual path. Taking tamasic food arouses negative feelings, passionate tendencies and lustful desires, which include indulging in intoxicants, and relishing various types of alcohols and non-vegetarian foods. This, in turn, ruins the life of an individual by distracting him from treading the Divine Path. It is a common saying that 'simple living and high

thinking' leads a person to a higher pedestal - both worldly and spiritually.

Through the mouth, we should recite the Divine Name and hymns and not use it for taking tamasic food and hurting others. It distracts the mind and pushes man towards hell.

Genital Organ

For treading the spiritual path, the Gurus have adopted chastity. Physical union between married couples must only be for the purpose of procreation leading to the birth of pious persons, who would tread the Divine Path and serve mankind selflessly. This has been clearly defined in the previous chapter entitled Body, Mind and Soul.

The genital organ also helps remove waste matter from the body and keeps it in a healthy state. Consequently, the Seeker can peacefully meditate on the Divine Name, and thus can offer himself selflessly in the service of mankind, which would lead him to the Spiritual Realm and in the attainment of self-realisation:

ਜਤੀ ਸਦਾਵਹਿ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਨਹਿ ਛਡਿ ਬਹਿ ਘਰ ਬਾਰੁ ॥

Jatee sadaaveh(i) jugat(i) na jaanheh(i) Chhad(i) baheh(i) ghar baar(u).(469)

(They call themselves celibate and abandon their homes, but they do not know the true way of life.)

Spirituality is positively correlated with celibacy. Even a married person can acquire celibacy if he follows the proper principles of marriage with one's spouse. Under the Divine Law, if a good and divine person has to take birth in a house, then both husband and the wife will copulate, not under the influence of sexual indulgence, but following the Divine Principle of giving birth to a saintly child as ordained by the Divine. A married person should remain celibate till the child is breast-fed. This period of celibacy could extend even up to three years after conception. Even after this, the couple should not indulge in sex until there is a divine perception, which would be perceived after contemplating on the Divine Name:

ਇੰਦ੍ਰੀ ਬਸਿ ਕਰਿ ਸੁਣਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥

Indree bas(i) kar(i) sunh-hu Hari(i) Naam(u). (299)

(Control the lustful instincts of your sexual organs from indulging in dreadful sexual passions so that you can perceive spiritual bliss and wisdom to listen to and recite the Divine Name to attain self-realisation.)

However, Guru Nanak Dev has strongly emphasised on having strict control over sexual desires and passions, which lead to the assimilation of the virtues of contentment to shape the life of a person, to tread the Divine Path. This is just like the goldsmith who prepares gold ornaments out of iron ore:

ਜਤੁ ਪਾਹਾਰਾ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਸੁਨਿਆਰੁ ॥

Jatt(u) paahaaraa dheeraj(u) sun-e-aar(u). (8)

(Let self-control be the furnace, and patience, the goldsmith.)

Guru Nanak Dev adds:

ਜਤੁ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਸਮਾਏ ॥ ਚਉਥੇ ਪਦ ਕਉ ਜੇ ਮਨੁ ਪਤੀਆਏ ॥

Jatt(u) satt(u) sanjam(u) rid-ei samaa-e. Chouth-ai padd kaou j-ai mann(u) patee-aa-e. (686)

(Chastity, purity of thoughts and self-restraint from passions, are the pre-requisites for treading the Divine Path, and attaining the final destination of spirituality, i.e., to merge completely with the Divine within.)

Anus

This organ helps in the removal of excreta from the body, thus keeping it strong and healthy, so that it can help an individual to meditate on the Divine Name and lead a spiritual life.

Some individuals use this organ for sexual gratification. This practice is against Divine Law and those, who indulge in it, cannot follow the spiritual path; rather they slip down to hell.

Hair

Hair are God's gift to mankind. Its benefits cannot be described in words. In ancient times, all the prophets, saints and sages of all religions would keep their hair unshorn. It is, indeed, perplexing as to when, how, and why the practice of cutting one's hair began.

It is God's Will that our hair keep on growing throughout our life for the benefit of our body. After a certain length, as destined for the body, they cease to grow further. Hair, unlike any other organ, regenerates each time they are shorn. So, it is the spiritual philosophy as to why the Divine Law blesses the person with grown hair. If we cut the hair, we do so against His Will. Many divine persons emphasise that hair is like the holy tongue, used to recite the Divine Name and imbibe the spiritual energy for the benefit of a person.

Hair is the store house of many essential nutritive substances, and the deficiency of many elements in the body can be detected through their chemical analysis. The practice of cutting the hair at regular intervals leads to the loss of many vital substances, like vitamins and minerals. Even modern science analyses hair to find the deficiency of minerals or nutrients in the body. When we cut our hair, it again grows for the benefit of the body. On the other hand, if any other limb of the body is cut off, it doesn't grow again. Nails also keep on growing, but they are dead cells

consisting of Keratin (Protein), which are pushed out of the body. The only living part of the fingernails is located underneath the skin and this cannot be cut. Thus, growing of hair again and again is, according to the Divine Law, for the benefit of the human being. While combing, dead hair come off automatically without any pain. Hair contain lots of minerals, vitamins and other vital elements, which are very essential for the body. Going by the trend, one continues cutting one's hair, but they grow again and again for one's benefit. Due to our ignorance, we go on cutting our hair, and thus the body is robbed of all the vital minerals, elements and enzymes. In fact, by doing so, we are disobeying the Divine Law too.

In eastern religions, there is a belief that hair absorbs cosmic energy and by tying them in a knot at the top of the head, one can concentrate and preserve this energy in this vital part of the body. Gurbani sheds light on the vital role played by the hair in helping the Seeker to attain spiritual knowledge:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

Gurmukh(i) rom(i) rom(i) Har(i) dhiaav-ei. (941)

(God-conscious people are always attuned to the Divine, and their hair acts as divine antenna to absorb Divine Energy by reciting the Divine Name quietly.)

The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev says:

ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ਕੇਸ ਸੰਗਿ ਝਾਰੇ ॥

Gur k-ai charan kes sangg(i) jhaar-ai. (387)

(With my hair, I dust the feet of the Guru.)

This symbolises the Seeker's utmost humility and devotion to serve his Divine Master to gain Divine Wisdom.

Guru Ramdas had a long beard. When He met Baba Sri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak Dev, He was asked why He had grown such a long beard. Guru Ramdas replied with utmost humility, "It is for cleaning the dirt and dust off your (Baba Sri Chand's) holy feet". And, He actually did it with His beard. Baba Sri Chand remarked in divine ecstasy that He and the divine humility of His predecessors have snatched the spiritual seat of Guru Nanak Dev from them (Guru Nanak Dev's sons). It reasserts that everybody should have humility and reverence to perceive the divine teachings of the Guru in letter and spirit:

ਕੇਸਾ ਕਾ ਕਰਿ ਬੀਜਨਾ ਸੰਤ ਚਉਰੁ ਢੁਲਾਵਉ ॥

Kesaa kaa kar(i) beejnaa Sant chour(u) dhulaavou. (745)

(I make my hair into a fan and wave it over the Saint.)

It further emphasises the role of hair in divinity. Hair should be made a fan for waving it over the divine persons for attaining the divine virtues:

ਮੇਰੇ ਰਾਮ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਕੈ ਹਉ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਕੇਸਾ ਕਾ ਕਰਿ ਚਵਰੁ ਢੁਲਾਵਾ ਚਰਣ ਧੁੜਿ ਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਈ ॥

M-ai-r-ai Ram Har(i) jann k-ei Haou bal(i) jaaee.

Kesaa kaa kar(i) chavar(u) dhulaavaa Charanh dhoorh(i) mukh(i) laaee. (749)

(O my Lord! I am a sacrifice to the humble servants of the Divine Lord. I make my hair into a fan, and wave it over them; and apply the dust of their feet to my face to imbibe utmost humility.)

Guru Arjan Dev, in divine humility, says:

ਕੇਸ ਸੰਗਿ ਦਾਸ ਪਗ ਝਾਰਉ ਇਹੈ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਮੋਰ ॥

Kes sangg(i) daas pagg jhaarou lh-ei manorath mor. (500)

(With my hair, I wash the feet of the divine persons; this is the purpose of my life- to obtain the blessing of divine humility, which is correlated with perceiving of divine knowledge.)

The Forehead

The forehead is used to bow down before a deity or the divine persons or the Eternal Being to seek blessings. Each time one bows down before one's parents or before a holy person as a mark of respect, one decimates some of his ego. Bending of the body is submission to the divine person or to the Guru and is directly correlated with the eradication of ego. For a genuine Seeker, there is a significant spiritual gain each time he bows. Humility is essential for self-realisation - the more the better. More the humility less will be ego; less the ego, more will be the spiritual progress:

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੜਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਨਿਵਿ ਨਿਵਿ ਲਾਗਉ ਪਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥

Jo dees-ei Gursikhrhaa Tiss(u) niv(i) niv(i) laagou paa-e jeeou. (763)

(When I see a devoted disciple of the Guru, I would humbly bow and fall at his feet, not only out of respect for his spiritual inclination for the Divine Master, but also to imbibe it with the intention of eradicating my ego.)

Guru Ramdas says:

ਸੋ ਸੀਸੁ ਭਲਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰ ਪਾਵਨੁ ਹੈ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਿੰਦੁੜੀਏ ਜੋ ਜਾਇ ਲਗੈ ਗੁਰ ਪੈਰੇ ਰਾਮ ॥

So sees(u) bhalaa pavitar paavan(u) h-ei m-ai-r-ee jindurhee-ai

Jo jaa-e lagg-ei Gur p-ei-r-ai Ram. (540)

(O my mind, sublime, pure and pious is that head, which falls at the Guru's feet to imbibe the Divine Wisdom.)

Guru Arjan Dev also echoes similar thoughts, when he says:

ਜਲੁ ਢੋਵਉ ਇਹ ਸੀਸ ਕਰਿ ਕਰ ਪਗ ਪਖਲਾਵਉ ॥

Jal(u) dhovaou eh sees kar(i) Kar pagg pakhlaavou. (813)

(I carry water on my head for washing the feet of the God-conscious persons to assimilate Divine Values.)

He also says:

ਮਸਤਕੁ ਅਪਨਾ ਭੇਟ ਦੇਉ ਗੁਨ ਸੁਨਉ ਰਸਾਲ ॥

Mastak(u) apnaa bh-ai-t d-ai-ou Gunn sunou rasaal. (810)

(I offer my head, i.e., I completely surrender my ego to the God-conscious persons and listen from them the glories and praises of the Divine Lord, the source of spiritual bliss.)

and also:

ਸੰਤ ਚਰਨ ਧਰਉ ਮਾਥੈ ਚਾਂਦਨਾ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਅੰਧੇਰੈ ॥

Sant charan dharou maath-ei chaandnaa Greh(i) ho-e andh-ai-r-ei. (1301)

(When I touch the feet of God-conscious persons with my forehead, with utmost devotion and humility, I will shed my egoistic instincts, and thus, the darkness concealing the Divine Wisdom would be dispelled and the brightness of the Divine will shine forth.)

Guru Nanak's message is clear that in a game of Divine Love, even the head has to be sacrificed:

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥

ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ॥

Jaou taou prem kh-ai-lanh kaa chaaou. Sirr(u) dhar(i) talee galee m-ai-ree aaou.

It(u) maarag(i) p-ei-r(u) dhareej-ei. Sirr(u) deej-ei kaanh(i) na keej-ei. (1412)

(In order to play the game of Divine Love, one has to surrender his ego completely, and whoever treads this Divine Path has to shed his ego.)

If the brow does not bow down before the divine person; instead, if it is only adorned to look beautiful, then the ego gets inflated, and the whole spiritual progress comes to a halt. Guru Nanak Dev warns:

ਜਿਨ ਸਿਰਿ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਪਟੀਆ ਮਾਂਗੀ ਪਾਇ ਸੰਧੂਰੁ ॥

ਸੇ ਸਿਰ ਕਾਤੀ ਮੁੰਨੀਅਨਿ ਗਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ਧੂੜਿ ॥

Jinn sirr(i) sohan(i) pattee-aa Maangee paa-e sandhoor(u).

S-ai sirr(i) kaatee munnee-ann(i) Gal vich(i) aav-ei dhoorh(i). (417)

(Those young women, who decorate their heads with beautifully knitted hair and put vermilion in the hairparting, inflate their ego to such an extent that it would ultimately lead them to the path of miseries.)

When Babar, the Mughal Emperor invaded the city of Aminabad, the heads of those women were shorn and they were dragged around like slaves due to which lots of dust went into their throats. It means, their extreme ego was humiliated because they did not bow their heads before any God-conscious person because of their ego. When these egoistic men and women were subjected to miseries by the invader Babar, and put into jail, Guru Nanak Dev, after perceiving their miseries and repentance, got Himself imprisoned along with them to mitigate their miseries. All the imprisoned persons, including Guru Nanak Dev, were ordered to grind grains with hand-driven stone mills. Guru Nanak Dev started reciting the Divine Hymns

and asked all the prisoners to do so. Lo! The stone mills started grinding the grains automatically, on their own. While, all the prisoners, with folded hands, recited the Hymns. When Babar was informed of this miracle, he rushed to the jail and was horrified. Seeing the divine glow and aura on the Guru's face, who was deeply immersed in reciting the Hymns, the Emperor fell at His feet and begged His pardon. To escape the curse of God (Allah), he pleaded with the Guru to shower His blessings to rid him of his sins. The merciful Guru asked Babar to free all the captives and return their looted bounties. The Emperor obeyed His order and got His Divine Blessings by submitting that he would never inflict atrocities on anyone in future. Due to this gesture and the Divine Blessings, he defeated other Arabian tyrant rulers, and ruled India without much ado. Baba Farid, a Muslim saint also testifies that humility is the greatest virtue:

ਜੇ ਸਿਰੁ ਸਾਈ ਨਾ ਨਿਵੈ ਸੋ ਸਿਰੁ ਕੀਜੈ ਕਾਂਇ ॥
ਕੁੰਨੇ ਹੇਠਿ ਜਲਾਈਐ ਬਾਲਣ ਸੰਦੈ ਥਾਇ ॥

Jo sirr(u) Saa-ee naa niv-ei So sirr(u) keej-ei kaan-ai.

Kunn-ai h-ei-th jalaaee-ei Baalanh sandd-ei thaa-e. (1381)

(What is to be done with that head, which does not bow before the Divine Lord? It should be put into the fireplace in place of firewood.)

It means that the ego, which is the greatest hurdle to Divine Realisation, can only be eradicated by cultivating divine humility with the recitation of the Divine Name.

Eyes

What are the eyes for? Gurbani says that they are meant for reading the holy scriptures and meditating on the Divine Name to gain spiritual insight. With eyes, we can behold the divine persons, who inspire us to follow the Divine Path, leading to God-realisation. Guru Ramdas emphasises:

ਤੇ ਨੇਤ੍ਰ ਭਲੇ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ਹਰਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਜਿੰਦੁੜੀਏ ਜੋ ਸਾਧੂ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਦੇਖਹਿ ਰਾਮ ॥

T-ai n-ai-tar bhal-ai parvaanh(u) heh(i) m-ai-ree jindurhee-ai

Jo sadhu Sat(i)guru d-ai-kheh(i) Ram. (540)

(Blessed are those eyes, which see the holy deeds of the God-conscious persons, and get inspired to tread the Divine Path, which improves the spiritual status of the mind.)

In Sukhmani Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev says that eyes are a means to obtain bliss:

ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ਪੇਖਿ ਦਰਸੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥

N-ai-tar-hu p-ai-kh(i) daras(u) sukh(u) ho-e. (290)

(Beholding His Divine Vision with my eyes, I am inspired to attain Divine Peace.)

He also says:

ਨੈਣ ਨ ਦੇਖਹਿ ਸਾਧ ਸਿ ਨੈਣ ਬਿਹਾਲਿਆ ॥

N-ei-nh na d-ai-kheh(i) saadh Se n-ei-nh bihaal-e-aa. (1362)

(The eyes, which do not catch a glimpse of the divine persons, and never follow their spiritual advice, would lead man to live a miserable life.)

Anand Sahib, one of the Nitnem Banis, suggests that eyes are meant only to behold the true Guru:

ਏ ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ਮੇਰਿਹੋ ਹਰਿ ਤੁਮ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਧਰੀ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੇਖਹੁ ਕੋਈ ॥

Ai n-ai-tar-hu m-ai-r-e-ho Har(i) tum meh(i) jot(i) dharee

Har(i) binn(u) avar(u) na d-ai-khahu koe. (922)

(O my eyes! You have been blessed with the Divine Vision to see One in all, and all in One.)

Guru Arjan Dev reiterates:

ਨੇਤ੍ਰੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੇਖਣਾ ਸ੍ਰਵਣੀ ਸੁਨਣਾ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਉ ॥

N-ai-tree Sat(i)guru p-ai-kh-nhaa Sravanhee sun-nhaa Gur Naaou. (517)

(Let your eyes behold the True Guru and let your ears hear the Divine Name.)

In His divine composition, Anand Sahib, Guru Amardas addresses the eyes of the human being:

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਏਹਿ ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ਅੰਧ ਸੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਦਿਬ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਹੋਈ ॥

Kah-ei Nanak eh(i) n-ai-tar andh s-ai Satgur(i) mili-ei dib drisat(i) hoe. (922)

(O my eyes! You were blind due to your egoistic mind, but after getting the company of the God-conscious persons, you are blessed to visualise the Divine within.)

Guru Arjan Dev warns:

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਨੇਤ੍ਰੁ ਪੇਖਤ ਪਰ ਤ੍ਰਿਅ ਰੂਪਾਦ ॥

Mith-e-aa n-ai-tar p-ai-khat parr tri-a roopaad. (269)

(Those eyes are worthless, which gaze upon the beauty of other's woman.)

Eyes help us in earning our livelihood through honest toil. However, in order to seek the blessings of the Divine Lord, at least one-tenth of what we earn should be parted for charity.

Tongue

The tongue has been blessed to recite the Divine Name and sing Hymns in praise of the Almighty. Always speaking the truth, and avoiding harsh language, help a man attain success not only in this world, but also to perceive the Divine Realm. Speech should always be polite, humble, soft and sweet. It subdues the ego to a great extent. Spiritual blessings are showered upon those, who never speak ill of others, never use harsh words, and tell no lies. Guru Amardas emphasises:

ਰਸਨਾ ਫਿਕਾ ਬੋਲਣਾ ਨਿਤ ਨਿਤ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

Rasnaa phikkaa bolnhaa Nitt nitt ho-e khu-aar(u). (594)

(The one whose tongue speaks egoistic and harsh words, suffer many miseries continuously.)

Guru Arjan Dev emphasises that the tongue is useful only if it meditates on the Divine Name:

ਰਸਨਾ ਜਪਤੀ ਤੂਹੀ ਤੂਹੀ ॥ ਮਾਤ ਗਰਭ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਕ ਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਮੰਡਲ ਇਕ ਤੁਹੀ ॥

Rasnaa japtee toohee toohee. Maat garabh tum hee pratipaalak Mrit mandal ik tuhee. (1215)

(O my tongue! Recite the Divine Name continuously, because it sustained me in the mother's womb and in this mortal world also. Only it would help me to tread the Divine Path.)

He further emphasises on singing the praises of the Divine Lord:

ਰਸਨਾ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਪਾਲ ਨਿਧਿ ਗਾਇਣ ॥ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਰਹਸੁ ਮਨਿ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਸਗਲੇ ਦੁਖ ਪਲਾਇਣ ॥

Rasnaa gunh Gopaal nidh(i) gaa-e-nh.

Saant(i) sehaj(u) rehas(u) mann(i) upj-e-o Sagl-ai dookh palaa-e-nh. (713)

(My tongue sings the praises of the Divine Lord, who is the ocean of virtues, due to which peace, tranquillity, poise and delight dwell in my mind, and all the sorrows vanish.)

In Sukhmani Sahib also, the Guru goads the Seeker to recite the Divine Name:

ਬੋਲਹੁ ਜਸੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤਿ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਅਪਨੈ ਜਨ ਕੀਨੀ ਦਾਤਿ ॥

Bolahu jas(u) jihbaa dinn(u) raat(i). Prabh apn-ei jann keenee daat(i). (286)

(O my tongue! Go on reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. God has bestowed the tongue to man as a gift to recite His Name.)

Saint Namdev expounds in one of the Hymns of Guru Granth Sahib:

ਮਨੁ ਮੋਰੋ ਗਜੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮੇਰੀ ਕਾਤੀ ॥ ਮਪਿ ਮਪਿ ਕਾਟਉ ਜਮ ਕੀ ਫਾਸੀ ॥

Mann(u) m-ai-ro gaj(u) jihbaa m-ai-ree kaatee. Mapp(i) mapp(i) kaatou jamm kee faasee. (485)

(My mind is the yardstick, and my tongue is the scissors with which I go on eradicating the awful disease of ego, bit by bit.)

Guru Arjan Dev warns that if the tongue is not performing its basic duty, it should better be dispensed with:

ਰਸਨਾ ਜਪੈ ਨ ਨਾਮੁ ਤਿਲੁ ਤਿਲੁ ਕਰਿ ਕਟੀਐ ॥

Rasnaa jap-ei na Naam(u) Til(u) til(u) kar(i) kattee-ei. (1362)

(The Divine has blessed the tongue to recite His Name, otherwise, it should be cut bit by bit.)

The tongue must not remain engrossed in eating tasty, sumptuous food only, lest it develops greed, which is negatively correlated with attaining the Divine Wisdom. Guru Amardas emphatically clarifies:

ਏ ਰਸਨਾ ਤੂ ਅਨ ਰਸਿ ਰਾਚਿ ਰਹੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਪਿਆਸ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

Ai rasnaa tu ann ras(i) raach(i) rahee T-ai-ree piaas na jaa-e. (921)

(O my tongue! You are always engrossed in tastes, still your thirst does not satiate. It will ultimately lead you down towards hell.)

Nose

God has blessed man with a nose, i.e., a pair of nostrils through which he breathes. In fact, breath is life. With each breath, the oxygen is inhaled and carbon-dioxide, is driven out. The breath should be used for reciting the Divine Name for spiritual enlightenment. In Hindu philosophy, breath is called Prana (life force), in which the Divine Name pervades. Reciting the Divine Name through each breath is most effective in realising the Divine within.

According to Gurbani, breath control is mind control. The exercises of having long breath are also very important, both for perfect health and spiritual bliss. Gurbani says, "O man! Recite the Divine Name continuously with each breath. You will eradicate all the worries of the mind." Breath, which is the life-giving force, is the vital link to merge mind (ego) with Divine Reality in the human body:

ਏਕੁ ਸਬਦੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਾਨਿ ਬਸਤੁ ਹੈ ਬਾਹੁੜਿ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਆਵਾ ॥

Ek(u) Sabad(u) m-ai-r-ei praan(i) basat(u) h-ei Baahurh(i) janam(i) na aavaa.(795)

(The Divine 'Word' pervades each breath of mine. Its continuous recitation with each breath would lead me to realise the Divine within, which would get me salvation, and thus get rid of the cycle of birth and rebirth.)

In Sukhmani Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev says:

ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਿਮਰਹੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ॥ ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਉਤਰੈ ਚਿੰਦ ॥

Saas(i) saas(i) simrahu Gobind. Mann antar kee uttr-ei chind. (295)

(O man! Recite the Divine Name with each breath continuously, so that you are free from all the worldly worries - even of the death.)

Guru Ramdas loves the Sikh, who keeps reciting the Divine Name with each breath:

ਜੋ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਸੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ ॥

Jo saas(i) giraas(i) dhi-aa-e m-ai-rra Har(i) Har(i) So Gursikh(u) Guru mann(i) bhaav-ei. (305)

(A Gursikh, who recites the Divine Name with every breath, while feeling the presence of the Divine, is dear to the Guru.)

If nose is used only to enjoy lustful fragrance, it would lead a person towards hell. On the other hand, if it is used for reciting the Divine Name, with every breath it takes him to the Spiritual Realm (salvation).

Ears

When we hear and concentrate on the Divine Hymn or on the Divine Name, the inner self gets cleansed, thus helping us realise the Divine within:

ਏ ਸ੍ਰਵਣਹੁ ਮੇਰਿਹੋ ਸਾਚੈ ਸੁਨਣੈ ਨੋ ਪਠਾਏ ॥

Ai srvanh-hu m-ai-r-e-ho Saach-ei sun-nh-ei no pathaa-e. (922)

(O my ears! You have been created to hear the Divine Truth.)

Guru Arjan Dev is all praise for the ears:

ਭਿਤਿ ਪਾਈ ਚੁਕੇ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਗਵਨ ॥ ਸੁਨਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਸ੍ਵਨ ॥

Thit(i) paa-ee chook-ai bhram gavan. Sunn(i) Nanak Har(i) Har(i) jas(u) sravan. (287)

(After listening to the glories of the Divine, all my doubts are cleared and the wavering of the mind ceases, which leads to the stage of equipoise.)

Guru Ramdas expounds:

ਨੈਨੀ ਦੇਖਿ ਦਰਸੁ ਮਨੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤੈ ਸ੍ਵਨ ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਈਆ ॥

ਸੁਨਿ ਸੁਨਿ ਆਤਮ ਦੇਵ ਹੈ ਭੀਨੇ ਰਸਿ ਰਸਿ ਰਾਮ ਗੋਪਾਲ ਰਵਈਆ ॥

N-ei-nee d-ai-kh(i) daras(u) mann(u) tript-ei Sravan Baanhee Gur Sabad(u) sunh-ee-aa.

Sunn(i) sunn(i) aatam dev h-ei bheen-ai Ras(i) ras(i) Ram Gopal rav-ee-aa. (833)

(After seeing the inexpressible glories of the Divine, my mind gets satiated; with my ears, I listen to the Hymns and the Divine Word. Thus, by listening to His glories, I have realised the manifestation of the Divine within and without, which has bestowed upon me immense inexpressible pleasure.)

On the other hand, if a person listens to the slander and faults of others, according to the Divine Law, the same fault will be imprinted on his mind, and he will stray away from the spiritual path. He will fall from the spiritual state, and will get involved in worldly worries and egoistic deeds. He will start enjoying lewd songs and his own false praises. This would further inflate his ego and he would get trapped in the vicious circle, which will result in his downfall in all spheres. Listening to words, which only arouse sensual passions, also acts as a great barrier intreading the Divine Path. Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਕੰਨੀ ਸੁਤਕੁ ਕੰਨਿ ਪੈ ਲਾਇਤਬਾਰੀ ਖਾਹਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੰਸਾ ਆਦਮੀ ਬਧੇ ਜਮ ਪੁਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

Kannee sootak(u) kann(i) p-ei laa-e-tbaaree khaah-e.

Nanak hansaa aadmee Badh-ai jamm pur(i) jaah-e. (472)

(If the ears of a person listen to the slander of others, even such persons who call themselves spiritualistic are bound to go to hell.)

Touching and Seeing the Skin

Skin plays a vital role in everyone's life. Often, before marriages are finalised, the complexion of the prospective bride and groom are taken into consideration. There are many examples when a person treading the spiritual path has been led astray by the beauty and charm of a woman. There is a common spiritual saying that the main hurdle in treading the Divine Path is the skin (Chamri) and money (Damri), which means that the fair skin of a woman, diverts the Seeker from the

right path, for he gets entrapped in lustful activities. Similarly, the lure of money diverts from the path, even the so-called holy persons, luring them towards worldly indulgence, which can divert a person away from the Divine Path. These two vices are considered to be great hurdles. They prevent one from treading the Divine Path. Touching and kissing a woman arouses lustful feelings. Once one falls prey to this, he gets distracted from the spiritual path.

On the other hand, by reverently touching the hands and feet of the parents, one develops more attachment to them. Skin has a great virtue also, through which one can become divine. By rendering physical service to the divine person, including massaging and touching his feet with reverence, one gets spiritual vibrations, and is inspired to tread the Divine Path. With the passage of time, he becomes a divine person. The prominent spiritual examples are of Bhai Lehna, who became the second Guru Nanak Dev by following his Divine Master in letter and spirit. Similarly, Guru Amardas, and the succeeding Gurus, followed the Divine Path by always putting their forehead on their Guru's feet. By doing this they received spiritual vibrations and bliss, which helped them to follow the divine instructions of their Divine Master in letter and spirit, to become Divine.

Life and Death

The Worldly Version of Life and Death

Life: It is the union of body, mind and soul. The soul gives life to the body. Mind, in the form of ego (carried over from past lives), enters the new-formed embryo in the mother's womb. It is a negative force and keeps the body away from spiritual bliss. If left unchecked, it leads the body astray from the Divine Path. The fact is that man has been blessed with this life to tread the Divine Path to realise the Divine, within and without.

Death: Under the Divine Law, when the soul withdraws its Divine Power from the body, the latter dies. Mind (the subtle body) has no power to restore life to the dead frame. Thus, it hovers above the lifeless body, and grieves because it carries attachment to its former dwelling place. It wails: "Oh! My body is dead - it moves no more". So strong is its attachment that it even accompanies the corpse on its last journey to the cremation ground. In Eastern faiths, the rite of burning the dead body is a symbolic act to break attachment of the subtle body from the physical body. The subtle body (mind) can then fly to its destined place in the cosmos as per the deeds performed in the world through its physical body.

The Spiritual Version of Life and Death

Life : When the higher part of mind is engrossed in the Supreme Being through meditation on the Divine Name, man is said to be spiritually alive.

Death : When mind, somehow or the other, is detached from the divine Essence, cravings arise that cause a person to indulge in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. He forgets the Divine Master and gets involved in worldly pursuits, which is considered spiritual death. In short, keeping faith in the Divine by reciting His Name is spiritually alive, while forgetting the Divine during one's lifetime is the spiritual death. Guru Nanak expounds:

ਆਖਾ ਜੀਵਾ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਉ ॥

Aakhaa jeevaa visr-ei mar(i) jaaou. (9)

(If I recite the Divine Name, I am spiritually alive, while forgetting it, I am spiritually dead.)

The third Nanak, Guru Amardas also confirms:

ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਲਏ ਤਾ ਜੀਵੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਵੈ ਖਿਨੁ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਇਆ ॥

Jann Nanak Naam(u) la-e taa jeev-ei Binn(u) Naav-ei khin(u) mar(i) jaa-e-aa. (87)

(By reciting the Divine Name one remains spiritually alive; without it, one is spiritually dead even while alive.)

How to Die Spiritually While Still Alive?

When a person completely sheds his ego by reciting the Divine Name with total faith, love and devotion, he becomes one with the Divine Reality, and attains everlasting bliss. As per the Divine Law, as explained in Guru Granth Sahib, he attains self-realisation, while still alive in the world. Such a person is called Jivan Mukat, which literally means - liberated from ego completely, while still alive. In short, it is ego, which drags a person into the bondages - the cycle of birth and rebirth. Guru Ramdas clarifies:

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਮਰਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਮਰੀਆ ॥

Jeevan mukat(i) so aakhee-ei Mar(i) jeev-ei mareeaa. (449)

(He, who completely eradicates his ego by reciting the Divine Name, gets released from the cycle of birth and rebirth, and attains self-realisation in this very life.)

Guru Nanak reiterates:

ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰੈ ਸੋ ਮਰਿ ਰਹੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਮਰੈ ਨ ਦੂਜੀ ਵਾਰ ॥

Sabad(i) mar-ei so mar(i) rah-ei Phir(i) mar-ei na doojee vaar. (58)

(If one eradicates his ego completely by reciting the Divine Name, he remains in spiritual bliss, and is thus released from the cycle of birth and death.)

Detached from the Divine within, a person wanders for long in the cycle of birth and rebirth. A detailed account of the theory of birth and rebirth has been given in the chapter entitled Karam Nibera on page 48.



Karam Dharam

(Actions/Deeds and the Divine Law) Actions and Deeds (Karma)

Karma is the accumulated impressions of all past and present deeds or actions. They play a key role in the life of the Seeker for treading the Divine Path. It is, therefore, important to know how deeds (Karmas) originate in human life.

When the consciousness of a person, under the influence of worldly pleasures, detaches from the Divine within, craving for worldly possessions arise. Craving leads to temptation to fulfil worldly desires. When temptation is put into action to fulfil worldly desires, it is called Karma (action or deed). Under immense influence of the worldly desires, the cravings get stronger, due to which Karma is repeated regularly, which takes the form of habit. Over the years, ingrained habits, determine a man's character.

Law of Karma : Transmigration of the soul is a reality according to eastern religious philosophy. By meditating on the Divine Name, and by singing the Hymns regularly, with full devotion and by performing selfless service to mankind, one comes to know of all his past births through the four aeons (Yugas). Weighed on the balance of reason, the law of transmigration becomes clear. Some are born poets, warriors, mathematicians, musicians, and seers. These developments come to them from their past lives.

The impressions of all the Karmas - good or bad - are engraved on the mind (Antehkaran). They form a part and parcel of one's life and go with him in the next birth. Good Karmas give their rewards, while the evil ones bring with them miseries. The good Karmas bring a man in the sphere of the congregation of God-conscious persons (Satsang), while evil Karmas lead him astray. By following the path of meditation on the Divine Name, one can eradicate the effect of all evil Karmas.

So, the causes and consequences of actions (Karmas) can thus be expressed in the following simple sequence:

Detachment from the Divine Name leads to:

Craving → Temptation → Action → Habit → Character

Guru Amardas clarifies it in His divine composition Anand Sahib:

ਲਿਵ ਛੁੜਕੀ ਲਗੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਅਮਰੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

Liv chhurkee laggee trisnaa Maa-e-aa amar(u) vartaa-e-aa. (921)

[When Love for the Divine Lord wears off, the human mind gets attached to worldly desires, and thus the script of illusion (Maya) which induces a person to be engrossed in different vices to fulfil his worldly desires, runs its course.]

Mind is a reservoir of accumulated impressions of the actions, performed, both in the present as well as in the previous lives.

Deeds (Karma) of each individual are of three kinds:

1. The Sanchit Karma - the deeds actually performed in the present human life.
2. The Prarabdh Karma - the impressions on the mind created by actions - good or bad - performed in the past lives.
3. The Kriyaman Karma - the actions that one intends to do in his daily life.

Guru Arjan Dev assures in one of his Hymns:

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਬਚਨੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਾ ਸੋ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਤਰੀਐ ॥

J-ai ko bachan(u) kamaav-ei santan kaa So Gur parsaadee taree-ei. (747)

(Anyone can swim across the deadliest world-ocean, if he follows the divine instructions of the saints in letter and spirit and recites the Divine Name with full love and devotion under the guidance of the holy persons.)

Karam Nibera

(Expurgation of Past Deeds)

According to Indian philosophy, actions initiated by the consciousness under the influence of the higher mind - sphere of the divine Wisdom (Budhhi), are virtuous. Actions performed under the influence of the lower mind (ego) are sinful, worldly and purely selfish. The impressions of all actions are imprinted on the sub-conscious mind (Antehkaran) and are recorded forever. In other words, each individual has an invisible computer in his body, where all his deeds - good or bad - are recorded.

Mind has many levels, each having a varied amount of ego. The top-most portion of the human mind, which has the least ego is called Budhhi or the sphere of the initiation of divine Realisation:

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀਅ ਉਪਾਇ ਕੈ ਲਿਖਿ ਨਾਵੈ ਧਰਮੁ ਬਹਾਲਿਆ ॥

Nanak jee-a upaa-e k-ei Likh Naav-ei Dharam(u) bahaal-e-aa. (463)

[Guru Angad Dev says, having created the beings, the Divine Lord installed the Righteous Judge of Dharma (the divine computer), to read and record their actions, which is known in eastern religions as 'Chitra-gupta'.]

Based on good actions of the past lives, one is born a human being and carries out actions drawing conscious energy from the Divine Essence pervading within

the body. Under the Divine Will, when this energy is withdrawn, he dies. Guru Nanak Dev clarifies:

ਸੰਜੋਗੁ ਵਿਜੋਗੁ ਦੁਇ ਕਾਰ ਚਲਾਵਹਿ ਲੇਖੇ ਆਵਹਿ ਭਾਗੁ ॥

Sanjog(u) vijog(u) du-e kaar chlaaveh(i) L-ai-kh-ai aaveh(i) bhaag. (6)

(Union with Him, and separation from Him, comes by His Will. We come to receive what is written in our destiny.)

Just as in a phonograph, we put a plate and then start the machine, the voice and subject matter produced is the same as was impressed upon it in the previous machine. In the same way, the impressions etched on our minds by our actions in past lives make us repeat the same actions - good or bad - in the present life and give their fruit to us. But the actions performed in present life (Sanchit Karma) can change their course for good or evil. A person, who attends the holy congregation (Satsang) and follows the path of meditating on the Divine Name gets his evil impressions erased.

Guru Arjan Dev clarifies that everyone has to bear the fruit of his past actions - good or bad:

ਜੇਹਾ ਬੀਜੈ ਸੋ ਲੁਣੈ ਕਰਮਾ ਸੰਦੜਾ ਖੇਤੁ ॥

J-ai-haa beej-ei so lunh-ei Karmaa sandrhaa kh-ai-t(u). (134)

(According to the Divine Law, every person has to reap the fruit according to the deeds - good or bad - as performed in the previous lives.)

The subtle body survives the physical death of a person, and based on the sum total of its past actions, wanders in the cycle of birth and rebirth. It can only attain self-realisation if born in human body and keeps company of the divine persons from whom he can get spiritual instructions and inspiration. Thus inspired, he then treads the Divine Path, meditates on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, expurges all his bad Karma, and roots out his ego completely. Thus, he purifies his mind to such an extent that he realises the Divine within, and attains salvation in this very life. Guru Nanak Dev makes it amply clear:

ਮਤੁ ਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਇ ਅਗੈ ਪਾਇਸੀ ॥ ਜੇਹੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇ ਤੇਹਾ ਹੋਇਸੀ ॥

Mat(u) ko jaanh-ei jaa-e agg-ei paa-e-see. J-ai-h-ai karam kamaa-e t-ai-haa ho-e-see. (730)

(Let no one think that he would get Divine Peace hereafter, automatically. In fact, whatever deeds a man performs, he would reap the fruit of the same accordingly - good or bad.)

Guru Arjan Dev humbly submits:

ਪਿਛਲੇ ਅਉਗੁਣ ਬਖਸਿ ਲਏ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Pichhal-ai aougunh bakhas(i) la-e Prabh aag-ei maarag(i) paav-ei. (624)

(O my Lord! Forgive my past misdeeds and guide me along the Divine Path; enable me to become Your devoted servant so as to ultimately merge with You.)

Guru Granth Sahib, the Eternal divine scripture of the Sikhs, emphasises that the divine process of erasing the impressions of bad deeds is, by singing the Hymns of the Divine Lord, meditating on the Divine Name and serving mankind selflessly. This practice eradicates one's ego completely, and helps to develop an outlook to see One in all and all in One, ultimately taking him to the realm of eternal bliss, i.e., merging with the Divine within.

Indeed, human beings are born only for this divine purpose. To achieve it, two entities are required: (1) a field (earth) for performing good deeds and serving humanity selflessly for perceiving the Divine Wisdom, and (2) a medium, i.e., the human body, through which a person performs divine deeds. That is why the earth is called Dharamsal - a place, where a person can perform Dharma or pious deeds to earn his living through hard work, while giving one-tenth of his earnings for a noble cause. He should keep company of the divine persons and meditate on the Divine Name and thereby accumulate divine virtues. While living the holy life, he should always remain grateful to the Divine Lord and constantly pray, 'O Divine Master! these virtues are bestowed upon me only due to Your Divine Grace'. He must have no egoistic feelings and should carry out his worldly responsibilities as if these were divinely ordained duties and expecting no reward for his toil. While rendering these worldly duties, he should remain contented as per the Divine Will. Guru Granth Sahib calls this way of life as rendering selfless service for getting His Divine Blessings. In other words, he is treading the Divine Path by serving mankind selflessly. This, in fact, is called Karma Yoga, the theme of which is narrated in the following Hymn of Guru Arjan Dev:

ਕਰਮ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਿਹਕਰਮ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਬੈਸਨੋ ਕਾ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਧਰਮ ॥
ਕਾਹੂ ਫਲ ਕੀ ਇਛਾ ਨਹੀ ਬਾਛੈ ॥ ਕੇਵਲ ਭਗਤਿ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਾਚੈ ॥
Karam karat hov-ei nehkaram. Tis(u) b-ei-sno kaa nirmal Dharam.

Kaahoo phal kee ichhaa nahee baachh-ei. K-ai-val bhagat(i) keertan sangg(i) raach-ei. (274)
(After performing good deeds, the Seeker with utmost humility and spiritual bliss, says, "O my Lord! I have not done this. It has been performed with Your Divine Grace and under Your Command." By so doing, he develops more humility and love for the Divine and does not have any craving for worldly rewards. According to Gurbani, such a person is called 'Vaishnava', a pious person, who has accomplished noble deeds under the command of the Divine.)

Gurbani is also very clear that no holy deed, which is performed under the command of the Divine Lord, ever goes in vain. Not only that, even the selfish deeds that last only a fleeting moment will have to bear the fruit - good or bad - accordingly. Guru Arjan Dev amply clarifies this:

ਪਤਿਤ ਪਾਵਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਸਦਾਏ ਇਕੁ ਤਿਲੁ ਨਹੀ ਭੰਨੈ ਘਾਲੇ ॥

Patit paavan(u) Har(i) birad(u) sadaa-e lk(u) til(u) nahee bhann-ei ghaal-e. (784)

(The Divine Lord does not overlook His devotees even for an iota of selfless service.)

However, actions carried out under influence of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - only lead to mental anguish and eventually push a person into the cycle of birth and rebirth. He remains in this vicious cycle among the living species and suffers greatly. Under the Divine Law, a man must pay for all his actions which are performed under the influence of ego and he suffers the consequences. Guru Nanak Dev clarifies:

ਕੀਤਾ ਆਪੋ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਲੇਖਾ ਸੰਢੀਐ ॥

Keetaa aapo aapnaa Aap-ai hee l-ai-khaa sandhee-ei. (473)

(Everybody reaps the fruits - good or bad - according to the actions performed by him during his life-time and there is no escape from this.)

All through life, from birth to death, the impressions of all actions are stored, firmly imprinted and embedded in the mind. Guru Arjan Dev emphasises:

ਜਿਤੁ ਲਾਗੋ ਮਨੁ ਬਾਸਨਾ ਅੰਤਿ ਸਾਈ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਨੀ ॥

Jitt(u) laago mann(u) baasnaa Antt(i) saa-ee pragtaanee. (242)

(Whatever desire is perceived by one's mind, he performs the deeds accordingly. Similarly, he reaps the rewards of the same - good or bad - in the end.)

As a person approaches death, all impressions embedded in the subconscious mind (Antehkaran) rise up to the conscious mind. According to the Divine Law, a person's last thoughts (before death) determine what species the man would be born in, in his next birth:

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਲਛਮੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥

ਸਰਪ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥ ਅਗੀ ਬਾਈ ਗੋਬਿਦ ਨਾਮੁ ਮਤਿ ਬੀਸਰੈ ॥

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥ ਬੇਸਵਾ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਲੜਕੇ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥ ਸੂਕਰ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਜੋ ਮੰਦਰ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥ ਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਜੋਨਿ ਵਲਿ ਵਲਿ ਅਉਤਰੈ ॥

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੁ ਸਿਮਰੈ ਐਸੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਮਹਿ ਜੇ ਮਰੈ ॥

ਬਦਤਿ ਤਿਲੋਚਨੁ ਤੇ ਨਰ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਪੀਤੰਬਰੁ ਵਾ ਕੇ ਰਿਦੈ ਬਸੈ ॥

Antt(i) kaal(i) jo lachhmee simr-ei Ei-see chintaa meh(i) j-ai mar-ei.

Sarap jon(i) val(i) val(i) aoutar-ei. Aree baaee Gobid Naam(u) matt(i) beesr-ei.

Antt(i) kaal(i) jo istree simr-ei Ei-see chintaa meh(i)

j-ai mar-ei. B-ai-svaa jon(i) val(i) val(i) aoutar-ei.

Antt(i) kaal(i) jo larhik-ai simr-ei Ei-see chintaa meh(i)

j-ai mar-ei. Sookar jon(i) val(i) val(i) aoutar-ei.

Antt(i) kaal(i) jo mandar simr-ei Ei-see chintaa meh(i)

j-ai mar-ei. Pr-ai-t jon(i) val(i) val(i) aoutar-ei.

Antt(i) kaal(i) Naaraa-e-nh(u) simr-ei Ei-see chintaa meh(i) j-ai mar-ei.

Badat(i) Tilochan(u) t-ai nar muktaa Peetambar(u) vaa k-ai ridd-ei bas-ei.(526)

(If, at the time of death, a person thinks about his accumulated wealth, he would be reborn as a snake-like reptilian creeping creature. 'O sister! Don't forget your Divine Husband'. If, at the point of death, a person has lustful thoughts, he would be reborn as a lustful person, like prostitutes, in the subsequent birth. If, in his last moments, a person remembers his children, he would be re-born into the form of pig-like species, which produce numerous off-springs. If, a person dies while thinking of his mansions, he would be re-incarnated as a ghost and would haunt those dwelling places.

These examples show how attachment ruins a person, both, here and hereafter. In the last couplet, the sole aim of human life has been emphasised. Says the Hindu saint Trilochan in a Hymn, incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib: If the mind of a dying person is completely engrossed in his Divine Master, he would gain self-realisation and would be liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth.)

Mentioned above are only a few examples. Greedy, lustful, arrogant, or cruel persons (or those given to other evil actions) will spin around in the cycle of birth and rebirth - incarnating in the form of millions of species according to their deeds. Under the Divine Law, an individual in the form of the subtle body, having passed through innumerable species and undergone sufferings for evil deeds done, may finally get a chance to be reborn as a human being with blessings of the Divine, and spend his life in the company of the holy persons.

If a seeker after Truth has the good fortune to receive spiritual instructions from a God-conscious person and carries out his teachings in letter and spirit, he would gain the insight to tread resolutely on the Divine Path. Reciting Gurbani, meditating on the Divine Name and serving mankind selflessly, the Seeker would attain The Divine Wisdom and find self-realisation in this very life. Everyone should strive to tread the Divine Path with determination, despite facing obstacles. A resolute traveller would get divine assistance and find the necessary willpower to overcome all hurdles. If we study the lives of spiritual Seekers of the past, we find that many of them followed the Divine Path with diligence, became God-conscious and then inspired others to follow the same path. Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਮਹਿਮਾ ਸਾਧੂ ਸੰਗ ਕੀ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮੀਤਾ ॥

ਮੈਲੁ ਖੋਈ ਕੋਟਿ ਅਘ ਹਰੇ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਭਏ ਚੀਤਾ ॥

Meh(i)maa sadhu sangg kee Sun-hu m-ai-r-ai meetaa.

M-ei-l(u) khoee kot(i) agh har-ai Nirmal bha-e cheetaa. (809)

(O my friend! Listen to the glory of keeping divine company under which one recites the

Divine Name with full love and devotion. By doing so, all the egoistic filth is washed away, millions of sins are dispelled and the conscious becomes divinely pure.)

On the other hand, if we do not give up evil actions, we keep moving away from the Divine Path and suffer pain. However, such suffering has a positive impact, as it washes away the past sins. So, let a man not complain, when misfortune strikes him. Let him look upon suffering, as a blessing of the Lord that helps him become a pious person.

This is the divine message of Guru Nanak Dev, founder of the Sikh faith. Whoever follows this teaching faithfully, will make steady progress on the spiritual path, and one day will surely achieve his purpose of realising the Divine Reality.

Heaven, Hell and Salvation

Hell : If the mind is awfully engrossed in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and forgets the Divine Lord, then this is like suffering in the fires of hell.

Heaven : A mind bereft of ego, merges with the Divine Reality and finds the everlasting bliss, which is Heaven.

Self-realisation while still alive (Jeevan Mukta) : He, who has decimated the five vices, which combine to give birth to ego, attains self-realisation in this very life. He keeps company of the divine persons and follows their teaching in letter and spirit. He earns his living through honest toil, and gives away at least a tenth of his honest earnings for charitable purposes. While rendering worldly deeds or working to earn his livelihood, he should consider work as worship, which means that he renders work according to the Will of the Divine. He rises at the ambrosial hour and after the bath, sits in meditation on the Divine Name. He keeps reciting the Hymns or meditates on the Divine Name, even while carrying out his worldly duties.

By mere human efforts, one cannot attain freedom from attachment to the material pursuits. The whole Universe is ruled by the Divine Law. Nothing worth attaining can be secured without a harmonious 'at-one-ment' with this law, which can only be reached by devotional meditation on the Divine Name and selfless service of mankind.

He submits completely to the Divine Will and accepts with grace whatever befalls him. Thus, by and by, he sheds his ego and in the end, becomes completely free from this vice.

However much depraved a person may be, the still voice within warns him at every wrong step, but his confirmed habits of wrong actions carry him away.

In the human stage of evolution, everyone gets the power of judging right from wrong. This power is engrained in every human soul. This innate power coupled with righteous actions and the company of God-conscious persons, who show the path of divine realisation through meditation on the Divine Name, attunes one with the infinite. One becomes one with the Divine Law. He submits to the Divine Will under all circumstances and gets free of ego. The sense of mine and thine, which forms the dark curtain of ignorance and is a bar to self-realisation, is eradicated and a spiritual link established with all mankind and the created Universe.

When this stage is attained, mind merges completely with the Divine and self-realisation is bestowed upon him automatically. The Seeker, who attains self-realisation, while still alive, by following the Divine Law in letter and spirit, is called Jeevan Mukta, i.e., one, who is free from ego completely and has merged with the Divine, while still alive. Such a person is also called a Bideh Mukta or Brahmgyani (completely merged with the Divine) in this very life by shedding his ego completely. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Nanak, clarifies this in the following Hymn of Sukhmani Sahib:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਆਤਮ ਹਿਤਾਵੈ ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋਊ ਕਹਾਵੈ ॥

Prabh kee aag-e-aa aatam hitaav-ei. Jeevan mukt(i) so-oo kahaav-ei. (275)

(One, who follows the Divine Law and eradicates his ego completely, is termed as Jeevan Mukta, i.e., liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth in this very life.)

Salvation (Moksha): When a person completely sheds his ego - which is the root cause of all suffering, his mind merges with the Divine within, and gains freedom from birth and rebirth in this very life.

By singing and listening to the divine praises with rapt attention and filling our mind with His love and devotion, we get freedom from attachment - the source of all worries and miseries - and attain self-realisation, i.e., the heaven.

Controlling one's mind with egoistic effort is just like captivating a snake in a casket. Whenever the lid is removed, the serpent jumps up and gives a deadly sting. On the other hand, if the mind is controlled by continuous meditation and prayer under the guidance of the divine persons (Saints), a stage is reached when one rises above all desires and becomes the master of his passions. This is the balanced stage of mind filled with everlasting Divine Bliss and Joy (Sehj Awastha or Atampad), which means ever in communion with the Divine, Nature and Divine Law. Then, all his actions, speech, giving and taking, and the whole course of his life flows in a smooth and natural way, in unison with the Eternal Law governing his mind and the whole Universe.

Under the Divine Law, people get joy and sorrow according to their deeds (Karmas). Under this Law, some are blessed with Divine Grace, and get freedom from all desires and the gift of self-realisation. Under the same Law, some go on passing through endless cycles of birth and rebirth.

Dharma

To Follow the Righteous Path as per the Divine Law

The set of spiritual laws, which one has to follow to realise the Divine is called Dharma - the righteous path. Following the spiritual rules and regulations of Dharma, with full love and devotion, leads the Seeker to the divine Realm.

The entire manifestation of the matter of the Universe is, in fact, the physical frame of the Supreme Being. The Divine Lord (Parmatma), pervades everywhere and the Universe functions under His Divine Law. Within each living creature, He pervades every cell as the soul (Atma). As a matter of fact, the Universal Soul (Parmatma) and Atma are one and the same.

Parmatma, as the Atma in each individual being, is the only reality in the Universe; all else is unreal. The set of laws that has to be followed to perceive the Divine Truth is the true religion of the whole of mankind. The holy Scriptures emphasise that to shed all illusions and meditate only on the Divine Name to see One in all and all in One, is the true religion of mankind for all times to come.

Unfortunately, the urge for realisation of the Divine within has been neglected by most of the religious cults. Rituals and forms have taken the first place. The search for the realisation of the Divine by meditating on the Divine Name, singing of hymns in praise of the Divine and the practice of perceiving the Religious Truth in our daily life, have been relegated to the secondary place.

It is the duty of all the spiritualists to come on a common platform and give to the world the message of shedding ego by reciting the Divine Name honestly, with full love and devotion, to see One in all and all in One. It will help create spiritual brotherhood and establish divine Peace in the world. In this context, Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਸਰਬ ਧਰਮ ਮਹਿ ਸ੍ਰੈਸਟ ਧਰਮੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਕਰਮੁ ॥

Sarab Dharam meh(i) sr-ai-sat Dharam(u). Har(i) ko Naam(u) jap(i) nirmal karam(u). (266)

(Of all the religions, the supreme religion is to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion and render selfless service to humanity.)

We perceive His Creation and Nature through which He manifests and reveals Himself. The created Universe is so infinite that no one, by mere intellect, can gauge and describe it. This Creation is sustained and carried on persistently by the

Divine Law. The balance of the whole Creation is maintained by the righteous deeds (Dharma).

Sikh Faith (Dharma)

Sikh faith is not an 'ism' in the narrow sense of the term. It is a spiritual way of life for the entire mankind, beyond the narrow divisions of caste, creed and religion. Believing in one God and abiding by the tenets of worship, which enable one to unite with the Supreme Being, in a nutshell, is the life of the Seeker. The principles of the Sikh way of life were revealed by Guru Nanak Dev (the first Sikh spiritual Master) through the Divine 'Word' (Gurbani).

The Sikh way of life has been enunciated by the Gurus, by bringing on the same spiritual platform, all those who meditated on the Divine Name, without any distinction of religion, caste, creed, race or colour.

While compiling the sacred Hymns of the first four Gurus (Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, and Guru Ramdas) in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy Scripture, Guru Arjan Dev, besides his own hymns and those of the first four Gurus, incorporated the Hymns of the contemporary Saints (Bhagats), who initially followed their own religious path of devotion and prayer and realised the Divine within.

These Saints belonged to various classes and religions, and in the beginning, followed the rites and rituals of their own sect. As they moved on, they gave up all their rituals and forms and proclaimed with one voice, the same Truth, the existence and the realisation of the Omnipresent. Thus, establishing once and for all that the sphere of God-consciousness is a Live Realisation, and he, who honestly searches after it in humility and keeps the company of God-conscious persons, reaches it.

The Sikh Gurus, the incarnations of the Supreme Being, as also various divine persons of that era, though belonging to Hinduism, Islam and other faiths, eradicated their ego completely and merged with the Divine by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. Though, initially they followed their own religious paths faithfully and became divine, they finally preached the same message of Divine Truth, thereby, laying the foundation of a spiritual way of life. Each subsequent Guru added a few tenets to the Sikh doctrine. Finally, on the Vaisakhi of 1699, Guru Gobind Singh gave the nectar, prepared by the double-edged sword for initiation into the Khalsa fold (Khande di Pahul - Amrit) to five of his beloved followers and created the Khalsa Panth. These five chosen beloved ones belonged to different castes, from across India, i.e., Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat and Karnataka. Later, the Guru himself received the same holy initiation by

partaking of Amrit from these the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piaras) and joined the Khalsa fold. He then prescribed a code of conduct (Rehat Maryada), which lays down the Sikh way of life. This shows the divine humility of Guru Gobind Singh, who first blessed his 'Five Beloved Ones' with Amrit, and later begged for the same from these divine Sikhs, initiated earlier by Him. That is why he is called:

ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Wah Wah Gobind Singh Aap-ai Gur ch-ai-iaa.

(Wondrous is Guru Gobind Singh, who was the Guru; and at the same time became a disciple of his 'Five Beloved Ones'; who attained the Divine Wisdom and were conferred 'Guru Panth Khalsa'.)

For several generations of Sikhs, the object of devotion has been the Divine 'Word' revealed by the living Gurus. Then in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh ordained his followers to look upon the Divine 'Word' as revealed in the Eternal, Immutable divine Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib as the true Eternal Guru.

The Seekers, who belonged to various castes, creeds and ranks of society and began their search of Truth in their own way, ultimately took to meditation on the Divine Name - Rama, Gobind or Allah. It clearly shows that every sincere and honest Seeker is guided in his path of self-realisation to become God-conscious. His mind throbs with love for the entire Universe, and all mankind appear to him as brothers and sisters in spirit, without any distinction of caste, creed, race or colour.

Worship of the Divine Lord of the Universe, who is One for All

Sikh only worships the Divine Lord of the Universe, i.e., the Creator of the Universe. Worship of any one of His Creation, i.e., fire, water, air, moon, sun, gods, goddesses, idols etc. is of no use, but a waste of time for treading the spiritual path. Thus, the Sikh way of life is non-figurative. While living in this world, a Sikh abides by the Divine Lord's Will and faithfully carries out his spiritual obligations by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion and rendering selfless service to humanity. Saint Kabir expounds it in one of his Hymns:

ਜੋ ਪਾਥਰ ਕਉ ਕਹਤੇ ਦੇਵ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੇਵ ॥

ਜੋ ਪਾਥਰ ਕੀ ਪਾਂਈ ਪਾਇ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਘਾਲ ਅਜਾਂਈ ਜਾਇ ॥

Jo paathar kaou keht-ai dev. Taa kee birthaa hov-ei sev.

Jo paathar kee paan-ee paa-e. Tis kee ghaal ajaan-ee jaa-e. (1160)

(For those who have faith in stone-idols and believe them as their gods and goddesses; their pseudo-devotion and services are of no use to realise the Divine within and without. Those who merely remain worshipping the stone-gods and goddesses for seeking worldly bounties, their endeavours to realise the Divine within are futile.)

To those, who claim that self-realisation can be obtained by worshipping idols,

Saint Kabir says, 'It is a waste of time if devotion and love for the Divine within is not complete. It is of no use worshipping or offering prayers before the stone-idols'. For the Seeker, such an activity is a futile exercise. If one rises to the stage of Divine Wisdom, he would see One in all and all in One, even in sand, pebbles, stones, rocks, plant kingdom, animal kingdom, etc.

Saint Ramanand was a Gaur Brahmin and a Vaishnava. He used to worship the stone-god in a temple for realising the Divine within. His earnest endeavour to realise the Divine within led him to recite the Name of the Omnipresent, and ultimately he reached the stage of realisation -One in all and all in One. Ramanand expresses his state of mind thus:

ਕਤ ਜਾਈਐ ਰੇ ਘਰ ਲਾਗੋ ਰੰਗੁ ॥ ਮੇਰਾ ਚਿਤੁ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਮਨੁ ਭਇਓ ਪੰਗੁ ॥
ਏਕ ਦਿਵਸ ਮਨ ਭਈ ਉਮੰਗ ॥ ਘਸਿ ਚੰਦਨ ਚੋਆ ਬਹੁ ਸੁਗੰਧ ॥
ਪੂਜਨ ਚਾਲੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਠਾਇ ॥ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਤਾਇਓ ਗੁਰ ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਜਹਾ ਜਾਈਐ ਤਹ ਜਲ ਪਖਾਨ ॥ ਤੂ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਸਮਾਨ ॥
ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਸਭ ਦੇਖੇ ਜੋਇਆ ॥ ਉਹਾਂ ਤਉ ਜਾਈਐ ਜਉ ਈਹਾਂ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮੈ ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਤੋਰ ॥ ਜਿਨਿ ਸਕਲ ਬਿਕਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਕਾਟੇ ਮੋਰ ॥
ਰਾਮਾਨੰਦ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਰਮਤ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਾਟੈ ਕੋਟਿ ਕਰਮ ॥

Kat jaaee-ei r-ai ghar laago rangg(u). M-ai-raa chit(u) na chall-ei mann(u) bha-e-o pangg(u).

Ek divas mann bha-ee umangg. Ghas(i) chandan choaa bahu sugandh.

Poojan chaalee Brahm tthaa-e. So Brahm bataa-e-o Gur mann hee maah-e.

Jahaa jaaee-ei teh jal pakhaan. Too poo-r(i) rah-e-o h-ei sabh samaan.

B-ai-d Puraan sabh d-ai-kh-ai jo-e. Oohaana taou jaaee-ei jaou eehaan na ho-e.

Sat(i)gur m-ei balihaaree tor. Jin(i) sakal bikal bhram kaat-ai mor.

Ramanand Suaamee ramat Brahm. Gur kaa Sabad(u) kaat-ei kot(i) karam.(1195)

(Where shall I go now, because I have realised the divine Bliss within my heart which is a source of life and spiritual bliss? My mind now does not wander, because my egoistic mind is vanished, and I am engrossed in the Divine Truth, completely.

One day an immense desire arose in my mind to go to the temple to worship God. For that I rubbed the paste of Sandalwood with fragrance of various kinds on my forehead. Before going to the temple, I instantly realised the Divine within by His Grace. The same Divine made me realise Him in my own heart.

Whenever I go to the temple, I only see water and stone images, but O Divine Lord! You have made me to see You pervading everywhere. I have studied all the Vedas and Puranas but ultimately realised that instead of continuously studying all these revered books, I should concentrate on the recitation of Your Divine Name in my heart, with complete love and devotion, and realise Your presence within and without. O my Divine Master! I wholeheartedly sacrifice myself upon You, as You have cleansed my egoistic mind

completely, enabling me to merge with You. I have lost my identity by eradicating ego completely and merged with You. I have come to the conclusion that reciting the Divine Name eradicates millions of bad deeds, which make the Seeker merge with the Divine completely.)

Pseudo-Rites and Rituals have no Place in the Sikh Faith

The Sikh way of life forbids rituals like applying the frontal mark (Tilak), fasting, wearing the sacred thread (Janeu), lighting earthen lamps before stone idols, ancestor worship, belief in contamination of the home after child-birth, idol worship, observance of ritual silence, torturing the body through difficult yogic postures, belief in the auspiciousness of certain days, astrology and fortune telling, worshipping and making offerings at graves, tombs and crematoriums, and wandering in the forests in search of God.

Saint Pipa, a disciple of Ramanand, was the king of Gungraogarh. He was a Gaur Brahmin and meditated on Rama, the Omnipresent. He explains his experiences to tread the spiritual path, to realise the Divine within, in the following Hymn incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਕਾਯਉ ਦੇਵਾ ਕਾਇਅਉ ਦੇਵਲ ਕਾਇਅਉ ਜੰਗਮ ਜਾਤੀ ॥
ਕਾਇਅਉ ਧੂਪ ਦੀਪ ਨਈਬੇਦਾ ਕਾਇਅਉ ਪੂਜਉ ਪਾਤੀ ॥
ਕਾਇਆ ਬਹੁ ਖੰਡ ਖੋਜਤੇ ਨਵ ਨਿਧਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਆਇਬੋ ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਜਾਇਬੋ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਦੁਹਾਈ ॥
ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡੇ ਸੋਈ ਪਿੰਡੇ ਜੋ ਖੋਜੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਵੈ ॥
ਪੀਪਾ ਪ੍ਰਣਵੈ ਪਰਮ ਤਤੁ ਹੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਹੋਇ ਲਖਾਵੈ ॥

Kaayaou d-ai-vaa kaa-e-aou d-ai-val Kaa-e-aou jangam jaatee.
Kaa-e-aou dhoop deep na-ee-b-ai-daa Kaa-e-aou poojou paatee.
Kaa-e-aa bahu khandd khojt-ai nav nidh(i) paaee.
Naa kachhu aa-e-bo naa kachhu jaa-e-bo Ram kee duhaaee.
Jo brahmandd-ai soee pindd-ai jo khoj-ei so paav-ei.
Peepaa pranhv-ei param tat(u) h-ei Sat(i)guru ho-e lakhaav-ei. (695)

[One need not go to a temple and worship a stone image. One need not burn incense, light ghee in earthen pots, take flowers and green leaves for worship of the stone-deity (Puja). Search within you and you shall realise the Divine, who dwells in all human frames. The whole Universe is a manifestation of the Eternal Divine. All forms spring from the divine Ocean, and then, like waves in the sea merge into it.]

The Eternal Divine, Who permeates the Universe, is pervading every element of His Creation. He, who searches Him within by meditating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, realises Him within and without. In deep humility says

Pipa, 'The Eternal Divine is an Everlasting Reality and under the guidance of a Divine Master, the Seeker realises Him within and without. He pervades the whole Universe'. Guru Tegh Bahadur also reiterates the omnipresence of the Divine:

ਕਾਚੇ ਰੇ ਬਨ ਖੋਜਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ਸਦਾ ਅਲੇਪਾ ਤੋਹੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਮਾਈ ॥

Kaah-ai r-ai bann khojan jaa-ee. Sarab nivaasee sadaa al-ai-paa Tohee sangg(i) samaa-ee.(684)

(Why do you go searching for the Divine in the forest? In fact, the Omnipresent dwells everywhere. Still, He is unattached to any matter. He is always within you, to provide you with all the power, to perform all your worldly duties.)

Referring to those pseudo-saints, who carry out rituals in the name of religion and just putting on a show of spirituality, the Guru warns that such hypocrisy instead of washing away the present bad deeds of the devotees would even erase their past good deeds. Such individuals would remain trapped in the cycle of birth and rebirth. To obtain release from the endless process of transmigration, the Sikh faith ordains its followers to have complete faith in the Divine Lord and His omnipresence, while singing His praises with love and devotion. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master expounds:

ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਪਾਖੰਡ ਜੋ ਦੀਸਹਿ ਤਿਨ ਜਮੁ ਜਾਗਾਤੀ ਲੂਟੈ ॥

ਨਿਰਬਾਣ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਕਰਤੇ ਕਾ ਨਿਮਖ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਜਿਤੁ ਛੂਟੈ ॥

Karam Dharam paakhand jo deeseh(i) Tinn jamm(u) jaagaatee loot-ei.

Nirbaanh keertan(u) gaavahu Kart-ai kaa Nimakh simrat jitt(u) chhoot-ei. (747)

(Persons, who perform pseudo-rituals and other hypocritical religious actions, are caught by the devil of ego and are robbed of all their virtues. O man! Recite the holy hymns in praise of the Divine Lord, without nurturing any worldly desires. You will get the self-realisation in this very life.)

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master echoes the similar feelings with a stern warning:

ਸਭ ਕਰਮ ਫੋਕਟ ਜਾਨ ॥ ਸਭ ਧਰਮ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਮਾਨ ॥

ਬਿਨ ਏਕ ਨਾਮ ਅਧਾਰ ॥ ਸਭ ਕਰਮ ਭਰਮ ਬਿਚਾਰ ॥

Sabh karam phokat jaan. Sabh Dharam nehphal maan.

Binn ek Naam adhaar. Sabh karam bharam bichaar. (Akal Ustat)

(Sikh faith warns man that if he doesn't recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion, keeping in view the presence of the Divine Lord within to merge with Him, all his pseudo-deeds become useless. Rather these deeds become hurdles to tread the Divine Path.)

Division of Humanity into different Castes, Creeds and Sects is Condemnable

The Sikh faith is open to all and does not discriminate against any religion, caste or creed. Guru Granth Sahib contains the Hymns of not only the Sikh Gurus,

but also of five Muslim saints and other divine persons, belonging to different castes and creeds. It emphasises that the Sikh way of life is open to all and does not discriminate on the basis of religion, caste and creed. Sikh means 'learner of the Divine Truth'.

Saint Ravidas devoted himself to meditation on Rama, the Omnipresent, and attained the stage of enlightenment. High-caste Brahmins fell at his feet to receive His blessings and get the bounty of the Divine Name. The state of mind, which he reached, is given here in His own words:

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥
 ਨਾਂ ਤਸਵੀਸ ਖਿਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਮਾਲੁ ॥ ਖਉਫੁ ਨ ਖਤਾ ਨ ਤਰਸੁ ਜਵਾਲੁ ॥
 ਅਬ ਮੋਹਿ ਖੂਬ ਵਤਨ ਗਹ ਪਾਈ ॥ ਉਹਾਂ ਖੈਰਿ ਸਦਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥
 ਕਾਇਮੁ ਦਾਇਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ॥ ਦੋਮ ਨ ਸੇਮ ਏਕ ਸੋ ਆਹੀ ॥
 ਆਬਾਦਾਨੁ ਸਦਾ ਮਸਹੂਰ ॥ ਉਹਾਂ ਗਨੀ ਬਸਹਿ ਮਾਮੂਰ ॥
 ਤਿਉ ਤਿਉ ਸੈਲ ਕਰਹਿ ਜਿਉ ਭਾਵੈ ॥ ਮਹਰਮ ਮਹਲ ਨ ਕੋ ਅਟਕਾਵੈ ॥
 ਕਹਿ ਰਵਿਦਾਸ ਖਲਾਸ ਚਮਾਰਾ ॥ ਜੋ ਹਮ ਸਹਰੀ ਸੁ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

Begam Pura sehar ko naaou. Dookh(u) andoh(u) nahee tih(i) thaaou.
 Naan tasvees khiraaj(u) na maal(u). Khauf(u) na khataa na taras(u) javaal(u).
 Ab moh-e khoob vatan geh paaee. Oohaana kh-ei-r(i) sadaa m-ai-r-ai bhaaee.
 Kaa-e-m(u) daa-e-m(u) sadaa Paat(i)saahee. Dom na s-ai-m ek so aahee.
 Aabaadaan(u) sadaa mas-hoor. Oohaana ganee baseh maamoor.
 Tiou tiou s-ei-l kareh jiou bhaav-ei. Mehram mehal na ko atkkaav-ei.
 Keh Ravidas khalaas chamaaraa. Jo hum sehree su meet(u) hamaaraa. (345)

[I have reached the Divine Destination by reciting the Name of the Lord, the Omnipresent, who is formless and free from fear, anxiety, pain, worries and sorrows. Unlike worldly spheres, there is no attachment and no taxes to pay. I have risen above all fear. It is such a divine sphere from where nobody has the fear to fall down and go to hell. I have found my true Home and enjoy eternal bliss. The crown of everlasting spiritual Kingship has been bestowed upon me. All thoughts of mine and thine, second or third have vanished. I see One and One alone, Who pervades the entire Universe. It is an ever glorious Eternal realm and in it dwell those, who merge with the Divine completely by reciting His Divine Name with full love and devotion. Having reached Oneness with the Divine, their actions become spontaneous and natural, free from all restraints of attachment. Says Ravidas cobbler (Chamaar), all my shackles of doubts and fears have been removed. I have merged with the Divine Lord and got salvation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. They, who have attained this divinely worryless state, are my spiritual friends, companions and kith and kin.]

Bhagat Kabir was a weaver, born into a Muslim family. He became the disciple

of Ramanand Gaur, the Brahmin, who was the renowned saint of his time. Kabir meditated on the Divine Name and attained the stage of Divine Wisdom (Brahm Gyan). Kabir went on to be one of the greatest Saints of all times,. He perceived the whole Universe as a manifestation of the Divine and realised God everywhere, which he expounded in the following Hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥

ਲੋਗਾ ਭਰਮਿ ਨ ਭੁਲਹੁ ਭਾਈ ॥

ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸ੍ਰਬ ਠਾਂਈ ॥

ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਅਨੇਕ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਜੀ ਸਾਜਨਹਾਰੈ ॥

ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਨਾ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ਕੁੰਭਾਰੈ ॥

ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਸਚਾ ਏਕੋ ਸੋਈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਛੁ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ਸੁ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਨੈ ਬੰਦਾ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਈ ॥

ਅਲਹੁ ਅਲਖੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਗੁੜੁ ਦੀਨਾ ਮੀਠਾ ॥

ਕਹਿ ਕਬੀਰ ਮੇਰੀ ਸੰਕਾ ਨਾਸੀ ਸਰਬ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਡੀਠਾ ॥

Aval Alah noor(u) upaa-e-aa Kudrat(i) k-ai sabh band-ai.

Ek noor t-ai sabh(u) jagg(u) upj-e-aa Kaoun bhal-ai ko mand-ai.

Logaa bharam(i) na bhool-hau bhaae. Khaalik(u) khalak khalak meh(i) Khaalik(u)

Poor(i) rah-e-o srab tthaan-ee.

Maatee ek an-ai-k bhaant(i) kar(i) Saajee Saajanhaar-ei.

Naa kachhu poch maatee k-ai bhaand-ai Na kachhu poch kumbhaar-ei.

Sabh meh Sachaa eko soee Tis kaa keeaa sabh(u) kachhu hoee.

Hukam(u) pachhaan-ei su eko jaan-ei Bandaa kahee-ei soee.

Alahu alakh(u) na jaaee lakh-e-aa Gur(i) gurrh(u) deenaa meetthaa.

Keh Kabir m-ai-ree sankaa naasee Sarab Niranjan deetthaa. (1349)

[In the beginning, God (Allah) manifested in the form of inexpressible Divine Light, which created the whole Universe and the mankind. As the whole Creation sprang up from the same Divine Light, then whom shall we call good and whom bad (high or low). O man! Do not lose yourself in false doubts. He is One in all and all in One and pervades the whole Creation. The Creator is in His whole Universe and the Universe is in Him. Like a potter, He has created all kinds of forms and species, from one common matter, i.e., five elements - air, water, fire, earth and ether. Both the Creation and the Creator are the same - natural and faultless - because the Divine, in fact, is the Reality, which pervades the whole Creation. In other words, the Divine Reality pervades everywhere as well as in every creature. He, who has intuned himself with the Divine, realises the everlasting Divine everywhere. Such a person has the right to be called a devotee of the Almighty Lord (Allah), which can't be described and measured in words. My Divine Master has given me the inexpressible

Divine Wisdom. Says Kabir, all my doubts have been erased and I perceive the Divine pervading everywhere.]

One's high-caste does not reflect his superiority. It is only the good deeds and truthful living, which enable man to become God-conscious and divine:

ਜਾਤਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਨਹ ਪੂਛੀਐ ਸਚ ਘਰੁ ਲੇਹੁ ਬਤਾਇ ॥
ਸਾ ਜਾਤਿ ਸਾ ਪਤਿ ਹੈ ਜੇਹੇ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

Jaat(i) janam(u) neh poochhee-ei Sach ghar(u) l-ai-hu bataa-e.

Saa jaat(i) saa patt(i) h-ei J-ai-h-ai karam kamaa-e. (1330)

(The person, who perceives the Divine Reality and merges in it completely by losing his identity, cannot be categorised in terms of caste, creed and religion. The deeds - good or bad - performed by a person in his life, in fact, decide his caste, creed, etc.)

In the realm of the Divine (Nirankar ke Des), i.e., the Formless State, where the Divine pervades, there is no caste, creed, colour or religion. Truthful living alone leads to this Divine Realm. Indeed, under the Divine Law, one is considered high-caste or low-caste only according to the deeds performed by him in the previous and present lives.

Respect for Womanhood

Sikh faith holds that women are as capable as men in carrying out all social obligations. In Sikh history, women have fought as bravely as men in the battlefield. The Sikh Gurus forbade Sati - the burning alive of a widow on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. In present times, the abhorrent practice of female foeticide is being condemned.

A Sikh widow is allowed to re-marry. Women carry out all the responsibilities at par with their male counterparts to propagate the Sikh way of life. Guru Amardas conferred spiritual seats for preaching the Divine Doctrine to the enlightened men as well as to holy women. Guru Nanak Dev exhorts:

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥

So kiou mandaa aakhee-ei Jitt(u) jameh(i) raajaan. (473)

(Why should we look down upon women, who have given birth to the prophets, saints, sages, kings etc.)

He goes on to reveal:

ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੈ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

Nanak bhandd-ei baahraa Eko Sacha so-e. (473)

(All living creatures are born of a female and the only one, not thus born, is He alone, the Divine Lord.)

Sheikh Farid and his disciple Sheikh Brahm were Muslims. They followed the

rites and rituals of their religion, followed the Islamic regimen of performing the Namaz five times a day. They meditated regularly on Allah, the Divine. Being true and honest Seekers after Truth, they realised that God existed in every human being, irrespective of any caste, creed or religion. They emphasised that nobody should hurt the feelings of anyone, irrespective of his religion, caste or creed, if he really has the urge to realise the Divine within. Sheikh Farid proclaims:

ਇਕੁ ਫਿਕਾ ਨ ਗਾਲਾਇ ਸਭਨਾ ਮੈ ਸਚਾ ਧਣੀ ॥ ਹਿਆਉ ਨ ਕੈਹੀ ਠਾਹਿ ਮਾਣਕ ਸਭ ਅਮੋਲਵੇ ॥

lkk(u) phikkaa na gaalaa-e Sabhnaa m-ei Sachaa dhanhee.

Hiaaou na k-ei-hee tthaah-ai Maanhak sabh amolv-ai. (1384)

(Do not speak rudely to anyone, as the same Divine Master dwells in the hearts of all. Do not break the heart of anyone, as every heart is a priceless jewel in the Divine Realm.)

In Sikh history, women followers of Guru Gobind Singh showed great devotion to their Spiritual Master. They severely rebuked their men-folk, who had returned home from the battlefield, after deserting the Guru during the siege of the Anandpur Fort. These women challenged their desertion and taunted them that they could wear the female attire with bangles, and perform the domestic chores, while the womenfolk would go to the battlefield to fight the enemy and obtain the divine Blessings of their Divine Master, Guru Gobind Singh.

The most vocal and divine among the women was Mai Bhago, who prepared herself to go to the battlefield at Muktsar on horseback. The deserted Sikhs felt ashamed and begged pardon from Mai Bhago and requested her to lead them to the battlefield for wiping away their sins by fighting with the tyrants bravely at the cost of their lives. The brave and fearless Mai Bhago, on horseback, led them to the battlefield. History remembers these Sikhs as Chaalee Mukte, i.e., the forty liberated ones, who eventually fell fighting the tyrant, except their leader Maha Singh and the revered lady Mai Bhago, who conquered the battle. Thus, they became spiritual martyrs to be blessed by Guru Gobind Singh.

Life of the Householder Upheld

To follow the spiritual path for realising the Divine within, one is not required to retreat into the forest. According to Gurbani, a Seeker can achieve his aim of merging with the Divine, even by leading the life of a householder and rendering service to humanity, while remaining oriented to the Divine within.

Saint Namdev, a Maharashtrian devotee of Govind, was a washerman, dyer and calico printer. He started his spiritual journey as an idol worshipper, but being a true and completely dedicated searcher of the divine Truth, reached the stage of self-realisation. In one of His Hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth

Sahib, He expounds:

ਸਭੈ ਘਟ ਰਾਮੁ ਬੋਲੈ ਰਾਮਾ ਬੋਲੈ ॥ ਰਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੋਲੈ ਰੇ ॥
ਏਕਲ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੁੰਜਰ ਚੀਟੀ ਭਾਜਨ ਹੈਂ ਬਹੁ ਨਾਨਾ ਰੇ ॥
ਅਸਥਾਵਰ ਜੰਗਮ ਕੀਟ ਪਤੰਗਮ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਰਾਮੁ ਸਮਾਨਾ ਰੇ ॥
ਏਕਲ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਰਾਖੁ ਅਨੰਤਾ ਅਉਰ ਤਜਹੁ ਸਭ ਆਸਾ ਰੇ ॥
ਪ੍ਰਣਵੈ ਨਾਮਾ ਭਏ ਨਿਹਕਾਮਾ ਕੋ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਕੋ ਦਾਸਾ ਰੇ ॥

Sabh-ei ghatt Ram(u) bol-ei Rama bol-ei. Ram binaa ko bol-ei r-ai.

Ai-kal maatee kunjar cheetee Bhaajan h-ei-n bahu naanaa r-ai.

Asthaavar jangam keet patangam Ghatt(i) ghatt(i) Ram(u) samaanaa r-ai.

Ai-kal chintaa raakh(u) anantaa Aour tajahou sabh aasaa r-ai.

Pranhv-ei Nama bha-e nehkaamaa Ko Thakur(u) ko daasaa r-ai. (988)

Even while carrying out his worldly duties, one can still tread the Divine Path, if one performs those duties according to the Will of God with full love and devotion. In fact, in this way, his work becomes worship, perceiving that the Divine has blessed him to render such pious duty. Gurbani makes it amply clear that the union of human beings with the Divine is, in fact, the spiritual marriage. Even during worldly marriages, in Sikh way of life, both husband and wife take vows around Guru Granth Sahib and pledge that from that day, they both have accomplished the marriage with the Divine Lord. Further, they pledge that they would henceforth, follow the divine instructions, while performing their household duties according to the Divine Will.

A Sikh respects the Spiritual Values of all Religions and Prays for the Welfare of Humanity

The consciousness of man should consistently feel the presence of the Divine Lord within everybody. When a God-conscious person speaks, it is, in fact, the Guru's shabad within him that are spoken, without ego in the voice. The holy person perceives that whatever he does or says, is according to the Divine Order. On the other hand, worldly persons speak with egoistic minds. All living creatures exist due to the presence of God within them. That is why we should love our fellow-beings, serve them selflessly, without paying heed to where they come from, who they are, and what they look like. We must keep in mind the fact that all beings are enlightened with the same Eternal Divine Light. He, who is attuned to the Divine, by reciting His Name with full love and devotion, without a trace of ego, gets rid of all the negative forces - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Thus, he perceives One in all and all in One. He develops the outlook of Universal Brotherhood. To him, none is a stranger, as he has love and compassion for everyone. He neither worries for the past nor for the future and always remains in the present state of mind perceiving the

Divine within. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies this in one of His Hymns:

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥
ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੈ ਪੇਖਿ ਪੇਖਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਗਾਸਾਈ ॥

Bisar ga-ee sabh taat(i) praa-ee. Jabb t-ai saadhsangat(i) moh-e paa-ee.
Naa ko b-ei-ree nahee bigaanaa Sagal sangg(i) hamm kaou bann(i) aa-ee.
Jo Prabh keeno so bhal maan-e-o Eh sumat(i) sadhu t-ai paaee.

Sabh meh(i) rav(i) rah-e-a Prabh(u) ek-ei P-ai-kh(i) p-ai-kh(i) Nanak bigsaaee.(1299)

(Ever since I have found the company of the Saints and follow their holy directions, all thoughts of mine and thine have vanished. No one is my enemy and none a stranger. I feel every one as my spiritual Kith and Kin. Whatever God does is for the well-being of all. I always keep myself resigned to His Will. I have found this balanced state of mind by following the advice of God-conscious persons. I realise the Eternal Divine pervading through the entire Creation. After perceiving this divine phenomenon, the fifth Nanak expounds: 'O Divine! You are Wondrous!')

Traditionally, the supplicatory prayer offered by a Sikh (Ardas), always closes with the following couplet:

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ ॥

Nanak Naam charhdee kalaa T-ai-r-ai bhaanh-ai sarbatt daa bhalaa.

(May Your Name, Your glory, O God! Be ever in ascendance. May the whole Creation be blessed with the divine peace and prosperity in Your Will, by Your Divine Grace.)

Bhagat Bheekhan originally belonged to the Muslim faith and followed his own customs and rituals with full love and devotion, which led him to meditate on The Divine Lord with full dedication. After realisation of God, the Omnipresent, he expounded the following Hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਐਸਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਤਨੁ ਨਿਰਮੋਲਕੁ ਪੁੰਨਿ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਅਨਿਕ ਜਤਨ ਕਰਿ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਰਾਖਿਆ ਰਤਨੁ ਨ ਛਪੈ ਛਪਾਇਆ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਕਹਤੇ ਕਹਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਜੈਸੇ ਗੁੰਗੇ ਕੀ ਮਿਠਿਆਈ ॥
ਰਸਨਾ ਰਮਤ ਸੁਨਤ ਸੁਖ ਸ੍ਰਵਨਾ ਚਿਤ ਚੇਤੇ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਈ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਭੀਖਨ ਦੁਇ ਨੈਨ ਸੰਤੋਖੇ ਜਹ ਦੇਖਾਂ ਤਹ ਸੋਈ ॥

Ei-saa Naam(u) ratan(u) nirmolak(u) Punn(i) padaarath(u) paa-e-aa.
Anik jatan kar(i) hird-ei raakh-e-aa Ratan na chhapp-ei chhpa-e-aa.
Har(i) gunn keht-ai kehan(u) na jaaee. J-ei-s-ai goong-ai kee mitth-e-aaee.
Rasnaa ramat sunat sukh(u) sravnaa Chit ch-ai-t-ai sukh(u) hoee.
Kahu Bheekhan du-e n-ei-n santokh-ai Jeh d-ai-khaan teh soee. (659)

[The priceless jewel of the Divine Name has been bestowed upon me as a reward of my

good deeds (Karmas). It has found a permanent place in my heart. Despite all my efforts to hide, its glory shines forth on my forehead and radiates through the whole of my frame. The divine Attributes and His praise cannot be expressed in words. It is just like a dumb person, who enjoys dainty sweets, but cannot express his experience. By meditating on the Divine Name with my tongue, and hearing it with my ears, and fixing my mind on the same, I have attained a state of permanent bliss. Says Bheekhan, my eyes have awakened to the Divine Glory, and I see Him everywhere.]

By seeking welfare of the entire Creation, the individual mind breaks the barriers of caste, creed, colour and religion which divide humanity from one another. The devotee experiences the feeling of divine humility and a sense of the Omnipresence of the Divine Lord but cannot express it in words.

Mission of the Red Cross in Sikh Faith: Today, the International Red Cross Society enjoys worldwide reputation as a neutral organisation offering humanitarian aid in times of war and natural calamities. But more than 300 years ago, Guru Gobind Singh, through his disciple Bhai Ghanaiya, founded a divine Mission, which was matchless and incomparable to the present day Red Cross movement that serves wounded soldiers in the battlefield, where two warring groups or countries are engaged in conflict or war.

In time of war, the International Red Cross, being a neutral party, serves this purpose of handling the wounded soldiers of both warring countries. But, under the divine Mission of Guru Gobind Singh, groups of dedicated Sikhs went around the battle field providing drinking water and medical aid to wounded soldiers, not only of the Sikh army, but also of the enemy (Mughal forces of Aurangzeb), who were committing atrocities on innocent people. In the battle of Anandpur Sahib, Bhai Ghanaiya, a devoted disciple (Gursikh) of Guru Gobind Singh, was assigned the duty of serving water to the wounded soldiers, irrespective of whether they belonged to the Sikh forces or the enemy. Every wounded Mughal would request to Bhai Ghanaiya, "O divine friend! For the sake of Allah, give me water." Perceiving the glimpse of His Divine Master Guru Gobind Singh in the Mughal soldiers, Bhai Ghanaiya would offer water from his vessel with love and affection. After taking water, they would resume fighting with the Sikh soldiers.

Seeing this unusual action of Bhai Ghanaiya, who belonged to the Sikh forces, some of the narrow-minded Sikh soldiers became furious and dragged him to the divine court of Guru Gobind Singh. They complained, "O Divine Master! With great martial arts and efforts, we inflict a great stroke of the sword and lay down enemy on the ground with wounds, but this traitor Sikh, Bhai Ghanaiya, who might have been bribed by the enemy, pours water into the mouth of the wounded Mughals.

The duty assigned to him was to give water only to the Sikh soldiers and not to the enemy soldiers. He is a great traitor and should be cut to pieces so that others should learn a lesson". In the Guru's army, there were two groups of soldiers: One, who were attuned with the Divine Name and fought the battle keeping in view their divine duty as assigned by their Guru, but with no ill will or anger in their heart against the Mughals. They appreciated Bhai Ghanaiya, who was truly following the principles of His Divine Master:

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥

Naa ko b-ei-ree nahee bigaanaa Sagal sangg(i) hamm kaou bann(i) aa-ee.(1299)

(No one is my enemy, and no one is a stranger. I get along with everyone.)

But the other group, comprising the short-sighted Sikhs, who had not moulded their lives as per the Divine Teaching, were furious with Bhai Ghanaiya. They dragged him to the divine court of Guru Gobind Singh, with a view to get him punished. However, the Guru, with a smile on His face, asked Bhai Ghanaiya, "Have you served water to the Mughal soldiers?" He replied, "O Divine Master! I did not give water to the enemy". On hearing this, intolerant Sikhs further got enraged, "O Divine Master! He is telling a lie. With great effort, we inflict wounds on the enemy and put them on the ground, they are in the condition of dying, but after getting water from Bhai Ghanaiya, they get re-energised and resume the fight with us. He is a big traitor and should be blown away with the canon". On hearing this, the Guru again lovingly asked, "Then whom did you serve the water?" He replied "O My Divine Master! I put water into Your mouth and felt Divine Bliss. I did so perceiving Your divine Teaching that all human beings are the sons of God":

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਸੋ ਤੇਰਾ ਰੂਪੁ ॥ ਗੁਣ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਅਨੂਪੁ ॥

Jo dees-ei so t-ai-ra roop(u). Gunh nidhaan Govind Anoop. (724)

(Whatever is seen, is Your form, O treasure of virtue! O Lord of the Universe! O Lord of the incomparable beauty!)

He further said, "O my Divine Master! I see the divine glimpse of You in everyone fighting in the battlefield. Thus, by putting water in everyone's mouth, irrespective of whether he is a Sikh or a Mughal, I am overwhelmed to see a glimpse of You in them, irrespective of caste, creed or religion."

On hearing this loving reply, Guru Gobind Singh embraced Bhai Ghanaiya with divine affection and remarked that he had truly realised the Divine Mission of Guru Nanak Dev. The Guru advised the grumbling soldiers, "O my disciples (Sikhs)! You have not attained the stage of spiritual bliss that Bhai Ghanaiya has achieved. In fact, the war against the Mughals is a spiritual play to perform one's duty with full love and devotion without having a tinge of hatred in your mind. It is not a

worldly war to establish any kingdom on earth, but a spiritual play to mould your life according to Guru Nanak Dev's Divine Law, so as to eradicate ego or hatred completely, even while fighting in the war, which should be considered a Divine Play".

Guru Gobind Singh then gave Bhai Ghanaiya a pack of ointment too, to treat the injured soldiers without discrimination between friend or foe, on the basis of religion, besides serving water in the battlefield. Addressing His disciples, Guru Gobind Singh told them that their war was not like that of worldly rulers, who were driven by lust to grab the enemy territory, but it was a Divine Play to eradicate ego. As such, if every human being follows these divine principles, heaven would pervade in the world. The Guru clarifies this in the undermentioned Hymn:

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ।

Maanas kee jaat sabh-ei ek-ei pehchaanbo (Akal Ustat)

(The entire mankind, belonging to any country, religion, caste, creed or tribe is one, because everybody has the same divine soul, due to which he is alive and performs all his duties. The differences in humanity occur due to egoistic persons.)

This shows that even if a Sikh is fighting a war, he is just performing his duties assigned by the Guru and he should not nurture any anger, hatred or ill will in his heart, otherwise he would be vengeful and would become a butcher with immense ego and would commit atrocities. There is an example-one of the Sikhs was fighting in the battle with a heavy sword. Suddenly, he developed great anger and completely lost his spiritual vision. At that stage, he repented so much for not abiding by the Guru's principle, and perceived that by being cruel, he would go to hell. So, he threw away his sword, and returned home to start meditating on the Divine Name to mitigate his ego and anger completely.

Now, the world has established the Red Cross, where a neutrally established third party goes to the battle-field and looks after the wounded soldiers, irrespective of the warring side. This in terms of spiritual outlook is nowhere near the divine mission enshrined through Bhai Ghanaiya by Guru Gobind Singh more than 300 years back.

Even today, in the Sikh-run community kitchens (Guru ka Langar) especially in Gurdwaras, free food is served to all irrespective of any status, caste, creed, religion and gender. This tradition was started by Guru Nanak Dev and is an important tenet of the Sikh faith.

In order to follow the Divine Path of Gurmat, i.e., teachings of the Divine Master, Gursikhs - students of spirituality, work tirelessly to imbibe and put into practice the spiritual teachings of the Gurus.

Uniqueness of Sikh Faith

Sikh faith is a simple, practical and spiritual way of life to attain God-realisation. There is no room for torturing the body, indulging in meaningless rituals, hypocrisy and superstition. All the ten Gurus (Divine Masters) preached the Spiritual Fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of mankind. They denounced duality based on distinction of religion, caste, creed or material possessions. Guru Nanak Dev preached the inculcation of divine humility in order to prepare the mind to unite with the Divine Lord by eradicating the ego completely. In this era of darkness (Kalyuga), the fire of desires spreads uncontrollably because of bad company and lustful desires. This can only be contained by reciting the Divine Name, which mitigates ego and helps the Seeker tread the Divine Path with full love and devotion.

During the time of Guru Nanak Dev and the succeeding Gurus, the mini-rulers (Misls), and during the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there was not a single instance of forceful conversion of people of other religions to the Sikh faith. The Sikh Gurus were embodiment of the divine principles to see One in all and all in One, and did not allow erosion of these divine principles. As such, Guru's followers (Gursikhs) too treaded on the same Divine Path, even under adverse circumstances.

If we look back, from the time of the Gurus to the days of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and even during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, material inducements or coercion were never used to convert people to the Sikh faith. In fact, many Hindus and Muslims, while following their respective faiths and religion, practiced the Guru's teachings and treaded the spiritual path with the blessings of the Almighty. Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh faith preached a simple three-fold Divine Message to the masses:

- (a) Kirat Karni - earning one's livelihood through honest toil and hard work.
- (b) Vand Chhakna - sharing one's food with the needy and also sharing the earnings with the under-privileged.
- (c) Naam Japna - meditating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion to realise the Divine within as far as possible in this very life.

Anyone following any faith can attain God-realisation by honestly treading the path shown by Guru Nanak Dev and by serving humanity selflessly. The Guru preached the Brahmins, Yogis and Sanyasis to acquire Divine virtues by faithfully following the tenets of the Hindu faith. He exhorted the Muslim clerics and Qazis to become good Muslims by following the precepts of the Koran, the holy book of Muslims, while treading the spiritual path.

Guru Nanak Dev preached that only divine deeds enable one to unite with the Almighty Lord:

ਪੁਛਨਿ ਫੋਲਿ ਕਿਤਾਬ ਨੋ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਵਡਾ ਕਿ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋਈ?
ਬਾਬਾ ਆਖੇ ਹਾਜੀਆ ਸੁਭਿ ਅਮਲਾ ਬਾਝਹੁ ਦੋਨੋ ਰੋਈ ।

Puchhan(i) phol(i) kitaab no Hindu vaddaa k-ai Musalamaanoe?

Baba aakh-ai haajeeaa Subh(i) amlaa baajh-hu dono roee. (Vaar Bhai Gurdas)

(When Guru Nanak Dev visited Mecca, the Muslim clerics asked Him to search His book and clarify whether Hindus were acceptable in the Divine Realm or the Muslims. In his reply, the Guru said, "Without performing the divine deeds, both Hindus and Muslims will repent at the end of their life, when they will be shown the way to hell. " This principle applies to all religions.)

It means that those, who do not perform good deeds during their lifetime would repent when their deeds are accounted for.

Guru Nanak Dev's divine message was so powerful and effective that even the demon Kauda, the sorcerer Noor Shah and the conman Sajjan - who were all performing dreadful and cruel deeds, which would have led them to hell - gave up their wicked ways and took to the spiritual life by following the divine advice of Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Lehna, a follower of goddess Durga, was so influenced by the life of Bhai Jodh, a Sikh follower of Guru Nanak Dev, that he too became a Sikh. Treading the path shown by Guru Nanak Dev with single-minded devotion and obeying His Divine Master in letter and spirit, he attained such spiritual perfection that the Guru anointed him as His successor ahead of His own sons. It is amazing, how by living the life of a true Gursikh, 'an honest student of spirituality', an idol-worshipper rose to become a spiritual Master (Guru) of Sikh faith.

Likewise, Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas, inspired by the Sikh way of life, rose to become the third and the fourth Divine Masters, respectively.

During the time of the fifth Divine Master, Guru Arjan Dev, a renowned Muslim Sufi Saint, Sain Mian Mir got so impressed by the Sikh way of life that he became a devout follower of Guru Arjan Dev. He was included among the personages, who laid the foundation-stone of Sri Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar. While compiling the holy Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, Guru Arjan Dev included the divine compositions of his predecessors as well as of several divine persons, who initially followed the spiritual path according to the traditions and rituals of their respective religions. Since they had immense desire and dedication to realise the Divine within, they meditated on the Divine Name with full love and devotion and ultimately merged with Him. Some of them like Ravidas, Namdev, Trilochan and others belonged to lower castes of the Hindu society. By so doing, the Gurus gave the

message that whoever follows his faith with full love, devotion and dedication, would ultimately reach the Divine Realm, where there is no caste, creed and religion but only the Formless One.

When we bow before Guru Granth Sahib, we pay obeisance not only to the Hymns of the six Sikh Gurus, but also bow our heads before the Hymns of the saints, who initially followed their faiths with full dedication and ultimately merged with the Formless Divine. That is why Guru Granth Sahib is unique in itself and the only true inter-faith divine scripture.

Similarly, the sixth Divine Master, Guru Hargobind brought up a Muslim orphan Painde Khan, who grew up to become one of the Generals of the Guru's army. Guru neither coaxed him nor offered any allurements, nor used any force to convert him from Islam to the Sikh way of life. When the Guru founded Sri Hargobindpur township, He not only built a Gurdwara for the Sikhs but also a Mosque for His Muslim devotees to enable them to offer prayers in the true spirit of Islam. While He preached and propagated the divine message of Guru Nanak Dev, he neither offered them temptations nor coerced them to embrace the Sikh faith.

The seventh spiritual Master, Guru Har Rai, while preaching spirituality, ran a free hospital, open to all - Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. He saved the life of Prince Dara Shikoh, the dying son of Shah Jahan, the Muslim Emperor of India, with medication from His hospital. Keeping alive the tradition established by his predecessors, he didn't force or induce anybody to become a Sikh.

The eighth spiritual Guru, Guru Harkrishan at the age of five, travelled to Delhi and while giving the message of co-existence and love, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev, He saved the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs from the deadly epidemic of small pox. Influenced by the life and teachings of the Guru, Mirza Raja Jai Singh and Muazzam, the younger son of Aurangzeb, along with several Delhiites began to emulate the Sikh way of life, on their own.

The self-sacrificing deed of Guru Tegh Bahadur has no parallel in history. He laid down his life to save the Hindu faith. That is why he is hailed as the 'protector of the Hindu frontal mark (Tilak) and the sacred thread (Janeu). When Emperor Aurangzeb said to Him, "You don't wear the sacred thread and the frontal mark of the Hindus, then why do you want to sacrifice your life for saving the traditions of the Hindu faith?" The Guru replied, "O King! Had the Muslims been subjected to this kind of atrocities and forceful conversions, I would have laid down My life for them also."

Guru Gobind Singh continued the same tradition. He himself was a great saviour of humanity and thus commanded an army of brave Sikh soldiers. He fought and

won several battles to save the downtrodden, but never annexed any territory to establish His own kingdom. The eminent Muslim, Pir Budhu Shah, was so inspired by the spirituality and Divine deeds of Guru Gobind Singh that he didn't even hesitate to sacrifice His two sons for the Guru in the battle of Bhanghani and became a great devotee of Guru Gobind Singh. Later on, the Pir too was assassinated by the Mughal forces on the charge that he nurtured cordial relations with the Guru.

Emperor Aurangzeb sent two great generals, namely Syed Begh and Saed Khan, with a large force to capture or kill Guru Gobind Singh in the battlefield. After perceiving the spirituality of the Guru, they were so hypnotised that they accepted Him as their spiritual Master. The Guru never called upon them to abandon their faith and become Sikhs. But they became pious by following the divine advice and holy instructions of the Tenth Master. A lot of people in India were inspired by the teachings of the Sikh Gurus and the exemplary lives of the Sikhs for rendering selfless service to humanity with so much love and devotion that they preferred to opt for the Sikh way of life on their own in large numbers.

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, the devout disciple of Guru Gobind Singh, fought many battles against the tyrannous Mughal rule and established his own Kingdom, wherein he distributed land to those poor peasants, who were slaves of the landlords, without any distinction of caste, creed or religion. He, thus, laid the foundation of divine socialism. He never coerced anyone nor offered any type of inducements for adopting the Sikh faith. Inspired by the Sikhs, several people embraced the Sikh faith on their own. A unique example is worth mentioning here:

Farukh Siyar, the Mughal Emperor had ordered that Sikhs be killed on sight. As per the order, when Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, along with his Sikh soldiers was arrested and being taken to Delhi, a young Hindu lad also surrendered so as to attain martyrdom along with his Sikh brethren. His mother petitioned to the Mughal Emperor that her son was a Hindu and not a Sikh, and humbly pleaded that he be pardoned. The Emperor accepted the petition of the distressed mother and ordered the release of her 'Hindu' son. When the boy learned of this, he told his tormentors that he was a Sikh and that the woman was a liar and she was not his mother. He added that he would feel privileged to attain martyrdom along with his Sikh brethren and would become acceptable at the Divine Portal. Ultimately, the boy attained martyrdom amongst roaring Sikh salutations.

It shows that people were so influenced by the Sikh way of life that they continued to embrace the Sikh faith despite the fear of death.

This tradition was carried forward when the Sikhs attained political power in the 18th century under the mini-rulers (Misls) and even during the reign of Maharaja

Ranjit Singh, the ruler of Punjab. During his rule, no one was offered any worldly allurements or induced or forced to give up his faith to adopt the Sikh faith. So much so, that several top-ranking Hindus and Muslims rose to be courtiers, ministers, generals and subordinates of the Maharaja. Punishments like hanging and torture were abolished even for the most heinous crimes during his regime. Here was a unique example of the principles of Sikh faith being translated into practice - kindness and liberality towards all, being the fundamental principle of the Sikh faith.

An in-depth study of the Sikh faith will reveal that it is a universal way of life for the entire mankind. There are several references in the Sikh scriptures that suggest that the Gurus neither advised nor allured the followers of other religious faiths to embrace the Sikh way of life, nor did they use any force or punishment to get anyone converted to the Sikh faith. Rather, they taught them that they should be true to their own faith and follow its divine principles in letter and spirit. By doing so, they too can become divine persons. Guru Granth Sahib preaches everyone:

To a Sanyasi - a mendicant:

ਸੋ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਜੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੇਵੈ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਏ ॥

So san-e-aasee jo Sat(i)gur s-ai-v-ei Vich-hu aap(u) gvaa-e. (1013)

(He alone is a mendicant, who recites the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion under the direction of the True Guru, who would eradicate his ego completely to become Divine.)

To a Pandit - a Hindu religious scholar:

ਸੋ ਪੰਡਿਤੁ ਜੋ ਮਨੁ ਪਰਬੋਧੈ ॥ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਆਤਮ ਮਹਿ ਸੋਧੈ ॥

So Pandit(u) jo mann(u) parbodh-ei. Ram Naam(u) aatam meh(i) sodh-ei. (274)

(He is a true Pandit, a religious scholar, who tries to motivate his mind to tread the Divine Path. He should be engrossed in realising the Divine, by reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion.)

To a Brahmin - a high-caste Hindu:

ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਜੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ॥

So Braahmanh(u) jo Brahm bechaar-ei. (662)

(He alone is a Brahmin, who perceives the Divine within.)

To a Vaishnav - a true devotee of Lord Vishnu (Sustainer of Humanity as per Hindu mythology):

ਬੈਸਨੋ ਸੋ ਜਿਸੁ ਉਪਰਿ ਸੁਪ੍ਰਸੰਨ ॥ ਬਿਸਨ ਕੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਤੇ ਹੋਇ ਭਿੰਨ ॥

B-ei-sno so jis(u) oopar(i) suprasann. Bisan kee maa-e-aa t-ai ho-e bhinn.(274)

(The true Vaishnav, who leads the simple vegetarian life and treads the Divine Path by

reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion, eradicates his ego completely and gets rid of worldly illusions. This way, he would merge with the Divine and attain salvation.)

To a Yogi - an ascetic:

ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

Anjan maah-ai Niranjan(i) rahee-ei Jog jugat(i) iv paa-ee-ei. (730)

(Yogi is the one, who remains pure in the midst of the materialistic filth, and treads the Divine Path with love and devotion by reciting the Divine Name and merges with the Omnipresent.)

To a Muslim:

ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣੁ ਮੋਮ ਦਿਲਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਮਲੁ ਦਿਲ ਤੇ ਧੋਵੈ ॥

Musalmaanh(u) moam dil(i) hov-ei. Antar kee mal(u) dil t-ai dhov-ei. (1084)

(He, who is kind-hearted and affectionate towards others irrespective of caste, creed or religion and eradicates his ego completely, is called a true Muslim. These virtues would motivate him to tread the Divine Path with full love and devotion for getting salvation.)

To a Mullah - a Muslim priest:

ਸੋ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਜੋ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਲਰੈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਕਾਲ ਸਿਉ ਜੁਰੈ ॥

So Mullaan jo mann siou lar-ei. Gur updes(i) kaal siou jur-ei. (1159)

(He alone is a Muslim priest, who struggles with his mind to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion. By following the teaching of the Divine Lord to eradicate his ego completely, he merges with the Divine.)

To a Qazi - a Muslim Judge:

ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਕਾਜੀ ॥

Sach(u) kmaav-ei so-ee Kaajee. (1084)

(He alone is a Qazi, who recites the Divine Name with full love and devotion to perceive the Divine Truth within.)

To a Sheikh - a Muslim ruler:

ਸੋਈ ਸੇਖੁ ਮਸਾਇਕੁ ਹਾਜੀ ਸੋ ਬੰਦਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਨਜਰਿ ਨਰਾ ॥

So-ee S-ai-kh(u) msaa-e-k(u) Haajee So bandaa jis(u) najar(i) nraa. (1084)

(He alone is a Sheikh, a preacher, a Haji, and he alone is God's slave, who is blessed with God's Grace by remembering Him with full love and devotion to realise the Divine within.)

To a Haji - a pilgrim to Mecca, the most revered shrine of Muslims:

ਜੋ ਦਿਲੁ ਸੋਧੈ ਸੋਈ ਹਾਜੀ ॥

Jo dil(u) sodh-ei so-ee Haajee. (1084)

(He alone is a Haji, who purifies his mind of egoistic thoughts by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion to realise the Divine within.)

To a Kshatriya - the Hindu warrior:

ਖੜੀ ਸੋ ਜੁ ਕਰਮਾ ਕਾ ਸੂਰੁ ॥ ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਕਾ ਕਰੈ ਸਰੀਰੁ ॥

Khatree so ju karmaa kaa soor(u). Punn daan kaa kr-ei sareer(u). (1411)

(Kshatriya is that person, who performs good deeds by controlling his mind from getting astray. He should give charity and submit his body and mind to the Divine Lord by reciting the holy Name.)



Guru - The Divine 'Word'

The Guru

The Sanskrit word Guru, means one who dispels the darkness of ignorance, and reveals the Divine Wisdom (Gu means darkness and Ru means to remove or dispel).

In Gurbani, the word Guru often refers to the divinity of the Almighty Lord. In fact, Akal Purakh, the 'Timeless One' is often known as the real Guru.

In the divine composition Chaupae Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh says that the everlasting, unchanging divine reality is the true Guru of all. Without a beginning and an end, He is ever the same. He existed before the Universe was created, and He shall continue to exist even after the Universe vanishes:

ਆਦਿ ਅੰਤਿ ਏਕੈ ਅਵਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਸੋਈ ਗੁਰੁ ਸਮਝਿਯਹੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ॥

Aad(i) antt(i) ek-ei avtaaraa. Soee Guru sam-jh-e-hu hamaaraa.

(Chaupae Sahib)

(He, who was pervading before the manifestation of the Universe and would remain so even after the Universe is extinct, should be considered my true Guru.)

The Eternal Divine Reality takes the form of the Guru. With His divine teaching, He dispels the darkness of our ignorance and bestows within us Divine Wisdom. Just as the Universe is the body of the Divine Lord, who pervades as the Supreme Soul (Paramatama), so is the human body, the abode of the Divine 'Word' in the form of Atma (divinely positive force). At the same time, a negative force also pervades the cosmos, which is called 'ego', which also pervades in everybody in the form of 'mind' consisting of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Thus, in the human body pervades Atma - the divine force; and 'ego', the negative force. When a person sheds his ego completely, the positive force or 'Divine Reality', i.e., God, manifests Himself.

Those, who have conquered the 'ego', become true recipients of Divine Grace. They become one with the Eternal Divine and their mind is filled with Divine Power, which enables them conquer the five passions - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Whatever they say comes to pass. Their words and actions become forceful and radiant with spiritual power. No one can attain that stage unless he eradicates his ego completely.

The Almighty Lord is the real Guru, who inspires and motivates everyone to merge with Him by shedding the ego completely. When a divine person takes the role of a Guru to discharge his divine duty, a doubt may creep in the mind of the Seeker: Why should he bow before the Guru (in human form), who has a body, which is just like his own? He is confused, because his mind is still groping in the dark, devoid of Divine Wisdom. However, we should be clear in our mind that from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh, i.e., in all the ten Gurus and now in the Sikh scripture (Guru Granth Sahib), the Eternal Light of the same Divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru) pervades. Shabad imparts instructions to all and is designated as Shabad Guru. Meditation on the Shabad Guru removes the egoistic darkness of a person, who becomes divine, being ego-less. Therefore, any person, who merges with the Divine, by shedding his ego completely, is also called a divine person. Thus, bowing before the Divine within helps in merging the mind with the Divine:

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਰਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਨਿਵਿ ਨਿਵਿ ਲਾਗਉ ਪਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥

Jo dees-ei Gursikhrhaa Tiss(u) niv(i) niv(i) laagou paa-e jeeou. (763)

[When I see a Gursikh (the divine person), who is following the teachings of the Guru in letter and spirit, I humbly fall at his feet with utmost reverence to get his blessings to recite the Divine Name.]

When we bow before Guru Granth Sahib, we actually offer reverence to the Shabad Guru and not to the physical form of the scripture. Similarly, when Sikhs during the lifetime of the Gurus, bowed before the ten Gurus, they too offered their respects to the Eternal Shabad Guru and not to the physical frames (bodies) of the Gurus. The Divine teaching of the ten Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib transformed many devout disciples (Gursikhs), who became Divine after shedding their ego completely. They are generally known as Brahmgyani, Sant, Gurmukh, Saadh, Bhagat, Baba and Khalsa, the divine ones.

In fact, there is no difference between these various categories of God-conscious persons, who have been given different names according to the varying traditions of different regions and times. When we bow before them or touch their feet with reverence, we are, in fact, bowing before the Divine within their body, which is completely free from ego. Under the Divine Law, bowing before such divine persons is to eradicate one's ego to the maximum extent and thus, one is motivated towards the realisation of the Guru (the Divine within). The age-old tradition and culture of India is to bow before the parents and other elderly persons, as also before the teachers in reverence, which develops humility in the young persons thereby eradicating their ego to a great extent.

It is a great psychological effect that when we bend the body and touch the feet

of any elderly person, including parents and holy persons, we definitely mitigate our ego to some extent. That is why there used to be great respect in the family hierarchy. There are many examples that there was one kitchen for the whole family comprising of grandfather, fathers, uncles, and their wives and children. There was much more cohesion in the family and divorces were never heard of in society at that time.

In one of the Hymns, Guru Ramdas emphasises that a disciple, who follows the Guru's instructions in letter and spirit becomes the beloved of the Guru; so much so that the Guru bows before that noble person:

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥

Jann(u) Nanak dhoorh(i) mangg-ei tis(u) Gursikh kee

Jo aap(i) jap-ei avreh Naam(u) jpaav-ei. (306)

[The Guru begs for the dust of the feet of that devoted disciple of the Guru (Gursikh), who himself recites the Divine Name and inspires others to do so.]

Guru Gobind Singh says:

ਆਤਮ ਰਸ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨਹੀ, ਸੋ ਹੈ ਖਾਲਸ ਦੇਵ ॥

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਹਿ, ਮੇ ਮਹਿ, ਤਾਸ ਮਹਿ, ਰੰਚਕ ਨਾਹਨ ਭੇਵ ॥

Aatam ras jeh jaan-hee, So h-ei khaalas d-ai-v.

Prabh meh(i), m-ai meh(i), taas meh(i), ranchak naahan bh-ai-v.

(Sarabloh Granth, 533)

(He, who has realised the Divine within, is the True Khalsa. He is one with God and myself.)

Since it may be difficult to differentiate a genuine saint from an imposter, Sikhs are enjoined to bow before the Shabad Guru, i.e., Guru Granth Sahib. However, it is customary for Indians to bow before the elders as a token of regard. According to the Sikh Rehat Maryada, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, one must bow only before it and none else, including saints and the elderly.

Why must one bow only before Guru Granth Sahib and not before any mortal? Simply, because a common man may not be able to differentiate a genuine saint from an imposter. However, we must treat our elders with respect, not only to seek their blessings but also to mitigate our ego. Each time, we bow before an elder, part of our ego is decimated. With the passage of time, our mind gets purified and we are able to tread the Divine Path. This Divine process goes a long way in resolving disputes in the family and among communities, regions and nations. Humility, which means discarding of ego, would be of great help in establishing permanent peace and brotherhood in the world.

At Mount Kailash, in the Himalayas, a band of adepts with occult powers

(Siddhas/Yogis), were engaged in certain mystical rituals and rites to prolong their life span and attain more occult powers. The young Guru Nanak Dev visited them and held discourses on divine knowledge, which was beyond their imagination. This amazed them and they wanted to bring Him into their fold. They even performed several miracles and tried to intimidate the Guru, but failed to do so. Finally, they asked him who was His Guru who gave Him such Divine Wisdom:

ਤੇਰਾ ਕਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਤੂੰ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

T-ai-raa kavanh(u) Guru Jis kaa too ch-ai-laa. (942)

(Who is Your Guru? Whose disciple are You?)

In reply, the Guru was categorical:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Sabad(u) Guru surat(i) dhun(i) ch-ai-laa. (943)

[Shabad, the divine 'Word' is My Guru and My mind (consciousness), the disciple.]

It is amply clear from the divine discourses that a physical entity is subject to decay. Thus, the human body or various idols cannot replace the Shabad Guru, which is Eternal, unchanging and all-pervasive. An identical question was put to Sant Attar Singh, Mastuanewale, during his travels in the Rawalpindi region(now in Pakistan). His clear response was that there never could be a mortal or an idol that could be called Guru. He pointed out that even Guru Nanak Dev, during his discourses, always emphasised that Shabad is the true Guru to lead one to Divine Wisdom.

Whenever there is a strong urge to shed ego completely and become one with the Divine, which in reality is spiritual bliss, then whatever path one follows with full love, devotion and honest toil, ultimately leads the Seeker towards realisation of the Divine within. By meditating on the Shabad Guru, one attains Divine Wisdom and merges with the Almighty Lord.

Saints like Namdev, Dhanna and Ramanand attained spiritual bliss and became one with the Divine Lord, although they began their spiritual journey by worshipping idols. After having worshipped idols for many years, when the longing to meet the Divine became intense, their outward looking minds began to search for the Divine within by meditating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, and finally they became divine persons. Therefore, what matters ultimately is the intensity of positive attitude.

From these examples, it is clear that a seeker, who has an urge to see the Divine within, must follow the Guru's commandments with full faith, love and devotion.

If a person goes on a pilgrimage or recites the Divine Name and worships the Shabad Guru for accumulation of wealth and gains or seeks blessings to rid himself

of illness or physical miseries, or to overcome discord in the family, these endeavours might result in some worldly gains, but at the same time, he gets entangled in material possessions and pursuits only. As a result, he drifts away from the true purpose of life to become Divine.

According to Gurbani, he, who has not received spiritual initiation and Divine Name from the Guru is called an 'atheist' (Nigura or without a Guru). Gurbani makes it clear that without treading the Divine Path under the Guru's advice, one would drift away from the real purpose of life, and God knows for how much time he would remain wandering under the influence of the ego comprising the five vices, and in the end, he may descend into the animal kingdom, wandering aimlessly. The person who has the desire to tread the Divine Path to eradicate the five vices should not keep company of the atheists. The true Guru is one, who has realised the Divine within and merged with Him completely by losing his identity and shedding his ego completely.

The Divine Name (Naam)

The Divine Name (Naam) or Shabad Guru indicates the presence of the Divine Lord within and without. He pervades everywhere within each living Creation as well as the minutest particle of matter. The consciousness of man has to unite with the Divine within, with the help of recitation of His glories, the Gurbani Hymns and Divine Name continuously with full love and devotion. By so doing, the mind sheds the five vices and becomes the disciple of the Divine within. In fact, such a Seeker is the true Sikh of the Divine Master. In common usage, a creature, object or place has a name, but Gurbani uses Divine Name (Naam) as a collective expression to address God in the diverse divine qualities, which are recalled in Naam Simran (meditation on the Divine Name). The praise of the infinite grace of God becomes Naam Simran for man. Any object that has a shape and form has a name too. Since God is formless and beyond attributes, He can have no specific name, He cannot be called by any specific name. However, for the purpose of meditation, one recites His Name according to His many Divine attributes as perceived by the Seeker:

ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਮ ਅਨੇਕਾ ਰੂਪ ਅਨੰਤਾ ਕਹਣੁ ਨ ਜਾਚੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਗੁਣ ਕੇਤੇ ॥

T-ai-r-ai Naam an-ai-kaa roop anantaa Kehanh(u) na jaahee t-ai-r-ai gunh k-ai-t-ai. (358)

(In the Divine Realm, You have no Name, but only the Omnipresent. However, worldly people call You with various names according to the qualities they perceive. O' Almighty Lord! You are perceived by your devotees in various forms. In spite of this, nobody can numerate Your immense qualities.)

In Jaap Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh has described this Divine Reality as

'Nirnamae' i.e. The Divine, having no name and with no symbol, mark, caste or creed. None can express the shape and appearance of the Divine.

The Divine Power is the Master of a million qualities and the King of kings. He is the ruler of all the three realms, i.e., this planet and all the planets above and below it. The entire set of creatures including deities, humans, ignorant men and the entire nature call this Power as infinite, boundless and beyond imagination. Then how can one describe all His Names? However, enlightened men have named God on the basis of their experiences with the Almighty. Guru Gobind Singh says:

ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਚਿਹਨ ਅਰੁ ਬਰਨ ਜਾਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਪਾਤਿ ਨਹਿਨ ਜਿਹ ॥

ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਅਰੁ ਰੇਖ ਭੇਖ ਕੋਊ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਤ ਕਿਹ ॥

ਅਚਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨਭਉ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ ਅਮਿਤੋਜਿ ਕਹਿਜੈ ॥

ਕੋਟਿ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰਾਣ ਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾਣਿ ਗਣਿਜੈ ॥

ਤ੍ਰਿਭੁਵਣ ਮਹੀਪ ਸੁਰ ਨਰ ਅਸੁਰ ਨੇਤ ਨੇਤ ਬਨ ਤ੍ਰਿਣ ਕਹਤ ॥

ਤਵ ਸਰਬ ਨਾਮ ਕਥੈ ਕਵਨ ਕਰਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਰਨਤ ਸੁਮਤ ॥

Chakkra chihan aru baran jaat(i) Aru paat(i) nahin jeh.

Roop rangg aru r-ai-kh bh-ai-kh Ko-oo keh na sakat keh.

Achal moorat(i) anbhaou prakaas Amitoj(i) kahijj-ei.

Kot(i) Indra Indraanh saahu Saahaanh(i) ganhijj-ei.

Tribhavanh maheep sur nar asur N-ai-t n-ai-t bann trinh kehat.

Tav sarab Naam kath-ei kavan Karam Naam barnat sumat(i). (Jaap Sahib)

(The Almighty Lord has got no physical frame and sign, nor does He belong to any tribe, caste, creed etc. No one in this Universe can describe His beauty, colour, sign and dress. His structure is firm and He only is divinely realised. He holds unlimited power. Countless mighty kings acknowledge Him as the Supreme Powerful King. The whole mankind, angels and demons, consider Him the Divine Supreme King of the whole Universe and all the species of the plant kingdom perceive Him as Formless. Since He possesses innumerable virtues, nobody can define His Name relating to any virtue. However, all the holy persons narrate His various Names according to His Divine manifestations, actions and qualities.)

In another verse in Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev exclaims:

ਤੂ ਅਚਰਜੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਿਸਮਾ ॥

Tu achraj(u) kudrat(i) t-ai-ree bismaa. (563)

(O God! You are beyond the limits of human understanding and are infinite. The expanse of Your visible Creation in the form of Nature astounds man.)

When deeply perceived, each Name of God describes one or the other grace showered upon man. For example 'Rama' is the Omnipresent; 'Hari' is one who washes away sins and purifies the mind; 'Gobind', the Master of the creation; 'Rahim',

the merciful one; 'Allah' is the all-Pervading and beyond imagination etc. Each recalls a particular attribute of God in the mind of the individual, meditating on that Name. When a Sikh utters the word 'Waheguru' with love and devotion, his mind is filled with the feeling that 'You are amazing, wondrous and infinite and You are remover of the darkness of ego'. The effect of all the Divine Grace then flows into all the corners of his mind.

The Divine Name (Waheguru, Gurmantra)

The Divine Name (Waheguru, Gurmantra) for meditation in Sikh faith means, 'O Divine Master! You are Wondrous!' Whosoever treads the spiritual path by reciting Waheguru with complete love and devotion would be totally attuned with the Divine within and develop an outlook to see One in all and all in One. The word Waheguru is made up of Wah (boundless one); gu (darkness - ignorance of the Divine Wisdom) and ru (to dispel). Thus Waheguru is the dispeller of darkness, i.e., ignorance of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. He is wondrous, because He illuminates the mind with spiritual bliss and divine knowledge.

By imbibing the teaching of Satguru, the Divine in one's mind, and meditating on Gurmantra, mind and intellect acquire the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, and reach the sphere of the Divine Truth.

By assimilating the Satguru's teachings in the mind, one attains the knowledge of the cosmos (Brahmand) and acquires such occult powers, by which he can know what all is going on in the entire Universe.

By fixing the Satguru's teaching in one's mind, one goes on following the right path and does not face the troubles and worries of attachment to his own self, his relations and worldly possessions. Such a person gets freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth and rises above the fear of death. The glory of the Divine 'Word' (Gurmantra - Waheguru), which is immaculate and free from all attachment, is so great that only he, who meditates with full love and devotion and dwells in his mind, can realise Him.

To achieve success on the spiritual path, Waheguru Gurmantra is the supreme Mantra because it includes all the divine attributes of the Almighty. Therefore, meditating on Waheguru Gurmantra with full love and devotion, perceiving His presence within, cleanses the mind. The Seeker acquires the Divine Wisdom and always remains attuned to the Divine - within and without - and acquires all the divine knowledge of the Universe:

ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਦੀਸੈ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਏਕੁ ਏਕੁ ਵਖਾਣੀਐ ॥
ਆਤਮ ਪਸਾਰਾ ਕਰਣਹਾਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਬਿਨਾ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣੀਐ ॥

Brahm(u) dees-ei Brahm(u) sunhee-ei Ek(u) ek(u) vakhaanhee-ei.

Aatam pasaraa karanh-haaraa Prabh binaa nahee jaanhee-ei. (846)

(All divine persons realise God and hear Him through His Creation. They expound that there is One and only One in the Universe. The Divine is the Creator of the entire Universe. Everything is happening in His Divine Order. No one can realise this Divine phenomenon without the blessings of the Lord.)

It is enjoined upon every Seeker to meditate on the Divine Name Waheguru to tread the divine path. It subdues the ego completely and leads to union with God:

ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਹੈ ਜਪਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਖੋਈ ॥

Waheguru Gurmantar h-ei Jap(i) haum-ei khoee.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 13, Pauri 2)

(Waheguru, the Divine Name, is Gurmantra. Reciting it, one becomes free of Ego.)

and

ਸਤਿ ਸਾਚੁ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ਆਦਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਸਦਾ ਤੁਹੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਵਾਹਿ ਜੀਉ ॥

Sat(i) Saach(u) Sree Nivaas(u) Aad(i) Purakh

sadaa Tuhee Waheguru Waheguru Waheguru Waah-e jeeou. (1402)

(You are forever True, Home of the Divine excellence, the Primal Supreme Being, always pervading everywhere. Marvellous dispeller of ignorance, You are excellent.)

All that we have is due to Your blessings. Through the ages, Your benevolence to Your devotees knows no bounds:

ਸੇਵਕ ਕੈ ਭਰਪੂਰ ਜੁਗੁ ਜੁਗੁ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਤੇਰਾ ਸਭੁ ਸਦਕਾ ॥

Sewak k-ei bharpoor jugg(u) jugg(u) Waheguru t-ai-raa sabh(u) sadkaa. (1403)

(O Supreme Blessor of Your devotee! Through the ages, O Marvellous Dispeller of ignorance! You are the Supporter of the whole Universe.)

Guru Nanak Dev reveals the Gurmantra indirectly:

ਵੇਮੁਹਤਾਜਾ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਕਹਹੁ ਗੁਰ ਵਾਹੁ ॥

V-ai-muhtaajaa V-ai-parvaahu. Nanak daas kah-hu Gur Waahau. (376)

(O Divine Lord! You are the Supreme One and self-contained. Nanak, Your humble servant, exclaims: O Divine Master! You are Wondrous!)

Guru Gobind Singh also exclaims in one of His Hymns: O God! You are the Refuge for the destitute and the Saviour of the world. By meditating on the Divine Name (Waheguru) with full devotion and love, Your divine blessings have been bestowed upon us:

ਭਯੋ ਨਿਸਤਾਰ ਅਸਰੁਨ ਸੇ ਤਾਰ ਲਿਯੋ ਗੁਰ ਜਗਤ ਸਭੈ ॥

ਸ਼ਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਫਤਹਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੁ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੁ ਸਚ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਅਖਯੈ ॥

Bha-e-o nistaar asrun s-ai Taar lio Gur jagat sabh-ei.

Shah Gobind Singh fateh Sat(i)gur kee Waheguru Waheguru Sach mantra akh-ei.

(Sarab Loh Granth)

Gurbani emphatically ordains that if a man abstains from meditating on the Divine Name (Gurmantra), he becomes egoistic and wastes his life and suffers miseries. He remains drifting towards the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Such a person is in no way different from a dog, a pig, a donkey, a crow, a snake, etc.

The life of a human being is the most superior to all the species, as he has been bestowed with the wisdom to realise the divine within by meditating on His Divine Name.



The Divine Path of the Searcher after Truth

Sikh, Sanmukh, Gursikh, Gurmukh

One, who has faith in the Eternal One, follows the divine advice of Guru Granth Sahib in letter and spirit, leads his life according to the divine teachings of the Guru, and does not wander in search of the Divine Reality, but respects all those, treading the Divine Path, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, is a Sikh. Abiding by the edict of Guru Gobind Singh, every Sikh is ordained to get initiated into the Khalsa fold with the Divine Nectar (Amrit) and thereby become the Guru's beloved one. According to Gurbani, by doing so, there awakens in his heart the divine discipline and an urge to realise the Divine within. By shedding the pseudo-intellectual reasoning, he meditates on the Divine Name and tries to subdue his ego to enable him realise the Divine within.

Sikh : One who follows the instructions of his Divine Master, Guru Granth Sahib, for treading the spiritual path while performing the duties of a householder and parts with one-tenth of his honest earnings for the divine cause, is called a Sikh:

ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਖਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ॥

So Sikh(u) sakhaa bandhap(u) h-ei bhaae Je Gur k-ai bhaanh-ai vich(i) aav-ei. (601)

(Hear, O brother! That Sikh is the well-wisher and helper of mankind, who follows the holy instructions and the Divine Will of his Divine Master in letter and spirit.)

Sanmukh : A Sikh, who meditates on the Divine Name, keeping in mind the presence of the Divine within and comes closer to the Guru:

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੇਤੀ ਸਨਮੁਖੁ ਹੋਵੈ ॥

ਹੋਵੈ ਤ ਸਨਮੁਖੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਕੋਈ ਜੀਅਹੁ ਰਹੈ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਲੇ ॥

J-ai ko Sikh(u) Guru s-ai-tee sanmukh(u) hov-ei.

Hov-ei ta sanmukh(u) Sikh(u) koe Jeea-hu rah-ei Gur naal-ai. (919)

(If a Sikh remains close to the Guru by following His Divine Instructions in letter and spirit, the Guru emphasises that such a Sikh perceives the Divine Wisdom within his heart.)

Gursikh : He, who follows the divine instructions of the Guru in letter and spirit and treads the divine path honestly with great love and devotion, to become closer to the Divine within, is called a Gursikh:

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥

Jann(u) Nanak dhoorh(i) mangg-ei tis(u) Gursikh kee

Jo aap(i) jap-ei avreh Naam(u) jpaav-ei. (306)

[The Guru begs for the dust of the feet of that Gursikh (devoted disciple of the Guru), who himself recites the Divine Name and inspires others to do so.]

Here is a unique example, where the Divine Master (Nanak) begs for the dust of the feet of such a Gursikh, who becomes close to the Divine within, by reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion, and by rendering selfless service to mankind, motivates others to follow this path to attain self-realisation.

Gurmukh : One who has eradicated his ego completely by meditating on the Divine Name with full love, devotion and honest toil, and who has merged with the Divine by eradicating his ego completely, is known as Gurmukh. Thus, there is no difference between the Divine and the Gurmukh. Gurmukh is also known as Brahmgyani, who has complete knowledge of Divine Wisdom and the Cosmos. In fact, he has become the Divine, by having eradicated his ego completely.

ਪੰਚ ਪਰਵਾਣ ਪੰਚ ਪਰਧਾਨੁ ॥ ਪੰਚੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਮਾਨੁ ॥

Panch parvaanh panch pardhaan(u). Panch-ai paaveh dargeh maan(u). (3)

In this stanza (Pauri), Guru Nanak Dev describes the mental stage of those persons, who have heard the Divine Name from the Divine Master (Satguru), have weighed it in their minds and given it a permanent place there, by daily mediating on Him and singing Hymns in His glory, with full love and devotion. They have brought their lives in unison with the Divine Law. Their minds are ever-filled with rapture, all-embracing love, self-knowledge, self-control, sweet imperturbable temperament, righteousness and mercy. Such persons attain the stage of God-consciousness (Brahm Gyan) in their very lifetime. In this world, they are revered and attain spiritual, moral and social leadership. After shedding their mortal frame, they merge with the Divine completely. Such persons are the divine ornaments in the courts of the kings. In fact, they are true kings in the Divine Realm. Such persons acquire atonement with the Eternal Divine. They become one with Him and blend themselves with the Guru by ever keeping His teaching in their minds. They always keep their minds fixed on the Divine Master and meditate on His Name. No worldly desire can deter them from the path of selfless service. They perceive Him in the whole created Universe.

The Ambrosial hour (Amrit Vela)

Guru Nanak Dev and other sages and saints have prescribed the ambrosial hour (Amrit Vela) as the best time to meditate on the Divine Name. Amrit Vela

means the latter part of the night, after midnight, and at least three hours before sunrise.

All humans, who have an urge to perceive the Divine within, wake up at any convenient time after midnight according to their devotion and strength of mind, but not later than three hours before sunrise. After having the bath, they meditate on the Divine Name and recite Gurbani Hymns. Guru Ramdas clarifies the importance of the ambrosial hour for realising the Divine within and for developing the outlook to see One in all and all in One:

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

Gur Satgur kaa jo Sikh(u) akhaa-e Su bhalk-ai utth(i) Har(i) Naam(u) dhiaav-ei. (305)

(One who calls himself a Sikh of the Guru, the True Guru, shall rise in the early morning hours and meditate on the Lord's Name.)

Some persons ask what is the need of taking the trouble of rising up in the ambrosial hour? Can't we meditate on the Divine Name at any time of the day? By all means, meditate day in and day out, without losing a single moment. But getting up three hours before sunrise has its own significance.

Significance of Time

1. Mankind is divided into two parts:
 - a) Those, who follow the path of looking within, by performing selfless and righteous actions in their daily life, meditate on the Divine Name, pray, and sing hymns in His praise every morning. They are called Gursikhs.
 - b) Others, who follow the path of hunting after pleasures and satiating their sensual appetites, are called Manmukhs, i.e., following the instincts of their minds.

Every person radiates his own magnetic field either for good or for evil. These vibrations affect the minds of others in their own way.

Persons, who follow the path of enjoyment and pleasure, remain awake till past mid-night. Tired, exhausted and with their stomachs overloaded, they go to the realm of oblivion. Their dark and evil vibrations become dormant and inactive. The atmosphere gets free from their debasing tendencies.

On the other hand, all lovers of God to whatever caste, creed, race or religion they may belong, get up after midnight at least two or three hours before sunrise and meditate on the Divine Name. They radiate Divine waves, which help the early rising devotees of God in their effort to concentrate their mind on the Divine Name.

2. The time (three hours before sunrise) is free from all noise, stir and bustle. The entire nature silently revels in the divine glory. Nature and the Divine

within are in complete union. This harmony enters the soul of the early riser, and fixes his mind on the Divine Name.

3. After taking rest at night, one becomes fresh and fit. He can fix his attention on the Divine Name with a sound mind and a sound body.
4. The peace of mind and the spiritual uplift, which a man attains by meditating on the Divine Name in the wee hours of the morning, keep him buoyant and unattached in the struggle of daily life. He does his duty without being enslaved by the worldly temptations of daily life.

The Method

The process is very simple and natural. The Seeker is to sit in an erect posture with the right foot in the cavity between the shin and the thigh of the left leg; and the left foot in the right leg cavity. With a heart full of love and devotion, slowly and steadily pronounce the Name, he has chosen to recite. He should make the Name and its meanings dwell in his heart. He should devote an hour or so daily to meditation and prayer and then attend a congregation, where hymns in the praise of God are sung. Where there is no place of worship, or it is not possible to participate in congregational service, he should recite the Hymns, prescribed for the morning, at home, considering his house or place of stay as the place of worship. Whenever he has time during the day, he should keep reciting the Divine Name, while performing his worldly duties. By doing so, work becomes worship. Saint Namdev expounds in Guru Granth Sahib:

ਨਾਮਾ ਕਹੈ ਤਿਲੋਚਨਾ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਰਾਮੁ ਸੰਮ੍ਹਾਲਿ ॥

ਹਾਥ ਪਾਉ ਕਰਿ ਕਾਮੁ ਸਭੁ ਚੀਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Naamaa kah-ei Tilochanaa Mukh t-ai Ram samhaal(i).

Haath paaou kar(i) kaam(u) sabh(u) Cheet(u) Niranjan naal(i). (1376)

(Namdev says: O dear Trilochan! Recite the Divine Name with your tongue while performing your worldly duties with your hands and feet. But let your consciousness remain attuned with love of the Divine Lord.)

The Effect

Every human being has the Divine within, but it is hidden from his view by the layer of selfishness and the impressions of all the actions one has performed under the influence of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Just as the noonday sun, shining in the sky with a dazzling brightness, is suddenly hidden from our view by a cluster of clouds and we are left in the dark, in the same way the divine sun is overshadowed by the clouds of selfishness. Slowly and steadily, by daily meditating

on the Divine Name and singing His praises, this cloud of selfishness is removed. The veil of ignorance and attachment to the physical is torn asunder and one feels His presence - both within and outside.

Meditating on the Divine Name during the ambrosial hour is the most beneficial to the spiritual aspirant. According to spiritual science, every individual emits good or bad vibrations into the atmosphere depending upon the sum total of his past deeds.

In the ambrosial hour after 12:30 a.m., the saints and the seekers wake up and recite the glories of the Divine Name. This emits spiritually charged vibrations, which inspire the whole of mankind for obtaining the divine blessings. It is just like divine telepathy.

All humans, who wake up in the ambrosial hour, after having bath, start meditating on the Divine Name, emit the spiritually charged vibrations, which inspire the entire mankind for receiving the divine blessings. It is just like a divine telepathy.

Thus, the seeker after Truth obtains strength from the divine persons to concentrate on the Divine Name with full love and devotion. However, people, who indulge in worldly pleasures like eating, drinking and enjoying themselves, will retire to bed at midnight completely tired. Their bad vibrations weaken and gradually exhaust before the start of ambrosial hour (Amrit Vela). As a result, this time is free from the ill effects of bad vibrations. Going to bed early at night provides proper rest to the body and mind to become refreshed. Thus, the refreshed seeker is able to get up at the ambrosial hour, and immerse himself in recitation of the Divine Name.

The individual who meditates daily during the ambrosial hour on the Divine Name, gains spiritual strength and experiences divine ecstasy. This helps him work with full vigour the whole day. He concentrates on his work with full devotion, considering it as worship for getting divine pleasure. Thus, his hard toil becomes worship of the Divine, and he does not bother for the reward in return. According to the Divine Law, all the bounties are showered upon him automatically because he becomes the beloved of the Supreme Being.

A seed sprouts only when sown in fertile soil, which has the required amount of moisture. Similarly, if the seed of God's Name is planted during Amrit Vela, it shall produce such divine crop in abundance, which would never run out, no matter how much it is used even for the welfare of the fellow beings.

Guru Ramdas, the fourth divine Master, clarifies this in the following Hymn:

ਹਰਿ ਧਨੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੈ ਵਤੈ ਕਾ ਬੀਜਿਆ ਭਗਤ ਖਾਇ ਖਰਚਿ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਖੁਟੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Har(i) dhann(u) Amrit v-ai-l-ei vat-ei kaa beej-e-aa

Bhagat khaa-e kharach(i) rah-ai nikhutt-ei naahee. (734)

(The devotees of the Lord plant the seed of the Lord's wealth in the ambrosial hour. They eat it and spend it, but it is never exhausted.)

Vat-ei here means proper amount of moisture in the soil, which enables the seed to sprout. The Guru emphasises that reciting the Divine Name and the Hymns during Amrit Vela, is like sowing the divine seed in fertile soil with proper moisture. As a result, an abundant crop of the Divine Name is produced and the devotee advances spiritually to such an extent that the worldly needs do not bother him, because he gets everything from the Divine Lord and remains contented. Rather, he helps mankind through this spiritual accumulation.

Gurbani warns the seeker that he, who does not rise and meditate during the ambrosial hour, should be considered spiritually dead, although he is alive with egoistic strength and vigour. This has been clarified by Baba Farid, a Muslim saint in the following Hymn, incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਪਿਛਲ ਰਾਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਗਿਓਹਿ ਜੀਵਦੜੋ ਮੁਇਓਹਿ ॥

Farida pichhal raat(i) na jaag-e-oh(i) Jeev-darho mu-e-oh(i). (1383)

(Farid says: If one does not awaken in the early hours before dawn, he is spiritually dead, while alive.)

A true Sikh meditates on the Divine Name during the ambrosial hour and recites the glories of God, both during the day and at night. This removes all his sorrows, worries and worldly miseries, thus helping him tread the spiritual path to realise the Divine within:

ਝਾਲਾਘੇ ਉਠਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਿ ਨਿਸਿ ਬਾਸੁਰ ਆਰਾਧਿ ॥

ਕਾਰਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਨ ਬਿਆਪਈ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਟੈ ਉਪਾਧਿ ॥

Jhaalaagh-ai utth(i) Naam(u) jap(i) Nis(i) baasur aaraadh(i).

Kaar(h)aa tujh-ei na biaap-ee Nanak mit-ei upaadh(i). (255)

(O devotee! Rise in the ambrosial hour and recite the Name of the Divine, day in and day out. Nanak says that you would be free from all fear, anxiety and the worldly miseries and ultimately get the spiritual bliss.)

The Daily Prayer (Nitnem)

The daily spiritual prayer and divine discipline expounded by the Gurus and binding on every Sikh is called Nitnem, i.e., daily morning regimen of Hymn reading.

A person has to remain disciplined, anyway, even for the worldly accomplishments. In the army, police, educational institutions, and in other social organisations, there are certain codes of conduct, which one must adhere to. Similarly, a student of spirituality must also observe a certain set of divine rules, illustrated separately in the succeeding chapter Sikh Way of Life.

The first obligation for a Sikh is to wake up at ambrosial hour (Amrit Vela) and after following the daily regimen, one should meditate on the Divine Name and recite a set of Hymns (the five Banis) as ordained by the tenth Master. He should remain attuned to the Waheguru or the Mool Mantra right through the day, even while going about his daily routine. As the sun sets, he should recite the evening prayer, Rehras and before retiring for the day, he should recite another set of Hymns, commonly known as Kirtan Sohila. Rigorous adherence to this regimen is the Divine Law, which ensures a great success to realise the Divine within by treading the divine path honestly with full love and devotion. As opposed to this, all ritualism, renunciation of the world and self-mortification, remaining in secluded places like a cave or an underground cell with a view to attain union with God, are of little importance.

In addition to the five prescribed Banis for daily recitation, a Sikh should also recite Asa Di Vaar and Sukhmani Sahib. The Sikhs of the bygone days also added these Banis in their daily prayers. Not only that, they even used to recite the entire Panj Granthi (comprising ten Banis) as part of their Nitnem. Apart from this, to obtain the blessings of the Guru, every Sikh should have an urge to visit the Gurdwara on a daily basis, to join in the holy congregation and listen to the Hymns and preaching of the Guru.

The Banis prescribed for a Seeker to be recited daily are as follows:

During Amrit Vela : Japuji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Tvaprasad Swaeeye, Chaupae and Anand Sahib.

In the evening : Rehras Sahib, comprising of three Banis, i.e., Sodar, Chaupae and six stanzas of Anand Sahib and some other Hymns.

Before retiring for the night : Kirtan Sohila.

Japuji Sahib : The title of this composition is Jap and the suffix of ji and Sahib are only added as a mark of respect. Japuji Sahib is a revelation, which springs from the self-illuminated heart of Guru Nanak Dev in direct and constant touch with the Eternal Reality, the One in all and all in One. The subject matter contained therein, is beyond the reach of human intellect. In fact, it is the subject of self-realisation, viz. the realisation of the Divine within.

It is the inaugural Bani of Guru Granth Sahib. Japuji Sahib is not categorised in any of the prescribed musical measures (Ragas).

Japuji Sahib begins with Ik Onkar Satnam Karta Purakh Nirbhau Nirvair Akal Moorat Ajooni Saibhang Gur Parsad. These words are collectively called the Mool Mantra (basic tenets of Divinity) wherein the Guru has delineated the fundamental attributes of God:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

**Ik Onkaar Sat(i) Naam(u) Kartaa Purakh(u) Nirbhaou Nirveir(u)
Akaal Moorat(i) Ajoonee Saibha-n Gur Parsaad(i). (1)**

(There is but One all embracing and all-powerful Divinity, Who manifests Himself first in the shape of the sacred word and then through the whole created Universe.

He is the One-in-All and the All-in-One. He is the Eternal Reality and His name Satnam is also Eternal. He is the Creator and has the power of independent self-creation. He permeates the whole creation. He is the only male element in the Universe and all else is female, according to the spiritual categorization. He is above all fear and is free from all thoughts of enmity. He is immortal, free from birth and rebirth, and can be realised in every created thing.

He is self-existent. The whole Universe is dependent for its existence on Him, the Generator of all, without any one to generate Him.

He can be realised through the grace of the Guru, the Teacher, who is God-conscious and sees Him both within and without.)

The rest of the composition of Japuji Sahib is, in fact, an entire divine explanation of the Mool Mantra, which contains the attributes of the Divine. The spiritual gist of the Hymns of Japuji is to perceive divine knowledge of Ek Onkar, the Omnipresent.

Jaap Sahib : Jaap Sahib is a composition of Guru Gobind Singh and it comprises of 199 verses. The main subject of this composition is the praise and adoration of the Divine Lord. This has been done after perceiving His various Divine attributes. The language used in this composition is a mixture of Braj Bhasha, Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Punjabi, prevalent at that time. Some of the words used in this divine composition are a queer mixture of different languages, which have been coined by Guru Gobind Singh and are not commonly found in any dictionary.

Tva Prasad Swaeeye : This composition is also written by Guru Gobind Singh. It is a part of his longer composition known as Akal Ustat (the praise of God). Herein, the Guru refers in detail to the various kinds of rituals and ceremonies, pilgrimages, sects and traditions, warriors, celibates and those, who lived by inhaling air only and worshipped idols and graves. The Guru says that one cannot realise God through any of these ritualistic practices. He can only be realised when one's consciousness is imbued with loving devotion by reciting His Divine praises. The Guru concludes that if the whole humanity inculcates Divine Love in their hearts and perform selfless-service, the time is not far when the entire world will become an abode of Divine Peace.

Kabio Bach Benti Chaupae : This composition has also been authored by Guru Gobind Singh. The theme of this composition is prayer before the Lord. It refers to the Creation of the Universe and the Celestial Being's supplicatory offer to God, urging, 'O Timeless One! Rid us of our vices and immerse us in Your True Essence.' Guru Gobind Singh expounds, 'The One, who is Immutable from the beginning to the end, is my Divine Master.'

Anand Sahib : These Hymns of blissful joy have been composed by Guru Amardas (the third Sikh Divine Master) under the Ramkali Raga, consisting of 40 stanzas. The human being is inspired to seek union with God. The Guru says that when the tune of the mind gets alienated from the Divine, the first vice which arises is called Trishna (craving). Then due to the cravings, man is engrossed in worldly affairs and forgets the Divine within. On the contrary, if the conscience of man establishes the link with the Divine by meditating on the Divine Name with full devotion and love, then he is able to realise the Divine within. However, despite being engrossed in worldly pleasures, if he is performing his worldly duties honestly, with full devotion, it itself becomes worship. He considers all these worldly pleasures as trappings of life and thus remains detached from all these vices.

Sodar Rehras : A combination of Hymns constitute this Bani, which includes So Dar, So Purkah, Kabio Bach Benti Chaupae, the first five and the last stanza of Anand Sahib, along with some other Hymns.

Kirtan Sohila : This composition begins with a Hymn in Raag Gauri Deepki and comprises a total of five Hymns, composed by different Gurus. Gursikhs recite these hymns at bedtime before going to sleep at night. In Gurbani, Guru Nanak Dev recites the Aarti, i.e., praises of God and its Creation. Generally in Aarti, people put lights in different frames prepared of bronze, gold, silver or earthen material in a span of tray and perform different acts to please the Almighty Lord. Guru Nanak Dev says that my divine prayer (Aarti) for getting the blessings of the Almighty Lord is that the whole cosmos is my tray and the suns, moons and stars of the Universe are the lights in that tray. The essence (fragrance), which one uses in the form of Dhoop is, in fact, the whole of the vegetation of the world, and the entire air of the Universe acts as a fan for waving on the deity, as the whole atmosphere is waving over the Almighty and the fruits of the whole vegetation created by the Divine are my offerings to the Divine deity. This Aarti as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev was highly appreciated by the Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, who considered this Aarti as a prayer for the entire world to get the blessings of the Almighty Lord.

The real purpose of reciting these Banis is to show the spiritual path to humanity and urge humans to submit completely to the all-powerful Omnipresent.

The Sikh Way of Life

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru Nanak Dev, prescribes a daily routine for a Seeker. He must wake up in the ambrosial hour and recite a set of divine compositions, (Nitnem) - Japuji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Tvaprasad Sawaeeye, Chaupae and Anand Sahib. The pool of Nectar of the True Name should dwell in his heart. One, who with full love and devotion, recites the Hymns and follows the Guru's teaching in letter and spirit, perceives the Divine Lord within. Such a person cleanses all his sins of the past several lives. Even while performing his worldly duties, he keeps reciting the Divine Name. At sundown, he recites Sodar Rehras and at bedtime, Kirtan Sohila. He, who abides by the Guru's teachings, attains a state of heightened spiritual awareness. Thus, the Divine 'Word' is embedded in his heart and it becomes his divine habit to keep on reciting the Divine Name even while performing the worldly duties. Such a person is called Gursikh, who has the urge to realise the Divine within. Wondrous is the fourth Divine Master, Guru Ram Das, Who with humility seeks the dust of the feet of such divine devotee (Gursikh), who not only recites the Divine Name continuously to merge with the Divine within, but also inspires others to do so. This regimen of the Gursikh has been amply clarified by Guru Ramdas in the following Hymn:

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਰਿ ਨਾਵੈ ॥

ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੋਖ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

ਫਿਰਿ ਚੜੈ ਦਿਵਸੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵੈ ਬਹਦਿਆ ਉਠਦਿਆ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

ਜੋ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਸੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ ॥

ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਦਇਆਲੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੇਰਾ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਸੁਣਾਵੈ ॥

ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ ॥

Gur Sat(i)gur kaa jo Sikh(u) akhaa-e Su bhalk-ai utth(i) Har(i) Naam(u) dhiaav-ei.

Uddam(u) kar-ai bhalk-ai parbhaatee Isnaan(u) kar-ai Amrit sar(i) naav-ei.

Updes(i) Guru Har(i) Har(i) jap(u) jaap-ei Sabh(i) kilvikh paap dokh leh(i) jaav-ei.

Phir(i) charh-ei divas(u) Gurbani gaav-ei Behd-e-aa utthd-e-aa Har(i) Naam(u) dhiaav-ei.

Jo saas(i) giraas(i) dhi-aa-e m-ai-raa Har(i) Har(i) So Gursikh(u) Guru mann(i) bhaav-ei.

Jis no da-e-aal(u) hov-ei m-ai-raa Suaamee Tis(u) Gursikh Guru updes(u) sunhaav-ei.

Jann(u) Nanak dhoorh(i) mangg-ei tis(u) Gursikh kee Jo aap(i) jap-ei avreh Naam jpaav-ei. (305)

Bhai Gurdas was a divine person, who followed the divine instructions and acted as the scribe for Guru Arjan Dev for compiling Granth Sahib. He also lays down the code of conduct, which a Sikh must follow. With utmost humility, he submits:

ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਰਿਦੈ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਆਵੈ ॥

ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਪਰ ਨਾਰੀ ਦੇ ਨੇੜਿ ਨ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਪਰ ਦਰਬੈ ਨੋ ਹਥੁ ਨ ਲਾਵੈ ॥
ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਪਰ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਸੁਣਿ ਆਪੁ ਹਟਾਵੈ ॥
ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦਾ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ॥
ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ, ਥੋੜਾ ਸਵੈ ਥੋੜੇ ਹੀ ਖਾਵੈ ॥
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸੋਈ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਵੈ ॥

Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Gurmat(i) ridd-ei gareeb-e aav-ei.
Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Par naaree d-ai n-ai-rh(i) na jaav-ei.
Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Par darb-ei no hath(u) na laav-ei.
Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Par nindaa sunh(i) aap(u) hataav-ei.
Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Sat(i)gur da updes(u) kamaav-ei.
Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa, Thorhaa sav-ei thorho hee khaav-ei
Gurmukh(i) soee sehaj(i) samaav-ei. (Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 12, Pauri 4)

(I offer myself in sacrifice to that Sikh, who is truly devoted to the Guru's teachings and cultivates humility in his heart; who does not look upon others' spouse with lustful intention; does not covet another's wealth; turns a deaf ear when someone speaks ill of others; follows the instructions of the Divine Master with full devotion, exercises self-restraint and is abstinent in the matter of food and sleep. Such a Seeker has realised the Divine within.)

According to the Guru's teachings, one can attain the stage of self-realisation only when one steadfastly follows the code of conduct and discipline outlined above, and meditates on the Divine Name perceiving the Divine within. However, before this, one must undergo initiation into the Khalsa fold by partaking of the Divine Nectar(Amrit) from the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piare) and follow their teachings.

Guru Gobind Singh dictated the code of conduct to Bhai Desa Singh and asked him to preach the same among the Sikhs. Bhai Desa Singh, in his manual of the Sikh code of belief and discipline (Rehat Nama), recounts that Guru Gobind Singh with utmost humility stated that any Sikh, who scrupulously adheres to the Sikh code of conduct, would become His Master and He would be his disciple:

ਰਹਿਣੀ ਰਹੈ ਸੋਈ ਸਿਖ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਓਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਮੈ ਉਸ ਕਾ ਚੇਰਾ ॥

Reh(i)nhee rah-ei soee Sikh m-ai-raa. Oh Sahib m-ei us kaa ch-ai-raa.

(Rehatnama Bhai Desa Singh)

What is dear to the Guru is the adherence of the Sikh to the spiritual code of conduct and not his physical frame:

ਰਹਿਤ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਮੁਝ ਕੋ ਸਿੱਖ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

Rehat piaaree mujh ko Sikh piaaraa naah-e.

(Rehatnama Bhai Desa Singh)



Meditation on the Divine Name

The Need to Meditate

Meditation should not be done to draw the attention of others towards oneself, just for seeking praises and worldly bounties. In fact, meditation on the Divine Name is a blessing to a person, just like a divine soap, which cleanses one's mind fouled by ego and sins due to the performance of bad deeds in the previous as well as present births. Guru Nanak Dev defines:

ਮੂਤ ਪਲੀਤੀ ਕਪੜੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਦੇ ਸਾਬੂਣੁ ਲਈਐ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਇ ॥
ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਏ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

Moot paleetee kaparh(u) ho-e. D-ai saaboonh(u) la-ee-ei oh(u) dho-e.

Bharee-ei matt(i) paapaa k-ei sangg(i). Oh(u) dhop-ei naav-ei k-ei rangg(i).(4)

(The clothes, spoiled by urine and other excretions can be washed with soap. Similarly, if one's mind is spoilt with the filth of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, it can only be washed by scrubbing with the divine soap, i.e., recitation of the Divine Name with full love and devotion.)

Let us see how the mind gets fouled. If a spotless white sheet is spread out under the leaking roof of a mud hut during rainfall, the muddy drops fall on the white sheet and turn it muddy. How did the white sheet get soiled? The reason is that as the drops of rain started falling on the roof, they mixed with the soil present there. When those droplets dropped on the sheet, the soil seeped into the fabric. As the drops kept continuously falling on the sheet, the whole sheet gradually turned muddy.

Similarly, in the beginning, the human mind is spotless like the white sheet. All worldly thoughts and selfish deeds performed under the influence of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride leave evil impressions on the mind, and gradually the whole mind gets filled with foul thoughts of ego, which can only be removed by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. In fact, the Divine Name acts as a divine soap to wash these egoistic deeds.

Techniques of Meditation

Traditionally, the technique to meditate on the Divine Name, which is to be embedded in the heart faithfully, learnt from saints, sages and Gursikhs, who had

already realised the Divine within, was further handed down to the seeker by word of mouth.

The great scholar-martyr Bhai Mani Singh, who acted as the scribe for Guru Gobind Singh for compiling the entire Adi Granth (the holy scripture of the Sikhs), also learnt the technique of meditation with full humility, love and devotion by keeping company of the tenth Master.

Bhai Gurdas in his eleventh ode (Vaar), in Bhagat Mala and in episodes relating to Gursikhs namely Sheehan and Gajjan, has thus elaborated the technique of meditation:

"While at work, with each breath taken in one should intone the word 'Wahe', and the word 'Guru' with each breath taken out."

Based on the above, initially there are three techniques to meditate on the Divine Name:

- (i) **By the movements of lips** : In the early stages, the aspirant should chant aloud the Divine Name, Waheguru and recite Gurbani. This will enable him to acquire concentration of mind. In the next step, the lips and the tongue should move in perfect harmony and recite the name Waheguru inaudibly. During meditation, the aspirant should feel the presence of the Divine Lord within, and believe that He alone is enabling him to recite His Name. He should merge his consciousness with the Divine Name Shabad Guru dwelling within his heart, and should listen to the melody of the divine sound. This stage of meditation is termed Baikhari.
- (ii) In the second stage, the lips are closed and the tip of the tongue strikes the hard palate and one slowly recites the Divine Name, Waheguru. In other words, one recites Waheguru inaudibly, but his consciousness is centered on the divine presence within his heart. This stage of meditation is termed Madhma.
- (iii) When one breathes in through the nostrils, it is accompanied by Wahe and each breath out is accompanied with Guru. In other words, while inhaling, the disciple recites Wahe, whereas, while exhaling he recites Guru with each breath. This stage of meditation is termed Pasanti. The aspirant has to practice this technique with full love and devotion and with unhurried ease. While the breath is drawn in, he intones Wahe, and the consciousness should feel that the divine presence illuminates the heart, where the breath finally arrives. Each moment of the breath, i.e. Prana embodies the presence of the Timeless One (God). Likewise, when the breath comes out, he intones Guru and the mind should feel that the unvarying reality of the Timeless One, i.e. the Divine, pervades in every particle of the matter in the external world:

ਏਕੁ ਸਬਦੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਾਨਿ ਬਸਤੁ ਹੈ ਬਾਹੁੜਿ ਜਨਮਿ ਨ ਆਵਾ ॥

Ek(u) Sabad(u) m-ai-r-ei praan(i) basat(u) h-ei Baahurh(i) janam(i) na aavaa. (795)

(When I recite the Divine Name with every breath of mine, with full love and devotion, I perceive the Divine pervading everywhere, and thus I get liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth with the blessings of the Divine Master.)

However, during all these stages of meditation, it is of paramount importance that one must feel the presence of the Divine in his heart, while reciting the Divine Name. The aspirant must believe resolutely that it is the Shabad Guru, which alone is driving the ceaseless chain of breath, i.e., Prana. Gurbani clearly defines that the Divine is present in every breath within the body as well as in the cosmos.

In fact, the Divine controls the breath. When the breath goes deep into the heart, the aspirant perceives the pervading of the Divine there. When the breath goes outside in the world, his mind perceives the Divine pervading everywhere in the cosmos. The students of spirituality should feel that the breath cycle gifted by the Divine is meant for recitation of His Divine Name.

When a devotee's love and devotion to the Divine is increased, his cycle of breaths is considerably reduced due to intense love and devotion with the Divine within. In other words, breaths are prolonged, and as such, he takes fewer breaths per minute.

Thus, breath control is mind control. In a minute, a man generally takes about sixteen breaths and if the same man is very worried, angry and undergoes intense tension due to worldly affairs and takes to alcohol or drugs, his breaths per minute are increased, even up to 25-30. Thereby, it not only affects his health due to worries and other concerned ailments, but also reduces his span of life. On the other hand, if a person recites the Divine Name with full love and devotion, his breaths are prolonged and in this way many seekers take less than 5-6 breaths per minute when they recite the Divine Name. Some saints are so absorbed in reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion that they forget the breathing cycle, while remaining completely absorbed in divine bliss. Thereby, their concentration for deep meditation of the Divine Name is greatly increased. Hence, their life span is also prolonged.

A recent medical study in America has revealed that if a man takes six breaths a minute, his brain becomes very active and secretions from his pineal and pituitary glands comprise more of (i) Serotonin, (ii) Dopamine and (iii) Endorphin. Thus, his mind becomes sharper, with a greater ability to concentrate and less prone to diseases. Hence, he remains healthy and his life is prolonged.

There is another technique of reciting the Divine Name with prolonged breaths.

To start with, the seeker should inhale the Divine 'Word' Waheguru with a long breath, behold the breath within while reciting Waheguru four times, then exhale the same breath by reciting Waheguru twice. The ratio in words and figures can be represented as number of times the Divine Name is recited while inhaling: number of times the Divine Name is recited while holding breath in the heart: number of times the Divine Name is recited while exhaling, which numerically can be represented as 1:4:2. In this way of recitation of Waheguru, one hardly gets four to five breaths per minute. It can further be increased by reciting the Divine Name in the ratio of 2:8:4 according to the technique mentioned above. According to the devotion and concentration of the devotee's mind, this ratio of reciting the Divine Name can further be increased to 3:12:6, 4:16:8 and so on. Thus, more this ratio is increased, more would be the concentration of mind on the Divine Name and more would be the life span of that seeker.

These are the miracles of reciting the Divine Name with every breath. Thus, the breaths of human beings are the divine bounties for reciting the Divine Name to attain self-realisation in this very life. This is possible only if one has utmost devotion to keep company of the divine persons and performs meditation under their guidance, to realise the Divine within in this very life. The association and guidance of the divine person are mandatory to tread the righteous path towards realisation of the God within, in this very life.

There was a society of pseudo-divine persons, who called themselves ascetics and performed miracles not only to meet God, but also to motivate common people to become their followers. With the yogic postures, they could control their breathing, and thus increase their life span to hundreds of years. They remained engrossed in occult powers and did not really follow the spiritual path to realise the Divine within. With these occult powers, they could perform miracles and could even reshape the structure of their body. The glaring example of the same is that of ascetic persons (Yogis) of Achal Batala in Punjab. They tried to frighten Guru Nanak Dev after transforming their bodies into tigers, snakes, birds etc. They even showered the balls of fire from the sky to terrorise Guru Nanak Dev, who had become very popular among the masses due to His Divine Wisdom. But the Guru merely smiled at them and told them that they had wasted their life for acquiring those occult powers and had merely increased their life span without realising the Divine within, for which they had abandoned their households and wandered in the forests and mountains. One of these Yogis, Bharthree had renounced his kingdom to realise the Divine within and had got entrapped in the pseudo-miracles of those ascetics. He was very impressed with the spiritual

wisdom of Guru Nanak Dev, and thus became His follower. At that time, his age was more than 1400 years.

Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਿਮਰਹੁ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ॥ ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰ ਕੀ ਉਤਰੈ ਚਿੰਦ ॥

Saas(i) saas(i) sim-rahu Gobind. Mann antar kee utr-ei chind. (295)

(If a man goes on reciting the Divine Name with each breath with full love and devotion, considering the Divine permeating within, he would get rid of all his worries and thus, would become Divine by reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion.)

The under-mentioned Hymn also emphasises the perceiving of the Divine within and without - in the body as well as in the cosmos:

ਬਾਹਰਿ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਨਹੁ ਇਹੁ ਗੁਰ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਬਤਾਈ ॥

Baahar(i) bheetar(i) eko jaan-hu Eh(u) Gur giaan(u) bataaee. (684)

(Within and without, there is only the One Lord. The Guru has imparted this wisdom to me.)

(iv) The fourth stage is attained spontaneously after long years of unremitting divine toil and reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion, especially with every breath. At this stage, the Shabad, the Divine 'Word' and consciousness (Surt) become one, and the divinely blessed one perceives each strand of the hair of the body reciting the Divine Name on its own - uninterruptedly. This is the Para stage. It is above all the previous stages and one merges with the Divine completely.

In the below-mentioned Hymn, Guru Arjan Dev further clarifies this spiritual stage:

ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰੈ ਜੋ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਸਰਬ ਮੈ ਪੇਖੈ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥

ਨਿਮਖ ਨਿਮਖ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਨਮਸਕਾਰੈ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਓਹੁ ਅਪਰਸੁ ਸਗਲ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੈ ॥

Ur(i) dhaar-ei jo antar(i) Naam(u). Sarab m-ei p-ai-kh-ei bhagvaan(u).

Nimakh nimakh Thakur namaskaar-ei. Nanak oh(u) aparas(u) sagal nistaar-ei. (274)

(He, who meditates on the Divine Name within and attains such a stage to see 'One-in-All' and 'All-in-One', reaches the stage of realising the Divine within, and merges completely with the same. Nanak says that such Divine persons would inspire humanity to tread the divine path for attaining self-realisation.)

To quell the sense of 'I' and 'Mine', i.e., ego, while meditating, it is of utmost importance to invoke His Divine presence within. The aspirant should believe that 'He' (the Almighty) is mine and ensconced in my heart. He is causing me to recite 'His Name'. This is called Hazoori, i.e., always engrossed in His Presence within. It has been revealed by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਦਾ ਹੈ ਨਾਲੇ ॥ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਤਿਸੁ ਸਦਾ ਸਮਾਲੇ ॥

Guru m-ai-r-ei sangg(i) sadaa h-ei naal-ai. Simar(i) simar(i) tis(u) sadaa samhaal-ai. (394)
(The Almighty is with me at all times and resides in my heart, with the result that I have to recite His Name repeatedly in order to enable the consciousness to remain merged with Him.)

and

**ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੁ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨੁ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ਰਿਦੈ ਲੈ ਧਾਰਉ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਸਦਾ ਨਮਸਕਾਰਉ ॥**

Gur kee moorat(i) mann meh(i) dhiaan(u). Gur k-ei Sabad(i) mantar(u) mann(u) maan.

Gur k-ai charan ridd-ei l-ei dhaarou. Guru Parbrahm(u) sadaa namaskaarou.(864)

[O Man! Hold on to the Divine commandment firmly in your heart and worship the Divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru), which is always with you. Fix your mind on the same and remember His Name all the time.]

In early stages, it is imperative for the uninitiated to focus on the awareness of the Divine Presence (Hazoori), although he might not be able to experience it. As the practice of the Divine Name builds up, the impurities of the mind, accumulated because of past indulgence in vices, get cleansed. Eventually, his heart will be illumined by awareness of the presence of the Divine within. This can only be achieved if there is deep determination of the mind to do so. This is called Vairagya Vriti, which means that one is detached inwardly from the whole world, while rendering his formal worldly duties with full devotion by remaining immersed in the Divine within.

After continuous intensive meditation on the Divine Name, a stage is reached where consciousness completely merges with the Divine and the seeker forgets the world. As such, he attains and realises the stage of the Formless One:

ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕੈ ਦੇਸਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਾ ਸੁਖਿ ਲਹਹਿ ਮਹਲੁ ॥

Nirankar k-ei des(i) jaah-e taa sukh(i) laheh(i) mahall(u). (595)

(Whosoever reaches the Divine Realm, would get inexpressible divine bliss and ultimately get salvation.)

Hurdles in Meditation

The beginner, who sets out on the path of meditation on the Divine Name, soon faces three major hurdles:

1. Feels drowsy soon after sitting down to meditate.
2. Sitting cross-legged, one feels tired after a short while.
3. Concentration on the Divine diminishes with the worldly attractions, due to which, the mind starts wandering here and there and gets engrossed in the worldly bondages.

The best remedy to overcome sleep is to have a cold-water bath, but if this fails,

one should splash cold water in the eyes. If even this does not work, one should get up and continue meditation while walking to and fro for a while. Once the wave of sleepiness has passed off, one can sit down again.

There is only one way to get past the second hurdle. Our body is our work-horse on which we have to cross over the ocean of vices and achieve our spiritual goal. However, we have pampered and weakened it by over-indulging in the senses. If the mind refuses to do our bidding, we must dig our heels in and tell it that for long it has had its way, now it must do what it is told to do. We should have the strength and courage to keep our body under control. If we are steadfast in our resolve, then this wild, unbridled horse will be tamed within a short time. For this, we have to be self-disciplined, eat sparingly and bear gladly the initial pain the body has to undergo while performing intense meditation, by forgetting comforts of the body. It requires great determination to achieve this goal.

The third hurdle persists for a very long time from the moment one carries out the practice of meditation. It can appear very formidable in the beginning, but gradually becomes more and more subdued. The best way to overcome this hurdle is to feel the presence of the Divine in our heart. Then, one humbly submits, 'O My Divine Master! Despite my faults, I am still Your humble and innocent child. Take pity on me and shower Your blessings so that my mind should forever dwell at Your lotus feet.'

Another technique to rein in the wandering mind is to recite the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur and recall the sacrifices made by the Sikh Gurus and other martyrs. It would fill one with remorse to think how ungrateful one has been in knowingly straying away from the path shown by the Divine Masters (Gurus). To repent even once in gratitude to the Gurus, one washes away his sins of several previous lives to a great extent:

ਨਿਹਤੇ ਪੰਜਿ ਜੁਆਨ ਮੈ ਗੁਰ ਥਾਪੀ ਦਿਤੀ ਕੰਡਿ ਜੀਉ ॥

Niht-ai panj(i) juaan M-ei Gur thaapee ditti kandd(i) jeeou. (74)

(I have conquered the five horrible vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - with the blessings of my Divine Master.)

and

ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ ॥

Mann(i) jeet-ei jagg(u) jeet(u). (6)

(Conquering the egoistic and wavering mind by shedding the ego completely is the real conquest of the whole world spiritually.)

In other words, the seeker doesn't bother for the world, but the Divine within and without.

Hurdles Faced by the Seeker after Truth

1. Seriousness

This is the first stage to tread the Divine Path. Generally, everybody is engrossed in worldly pursuits and egoistic talks and makes many like-minded friends. It is only by the grace of God that one comes in contact with a divine person. He perceives the glory of God and realises that the aim of life is to attain self-realisation by reciting the Divine Name. He, therefore, starts getting serious because of the recitation of the Divine Name and Hymns. Now, he does not want to waste time by indulging in the worldly discussion not only with friends, but also with his relatives, and wants to concentrate on the Divine Name. At this stage everybody starts criticising him and passing comments like, 'What has happened to you that you have become so serious - Have you developed some disease, if so, consult your physician?' But he remains quiet and can't express the divine feeling hidden in his heart and doesn't bother for all these rubbish talks of his friends and relatives, remains serene and quiet, and goes on meditating on the Divine Name while improving his habits and the quality of spiritual life, thereby moving towards spirituality for attaining the blessings of the Divine. He now becomes well-mannered and deals with everybody with divine humility. Everybody starts loving him and bestows lots of praises for his divine qualities. But, if he gets trapped in these false praises, he starts losing his spiritual values and falls back to the same old state. If he, by the grace of God, withstands all these praises, and goes on shedding the ego by meditating on the Divine Name, he then enters the stage of Nidhi.

2. Treasure (Nidhi)

As the seeker after Truth progresses along the spiritual path with full love and devotion and follows his daily regimen of prayer, meditation and selfless service, he soon begins to radiate divine love. People begin to flock him, calling him 'saint' and showering praises on him. Again, at this point, if he is puffed up with pride, he, falls into the very first hurdle along the way to spiritual success, and further progress comes to a halt. However, by the grace of God, if he again finds the company of the divine persons, and follows their divine instructions in letter and spirit to tread the divine path by not bothering about the praises of the people, he continues to remain humble at heart and makes steady progress:

ਹਉਂ ਤਿਸ ਘੋਲ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਰਿਦੈ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਆਵੈ ॥

Haoun tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa Gurmat(i) ridd-ei gareebee aav-ei.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 12, Pauri 4)

(I love him deeply, who cultivates the divine humility through recitation of the Hymns in company of the God-conscious persons.)

When someone heaps a person with praise, he should offer a silent prayer: 'O my Lord! All my success and praises are due to Your blessings. Before gaining Your blessings, I did not have any merits and nobody even knew me.'

If, by God's grace, one assimilates these divine virtues, he enters the stage of worldly success (Riddhi).

3. Worldly Success (Riddhi)

Diligent practice of meditation over a period of time produces occult powers in the seeker. People now start getting attracted towards him and start offering him sumptuous food, money, clothing and other costly offerings. If the seeker accepts these offerings and uses them for himself or for his loved ones, his spiritual progress comes to a halt and starts regressing. He loses all his occult powers. But, if he is firmly inclined to progress on the Divine Path, he uses these gifts for spiritual purposes, like running a free community kitchen for all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion; or builds a place of worship or offers help to the needy. By doing so, he crosses over the third hurdle and steadily moves on towards his goal to realise the Divine within.

At this stage of the spiritual journey, the seeker finds himself flooded with wealth. Even a householder, working in some job or business, will start getting more wealth unconsciously and becomes prosperous. If he uses this for his own comfort and indulges in vices like drinking or eating sumptuous food, he falls from the spiritual stage and becomes a worldly person like others and enjoys life by indulging in mundane affairs. On the other hand, for his own good, he must use only a part of it for his basic needs, while with all humility, he should use the rest of the money to mitigate the sufferings of others. He should remain grateful to God for His Blessings and should continue to recite the Divine Name. At the same time, he should try to become more and more humble with each passing day. By following this divine path selflessly, he should offer silent prayer: 'O Divine Father! It is due to You, and with Your grace, that by meditating on Your Divine Name, I could get Your Blessings to reach the present stage.' By cultivating this divine humility, he would enter the stage of Siddhi.

4. Occult Power (Siddhi)

Practice of meditation on the Divine Name with single-minded devotion leads one from the stage of Riddhi to the stage of Siddhi. In this stage, whatever one utters

even in the most casual manner comes true. It requires the courage of a brave warrior to keep such occult powers under control. Most seekers, who set out on the spiritual journey, get stuck at this stage. People begin to flock such persons, seeking boons and material gains. They acquire large bounties along with honour and praises, which keep growing with the passage of time. Some of them become self-styled gods, who shower blessings as well as curses on their followers. However, this situation is like a swarm of flies hovering around a cake of jaggery. The flies descend on the sticky jaggery, get stuck and lose their wings, while the cake gets spoilt. The entire world is caught in the web of material possessions (Maya), but the seeker should remain cautious and refrain from performing these miracles and should develop great humility to tread the Divine Path to reach the Divine Realm. By granting boons, he simply fritters away his hard-earned spiritual wealth and is no better than those, who nurture worldly ambitions. He thus wastes his time and energy.

The Gurmukhs, who faithfully obey their Guru, are able to weather the storm of the Siddhi stage, because they surrender themselves to the Will of God - they neither grant boons nor curse people - and remain humble servants of the masses.

5. The Divine Wisdom (Buddhi)

By the grace of the Guru and in company of the the divine persons (Gurmukhs), if the seeker successfully gets past the hurdles of Nidhi, Riddhi and Siddhi, he arrives at the next spiritual stage, Buddhi. After overcoming the temptation in the Siddhi stage, his mind gets enlightened and his consciousness reaches the realm of Divine Knowledge (Gyan Khand). He acquires the knowledge of past as well as future (of this world and the other worlds too), but still the knower and the known remain separate. In other words, some subtle duality (ego) still persists in his mind. The seeker knows that the duality of 'I' and 'Thou' still remains to be wiped out. Thus, the seeker and the Timeless One are still separate at this stage.

When the seeker, through tireless effort of meditation, is able to overpower his seemingly invincible mind full of vices and evil thoughts, he crosses over to the stage of Buddhi and his mind is illumined with Divine Light and Wisdom. When the arrows of God's Love pierce his heart, he gets immersed in divine love and his mind is cleansed of all worldly desires and illusions and he sees One in All and All in One. The fourth Divine Master Guru Ramdas clarifies:

ਅਚਰੁ ਚਰੈ ਤਾ ਸਿਧਿ ਹੋਈ ਸਿਧੀ ਤੇ ਬੁਧਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੇ ਸਰ ਲਾਗੇ ਤਨ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਤਾ ਭ੍ਰਮੁ ਕਾਟਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥

Achar(u) char-ei ta sidh(i) hoee Sidhee t-ai budh(i) paaee.

Prem k-ai sar laag-ai tann bheetar(i) Ta bhram(u) kaat-e-aa jaaee. (607)

[If one controls the five vices, he attains the stage of Siddhi (full of occult powers). If he further cultivates the divine virtues by meditating on the Divine Name, he will attain Buddhi (the Divine Wisdom). If he perceives the divine love and immerses his mind in it, he rids himself of all confusions and doubts, which are the hurdles to realise the Divine within, and attains the stage of Divine Realm.]

6. Equipoise (Sehaj Awasatha)

Man fails to feel the presence of the Supreme Being completely, as long as the traces of ego remain within him. However, as soon as these traces of ego are eradicated completely, he feels the presence of the Divine - within and without. Bhagat Ravidas clarifies this state in the following Hymn incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਜਬ ਹਮ ਹੋਤੇ ਤਬ ਤੂ ਨਾਹੀ ਅਬ ਤੂਹੀ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Jab hamm hoat-ai tabb Too naahee Abb Toohee m-ei naahee. (657)

[When my intellect was under the influence of ego, then O God! I did not perceive Your Presence. Since, with Your Divine Blessings my ego has completely been eradicated and now 'I' has completely vanished, You have embraced me in Your Divine Self and now there is no duality of 'mine' and 'thine'. Thus, according to Your Divine Law, after reaching this, the Divine Realm (Nirankar ka Des), I see One in All and All in One.]

When the arrow of the Divine Love strikes the human heart, the person merges himself with the Divine Love and acquires the stage of complete commitment and equipoise. At this stage, the seeker reaches such an ecstatic stage that his intellect merges with the Divine (Shabad Guru). At this stage, he loses his identity completely and merges with the Eternal One and gets all His Spiritual Bliss:

ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕੈ ਦੇਸਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਾ ਸੁਖਿ ਲਹਹਿ ਮਹਲੁ ॥

Nirankar k-ei des(i) jaah-e taa sukh(i) laheh(i) mahall(u). (595)

(Whoever reaches Divine Realm and merges with the Formless Divine Lord, loses his identity completely.)

Having arrived at this stage, the seeker merges with the Divine completely and thus becomes Gurmukh. Here, no pain or pleasure, joy or sorrow, affects him, because he has lost his identity and has merged with the Creator. This stage has also been called the 'state of equipoise', where there is no suffering or anxiety, but only the Divine Formless One pervades. Ravidas expounds thus in the following Hymn:

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੂਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥

Begam Pura sehar ko naaou. Dookh(u) andoh(u) nahee tih(i) tthaaou. (345)

(Begampura, 'the city without sorrow' is that state of mind, where there is no suffering or anxiety and which is free from the cycle of birth and rebirth.)

Guru Nanak Dev also reiterates:

ਆਤਮ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਆਤਮੁ ਚੀਨਸਿ ਗੁਰ ਬੀਚਾਰਾ ॥

Aatam meh(i) Ram(u) Ram meh(i) aatam(u) Cheenas(i) Gur beechaaraa. (1153)

(With the Divine preaching of my Guru, I have realised that the Divine within me is the same as one pervading the whole Universe.)

Thereafter, the divine person (Gurmukh) realises His presence everywhere - within the body as well as outside - pervading the entire Universe. Having dispelled his individual identity (ego), he completely merges with the Divine Lord. Guru Arjan Dev propounds:

ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਤੇਰਾ ॥

M-ei naahee Prabh sabh(u) kichh(u) t-ai-raa. (827)

(O my Divine Master! I am nothing. You pervade everything and I am part and parcel of the same. O My Divine Master! Now I have been enslaved by You and thus have become One with You.)

Guru Amardas clarifies:

ਰਿਧਿ ਸਿਧਿ ਸਭ ਭਗਤਾ ਚਰਣੀ ਲਾਗੀ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਹਜਿ ਸੁਭਾਈ ॥

Ridh(i) sidh(i) sabh bhagtaa charnhee laagee Gur k-ei sehaj(i) subhaaee. (637)

[Arriving at this stage, the seeker merges with the Eternal One. All the Riddhis and Siddhis (occult powers) mentioned earlier, are ever at His feet to serve according to His Command with the blessings of the Divine Master.]

But such a divine person remains above all these occult powers and under the Divine Will. Guru Arjan Dev presents the state of mind of such a person, thus:

ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਂਗੈ ॥

T-ai-raa keeaa meethaa laag-ei. Har(i) Naam(u) padaarath(u) Nanak maang-ei. (394)

(O my Divine Master! Whatever You do, is for the betterment of all. Nanak begs for the wealth of the Divine Wisdom.)

Realisation of the Divine (Anbhao Prakash)

The Supreme Being is formless and as such, has no caste or creed. No one can describe His appearance, colour, form or define Him through any logic, as He is the subject of love and faith alone. Man can feel His presence through each pore of his body. In other words, he may become God-conscious, but he still cannot describe Him in words. Man experiences the feelings of joy and sorrow, but it is impossible to describe these emotions. Similarly, a God-conscious person may begin to feel the presence of God everywhere - inside and out - in every aspect of Nature, while he recites the daily regimen of prayers- the Divine 'Word' (Gurmantra), participates in or listens to the singing of the Divine praises,

performs selfless service and does self-introspection, but cannot describe Him in words. Such a person perceives the same Divine Lord pervading everywhere in each living being and each voice seems to him to be the voice of the Beloved Lord. It becomes clear to him that the support of the entire world and the basis of all the different words, languages and voices, is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss (Satt Chitt Anand), i.e., the Supreme Being.

Beyond this divine state, there is no higher sphere. Such a state can be realised in this very life.

To reach the stage of equipoise (Sehaj), Guru Ramdas, in a set of Hymns set to Raag Suhi, entitled Laavaan, depicts the four stages of God-realisation using the metaphor of the meeting of the bride and the groom:

ਹਰਿ ਪਹਿਲੜੀ ਲਾਵ ਪਰਵਿਰਤੀ ਕਰਮ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਬਾਣੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਵੇਦੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਹੁ ਪਾਪ ਤਜਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਧਰਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵਹੁ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦ੍ਰਿੜਾਇਆ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ਆਰਾਧਹੁ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਗਵਾਇਆ ॥
ਸਹਜ ਅਨੰਦੁ ਹੋਆ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਮਨਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥
ਜਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਲਾਵ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਆਰੰਭੁ ਕਾਜੁ ਰਚਾਇਆ ॥

Har(i) peh(i)larhee laav parvirtee Karam drirhaa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Baanhee Brahmaa ved(u) Dharam(u) drirhahu Paap tajaa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Dharam(u) drirhahu Har(i) Naam(u) dhiaavahu Simrit(i) Naam(u) drirhaa-e-aa.
Sat(i)guru Guru poo-raa aaraadhahu Sabh(i) kilvikh paap gavaa-e-aa.
Sehaj anand(u) hoaa vaddbhaagee Mann Har(i) Har(i) meethaa laa-e-aa.
Jan(u) kah-ei Nanak laav peh(i)lee Aarambh(u) kaaj(u) rachaa-e-aa. (773)

(The first requirement for the seeker or the devotee is that he should lead a life of noble deeds while performing his social obligations. He must imbibe the virtues of chastity, contentment, compassion, forgiveness, etc, which are mentioned in the scriptures. He must not crave for other's wealth and should refrain from talking ill of others and should shun falsehood. He should not only save himself from sinful actions, but also follow the path of righteousness. At the same time, he should keep reciting the Divine Name with full love and faith. In this way, all the impurities of the inner-self will be washed away by the grace of the True Guru. The fortunate seeker will then find remembrance of the Divine Name very joyful and it will bring solace and state of equipoise. Thus, will begin the ceremony of the divine marriage of the 'seeker-bride' with the 'Lord-groom'.)

ਹਰਿ ਦੂਜੜੀ ਲਾਵ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਨਿਰਭਉ ਭੈ ਮਨੁ ਹੋਇ ਹਉਮੈ ਮੈਲੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਭਉ ਪਾਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਰਾਮੁ ਹਦੂਰੇ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਮੁ ਪਸਾਰਿਆ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਸਰਬ ਰਹਿਆ ਭਰਪੂਰੇ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੋ ਮਿਲਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਮੰਗਲ ਗਾਏ ॥
ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੂਜੀ ਲਾਵ ਚਲਾਈ ਅਨਹਦ ਸਬਦ ਵਜਾਏ ॥

Har(i) dooj-rhee laav Sat(i)guru Purakh(u) milaa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Nirbhaou bh-ei mann(u) ho-e haum-ei M-ei-l(u) gavaa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Nirmal(u) bhaou paa-e-aa Har(i) gunh gaa-e-aa Har(i) v-ai-kh-ei Ram(u) hadoor-ai.
Har(i) aatam Ram(u) pasaar-e-aa Suaamee Sarab rah-e-aa bharpoor-ai,
Antar(i) baahar(i) Har(i) Prabh(u) eko Mil(i) Har(i) jann mangal gaa-e.
Jann Nanak doojee laav chalaee Anhad Sabad vajaa-e. (774)

(When the 'seeker-bride' purifies her inner-self by submitting to the Will of the Divine Lord, she is able to establish a spiritual bond with Him. Her mind becomes fearless and pride of the body is vanished. As soon as this happens, a feeling of divine fear runs through her heart, and she is submerged in the Divine within. She sings His praises and develops the wisdom to realise His presence everywhere - inside the body and the whole cosmos. By so doing, she spontaneously recites the glory of the Divine in the company of the divine persons. The Guru says that at this second stage, the seeker begins to perceive the joyful divine vibrations resonating throughout Creation.)

ਹਰਿ ਤੀਜੜੀ ਲਾਵ ਮਨਿ ਚਾਉ ਭਇਆ ਬੈਰਾਗੀਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਸੰਤ ਜਨਾ ਹਰਿ ਮੇਲੁ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਵਡਭਾਗੀਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਨਿਰਮਲੁ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਇਆ ਮੁਖਿ ਬੋਲੀ ਹਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ ॥
ਸੰਤ ਜਨਾ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਪਾਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਕਥੀਐ ਅਕਥ ਕਹਾਣੀ ॥
ਹਿਰਦੈ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਪੁਨਿ ਉਪਜੀ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੀਐ ਮਸਤਕਿ ਭਾਗੁ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬੋਲੇ ਤੀਜੀ ਲਾਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਉਪਜੈ ਮਨਿ ਬੈਰਾਗੁ ਜੀਉ ॥

Har(i) teej-rhee laav mann(i) chaaou bha-e-aa B-ei-raageeaa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Sant janaa Har(i) m-ai-l(u) Har(i) paa-e-aa Vaddbhaageeaa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Nirmal(u) Har(i) paa-e-aa Har(i) gunh gaa-e-aa Mukh(i) bolee Har(i) baanhee.
Sant janaa vaddbhaagee paa-e-aa Har(i) kathee-ei akatth kahaanhee.
Hird-ei Har(i) Har(i) Har(i) dhun(i) upjee Har(i) japee-ei mastak(i) bhaag(u) jeeou.
Jann(u) Nanak bol-ai teejee laav-ei Har(i) upj-ei mann(i) b-ei-raag(u) jeeou. (774)

(At the third stage, an intense urge develops in her heart, to meet the Divine within, and, therefore, by the grace of God, the 'seeker-bride' starts reciting the Divine Name with full devotion and love. The fourth Guru says that in the third divine circumambulation, forgetting the worldly worries and the manifestation of the matter, she gets engrossed within to merge with the Divine Lord. According to the Divine Law, she acquires company of the enlightened persons, due to which she starts perceiving the Divine within intensively by the blessings of the Divine Lord. Perceiving this Divine Reality within, she starts reciting Gurbani (the Divine glories). Her heart becomes aware of the manifest Divine reality and the desire to know and to realise the Transcendental One becomes more and more intense.

She longs to meet the pure enlightened Gurmukhs. She is always singing the praises of the Divine Lord and keeps reflecting on His Name. Fortunately, she happens to have association of the holy persons, and she starts treading the Divine Path after getting rid of all the dualities for perceiving spirituality in the company of the saints. From her heart, now overflows the nectar-like music of divine love.)

ਹਰਿ ਚਉਬੜੀ ਲਾਵ ਮਨਿ ਸਹਜੁ ਭਇਆ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੁਭਾਇ ਹਰਿ ਮਨਿ ਤਨਿ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਇਆ ਬਲਿ ਰਾਮ ਜੀਉ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਇਆ ਮੇਰੇ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਭਾਇਆ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥
ਮਨ ਚਿੰਦਿਆ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਜੀ ਵਾਧਾਈ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਠਾਕੁਰਿ ਕਾਜੁ ਰਚਾਇਆ ਧਨ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਿਗਾਸੀ ॥
ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬੋਲੇ ਚਉਥੀ ਲਾਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਇਆ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਅਵਿਨਾਸੀ ॥

Har(i) chauth-rhee laav mann(i) sehaj(u) bh-e-aa Har(i) paa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Gurmukh(i) mil-e-aa subhaa-e Har(i) Mann(i) tann(i) meethaa laa-e-aa Bal(i) Ram jeeou.
Har(i) meethaa laa-e-aa m-ai-r-ai Prabh bhaa-e-aa Anndinn(u) Har(i) liv laaee.
Mann chind-e-aa phal(u) paa-e-aa Suaamee Har(i) Naam(i) vajee vaadhaaee.
Har(i) Prabh(i) Thakur(i) kaaj(u) rachaa-e-aa Dhann hird-ei Naam(i) vigaasee.
Jann(u) Nanak bol-ai chauthee laav-ei Har(i) paa-e-aa Prabh(u) avinaasee. (774)

(In the fourth Divine circumambulation, the 'seeker-bride's' mind completely gets rid of egoistic waverings and gets so engrossed in the divine bliss within that it completely merges with the Divine Lord. She merges with the Divine Reality and enters the state of equipoise and thus, realises the Divine Wisdom within. By submitting to the Divine within, and attaining the state of equipoise, she always remains attuned to the Divine - day in and day out. The intense desire to merge with the Divine within, is bestowed upon her. She always remains in such a divine bliss, which is inexpressive and all the worldly bounties are bestowed upon her by His Divine Grace. The divine groom showers such divine Blessings that her individuality merges with the Divine completely - in and out. In this last Hymn, Guru Ramdas, the servant of God, expounds that in the fourth Divine circumambulation, the seeker becomes completely Divine.)

In all these four Hymns, known as Laavan, the seeker is a bride and the Divine is the groom or the husband.

When the seeker's heart is detached from the material world, he dedicates everything - including his body, mind and wealth - to the True Guru and submits to the Divine Will. He devotes himself completely to the service of divine persons.

According to the divine philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev, God is, in fact, the husband and the entire humanity - male or female - is His bride. The Guru affirms:

ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਸਬਾਈ ਨਾਰਿ ॥

Thakur(u) ek sabaeee naar(i). (933)

(The God is the Divine Husband of the entire Creation and all the creatures are His brides, whom He looks after without discrimination.)

The seeker after Truth (the bride) forgets her entity and becomes egoless. She is then completely attuned with the Divine Name and reaches the state of equipoise. All her desires and temptations are gone. She is fully detached and God becomes manifest in her. She becomes Gurmukh, one with the Guru. Her consciousness unites with the Divine 'Word'. The bliss of the Divine Lord pervades every cell of her body. Her mind is now concentrated on the Divine Name (Waheguru) - day in and day out. The Absolute One, whom she yearned to meet, manifests within her. The seeker merges with the Divine, her heart fills with joy and she begins receiving felicitations from one and all:

ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਇਕੁ ਇਕੁ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਾਇਆ ॥

Sahib(u) sewak(u) ik(u) ik(u) dristaa-e-aa. (524)

(The divine devotee and the Divine Lord become one. In other words, the devotee loses his egoistic identity completely and merges with the Divine within.)



Mental States of a Man

In spirituality, there is a hierarchy of five mental states (Gunas), into which the whole of mankind is divided. For the worldly people, there are basically three mental states, namely - state of mental darkness and inertia (Tamoguna), state of energetic passions for accumulation of worldly possessions (Rajoguna) and the state when man starts treading the Divine Path after shedding most of his ego (Satoguna). The next two states - Buddhi, which is attained when the seeker goes after Truth with utmost love and devotion, continues treading the Divine Path and reaches the stage of Divine Wisdom; and Atam Pad - which is attained when one sheds his ego completely with the recitation of the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion, and reaches the state of the Divine Realm. According to these states of mind, irrespective of caste, creed and religion, the lowest one is the Tamoguni, state of mental darkness and inertia. The second state or the middle is called the Rajoguni, the state of energetic passions. The third, which is the next higher state of the mind, is the state of Truthfulness (Satoguni), which comprises of contentment and divine humility. The person of this category is sober, with good qualities and tries to render selfless service to others and recites the Divine Name for his spiritual uplift. A Rajoguni, who endeavours to help the needy in various fields to upgrade their destiny and render selfless service to humanity in association with the divine persons rises to the state of Satoguni. With the association of the divine persons, a Tamoguni reaches the state of Rajoguni, who further endeavours to rise higher in the spiritual realm. If Rajoguni keeps on continuing his association with the divine persons, renders good deeds, and develops an urge to meet God, he enters the state of Satoguni. Satoguni persons always seek company of the pious and the divine persons and render selfless service for the downtrodden irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

They meditate on the Divine Name with full love and devotion and also render selfless service and thus achieve the next higher state, i.e., Buddhi. At this stage, their ego gets eliminated to a large extent. The ultimate in the states of mental evolution is the state of spiritual awakening, called the state of having attained Atam Pad or Turiya Pad or Sehaj Awastha - the state of equipoise. A seeker reaching this state will find himself in the Realm of the Divine. Under the Divine Law, the entire mankind is divided into these five states, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

If a man looks honestly within himself while keeping company of the noble persons, he will realise where he stands and which state of mind, i.e., Gunais predominant in him, and how he can rise higher.

Good or bad company influences an individual's quality of mind, and hence he is placed in any of the first three states (Gunas) described above. If a person of Tamoguni dispensation intrinsically being most egoistic and devoid of human values, joins the holy congregation, he will move up to the Rajoguni category, as described above. Thereafter, if he still continues to live by the Guru's teaching and is blessed by the company of saintly persons, he will enter the state of being a Satoguni, i.e., least egoistic and more compassionate one as described above. However, if a person of Rajoguni temperament falls into adverse condition or bad company, he is bound to slip back into the lower state of Tamoguni.

It is true that a person can rise to higher mental states in life only if he keeps company of the holy persons and imbibes divine values. No religion can claim that all its followers belong to the category of the state of truthfulness, i.e., the Satoguni category.

If the majority of the people of a city, province or country have Tamoguni nature (most egoistic and duffer), then the era of darkness or the last of the four eons in the Indian tradition (Kalyuga) will prevail there. On the other hand, if the majority of the people in a city, province or country remember God with love and devotion and render selfless service to humanity, they would fall in the category of Satoguni, which creates Satyuga, i.e., the era of Truthfulness would then set in.

The State of Tamogun - Egoistic and Lustful

A Tamoguni person is always engrossed in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and thus, keeps groping in the dark and suffers badly. He is unable to know the difference between good and evil. Under the influence of sensuous desires, he becomes cruel and commits evil deeds and brings sufferings not only upon himself, but on others also. He leads the life of an animal and never treads the right track. Guru Arjan Dev's verse in Gurbani illustrates this state of mind:

ਕਰਤੂਤਿ ਪਸੂ ਕੀ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਾਤਿ ॥ ਲੋਕ ਪਚਾਰਾ ਕਰੈ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤਿ ॥

Kartoot(i) pasoo kee maanas jaat(i). Lok pachaaraa kar-ei din(u) raat(i). (267)

(The deeds of human beings are like animals, yet they pretend to be human beings by putting up a false show before the world.)

The food habits and lifestyle of such persons reflect their state of mind. They eat rich, sumptuous food, which induces laziness and they are often addicted to

alcohol and other intoxicants. However, if fortune smiles on them, they may happen to meet a saintly soul and start keeping his company. By and by, their Tamasic tendencies will wither away, and they will ascend to the higher state of being a Rajoguni, where there is more vigour, energy and adventure.

The State of Rajogun - Full of Vigour, Energy and Adventure

People with Rajoguni qualities are always full of vigour, energy and are generally much more adventurous. They are less egoistic than the Tamoguni people. They pursue acquisition of wealth, power and status. They are always struggling to decide between good and evil. Their higher mind (Buddhi) constantly reminds them to pursue the Divine Path, but their heart (lower mind) is engrossed in the evils of lust, wealth, greed, attachment, and ego and is attracted towards the material world and its temptations. Their intellect tries to stop them from going along the path of worldly pleasures, which only bring pain, so as to lead them to the path of happiness; but their heart always stoops towards temptations of sensual pleasures. The struggle between their mind and heart remains perpetual, thus, making them sad and anxious. Sleep may elude them and in desperation, they may take to alcohol and other intoxicants.

When such persons come in contact with the enlightened and holy souls and begin to listen to Gurbani and follow the teaching of the Divine Masters (Gurus), their minds gradually move in the direction of restraining their sensuous desires and they ascend towards the Satoguni state. But unfortunately if they find themselves in evil company, with the passage of time, they will again descend to the Tamoguni state.

Rajoguni persons read the spiritual scriptures and go on pilgrimages, but only with the aim of seeking blessings to gain wealth, power and dominance over others.

The State of Satogun - Truthfulness

By continuous association with the divine persons and rendering good deeds, the seeker becomes a Satoguni. In this state, a person being least egoistic, has full control over his senses and keeps a check on the evil tendencies. The mind is fully restrained and the consciousness is concentrated on the Divine. Such blessed individuals remember the Supreme Being with each breath and follow the Divine Path with complete devotion. They even inspire others to tread the spiritual path. They begin to look within, and are completely absorbed in meditating on the Divine Name to realise the Divine within. They eat simple, vegetarian food and wear simple

clothes. When they render worldly duties, their work becomes worship:

ਛਾਦਨ ਭੋਜਨ ਕੀ ਆਸ ਨ ਕਰਈ ਅਚਿੰਤੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਏ ॥

Chhadan bhojan kee aas na kar-ee Achint(u) mil-ei so paa-e. (1013)

(They do not show any craving for wearing good clothes or eating sumptuous food. They gracefully accept whatever comes their way according to the Divine Will.)

The State of Buddhi - The Divine Wisdom

Persons of Satoguni state acquire the state of Buddhi, i.e., the Divine Wisdom by reciting the Divine Name continuously while performing worldly duties and do not have any craving for material possessions. They develop an intense urge to meet the Divine within. By treading the Divine Path with full love and devotion, they enter the state of Buddhi. A person in the mental state of Buddhi persistently treading the Divine Path with utmost love and devotion, will ultimately attain the state of Divine Realm (Atam Pad).

The State of Atam Pad - The Divine Realm

Beyond the four states described above, there is the highest state of spiritual awakening, which is known as Atam Pad or Turiya Pad or Sehaj Awastha (the state of equipoise). A seeker, who reaches this stage, finds himself in the realm of the Divine. In Gurbani, this state is also called Sach Khand (the abode of Truth), Begumpura (the worriless state) and Nirankar ka Des (the Realm of the Formless One). To reach Atam Pad, the seeker, in the state of Buddhi, continues to meditate on the Divine Name with full love and faith to eliminate the ego completely. Once this is achieved, he begins to see the Divine within and without. Having liberated himself from worldly bondages, his consciousness is eternally merged in the Divine Lord. Thus, the seeker and the Sought become One. The Muslim Saint Kabir in the following Hymn, as incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib, exclaims:

ਰਾਮ ਕਬੀਰਾ ਏਕ ਭਏ ਹੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥

Ram Kabira ek bha-e h-ei Ko-e na sak-ei pachhaanee. (969)

(Now Kabir has completely eradicated His ego and merged with the Divine, so much so that none can distinguish one from the other.)

Guru Gobind Singh echoes the similar feelings when he says:

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਦੁਇ ਏਕ ਹੈ ਬਿਬ ਬਿਚਾਰ ਕਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

Har(i) Har(i) jann du-e ek h-ei Bib bichaar kachhu naah-ai. (Dasam Granth)

[God and His Divine disciple have become one by losing his identity (ego) completely by reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion. As such, there is no difference between the two.]

Guru Arjan Dev amply clarifies:

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਮਹਿ ਜਨੁ ਜਨ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ॥ ਏਕਹਿ ਆਪਿ ਨਹੀ ਕਛੁ ਭਰਮੁ ॥

Brahm meh(i) jann(u) jann meh(i) Parbrahm(u). Ekeh(i) aap(i) nahee kachhu bharam(u). (287)

[The disciple after losing his identity (ego) completely has merged with the Divine and as such both have become One without any trace of a difference.]

This, in fact, is the ultimate and sole purpose of human life- to merge with the Divine completely after shedding the ego. Such persons are known as Saints, Sages, Divine Masters (Gurus) or Prophets, who work only for the spiritual welfare of mankind. Needless to say, all their actions are performed in accordance with the Divine Will.



Joy and Sorrow

Four Boons for Divine Realisation - Dharam, Arth, Kaam & Moksh

To achieve the aim of life for which man has come on this earth, all human beings endeavour to get these four boons: Righteous deeds, needful requirements, desire to tread the Spiritual Path and finally to attain Salvation (freedom from the cycle of birth and rebirth). Of these, the first three are needed to render the worldly affairs as per the Divine Order. The fourth invaluable blessing is for treading the Divine Path with utmost love and devotion for getting salvation in this very life:

1. **Divine Deeds (Dharam)** : After getting rid of the worries of the worldly requirements for sustenance by the grace of God, one treads the Divine Path by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion.
2. **Need-based Requirements (Arth)** : To tread the Divine Path, one should have minimum need-based worldly requirements for sustenance. More a man is involved in accumulation of wealth and material possessions, more is he engrossed in worldly worries and thus forgets the real aim of life, i.e., to attain salvation.
3. **Desires to tread the Spiritual Path (Kaam)** : For this purpose, the seeker begs for the blessings from the Divine for having the association of divine persons to perceive the holy techniques, which enable him tread the Divine Path honestly with full love and devotion. It helps eradicate his ego completely, thereby having the glimpses of the Divine within.
4. **Liberation (Moksh)** : The ultimate aim of a person in this world is to get liberated from the worldly bondages and the cycle of birth and rebirth, i.e., getting self-realisation while performing his worldly duties under the command of the Divine in this very life.

Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਚਾਰਿ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਮਾਰੈ ॥ ਸਾਧ ਜਨਾ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਾਰੈ ॥

Chaar(i) padaarath j-ai ko maag-ei. Saadh janaa kee sewa laag-ei. (266)

(If a person seeks the four boons of Dharam, Arth, Kaam and Moksh, he must keep holy company and devote himself to serving them by following their divine instructions with full love, devotion and divine humility.)

Three miseries of Humanity - Aaadh, Biyaadh, Uppaadh

All creatures of the world are by and large suffering from these three miseries:

1. **Aaadh** - Miseries of the mind, according to its spiritual state. If the human mind is engrossed in worldly worries and disturbances, it creates many miseries for the body - both mental as well as physical. These miseries occur due to the bad deeds performed under the instinct of the greedy mind. These bad deeds are performed either in the present life or have been performed in the previous lives, which are carried forward through the subtle body.
2. **Biyaadh** - The physical ailments due to the bad deeds performed under the influence of the egoistic mind and indulgence in sumptuous non-vegetarian food, alcohol, drugs etc.
3. **Uppaadh** - Those miseries, inflicted on humanity by nature and other sources when the Divine Order is forgotten, (either individually or collectively by the people of an area, country or even the entire world) and there is interference with Nature for selfish purposes. These miseries include floods, cyclonic storms, earthquakes, lightning strikes, tsunamis, wars (both civil and international), theft and dacoity under the influence of greediness, which cannot be controlled by the common people, save the divine persons, who motivate others to tread the Divine Path, which would ultimately mitigate all these miseries to a large extent.

In order to get rid of these three types of miseries, all should follow the Divine Order and Wisdom, individually as well as collectively, on a large scale after meditating on the Divine Name and reciting hymns to tread the Divine Path with full love and devotion. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies this in the following Hymn:

ਆਧਿ ਬਿਆਧਿ ਉਪਾਧਿ ਸਭ ਨਾਸੀ ਬਿਨਸੇ ਤੀਨੈ ਤਾਪ ॥
ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਬੁਝੀ ਪੂਰਨ ਸਭ ਆਸਾ ਚੂਕੇ ਸੋਗ ਸੰਤਾਪ ॥
ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਤ ਅਚੁਤ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਮਨ ਤਨ ਆਤਮ ਧ੍ਰਾਪ ॥

Aadh(i) biaadh(i) upaadh(i) sabh naasee Bins-ai teen-ei taap.

Trisnaa bujhee pooran sabh aasaa Chook-ai soag santaap.

Gunh gaavat achutt Abinaasee Mann tann aatam dhraap. (1223)

(All these three miseries including their reflection on the body are vanished. All cravings of the mind also vanish and the divine desires are fulfilled due to which all worries of the mind and ailments of the body are vanished. All virtues are bestowed by reciting the Divine Name and the Hymns in praise of the Almighty Lord, due to which the mind and the body are imbued with the divine bliss to realise the Divine within. By so doing, one gets liberated from all the three miseries.)

The Guru further emphasises:

ਤੀਨੇ ਤਾਪ ਨਿਵਾਰਣਹਾਰਾ ਦੁਖ ਹੰਤਾ ਸੁਖ ਰਾਸਿ ॥
ਤਾ ਕਉ ਬਿਘਨੁ ਨ ਕੋਊ ਲਾਗੈ ਜਾ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਗੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥

Teen-ai taap nivaranh-haaraa Dukh(u) hantaa sukh raas(i).

Taa kaou bighan(u) na ko-oo laag-ei Jaa kee Prabh aag-ei ardaas(i). (714)

(The Divine Lord, not only eradicates these three miseries but also the ailments of the body by bestowing divine bliss. Such a holy person gets rid of all the worldly hurdles, by performing prayers with utmost love and devotion, with the perception of the Divine within and everywhere.)



Stages While Treading the Spiritual Path

There are two kinds of persons, who tread the spiritual path:

- a) **Persons with the Divine Instincts** : Prophets and saints are born with the divine instinct and inner poise. Even in early childhood, they hardly cry or get distracted by the worldly possessions. As they grow old, they are drawn towards Divine Wisdom within themselves and tend to keep aloof. Their reserved nature perturbs their friends and relatives, who are at a loss to understand their lack of interest in the worldly affairs around them. Guru Nanak Dev, during his childhood, often faced harsh comments and treatment from His parents specially the father due to His lack of interest in the worldly affairs. Kabir too had to face the wrath of His parents and others whenever He was absorbed in the divine within. Namdev also faced many harsh treatments specially from the upper caste people. There are so many saints, who faced many problems in the early stages of their life.
- b) **Persons having great urge to tread the Divine Path** : There are some people, who have some spiritual capital carried forward from their previous lives. Thus, they have an inclination to tread the Divine Path leading to God-realisation. Seeking the company of God-conscious persons, they are inspired towards a spiritual life. Before this happens, they live like common people - talking, laughing and enjoying the world. However, as soon as they start treading the spiritual path, they withdraw even from their family and close kin. The worldly comforts lose their allure, and they resolve to meet the Divine within as soon as possible. As explained above, they too have to face hostile comments and criticism from those around them. However, if they withstand this adverse situation and carry on the Divine Path with full determination, their friends and relatives, who once were perturbed with them now get attracted to them. Their pious life and good deeds now serve as a magnet to attract like-minded people. They start singing praises of God and enter the stage of the high praise (Nidhi), which is an obstacle for further progress on the spiritual path. The honest seeker should not pay attention to these worldly praises.

One can only realise the Divine within if he treads the Divine Path with full love and devotion, brushing aside with his strong willpower the hurdles of Nidhi, Ridhi, Siddhi, which have already been explained in the chapter Meditation on the Divine Name.

Constitution of a Living Body

The body of a living person consists of two constituents. One is the physical frame, which consists of all the limbs and other important organs that are visible either through the eyes or through the help of sophisticated equipments like cameras, lens, microscopes, X-ray, MRI machines etc., through which the body performs physical work etc. Any defect or disease in these physical organs can most likely be detected and cured by a physician. Almost everybody knows about these physical organs. However, some of the vital invisible body functions cannot be seen and cured by medical science. These invisible virtual parts of the body, which are considered very important, can only be experienced and set right through spiritual science to attain self-realisation in this very life. These invisible parts of the body are being explained:

Mind

Mind - It is a combination of innumerable thoughts.

Thoughts - Arise out of cravings for getting something.

Craving - To develop desire or thoughts for achieving any worldly possession including the social status.

Birth of Craving - In the beginning, mind is fixed on the Divine within. When the tune of mind, due to bad company, gets detached from the Divine within, it gives birth to craving for worldly possessions:

- Craving leads to the birth of worldly thoughts.
- Such worldly thoughts lead the mind towards lustful thinking and the fulfilment of sensuous desires.
- When such thoughts are physically carried out, actions are said to have been performed.
- Repetition of the same actions instils a habit.
- The repetition of a habit determines the character of a person and is an expression of his state of mind.

Guru Amardas, the third Nanak, clarifies it in the following Hymn:

ਲਿਵ ਛੁੜਕੀ ਲਗੀ ਤਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਅਮਰੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

Liv chhurhkee laggee trisnaa Maa-e-aa amar(u) vartaa-e-aa. (921)

(When one's love for the Divine wears off, the first evil that creeps into the mind is craving for worldly pleasures. The craving further gives birth to many other vices like accumulating wealth and worldly possessions.)

Lord Buddha says : 'The world is full of miseries, which come from worldly desires.'

To mitigate these worldly desires, the Almighty has enunciated some spiritual doctrines, which a man should follow to get salvation. Guru Nanak Dev clarifies:

ਅੰਧੁਲਾ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਪਰਦੇਸੀ ਖਿਨੁ ਆਵੈ ਤਿਲੁ ਜਾਵੈ ॥

Andhulaa neech jaat(i) pard-ai-see Khin(u) aav-ei til(u) jaav-ei. (731)

(Mind is a duffer, blind and a negative force. Its realm is an egoistic sphere in which it wanders in the materialistic world and thus spoils the body, which is considered the divine abode by divine persons to search the Divine within and merge with Him.)

In another Hymn, Guru Nanak Dev rebukes the mind, which is engrossed in sensuous pleasures:

ਸੁਣਿ ਮਨ ਅੰਧੇ ਕੁਤੇ ਕੂੜਿਆਰ ॥

Sunh(i) mann andh-ai kutt-ai koorh-e-aar. (662)

(O blind mind! Hear, you are just like a wandering dog, who is engrossed in sensual pleasures, which become barrier to realise the Divine within.)

Even without your saying, God knows everything about your actions due to which you undergo miseries. If your energy is channelized to tread the Divine Path in association with the saintly persons, you would reach the Divine Realm ultimately. In yet another Hymn, Guru Amardas, the third Guru reveals:

ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

Mann toon jot(i) saroop(u) h-ei Aapnhaa mool(u) pachhaanh(u). (441)

(O Mind! You are, in fact, the form of the Divine within. As such, if you search Him within, with great urge and devotion, by shedding all the five vices you would ultimately become the Divine.)

Now is the time that you should intune with the Divine within by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion to achieve your ultimate goal of self-realisation, i.e., salvation.

When the consciousness of the mind is shrouded in the darkness of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - it is called Tamoguni or the most egoistic.

If the same mind, under the influence of the higher mind (having inclination towards the Divine), begins to search for the Divine within, with the association and motivation of the divine persons, one starts rendering selfless service to humanity as ordained in Gurbani. With the passage of time, with his utmost devotion

to recite God's Name, his mind would shed ego completely and merge with the Divine within.

Various cravings of the mind influence the mental state of a person. The mind, under the control of three types of states - highest ego (Tamoguni), medium ego (Rajoguni) and least ego (Satoguni) indulges in sensual pleasures of varying degrees. It suffers most in the Tamoguni state (burning as if in the fires of various desires), suffers less in the Rajoguni state, and finds happiness in the Satoguni state (as if enjoying the holy pleasures).

Guru Arjan Dev clarifies the above philosophy in this Hymn:

ਤ੍ਰਿਤੀਆ ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਬਿਖੈ ਫਲ ਕਬ ਉਤਮ ਕਬ ਨੀਚੁ ॥

ਨਰਕ ਸੁਰਗ ਭ੍ਰਮਤਉ ਘਣੋ ਸਦਾ ਸੰਘਾਰੈ ਮੀਚੁ ॥

Tritee-aa tr-ei gunh bikh-ei phall Kabb uttam kabb neech(u).

Narak suragg bhamtaou ghanho Sadaa sanghaar-ei meech(u). (297)

[A person under these three states of mind (highest, moderate and low ego) undergoes the cycle of birth and rebirth, accordingly.]

The highest egoistic man undergoes the lowest status of birth, i.e., Tamoguni. A person born with moderate ego is called Rajoguni. A person with least ego takes the birth in the category of Satoguni (pious state of mind). In other words, according to the level of ego of a person, he takes birth under these categories. As such, he goes on wandering in the cycle of birth and rebirth according to the state of his egoistic mind. He remains wandering in this very cycle until he gets Divine Wisdom by meditating on the Divine Name with love and devotion in the company of the divine persons. By doing so, he gets salvation in this very life.

Whether the mind will turn outwards and run after sensual pleasures, which only bring suffering in the end, or turn 'inwards' in search of the Divine Truth, depends on two factors. The first is the aggregate sum total of good and bad deeds performed by a person in the past lives, and the second is the type of company he keeps in this life.

Even if a person has performed good deeds in the past lives, he will undo all the good work by associating with wicked persons in this life and will wander in the cycle of birth and rebirth. If, however, he keeps company of the spiritual persons and imbibes their divine teachings in letter and spirit, he would definitely achieve his divine goal.

Similarly, if a person, who has accumulated all the bad deeds from past lives, again falls into evil company, his Karmas get worsened manifold. He will get entrapped in the cycle of birth and rebirth. Under worst condition, he may even take birth in the lower species of the animal kingdom. But, if the same person has

the good fortune to meet and keep the company of God-conscious persons, he too gets inspired to tread the spiritual path with single-minded devotion. With the spiritual wisdom that he keeps accumulating, he would be able to wash away the accumulated bad deeds of the past and the present life. With the mind thus purified, he progresses on his spiritual pursuit enthusiastically in search of the Divine within.

Consciousness (Surt)

The consciousness (Surt) is that part of the mind, which directs an individual to pursue good or bad deeds. If it induces a person towards bad company, his outlook becomes egoistic or Tamoguni. And if the consciousness of this Tamoguni individual now induces him to seek company of saints and sages, read the holy Scriptures and serve others selflessly, he ascends to the Rajoguni state.

A person of moderate egoistic (Rajoguni) temperament may descend to the most egoistic (Tamoguni) state in the company of evil persons. The same individual may ascend to the least egoistic (Satoguni) state if the consciousness drives him to seek the company of enlightened persons and recite the Hymns with full love and devotion.

If a person in the Satoguni state of mind keeps company of a person of the Rajoguni temperament, with the passage of time, he may develop cravings and he may fall into the trap of Rajogun. In the worst scenario, if the cravings become intense, he may even descend into the Tamoguni state.

But if a Satoguni person is fortunate enough to have the company of God-conscious persons and devotes himself whole-heartedly to carrying out the divine teachings, he would make rapid progress on the spiritual path and would enter into the sphere of the Divine Wisdom - Buddhi. He is now very close to reaching his final goal - the Divine Realm (Atam Pad or Nirankar ka Des), which is the state of equipoise and completely worrilessness. With utmost devotion, he would continue to carry out the spiritual instructions of his Divine Master to root out his ego completely. Nurturing intense desire to meet the true Lord, he would finally reach the Divine Realm where the Almighty Lord pervades. The mystical tenth door is the hidden one, which would open into the Realm of the Divine or Nirankar ka Des. Guru Nanak says:

ਜੇਹੀ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਤੇਹੈ ਰਾਹਿ ਜਾਇ ॥

J-ai-hee surat(i) t-ai-h-ei raah(i) jaa-e. (662)

(Whatever is the tune of your mind - good or bad - you will follow the same path and will reach the same state.)

Guru Amardas, the third Guru expounds:

ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਰਾਤਾ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਮੇਇ ॥

Mann(u) tann(u) raataa Gur kee Baanhee Sewa surat(i) sam-ai-e. (1259)

(My mind and body are imbued with the 'Word' of the Hymns. My consciousness is immersed in His divine service.)

Living in this world, one should always seek the company of divine persons for imbibing spiritual guidance. He should always remember the Divine Name, with full love and devotion. When the time is ripe, the same seeker will cross the state of Divine Wisdom or Buddhi and will reach the Divine Realm or Nirankar ka Des.

Guru Nanak Dev says that on the spiritual journey, the Eternal 'Word' is the Guru and the consciousness (Surt) of a person is His disciple:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Sabad(u) Guru surat(i) dhun(i) ch-ai-laa. (943)

(The divine 'Word' is the Guru, upon whom I devotedly focus my consciousness as a true disciple.)

In this Hymn, Guru Nanak Dev inspires all mankind to fulfill the true purpose of life.

Guru Nanak Dev says: 'Meditate on the Divine Name, serve others, without being selfish and abide by His Divine Will. In this way, you will merge with the Divine within, and attain salvation while still alive. Then whatever action, you perform, would be under the Divine Will'.

To help a student of spirituality achieve the goal of self-realisation, the environment plays a very important role. Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਨਾਨਕ ਵੈਸਾਖੀ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਾਵੈ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਾ ॥

Nanak v-ei-saakheen Prabh paav-ei Surat(i) Sabad(i) mann(u) maanaa. (1108)

[When the mind is completely merged with the Divine, by shedding its ego completely, it spiritually rejoices, "O Nanak! My mind has been completely merged with the Divine, which is the Supreme blissful state of Divine enjoyment. As such, it becomes the celebration of Vaisakhi, (Vaisakh, i.e., April month), when the entire plant Kingdom blooms and the farmers enjoy and celebrate the bumper harvest in north India.]

Part of mind (Chitt)

Chitt is that part of the mind, which remembers past deeds - good or bad - and stores them in the memory. If it recalls divine deeds and goes on storing them in memory, it will receive the blessings of the Divine Lord. Guru Nanak warns:

ਮਨੁ ਭੂਲੋ ਬਹੁ ਚਿਤੈ ਵਿਕਾਰੁ ॥

Mann bhoolo bahu chitt-ei vikaar(u). (222)

(The human mind is engrossed in vices and egoistic deeds due to which man has forgotten the eternal Divine Reality within, completely, and this has led him to hell.)

Guru Amardas advises the seeker after Truth:

ਮਨ ਰੇ ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਛੋਡਿ ਚਉਥੈ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥

Mann r-ai tr-ei gunh chhod(i) Chaouth-ei chit(u) laa-e. (603)

(O mind! Cultivate the divine love and affection with utmost toil so that you are able to renounce the three egoistic worldly states-Tamo, Rajo and Sato Gun. Then only will you reach the fourth state of Divine Wisdom, i.e., Buddhi, which would inspire you to tread the Divine Path with love and devotion, so that you can merge with the Divine by shedding your ego completely.)

Guru Arjan Dev exhorts:

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨ ਏਕਸ ਸਿਉ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥

M-ai-r-ai mann ekas siou chitt(u) laa-e. (44)

(O my mind, focus your consciousness with utmost devotion and love only on the Divine Lord, who is Omnipresent.)

By meditating on the Divine Name with full faith and utmost love, ego can be completely eradicated and the mind becomes pure. The individual then becomes one with the Divine within and enjoys spiritual bliss. This can only be achieved by cultivating divine humility and complete faith in the Divine by meditating on His Divine Virtues with utmost love and devotion. Utmost devotion is the key to success and for that one should forget the whole world and should have full faith in Him while performing one's worldly duties honestly, and perceiving His command within.

Matt (Wisdom)

Matt is a state of Divine Knowledge and is a part of the Divine Wisdom (Buddhi). It inspires a person to honestly follow the Divine Path for which he has come into this world. At the end of a holy congregational service in a holy place, we pray:

ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਨ ਨੀਵਾਂ ਮਤ ਉੱਚੀ ਮਤ ਦਾ ਰਾਖਾ ਆਪ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ॥

Sikkhaan daa mann neenvaan matt uchee Matt daa raakhaa aap Waheguru.

(May the minds of Sikhs remain humble and may their wisdom be exalted to remember the Divine Lord, who is the protector of their wisdom and prevents them from going astray.)

In company of the evil and unholy, one may get into worldly pleasures, which ultimately end in egoistic pains and its various vices. The wisdom (Matt) of such a person is said to have been impaired - as expressed in the Punjabi idiom, Matt maree gayee, i.e., his wisdom has been spoiled. This can then be cleaned only with the divine soap, which is reciting the Divine Name. Guru Nanak Dev explains this clearly in the following Hymn:

ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਏ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

Bharee-ei matt(i) paapaa k-ei sangg(i). Oh(u) dhop-ei Naav-ei k-ei rangg(i).(4)

(The impressions of our sinful actions, which are embedded on our minds, can only be washed away by the Divine soap, i.e., meditation on the Divine Name, with utmost love and devotion.)

The Physical Heart (Dil) and the Invisible Heart (Hirda)

The heart is a physical organ in the chest that pumps blood through the body. It is called Dil.

In addition to this physical heart, there is an invisible heart, called Hirda. It is unseen or unidentified, and an invisible part of the body, which emit the waves of sorrow, worldly pleasure as well as spiritual bliss in the whole of the body. It is categorized as Hirda or Riddha. When one merges with the Divine by shedding his ego completely, the spiritual waves, which emit from the whole of his body form an aura, which can only be felt or perceived by divine persons. Sheikh Farid, the renowned Muslim Sufi saint, says:

ਦਿਲਹੁ ਮੁਹਬਤਿ ਜਿਨ੍ ਸੇਈ ਸਚਿਆ ॥ ਜਿਨ੍ ਮਨਿ ਹੋਰੁ ਮੁਖਿ ਹੋਰੁ ਸਿ ਕਾਂਢੇ ਕਚਿਆ ॥

Dil-hau muhabat(i) jinn(h) s-ai-ee sach-e-aa.

Jinn(h) mann(i) hor(u) mukh(i) hor(u) se kaandh-ai kach-e-a. (488)

(Only those blessed ones, who are affectionately indebted with the love of God, with full devotion in their heart, realise the Divine Truth. On the other hand, those who have one thing in their heart and the other on their lips are dishonest and are far away from perceiving spiritual truth.)

As mentioned earlier, if the waves radiating from the invisible heart make an individual run after worldly possessions, they give rise to worldly attachment (Moh). But, if these very divine waves stimulate the search for the Divine within, they ultimately become Divine. Divine Love is only for God and the divine persons. The other so-called worldly love is just attachment, whether with the family or with material possessions. Divine persons inspire the seeker to tread the Divine Path and seek the Divine within. The desire for worldly wealth or material knowledge or the emotions that draw one close to one's spouse or family is not true love, but is attachment (Moh). Such attachment only strengthens worldly bondage and takes a person away from the Divine Path. Guru Ramdas, the fourth divine Master expounds:

ਮਨਿ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਕੋਧੁ ਮਹਾ ਬਿਸਲੋਧੁ ਨਿਰਪ ਯਾਵਹਿ ਲੜਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Mann(i) hird-ei krodh(u) mahaa bislodh(u) Nirapp dhaaveh(i) larh(i) dukh(u) paa-e-aa. (445)

(Hearts and minds of the Kings were filled with the horribly poisonous essence of anger

which gave birth to lust, greed and arrogance. They fought wars to inflate their ego while annexing the territory and wealth of others. This led them to the most egoistic miseries, and at the end they underwent various types of pains, which led them to hell.)

The Guru further clarifies:

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਨਿਤ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵੈ ॥

Nanak saant(i) hov-ei mann antar(i) Nitt hird-ei Har(i) gunh gaav-ei. (1178)

(O Nanak! When mind is imbued with divine love and peace, after eradicating ego completely, only then can mind be channelized to recite the Divine Name and glories of the Divine Lord constantly for getting the Divine Wisdom.)

Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਗੁਰੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰੁ ਤਾ ਕਾ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਧਰਿ ਮਨ ਧਿਆਨੁ ॥

Guru m-ai-r-aa Parbrahm Parmesur(u) Taa kaa hird-ei dhar(i) mann dhiaan(u). (827)

(My Guru is the Supreme Being and the Divine Lord of the Universe. O my mind! Cultivate the supreme love and devotion for Him in the heart by reciting His Divine Name continuously and instill in your heart Divine Love completely.)

Memory (Antehkaran)

In some scriptures, the Antehkaran has also been referred to as Chitra Gupta. In the present scientific era, it may be called a sophisticated 'computer', which keeps the record of data for every action being performed in this life as well as in previous lives. Thus, it is that faculty of the mind, which records the mental impressions of all the deeds performed by a person in the past as well as in the present time. These stored impressions of the mind, shape the individual's destiny, not only in this life, but also in the succeeding ones. It is thus, a reservoir of mental deposits which shape the consciousness of the mind and help the body perform certain actions in a pre-determined way. The Muslim Saint Kabir in one of His Hymns expounds:

ਬਾਬਾ ਅਬ ਨ ਬਸਉ ਇਹ ਗਾਉ ॥ ਘਰੀ ਘਰੀ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਮਾਰੈ ਕਾਇਬੁ ਚੇਤੁ ਨਾਉ ॥

Baba abb na basou eh gaaou.

Gharee gharee kaa l-ai-khaa maag-ei Kaa-e-th(u) ch-ai-too Nao(u). (1104)

(O my Divine Master! I do not like to be in this physical frame, where the worldly actions of every moment are recorded by the divine accountants, Chitra Gupta. Bless me so that I tread the Divine Path to reach the Divine Realm.)

In modern terms, we can compare the Antehkaran to an invisible computer or data-recorder, in which the data of all the deeds - good or bad - of a person is stored.



Mental Stages of Meditation

Divine Love (Prem)

In the spiritual realm, Divine Love (Prem) means, which is beyond the self-centred, self-seeking, 'I-ness', i.e., beyond these egoistic actions. In his spiritual journey when the seeker reaches the stage of Divine Love, he develops an urge to tread the Divine Path in association with and with the guidance of divine persons. As a result, he is so inspired by them that he develops an immensely deep urge within him to recite the Divine Name continuously, with full love and devotion. He reaches a stage to see One in All and All in One and renders divine service to humanity under commandments of the Divine Lord for seeking His blessings.

If a person is deeply involved in looking after his family and has a close relationship with friends or others, with an eye on personal gains, such involvement is not love, but attachment, since it has an ulterior motive. Eating rich food, wearing expensive designer clothes, and getting involved in the affairs of the world are hindrances in the spiritual path.

Guru Gobind Singh makes it clear that the only way to become one with the Supreme Being is through Divine Love, which is without the ego:

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੋਂ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਇਓ ॥ (ਤਵ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸਵੱਯੋ)

Saach(u) kahon sunn I-ai-hu sabh-ei Jinn prem keo tinn hee Prabh paa-e-o.

(Tav Parsad(i) Sawaeeye)

(O human beings! I speak the Truth with full love, devotion and divine experience. Realise that the Divine within is the subject of pure love and devotion, which one cultivates within after shedding the worldly worries, ego and attachments.) 20-9

Urge to Realise the Divine (Vairaag)

An intense urge to merge with the Divine after abandoning all the cravings and attachments for wealth and pleasures is called Vairaag, i.e., seriousness of realisation of the Omnipresent. During the course of this spiritual journey, a stage is reached, when the seeker acquires the wisdom to realise that the world is a mere illusion. He realises that the worldly desires are great obstacles to realise the Divine within and becomes God-conscious. He, therefore, performs the worldly duties ordained by the Divine, with no personal motive or attachment. Thus, with immense devotion and

love, he develops an urge to merge with the Divine within while performing the worldly duties according to His Divine Will. This state of mind is called Vairagya Virti, i.e., detachment from the cravings of the egoistic mind. Furthermore, by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion, he is intuned with the Divine within, while living in the world and performing the duties, destined by the Divine. In other words, the key to success is to cultivate Divine Wisdom within, by remaining in Vairagya Virti even while performing the worldly duties and carrying out family responsibilities, as ordained by the Divine. Muslim Saint Kabir clarifies it in this Hymn:

ਬਿਨੁ ਬੈਰਾਗ ਨ ਛੁਟਸਿ ਮਾਇਆ ॥

Binn(u) b-ei-raag na chhootas(i) maa-e-aa. (329)

(Without cultivation of Vairaag virtue, one cannot rid of the ego, which is directly correlated with Maya, the worldly pleasures.)

Guru Arjan Dev depicts His state of mind thus:

ਮਨਿ ਬੈਰਾਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਦਰਸਨੁ ਦੇਖਣੈ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥

Mann(i) b-ei-raag bha-e-aa Darsan(u) d-ai-kh-nh-ei kaa chaaou. (50)

(My mind has developed the immense urge to realise the Divine Lord by shedding the ego.)

Vairaag is of three types:

- 1. Innate Worldly Detachment (Sutte Vairaag) :** The blessed person, who has completely detached himself from worldly affairs and cultivates the holy urge to meet the Divine within, is known to have experienced Sutte Vairaag. This state of natural detachment from worldly affairs, to seek the Divine within, can even be found in childhood due to a person's attachment with the Divine from his previous births. Some such children are the young saints Dhruva and Prehlad; Muslim Saint Baba Farid; Guru Harkrishan; the four beloved sons of Guru Gobind Singh (Sahibzadas) and many other saints and sages, who started their divine life in their childhood. In fact, all the true saints and sages of all religions have this type of inclination. They are richly endowed with spiritual capital from the past lives, which carries over to the present one. The Sikh Gurus and other prophets and great saints of the past, all had innate detachment (Sutte Vairaag). In the twentieth century, Saint Attar Singh Mastuana Wale; Baba Sham Singh, Amritsar; Baba Nand Singh Kaleranwale, Baba Jawala Singh of Harkhowal Wale; Saint Attar Singh Attle Wale and many such saints had similar inclinations.
- 2. Worldly Detachment through divine association (Sangate Vairaag) :** Some kind-hearted, pious individuals develop the Vairaag Vrittio inclination towards spiritual life, leading to God-realisation after being associated with

God-conscious persons and following their teachings in letter and spirit. In Sikh history, Baba Buddha, Bhai Bhagirath, Bhai Mansukh and Bhai Lehna came under the influence of Guru Nanak Dev and achieved Divine Wisdom under His spiritual guidance. In fact, Bhai Lehna went on to become the second Spiritual Master of the Sikhs by obeying his Divine Master Guru Nanak Dev in letter and spirit.

In recent times, under the spiritual guidance of Saint Attar Singh, Teja Singh, too, became a great saint and laid the foundation of The Kalgidhar Trust/Society to run various educational institutions/universities and other social welfare projects for the needy, especially the downtrodden people, not only at Baru Sahib in Himachal Pradesh, but also in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Saint Teja Singh, M.A., L.L.B (Punjab), AM (Harvard), writes in his autobiography that under the influence of Western education and culture, he had turned an atheist, but his association with Saint Attar Singh Mastuanawale changed his life.

3. Detachment arising out of sudden misfortune (Kaaran Vairaag) :

Kaaran Vairaag is caused after a sudden misfortune, e.g., the loss of a loved one, the loss of wealth or material possessions. In ancient times, it is said that King Bhartharee, the ruler of an Indian province, was grief-stricken on the demise of his dear wife. He became disillusioned with worldly life, renounced his kingdom, and began wandering in search of the Divine. He even joined the Siddhas and became a disciple of Gorakh Nath, an adept Yogi (Siddha) with occult powers. He, too, became an adept Siddha and could work miracles.

But, he was deeply disillusioned and lost peace of mind. Eventually, he met Guru Nanak Dev, received His blessings, followed his teachings, and gained self-realisation.

Bhai Lachman Das, a Rajput warrior, became deeply remorseful after killing a pregnant doe during a hunting sojourn. He renounced the world and became a wandering saint. At Nanded, on the banks of the river Godavari, he met Guru Gobind Singh and became His disciple. The Guru sent him to Punjab to contain the atrocities inflicted on the poor masses by the Mughal ruler. He conquered Punjab, established a social kingdom, and made the tenants the owners of the agricultural land, which was under the possession of big landlords. He later achieved fame as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. A huge Mughal force ultimately captured him, and he attained martyrdom as per the Divine Will.

Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, the renowned Sikh scholar, in his encyclopaedia of the Sikhs, Mahan Kosh, has classified Vairaag into four types:

- i) **Yattmaan** : Considering that worldly life is full of sufferings, one is inclined to tread the Divine Path under the guidance of saints. An example of this is Lord Buddha.
- ii) **Vaiterek** : After deep consideration, one realises that acquiring material wealth is negatively correlated with spirituality, and one finds himself engrossed in a wretched life. Consequently, he starts treading the Divine Path by renouncing the worldly life.
- iii) **Eikendriye** : Frustration sets in after indulgence in worldly pleasures. On account of this, one takes to the life of divine devotion and prayer. With an aim to attain self-realisation, one treads the spiritual way of life with complete love and devotion and thus, does not run after worldly pleasures.
- iv) **Vashikaar** : With the utmost urge to realise the Divine within, one performs exercises with complete love and devotion and recites the Divine Name. Having thus controlled the mind, he does not have any craving for worldly pleasures except to realise the Divine within and without.

Yearning to meet God (Birha)

When the seeker after Truth perceives his separation from the Divine Reality within, he becomes sad and is filled with remorse. He develops an intense urge to meet the Divine, a state known as Vairaag. He longs to meet his Divine Master and in a state of profound love, weeps and sheds tears, begging his Divine Master to have pity on him and take him into His divine-fold so that he could get divine pleasure. This state of mind of the seeker has been picturised by Guru Ramdas in the following Hymn:

ਹਉ ਰਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਦੇਖੇ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮਾ ਮੈ ਨੀਰੁ ਵਹੇ ਵਹਿ ਚਲੈ ਜੀਉ ॥

Haou reh(i) na sakaa binn(u) d-ai-kh-ai Preetmaa M-ei neer(u) vah-ai veh(i) chal-ei jeeou. (94)
(O My Beloved Divine Lord! I cannot remain in equipoise without realising Your presence in my heart. Out of the intense love to realise You in my heart, I cannot control my tears which further intensify my urge to have a glimpse of You as early as possible.)

Shedding these tears to express his longing for meeting Him within, the seeker washes away many sins of his past and present lives.

According to Gurbani, the state of Birha is like the acquisition of a rich divine kingdom, in which one can conduct an intensive divine search within and ultimately realise the Divine. But, what about him, who does not yearn to meet the True One? His body is like a crematorium, because the fire of lust, anger, greed etc. is burning the virtues in his heart to realise the Divine within. The Muslim saint Farid explains this condition of Birha in a Hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਬਿਰਹਾ ਬਿਰਹਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਬਿਰਹਾ ਤੂ ਸੁਲਤਾਨੁ ॥
ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਤਨਿ ਬਿਰਹੁ ਨ ਉਪਜੈ ਸੋ ਤਨੁ ਜਾਣੁ ਮਸਾਨੁ ॥
Bir-haa bir-haa aakhee-ei Bir-haa too Sultaan(u).

Farida jitt(u) tann(i) bir-hu na upj-ei So tann(u) jaanh(u) masaan(u). (1379)

(Many people yearn, crave and weep, to have a glimpse of the Divine within, which becomes their divine urge to realise the Supreme Beloved within. The body, which is devoid of the utmost yearning to realise the Beloved Divine, should be considered the cremation ground where all the human virtues to meet the Divine are burnt to ashes.)

Intense Love for the Divine (Vivek)

When Vivek, the intense love for the Divine turns into a burning desire to meet Him, then the divine virtues spring up in his mind to realise the Divine. In this state, the seeker forgets all the worldly illusions and reaches the stage, where he can differentiate between virtues and vices as well as the real and the unreal. Clearing all his doubts, he starts treading the Divine Path steadfastly. Guru Amardas, the third Divine Master, clarifies it in the following Hymn:

ਅਚਰੁ ਚਰੈ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੁਧਿ ਪਾਏ ਪੁਰਖੈ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਮਿਲਾਇ ॥

Achar char-ei bib-ai-k budh(i) paa-e Purakh-ei Purakh(u) milaa-e. (1276)

(With the Divine Wisdom, the seeker controls the uncontrollable mind, and the Guru blesses him to meet the Divine.)

State of Enlightenment (Buddhi)

Buddhi, the state of enlightenment, can be attained by passing through various stages as enunciated by Guru Ramdas in the following Hymn:

ਅਚਰੁ ਚਰੈ ਤਾ ਸਿਧਿ ਹੋਈ ਸਿਧੀ ਤੇ ਬੁਧਿ ਪਾਈ ॥

ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੇ ਸਰ ਲਾਗੇ ਤਨ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਤਾ ਭ੍ਰਮੁ ਕਾਟਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥

Achar(u) char-ei ta sidh(i) hoee Sidhee t-ai budh(i) paaee.

Prem k-ai sar laag-ai tann bheetar(i) Ta bhram(u) kaat-e-aa jaaee. (607)

[If one overpowers his mind, he attains the stage of Siddhi (occult powers). If he further cultivates Divine Wisdom by meditating on the Divine Name, he will attain the Divine Wisdom (Buddhi). If he perceives the divine love and immerses his mind in it, he rids himself of all confusions and doubts, which are the hurdles to realise the Divine within, and attains the stage of Divine Realm.]

With the blessings of the Divine Lord, one must endeavour to control the five vices-lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride-which cannot be controlled by the mind engrossed in worldly pleasures. If a person has an immense spiritual urge for treading the Divine Path, and fully controls the five vices, he attains the stage of

Siddhi (accumulation of occult powers). But, if he does not perform these occult powers due to his intense desire to meet the Divine within, by reciting the Divine Name continuously with full love and devotion, he enters the stage of perceiving Divine Wisdom (Buddhi). If the same person is further engrossed in the Divine Love within, he perceives the Divine pervading everywhere i.e and sees One in All and All in One.

Treading the spiritual path, the seeker faces many obstacles. He gains supernatural powers and can work miracles. But, the use of such miraculous powers not only hinder his progress in the realisation of the Divine, but also leads to his downfall from that spiritual state. However, if he preserves his spiritual powers, with the urge to meet the Divine within, he becomes stronger with this inspiration and starts reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. He successfully enters the state of Divine Wisdom (Buddhi). If he further goes on reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion, he sheds all the illusions of worldly attractions. Then with full zeal and devotion, he goes ahead to enter the Divine Realm, i.e., Formless One.

Divine Equipoise (Sehaj Avastha)

When the seeker after Truth, treading the Divine Path with full devotion and love, sheds his ego completely, he reaches the final goal of his spiritual journey - the stage of Sehaj Avastha. In other words, he reaches the realm of the Formless Divine Reality and becomes one with Him. Since he gains complete knowledge of the Divine Reality, he is known as Brahmgyani (knower of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge of the Universe created by the Supreme Being). This divine stage has been amply clarified by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਜਲ ਕਾ ਜਲੁ ਹੁਆ ਰਾਮ ॥ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲੀ ਸੰਪੂਰਨੁ ਥੀਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

Sooraj kiranh(i) mil-ai Jal kaa jal(u) hooaa Ram.

Jotee jot(i) ralee Sampooran(u) theeaa Ram. (846)

[As the rays of light merge with the sun, and water merges with the ocean, similarly, if a soul merges with the Supreme Soul (the Divine), within and without, it merges with the Omnipresent by losing its identity completely.]

Presence of Mind (Hazoori)

ਆਠ ਪਹਰ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਬਸਹਿ ਹਜੂਰੇ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇਈ ਜਨ ਪੂਰੇ ॥

Aatth pehar Prabh baseh hajoor-ai. Kahu Nanak s-ai-ee jan poo-r-ai. (286)

In this Hymn, the Divine Master emphasises that the seeker must endeavour to remain merged with the Divine Reality throughout the period of twenty-four

hours, i.e., day in and day out. He should follow the instructions of the Divine in letter and spirit while performing all his worldly duties. In other words, he should consider that whatever is being done or happening is controlled by the Divine Law. Having attained this state of mind, he doesn't bother for the past deeds and the future happenings, and thus remains in the state of equipoise. This is called Hazoori (the presence of mind).

All the stages of spirituality are achieved only if one keeps in mind the presence of the Divine within and without, forever. He recites the Divine Name or performs the Divine duty by praying, 'O Divine Lord! I am Your humble servant, and it is Your greatness that You have got these virtuous deeds done through me.' By doing so, he merges with the Divine and is known as a divinely perfect person. Presence of mind plays a great role in making a person a perfect human being. In fact, man has come on this earth to realise the Divine within. While performing all the worldly duties, he should bear in mind that these deeds are being performed according to the Will of the Divine Lord. In this way, his worldly work becomes worship. He thus loses his identity and merges with the Divine, and performs all his worldly duties according to His Will. He loses his identity and merges with the Lord to perceive His divine instructions. This state is known as Jiwan Mukht, i.e., attaining self-realisation while still alive in this world. The presence of mind bestows upon him all kinds of solace and peace of mind, to tread the Divine Path, while still performing the worldly responsibilities according to His Will. This state is also called Bideh Mukht, i.e., getting salvation while still alive according to the Divine Will. In a nutshell, presence of mind means that one remains absorbed in the Divine Within, while performing the worldly duties by forgetting his past worries as well as future happenings.



Virtues & Vices

Virtues

The real purpose of human life is to become Divine by perceiving the Divine Reality in this very life. To achieve this goal, one has to tread the Divine Path with utmost love and devotion by following the below-mentioned virtues:

Truth (Divine Purity) : In the Spiritual Realm, 'Truth is God' and 'God is Truth'. One should always follow a truthful life. Come what may, he must speak the truth and should not utter any lie while performing his worldly obligations. He should practise it as a matter of principle:

ਬੋਲੀਐ ਸਚੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਝੂਠੁ ਨ ਬੋਲੀਐ ॥ ਜੋ ਗੁਰੁ ਦਸੈ ਵਾਟ ਮੁਰੀਦਾ ਜੋਲੀਐ ॥

Bolee-ei Sach(u) Dharam(u) jhooth(u) na bolee-ei.

Jo Guru das-ei vaat mureedaa jolee-ei. (488)

(Speak the Truth, in righteousness and do not tell lies. The disciple ought to travel the route, shown by the Guru.)

Divine grace can only be obtained by selfless service, meditation on the Divine Name, singing hymns in His praise and leading an honest and truthful life.

Righteousness (Dharma) : A set of rules or principles, which have to be followed in order to successfully tread the Divine Path to attain self-realisation, is called Dharma. In other words, Dharma is to realise the Divine within and merge in it by losing one's identity completely. In fact, eradicating the ego completely is called Dharma in the real sense and the same is known as the Divine Path. The Divine Path (Dharma) for the whole world is one, which is the realisation of the Divine within and to see One in All and All in One. Modern civilisation has developed hatred for religions, leading to conflicts and wars, which are based purely on ignorance of the essence of true religion. If somebody treads the Divine Path honestly, with full love and devotion for realisation of the Divine within, he would see One in All and All in One. There should not be any hatred for any religion, as religions are the different Divine Paths developed according to circumstances prevailing in different regions at different times. The aim of every religion is to guide its followers to merge with the Divine, and create Universal Brotherhood by treading the Divine Path, with honest toil, perseverance and purity of thoughts, to reach the final destination of the Divine Realm, which is one for the entire humanity.

Selfless Service:

Selfless service is of three kinds:

- a) Parting with at least one-tenth of one's earnings for spiritual and benevolent causes of humanity, particularly for the downtrodden persons
- b) Physical selfless service is service without seeking any gains or attachment for rendering help to others. This service is considered to be superior to the one mentioned above.
- c) Service of the mind, is complete submission to the Divine by shedding ego completely. Mind of a worldly person is most egoistic and selfish, which is a great barrier for realising the Divine within. We have to demolish this barrier by rendering selfless service, and ensuring concentration of the mind on the Divine Name. The service of mind can only be rendered if one performs the two above-mentioned services honestly.

At least, one-tenth of one's earnings should be set aside for spiritual purposes, and one must use his body to render selfless service, without any attachment. As one does so, the mind should be engaged in reciting the Divine Name.

The first step in this direction is to perform the righteous actions, i.e.

1. Straightforward and truthful behaviour in all human activities
2. Seeing one's own faults and the good qualities of others
3. Sweetness in speech and manners
4. Seeing all persons as children of the One Divine Lord, without any distinction of caste, creed, colour or religion
5. Contentment with whatever naturally comes to us, and thanking the Almighty Lord for the same

These virtues, coupled with Hari Kirtan and meditation on the Divine Name lead the seeker into the sphere of knowledge (Gyan), which is the second stage. His vision becomes far-reaching and he feels the infinitude of God's creation by realising that the limitless Universe, containing the innumerable solar systems with their suns, moons, Brahmas, Vishnus, Shivas, Avatars, is the manifestation of the physical frame of the Divine.

Selfless Service to Humanity : This leads to the establishment of spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace in the world, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Bearing ill will to None : To get the blessings of the Supreme Being, the seeker should renounce egoistic instincts, like anger and hatred towards others, regardless of caste, creed or religion.

Sweet and humble speech : Speech should be soft and gentle to soothe the minds of others, without a tinge of ego. It should not hurt anyone.

Divine Humility : The seeker should have no pride and must remain humble towards everybody, regardless of caste, creed, colour, religion or status.

Forgiveness : It is a great human virtue required to tread the Divine Path. Tolerance against harsh words and forgiving the ill-treatment meted out by others gives immense spiritual pleasure and helps tread the Divine Path.

Compassion : In order to realise the Divine Wisdom, one should have compassion for all, bearing in mind that all living beings have the same Divine Essence. Serving them with utmost humility would also inspire them to tread the Divine Path and become compassionate.

Contentment : Whatever God gives, one should accept it as His bounties, without ever grumbling if it is not according to one's ambitions. He should not be envious of another's wealth or possessions and there should be no malice or hatred in his mind. He should remain calm and serene under all circumstances accepting it as the Divine Will.

Tolerance : Tolerance is the greatest virtue, and is directly co-related with spirituality. The seeker, who has shed his ego to a great extent should remain calm, quiet and pious even when others criticise and use unkind and harsh words against him, because with Divine Wisdom he should know that they are uttering or criticising under the influence of their ego, which is negatively co-related for perceiving Divine Wisdom. Such saintly persons pray to the Almighty Lord to bless them to tread the Divine Path for shedding their ego and ultimately attain Divine Wisdom.

Detachment : One should perform his duties thinking that 'work is worship', and not hanker after worldly rewards for his services. He should bear in mind that whatever happens is ordained by the Divine Will.

Justice : One should render justice while performing one's duties. He should be fair and just in dealing with others and must refrain from such deeds through which he gains, but by causing harm to others. He should render his duties honestly without expecting any rewards. His work thus becomes worship to tread the Divine Path.

Perseverance (Dheerata/Dheeraj) : One should remain content under all circumstances, and continue to work steadfastly without expecting any worldly rewards, though they come to him automatically, through the Divine Lord, according to his perseverance with the passage of time. This attitude and aptitude of working becomes worship, through which one gets bounties of this world as well as of the Divine Realm.

Preservation of Divine Qualities (Gambheerata) : It implies preservation

of one's spiritual powers. As one progresses along the Divine Path, he comes to possess many mystical powers. When this happens, he should remain humble about his achievements. No one should fathom the spiritual treasure within him, just as no one can fathom God:

ਏਵਡੁ ਉਚਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਉਚੇ ਕਉ ਜਾਣੈ ਮੋਇ ॥

Ai-vadd(u) oochaa hov-ei ko-e. Tis(u) ooch-ai kaou jaanh-ei so-e. (5)

(If one attains the stage of spirituality as high as the One he merges with, only then can he perceive the All Pervading Divine within.)

Resilience/Firm Endurance (Soorbeerata) : After meditating on the Divine Name, one overcomes the five vices, and is able to eradicate ego completely. To do so, he requires courage, self-control and patience. He, who achieves this success, becomes so brave that he can willingly lay down his life for the divine righteousness.

Divine Discipline : To achieve success on the spiritual path, one needs self-discipline to behold the mind firmly and prevent it from going astray.

Endeavour : One should work hard to make a living and part with one-tenth of his honest earning for the welfare of humanity. To tread the Divine Path for realising the Divine within, he will have to make a concerted effort by shedding the worldly comforts, pleasures and overcoming the worldly hurdles. Even after doing all this, he should maintain divine humility, which means that whatever has been achieved is only with Divine Grace.

Self-control : One should restrain the mind from running after sensual pleasures and gently motivate it to follow the spiritual path. The seeker should rein in the outgoing mind and motivate it to search for the Divine within.

Fearlessness : The seeker should fear only the Divine, which can be achieved by following the holy instructions of the divine persons, who are free from fear of the world and beyond.

Gratitude : God has showered many gifts upon us. Of these, the greatest gift is the human body, through which one can attain the state of Sat-Chitt-Anand, meaning truth, consciousness and bliss. To remain contented and grateful for His blessings is also a form of meditation.

Divine Will : To rejoice in whatever pleases Him and whatever He does is right.

It is complete submission to His Divine Will and Order, keeping in view that whatever He does is most beneficial for us.

Divine Listening : One should listen to the divine instructions and the praises of the Divine Lord with full respect and devotion and act upon them honestly. Guru Amardas clarifies the Divine Order:

ਏ ਸ੍ਰਵਣਹੁ ਮੇਰਿਹੋ ਸਾਚੈ ਸੁਨਣੈ ਨੋ ਪਠਾਏ ॥ ਸਾਚੈ ਸੁਨਣੈ ਨੋ ਪਠਾਏ ਸਰੀਰਿ ਲਾਏ ਸੁਣਹੁ ਸਤਿ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Ai sravanh-hu m-ai-r-e-ho Saach-ei sun-nh-ei no pathaa-e.

Saach-ei sun-nh-ei no pathaa-e Sareer(i) laa-e sunh-hu satt(i) Baanhee. (922)

(O my ears! You are created only to hear the Divine Truth - the virtues and the Divine Hymns - to cleanse your mind for reciting the Divine Name - Naam to realise the Divine within and without.)

Acceptance : One should accept the holy instructions and commandments of the Almighty Lord without questioning and hesitation. It helps the seeker realise the Divine within and without.

Reverence : To lead a life devoted to the teachings of the Divine Lord and merge oneself in divine love is called reverence. Guru Nanak Dev expounds:

ਸੁਣਿਆ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਕੀਤਾ ਭਾਉ ॥ ਅੰਤਰਗਤਿ ਤੀਰਥਿ ਮਲਿ ਨਾਉ ॥

Sunh-e-aa mann-e-aa mann(i) keetaa bhaaou. Antargat(i) teerath(i) mal(i) Naaou. (4)

(If one hears the glories of the Divine Lord and imbibes the same with full love and devotion, he merges with the Divine.)

Receptivity : One should have deep love and affection and a keen desire to follow the spiritual path.

Determination : One should be fully committed to imbibe the teachings of the Divine Master with full love, devotion and honest toil. Guru Amardas emphasises:

ਏ ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਜੀ ਧਿਆਇ ਤੂ ਇਕ ਮਨਿ ਇਕ ਚਿਤਿ ਭਾਇ ॥

Ai mann Har(i) jee dhiaa-e too lk mann(i) ik chitt(i) bhaa-e. (653)

(O my Mind! Meditate on the Divine Name with single-minded devotion without having a tinge of wavering towards egoistic deeds.)

Faith: To meditate on the Divine Name with firm belief and devotion, keeping in mind that He is Omnipresent, upon whom man should have full faith. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies it in the following Hymn:

ਜਾ ਕੈ ਰਿਦੈ ਬਿਸ਼੍ਵਾਸੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਇਆ ॥ ਤਤੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਾਇਆ ॥

Jaa k-ei ridd-ei bisvaas Prabh aa-e-aa. Tatt(u) giaan(u) tis(u) mann(i) pragataa-e-aa. (285)

(Utmost faith on the Divine is the key to succeeding in perceiving the Divine Wisdom instantly.)

Devotion : The utmost and unshakeable faith and dedication is paramount to realise the Divine Within.

Meditation : Contemplating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion to merge with the Divine within. Even in the higher stages, the Seeker forgets his body and materialistic surroundings and remains engrossed in the Divine.

Sacrifice : It requires a strong willpower to shed worldly comforts, sumptuous

food and sensual pleasures for realising the Divine within. For achieving this, one may even have to sacrifice his life to the Divine Will.

Contemplation : The mind imbued with Divine Love should always remain absorbed in the Supreme Being.

Self-surrender : Eradicating one's ego completely and merging the consciousness with the Divine.

Vices

Cravings (Trishna) - The Root Cause of all Vices

The desire for worldly possessions and all types of physical comforts, is called Trishna (cravings). As mentioned earlier, the consciousness of the developing foetus is engrossed in the Divine Name and is one with God. Guru Arjan Dev explains this phenomenon in the following Hymn:

ਗਰਭ ਕੁੰਟ ਮਹਿ ਉਰਧ ਤਪ ਕਰਤੇ ॥ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਰਹਤੇ ॥

Garabh kuntt meh(i) uradh tapp kart-ai. Saas(i) saas(i) simrat Prabh(u) rehat-ai. (251)

(Upside-down in the womb, the developing foetus is intuned with the Divine within, with each and every breath. Since there is no craving, he remains intuned with the Divine Lord.)

When a child is born in this mortal world, he forgets the Divine Lord and as he grows up, he develops numerous cravings.

Saint Beni, a Brahmin from Bihar, India expounds in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਗਰਭ ਛੋਡਿ ਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਮੰਡਲ ਆਇਆ ਤਉ ਨਰਹਰਿ ਮਨਹੁ ਬਿਸਾਰਿਆ ॥

Garabh chhod(i) mritt mandal aa-e-aa Taou Narhar(i) mann-hu bisaar-e-aa. (93)

(After birth, the child enters this mortal world, and his tune of mind is detached from the Divine Lord due to worldly illusions.)

Similarly, when the consciousness of a person is engrossed with divine love and affection, he remains serene and in spiritual bliss. The degree to which the mind remains attached with the Divine within depends upon the willpower he has developed after meditating on the Divine Name including in his earlier births. Then, he is not distracted by worldly desires. Guru Amardas enunciates:

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਜਿਨਾ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗੀ ਤਿਨੀ ਵਿਚੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Kah-ei Nanak Gur parsadee jinaa liv laagee Tinee vich-ai maa-e-aa paa-e-aa. (921)

(By the Guru's Grace, those who enshrine love for the Divine Lord remain in tune with Him, even in the midst of worldly illusions.)

Guru Amardas further emphasises:

ਲਿਵ ਛੁੜਕੀ ਲਗੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਅਮਰੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

Liv chhurhkee laggee trisnaa Maa-e-aa amar(u) vartaa-e-aa. (921)

(When, due to the worldly surroundings one's tune of mind is detached from the Divine

within, the first vice to creep in his mind is craving, which later gives birth to many other vices.)

Material desires and thoughts of worldly pleasures gradually lead to deeper and deeper attachments. Enslaved by these thoughts, whatever a man does, he gets entangled further in worldly illusions. He is like the spider that spins a web for itself, but dies turned upside down after being caught in it:

ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਬੰਧਨੀ ਭਾਈ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਬੰਧਕਾਰੀ ॥
 ਪਾਪਿ ਪੁੰਨਿ ਜਗੁ ਜਾਇਆ ਭਾਈ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਿਸਾਰੀ ॥
 ਇਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਗਿ ਮੋਹਣੀ ਭਾਈ ਕਰਮ ਸਭੇ ਵੇਕਾਰੀ ॥
 ਸੁਣਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਕਰਮਾ ਕਾਰੀ ॥
 ਜਿਤੁ ਕਰਮਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭਾਈ ਸੁ ਆਤਮ ਤਤੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥
 ਸਾਸਤੁ ਬੇਦੁ ਬਕੈ ਖੜੋ ਭਾਈ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਹੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੀ ॥
 ਪਾਖੰਡਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਚੁਕਈ ਭਾਈ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਵਿਕਾਰੀ ॥
 ਇਨ ਬਿਧਿ ਡੂਬੀ ਮਾਕੁਰੀ ਭਾਈ ਉਂਡੀ ਸਿਰ ਕੈ ਭਾਰੀ ॥

Aasaa mansaa bandhnee bhaaee Karam Dharam bandhkaaree.
 Paap(i) punn(i) jagg(u) jaa-e-aa bhaaee Bins-ei Naam(u) visaaree.
 Eh maa-e-aa jagg(i) moh-nhee bhaaee Karam sabh-ai v-ai-kaaree.
 Sunh Pandit karmaa kaaree.

Jit(u) karam(i) sukh(u) oopaj-ei bhaaee Su aatam tat(u) beechaaree.
 Saasat(u) b-ai-d(u) bak-ei kharho bhaaee Karam kar-hu sansaaree.
 Paakhand(i) m-ei-l(u) na choo-kaee bhaaee Antar(i) m-ei-l(u) vikaaree.
 In(u) bidh(i) doobee maakuree bhaaee Oondee sirr k-ei bhaaree. (635)

(Hope, desire, rituals and ceremonies are traps. Because of good and bad deeds, one is born into the world. Forgetting the Divine Name, he is ruined. This Maya is the enticer of the world. All such actions are corrupt. Listen, O ritualistic Pandit! Religious ritual, which produces happiness, is contemplation of the essence of the soul. You may stand and recite the Shastras and the Vedas, but these are just worldly actions. Filth cannot be washed away by hypocrisy. The filth of corruption and sin is within you. This is how the spider is destroyed by falling head-long in its own web.)

Guru Arjan Dev prescribes meditation on the Divine Name to overcome worldly cravings (Trishna). By following the Guru's edict, Trishna is diminished, and a state of self-realisation (Atam Gyan) is attained:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਬੁਝੈ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੈ ਸਿਮਰਨਿ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਝੈ ॥

Prabh k-ei simran(i) trisnaa bujh-ei. Prabh k-ei simran(i) sabh(u) kichh(u) sujh-ei. (263)

(The only remedy to shed cravings is by reciting the Divine Name, which bestows on one the wisdom to visualise miracles of the Divine Lord, who runs the affairs of this Universe according to His Will.)

Illusion, the False Perception (Maya)

Illusion (Maya) is not the reality, but the whole world is engulfed in this phenomenon, which man under illusion, perceives as reality. Engrossed in Maya, he forgets the Almighty. According to Guru Amardas, the third Guru Nanak Dev:

ਏਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮੋਹੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭਾਉ ਦੂਜਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

Eh maa-e-aa jitt(u) Har(i) visr-ei Moh(u) upj-ei Bhaou doojaa laa-e-aa. (921)

(By visualising this illusion as reality, we forget the Divine, i.e., the Creator of the Universe. By forgetting the Divine Lord, human beings develop attachment to worldly creations.)

Illusion in the world is spread out in its infinite variation. It is, in fact, the illusion that appears real to mortal eyes. The only reality is the Supreme Being, who pervades everywhere and is unchanging and Eternal. All else, even the visible world is changeable. All worldly creations are ever changing and must perish in the end. Indeed, it is a dream and not a reality. As a wall built of sand will last only for a short time, similarly in this world, nothing shall last forever, except the Eternal Divine, says Guru Tegh Bahadur:

ਜਗ ਰਚਨਾ ਸਭ ਝੂਠ ਹੈ ਜਾਨਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮੀਤ ॥ ਕਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਰੁ ਨਾ ਰਹੈ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਲੂ ਕੀ ਭੀਤਿ ॥

Jagg rachanaa sabh jhooth h-ei Jaan(i) lehu r-ai meet.

Keh(i) Nanak thir(u) naa rah-ei Jiou baaloo kee bheet(i). (1429)

(O dear spiritual friend! Hear that this world, the manifestation of the matter, is just an illusion and not a reality, which has been created and destroyed many a times, thus you should not perceive this as the Eternal Truth. It would vanish with the passage of time, as a wall of sand crumbles down by and by.)

We must realise that whatever we see with our mortal eyes is not a reality. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Nanak, expounds:

ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟਿਮਾਨ ਹੈ ਸਗਲ ਮਿਥੇਨਾ ॥

Drisat(i)maan h-ei sagal mith-ai-naa. (1083)

(Manifestation of the world is just an illusion and not reality.)

According to Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru Nanak:

ਇਹੁ ਜਗੁ ਧੂਏ ਕਾ ਪਹਾਰ ॥ ਤੈ ਸਾਚਾ ਮਾਨਿਆ ਕਿਹ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ॥

Eh(u) jagg(u) dhoo-ai kaa pahaar. T-ei saachaa maan-e-aa keh bichaar(i). (1186)

(This world is like a mountain of smoke, which has no real existence and can be swept away by a gush of wind. Human Beings, in their ignorance think this world to be real, and are thus drawn to it.)

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru Nanak expounds:

ਕਈ ਬਾਰ ਪਸਰਿਓ ਪਾਸਾਰ ॥ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਇਕੁ ਏਕੰਕਾਰ ॥

Ka-ee baar pasr-e-o paasaar. Sadaa sadaa ik(u) Ekankaar. (276)

(Indeed, the world's manifestation has been created, destroyed and recreated many a

times under the Will of God. However, the Creator is Omnipresent and is the embodiment of the Everlasting Truth.)

Says Guru Gobind Singh in the following Hymn:

ਜਬ ਉਦਕਰਖ ਕਰਾ ਕਰਤਾਰਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਜਾ ਧਰਤ ਤਬ ਦੇਹ ਅਪਾਰਾ ॥

ਜਬ ਆਕਰਖ ਕਰਤ ਹੋ ਕਬਹੂੰ ॥ ਤੁਮ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਤ ਦੇਹ ਧਰ ਸਭਹੂੰ ॥

Jabb udkarakh karaa Kartaaraa. Prajaa dharat tabb d-ai-h apaaraa.

Jabb aakarakh karat ho kab-hoon. Tumm m-ei milatt d-ai-h dhar sabh-hoon.

(Chaupae Sahib)

(It is the Divine Truth that the Almighty Lord at His pleasure creates the world with its diverse variety of living beings. And then under the Divine Will, whenever He desires, destroys His Creation and withdraws it within Himself.)

Scientists today explain the Creation of the world in terms of the 'Big Bang Theory'. From the metaphysical perspective, Creation has three aspects. The first is the Absolute One, i.e., the Divine Reality - Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the Universe. The second is the visible world, which is merely the visible manifestation (Sargun Saroop) of Divine Reality. The physical aspect of all living beings is part of it. The third is the Composite Mind, which is a repository of the impressions of the past and the present thoughts and deeds of all mankind. Guru Ramdas, the fourth Guru Nanak expounds:

ਇਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਸਭੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਚੇ ਕੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੋਤਿ ॥

Eh(u) sareer(u) sabh(u) Dharam(u) h-ei Jis(u) andar(i) sach-ai kee vich(i) jot(i). (309)

(This body is a Divine temple, in which the Divine resides.)

The real purpose of human life is to become one with the Supreme Being, for which he has been blessed with the human form. To achieve this, there are two prerequisites. First, the human body, which houses the Divine within and is called Harmandir (God's temple) in Gurbani. Second, is the earth, upon which he can perform good deeds. In Gurbani, the earth is termed as Dharamsal, a place to perform good deeds:

ਤਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਥਾਪਿ ਰਖੀ ਧਰਮ ਸਾਲ ॥

Tis(u) vich(i) dhartee thaap(i) rakhee Dharam saal. (7)

(This earth has been created as a place for performing righteous deeds and worship of the Divine.)

On this earth, dwell unlimited human beings of various kinds and colours, who are called by different names and their numbers is unlimited. Everyone reaps the fruit of one's own deeds (Karma), and acquires the stage accordingly. The Lord is the sole Eternal Reality and His court (the congregation of His saints) is also ever true. Those, who have realised the Divine and attained union with the Him, adorn Him.

When the mind (consciousness) falls prey to worldly temptations and gives up love for the Almighty, it turns outward. The outside world, including the human body, its physical pleasures and manifestation of the world, the family, the business and material possessions appear to be more attractive. All these are the manifestations of cravings, which pull the mind away from the Supreme Being. Man, thus remains engrossed in sensuous pleasures, thrills and worldly possessions. The mind drifts due to these illusions and breaks the bonds of love with the Lord. Under the sway of duality, it hovers in illusion. As the bonds of love with the Divine break, cravings gain an upper hand over the mind. Caught thus in the net of Maya, man suffers utmost pain. Guru Amardas, the third Guru Nanak expounds:

ਲਿਵ ਛੁੜਕੀ ਲਗੀ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਮਾਇਆ ਅਮਰੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

Liv chhurhkee laggee trisnaa Maa-e-aa amar(u) vartaa-e-aa. (921)

(When one's love for the Divine wears off, the first evil that creeps in his mind, is craving, which gives birth to many vices.)

However, on the other hand, if mind is motivated by an intense desire for union with the Supreme Reality, it treads the path of Divine Love. It then regards the grand illusion (Maya), i.e., one's family, business and possessions as belonging to God, and carries out its responsibilities in accordance with the Divine Will. It strives to attain union with the Almighty. For such a seeker, the visible world (Maya) becomes Dharamsal-the abode of Righteousness (Dharma)-and the body becomes the temple of God (Harmandir), wherein He dwells. Guru Nanak Dev expounds:

ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਇਵ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

Anjan maah-e Niranjan(i) rahee-ei Jog jugat(i) iv paa-ee-ei. (730)

(By reciting the Divine Name, one develops a divine technique, through which he remains aloof, despite being surrounded by the dark illusions of materialism.)

When a person, living in the world of Maya, fixes his mind on the Almighty, who is free from Maya, and attains union with Him, he is liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Muslim Saint Kabir, in the following Hymn expounds:

ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਭਵਜਲਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Anjan maah-e Niranjan(i) rahee-ei Bahurh(i) na bhavjal(i) paa-e-aa. (332)

(If we remain completely intuned with the Divine, and remain detached from the manifestation of the matter within, we escape the cycle of birth and rebirth and achieve self-realisation.)

Those who by the blessings of the Guru, are able to concentrate their minds on God and love Him intensely, they are able to attain Divine realisation even while living in the world of illusion. Guru Amardas, the third Guru Nanak, says:

ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਜਿਨਾ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗੀ ਤਿਨੀ ਵਿਚੇ ਮਾਇਆ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Kah-ei Nanak Gur parsadee jinaa liv laagee Tinee vich-ai maa-e-aa paa-e-aa. (921)

[When a student of spirituality (Gursikh) reaches the stage of self-realisation, through meditation on the Divine Name, he regards the world as an illusion, the manifestation of the matter created by the Divine. He is no longer moved by the allure of this illusion (Maya), and leads a life of self-restraint. He uses his money sparingly on himself, eats simple food, wears simple clothes and maintains a simple lifestyle. The rest of the money, he uses for the spiritual upliftment of humanity, according to the Divine Order.]

Ego - The Embodiment of Five Vices

Ego comprises of five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Desires give birth to pleasures and worldly comforts, which in turn produce lust and greed. Whatever they produce, take the form of attachment, which is worldly bondage. Whatever causes hindrance in achievement of the above, becomes the object of our anger. On the other hand, whatever helps in attainment of these, is the object of our attachment. The worldly attainments make a man proud and egoistic. The Guru proclaims that these five vices which reside within the body loot the nectar from the Divine Name. One who follows the instincts of his mind is not aware that no one will listen to his wails when he cries after losing everything.

Ego has four forms:

1. Ego of knowledge
2. Ego of caste
3. Ego of good deeds
4. Ego of worldly powers and possessions, e.g., ruling over others, property, family, youth, vigour, etc.

Engrossed in ego and allied evils, man behaves like an animal. He gets distracted from the Guru's path and lives his life in the darkness of ignorance. In this context Guru Amardas, the third Guru Nanak says:

ਇਸੁ ਦੇਹੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਪੰਚ ਚੋਰ ਵਸਹਿ ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰਾ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਲੂਟਹਿ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਨਹੀ ਬੁਝਹਿ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਸੁਣੈ ਪੁਕਾਰਾ ॥

ਅੰਧਾ ਜਗਤੁ ਅੰਧੁ ਵਰਤਾਰਾ ਬਾਝੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਬਾਰਾ ॥

Is(u) d-ai-hee andar(i) panch chor vaseh(i) Kaam(u) krodh(u) lobh(u) moh(u) ahankaaraa.

Amrit(u) looteh(i) manmukh nahee boojheh(i) Ko-e na sunh-ei pookaaraa.

Andhaa jagat(u) andh(u) vartaaraa Baajh(u) Guru gubaaraa. (600)

(There are five robbers lodged in the body, namely, lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. These vices steal away the divine nectar, which the egoistic persons do not realise. Those who forget the Divine Name, always utter falsehood. These five vices rob their

bodies and make them egoistic. Blind is the world and blind its ways. Without the Divine Master's guidance, all is illusion.)

Emphasises Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru Nanak Dev:

ਪਾਠੁ ਪੜਿਓ ਅਰੁ ਬੇਦੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿਓ ਨਿਵਲਿ ਭੁਅੰਗਮ ਸਾਧੇ ॥
ਪੰਚ ਜਨਾ ਸਿਉ ਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਛੁਟਕਿਓ ਅਧਿਕ ਅਹੰਬੁਧਿ ਬਾਧੇ ॥

Paath(u) parh-e-o aru baid(u) beechaar-e-o Nival(i) bhuangam saadh-ai.

Panch janaa siou sangg(u) na chhutk-e-o Adhik ahanbudh(i) baadh-ai. (641)

(If a man recites the Hymns, reads religious literature, performs rituals and performs yoga postures just to show off; none of these will help him in being liberated from the clutches of the five 'robbers' i.e. lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Rather, his ego gets inflated.)

Ego of the mind comprises of the five vices, which get transformed into evil and wicked thoughts and inflate ego. Anyone, who gets engrossed in these five evils is called Manmukh (self-willed), because his body acts according to the dictates of the mind. He, who has overcome them, by remembering the Name of God and he, who has eradicated his ego completely by moulding his life according to the teaching of the Guru is called Gurmukh (Guru-oriented). Guru Arjan Dev expounds in His Hymn that the Manmukh suffers from these evils, but the Gurmukh remains detached and enjoys the bliss of equipoise:

ਜਿਤਨੇ ਨਰਕ ਸੇ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਭੋਗੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਲੇਪੁ ਨ ਮਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

Jitn-ai narak s-ai manmukh(i) bhog-ei Gurmukh(i) l-ai-p(u) na maasaa h-ai. (1073)

(The egoistic persons suffer all hells, while the God-conscious persons are not touched by any evils of hell.)

Ego is a great hindrance in man's union with God. The greater the ego in a person, the farther he is from God because he is ever engrossed in the evils of the world. Guru Amardas, the third Guru Nanak enunciates:

ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਿਰੋਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਇ ॥

Haum-ei Naav-ei naal(i) virodh(u) h-ei Du-e na vseh(i) ik thaa-e. (560)

(Ego is opposed to the Divine Name. Both of them cannot remain together in the heart of a person. It is obligatory to completely eradicate ego, if one wants union with God.)

But there is still hope for the egoist, says Nanak. He should realise the holy power of the Divine Order:

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

Nanak hukm-ei j-ai bujh-ei Ta haum-ei kah-ei na ko-e. (1)

(If a man acts as per the Divine Will, he gets liberated from the ego.)

Ego is a serious malady, which serves as a hindrance in the way to God-realisation. However, if a man repents the sorrows born of the evil deeds of ego, he

begins to feel the pangs of separation from God, and this becomes the medicine for the malady of ego. Thus, he starts treading the Divine Path. It is clarified by Guru Nanak Dev in His following Hymn:

ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥

Haum-ei deeragh rog(u) h-ei Daaroo bhee is(u) maah-e. (466)

(Egoism is an awful disease, yet to cure the same, it also acts as a medicine.)

That means that an egoistic person performs many evil deeds under the influence of ego and then he undergoes sufferings and sorrows, which become divine punishment for him. Due to these diseases of ego, man experiences pangs of separation from God. Surrounded by all these miseries and diseases, he starts to repent deeply his actions, this motivates him to pray to the Almighty honestly, with full love and devotion. As a result his ego is eradicated, and he starts obtaining Divine bliss. Thus, his ego becomes the medicine to cure him. It motivates him to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion continuously and moves ahead on the path of spirituality towards Divine Realisation. The Muslim saint Kabir says:

ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਨਰੁ ਜਾਰੈ ॥ ਜਮ ਕਾ ਡੰਡੁ ਮੁੰਡ ਮਹਿ ਲਾਰੈ ॥

Kahu Kabir tabb hee nar(u) jaag-ei. Jamm kaa dandd(u) moondd meh(i) laag-ei. (870)

[Man is awakened only when Yama's (The God of Death, according to Hindu Mythology) rod strikes his head. The sufferings of man make him repent, and inspire him to receive Divine Grace.]

The worldly comforts make the seeker drift away from God, and make him a patient. Guru Nanak Dev expounds:

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

Dukh(u) daaroo sukh(u) rog(u) bha-e-aa Jaa sukh(u) taam(i) na hoee. (469)

(Miseries would become the medicine which motivates him to recite the Divine Name for obtaining His blessings. On the other hand, when a man is enjoying worldly comforts, he forgets the Divine and ultimately undergoes miseries.)

Waheguru is the Divine Name. In the Sikh way of life, Waheguru is the Supreme Gurmantra, the recitation of which with full love and devotion eradicates ego completely.

Guru's sikh, while reciting the Divine Name prays that God may liberate him from the malady of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. He should be freed from the awful malady of ego so that he gets the blessings of the Divine Lord, and ultimately gets merged with Him, and thus gets liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth, as enunciated by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਐਸੋ ਗੁਨੁ ਮੇਰੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਜੀ ਕੀਨ ॥
ਪੰਚ ਦੋਖ ਅਰੁ ਅਹੰ ਰੋਗ ਇਹ ਤਨ ਤੇ ਸਗਲ ਦੂਰਿ ਕੀਨ ॥

Ei-so gunn(u) m-ai-ro Prabh jee keen.

Panch dokh aru aham rog Eh tan t-ai sagal door(i) keen. (716)

[The seeker yearns for the blessings of the Divine Lord and submits: O Divine Lord! Bestow upon me your Divine Blessings, so that all my five vices and extreme malady (ego) is completely eradicated.]

When ego is eradicated completely through reciting the Divine Name, one feels the presence of the Divine within. Saint Ravidas, expounds in His Hymn:

ਜਬ ਹਮ ਹੋਤੇ ਤਬ ਤੂ ਨਾਹੀ ਅਬ ਤੂਹੀ ਮੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Jab hamm hot-ai tabb too naahee Abb toohee m-ei naahee. (657)

(O God! While I was egoistic, I could not perceive your Divine Wisdom. Now, after shedding my ego completely, I perceive that You are in my heart and pervading everywhere.)

Lust

Lust is that feeling of mind, which attracts man towards enjoying sensuous pleasures. His sensuous desires become so aroused that he becomes weak, mentally as well as physically.

Under the influence of the physical senses, the stronger a man's feeling of lust is, the weaker he will be, both physically and spiritually. If a student happens to be preoccupied with lust, he will surely lag behind not only in his studies, but also in his spiritual growth. A lustful man cannot progress even in the worldly sphere. His body turns frail and suffers from various ailments. He also suffers from various demerits. He becomes greedy, roguish, jealous, deceitful, likely to be enraged, a cheat, immoral and cruel. Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਕਉ ਗਾਲੈ ॥ ਜਿਉ ਕੰਚਨ ਸੋਹਾਗਾ ਢਾਲੈ ॥

Kaam(u) krodh(u) kaa-e-o kaou gaal-ei. Jiou kanchan sohaagaa dhaal-ei. (932)

(Lust and anger reduce the body to become so weak and fragile, that one gets engulfed in many awful diseases. It is just like slag, which melts the ornaments into a yellow stone.)

Even in family life, man can maintain his chastity by remembering the Divine Name and by living a spiritually disciplined life. Under the influence of sensual pleasures, man commits various evil deeds, and puts his body to many sufferings. Such a man is engrossed in these vices to such an extent that he ruins himself and his family. Sometimes the spouses take recourse in divorce, or even go to the extent of killing each other.

Lust is produced from the below-mentioned feelings of sensual desires:

1. **With eyes** : Reading porn and erotic literature, watching obscene pictures on

television or computer, looking at gaudy and skimpy dresses and feeling attracted towards the physical beauty of the opposite sex.

2. **With ears** : Listening to obscene and vulgar songs (radio and television play a major role in this).
3. **With nose** : Using aphrodisiacs and various type of perfumes which stimulate sensual feelings.
4. **With tongue** : The divine persons suggest that Tamasic food taken to satiate the tongue, uttering vulgar language and singing obscene songs, also produce sensual feelings.
5. **Physical touch** : Physical contact, especially in young age, with the opposite sex, arouses sensual and lustful feelings.

One must refrain from all these tendencies, only then can he save himself from the feeling of lust.

Wrath (Anger)

When a man fails to fulfil his desires, as he had wished, a feeling of frustration begins to grow within, which gives birth to anger. If one does not support a person, or creates hurdles in the fulfilment of his desires, it creates in him a feeling of enmity and revenge against such person. When someone does not listen to you, a feeling of anger overtakes. Anger produces mental tension and makes the person crazy. When a person attempts to tread the spiritual path or his endeavour in the field of education or in any other field fails, his mind goes into depression. He takes recourse in the evil ways to minimise mental tension. He gets vexed, sulks, and gets angry. An angry man is discontented, cruel, harsh, intolerant and slanderous, and may go into depression.

If one wants to get out of such a state, one must go to the holy congregation with commitment and faith, listen to and follow the teachings of the Guru in letter and spirit, and recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion. If one develops a feeling of anger even while fighting for a righteous and altruistic cause, his fight becomes a tyranny. He ceases to be philanthropist and noble. His tyranny doesn't even spare his own innocent relatives and kin. The Gurus advises us to be broadminded, overlook the faults of others, and shed anger. They advises us to perform philanthropist deeds.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Divine Master, brought up an orphan Muslim Pathan child, Painde Khan. However, when Painde Khan became ungrateful and challenged the Guru in the battlefield, he was given three opportunities by the Guru to vent his ire. The Guru bore all three strikes of Painde Khan on his shield. After the

third strike, the Guru attacked Painde Khan and felled him in one go. The Guru then got down from His horse in the battlefield, provided shade to his face with His shield to save him from the heat of the sun, took his head in the lap and said, "Painde Khan! Read the Muslim prayer (Kalma) and obtain salvation." That was the moment when Painde Khan remembered the blessings that the Guru had bestowed upon him. With great humility, he admitted to the Guru that the latter's sword was his Kalma. This is how the Guru conducted himself, without a feeling of anger towards the one who betrayed Him and had become ungrateful.

A good teacher is the one, who first teaches his student with love and consideration. If the student does not learn and understand, he should then simply rebuke him with the intention to set him right. Such a teacher has pity and love to improve the student's fate. An angry teacher can do no good to his student.

Greed

Greed is the desire to accumulate more than what God provides man to fulfil his basic needs. Greed is the main culprit inducing man to indulge in other vices like lust, anger, and attachment to worldly possessions and achievements. After worldly achievements, including the power to rule over others, man becomes arrogant and is filled with intense pride. A greedy man wastes his valuable life, which is meant for realisation of the Divine. Under the influence of desires, greed makes a person a thief, a robber, immoral, cruel, deceitful, discontented, ungrateful, envious and a cheat. As far as possible, one must not trust a greedy person. Such a person can deceive anybody to fulfil his selfish needs. Those, who keep company of the self-willed (Manmukh), also go astray from the real path and develop ill repute, thereby wasting their lives. Guru Amardas explains the negative ways of the greedy and warns:

ਲੋਭੀ ਕਾ ਵੇਸਾਹੁ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ ਜੇ ਕਾ ਪਾਰਿ ਵਸਾਇ ॥

ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਧੁਰੈ ਜਿਥੈ ਹਥੁ ਨ ਪਾਇ ॥

ਮਨਮੁਖ ਸੇਤੀ ਸੰਗੁ ਕਰੇ ਮੁਹਿ ਕਾਲਖ ਦਾਗੁ ਲਗਾਇ ॥

ਮੁਹ ਕਾਲੇ ਤਿਨੁ ਲੋਭੀਆਂ ਜਾਸਨਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਗਵਾਇ ॥

Lobhee kaa v-ai-saah(u) na keej-ei J-ai kaa paar(i) vasaa-e.

Antt(i) kaal(i) tith-ei dhuh-ei Jith-ei hath(u) na paa-e.

Manmukh s-ai-tee sangg(u) kar-ai Muh(i) kaalakh daag(u) lagaa-e.

Muh kaal-ai tinn(h) lobheean Jaasan(i) janam(u) gavaa-e. (1417)

(As far as possible, do not trust the greedy. In the end, he will drag you where no assistance will reach. Association with the self-willed or egoistic may bring blackening and branding of the face. Black are the faces of the greedy, who depart from this world having wasted their lives.)

Under the influence of greed, man feels tempted to get different things to eat and drink. This only makes the body fall prey to several diseases. There is a saying in English: 'Eat to live, not live to eat'. A man accumulating wealth is blind and deaf towards the Divine Name. He pays no attention to the Guru's 'Word' and remains engrossed only with worldly accumulations.

A person, who is awfully engrossed in accumulation of worldly possessions and enjoying pleasures, is rendered completely blind and deaf, despite seeing others with his eyes and hearing ill of others. Thus, he is averse to hearing Hymns due to turbulence in his mind.

A man engrossed in Maya commits sinful acts, and accumulates more and more, by hook or by crook, than be content with his rightful share.

A greedy person amasses huge wealth by foul means, even rendering damage to his friends and kin. However, he is a duffer and is unaware of the fact that this will not go with him after his death.

Attachment

Attachment is the sense of possession and attraction for the world and worldly gains. It cannot be called love, because it is due to selfish or greedy motives. When a man forgets to perform his divine responsibilities as per the Divine Rules (which are for the welfare of mankind), his destined deeds take the form of attachment. He becomes so engrossed in them that he fails to fulfil his worldly duties, responsibilities and spiritual deeds. If a young person, while studying, lets his concentration go astray under the feelings of attachment, towards his home or friends (irrespective of their gender), it is sure that his studies will suffer. Similarly, parents, who do not bring up their children with a sense of their divine duty, but out of a feeling of attachment, tend to become selfish. Attachment arouses distrust and conflicts, and does not allow one to concentrate on any matter seriously. This is the root cause of various social conflicts and discords. Attachment also makes man envious and a coward.

Guru Nanak Dev makes clear these awful conditions of the greedy person in the following Hymn:

ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹਿ ਸਗਲ ਜਗੁ ਛਾਇਆ ॥ ਕਾਮਣਿ ਦੇਖਿ ਕਾਮਿ ਲੋਭਾਇਆ ॥

Maa-e-aa moh(i) sagal jag(u) chha-e-aa. Kaamanh(i) d-ai-kh(i) kaam(i) lobhaa-e-aa. (1342)

(The entire world has gone astray from the Divine Path under the influence of attachment. A lustful man gives in to his sensual desire on looking at a woman.)

Guru Amardas clarifies it in the following Hymn:

ਏਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮੋਹੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭਾਉ ਦੁਜਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

Eh maa-e-aa jitt(u) Har(i) visar-ei Moh(u) upj-ei bhaaou doojaa laa-e-aa. (921)

(He forgets God when caught in the web of Maya and love for sensuous pleasures and thus ruins his life.)

If we bring up our children, serve them as elders serve youngsters, perform worldly duties considering them as divine gifts, the feeling of attachment will not arise. Rather, there will be a feeling of fulfilment for discharging the Divine Duties. All these virtues induce deep love for realisation of the Divine within.

Pride

When a man feels proud of his material possessions, like wealth, wisdom, intelligence, and physical beauty, he is called egoistic. An egoistic person stands in opposition and enmity against good persons and considers the wicked ones, who flatter him, as his friends. Ego gives birth to envy and duality. When a proud person looks at someone inferior to him in position, he feels proud of himself. And if he looks at someone superior to him, he feels envious, which further causes enmity. A proud person is ungrateful, cruel, tyrannical, slanderous, and selfish. If such a person gives something in charity, he does so only to inflate his ego, which is the main culprit and causes man to remain entrapped in the web of transmigration. Under its influence, he makes friends and foes according to their attitude towards him. This has been illustrated by Guru Arjan Dev in the following hymn:

ਹੇ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਮੂਲੰ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੰ ਪਾਪਾਤਮਾ ॥ ਮਿਤ੍ਰੰ ਤਜੰਤਿ ਸਤ੍ਰੰ ਦ੍ਰਿੜੰਤਿ ਅਨਿਕ ਮਾਯਾ ਬਿਸ੍ਰੀਰਨਹ ॥

H-ai janam maranh mool-n ahankaar-n paapaatmaa.

Mitar-n tajant(i) satar-n dri-rhant(i) anikk maa-e-aa biseerneh. (1358)

[Egoism, the source of transmigration is the very essence of sin. Friends gets deserted and foes are attached, innumerable illusion (Maya) tricks are spread.]

On the contrary, a man with humility at his heart, discards ego and remains happy in his own humble way. The humble person, after shedding ego, leads the life of spiritual bliss.

On the other hand, many proud persons have wasted away their valuable life intoxicated by pride. Under such circumstances, friends desert them and foes with selfish motive come closer. Proud and egoistic persons ruin their lives under the intoxication of pride and thus waste their lives and ultimately go to hell, as expounded by Guru Arjan Dev in one of His hymns:

ਸੁਖੀ ਬਸੈ ਮਸਕੀਨੀਆ ਆਪੁ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ਤਲੇ ॥ ਬਡੇ ਬਡੇ ਅਹੰਕਾਰੀਆ ਨਾਨਕ ਗਰਬਿ ਗਲੇ ॥

Sukhee bas-ei maskeeneaaa aap(u) nivaar(i) tal-ai.

Bad-ai bad-ai ahankaareeaaa Nanak garab(i) gal-ai. (278)

(The humble beings abide in peace; they subdue their ego and are meek. O Nanak! The proud and arrogant are consumed by their own pride.)

Worldly Desires

When a seeker recites the Divine Name, he reaches the state of Riddhi and Siddhi (miraculous powers). The desire to seek honour and felicitation among the people is born in him. This is evidently a vice. Generally, there are three kinds of obstacles faced by those treading the Divine Path:

Desire for gaudy wearing and sumptuous eating

The physical senses are engrossed in worldly allurements and their pleasures. A real Sikh of the Guru is he, who is not keen to wear flashy and attractive clothes and eat sumptuous food. By reciting the Divine Name, he should develop such a state of mind that whatever is offered to him to eat, he should take it as the blessings of the Divine. Guru Nanak Dev in one of His hymns emphasises on contentment to tread the Divine Path:

ਛਾਦਨ ਭੋਜਨ ਕੀ ਆਸ ਨ ਕਰਈ ਅਚਿੰਤੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਏ ॥

Chhadan bhojan kee aas na kar-ee Achint(u) mil-ei so paa-e. (1013)

(The seeker should gracefully accept, for eating, whatever he gets and should not make any comment. He should also not feel jealous of others eating tasteful foods. He should also carry out all the worldly obligations as per the Divine Law. He must not fall victim to evil tendencies and thus stoop low to the level of beasts.)

Desire for Public Recognition (Acclaim)

Every egoistic person desires honour and recognition among people. These vices create a great hurdle in treading the Divine Path. The short-sighted, so to be called spiritual student desires to be praised and cannot bear criticism. On the other hand, a dedicated spiritual student takes praises as a great hurdle in treading the Divine Path. For him criticism is much better, it develops the power of tolerance and humility to subdue the ego to a great extent. This helps him to tread the Divine Path. In other words, he steadfastly treads the Divine Path without caring for praises and criticism. Guru Tegh Bahadur emphasises:

ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਦੋਊ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਖੋਜੈ ਪਦੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਨਾ ॥

Ustat(i) nindaa do-oo tiaag-ei Khoj-ei padd(u) nirbaanaa. (219)

(A seeker should shed both praise and criticism and yearn to achieve Divine Wisdom.)

A person treading the spiritual path does not pay any attention to praises and criticism. He does not become great if people sing his praises and he does not become small if someone criticises him. The seeker considers criticism and praise as equal and does not bother about either. He goes ahead to tread the Divine Path. In fact, criticism is better for the student of spirituality, for it cultivates humility in him.

Praises, on the other hand, cultivate ego, due to which the immature student of spirituality slips back. But the committed students go ahead to cultivate spiritual values.

Desires for Perpetuity

This stands for human desire to perpetuate his identity and existence. It is foolish and ignorant of him to hanker after these because nobody bothers about him after his death, especially with the passage of time. In fact, such an urge is negatively correlated with spirituality. Only divine persons are remembered by humanity even after they shed their mortal frames.

When these desires cease, in the company of the holy persons and by the grace of the Guru, the seeker reaches such a state where he overcomes all the worldly praises, criticisms, sorrows, miseries and worldly comforts which go a long way to help the student of spirituality realise the Divine within and help him get salvation in this very life.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru Nanak, amply clarifies the divine ways to get salvation in this very life:

ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥
ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਭੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥
ਨਹ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਹ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ॥
ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਆਰਉ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥
ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ॥
ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਨਰ ਕਉ ਕੀਨੀ ਤਿਹ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਲੀਨ ਭਇਓ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥
Jo nar(u) dukh m-ei dukh(u) nahee maan-ei.
Sukh saneh(u) aru bh-ei nahee jaa k-ei Kanchan maatee maan-ei.
Neh nind-e-aa neh ustat(i) jaa k-ei Lobh(u) moh(u) abhimaanaa.
Harakh sog t-ai rah-ei niaarou Naah-e maan apmaanaa.
Aaasaa mansaa sagal tiaag-ei Jagg t-ai rah-ei niraasaa.
Kaam(u) krodh(u) jeh pars-ei naahan(i) Teh ghat(i) Brahm(u) nivaasaa.
Gur kirpaa jeh nar kaou keenee Tih eh jugat(i) pachhanee.
Nanak leen bha-e-o Gobind siou Jiou paanee sangg(i) paanee. (633)

(A suffering person feels no afflictions. He should be above all worldly pleasures, attachments and fears and should consider gold and dust alike. He should not be affected by slander and praises, nor by avarice, attachment and pride. He should consider the joy and sorrows alike. He should not get swayed by honour or dishonour. He should renounce

the lure of all the worldly possessions and desires which lead to lustful and luxurious life. He should feel free from all the worldly desires. He should be free from lustful desires and anger. If he is free from lustful desires and anger, then only he perceives the Divine Reality within. He, whom God blesses with his Divine Grace, realises the path to perceive the Divine within. Says the ninth Nanak that such a person is merged with the Divine as water of rivers merges with the water of the ocean.)

Overcoming Evils in The Light of Divine Hymns

One must remain modest and virtuous so as to save himself from lust. One ought to imbibe virtues of perseverance, tolerance and forgiveness to save oneself from wrath.

One must learn to obey the Divine Will in letter and spirit and share with others whatever materialistic possessions one has, so as to save himself from greed. Cultivation of the virtues of detachment are obligatory to save himself from worldly pleasures while living in the world. One must live in humility, compassion, modesty and courtesy so as to be free from the evil of ego and pride.

Man can cultivate such divine virtues only if he lives under the influence of Divine Will. It is essential for a person that he should consider God to be present everywhere and in all beings; and respect His Will. He should tread the path shown by the Divine Masters and always remember God.

A spiritually enlightened person possesses the divine virtues of forbearance, contentment and humility. Divine powers, divine virtues and enlightenment can be acquired only after reciting the Divine Name and can be borne only if one is in a state of contentment.

ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਉਰੁ ਧੋਏ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

Bharee-ei matt(i) paapaa k-ei sangg(i). Oh(u) dhop-ei Naav-ei k-ei rangg. (4)

(Guru Nanak Dev says: The mind fouled by sin and evil may only be cleansed by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion.)

Raza, Hukam and Bhaanha

Raza, Hukam and Bhaanha are almost similar Divine Orders. A Sikh gets trained to accept them only by meditating on the Divine Name. A humble attempt to explain these terms with our limited knowledge is being made here.

Raza : Raza means the Will of God. Everything that happens in this material world is according to His Divine Will. Only a true seeker of the Guru can understand the Will of God (Raza).

Hukam : The Divine Order to perform certain acts according to the Will of

God (Raza) is the Divine Order (Hukam) of God. Everything happens under His Divine Order (Hukam) and nothing ever happens outside it. This Divine Law controls the entire Universe, as is evident from this hymn of Guru Nanak Dev:

ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

Hukm-ei andar(i) sabh(u) ko Baahar(i) hukam na ko-e. (1)

(Everyone is subject to His Command and no one is beyond it.)

When a Sikh moulds his life according to divine principles and feels His presence everywhere and in every being, he realises the Divine Order pervading everywhere.

Bhaanha : Whatever happens under the Divine Order is happening under His Will and is called His Bhaanha (divine Acceptance) under the Divine Law. Whatever happens under His Divine Order (Hukam) is always right, whether it is right or wrong according to the state of one's mind. To live according to the Divine Will (Raza), to obey His Divine Order (Hukam) and to imbibe His Divine Acceptance (Bhaanha) constitute the life of a seeker.

The Seeker always remains in His Divine Will (Raza), obeys the Divine Order (Hukam) and accepts His Bhaanha (divine Acceptance) under His Divine Will. Now the question arises as to how should a person become truthful? How should the wall of falsehood surrounding him crumble and how should the darkness of ignorance be removed? The Divine Master gives a simple solution to all these questions in the following hymn:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Kiv sach-e-aaraa ho-ee-ei Kiv koorh-ei tutt-ei paal(i).

Hukam(i) rajaaee chalnaa Nanak likh-e-aa naal(i). (1)

(Question: *How shall one be at-one with Divine Truth and how shall the veil of ignorance (selfishness, worship of body or idols) be removed?*

Answer : *O seeker after Truth! Attune yourself with the Eternal Lord, which controls the whole Universe, ever since its Creation and which is embedded in the very depths of the human soul.)*

This implies that the darkness of ignorance can only be removed by accepting His Divine Order (Hukam). Says Guru Nanak Dev:

ਜੋ ਤੁਧੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੋਈ ਚੰਗਾ ਇਕ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਅਰਦਾਸੇ ॥

Jo tudh(u) bhaav-ei soee changgaa Ik Nanak kee ardaas-ai. (795)

[A Seeker supplicates that whatever is His Divine Will (Raza), the same is true, acceptable and pleases him.]

We may or may not like what befalls us, but should accept that all will be well

under His Divine Will (Bhaanha). This has been expounded by Guru Nanak Dev in another hymn:

ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਖਾ ਬੰਧਪੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ॥
ਆਪਣੈ ਭਾਣੈ ਜੋ ਚਲੈ ਭਾਈ ਵਿਛੁੜਿ ਚੋਟਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥

So Sikh(u) sakhaa bandhap(u) h-ei bhaaee Je Gur k-ai bhaanh-ai vich(i) aav-ei.

Aapnh-ei bhaanh-ei jo chal-ei bhaaee Vichhurh(i) chotaa khaav-ei. (601)

(That Seeker is closer and dearer to the Divine, who treads according to His Will. The person, who follows his own path under his egoistic mind, would undergo miseries of the world.)

Guru Nanak Dev takes the disciple to a very high pedestal:

ਕੇਤਿਆ ਦੂਖ ਭੂਖ ਸਦ ਮਾਰ ॥ ਏਹਿ ਭਿ ਦਾਤਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਦਾਤਾਰ ॥

Ket-e-aa dookh bhookh sadd maar. Eh(i) bhi daat(i) t-ai-ree daataar. (5)

(There are many, who suffer from the pangs of disease, hunger and incessant trouble. But O Divine Father! These too are Your Gifts.)

Those, who do not accept the Will of God and remain self-oriented (Manmukh), get separated from Him and are pushed to hell due to bad deeds. Guru Arjan Dev in the following hymn expounds:

ਜਿਤਨੇ ਨਰਕ ਸੇ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਭੋਗੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਲੇਪੁ ਨ ਮਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

Jitn-ai narak s-ai Manmukh(i) bhog-ei Gurmukh(i) l-ai-p(u) na maasaa h-ai. (1073)

[The self-oriented (Manmukhs) suffer from all the pangs of evils while the God-oriented persons (Gurmukhs) abiding the Divine Law remain detached from all these sufferings.]



Principles of a Sikh (Seeker after Truth)

The Holy Congregation (Sangat)

Holy congregation is an assembly of the seekers after Truth, where the glories and divine attributes of the Supreme Being are recited to tread the Divine Path and realise the Divine within. Regular participation in the holy congregation for reciting, singing and reflecting on the hymns with full love and devotion helps the seeker to shed evil tendencies and motivate him to tread the Divine Path. The devotee starts treading the Divine Path with association of the saintly persons, who guide him to cross the worldly hurdles and attractions to realise the Divine within. It has been clarified by Guru Nanak Dev in the following hymn:

ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਕੈਸੀ ਜਾਣੀਐ ॥ ਜਿਥੇ ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੀਐ ॥

Satsangat(i) k-ei-see jaanh-ee-ei. Jith-ei eko Naam(u) vakhaanh-ee-ei. (72)

(How can we identify a holy congregation? That gathering, where only the Absolute One is remembered and His eulogy is sung, with full love and devotion, is called the holy congregation.)

Sat Sangat, i.e., company of the seekers, which is also known as Saadh Sangat, is the gathering of the seekers either in the shrines or anywhere, where the eulogies of the Divine are sung. Here the devotees sing the hymns and recite His Name (Naam). Here men and women gather together without any distinctions of caste, creed, race, religion or sex. Sometimes, such holy gatherings can also take place at homes or at other convenient places where there is no facility of reverence to install the Guru Granth Sahib. Bhagat Ravidas says:

ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਮਾਧਉ ਜੈਸੇ ਮਧੁਪ ਮਖੀਰਾ ॥

Satsangat(i) mil(i) rahee-ei maadhau J-ei-sai madhup makheeraa. (486)

(O our Divine Father! Give us the strength that we should remain cohesively in the company of Divine persons like the honey-bees in their web.)

In another hymn of the Guru Granth Sahib, the importance of the divine congregation is further emphasised by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਾਧਉ ਜੀ ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਸਿ ਤਰਿਆ ॥

M-ai-r-ai maadhau jee Satsangat(i) mil-ai se tar-e-aa. (495)

(O my Divine Father! Give me strength to remain in divine company so that I may get Divine Wisdom by shedding my ego completely.)

A holy congregation is a gathering of seekers after Truth, where everybody remembers the Divine Lord. Their outward tendencies become inward and they realise the Divine Wisdom. The evil ideas automatically calm down in their hearts, which become pure after their ego gets eradicated. Their feeling of jealousy ceases. He is inimical and hateful towards none. None is alien to him. He begins to love everybody with divine affection. Guru Arjan Dev enunciates:

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥ ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥

Bisar ga-ee sabh taat(i) paraa-ee. Jabb t-ai saadhsangat(i) moh-e paa-ee.

Naa ko b-ei-ree nahee bigaanaa Sagal sangg(i) hamm kaou ban(i) aa-ee. (1299)

(My duality has been completely eradicated ever since I joined divine company. No one is my enemy and none is a stranger. I get along with everyone.)

Through participation in the holy congregation, the influence of illusion, duality and the delusion is diminished. The seeker starts serving mankind selflessly. He concentrates on the Divine Name, recites Gurbani and moves closer to Divine Realisation. Guru Ramdas expounds:

ਵਿਚਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਵਸੈ ਜੀਉ ॥

Vich(i) sangat(i) Har(i) Prabh(u) vas-ei jeeou. (94)

(In the holy congregation, the seeker perceives the obvious presence of the Divine and see One in All and All in One.)

Guru Arjan Dev proclaims in one of His hymns:

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਆਰਾਧਨਾ ਹਰਿ ਨਿਧਿ ਆਪਾਰ ॥ ਧਰਮ ਅਰਥ ਅਰੁ ਕਾਮ ਮੋਖ ਦੇਤੇ ਨਹੀ ਬਾਰ ॥

Saadhsangg(i) aaraadhnaa Har(i) nidh(i) aapaar.

Dharam arath aru kaam mokh D-ai-t-ai nahee baar. (816)

(Through the holy congregation, man easily acquires all the four bounties (Padaraths). These are: Righteous deeds - Dharma; Needful requirements - Arth; Desire to tread the spiritual path - Kaam; Self-realisation - Moksha (the Divine Bliss.)

As the seeker begins to live by concentrating on the Divine 'Word' through his thoughts, utterances and deeds, his mind ceases to be extrovert and tends to be introvert. His love with the Divine Master increases and gradually his effort for Divine Realisation bears fruit. When the person perceives the presence of the Divine within, he reaches that stage, where he sees One in All and All in One. For him, the holy congregation is a kind of fortress, which prevents his mind from going astray and inspires it to remember the Divine Name, and ultimately, with the passage of time he realises the Divine within. It is a kind of divine laboratory, where ego is

tested. It is only through participation in the holy congregation that a person learns, by reciting the Divine Name, to shed his ego, which inspires him to imbibe the power of tolerance even in the worst circumstances. This further raises his spiritual status. An ordinary person becomes pious and holy in the company of divine persons. He thus acquires the highest spiritual state. There are many instances in Sikh history, where the company of holy persons transformed even thieves, robbers, sinners, wicked and egoists into holy persons after treading the Divine Path thereby becoming divine. There are examples of Ajamal, the sinner; Ganaka, the prostitute; Kauda, the cannibal; Sajjan, the swindler; Nurshah, the sorceress; Bhumia, the thief etc. Others include Duni Chand, Bidhi Chand, Sayyad Beg, Said Khan and Abu-ul-Turrani. This implies that howsoever great a sinner a man may be, his participation in the holy congregation helps him to tread the Divine Path honestly with love, devotion and thus merges him with the Divine as he sheds his ego completely. Guru Arjan Dev affirms this in the following hymn:

ਮੇਰੇ ਮਾਧਉ ਜੀ ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਸਿ ਤਰਿਆ ॥

M-ai-r-ai maadhau jee Satsangat(i) mil-ai se tar-e-aa. (495)

(O my Divine Father! Give me strength to remain in divine company so that I may get the Divine Wisdom by shedding my ego completely.)

Among all the species, only man has the wisdom to realise the Divine within. This can only be achieved by having utmost devotion and association with the Divine persons, who guide the Seeker to perceive the divine technique, i.e., reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion with presence of mind.

Hence, a good-for-nothing person can also achieve the highest spiritual goal by following the divine instructions, based on the Hymns of Guru Granth Sahib under the guidance of divine persons, who have completely eradicated their ego by following the hymns in letter and spirit as expounded by Guru Ramdas:

ਮਿਲਿ ਸਤਸੰਗਤਿ ਪਰਮ ਪਦੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Mil(i) satsangat(i) param padd(u) paa-e-aa. (834)

(In the company of God-conscious persons, I have obtained the supreme status.)

In Sikh faith, the seeker (Sikh) can only merge with the Divine if he joins the company of the divine persons and follows their divine instructions completely in letter and spirit after getting initiated with the Divine Nectar (Amrit), prepared as per the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh. He must give one-tenth of his earnings in charity, wake up daily at least three hours before sunrise, take bath, recite the Divine Name and Hymns as prescribed in the code of conduct of the Sikh way of life.

Company of Evil Persons (Kusangat)

If a man, according to the prevailing circumstances is caught in the bad company, who are engrossed in the worldly sensuous pleasures and intoxicants, he imbibes the same bad habits. Infused with these vices, he doesn't bother about going to the place of worship. On the contrary, he is firmly inclined to participate in the bad company of those, who drink and are engrossed in intoxicants, drugs, cruel, and lustful actions. On account of all these bad habits, he develops diseases and wastes a lot of money to cure them. Thus, he ultimately ruins his precious life and wealth, which should have been used for divine purpose to seek the divine blessings to merge with the Divine. By following the vicious circle and wicked life, he heads towards hell.

According to the teachings of the Divine Masters, the person keeping bad company is called Manmukh (self-centred) and Sakat (infidel). Speaking about the characteristics of bad company, the Muslim saint Kabir says:

ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਸੁਨਹਿ ਨ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਹਿ ॥ ਬਾਤਨ ਹੀ ਅਸਮਾਨੁ ਗਿਰਾਵਹਿ ॥

Har(i) jas(u) suneh(i) na Har(i) gunn gaaveh(i). Baatan hee asmaan(u) giraaveh(i). (332)

(These people neither sing nor listen to the praises of the Divine Lord for inculcating divine virtues. Instead, they become more egoistic and boast of a lot, as if they are worldly wise and know everything due to which they build castles in the air with their pseudo-wise talks.)

Such pseudo-saints, of course, wear symbols of religion and adorn different kinds of robes. They carry a rosary around their neck and hold a shining urn in their hands. Can they be called saints? Certainly not! One cannot become a saint by merely wearing a particular robe and donning religious symbols. Kabir says:

ਓਇ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਸੰਤ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਹਿ ਬਾਨਾਰਸਿ ਕੇ ਠਗ ॥

Oe Har(i) k-ai Sant na aakhee-eh Baanaaras(i) k-ai thagg.

(Behold! Such people are not saints, but the cheats of the holy city of India.)

Thus, we must avoid the company of the atheist and the pseudo-saint, because even a slight influence of this company can affect our journey towards Divine Realisation to a great extent. Likewise, our mind can also fall prey to evil and sensuous desires easily, which should be completely avoided by the seekers. On the contrary, we should overpower it and lead our life according to the teaching of the Divine Masters. Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਉਲਟੀ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਉਲਟੀ ਰੇ ॥ ਸਾਕਤ ਸਿਉ ਕਰਿ ਉਲਟੀ ਰੇ ॥

Ultee r-ai mann ultee r-ai. Saakat siou kar(i) ultee r-ai. (535)

(O mind! Follow the reverse path from the evils, especially from the atheists)

The slightest touch of the vessel blackened with soot, will surely sully our hands. Similarly, a banana plant, which gives fruit and has beautiful leaves, if grows up in the proximity of a thorny Jujube (Ber) tree, the leaves of the banana tree are sure to get torn when the Ber tree branch sways with the wind. In the same way, if we keep bad company, its evil effect is bound to affect us. That is why we are advised to keep company of the holy and the saintly persons even if we have to live on unpalatable food or bear some other physical hardships. We should have firm conviction that whatever God does is good for us. We must not, even unconsciously, keep the company of the wicked and the atheist (Sakat). If we do so, we shall be wasting our life. Man goes astray in the bad company by deviating from the spiritual path and remains caught in the web of transmigration. Saint Kabir warns about the effect of bad company thus:

ਕਬੀਰ ਸਾਕਤ ਸੰਗੁ ਨ ਕੀਜੀਐ ਦੁਰਹਿ ਜਾਈਐ ਭਾਗਿ ॥
ਬਾਸਨੁ ਕਾਰੋ ਪਰਸੀਐ ਤਉ ਕਛੁ ਲਾਗੈ ਦਾਗੁ ॥

**Kabir saakat sangg(u) na keejee-ei Dooreh(i) jaaee-ei bhaag(i).
Baasan(u) kaaro parsee-ei Taou kachhu laag-ei daag(u). (1371)**

(Do not associate with the faithless cynics; run away from them. If you touch a vessel stained with soot, some of the soot will stick to you.)

Kabir further advises to remain in the company of the holy, come what may:

ਕਬੀਰ ਸਾਧੂ ਕੀ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਰਹਉ ਜਉ ਕੀ ਭੂਸੀ ਖਾਉ ॥ ਹੋਨਹਾਰੁ ਸੋ ਹੋਇਹੈ ਸਾਕਤ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ ਜਾਉ ॥

**Kabir sadhu kee sangat(i) rah-ou Jaou kee bhoosee khaaou.
Hon-haar(u) so ho-e-h-ei Saakat sangg(i) na jaaou. (1396)**

(One should keep company of the saints, even if he has to take the rough barley bread and bear all kinds of hardships, but should refrain from keeping association with the atheists, due to which he gets caught in the process of birth and rebirth and suffers lots of hardships and problems.)

It is generally observed that it takes a person lot of effort and time to become spiritual, but even a brief spell of bad company corrupts the human mind. A person, thus spoilt, becomes an atheist (Saakat) and suffers immensely and ultimately goes to hell. Sheikh Farid (the Muslim saint) testifies it in one of His hymns, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਗੰਢੇਦਿਆਂ ਛਿਅ ਮਾਹ ਤੁਝੰਦਿਆ ਹਿਕੁ ਖਿਨੋ ॥

Ganddh-ai-diaan chhee-a maah Turhand-e-aa hik(u) khino. (488)

(To become Divine or to perceive the divine Wisdom takes a lot of time by keeping company of the holy persons, performing meditation and rendering good deeds. But on the other hand, under the influence of sensual pleasures, the bad company takes no time to lead a person astray from the divine Path and ruins his life which was granted to him to attain salvation.)

Some of the reasons for falling into bad company:

1. By associating with persons, who are inclined towards sensuous desires and worldly attractions
2. Watching amorous programmes on television and listening to vulgar songs
3. By eating Tamasic food and taking intoxicants
4. Getting attracted towards the latest fashions of the world
5. Reading obscene literature

There are so many examples and incidents, where bad company has left a bad effect on man.

Bad Effects of Television

Around 1970, a poor woman left her brother, who was about forty years of age in a monastery at the mercy of a holy person named Saint Harnam Singh of Rampur Khara. People would address the man as Sadhu. He was deaf and could hardly speak. His legs were partially deformed and he could not walk properly. Saint Harnam Singh looked after him with great care. He used to make him sit by his side and recite hymns from the divine scripture. The Saint would utter the Divine 'Word' Waheguru, loudly in his ear several times, and he often responded in a stammering tone saying, Wadu Wadu.

The constant company of several years, and the hymns recited by Saint Harnam Singh, left such a deep impact on this man that his physical disabilities began to disappear. His hearing started returning. After a few months, he began reading and reciting the hymns correctly. Thereafter, the saint initiated him with Amrit and showed him the Divine Path to tread on, as ordained by the tenth Divine Master, Guru Gobind Singh. After some time, his involvement with the hymns became so intense that he would be heard reciting 'Waheguru, Waheguru', even while asleep. He began to hear the sound of cosmic divine music, so much so, that his innocent utterances began to prove true.

Time went by, and Sadhu Singh now enjoyed good health. Sometimes, with the permission of Saint Harnam Singh, his brother would take him to their native home in Ludhiana. His kin would put on the television for his entertainment and he would go on watching television all day. As a result of this, his mind began to waver and his spiritual state reduced. He started behaving like any other worldly being. When he returned to Saint Harnam Singh's monastery, his mind was somewhere else. He would go on talking about television and its programmes with his companions. The Saint advised him against watching television, but he paid no heed. In the meantime, Saint Harnam Singh passed away.

One day, Sadhu Singh's brother came and took him again to Ludhiana. Back home, he remained glued to the television for about a month. He felt so addict to the television that he would not leave it even for a minute. Returning to the monastery after a month, Sadhu Singh told his companions that now he could not concentrate on reciting the Divine Name and the experience of hearing cosmic divine music had also ceased to exist. His addiction to television had become so strong that he started demanding the installation of a television in the monastery as well. He would go to the neighbours to watch television. Reciting the Divine Name was now a thing of the past, and he got more and more inclined towards fulfilment of his sensuous desires. Consequently, once again, the same old ailments took over his body. It is really surprising as to how his spiritual endeavour of more than twenty years, through meditation on the Divine Name and participation in the holy congregation, was washed away by watching television for about two months only.

Dear friends! What better example can be given of the bad effects of television? If it can lead a man astray after twenty years of devotion to the Divine, then what would be the plight of a common man or the young children?

Intoxicants and Tamasic Food

When Guru Angad Dev (the second spiritual Master of the Sikhs) was at Khadur, preaching the message of Guru Nanak Dev in the daily congregations, all the ailments of the sick, on whom the Guru's eyes fell got cured as per the Divine Will.

There was a person called Maluka. He fell in company of the pseudo-yogis and started taking alcohol, with the result that he began talking ill of Guru Angad Dev. Consequently, he began to have attacks of epilepsy. When his relatives lost all hopes of his survival, they took him to the Guru to seek His forgiveness. The Guru advised him to give up intoxicants and start remembering the Divine Name. Since he followed the command of the Guru, His blessings cured Maluka of the epilepsy attacks, and he once again attained his normal life. He enjoyed the Guru's blessings for several years. However, he fell into the company of the pseudo-saints once again and began to speak ill of Guru Angad Dev. One day, under the influence of alcohol, he started speaking ill of the Guru loudly and boasted: 'O Guru, I have taken liquor, You do whatever You can!.' While uttering these foul words, he could not control himself and fell from the roof and died.

Fashion

Prof. Ganga Singh was the Principal of Shaheed Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar. He was a renowned scholar of Sikh history, scripture and theology. He

was also a popular Sikh orator and was referred to as the right-hand man of Master Tara Singh, the renowned Sikh leader.

Once in Shimla, after the morning prayers, Prof. Ganga Singh gave a Gurbani discourse, wherein he elaborated on the divine Abode (Sach Khand). He spoke on the subject using various embellishments. The next day, the professor visited to pay his respect to Saint Attar Singh of Mastuana Wale, who was enjoying the spiritual bliss during his seclusion. Prof. Ganga Singh sat by his side. Saint Attar Singh opened his eyes and on seeing the professor, he quipped that he had painted a beautiful picture of the Abode of Spiritual Realm (Sach Khand) during his discourse the previous day. The Saint then asked him whether he had seen the Sach Khand. Prof. Ganga Singh submitted with folded hands that he only possessed the worldly knowledge of the abode of the Spiritual Realm (Sach Khand) and whatever embellishments he knew, he had added to the topic and made his presentation before the holy congregation.

To this, he added, "O Saint! Being a Divine person, you have realised the divine Abode (Sach Khand), where you always remain immersed with the Divine." He further submitted, "O Saint! Bless me so that I have a glimpse of the Divine abode." On hearing this, Saint Attar Singh went into a deep meditative contemplation. A divine light emanated from his face, which filled the entire room. Prof. Ganga Singh expressed his feelings about that moment on several occasions. He said that he had never felt such ecstasy as he had felt that day. He had experienced eternal bliss in his body, which was impossible to explain in words.

The same Prof. Ganga Singh, when sent to western countries by Master Tara Singh, to preach the Sikh tenets, fell under the evil influence of the western culture, bad company and materialistic illusions. In the bad company, he even got his long hair shorn off when he reached Paris, the capital of France. After wandering in several countries of the west, he returned to India, disappointed. Back home, he sought an apology from the Divine Master (Guru), partook Amrit to atone for his wayward behaviour, and once again dedicated himself to the service of preaching the Guru's tenets to the followers of the Sikh faith.

Pangat

Pangat is the congregation of the devotees partaking of food prepared in a common kitchen of the Sikh temple (Gurdwara) by sitting on the mat, spread on the ground. Everyone sits in a line irrespective of caste, creed, religion, age, sex or social status for taking the prepared food, keeping in view the same to be as blessing of the Divine Lord. Partaking of food in this way is called Pangat.

When Guru Nanak Dev's father gave him twenty rupees to do some business, the Guru spent that amount to provide food to the hungry ascetics. The institution of Langar or free kitchen, initiated with the blessings of Guru Nanak Dev, is now well known throughout the world as an integral part of every Sikh shrine. Herein, everybody, whether rich or poor, high or low, theist or atheist, man or woman, is offered food without any distinction of caste, creed, sex or religion. All sit side by side in a row and partake of the food.

In the Sikh tradition, Guru Amardas (third Divine Master of the Sikhs) laid great emphasis on the institution of taking food in the Pangat at the holy place. He gave instructions that whoever wished to see Him would first have to partake of food by sitting in the Pangat. This tradition of partaking of food in the Pangat is carried out even today in Sikh temples throughout the world to get the blessings of the Divine.

Once Emperor Akbar, who was a Muslim, but always sought blessings of divine persons of any faith, visited Goindwal to meet the Divine Master, Guru Amardas. When he was told of the pre-condition to meet the Guru, the Emperor partook of the food from the common kitchen by sitting in the Pangat where poor and rich were sitting and taking food. After taking food from the Langar, he went to pay obeisance to Guru Amardas and sought His blessings.

To cover the head, while visiting a Sikh shrine or any other religious place or for the Langar, is a gesture to show respect and reverence.

Miri-Piri

Guru Nanak Dev started the tradition of Miri-Piri, but the sixth Divine Master Guru Hargobind, further carried this tradition forward by wearing two swords, one symbolising the Miri and the other Piri. The bards (Dhadis) of the time, Natha and Abdulla, sang ballads commemorating this tradition.

Man has come on this earth with the sole purpose of merging with the Divine by leading the worldly life according to the Divine Law, i.e., earning his livelihood with honest toil and sharing the same with the needy and treading the spiritual path. To achieve the objective of self-realisation in this very life, there are two basic requirements. One is the human body to perform the action, and the other is the Mother Earth, which has been addressed by Guru Nanak Dev as Dharamsaal, i.e., abode for treading the Divine Path. For this, he has to pursue the life of a householder, and carry out his worldly duties on the pattern as enunciated by the Divine Masters. Treading the Divine Path, in association with the divine persons, and meditating on the Divine Name, is the true way to become divine in this very life and attaining self-realisation.

This pattern, through which even while leading the life of a householder one merges with the Divine, is called Miri and Piri.

Leading the Worldly Life According to the Divine Will (Miri)

Living on this earth, one should spend life as a good householder, earning a livelihood honestly, sharing the same with the needy and rendering other obligations, i.e., social, administrative and religious selflessly by remaining detached from material allurements. He may even have to sacrifice his life for the protection of the weak, downtrodden and women. This is known as "Miri". The seeker performs the worldly affairs as per the Will of God through which he can minimise his worldly needs and ego. By so doing, he starts treading the Divine Path of meditating on the Divine Name faithfully with honest toil, to reach the Divine Realm of Piri. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Nanak exclaims:

ਕਰਮ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਿਹਕਰਮ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਬੈਸਨੋ ਕਾ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਧਰਮ ॥

Karam karat hov-ei nehkaram. Tis(u) b-ei-sno kaa nirmal Dharam. (274)

After performing all good deeds, one should develop the feeling that these have been got done by the Divine through this humble devotee. Thus, these holy deeds of the person motivate him to tread the Divine Path to merge with the Almighty Lord.

The Divine Kingdom (Piri)

After performing the duties of the Miri, honestly and with divine devotion, one enters the stage of Piri. It is that divine stage, which is achieved by a person by meditating on the Divine Name, keeping in view that the Omnipresent is residing within him. By reciting the Divine Name honestly, one sheds his ego completely and merges with the Divine within. After attaining this spiritual stage, he perceives the presence of the Divine Lord not only in every cell of his body, but also in the entire cosmos. In this state, he gets complete Divine Knowledge and becomes Divine (Brahamyani). Such a divine person provides the spiritual guidance to humanity irrespective of caste, creed, region or religion. He also fulfils his mission, for which he has taken birth. This stage is also called transcendental meditation of the Divine Lord within.

Worship of the Divine (Pooja Akal Ki)

Recitation of the Divine 'Word' (Parcha Shabad Ka)

Association with the Divine person (Deedar Khalse Ka)

The father of Bhai Chaupa Rai was a devout Sikh during the time of the sixth Divine Master of the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind. Chaupa himself was a devoted Sikh

of Guru Har Rai and Guru Tegh Bahadur (seventh and ninth Divine Masters respectively). He had also performed the duties of attending to the divine child, Gobind Rai, son of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Patna Sahib in Bihar, the child went on to become the tenth Divine Master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh. Chaupa also taught the divine child the Gurmukhi language. When the Guru migrated to Anandpur Sahib, Chaupa remained in the Guru's service. On the Vaisakhi of 1699, when the Guru initiated the Khalsa, Bhai Chaupa Rai also received the Divine Nectar (Amrit) and got transformed from Chaupa Rai to Chaupa Singh. He remained in service of the Divine Master until the latter reached Nanded in Maharashtra. When the Guru found him firm in his commitment to the Sikh way of life, he directed him to write a Code of Conduct for Sikhs (Rehatnama) under his supervision. On hearing this commandment, Bhai Chaupa Singh humbly requested the Guru: 'O great Divine Master! I do not possess any merit and wisdom to delineate the code of conduct (Rehatnama) of Khalsa.' The Divine Master told him to start writing the Code, as desired, and the Guru himself would guide him in preparing the treatise. Thus, Chaupa Singh wrote the Rehatnama, which is known among the Sikhs as Hazoori Rehatnama or Rehatnama Bhai Chaupa Singh. In this Rehatnama, Bhai Chaupa Singh demarcates three principles of the Sikh way of life:

Worship of the Divine (Pooja Akal Ki)

The Gurus have directed the Sikhs to worship only one God. By prefixing the words Ik Onkar to the Sikh Divine scripture, Guru Nanak implies that the God is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the manifestation of this entire world. The Guru reiterates that there is One Almighty Lord, who is present everywhere. The Sikh must praise the Divine Lord, by reciting Gurbani and meditating on the Divine Name by perceiving the presence of the Divine within.

Recitation of the Divine 'Word' (Parcha Shabad Ka)

By reciting the Divine 'Word', the Sikh would achieve the Divine in this very life. This is the only way enunciated in the Divine Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib. As such, he should not worship any idol, image, picture, tomb etc. A Sikh should recite Gurbani and meditate on the Divine Name according to the Code of Conduct of the Guru, and tread the divine path faithfully with honest toil. He should refrain from following the Code of Conduct of any other religion, which could create confusion in his mind, because everything for attaining spirituality has explicitly been defined by the tenth Divine Master, Guru Gobind Singh, Himself. A person, who follows the teachings of the hymns attains the stage of equipoise in this very

life, otherwise he remains in the domain of illusion. Shabad Guru guides the Sikh to attain the stage of detachment and immerse himself in the Divine Love. Guru Nanak Dev enunciates:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰਾ ਗਹਿਰ ਗੰਭੀਰਾ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਬਦੈ ਜਗੁ ਬਉਰਾਨੰ ॥
ਪੂਰਾ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਸਗਜਿ ਸੁਭਾਗੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨੰ ॥

Sabad(u) Gur peera gehar gambheeraa Binn(u) Sabad-ei jagg(u) baouraan-n.

Poora b-ei-raagee sehaj(i) subhaagee Sach(u) Nanak mann(u) maan-n. (635)

[Shabad Guru (the Divine 'Word') is the Divine Himself, which is beyond the imagination of the human intellect. Without recitation of the Divine 'Word', one experiences all types of hells (miseries). Whoever recites the Divine 'Word', remains fully detached from the vicious circle of worldly affairs by performing worldly duties faithfully, according to the perception of the divine instructions with full devotion. Guru Nanak Dev says, 'Such a seeker would be instilled with Divine Truthfulness.]

Association with the Divine person (Deedar Khalse Ka)

A Sikh (seeker after Truth) is ordained to seek company of only those Guru-oriented persons (Gursikhs), who have moulded their lives according to the Sikh ethos and emulate their deeds and actions in life. This, in reality, is the true vision (Didar) of the pure One, i.e., Khalsa (the Divine Person).

To be in the holy congregation, in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, is like having a glimpse of the 'pure one' (Khalsa). Due to divinely atmosphere, the seeker feels the obvious presence of the Almighty Lord in the holy congregation.

Guru Nanak Dev expounds that in the holy company of the Divine persons, it has been perceived that the presence of the Divine Master is always realised due to pious atmosphere. He showers His spiritual bounties, wherever His eulogies to tread the Divine Path are recited with full love and devotion:

ਵਿਚਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਵਸੈ ਜੀਉ ॥

Vich(i) sangat(i) Har(i) Prabh(u) vas-ei jeeou. (94)

(Due to the divine atmosphere, the seeker feels the obvious presence of the Lord in the holy congregation.)

Degh Tegh Fateh

Degh: The concept of Degh Tegh Fateh in Sikh way of life began with Guru Nanak Dev, feeding the hungry ascetics with the eatables purchased with twenty rupees, which his father gave him to do some business. By doing so, the Guru founded the institution of free community kitchen (Langar) and imbibed among his followers a feeling of detachment for worldly possessions and the desire to share with others

whatever they possessed. The Sikhs pray daily, 'O Divine Lord! Bestow upon us your blessings so that we may share our bounties as showered upon us by You amongst not only members of our family, but also with whosoever comes.' In the Gurdwaras, free food is served to everybody whoever visits irrespective of caste, creed or religion. This is in accordance with the Guru's teaching for seeking His blessings. Even today, as a matter of principle, whoever visits the house of a Sikh for any purpose, he is first offered something to eat.

Degh, thus, stands for the fulfilment of fundamental needs of mankind with the blessings of the Almighty Lord.

Tegh: The word Tegh means that the disciple of the Divine Master realises within him the Divine Power, bestowed upon him by the Divine Lord. By doing so, he should overpower the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and thereby eradicate his egoistic tendencies completely. The Sikh should be aware of such egoistic persons in whom these evil tendencies are strong. He should protect the poor and the weak, accordingly. The perception of the Divine Power (Tegh) comes when the ego in man gets totally eradicated and his inner self gets enlightened. Such a person becomes a divine warrior, conquers his ego, and becomes altruistic.

The seeker, in whom the Divine Name shines forth in its pristine glory, comes to possess the power of millions of strong armies. Enunciates Guru Arjan Dev:

ਜਿਸੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਕੋਟ ਕਈ ਸੈਨਾ ॥

Jis(u) Naam(u) rid-ei Tis(u) kot kae s-ei-naa. (1155)

(One, who is intuned with the Divine Name completely after eradicating his ego, becomes a divine person and acquires the power of millions of armies.)

Conquering the mind and keeping it above all worldly desires, is the real conquest of the whole world, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev in this hymn:

ਮਨਿ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤੁ ॥

Mann(i) jeet-ei jagg(u) jeet(u). (6)

(Conquering the egoistic and wavering mind by shedding the ego completely is the real conquest of the whole world spiritually.)

Fateh : 'Conquering the mind, i.e., eradication of its ego completely by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. He, who has done it, is in fact, the conquerer of the world.'

Selfless Service (Sewa)

Service rendered with full devotion and without selfish motives is, the pre-requisite to tread the holy path to realise the Divine within.

Guru Amardas, the third Nanak proclaims that the service rendered according

to the Divine Instructions of the Guru is the supreme meditation and is acceptable at the Divine Portal. Renunciation of the worldly life; meditating and living in austerity in forests, caves and cellars; and torturing the body to accumulate occult powers, cannot be compared with the virtues of selfless service. By rendering selfless service, the seeker's ego is eliminated and the Divine Light becomes resplendent in his mind:

ਗੁਰ ਸੇਵਾ ਤਪਾਂ ਸਿਰਿ ਤਪੁ ਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਮਨਿ ਵਸੈ ਸਭ ਦੁਖ ਵਿਸਾਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥

Gur sewa tapan sirr(i) tapp(u) saar(u).

Har(i) jeeou mann(i) vass-ei Sabh dookh visaarnh-haar. (423)

(The Divine service is much higher than undergoing all sorts of penances and ascetic disciplines. Due to this, the Divine manifests in the heart of that person, who renders the holy service, and thereby gets rid of all the sufferings and miseries of the world.)

By rendering selfless service, one becomes humble and courteous. Mind gets purified and unites with the Divine. Guru Ramdas, the fourth Divine Master proclaims that only the service rendered with devotion is accepted at the Divine Portal:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸਫਲੁ ਹੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਕਰੇ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇ ॥ ਮਨਿ ਚਿੰਦਿਆ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵਣਾ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਜਾਇ ॥

Satgur kee sewa safal(u) h-ei J-ai ko kar-ai chitt(u) laa-e.

Mann(i) chind-e-aa phal(u) paavnhaa Haum-ei vich-hu jaa-e. (644)

(Service to the Guru is fruitful and rewarding, if one performs it with full love and devotion with his mind focused on it. The fruits of the mind's desires are obtained and egoism departs from within.)

A man who does this kind of selfless service attains Divine Wisdom and salvation by eradicating his ego completely.

A householder while leading a normal life, should develop his mental state in such a way that he considers all his relations, including parents, siblings, children and others, as God gifted companions. He should realise that it is his divine duty to serve them. He prays to God to seek His blessings to transform the kids into enlightened Sikhs. He considers everything, his business and job etc. as God's blessings to render service to Him truthfully with honest toil. He develops this attitude of service that everything is bestowed upon him by the Divine, and it is his duty to fulfil His command. In this way, one is rendering divine service by leading the life of a householder. One renders holy service to the Divine and gets His divine blessings to fulfil the divine desires of his life.

According to the Sikh way of life, three kinds of services are considered important for attaining Divine Wisdom viz., the selfless service rendered with (i) wealth, (ii) body and (iii) mind.

The basic self-service is contribution of wealth for a divine cause. By doing so, man imbibes a feeling of detachment from wealth. In other words, he does not accumulate it for worldly pleasures, but spends the same for the noble cause of humanity as destined by the Divine. After his mind gets detached from wealth and material possessions, he gets closer to God. In order to get Divine Wisdom, the next service is putting the body to use for rendering the noble service to humanity for creating spiritual atmosphere. Due to these services the mind becomes divinely strong and always remains in service with the Divine within by reciting the Divine Name and motivating others to follow the Divine Path. By rendering physical service selflessly, one's mind rises above bodily comforts and attachments, and develops the mental strength to withstand hardships while rendering strenuous service. As a result, his consciousness spontaneously develops devotion, love and an urge to realise the Divine within by getting rid of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, pride and attachment. In this way, one treads the Divine Path, eradicating the ego completely, and is united with the Supreme Being. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master of Sikhs affirms that only that person realises God, who renders selfless-service:

ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਹਕਾਮੀ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਹੋਤ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ॥

Sewa karat ho-e nehkaamee. Tis kaou hoat praapat(i) suaamee. (286)

(While rendering service, one should develop the feeling that it is being done with the blessings of the Divine. In this way, he fully submits to the Divine to render selfless service which leads him to realise the Divine within.)

1. Service through Wealth

This means to earn one's livelihood through honest toil and then part with at least one-tenth of the earnings for the welfare and holy causes of humanity. This enables the seeker to tread the Divine Path for obtaining self-realisation as clearly illustrated by Guru Nanak Dev in the following hymn:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

Ghaal(i) khaa-e kichh(u) hath-hu d-ai-e. Nanak raah(u) pachhanheh(i) s-ai-e. (1245)

(One, who toils hard to earn his livelihood and parts with one-tenth of his earnings, for the divine Cause; only then can one find the divine Path to tread upon for attaining self-realisation.)

2. Manual Service

This means to serve with one's own hands and feet for the welfare of humanity to seek blessings of the Divine Lord. Guru Arjan Dev proclaims that every seeker

should render physical service for the Divine cause, waving the hand like a fan over the devotees; carrying water for them; and grinding grains for the free kitchen, besides rendering other manual services for the welfare of humanity. By doing so, the seeker gets associated with the divine persons to tread the spiritual path for realising the Divine:

ਪਖਾ ਫੇਰੀ ਪਾਣੀ ਢੋਵਾ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਕੈ ਪੀਸਣੁ ਪੀਸਿ ਕਮਾਵਾ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਸਿ ਬੇਨੰਤੀ ਤੇਰੇ ਜਨ ਦੇਖਣੁ ਪਾਵਾ ॥

Pakhaa ph-ai-ree paanhee ddhovaa Har(i) jann k-ei peesanh(u) pees(i) kamaavaa.

Nanak kee Prabh paas(i) b-ai-nantee T-ai-r-ai jann d-ai-khanh(u) paavaa. (749)

(Give me strength to wave the hand fan for comfort of the holy congregation, carry water for them and grind the grains for preparing food for the holy gathering while reciting the Divine Name. Grant me association of the holy persons for treading on the Divine Path.)

Bhai Gurdas, a renowned Sikh scholar, also says:

ਵਿਣੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਧਿਗੁ ਹਥ ਪੈਰ ਹੋਰ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਕਰਣੀ ॥

Vinh(u) sewa dhrigg(u) hatth p-ei-r Hor nehphal karnhee.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 27, Pauri 10)

(Cursed be those hands and feet that do not serve the seekers after Truth. On the other hand, they are rather engaged in false and futile pursuits.)

3. Service with the Mind

Service with the mind means to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion and inspire others to do so. To achieve this, the seeker should refrain from the vices, which pollute the mind. Lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - are obstacles in the recitation of the Divine Name. Controlling these vices is the victory over the mind. To obey the command of the Guru in letter and spirit, and to live as per His Divine Will is the greatest service with the mind. To obtain the ultimate goal of life is to get Divine Wisdom. Selfless service of mankind is the prerequisite for meditation on the Divine Name. Service of the mind can be rendered only by the one who has love and devotion for the Divine and it comes with the perception and recitation of His glories. Service of the mind, in fact, is reciting the Divine Name with full faith, love and devotion.

In the below mentioned hymn, Guru Arjan Dev proclaims:

ਮਨੁ ਬੇਚੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਪਾਸਿ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਸੇਵਕ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਜ ਰਾਸਿ ॥

Mann b-ai-ch-ei Sat(i)gur k-ei paas(i). Tiss(u) sewak k-ai kaaraj raas(i). (286)

(One who surrenders his mind to his Divine Master completely by rendering divine service, has in fact eradicated his ego completely, and his motive to come to this world is fulfilled because he has realised the Divine. This is the sole purpose of human life.)

Guru Amardas also further clarifies:

ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਧਨੁ ਸਭੁ ਸਉਪਿ ਗੁਰ ਕਉ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

Tann(u) mann(u) dhann(u) sabh(u) saoup(i) Gur kaou Hukam(i) mann-i-ei paaee-ei. (918)

(O divine disciple! Submit your body, mind and wealth to the Divine Master, and render the Divine service according to His Will. While doing so, you will eradicate your ego completely, and thus realise the Divine.)

How best to serve mankind? Guru Arjan Dev, proclaims that one has to eradicate the ego completely, if one wants to serve humanity to perceive Divine Wisdom. One may even have to lay down one's life for this purpose for only this will lead man to the Divine Realm.

Therefore, rendering selfless service is a very difficult task, but doing so enables a man to receive Divine Wisdom from the True Guru, and provides him with an opportunity to realise the Divine Reality.

Guru Amardas, in the following hymn emphasises:

ਸਤਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਗਾਖੜੀ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਇ ॥ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਹਿ ਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੇਵਾ ਪਵੈ ਸਭ ਥਾਇ ॥

Satgur kee sewa gaakhrhee Sirr(u) deej-ei aap(u) gvaa-e.

Sabad(i) mileh(i) taa Har(i) mil-ei Sewa pav-ei sabh thaa-e. (27)

(Devotion to the Divine Master is an arduous task, and it comes by giving up all worldly desires by shedding the ego completely. The Guru testifies that undoubtedly divine service is very hard and everybody is not fortunate enough to be blessed with an opportunity to serve others selflessly. However, one who gets the blessings of the Divine Master attains the Eternal bliss.)

Guru Ramdas, tells us in the following hymn:

ਗੁਰ ਪੀਰਾਂ ਕੀ ਚਾਕਰੀ ਮਹਾਂ ਕਰੜੀ ਸੁਖ ਸਾਰੁ ॥

Gur peeraan kee chaak-ree Mahaan kar-rhee sukh saar(u). (1422)

(Rendering service to the divine persons selflessly is very arduous, but at the same time highly blissful.)

The Guru further makes it clear by citing a few examples. Just as an elephant moves ahead as commanded by its trainer, who is riding on its back, holding a spear in his hand to control the elephant, and just as the blacksmith places the solid block of iron under the strike of a hammer, similarly man should also serve the Guru by dedicating his mind and body towards Him completely. This will not only earn him the Guru's blessings, but also help him to merge with the Divine, who rules the whole of creation:

ਹਸਤੀ ਸਿਰਿ ਜਿਉ ਅੰਕਸੁ ਹੈ ਅਹਰਣਿ ਜਿਉ ਸਿਰੁ ਦੇਇ ॥

ਮਨੁ ਤਨੁ ਆਗੈ ਰਾਖਿ ਕੈ ਉਭੀ ਸੇਵ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

ਇਉ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਆਪੁ ਨਿਵਾਰੀਐ ਸਭੁ ਰਾਜੁ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਕਾ ਲੇਇ ॥

Hastee sirr(i) jiou ankas(u) h-ei Ehanh(i) jiou sirr(u) d-ai-e.

Mann(u) Tann(u) aag-ei raakh(i) k-ei Oobhee sev kar-ai-e.

Eou Gurmukh(i) aap(u) nivaaree-ei Sabh(u) raaj(u) srisat(i) kaa l-ai-e. (647)

Guru Arjan Dev, in a hymn amply clarifies that a person who follows the instinct of his mind and does not serve the Divine is called a Manmukh (self-oriented) who is engrossed in his egoistic mind. He just wastes his precious life, and remains entrapped in the cycle of birth and rebirth:

ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਹੋ ਸਾਕਤ ਆਵਹਿ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

Bin(u) Har(i) sewa sukh(u) nahee ho Saakat aaveh(i) jaahe. (214)

By devotedly following the teachings of his Guru, Bhai Lehna, the embodiment of selfless service, attained such spiritual perfection that although a shopkeeper, he was anointed by Guru Nanak Dev as his successor. During the ceremony of succession, Guru Nanak Dev went round him five times and then bowed before him. Never before during his travels spanning over two decades, had Guru Nanak Dev bowed before anyone. When Guru Nanak Dev circumambulated five times and bowed his head before Bhai Lehna, who humbly submitted with tears in his eyes: 'O My Divine Master! I am Your humble creature and You are the Divine Lord and as such, You are bowing before Your humble servant.' Guru Nanak Dev said, 'O Bhai Lehna! I do not bow before your physical frame, but the Divine within you, which has become One with mine. Thus, I am bowing before the Divine One.' Similarly, all the succeeding Divine Masters too attained the status of Nanak by selfless service and following the order of their Divine Masters in letter and spirit, keeping in mind the divine humility and faith showered by their Divine Masters. This is a unique example in the history of mankind, when a Guru bowed before his disciple, who became divine by following His divine instructions in letter and spirit.

We find several other instances of enlightened persons in Sikh history. Shining among them are Baba Buddha, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Ghanaiya and the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piare), who offered their heads to Guru Gobind Singh.

Kirat Karni, Vand Chhakna, Naam Japna

Honest Toil (Kirat Karni)

The Guru ordains every Sikh to earn his living through honest toil, keeping in mind the divine humility showered by the Divine Guru. This is the Dharma. The seeker should perform all his duties as if ordained by the Divine Lord. His duty becomes meditation of the Divine and he performs it according to His Divine Will. Thus, his work becomes worship of the Divine.

Bhai Gurdas, in one of his odes, guides the seeker how to tread the Divine Path:

ਕਿਰਤਿ ਵਿਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਹਥੁ ਦੇਕੇ ਭਲਾ ਮਨਾਵੈ ॥

Kirat(i) virat(i) kar(i) Dharam dee Hath-hu d-ai-k-ai bhalaa manaav-ei.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 6, Pauri 12)

(Earn your living according to the Divine Will, and share with the needy who treads the Divine Path.)

Namdev, a saint of the 15th century offers advice to his contemporary Saint Trilochan in the hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਨਾਮਾ ਕਹੈ ਤਿਲੋਚਨਾ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਰਾਮੁ ਸੰਮਾਲਿ ॥ ਹਾਥ ਪਾਉ ਕਰਿ ਕਾਮੁ ਸਭੁ ਚੀਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Naamaa kah-ei Tilochanaa Mukh t-ai Ram samhaal(i).

Haath paaou kar(i) kaam(u) sabh(u) Cheet(u) Niranjan naal(i). (1376)

(O dear Trilochan! Chant the Divine Name with your tongue while performing your worldly duties automatically through your hands and feet, let your conscious remain intuned with the love of the Divine Lord.)

There is a spiritual story behind this hymn. Namdev was a renowned saint of his time and Trilochan, having heard of the former's glory, was curious to see Him and nurtured an urge to become His disciple and learn how to tread the spiritual Path with full love and devotion and attain self-realisation. However, on meeting Namdev, he was amazed to find him engaged in printing fabric and constantly uttering the Divine Name with every breath: Ram... Ram... Ram... Ram. Seeing Namdev engrossed in this worldly activity, doubts arose in Trilochan's mind about the spirituality of Namdev. Before he met Namdev, Trilochan had envisioned Nama (Saint Namdev), living in a secluded place or in a cave, constantly engaged in meditating on the Divine Name. A sense of disbelief on Trilochan's face made Namdev clarify his doubts in His hymn cited above.

A Sikh is enjoined to work hard to make an honest living and while doing so, his mind should remain reciting the Divine Name. He must be upright and must not have any attachment with any of the worldly affairs. Guru Nanak Dev affirms:

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੂਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥

Hakk(u) praa-e-aa Nanakaa Us(u) sooarr us(u) gaa-e.

Gur(u) peer(u) haamaa taa bhar-ai Jaa murdaar(u) na khaa-e. (141)

(Grabbing the rights of others is a grievous sin - like the eating of beef for a Hindu, or the eating of pig's meat for a Muslim. By the same reasoning, to kill an animal for food is to take away its right of life. And in the Divine Court, no one will plead for such a sinner.)

He who earns his wealth by honest means and acts righteously, receives the divine blessings and thus prospers.

Sharing (Vand Chhakna)

The concept of Daswandh, i.e., tithe (One-tenth of one's earning to be set apart for the noble cause).

A Sikh, who desires to tread the Divine Path, must part with at least one-tenth of his earnings for the welfare of mankind, to tread the Divine Path. He should feel that all his wealth and material possessions are the gifts of God.

Generally, when worldly people offer money for benevolent causes, they usually do so with an egoistic feelings and for seeking praises from the society, which detracts from the merit of the act of charity. There are very few people, who, having eradicated their ego, consider their wealth as a gift of the True Lord and spend it for the spiritual uplift of humanity. Only such people can be said to have attained the true purpose of life. In this respect Guru Ramdas has clearly proclaimed:

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

Ghaal(i) khaa-e kichh(u) hath-hu d-ai-e. Nanak raah(u) pachhanheh(i) s-ai-e. (1245)

(One who toils hard to earn his livelihood, and parts with one-tenth of his earnings for the Divine Cause finds the Divine Path to tread upon for attaining self-realisation.)

He, whose intent is self-realisation, is enjoined to show compassion towards all living beings and must not bear malice towards anyone. He must part with one-tenth of his earnings for the divine cause; clarifies Guru Nanak Dev in the following hymn:

ਦਇਆ ਜਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਕੀ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੁੰਨੁ ਦਾਨੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

Da-e-aa jaanh-ei jee-a kee Kichh(u) punn(u) daan(u) kar-ai-e. (468)

It should be clearly understood that contributing one-tenth of one's income to the divine cause is the first step to overcome the evil of cravings and greediness and it starts mitigating one's ego.

In the same way, a Sikh is expected to devote at least one-tenth of his time out of a total of 24 hours to worship the True Lord, and recite His Divine Name and Gurbani to eradicate his ego completely.

Meditation on the Divine Name (Naam Japna)

The devoted Sikh earns his livelihood by honest toil and sets aside a part of his earnings for noble causes so that he can tread the Divine Path with full love and devotion. Anyone, who does not recite the Divine Name and instead remains engrossed in the sensual pleasures or engaged in accumulation of worldly possessions, wastes his precious life.

Guru Ramdas in the following hymn warns humanity that the real purpose of coming in this world is to recite the Divine Name for merging with the Divine within:

ਜਿਨ ਹਰਿ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਬਸਿਓ ਤਿਨ ਮਾਤ ਕੀਜੈ ਹਰਿ ਬਾਂਝਾ ॥

Jinn Har(i) hird-ei Naam(u) na bas-e-o Tinn maat keej-ei Har(i) baanjhaa. (697)

(Those, who have not realised the Truth within, by reciting the Divine Name, their mother should have remained infertile.)

Conduct of a Sikh (seeker after Truth)

A Sikh must love all, and his speech should reflect humility. Gentleness of speech and attitude of divine humility and modesty are the qualities that lead the seeker to tread the Divine Path for realisation of the Divine within, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev:

ਮਿਠਤੁ ਨੀਵੀ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਗੁਣ ਚੰਗਿਆਈਆ ਤਤੁ ॥

Mitthat(u) neevēe Nanaka Gunh chang-e-aeeaa tatt(u). (470)

Humility, forgiveness, gentle and soothing speech and power of tolerance are the highest divine virtues to tread the holy path for realisation of the Divine within, as enunciated by the Muslim saint, Sheikh Farid:

ਨਿਵਣੁ ਸੁ ਅਖਰੁ ਖਵਣੁ ਗੁਣੁ ਜਿਹਬਾ ਮਣੀਆ ਮੰਤੁ ॥ ਏ ਤ੍ਰੈ ਭੈਣੇ ਵੇਸ ਕਰਿ ਤਾਂ ਵਸਿ ਆਵੀ ਕੰਤੁ ॥

Nivanh(u) su akhar(u) khavanh(u) gunh(u) Jihbaa manheea mantt(u).

Ai tr-ei bh-ei-nh-ai v-ai-s kar(i) Taan vas(i) aavee Kantt(u). (1384)

Guru Nanak Dev adds that by harsh speech and unkind words, human body as well as the mind get engrossed in filthy affairs and undergo several miseries:

ਨਾਨਕ ਫਿਕੈ ਬੋਲਿਐ ਤਨੁ ਮਨੁ ਫਿਕਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

Nanak phikk-ei boli-ei Tann(u) mann(u) phikkaa ho-e. (473)

Diet

Guru Nanak Dev cautions the seeker in the following hymn: 'O seeker after Truth! Eat not such food as makes the body sick and arouses passions in the mind. Avoid sumptuous and rich foods, which cause distraction of the mind, due to which the seeker cannot concentrate on the Divine Name to get the blessings of the Almighty Lord.'

ਬਾਬਾ ਹੋਰੁ ਖਾਣਾ ਖੁਸੀ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਧੈ ਤਨੁ ਪੀੜੀਐ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਵਿਕਾਰ ॥

Baba hor(u) kxanhaa khusee khuaar(u).

Jitt(u) khaadh-ei tann(u) peerhee-ei Mann meh(i) chaleh(i) vikaar. (16)

Guru Nanak Dev further clarifies that such life is useless which is engrossed in constantly taking sumptuous food due to which the belly protrudes, and one becomes obese, and is unable to tread the Divine Path.

ਫਿਟੁ ਇਵੇਹਾ ਜੀਵਿਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਇ ਵਧਾਇਆ ਪੇਟੁ ॥

Phitt(u) ivehaa jeev-e-aa Jitt(u) khaa-e vadhaa-e-aa pait(u). (790)

In a hymn mentioned below Guru Nanak Dev adds, 'More a man is engrossed in attachments, pseudo-love and endless tastes of the tongue by eating sumptuous

food, the more he ruins his life. Due to these animal instincts, he cannot think of treading the Divine Path.

ਜੇਤਾ ਮੋਹੁ ਪਰੀਤਿ ਸੁਆਦ ॥ ਸਭਾ ਕਾਲਖ ਦਾਗਾ ਦਾਗ ॥

J-ai-taa moh(u) preet(i) suaad. Sabhaa kaalakh daagaa daag. (662)

Guru Arjan Dev expounds in the under-mentioned hymn that without reciting the Divine Name, whatever one wears or eats is just like a dog that goes on licking every pot, containing leftovers. This is the state of a lustful and greedy dog, similar to the one of greedy and lustful persons:

ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਜੋ ਪਹਿਰੈ ਖਾਇ ॥ ਜਿਉ ਕੂਕਰੁ ਜੂਠਨ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਇ ॥

Naam binaa jo pehir-ei khaa-e. Jio(u) kookar(u) joothann meh(i) paa-e. (240)

Bhai Gurdas, a renowned divine scholar of Sikh faith expounds:

ਹਉ ਤਿਸੁ ਘੋਲਿ ਘੁਮਾਇਆ ਥੋੜਾ ਸਵੈ ਥੋੜਾ ਹੀ ਖਾਵੈ ॥

Haou tis(u) ghol(i) ghumaa-e-aa Thorhaa sav-ei thorhaa hee khaav-ei.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 12, Pauri 4)

(He, who eats and sleeps moderately is befitting for treading the Divine Path.)

Guru Gobind Singh advises the seeker that one should take moderate food and sleep just for sustenance. He should develop the virtues of humbleness and forgiveness and develop Divine Love for the Eternal One:

ਅਲਪ ਅਹਾਰ ਸੁਲਪ ਸੀ ਨਿੰਦ੍ਰਾ ਦਯਾ ਛਿਮਾ ਤਨ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ॥

Alapp aahaar sulapp see nindraa Da-e-aa chhimaa tann preet(i).

(Ramkali Patshahi 10)

The student of spirituality should cultivate such divine virtues that he should take minimum need-based food and sleep and imbibe divine virtues like compassion, forgiveness and devotional love to realise the Divine within.

In a nutshell, according to all these spiritual examples, spirituality is positively co-related with need-based sleeping and eating, for sustenance.

Proper Attire of the Seeker (Sikh)

These days, people are generally crazy about fashion. They follow fashion trends and like to show-off by wearing gaudy and designer clothes. These acts only produce sensual thoughts and inflate their ego, and they become self-oriented.

Therefore, dress of the seeker ought to be simple and should be a role model for others treading the Divine Path, so that the evil thoughts of greed and desire do not creep into the mind. Guru Arjan Dev warns:

ਵਾਉ ਸੰਦੇ ਕਪੜੇ ਪਹਿਰਹਿ ਗਰਬਿ ਗਵਾਰ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਲਿ ਨ ਚਲਨੀ ਜਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਹੋਏ ਛਾਰੁ ॥

Vaao sand-ai kapparh-ai Peh(i)reh(i) garab(i) gavaar.

Nanak naal(i) na chalnee Jal(i) bal(i) ho-e chhar(u). (318)

(After death, these costly and provocative clothes do not go with the subtle body, but like all other material possessions, are burnt to ashes.)

Humility

If a seeker after Truth wants to tread the spiritual path shown by the Divine Master, he ought to look for virtues in others and demerits of his own. In this manner, the student of spirituality (Sikh) can develop humility and make endeavours to remove his demerits. If a man who is able to erase his ego completely and remains humble and still has feelings that no one is worse than him, such a student of spirituality gets the blessings of God to swim across the ocean of miseries and worldly desires as asserted by Guru Nanak Dev in the following hymn:

ਹਮ ਨਹੀ ਚੰਗੇ ਬੁਰਾ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਣਵਤਿ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਾਰੇ ਸੋਇ ॥

Hamm nahee changg-ai buraa nahee ko-e. Pranhvat(i) Nanak taar-ai so-e. (728)

Bhagat Farid also reiterates:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜੇ ਤੂ ਅਕਲਿ ਲਤੀਫੁ ਕਾਲੇ ਲਿਖੁ ਨ ਲੇਖ ॥ ਆਪਨੜੇ ਗਿਰੀਵਾਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਰੁ ਨੀਵਾਂ ਕਰਿ ਦੇਖੁ ॥

Farida j-ai too akal(i) lateef(u) Kaal-ai likh(u) na l-ai-kh.

Aapnarh-ai gireevaan meh(i) Sirr(u) neenvaa kar(i) d-ai-kh(u). (1378)

(If you are intelligent then don't accumulate bad thoughts in your mind, rather look within to remove the same if there is any and cultivate divine virtues.)

Respect for Womanhood

All Divine Masters (Gurus) laid great stress on empowerment and emancipation of women and made them equal partners in treading the Divine Path.

In the Sikh way of life, a woman has been granted a status equal to that of man. It strictly forbids practices like the burning of a widow on the pyre of her husband (Sati) and female foeticide. Contrary to social malpractices prevalent during the times of the Gurus, the Sikh religion encourages a widow to remarry. A woman is also considered equally competent to take care and be in charge of a Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) like her male counterpart. All the ten Gurus propagated and supported social and religious freedom for women and extended full respect to them. A verse by Guru Nanak Dev amply clarifies it:

ਸੋ ਕਿਉ ਮੰਦਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੰਮਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥

So kiou mandaa aakhee-ei Jitt(u) jameh(i) raajaan. (473)

(Why should we look down upon women, who have given birth to the prophets, saints, sages, kings etc.)

All the ten Gurus have proclaimed that the same Divine pervades in all - men and women alike. Women were given spiritual instructions in divine discourses

(Gurmat) along with men and the Gurus ensured that they were treated with respect in society.

While upholding these principles of humanity, Guru Amardas eliminated discrimination based on caste, creed and gender, and propagated the welfare of society. He established social equality by asking everyone to sit together and partake of Langar (the community kitchen). Even as He denounced the practice of burning alive of the widow on the pyre of the dead husband (Sati), He encouraged remarriage of widows, contrary to the prevailing practice. He treated women with dignity and initiated them into the practice of meditation on the Divine Name, which led many of them to a state of self-realisation. He set up 22 major centres of spirituality (Manjis) and 52 minor spiritual centres (Pirhis) to spread the divine message of Guru Nanak Dev. Of these, many were headed by the divine women to impart spiritual preaching.

By doing so the Gurus showed to the world that women were equally capable of gaining spiritual enlightenment as men and could then lead others on to the Divine Path. During the initiation ceremony (Amrit Chhakna) of the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piare), Guru Gobind Singh telepathically inspired his spiritual female associate Mata Sahib Devan to add sugar puff-balls (Patashas) to the holy nectar (Amrit) being prepared in the iron bowl and graced her with the title of Jagat Mata (Universal Mother). The Gurus, thus paid tribute to the womanhood as a whole. Since women received such high regard by the Sikh Divine Master (Guru), it was no wonder that many of them reached the pinnacle of divinity and spirituality. Mai Bhago was a woman devotee of Guru Gobind Singh, who attained renowned spiritual achievement by following the divine advice of the Guru in letter and spirit. Her spiritual achievement resulted in her wielding such authority that she was able to inspire the 40 Sikh soldiers (Chali Mukte, the forty liberated ones), who had earlier deserted Guru Gobind Singh during the siege of Anandpur Sahib, to return to the Guru's fold, and who later attained martyrdom after defeating the Mughal army in the battle of Muktsar.

Under the inspiring leadership of Mai Bhago, these 40 Mukte fought so bravely in the battle of Khidrane Di Dhab (now known as Muktsar) that although they were vastly outnumbered by the Mughals, they won a resounding victory.

The Sikhs followed the same path as ordained by the Sikh Gurus (Gursikhi) during the reign of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. Led by the belief that women were an invaluable part of the society, the Sikhs fought heroically to free some 14,000 such young girls from the clutches of Ahmed Shah Abdali, who had enslaved them with the intention to sell them in the markets of Afghanistan. The

Sikhs fought fiercely with Ahmed Shah Abdali, who ran to Afghanistan after crossing river Sutlej, and these Sikhs restored these helpless girls to their families with full respect and honour.

It is clear from the above examples that in Sikh way of life, women are an important pillar of the society, and they have a major contribution to make in its progress and development. But, why is the Sikh society in present times forgetting this noble teaching of the Guru? For ages, the eastern region of the world has considered the female as inferior; hence, some unscrupulous persons have no qualms about killing a female foetus. This is a direct intervention in the Divine Order and those who carry out such horrible acts, will surely head towards hell. God sends a creature into this world and man murders it even before it is born! Under the law of the land, a killer is given the death penalty, but in the Divine Court of the Timeless One how severe would be the punishment for those, who kill a foetus, is hard to imagine.

When we destroy a female foetus without thinking, we fail to realise that the same foetus, if allowed to be born, may have grown into an enlightened individual and one day would have become the mother of a great future saint or a divine king.

It is evident that female foeticide violates the tenets of the Sikh faith and is against the Divine Law. In line with the enlightened opinion, the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs (Akal Takht) has denounced this evil deed and strictly forbidden it.

The Householder's Life

In the Sikh way of life, leading the life of a householder has been accorded great significance for treading the Divine Path. Man has to realise God and become one with him while living a normal life in this world, performing all the obligations towards society, while treading the path of spirituality with utmost love and devotion.

While leading a householder's life, he has to meditate on the Divine Name, share whatever he earns with others and serve mankind in a selfless manner without seeking any reward. If one does not strive to lead a life of righteousness and remains entangled in worldly desires and passions, he is just like a beast and remains entrapped in the cycle of transmigration. This can even result in his next birth into the lower species of the animal kingdom. If such a fall is likely to happen, then he should try to have the association of divine persons and render their service selflessly so that his mind can be motivated to perform good deeds.

Muslim Saint Kabir pronounces:

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਉ ਗਿਰੁ ਕਰਹਿ ਤ ਧਰਮੁ ਕਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਤ ਕਰੁ ਬੈਰਾਗੁ ॥ ਬੈਰਾਗੀ ਬੰਧਨੁ ਕਰੈ ਤਾ ਕੋ ਬਡੋ ਅਭਾਗੁ ॥

Kabir jaou greh(u) kareh(i) ta Dharam(u) kar(u) Naahee ta kar(u) b-ei-raag(u).

B-ei-raagee bandhan(u) kar-ei Taa ko baddo abhaag(u). (1377)

(If you live the householder's life, then practise righteousness, otherwise you follow the life of an ascetic. If the ascetic is involved in the worldly desires and entangled in these, he is considered as most unfortunate and worthless because he has ruined his very valuable life.)

To remain detached from worldly desires appears to be difficult because the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - are like dangerous pitfalls on the way and only a few fortunate ones can get past them and reach the goal of self-realisation. It involves persistence, perseverance and commitment to mould one's life according to the principles of spirituality. This is possible only by reciting Gurbani and meditation on the Divine Name, despite facing hardships and obstacles on the way. During the bygone times and even today, many Seekers leave hearth and home and retire to the forest or a secluded place, feigning to lead the life of an ascetic, with the aim to realise God. Unfortunately, they are bereft of the company of divine persons, so their mental state remains involved in accumulation of occult powers. They perform miracles among the masses and motivate them to become their followers for seeking praises and accumulation of worldly bounties, which are negatively correlated with the perception of Divine Wisdom. Thus, they are no better than the simple householders, who, at least earn their livelihood honestly and part with one-tenth of the same for noble causes, recite the Divine Name and tread the spiritual path with full love and devotion for realising the Divine within. Guru Nanak Dev clarifies:

ਜਤੀ ਸਦਾਵਹਿ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਛਡਿ ਬਹਿ ਘਰ ਬਾਰੁ ॥

Jatee sadaaveh(i) jugat(i) na jaanheh(i) Chhad(i) baheh(i) ghar baar(u). (469)

(They call themselves celibate and abandon their homes, but they do not know the true way of life.)

Only those, who have realised the Divine within, can undergo physical hardships and austerities to motivate the common man to follow the spiritual path. Thus motivated, they would, in turn, motivate other kith and kin and associates to follow the Divine Path and eradicate worldly miseries. They further spread this divine message far and wide amongst the masses to follow the same.

Bhai Gurdas, a renowned divine follower of Guru Arjan Dev, narrates in his above ode (Vaar) the divine status of Guru Nanak Dev and his spiritual journey in the whole of Asia and Europe to spread the message of spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace in the world. The poet-saint glorifies the divine actions of Guru Nanak Dev:

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਬਾਬੇ ਪਾਯਾ ਬਖਸ਼ੁ ਦਰਿ ਪਿਛੋ ਦੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਘਾਲਿ ਕਮਾਈ ॥
ਰੇਤੁ ਅਕੁ ਆਹਾਰੁ ਕਰਿ ਰੋੜਾ ਕੀ ਗੁਰ ਕਰੀ ਵਿਛਾਈ॥
ਭਾਰੀ ਕਰੀ ਤਪਸਿਆ ਵਡੇ ਭਾਗੁ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਬਣਿ ਆਈ ॥
ਬਾਬਾ ਪੈਧਾ ਸਚਖੰਡਿ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਪਾਈ ॥
ਬਾਬਾ ਦੇਖੈ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਿ ਜਲਤੀ ਸਭਿ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਵੀ ਦਿਸਿ ਆਈ ॥
ਬਾਝਹੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਬਾਰ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਕਰਦੀ ਸੁਣੀ ਲੁਕਾਈ ॥
ਬਾਬੇ ਭੇਖ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕੀ ਰੀਤਿ ਚਲਾਈ ॥
ਚੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਸੋਧਣਿ ਧਰਤਿ ਲੁਕਾਈ ॥

Pehilaa Bab-ai paa-e-aa bakhas(u) dar(i) Pichho d-ai phir(i) ghaal(i) kamaaee.

R-ai-t(u) akk(u) aahaar(u) kar(i) Rorhaa kee Gur karee vichhaee.

Bhaaree karee tapas-e-aa Vadd-ai bhaag(u) Har(i) siou banh(i) aae.

Baba p-ei-dhaa sachkhand(i) Naou nidh(i) Naam(u) gareebiee paaee.

Baba d-ai-kh-ei dhiaan dhar(i) Jaltee sabh(i) prithvee dis(i) aae.

Baajh-hu Guru gubaar(u) h-ei h-ei h-ei kardee sunhee lukaabee.

Bab-ai bh-ai-kh banhaa-e-aa Udaasee kee reet(i) chalaabee.

Charh-e-aa sodhanh(i) dharat(i) lukaabee.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1, Pauri 24)

[To alleviate the suffering of humanity at the hands of the cruel rulers of the era, Guru Nanak Dev descended on the earth as a Divine Power in the human form. For the welfare of humanity, he took upon himself physical hardships and penances. He would always remain immersed in the Divine within. While doing hard penances, he slept on pebbles and ate sand and very bitter shrub in the secluded places. And as he did so, he radiated the benevolence of the Almighty Lord. As he always remained attuned to the Divine Lord, he was an epitome of both, immeasurable Divine Power and immeasurable Divine Humility. Guru Nanak Dev viewed with His divine vision that the whole humanity was burning in the fire of the five vices- lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Mankind was crying out in pain and there was no saviour in sight. Guru Nanak Dev, wearing the robes of an ascetic (Udasi) and like a divine Saviour, set out on a journey, travelling far and wide to spread the divine message to mitigate the sufferings of humanity.]

For more than two decades, Guru Nanak Dev travelled to distant lands spreading his divine message of love and truth and putting many a tyrant, cheat, thief, ascetic, and Siddha on the righteous path. During these travels, the hardships that he underwent, cannot be expressed in words.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Spiritual Master, though a perfect embodiment of the Divine, spent almost twenty-two years in a secluded underground cell, meditating on the Divine Name. Later, he laid down his life in order to put an end to the oppression of the masses at the hands of the cruel rulers, in order to

protect the Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) from forcible conversion to Islam by the then ruling class. Thus, it is a unique example in the history of the world, where the prophet of a religion sacrifices his life for the protection of others' religion.

In the nineteenth century, Saint Attar Singh of Mastuana, was born as a divinely realised person (Brahmgyani). He devoted many years of his life meditating on the Divine Name and praying for the welfare of mankind. By offering Khande di Pahul - the nectar of the double-edged sword (Amrit), to about 1.4 million people, he laid the foundation to create spiritual brotherhood and permanent peace in the world by motivating the masses to tread the Divine Path. He stressed the need for both girls and boys to be well-versed in spiritual way of life while receiving conventional traditional scientific education. Similarly, there have been many other God-realised saints who voluntarily suffered great hardship, joined the holy congregation and served mankind without seeking the comforts of a householder's life.

ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਸਬਾਈ ਨਾਰਿ ॥

Thakur(u) ek sabaee naar(i). (933)

and

ਇਸੁ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਏਕੁ ਹੈ ਹੋਰ ਸਗਲੀ ਨਾਰਿ ਸਬਾਈ ॥

Iss(u) jagg meh(i) Purakh(u) ek(u) h-ei Hor saglee naar(i) sabaee. (591)

(In this Universe, there is only One Divine Groom, all others are His brides, seeking His blessings.)

As enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Amardas respectively in the above hymns, it is amply clear that in this Universe, there is one Supreme Being, the Divine Husband of all- the whole humanity - male or female - are His brides (devotees). They assemble to worship spiritual values and escape the cycle of birth and rebirth. So, our Divine Husband is The Divine Lord (God) of the Universe and the entire mankind His disciple seeking self-realisation by following His divine instructions in letter and spirit. Guru Arjan Dev emphasises in the following hymn:

ਪ੍ਰਿਅ ਸਿਉ ਰਾਤੀ ਧਨ ਸੋਹਾਗਣਿ ਨਾਰਿ ॥

Pri-a siou raatee dhann sohaaganh(i) naar(i). (370)

(Whosoever is merged with the Divine within, is in fact the spiritual bride in the Divine Realm, and thus gets self-realisation in this very life with His blessings.)

Guru Amardas in the following hymn further clarifies:

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਤਿਸੁ ਮੇਲਿ ਲਏ ਸਾਈ ਸੁਹਾਗਣਿ ਨਾਰਿ ॥

Nanak jiss(u) nadar(i) kar-ai Tiss(u) m-ai-l(i) la-e saae suhaaganh(i) naar(i). (90)

(One, upon whom He bestows His Grace, is merged with Him. Such a person is the true soul-bride of the Divine Lord.)

At the time of the Sikh marriage ceremony, the bride and the groom

circumambulate Guru Granth Sahib four times to the accompaniment of the singing of hymns (Laavaan). At that time, they pledge that though in the worldly sense they have entered the householders' life, but in fact, they are spiritually wedded to the Divine Lord from that day. They also pledge that from now onwards they would follow the spiritual way of life to realise the Divine within.

Here, it becomes necessary to clarify that the householder's life is not restricted only to the marital life of husband and wife. The couple has to earn righteous living. They have to consider their children as God's gift and make all out effort to look after them, with their body, mind and wealth, so as to make them follow the Divine Path. Both the spouses must respect each other and help each other tread the Divine Path and save themselves from all the worldly miseries and evils, and perceive the Divine Lord within each other. In this way, they become One with the Divine.

The divinely devoted person, even without getting married in the worldly sense, while living in society observes all the divine duties and code of conduct of a householder's life. There have been several such distinguished persons in Sikh history such as Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Kanhaiya, Bhai Joga Singh, Baba Deep Singh, Baba Bir Singh Naurangabadi and his disciple Bhai Maharaj Singh, Baba Karam Singh of Hoti Mardan and his blessed disciple Saint Attar Singh of Reru Sahib, Saint Ishar Singh of Rarewale, Saint Jawala Singh of Harkhowal, Baba Nand Singh of Kaleran, Saint Attar Singh of Mastuana and many others. These persons did not marry in the worldly sense, but adopted the divine marriage and participated in the holy congregations and remained absorbed in the Divine Name and thus rendered invaluable spiritual service to mankind. They also inspired many others to tread the Divine Path. They rendered divine service to hundreds and thousands of families to mitigate their sufferings by inspiring them to follow the Divine Path. These are the holy ones, who have been called the 'great divine householders' in the divine Sikh Scripture by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਗ੍ਰਸਤਨ ਮਹਿ ਤੂੰ ਬਡੋ ਗ੍ਰਿਹਸਤੀ ॥

Grastann meh(i) toon baddo grihsatee. (507)

(Among householders, You are the Supreme Householder.)

As mentioned in the above hymn, all human beings, irrespective of any gender, are the wives of the Divine Husband, Who has created the whole Universe and pervades in it. Thus, every human being should become the devoted wife of the Divine Husband (God) to follow His spiritual instructions in letter and spirit in order to merge with Him and attain self-realisation in this very life. The general trend of humanity, by and large, is to remain intoxicated in worldly temptations and sensual pleasures, and thus serve only their family. Thus, there is no inclination

of human beings, at large, to become divine and attain self-realisation in this very life. This is explained very explicitly by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਏਕਾ ਸੇਜ ਵਿਛੀ ਧਨ ਕੰਤਾ ॥ ਧਨ ਸੂਤੀ ਪਿਰੁ ਸਦ ਜਾਗੰਤਾ ॥

ਪੀਓ ਮਦਰੋ ਧਨ ਮਤਵੰਤਾ ॥ ਧਨ ਜਾਗੈ ਜੇ ਪਿਰੁ ਬੋਲੰਤਾ ॥

Ekaa s-ai-j vichhee dhann kanta. Dhann sootee Pir(u) sadd jaagantaa.

Peeo madro dhann matvantaa. Dhann jaag-ei j-ai Pir(u) bolantaa. (737)

[In one body, both wife and husband reside, i.e., the mind (the wife) and the Divine within (the Husband). The wife always remains in sleep, i.e., engrossed in the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. But the Divine Husband, the Eternal One, always remains in a blissful state to shower His blessings, provided the receptive mind (wife) rises above the five vices to merge with Him by treading the Divine Path.]

Guru Arjan Dev, further clarifies the relationship between body, mind and soul:

ਧਨ ਕਹੈ ਤੂ ਵਸੁ ਮੈ ਨਾਲੇ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਿਅ ਸੁਖਵਾਸੀ ਬਾਲ ਗੁਪਾਲੇ ॥

ਤੁਝੈ ਬਿਨਾ ਹਉ ਕਿਤ ਹੀ ਨ ਲੇਖੈ ਵਚਨੁ ਦੇਹਿ ਛੋਡਿ ਨ ਜਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

ਪਿਰਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਹਉ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬੰਦਾ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਭਾਰੋ ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਜਿਸੁ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਛੰਦਾ ॥

ਜਿਚਰੁ ਰਾਖੈ ਤਿਚਰੁ ਤੁਮ ਸੰਗਿ ਰਹਣਾ ਜਾ ਸਦੇ ਤ ਉਠਿ ਸਿਧਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

ਜਉ ਪ੍ਰਿਅ ਬਚਨ ਕਹੇ ਧਨ ਸਾਚੇ ॥ ਧਨ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸਮਝੈ ਚੰਚਲਿ ਕਾਚੇ ॥

ਬਹੁਰਿ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਪਿਰ ਹੀ ਸੰਗੁ ਮਾਰੈ ਓਹੁ ਬਾਤ ਜਾਨੈ ਕਰਿ ਹਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

ਆਈ ਆਗਿਆ ਪਿਰੁ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ ॥ ਨਾ ਧਨ ਪੁਛੀ ਨ ਮਤਾ ਪਕਾਇਆ ॥

ਉਠਿ ਸਿਧਾਇਓ ਛੂਟਿ ਮਾਟੀ ਦੇਖੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਮਿਥਨ ਮੋਹਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

Dhan kah-ei too vass(u) m-ei naal-ai. Pri-a sukhvaasee Baal Gupal-ai.

Tujh-ei binaa haou kitt hee na l-ai-kh-ei Vachan(u) d-ai-h(i) chhod(i) na jaasaa h-ai.

Pir(i) kah-e-aa haou hukmee bandaa. Oh(u) bhaaro Thakur(u) jiss(u) kaanh(i) na chhandaa.

Jichar(u) raakh-ei tichar(u) tum sangg(i) rehnhaa. Jaa sadd-ai ta ootth(i) sidhaasaa h-ai.

Jaou pri-a bachan kah-ai dhann saach-ai. Dhann kachhoo na samjh-ei chanchal(i) kaach-ai.

Bahur(i) bahur(i) Pir hee sangg(u) maag-ei Oh(u) baat jaan-ei kar(i) haasaa h-ai.

Aaee aag-e-aa Pir-h(u) bulaa-e-aa. Naa dhann puchhee na mataa pakaa-e-aa.

Ootth(i) sidhaa-e-o choottar(i) maatee D-ai-kh(u) Nanak mithan mohaasaa h-ai. (1073)

[The body-bride (mind and body) says, 'Please live with me, O my beloved Lord! Without You, I am of no account. Please give me Your Divine 'Word' that You will not leave me.' The Divine Husband (the Divine within) replies, 'I am the slave of the Divine Lord. He is my Master, who is fearless and independent. As long as He Wills, I will remain with You, but when He summons me, I shall vanish from your vision.' The Divine Husband speaks words of Truth to the bride within the body (mind), but the bride is restless and inexperienced due to lack of Divine Wisdom and thus she cannot understand anything.]

Again and again, she begs her Divine Husband to stay on. She thinks that He is just joking. As per the Divine Order, the Divine within (husband) vanishes from her mind (body). He does not consult His bride (egoistic mind), nor does he ask her permission. He just vanishes from her sight and withdraws the Divine Power from the body, which then dies. The egoistic mind (the bride) hovers around the dead body, but doesn't have the power to revive it. Mind (subtle body) vanishes off in the cosmos and the discarded body-bride mingles with the dust after the cremation or the burial. Nanak says that the illusion of emotional attachment, is false.]

Within man's body there are two powers at work. One is the Divine Power, soul (Atma), which is one with the Divine, pervading the entire Creation. This Divine Power gives energy to the body to stay alive. The other is the mind, which is in the form of ego or the subtle body, which is made up of the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. It is a negative power that uses the body to run after pleasure, rule over others and accumulate wealth. Whenever, the Divine withdraws power under the Divine Order, the body dies. The Divine within a human being gives life to the body right from the stage of the embryo till the last breath is taken out. As long as the Divine (soul, i.e., Atma) gives power to the body through the breath, it remains alive. And as soon as the Divine withdraws power from the body, the breathing stops and death occurs.

Socialisation and Civility of a Seeker After Truth (Sikh)

The Sikhs, right from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh, and after that The Guru Granth Sahib, bowed their head in divine reverence before the Shabad Guru (Guru Granth Sahib) and not the body like others. On the other hand, they did not care for any pseudo gurus, gods or goddesses made of stone; cremation sites or graves and would never bow before them. According to the divine teaching of the Sikh Gurus, their disciples (Sikhs), for mitigating their ego and cultivating Divine Love, used to imbibe divine humility in their minds. It is a fact that when one bends forward, his ego is somewhat subdued. As such, all Sikhs in the recent past used to touch each other's feet with reverence and expound the salutation Sat Kartar (Divine is True).

Guru Granth Sahib clarifies that whenever one sees the true disciple of the Guru, he should touch his feet again and again to cultivate divine humility and thus mitigate his ego to a great extent:

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਰਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਨਿਵਿ ਨਿਵਿ ਲਾਗਉ ਪਾਇ ਜੀਉ ॥

Jo dees-ei Gursikhrhaa Tiss(u) niv(i) niv(i) laagou paa-e jeeou. (763)

Bhai Gurdas, a spiritual Sikh scholar, expounds that all the Sikhs Gurus laid a strong foundation of Sangat (divine congregation), sitting together on the floor in a row to partake food in a Gurdwara, where ruler, rich and poor are considered equal, they meet each other with the divine salutation, after initiation with the divine nectar by Guru Gobind Singh. He established Khalsa Panth and advised the Sikhs to explain with divine affection to each other the salutation Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa; Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh, which means, divine persons belong to the Almighty Lord, who rules over the Universe with divine harmony. This is the real aim of a disciple of the Divine Master (Gursikh). Such a disciple, after reciting the Divine Name and hymns, mitigates his ego completely and becomes a Khalsa, i.e., divinely pure, one who ultimately merges with the Divine within. This, in fact, is the victory of the Divine (Waheguru), who raises an ordinary person to such a height of Divinity that he merges with Him. While reciting Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh, a Sikh recites the Divine Name of God - Waheguru - twice and in return, he hears the Divine 'Word' Waheguru from his fellow beings. Waheguru means, O Divine, You are Wondrous!

Gurmukh, Khalsa, Saadh, Sant and Braham Gyani

Gurmukh : Gurmukh is one, who has eradicated his ego completely.

Guru Arjan Dev clarifies in one of the hymns:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਾਚਿ ਸਮਾਵੈ ॥

Gurmukh(i) rom(i) rom(i) Har(i) dhiaav-ei. Nanak Gurmukh(i) saach(i) smaav-ei. (941)

(The hair of the divine person are in fact divine tongues reciting the Divine Name every moment. Such a divine person merges with the Divine completely and thus attains salvation.)

A Gursikh, remains completely absorbed in meditation on the Divine Name, to the extent that every single hair of his body starts reciting the Divine Name. Once this stage is attained, he will succeed in eradicating his ego completely and merge with Divine Reality. He will then be said to have attained the state of the Formless One or to have reached the Realm of the Formless One (Nirankar ke Des). Thus, he becomes divine and is known as Gurmukh.

Khalsa - Divinely Pure: Guru Gobind Singh says that one who has eradicated his ego completely, becomes Khalsa, i.e., he attains the state of divine purity:

ਪੂਰਨ ਜੋਤ ਜਗੈ ਘਟ ਮੈ, ਤਬ ਖਾਲਸ ਤਾਹਿ ਨਖਾਲਸ ਜਾਨੈ ॥

Pooran jot jag-ei ghatt m-ei, Tabb khaalas taah-ai nakhaalas jaan-ei.

When one perceives and is engrossed in the manifestation of the Omnipresent in the body, only then he would be called Khalsa, who is completely free from ego.

The tenth Master further proclaims, "He, who has become the Divine by shedding his ego completely, is called the pure one, i.e., Khalsa. When this happens, the three - God, Khalsa and Me become One:

ਆਤਮ ਰਸ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨਹੀ, ਸੋ ਹੈ ਖਾਲਸ ਦੇਵ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਹਿ, ਮੇ ਮਹਿ, ਤਾਸ ਮਹਿ, ਰੰਚਕ ਨਾਹਨ ਭੇਵ ॥

Aatam ras jeh jaan-hee, So h-ei khaalas d-ai-v.

Prabh meh(i), m-ai meh(i), taas meh(i), ranchak naahan bh-ai-v.

(Sarabloh Granth, 533)

The Guru further stresses that he, who has become divine by eradicating his ego completely and merges with the Divine Word, shall be my Guru in the true sense:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰਾ ॥

Khalsa m-ai-ro Sat(i)gur poora.

It is important to understand that by the term Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh in no way implies the purity of the body. It is pertinent to know that the term Khalsa, in the real sense, is the eradication of ego completely and merging with the Divine.

Right from conception, the Divine pervades in every cell of the body, but mind or the subtle body, polluted as it is with the impressions of the past egoistic deeds accumulated over previous births, fails to realise the Divine within. By meditating on the Divine Name intensively, with full love and devotion, one sheds the ego (subtle body) completely, and becomes pure of egoistic vices. With his spiritual vision, he sees the presence of the Divine in every cell of his body and thereby sees One in All and All in One. The Guru expounds that such a person indeed becomes the Divine:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੋ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ ॥

Khalsa m-ai-ro roop h-ei khaas.

(The Divine One is My divine manifestation.)

Saadh : One who through utmost toil of meditation has moulded his mind to be in tune with the Divine, sheds all worldly pleasures and wipes out his ego completely by intense meditation on the Divine Name with full faith and devotion, is called a Saadh. In other words, Saadh is the one, who has intensively trained his mind to shed his ego completely and has merged with the Divine. Literally speaking, converting negative instincts to divine ones with utmost divine effort by taming one's mind is known as Saadh. Guru Arjan Dev proclaims that there is no difference between a Saadh and the Divine Lord:

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਧ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਭੇਦੁ ਨ ਭਾਈ ॥

Nanak saadh Prabh bh-ai-d(u) na bhaae. (272)

Sant (Saint): Sant is the one whose egoistic impulses have been subdued by

meditating on the Divine Name with every breath. In other words, he, who has completely shed his ego by intensively meditating on the Divine Name with every breath is known as a Saint, as enunciated by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਜਿਨਾ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਨ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾਂ ਮਨਿ ਮੰਤੁ ॥
ਧੰਨੁ ਸਿ ਸੇਈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਸੋਈ ਸੰਤੁ ॥

Jinaa saas(i) giraas(i) na visr-ei Har(i) Naamaan mann(i) mantt(u).
Dhann se s-ai-ee Nanakaa Pooran(u) soee sant(u). (319)

Brahamgyani - a person with complete Divine Wisdom: Constantly meditating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, the seeker reaches his goal to eradicate his ego completely and becomes Divine. Such a seeker is mentioned in the Hymns as a Brahamgyani. Guru Arjan Dev says that ultimately Brahmgyani himself has become God (the Creator of the Universe).

In Guru Granth Sahib, divinely enlightened persons are considered to be embodiments of the Supreme Being:

ਨਾਨਕ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਆਪਿ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰ ॥

Nanak Brahm Giaanee aap(i) Paramesar(u). (273)

[The person with perfect Divine Knowledge himself is the Divine (God).]

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਆਪਿ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ॥

Brahm Giaanee aap(i) Nirankaar(u). (274)

(The divine person, having complete knowledge of the Supreme Being is known as the Formless One.)

Such is the divine state of the Gurmukh (whose mind is completely merged with the Divine Lord), the Khalsa (the pure one, who has rooted out the ego completely), the Saadh (who has moulded his mind to become the divine), the Sant (who has completely calmed down his egoistic turbulence) and the Brahamgyani (who is full of the Divine Wisdom), all of them, having merged with Divine Reality are all One, i.e., the Divine, and see One in All and All in One.

All the above mentioned stages are the forms of God. All of them reach the stage of Formless One where the Almighty manifests. By reaching this stage, one does not undergo any sin or virtue because they all are merged with the Divine Lord of the Universe and become One with the outlook to see One in All and All in One. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies:

ਜਬ ਅਕਾਰੁ ਇਹੁ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟੇਤਾ ॥ ਪਾਪ ਪੁੰਨ ਤਬ ਕਹ ਤੇ ਹੋਤਾ ॥

Jabb akaar(u) eh(u) kachhu na drist-ai-taa. Paap punn tabb keh t-ai hotaa. (290)

(When one reaches the Divine Realm, he is so engrossed in the formless Divine within that he doesn't see any figure. In this stage, whatever duties he performs under the command of the Formless One i.e. Divine within and without, he reaches beyond the

worldly stage, which is free from the actions of sins and virtues.)

All these divine persons may perform any type of worldly actions in different forms under different circumstances for the betterment of humanity, but they remain attuned to Him under all circumstances. Due to the worldly illusion, a common man judges the actions of these divine persons through his mortal eye and is liable to go wrong in visualising these.

By passing judgment on the actions of these divine persons, ordinary mortals bring sin upon themselves and are driven along the path of suffering and keep wandering in the cycle of rebirth: Guru Nanak Dev in the above hymn clarifies:

ਗੁਰਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਾ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਵਹੁ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਕਾਹੇ ਧਾਵਹੁ ॥

Gur(i) kah-e-aa saa kaar kamaavahu. Gur kee karnhee kaah-ai dhaavahu. (933)

(Whatever the Guru expounds, the divine persons do the same with single-minded devotion without confusion and consider the same as His Blessings. One should not undergo any confusion in the direction given by the Guru. In other words, one should obey the instructions of the Guru in letter and spirit without perceiving any confusion in the divine actions of the Guru.)

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Divine Master, always wore a plume on his turban, wore tight fitting trousers (Pyjamas), a tunic embroidered in gold thread and other robes usually worn by the royals. Only the Guru himself knew or perhaps it was His divine Actions as to why He wore such an attractive dress. However, when he created the Khalsa, he chose the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Pyare), after asking for five heads. Their robes comprised a long simple cloak, a pair of long underwear and a round turban. The Guru, in royal attire, knelt before the 'Five Beloved Ones' with folded hands and prayed to these simply dressed Panj Pyare for bestowing upon Him the gift of the Divine Nectar (Amrit).

The Panj Pyare, now in the form of the Guru, asked Guru Gobind Singh that they had given their heads to him to receive the Divine Nectar and asked what would He give them in return for the blessings of the Divine Nectar (Amrit). The Guru promptly submitted with all humility that he would offer all his four sons and his mother in the service of the Khalsa, even if he were to endure any hardships and cruelty on his body. Pleased with the Guru's answer, the Panj Pyare blessed the Guru with the Divine Nectar.

All the devotees of the Guru and all the great persons from time to time wore simple, coarse-cloth cloaks with a pair of long drawers (underwear) and a round turban. These include Bhai Kanhaiya, Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Mani Singh, Baba Deep Singh, Akali Phoola Singh, Baba Bir Singh Aurangabad, Baba Karam Singh of Hoti Mardan, Baba Sham Singh Sewa Panthi of Amritsar, Saint Attar Singh of Mastuana,

Saint Attar Singh of Reru Sahib, Saint Attar Singh of Ghunsan, Saint Attar Singh Atle Wale, Saint Teja Singh, Baba Gurmukh Singh, Baba Jhanda Singh Kar Sewa Wale, Baba Nand Singh Kaleran Wale and several others. The cloak, which Saint Attar Singh of Mastuana wore, was generally called Kaffni, which literally means a shroud. It meant that the Sant had completely shunned his mind in relation to worldly desires and allurements and lived in unison with God.

In other words, he considered himself dead to the worldly manifestation and attuned with the Divine.

The 'Five Beloved Ones' and all enlightened persons willingly accepted the Guru's teachings as the embodiment of Divine Truth. However, they never paid any attention to what the Guru wore and what He ate and How he lived. If we dress in a luxurious manner, eat sumptuous food and move around with our followers in a convoy of expensive cars, then it is not the path shown by the Saints or the Braham Gyans. Those enlightened beings in no way tried to ape the Guru. Such showing off provokes several doubts in the minds of the followers and hurts their devotion and commitment. The faith of the followers to tread the path of spirituality is shaken.

Self-realised souls in all ages have proclaimed with one voice that where there is pretence, there can be no spirituality. It is, thus clear that with single-minded devotion, we must strive to carry out in our lives, the teaching of the Guru and to take no notice of His royal lifestyle. This indeed, is the path followed by the Gurmukh, the Khalsa, the Saadh, the Sant and the Brahamgyani.



Sikh Traditions

Gurdwara

The Sikh place of worship, Gurdwara (literally 'the Guru's door') has a spiritual connotation. One enters the Guru's portal to have the holy glimpse (Darshan) of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru with physical attributes. At the same time, one gains spiritual knowledge to tread the Divine Path in company of the holy persons (Gursikhs) present there. Any seeker can perceive the spiritual instructions from the Formless Shabad Guru - the Divine 'Word' - as the Guru. Meditating on the Shabad Guru, the consciousness reaches the mystical tenth door of the Divine Realm, where the seeker realises the Divine within and everywhere in the entire cosmos. Human body has got nine physically visible openings (doors). The tenth door is invisible and can be realised only with Divine Wisdom, which is acquired in the company of divine persons, who motivate the seeker to tread the Divine Path by following the spiritual instructions of the Divine Master, i.e., the Guru Granth Sahib. This, in fact, is the invisible Divine Realm where one perceives The Divine pervading everywhere. Having rooted out ego completely, the consciousness of human being reaches the divine tenth door and merges in the Formless Divine Reality. In other words, the seeker attains the state of Truth - Awareness - Bliss (Sat-Chit-Anand). Guru Amardas emphatically clarifies this:

ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਕਥਾ ਸੁਣਾਇਹਿ ਆਪਣੀ ਸਿ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੈ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਵਹੇ ॥

Jis no kathaa sunhaa-e-he aapnhee se Gurduaar-ei sukh(u) paav-h-ai. (919)

(Whoever is bestowed upon the way to realise the Divine within, treads the same with utmost love and devotion and thus ultimately reaches the Divine Realm and completely merges with the Formless One, who is full of Divine Bliss.)

Viewed through the physical eye, a Sikh temple (Gurdwara) is a place, where the Guru Granth Sahib is present and ceremonially installed on the holy palanquin each morning, and where Nishan Sahib, i.e., the ceremonial flag of the holy temple (Gurdwara) flutters. It beckons one and all, to enter the sacred precincts, forget the cares of the worldly affairs and immerse themselves in meditation of the Supreme Being. All are welcome to visit the Gurdwara irrespective of caste, creed or religion and listen to the hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib. Rich or poor, high or low, man or

woman, atheist or believer, and professing any faith, they sit together and hear the glories of the Almighty Lord being recited there.

From the time of Guru Nanak Dev, upto the time of Guru Arjan Dev, a house of worship was known as Dharamsal, a place to perform righteous deeds (Dharma). Guru Arjan Dev built the Harmandir Sahib, temple of God within the holy tank (Sarovar) at Amritsar. Later Guru Hargobind introduced the term Gurdwara in place of Dharamsal.

As a house of worship, a Gurdwara offers everyone the blessed company of the devout and an opportunity to listen to the recitation of the hymns (Kirtan) for perceiving the inspiration to meditate upon the Divine Name. In addition, one can partake of free meals (Langar) in the community kitchen and get free lodging for a night or two. The management of every Gurdwara is obliged to follow these traditions. It has long been the practice that the congregation (Sangat) in each Gurdwara arranges for the teaching of Gurmukhi (Sikh language) to children, so that they may learn to read Gurbani and imbibe the spiritual message from an early age. In some Gurdwaras with large premises; schools and medical centres are also run for the benefit of all.

The Sikh Flag (Nishan Sahib)

Every nation and community has its own flag, which symbolises and reflects its culture and tradition and is also a symbol of its honour and dignity.

On seeing the Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib), it immediately strikes that it represents a Sikh temple (Gurdwara), a place for the worship of the Supreme Being.

In Sikh tradition, it was Guru Hargobind, the sixth Divine Master, who for the first time had high flying flags (Nishan Sahib) installed at the Akal Takht in Amritsar. Ever since, it has become a tradition to have a Sikh flag (Nishan Sahib) flown high on the premises of the Gurdwara. The holy flag proclaims the greatness of God. It invites all people to break all barriers and come together to the Sikh temple, sing glories of the Almighty Lord, worship him to perceive spiritual values, and make lives successful.

The Sikh flag features the design of two swords crossed at the hilt and spread wide towards the upper side of the flag. These symbolise the principle of Miri-Piri, i.e., doing worldly affairs according to the principles of spirituality. In the centre, between the two swords is painted the double-edged sword, which signifies the fusion of the two swords of Miri and Piri into one double edged sword (Khanda), signifying the combining of the creed of Miri and Piri - doing worldly affairs with the values of spirituality. The double-edged sword is encircled with a ring, which symbolises that

the Divine Power pervades everywhere and has no beginning or an end.

The flagpole of the Nishan Sahib is normally wrapped in saffron or sometime in dark blue cloth and on top of the pole, above the triangular flag, a double edged sword (Khanda) is fixed.

The Holy Pool (Sarovar)

Guru Amardas had the first well with steps (Baoli) dug at Goindwal Sahib near Amritsar. Here, everyone could bathe and drink the water without discrimination of caste or creed. This tradition continues even today. This Baoli was the first holy pool (Sarovar) in Sikh history. Several years later, Guru Ramdas, on instructions from Guru Amardas, began the excavation of a large Sarovar, containing water for bathing of a large number of devotees in Amritsar city. This large divine pool was completed by his son Guru Arjan Dev, who later built more holy pools (Sarovars) in the city of Amritsar. Another large pool was completed at Tarn Taran for providing bathing facilities to a large number of devotees.

A Sarovar, which is always close to a Gurdwara, has great significance for Sikhs. Whenever the congregation joins in meditation and divine hymns (Kirtan) are sung, their vibrations immerse in the water and make it holywater. Bathing in the Sarovar helps to dissolve all man-made divisions based on social standing, wealth, caste, creed and religion. A dip in the Sarovar, thus, fosters a sense of brotherhood among people. A Sarovar also offers great convenience and helps to save time for bathing for a large number of devotees. The spiritually charged water of the divine pool helps cure many diseases.

Guru Granth Sahib's Commandment of the Day (Mukhvak)

Every Sikh should learn Gurmukhi (Punjabi language) and wherever possible, have the Guru Granth Sahib installed in his home in a special room. However, this requires a daily dedication of time and service from the Gursikh. Each morning, the sacred volume of the Guru Granth Sahib should be placed on a small bed (Manji Sahib). It should be opened ceremonially in the ambrosial hour and covered with a clean cloth covering, preferably white (Rumala). This practice is called Prakash. Then the Guru's commandment for the day (Hukamnama) is read out and the devotee should try to follow the directions of the gist of the same, while performing worldly affairs during the day. In the evening, after reciting Rehras, the devotee offers prayer (Ardas) and again should read the Hukamnama. After this, the Guru Granth Sahib should be closed and wrapped in a clean cloth (Rumala). If one can afford a

separate bed in the room, the Divine scripture may be placed there for the night. This practice is called Sukhasan, the closing ceremony of the evening. If, however, one does not have a separate bed or room facility for Sukhasan for keeping the Guru Granth Sahib during the night, then it can be placed on the same small cot where it was opened during the day for getting the Divine Commandments.

This practice is also followed in the Gurdwaras, where at night, the hymns are also sung besides reciting the Nitnem prayers. At the end of the day, after evening prayers, the Guru Granth Sahib is moved from the main hall in the temple to a separate room.

In keeping with the practice recommended by the SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee), on opening the sacred Scripture at random, the first hymn at the top of the left-hand page comprises the commandment for the day. If the hymn starts from the previous page, one turns the page and goes back to the beginning of the hymn. It was the practice with Saint Attar Singh and his divine disciple, Saint Teja Singh, that if on opening the scripture, the Mool Mantra appeared on either page, then the hymn following it would constitute the Hukamnama or commandment for the day.

Sehaj Paath/Akhand Paath of Guru Granth Sahib

Intermittent recitation (Sehaj Paath): A Gursikh family must find time to recite and listen to the divine hymns of Guru Granth Sahib, starting from the very beginning. The family should read the hymns, whenever time permits and complete the entire recitation according to their convenience. Before commencing the Sehaj Paath and on its completion, the holy sweet pudding (Karah Prashad) is prepared and after reciting the whole Anand Sahib (if time permits), otherwise the first five and the last stanza of Anand Sahib and prayer (Ardas) is performed, following which the Divine Commandment (Hukumnama) is read from the holy Scripture. Thereafter, the Karah Prashad is distributed among the devotees present (Sangat).

In the year 2013, the students of Akal Academy, Baru Sahib performed Sehaj Paath - an amazing series of 1088 episodes of the entire Guru Granth Sahib, which were sung on various string classical instruments in the designated classical Sikh musical measures (Ragas), as was originally prescribed by the saints, sages and Sikh Gurus in their hymns, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Interestingly, this was the maiden attempt, after the lifetime of the Gurus, to recite the complete Guru Granth Sahib with the original prescribed Ragas. This program was a great success and was viewed daily by lakhs of devotees throughout the world on National Television Networks.

Continuous Relay Recitation (Akhand Paath): The uninterrupted, continuous reading of the entire Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to end is called Akhand Paath. It usually takes 48 hours or so to complete. Even if it takes more time, the Akhand Paath is acceptable to the Guru. The same procedure is followed at the time of commencement and on completion of Shri Akhand Paath Sahib, as in the case of Sehaj Paath.

If the reading of the scripture is to be done by the men and women with proper training to read the Guru Granth Sahib (the Paathis), they earmark their turns and read the scripture as per their stipulated time - normally two-hour slots, although this can vary. Ideally, the family members should recite the hymns themselves, turn by turn.

The tradition of uninterrupted recitation of Guru Granth Sahib (Akhand Paath) began during the period of Nawab Kapur Singh, who established a group of senior Sikhs (the Buddha Dal) and a young brigade of Sikhs (the Taruna Dal). The task of the Buddha Dal was to propagate Gurbani through Akhand Paaths, whereas, the Taruna Dal was trained in martial arts.

Prior to this, during the struggle of Sikhs with the Mughal forces, Sikhs used to carry the Guru Granth Sahib with them. While fighting the Mughal forces, they quite often took shelter in the thick forest. They would recite the hymns continuously so that they could complete the recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib, as early as possible, to avoid the attack of the Mughal forces. Usually it took 48 hours to complete the continuous recitation of the Hymns of Guru Granth Sahib which came to be known as Akhand Paath of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Divine Assembly (Panth)

The Panth is the assembly of those persons, who have moulded their lives to tread the Divine Path, according to the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. A gathering of any large numbers of people cannot be categorised as Panth. Only those who follow the Divine Instructions of Guru Gobind Singh in letter and spirit, constitute the Panth. Panth - assembly of pious people, who tread the Divine Path, as enunciated by Bhatt Kirat (high-caste Brahmin), whose hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਇਕੁ ਉਤਮ ਪੰਥੁ ਸੁਨਿਓ ਗੁਰ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਤਿਹ ਮਿਲੰਤ ਜਮ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ ਮਿਟਾਈ ॥

Ik(u) uttam panth(u) sun-e-o Gur sangat(i) Teh milantt jamm traas mitaa-ee. (1406)

(In association of the God-conscious person, we realise the Divine Path of life. By treading the same, we realise the Divine within, due to which we shed the worries of all the negative forces.)

Guru Panth Khalsa

Guru Gobind Singh initiated the Guru Panth Khalsa on the Vaisakhi (the auspicious day in the spring season when the plants start blooming) of 1699 by bestowing Divine Nectar (Amrit) to the 'Five Beloved Ones', who offered their heads unhesitatingly to the Divine Master. This has already been explained on page 314.

During the last days of His physical life, Guru Gobind Singh anointed the Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru and proclaimed that in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, those five Gursikhs, who followed the Sikh Code of Conduct and had moulded their lives according to the Guru's teachings would constitute the Guru Panth Khalsa. Whatever decision they would take in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib would be known as Gurmatta (the Guru's decision). Bhai Gurdas, a learned Divine Sikh of Guru Arjan Dev, expounds:

ਇਕੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਦੁਇ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗੁ ਪੰਜੀਂ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ॥

Ik(u) Sikh(u) du-e saadh sangg(u) Panjeen Parmesar(u).

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 13, Pauri 19)

(One seeker after Truth is considered a Sikh. When two seekers sit together and exchange views on how to tread the Divine Path, they constitute Saadh Sangat. When five such persons form a Divine assembly and recite the glory of God, the presence of the Divine Lord is perceived.)

Resolution (Matta) / Decision on the spiritual way of life (Gurmatta)

When the Sikhs meet to take a decision on religious, social or political matters, the decision is called a Matta (resolution). However, the decision taken in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib for preaching the Divine principles, is called Gurmatta.

Edict (Hukamnama)

The letters written by the Gurus as commandments and instructions for the spiritual welfare of the Sangat are called Hukamnamas (edicts). Now the Hukamnamas are issued by the 'Five Beloved Ones' from the Akal Takht, the Supreme temporal seat of Sikhs, where they meet in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Slogan/Salutation of the Sikhs (Jaikara - Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal)

The Sikh slogan of Sat Sri Akal means that 'the Truth is everlasting'. It was often hailed during the time of Guru Gobind Singh. It was chanted to keep the Sikhs in high morale spirit, so that they could overpower the evil tendencies and

subdue their ego by meditating on the Divine Name. Thus, their tune of mind, while remaining detached from the physical body, would get attached to the Almighty, who is the True One (Sat), the Supreme (Sri) and beyond death (Akal). He is also fearless, without enmity, All-powerful and Omnipotent. Abiding by the Will of God, the Sikhs overcome wrath and ego, never commit any kind of tyranny, fight only for the cause of righteousness, and thus become philanthropists.

A Sikh, who utters Sat Sri Akal (Divine Slogan) with love and devotion shall be spiritually elevated and shall receive the blessings of God. The same slogan is also chanted at the end of every ceremony as well as during the daily prayer (Ardas), where the priest (Ardasia) proclaims 'Bole So Nihal' which means whosoever chants the Glory of God shall remain in Divine Bliss and the entire congregation rejoins with 'Sat Sri Akal'.

Birth and Naming Ceremonies

After a child is born in a Sikh family, as soon as the mother is strong enough to be considered normal, move about and bathe (there is no rigid rule as to how soon after child-birth this should happen), the family and close relatives gather in a Gurdwara. A bowl of holy sweet pudding (Karah Prashad) is placed before the Guru Granth Sahib and hymns of thanksgiving are sung. After performing prayers (Ardas), the Hukamnama is read from the Guru Granth Sahib. After this, the name is bestowed upon the child, based on the first letter of the hymn, read from the Guru Granth Sahib. The congregation (Sangat) endorses the name by shouting the Sikh salutation - Bole So Nihal - Sat Sri Akal. The words 'Singh' or 'Kaur' are suffixed to a boy's or girl's name, respectively.

Marriage according to Sikh Rites (Anand Karaj)

1. A Sikh (bride or groom) must marry only a Sikh.
2. Marriages among Sikhs must not be based on considerations of caste, creed or worldly status.
3. The marriage must be solemnised by following the prescribed code of conduct, i.e., Anand Karaj - ceremony of bliss.
4. Sikh faith forbids child marriage.
5. Any date that is convenient to both families may be chosen without considering any taboos, customs or rituals.
6. The wearing of a veil or a crown or a red thread band around the wrist by the groom, ancestor worship, placing the groom's feet in a vessel filled with diluted

milk, chopping off the stem of a wild berry/jujube (Beri) shrub, filling an earthen pitcher with water from a well, walk away from home in a fit of mock or feigned sulkiness, reciting coarse/rustic/vulgar couplets, performing a Havan (making an offering to the sacred fire), installing a wooden canopy or pavilion (Vedi), under which Hindu marriages are performed, vulgar dance by dancing girls, merry-making in a drunken state are all age-old wedding rituals. It is against the spirit of the Sikh faith to follow any of these.

7. The bridegroom's marriage party should consist of only a small number of close relatives and friends and should be in keeping with the wishes of the bride's family. On arrival at the bride's place, Shabad Kirtan should be sung and members of both parties should greet each other with a joyous exchange of the slogan - 'Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh'.
8. For the wedding ceremony, friends and relatives should gather in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. Hymns should be sung by the priest or any holy man or members of the congregation. The bride and the groom are seated in the front facing the Guru Granth Sahib - the bride on the left and the groom on the right. After this, Ardas is performed by standing before the Guru Granth Sahib with folded hands for the initiation of the marriage ceremony (Anand Karaj). Ideally, the marriage rites should be commenced soon after the conclusion of the morning prayers and the recitation of the divine hymns - Asa di Var.
9. The priest or any pious person then apprises the couple of their duties as a householder. Pointing to the composition of the hymns for marriage namely Laavan (in Raag Suhi in the Guru Granth Sahib), he urges the couple to imbue their relationship as husband and wife with full love and devotion with the perception that the same Divine Lord pervades in their bodies. Thus, after marriage the house-holder's duties should be performed according to the Divine Law keeping in view the presence of the Divine within and everywhere.
10. The priest exhorts the couple to experience the light of the Almighty Lord in each other and through love attain a state of 'two beings unified by a common spirit'. In this way, the couple, while leading the life of householders, may strive to attain union with the Timeless Being - their Common Spouse. Both of them must live in accordance with the principles of the Divine Law (Gurmat) and this union must serve as a means of attaining the true purpose of life, i.e., realising the Divine within.

The bride and the groom are then separately apprised of their respective marital responsibilities. The groom is told to remain true and faithful to his wife to the very end and hold her parents and relatives in the same high regard as his own

parents and relatives. The bride is told that she is being commended forever to the care and protection of her husband in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and the congregation (Sangat). Henceforth, her husband alone must be the object of her love and devotion. Through good or bad times, wherever she is, she must remain faithful to him. She must show the same regard to her husband's parents and relatives as she would do to her own kith and kin. The bride and the groom then touch their foreheads to the ground before Guru Granth Sahib as a token of having accepted the above instructions.

The bride's father now places one end of the Palla (a length of cloth) in the groom's hands, passes it over his shoulder and places the other end in the bride's hands. The Granthi sitting in attendance over the Guru Granth Sahib, then recites the four stanzas of the composition Laavan in the Raag Suhi. After the recitation of each stanza, the groom followed by the bride holding the Palla make a circumambulation of Guru Granth Sahib, while the hymn singers (Raagis) sing the recited Laav hymns. After each circumambulation, the couple should bow before the Guru Granth Sahib and then stand up to listen to the next Laav, being recited and after bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib they once again circumambulate the same. As such, after the fourth circumambulation, the groom and the bride should touch their foreheads to the ground before the Guru Granth Sahib and then sit down. The hymns - Anand Sahib - is sung (the first five and the last stanzas) and the ceremony is brought to a close with Ardas and the serving of the Karah Prashad to the congregation.

11. To perceive the fullest blessings of the Divine (Waheguru), the Anand Karaj ceremony should be performed soon after Asa di Vaar (the morning prayer). In fact, this is the divine rule according to the Sikh faith for getting the blessings of the Divine.
12. Marriages should not be based on the exchange of money.
13. When the parents of the bride visit her new home, they should not be averse to eating any food or drink offered to them.
14. Upon the death of the spouse, the survivor can remarry.
15. The ceremony of remarriage is the same as the ceremony of Anand Karaj described above.
16. The Sikh faith forbids bigamy.
17. If the bride and/or the groom have not undergone the initiatory rites of Amrit they should partake the same immediately.

Funeral Rites

1. Lighting an earthen lamp near the body of the deceased or donating a cow on his behalf, or performing any other meaningless rituals like Adh Marag, Siapa, Phuri, Diva, Pind Kiriya, Saradh (ancestor worship), Budha Marna, etc. are to be avoided as they are not part of the Sikh customs.
2. At the death of a loved one, there should be no weeping or wailing, beating of chest or other exaggerated expressions of grief. Only the recitation of Gurbani enables the mind to gracefully accept the divine Will.
3. Even a deceased infant should be cremated according to the Sikh rites.
4. Cremation can take place at any convenient time during the day.
5. Before cremation, the body should be washed and dressed in a clean set of clothes; the five Ks should be retained. The body is then placed on a stretcher and Ardas is performed, seeking the blessings of the Timeless One before leaving for the cremation ground. While leading the deceased on his final journey, the accompanying relatives and friends should sing hymns that arouse feelings of detachment. This will help them overcome their short-lived grief/separation and dwell on the glories of the Supreme Being. They may begin to realise - perhaps for a moment - that they too will eventually leave the world. Therefore, they must make their life successful after devoting themselves to meditation on the Divine Name and recitation of the Divine Hymns (Gurbani). At the cremation ground, a pyre is prepared and the corpse is placed on it. Ardas is performed and the pyre is lit. At a little distance from the blazing fire, the congregation sits down and recites the hymns that arouse a sense of detachment, so that their minds refrain from the grieving atmosphere and find solace in acceptance of the Divine Will. Once the pyre is fully ablaze, the congregation recites Kirtan Sohila (a set of hymns); a final prayer is offered and the Sangat departs.

On returning home of the deceased, recitation of the Guru Granth Sahib should be initiated. This can be done in a nearby Gurdwara or at home as the family prefers to, according to their convenience. The entire scripture is read either in a continuous way (Akhand Paath) in about 48 hours or by intermittent recitation (Sehaj Paath) over a week or more. During this time, Kirtan may be sung every evening. The recitation is culminated, on a day convenient to friends and relatives. All members of the household, who can read the scripture, should take part in the recitation. The ceremony at the end of the complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib marks the end of the death rites.

In the meantime, a day or two after the cremation, after the pyre has cooled, the ashes (together with partially burnt remnants of bones) are gathered and immersed in flowing water in a nearby river.

The Sikh Code of Conduct

Ceremony of Initiation into the Khalsa Fold

According to the tradition started by Guru Gobind Singh, the first step for a Sikh intending to tread the Path of the Divine (Gurmat) and become a true devotee of the Guru (Divine Master) is to get initiated with divine nectar (Amrit) prepared by the double-edged sword (Khande di Pahul) and shun any other form of initiation:

ਪ੍ਰਥਮ ਰਹਿਤ ਯਹਿ ਜਾਨ, ਖੰਡੇ ਕੀ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਛਕੇ । ਸੋਈ ਸਿੰਘ ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨ ਅਵਰ ਨ ਪਾਹੁਲ ਜੋ ਲਏ ॥

Pratham rehat yeh(i) jaan, Khand-ai kee pahul chhak-ai.

Soee Singh pardhaan avar na paahul jo l-ai.

(Rehatnama Bhai Desa Singh)

(O Sikh! Believe that the first and the foremost tenet in the code of conduct for a Sikh is to partake the Divine Nectar (Amrit) prepared by the double-edged sword. Only that Sikh is Supreme and dear to the Guru (Divine Master), who does not wander here and there to get any type of blessings and follows the Divine Path faithfully.)

Guru Arjan Dev asserts:

ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਾ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਦੇਹੀ ਮਹਿ ਇਸ ਕਾ ਬਿਸ੍ਰਾਮੁ ॥

Naou nidh(i) Amrit Prabh kaa Naam(u). D-ai-hee meh(i) is kaa bisraam(u). (293)

(The Divine Name is the most virtuous Divine nectar, which pervades throughout the body of every creature, due to which it is alive. As soon as the Divine within the body withdraws His Divine power, the creature dies.)

Passing through the cycle of rebirth, the mind gets covered, with layer upon layer of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. As a result, it is unable to concentrate on the Divine within and merge with the Divine. To enable the consciousness of man to merge with the Divine within, Guru Gobind Singh prepared the Amrit and poured it into the mouth of the seekers, which pierced the layers of the five vices in the body and attuned their mind at that moment with the Divine within. At that moment, the person realises the Divine within, but this stage would be further strengthened, if one recites the hymns and the Divine Name continuously, with full love and devotion to remain intuned to the Divine within. With the passage of time, with performance of spiritual deeds, his ego will be eradicated completely and he would attain self-realisation in this very life. If such a person does not

continue with the above-mentioned code in letter and spirit, he would remain engrossed in the worldly affairs. Guru Gobind Singh Himself got initiated with this Divine Nectar by the 'Five Beloved Ones':

ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

Wah Wah Gobind Singh Aap-ai Gur Ch-ai-laa.

(Wondrous is Guru Gobind Singh, who is the Guru (the Divine Master) and the disciple (Chela) at the same time.)

The Code of Conduct (Rehat Maryada) published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee lays down the following procedure for preparing the divine nectar (Amrit):

1. A quiet, secluded place should be earmarked for the ceremony.
2. There should be the august presence of Guru Granth Sahib. At least six Sikhs initiated with the divine nectar (Amritdhari), who had complete bath from head to toe, should be present. One of these, sits in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib, while the other five prepare and serve Amrit to the seekers.
3. The six Amritdhari Sikhs, who would prepare the Divine Nectar (Amrit) should have dedicated their lives as per the Guru's teachings in letter and spirit.
4. Any individual, male or female, belonging to any country, religion or caste and creed has the right to get initiated with Amrit and enter into the Khalsa fold, as long as he or she vows to follow faithfully the principles of the Sikh faith. The aspirants for partaking divine nectar (Amrit) should have bathed from head to toe and washed their hair and should be wearing the five 'Ks', i.e., Kes (unshorn hair), Kangha (small wooden comb), Kara (iron bracelet), Kirpan (small sword worn in a sling) and Kachhehra (long drawers/underwear). The candidates should not be carrying on their person any object or symbol, which violates the Guru's teachings. Their heads should not be bare, but neither should they be wearing any other form of head covering, except turban. They should also not be wearing any jewellery or ornaments of any kind. All the candidates, irrespective of being male or female, should stand respectfully before the Guru Granth Sahib with folded hands.
5. If an Amritdhari Sikh, having committed and confessed a major violation to the Sikh Code of Conduct seeks re-initiation, the 'Five Beloved Ones' (officiates) take him aside and pronounce a 'religious punishment' according to the code of conduct of the Sikh way of life.
6. One of the 'Five Beloved Ones' should outline to the concerned Sikh the principles governing the Sikh way of life. The Sikh faith enjoins worship of the Creator, with love and devotion and forbids the worship of idols or making

offerings at tombs, graves, other memorials to the dead, or at crematoriums. Recitation of Gurbani, selfless service of the congregation (Sangat) and the humanity at large, altruistic actions, remembrance of the Divine Name with love and devotion, partaking of Divine Nectar (Amrit) completely fulfilling in letter and spirit - all are the principles of the Sikh faith.

On understanding and accepting these principles, the initiate, should completely bow before the Guru Granth Sahib and invoke the blessings of the Guru before receiving Amrit. One of the 'Five Beloved Ones' will perform the supplicatory prayer (Ardas) seeking the Guru's consent to prepare Amrit. Then, a hymn (Hukamnama) is read from the Guru Granth Sahib, opening it at random, this is taken as the Guru's commandment.

7. A stone mortar topped by an iron bowl (the Baata) should be placed before the Guru Granth Sahib.
8. Some fresh water is poured into the bowl (Baata), to which a few sugar puffs are added. After this, the 'Five Beloved Ones' sit around the bowl in the heroic posture (Bir Asan)-(in which the right knee is placed on the ground and the left knee is held upright) and recite the five Banis composed by the Gurus and prescribed for this divine occasion.
In truth, Amrit is created only when the 'Five Beloved Ones', one by one, recite the Banis, i.e., Japuji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, the ten Tav Prasad Swaeeye (beginning with Sravag Sudh), the Chaupae Sahib and the complete Anand Sahib with full concentration while fixing their gaze on the water in the iron bowl. When this is done, the water gets imbued with Banis (the hymns) to become the Divine Nectar (Amrit), which is full of spiritual power.
9. The 'Five Beloved Ones' reciting the hymns should do so in a loud voice while holding the edge of the bowl with the left hand, and should keep stirring the water with the double-edged sword held in the right hand. The recitation should be done with full concentration on divine hymns (Bani). Inturn the other 'Four Beloved Ones' should take grip of the edge of the bowl with both hands and their sights should be fixed on the water and their minds should be fully concentrated on the hymns being recited. This process should be carried out one by one by other beloved ones allotted to them in the sequence mentioned above: [Japuji, Jaap Sahib, Tav Prasad Swaeeye (Sudha Swaeeye) Chaupae and Anand Sahib].
10. When the recitation comes to an end, one of the 'Five Beloved Ones' performs Ardas before the Guru Granth Sahib.
11. Only a person, who has participated in the entire rite of initiation, can receive

the Amrit. Anyone who turns up while the ceremony is in progress is not allowed for the initiation.

12. Then while fixing their attention on the Divine Master (the Guru Eternal), each seeker awaits his turn to receive the nectar. The recipient of Amrit should sit in the Bir Asan, cupping his hands placing the right on top of the left. Then five times, the ambrosial mix is poured into the cupped hands and the candidate is made to drink it. As each palmful is drunk, 'the Beloved One', who gives it says aloud, "Bol Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh" (The Khalsa belongs to the beloved of the Wondrous Destroyer of darkness; victory too, is His!). After drinking it, the recipient repeats this salutation. Then five palmfuls of the nectar is sprinkled into the eyes of the recipient and another five over his hair on the head. At each such sprinkling, the Beloved One recites the divine salutation "Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh" and the recipient repeats it. The remainder of the nectar is then shared by all the initiated (both male and female) together from the same bowl (Baata).
13. Thereafter, the 'Five Beloved Ones' in unison communicate the Gurmantra, which is Waheguru (Divine Name). Then together they recite the Mool Mantra, which the candidates have to repeat aloud after them:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

Ik Onkaar Sat(i) Naam(u) Kartaa Purakh(u) Nirbhaou Nirveir(u)

Akaal Moorat(i) Ajoonee Saibha-n Gur Parsaad(i). (1)

[There is but One all embracing and all powerful Divinity, who manifests Himself first in the shape of the sacred word and then through the whole created Universe. He is the One-in-All and the All-in-One. He is the Eternal Reality, and His Name, Satnam, is also eternal. He is the Creator and has the power of independent self-creation. He permeates the whole creation. He is the only male (Divine Master) in the Universe and all else is His female. He is above all fear and is free from all thoughts of enmity. He is immortal, free from birth and re-birth and can be realised in every created thing. He is self-existent. The whole Universe is dependent for its existence on Him but He is self-existent; the Generator of all, without any one to generate Him. He can be realised through the grace of the Guru, the Divine Teacher, who is God-conscious and sees Him, both within and without.]

14. One of the 'Five Beloved Ones' then explains to initiate the Sikh code of conduct as follows:

Having taken Amrit, they have got the admission in the institution of the Khalsa as established by the tenth Divine Master, Guru Gobind Singh. From now on, Guru Gobind Singh is their spiritual father and Mata Sahib Kaur their spiritual

mother. Kesgarh Sahib is their symbolic place, thus a medium, through which a Sikh (student of spirituality) approaches his Guru for the Almighty's blessings, help, support and security. So, the majority of the Sikhs generally perform Ardas before initiating and undertaking any significant task.

Taking the various derivations of the birth (rebirth after initiation), they are natives of Anandpur Sahib, where the consciousness dwells in the bliss/Eternal joy of the Divine Name and attains the Realm of the Formless One. It is further explained that all initiates present and all other Amritdharis (those, who have received initiation of the double-edged sword) are the sons and daughters of the same Divine Father and are spiritual brothers and sisters to each other. Having renounced all ties of ancestry, familial occupation/trade, past religious beliefs, in other words, having completely broken with their narrow consciousness of caste and descent, country and religion, they have now become brothers and sisters in the institution of Khalsa, they are not to worship any idol of god, goddess, deity, incarnation or prophet; but should offer obeisance only to the the One Timeless Being (Akal Purakh). They will not consider anyone other than the ten Gurus and the Divine 'Word' (Shabad) as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, as their Divine Guru and spiritual guide, to lead them to liberation. From now on, the Guru Granth Sahib would be their sole Guru.

15. After having their bath in the ambrosial hour, they should meditate on the Divine Name Waheguru for a reasonable time and follow it up by reciting the five divine compositions (Banis) namely, Japuji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Tav Prasad Swaeye (beginning with Sravag Sudh), Chaupae and complete Anand Sahib. In the evening, they should recite Rehras Sahib and before retiring to bed, they should recite Sohila. Throughout the day while performing the worldly duties, they are ordained to recite the Divine Name simultaneously. They should also recite the Hymns of Guru Granth Sahib or listen to the recitation according to the available time. If they are unable to read Gurmukhi, they are to make a sincere effort to learn it. Until then, they should meditate on Waheguru Gurmantra and the Mool Mantra.
16. They are to refrain from eating together in the utensil of a non-Amritdhari. (It is always better to take food separately).
17. They are not supposed to have any dealings with those who have been excommunicated from the Khalsa Panth.
18. Piercing the body (nose, ear etc.) or wearing any type of ornaments is prohibited for both men and women.
19. Female foeticide is prohibited. Nor is one to have any dealings with anyone

known to have committed this heinous act.

20. Giving or accepting dowry is against the Sikh tenets.
21. Stealing, adultery and gambling are forbidden.
22. A Sikh should greet a fellow Sikh with salutation of Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh.
23. Use of veil (Purdah) is prohibited.
24. Use of intoxicants of any type, including hemp, opium, alcohol, poppy head, cocaine etc. is strictly prohibited.
25. They should not observe any rite or ritual other than prescribed in the Sikh faith.
26. Dyeing the hair is not allowed. This is only to show off and is against the Will of God.
27. They must carry the five K's on their person at all times. The male must tie a turban on his head while the female may tie a turban or cover her head with any type of simple scarf.
28. The following four cardinal sins are to be avoided:
 - a) Trimming of the hair
 - b) Cohabiting with a person other than one's spouse
 - c) Use of tobacco, alcohol or any other intoxicant
 - d) Eating animal flesh.

(Any person committing any of these sins will have to get initiated into the Khalsa fold again. For details, refer to chapter 'Elaboration of Four Cardinal Sins').
29. After explaining all these Do's and Don'ts, one of the 'Five Beloved Ones' will perform the prayer (Ardas).
30. The Granthi in attendance, will hereafter take Hukamnama from the Guru Granth Sahib. If anyone from amongst those initiated had not earlier been named in accordance with the Sikh faith (Gurmat), he should renounce his previous name and be given a new name beginning with the first letter of the Divine Hymn (Hukamnama).
31. The initiation ceremony should conclude with the distribution of holy sweet pudding (Karah Prashad). All Amritdhari men and women should partake of it from the same bowl symbolising the end of all man-made rituals and customs.

The Five Kakars (Ks) - Holy Symbols

Guru Gobind Singh enjoined every Sikh to take initiation of the double-edged sword and maintain the five Ks - the symbols of the Khalsa - on their person.

Moreover, these symbols are a divine blessing of immeasurable value. Every Sikh must maintain and preserve at all costs (for it is the Guru's commandment to maintain), the five Ks. These external signs of the Khalsa Panth arouse feelings of love and reverence for the Guru in the devotee's heart. This in turn, enables his consciousness to dwell on the Divine Name. These symbols must not be looked at with mortal eyes, for they have a deep spiritual significance beyond their reach. The Guru had a divine purpose behind these symbols - that they would constantly remind the seeker to tread the spiritual path with full love and devotion for realisation of the Divine within. At the same time, these would inspire him to devote his life to the service of mankind. With our egoistic intellect, we are unable to perceive the Guru's Divine instructions, which only a self-realised person can.

We should preserve the five Ks as a commandment of the Guru and avoid any controversy. The Guru has conferred on us the Divine gift of the five Ks to enable us to become perfect human beings. Every Sikh is obliged to honour the Guru's commandment and preserve the five Ks on his person, thus earning the blessings of the Divine Masters. Such is the glory of these holy symbols that a Sikh bearing the five Ks stands out even in the midst of a sea of humanity.

Kes - Hair

Hair is a Divine Blessing bestowed on man by the Timeless One. It is the symbol and seal of His grace. Even a new-born baby has hair on the head. To earn the blessings of the Guru (Divine Master), a Sikh must abide by the Guru's decree and keep his hair unshorn. He must tie a turban around his head to preserve the hair and keep it in good condition. From top to toe, every strand of hair must be left intact and in its natural state. This is the Guru's commandment and blessed is the Sikh, who follows it.

Kangha - Wooden Comb

While the hair is a symbol of the Guru's grace, for its proper upkeep and care, the Guru has ordained the use of a wooden comb (Kangha). By tradition, a Sikh is required to keep it secure in the hair tied in a knot at the top of the head. On combing the hair, the dead strands come loose and stick to the comb. Combing the hair regularly keeps the locks from getting matted. While the comb helps us to keep the hair tidy and untangled, at the same time, it reminds us to cleanse our minds. To do so, we have to meditate on the Divine Name, recite Gurbani and serve mankind without selfish motive. If one merely washes the body again and again and makes no effort to cleanse the mind, there can be no spiritual progress. The

simple wooden comb reminds us that while we must keep the hair and body clean, it is important to 'wash' away the filth of the mental deposits of sins and evil deeds. This can be done by imbibing the ideals of the Guru and following his teachings as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib in letter and spirit. A Sikh is enjoined to strive for God-realisation by treading the Divine Path according to the instructions of Divine Hymns (Gurbani), as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib. Abiding by the Guru's Will, a Sikh should look upon the comb (Kangha) as a part of his body and always keep it fixed to his hair. Traditionally, only a wooden comb is acceptable.

Kara - Iron Bracelet

The wearing of the iron bracelet (Kara) symbolises that the wearer has become a devotee of the Guru. In order to fulfil this pledge, a Sikh must imbibe the determination and prowess of iron. It reminds the wearer that he is a disciple of the Guru and that he has to observe the tenets of the Sikh faith (Gurmat) and has to abstain from committing evil deeds, so that his mind remains pure and no finger is raised against the greatness of his Guru.

As per the tradition set by the tenth Divine Master, the Kara should be of iron only. A bangle made from any other metal like gold, silver or copper is unacceptable. It is worn by the Sikh on the right wrist as per the age-old tradition.

The Kara exhorts a Sikh to follow the Guru's commands of treading the Spiritual Path by seeking welfare for all, so that he can move towards God-realisation.

It is commonly believed that by wearing a Kara, a human being becomes a true devotee of the Guru. Such a person doesn't believe in false rituals and superstitions. So much so that the evil spirits never haunt him. The Kara, being a circle, has no end, which depicts that the Divine Lord is limitless and is beyond any imagination. We can perceive His glory and merge with the same, and can't be expressed in words.

Kirpan - Mini Sword

The word Kirpan is the combination of two Gurmukhi (Punjabi script) words: Kirpa + Aan. Kirpa means an act of kindness, a favour; and Aan means honour and respect. It symbolises the Guru's blessings and the Divine Power to subdue one's ego and pride. It is always to be worn on a sling around the neck, in accordance with the Guru's command and should never be parted from the body. At the time of bath, a Sikh should tie it around his head and while washing his hair, he should tie the Kirpan and Kanga around his waist. We should give due respect to the sword, which reminds us that the power of the Divine Lord is within us and can be imbibed

through meditation on the Divine Name. By doing so, the Guru's Sikh (disciple of the Divine), can overcome the five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and in the process subdue his ego and realise God within. It also inspires humans to protect themselves, as well as mankind in general, from the tyrannical people, who commit evil deeds under the influence of the five vices. The tenth Divine Master ordains a Sikh to wear a sword and thereby attain Divine Power through meditation on the Divine Name and selfless service. It will help stamp out millions of our sins, and our consciousness will be merged with the Divine.

While initiating into the Khalsa fold, the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piaras) inform the Amritdharis that if any of the three symbols like Kanga, Karah or Kirpan unconsciously gets detached from body, the Sikh should perform an Ardas and continue to wear it as before.

Today, purely for security reasons, the governments of many countries throughout the world have imposed a ban on wearing the sword (Kirpan) or knife on-board the planes. Under these circumstances, the Sangat has resolved that the Sikh should wear a symbolic mini Kirpan around the neck while travelling on a plane. After reaching the destination, the Sikh should perform supplicatory prayer (Ardas) and resume wearing his normal Kirpan as instructed by the 'five beloved ones' at the time of initiation. This is the only way in the present era to keep the five Kakars (symbols of initiation) intact with the body. Guru Gobind Singh emphasises:

ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਨ ਪਾਨ ਧਾਰੀਅੰ ॥ ਕਰੋੜ ਪਾਪ ਟਾਰੀਅੰ ॥

Kirpaan paan dhaareea-n. Karorh paap taareea-n. (Dasam Granth)

[Wearing the sword (Kirpan), which symbolises spiritual power, eradicates millions of sins. It means that persons, who wear the Kirpan, should always remember that the Divine Power of the Guru is with them at all times, which comes to use in eradicating the worst human enemy, i.e., ego, to a great extent. Thus, he dispels his sins created through the five vices and perceives the Guru within.]

While describing the power of the Almighty, Guru Gobind Singh has addressed Him as Kharag Ket, symbolising that God is all-powerful. He prays, "O All-Powerful Lord! We seek Your shelter. Save us by Your grace from the five vices, which create tyranny, and embrace us with Your Divine Grace." Guru Gobind Singh says:

ਖੜਗ ਕੇਤ ਮੈ ਸਰਣਿ ਤਿਹਾਰੀ ॥ ਆਪ ਹਾਥ ਦੈ ਲੇਹੁ ਉਬਾਰੀ ॥

ਸਰਬ ਠੌਰ ਮੋ ਹੋਹੁ ਸਹਾਈ ॥ ਦੁਸਟ ਦੋਖ ਤੇ ਲੇਹੁ ਬਚਾਈ ॥

Kharhag k-ai-t m-ei saranh(i) tihaaree. Aap haath d-ei l-ai-hu ubaaree.

Sarab thaur mo hoh(u) sahaaee. Dusatt dokh t-ai l-ai-hu bachaaee. (Chaupae)

(O Supreme Powerful Divine! I take your shelter. Protect me by keeping your divine hand

on my head. Help me everywhere. Protect me from the awful misery of the ego.)

It is for this reason that the sword, being a spiritual symbol, is considered supreme among all other weapons and the Guru has made it obligatory for every Sikh to wear the same. As a tradition, after supplication, the holy sweet pudding (Karah Prashad) and the food of the community kitchen (Langar) is stirred with the mini-sword before its distribution at the end of every ceremony, particularly in the Gurdwaras.

Kachhehra - Long Drawers:

Wearing of long drawers/underwear (Kachhehra) for a Sikh is ordained by the Guru. It is the Guru's blessing and symbolises Sikh's control over carnal desires. Kachhehra also reminds a person to imbibe noble values to overcome passions, which is only possible by meditating on the Divine Name. It also reminds a Sikh that while living in this world and observing the life of a householder, one has to refrain from adultery and sensual desires. Accordingly, a Sikh is supposed to treat every woman other than his wife as mother or a sister. The same applies to the opposite gender.

Four Cardinal Sins

When a Sikh becomes baptised (Amritdhari), he is advised to follow a code of conduct and refrain from the four cardinal sins, which are very serious and are to be avoided at all costs and at all times. However, if his mind gets distracted and he fails to obey the instructions of the Guru and does not concentrate on the Divine Hymns and Name, he then has to beg to get initiated again, after receiving a punitive action in the form of holy punishment such as fine and service (Sewa). These cardinal sins are:

- a) trimming of the hair from any part of body
- b) cohabiting with a person other than one's spouse
- c) use of tobacco, alcohol or any other intoxicant
- d) eating flesh of any creature

Spiritual Relations of an Amritdhari

Parents : During the initiation ceremony, the candidates are imparted a profound spiritual insight, that henceforth, Guru Gobind Singh is their spiritual father and Mata Sahib Kaur their spiritual mother. The initiated must clearly understand that it is the Guru who is his true father, mother, protector and Master/Lord. Due to this perception, one eradicates the worldly attachments correlated with ego to a great extent. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies:

ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਮਾਤਾ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਪਿਤਾ ਗੁਰਦੇਵ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਪਰਮੇਸੁਰਾ ॥

Gurdev Maataa Gurdev Pitaa Gurdev Suaamee Parmesuraa. (250)

(The Divine Master is in fact my mother, father, protector, husband etc.)

A true devotee comes to realise that the Guru is not only his father and mother, but also his friend and brother as enunciated by Guru Arjan Dev:

ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਿਤਾ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਾਤਾ ॥ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰਾ ਭ੍ਰਾਤਾ ॥

Toon m-ai-raa Pitaa Toon-h-ei m-ai-raa Maataa.

Toon m-ai-raa Bandhap(u) Toon m-ai-raaBhraataa. (103)

(O Divine Lord! You are my father, mother, dearest relative and brother.)

While leading the life of a householder and performing his worldly duties honestly, keeping in mind that work is worship, a person should strive hard to realise the Divine within, while observing the above instructions in letter and spirit. A baptised Sikh (Amritdhari), is enjoined to free himself from worldly attachments, give up pursuit of worldly desires and follow the teachings of the Guru with full devotion. Further, he should treat all fellow beings as brothers and sisters and all as equal by reciting Gurbani and concentrating on the Divine Name. Ultimately, the baptised Sikh (Amritdhari) reaches the spiritual stage to see One in All and All in One. The warmth of His love should embrace all living beings since the Divine Light of the Universal Father shines on all creatures of the Universe. We all are His children and He is our Divine Master, as Guru Arjan Dev in His divine hymn asserts:

ਏਕੁ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਤੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੁਰ ਹਾਈ ॥

Ek(u) Pitaa Ekas k-ai hamm baarik Toon m-ai-raa Gur Haaee. (611)

Place of Birth : During the Amrit ceremony, the initiates are also told that henceforth, they must believe that their real place of birth (rebirth after initiation) is Anandpur Sahib. This is to say that imbibing the Divine Nectar of the double-edged sword, which was prepared for the first time on the Vaisakhi of 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh at Kesgarh in Anandpur Sahib, has resulted in the spiritual rebirth of the one initiated. The spiritual concept of Anadpur Sahib is to strive hard to realise the Divine, which is the ultimate blissful abode, within. While living in the world, he can get rid of the bad deeds performed in the past and the present life by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion and enter the realm of spiritual bliss.

Place of Residence: The instruction imparted during the Amrit ceremony, that the initiate must consider himself a native of Anandpur Sahib, is only to reiterate the idea that he must fix his consciousness on the Shabad Guru and attain the

blissful state of union with the All Pervading One. The seeker must follow the teachings of the Guru with complete devotion and live in a state of Eternal bliss. Guru Amardas reiterates the same in the following hymn:

ਅਨੰਦੁ ਭਇਆ ਮੇਰੀ ਮਾਏ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਮੈ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

Anand(u) bha-e-aa m-ai-ree maa-e Sat(i)guru m-ei paa-e-aa. (917)

[O my mother! I am in tune with the Divine Lord (Satguru) that is why I remain in ecstasy.]

After attaining this stage, the seeker enters the Divine Realm, where there is no religion, caste or creed or any other worldly figure. Here, he merges with the all-Pervading Formless One. Guru Nanak Dev expounds this in one of his hymns:

ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕੈ ਦੇਸਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਾ ਸੁਖਿ ਲਹਹਿ ਮਹਲੁ ॥

Nirankar k-ei des(i) jaah-e Taa sukh(i) laheh(i) mahall(u). (595)

(Whoever reaches the divine Realm and merges with the Formless Divine Lord, loses his identity completely.)

Supplicatory Prayer to the Divine Lord (Ardas)

Broadly speaking, Ardas means a request, supplication, prayer, petition, or a humble address to the Supreme Lord. In fact, it is a petition, rather, a humble submission of the mind before the Almighty, to eradicate his ego completely and grant self-realisation in this very life. When one yearns and prays to the Lord for the company of the blessed persons (saints), to seek Divine advice it is called prayer of the mind.

The term Ardas seems either to have been derived from the Sanskrit (Arda'n = praying/requesting + Aas = desire/expectation), or from Persian word Arazdaasht (Arz = petition/request + Daasht = present/submit before someone). Whatever the source may be, it signifies the request for having spiritual bounties.

There are three categories of persons who perform the supplicatory prayers. Very few are those, who have eradicated their ego completely and become divine by reciting the Divine Name, i.e., meditation on the Divine with complete devotion. The continuous recitation of the Divine Name with each and every breath itself becomes a Supreme Divine Prayer. In other words, they are continuously performing Ardas in the form of recitation of the Divine Name (Naam). However, when they are in a holy congregation - a part of Sangat in a Gurdwara or at any other place - they also join in the formal Prayer as mentioned in the Sikh code of conduct (Rehat Maryada).

Sometimes, these divine persons also perform the Ardas for the spiritual uplift of the whole mankind or similar types of Ardas, as mentioned in Gurbani for lauding

the glory of Almighty and showing the right path to the devotees. Some of the divine persons like Kabir, Dhanna and Namdev performed Ardas for the basic needs to sustain the human life, while upholding the glory of the Divine Lord. By doing so, they inspired the common man to do the same for his sustenance and to recite the Divine Name (Naam) without any worldly worries and desires. Guru Amardas also performs Ardas as incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਜਗਤੁ ਜਲੰਦਾ ਰਖਿ ਲੈ ਆਪਣੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਧਾਰਿ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਦੁਆਰੈ ਉਬਰੈ ਤਿਤੈ ਲੈਹੁ ਉਬਾਰਿ ॥

Jagat jalandaa rakh l-ei Aapnhee kirpa dhaar(i).

Jitt(u) duaar-ei ubar-ei Tit-ei l-ei-hu ubaar(i). (853)

(O Divine Lord! Save the whole world from the awful fire of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride with your merciful blessings. Kindly accept the humble petition we make with our folded hands with utmost devotion. We humbly submit to kindly to save the whole Creation from the fire of all the awful miseries in whatever way it pleases You.)

The second category of persons is those, who have an immense urge to tread the Divine Path. They humbly pray with all humility to the Divine Lord, to bestow upon them, the motivation, strength and willpower to tread the Divine Path for eradication of ego completely for getting salvation in this very life.

Their prayer is not lengthy or formal, but confined to the remembrance of the Divine Name (God) to realise Him within and without. This becomes their holy prayer to the Divine Lord, to shower His divine blessings to eradicate their ego completely.

These above two categories of the holy persons remain contented with the happenings, which occur under the Divine Order.

The third category consists of a vast majority of people, who hanker after the material gains, worldly wealth, sensual pleasures, worldly comforts and false praises. Such persons perform all type of prayers, to seek and beg for worldly bounties. They are ignorant of the fact that by reciting the Divine Name and treading the Divine Path, all these bounties would come to them automatically.

In reality, it is a Divine Law that those who tread the Divine Path with utmost love and devotion while performing worldly duties under the commandments of the Divine Lord, attain salvation in this very life.

The Ardas is a Sikh prayer that is done before initiation, or after undertaking any significant task, after recitation of Nitnem Banis (the Divine hymns recited daily both morning and evening); or completion of the Divine services like the Paath, Hymn singing (Kirtan) or any other religious program.

Prayer (Ardas) is universal. Every individual, at some time or the other, remembers the unknown Supreme Power and through the Prayer, converses with

that Power. Prarthana, Sandhya and Upaasana by Hindus, Namaaz by Muslims, Prayer by Christians, are all akin to Ardas, the Sikh Prayer. They might appear to be different to the common man, but in the final analysis, their aim is the same. It means that Ardas, in some form or the other, exists in every faith and religion.

Ardas is a sort of plea to God to support and help the devotee with whatever he is about to undertake or has accomplished. Sikhs pray, prior to and after eating too. The wording of Ardas is also taken into account. The basic purpose of this prayer is an appeal to God (Waheguru) for protection, care and plea for the welfare and prosperity of all mankind and the means for the Sikh to thank Him for all that He has done.

The prayer is a submission to the Almighty, who has manifested Himself in this Universe in the form of Divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru). The Universal Lord pervades in the form of Divine 'Word' everywhere. Whoever, remembers Him with full love and devotion, would get salvation in this very life. Ever since Guru Gobind Singh founded the institution of Ardas, it has become a way of life for every Sikh.

In Gurdwaras, Ardas is performed by a Granthi (preacher) for the congregation or individuals. The attendant of Guru Granth Sahib continues to hold and wave a fly-whisk (Chaur), while standing. When a prayer is performed without the Guru Granth Sahib being present, everyone stands together and faces towards the person, who performs the prayer.

The beginning of the prayer (Ardas) is strictly set by Guru Gobind Singh. It starts with the remembrance of the Divine Lord and then Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Granth Sahib. Although they are the embodiment of the same Divine One, but to explain to the common man, they have been addressed by their worldly names.

Later on, further additions made by the Divine Sikhs and scholars at different times are reflective of Sikh struggles and sacrifices to uphold the Divine Truth as mentioned by the ten Gurus (Divine Masters).

When it comes to the conclusion of the prayer, the devotee uses the words; 'Waheguru! Please bless me in the task that I am about to undertake' and while starting a new task, 'O Divine Lord! having completed the hymn singing, we ask for Your continued blessings so that we can continue imbibing Your teachings and remember You at all times', etc. At the end of the Ardas, either in congregation or by the individual, it is exclaimed; 'O Divine Lord! Bless the whole mankind to follow Your Holy Doctrines'. This is the unique doctrine of the Sikh faith, wherein the welfare of the whole humanity is sought irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Ardas is performed not only as the finale of recitation of daily divine Hymns (Nitnem), but also on all occasions and celebrations in life, seeking the blessings of the Supreme Lord and invoking His benevolent grace. In simple words, Ardas is either for request or for thanks-giving.

Ardas is a unique composition based on the fact that it is the only one, out of several well-known prayers in the Sikh scriptures, which was not written in the entirety by the Gurus. The present form of Ardas is not found in the Guru Granth Sahib, because it is a continually changing devotional text that has evolved over time in order for it to encompass the feats, accomplishments and feelings of all the generations of mankind, within its lines.

Now, the question arises, why do we have to ask for favour from the Guru and perform a Prayer for its fulfilment, when He knows everything of our innerself? Guru Amardas expounds:

ਵਿਣੁ ਬੋਲਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਕਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਕੀਚੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥

Vinnh(u) bol-e-aan sabh(u) kichh(u) jaanhdaa Kis(u) aag-ei keech-ei ardaas(i). (1420)

(Without our utterances, He knows what is needed, so whom do we pray to?)

It is because, by doing so, we can develop divine humility as remembrance of God consistently subdues our ego to a great extent. Again, why should we make a prayer when He knows everything? Performing the prayer cultivates divine humility in a person, who subdues his ego to a great extent, and starts remembering the Divine Lord with full love and devotion. Eradicating one's ego to a great extent, he ultimately starts treading the Divine Path with full love and devotion.

It may be recalled here that Gurbani preaches the seeker to think well of the whole humanity. They believe in the Universal Brotherhood and do not identify anybody as their enemy and seek the welfare of one and all.

In a nutshell, the remembrance of God with every breath, with full love and devotion while performing all the worldly affairs physically, is automatically, the supreme holy prayer through which ego is completely eradicated and mind thus merges with the Divine within. Following this Divine Path one gets salvation in this very life with the eradication of ego completely.



Elaboration: The Four Cardinal Sins

At the initiation ceremony of Amrit, a Sikh is apprised of the four cardinal prohibitions, pronounced by Guru Gobind Singh. To a Sikh, these are strictly forbidden, and he who commits any of these cardinal lapses becomes Patit (apostate), though from his outward appearance, he may still look like a Sikh. He, who flouts the Guru's commandments, can never hope to gain the Guru's blessings, even though, under the influence of his ego, he may go on reciting divine hymns (Gurbani) and the Divine Name with the only purpose of obtaining worldly wealth and sensuous pleasures.

In shielding a Sikh from these cardinal sins, the Guru's purpose was to inspire him to tread the spiritual Path with full devotion and love. By doing so, the seeker realises the Divine within and attains self-realisation. None of the Gurus' teachings pertains to enabling mere worldly success and grabbing materialistic bounties which create actions and reactions among humans. Craving is directly correlated with negative actions and reactions amongst materialistic human beings. Thus, we should not perceive the code of conduct, as prescribed by the Gurus, from a worldly point of view, i.e. to accumulate worldly wealth. In fact, the aim of man should be to cultivate divine virtues, for his own spiritual uplift and spreading the divine message to humanity for establishing permanent peace in the world.

Desecration of Hair (Kes)

In the spiritual way of life of mankind, the Guru has emphasised that there should not be any desecration of Kes (hair), i.e., cutting or trimming it by any means and according to the Guru's holy advice is a cardinal sin. Any Sikh, who violates the divine instructions of the Guru in this respect, has to get initiated with Amrit (Divine Nectar) again after accepting the punishment from the 'Five Beloved Ones', otherwise he would develop animal instincts and by committing sins, would go to hell. All the Prophets and divine persons used to keep their hair long, which shows that hair is correlated with spirituality. As such, the Guru has emphasised that Sikhs should not cut their hair if they want to get pleasure of the Divine and attain self-realisation. The Almighty Lord is the Creator of the whole world. Persons, who have full love and devotion for the All Pervading Divine Lord (Akal Purakh),

naturally pay full respect to His Creation and bounties bestowed upon not only the human beings, but also other creatures.

After seeing in human beings the physical attributes of God, the first Divine Master Guru Nanak Dev enunciates in the Hymn the praises of His beautiful attributes thus:

ਤੇਰੇ ਬੰਕੇ ਲੋਇਣ ਦੰਤ ਰੀਸਾਲਾ ॥ ਸੋਹਣੇ ਨਕ ਜਿਨ ਲੰਮੜੇ ਵਾਲਾ ॥

T-ai-rai bank-ai lo-e-nh dantt reesaalaa. Sohn-ai nakk jinn lammrh-ai vaalaa. (567)

(O Divine Master in the form of humanity! Your eyes are wondrous and your teeth and nose are wonderful with the attribute of long hair.)

Whenever we depict someone's beauty, we often do so by describing his four features - eyes, teeth, nose, and hair. It is clear from the above verse that in describing the magnificent appearance of God in His formed aspect, all four features are equally important. Thus, the eyes, teeth, nose, and hair are God's valuable gifts to man and are important components of his body. The eyes are beautiful, for they are meant to see and perceive the divine knowledge from the sacred books and also seek glimpses of the divine persons. Teeth are beneficial, because by chewing food well, they help in digesting it and keeping the body strong and healthy; the tongue, protected by the teeth, recites the hymns and the Divine Name. The nose helps in inhaling air, which is composed of various elements like oxygen, to keep the body healthy, but beyond this it is very valuable to recite the Divine Name with every breath, to perceive Divine Wisdom and attain self-realisation. Hair is very valuable for imbibing the spiritual power from the cosmos and it also protects the body from the adversities of nature.

In fact, hair are the innumerable, invisible, mystical tongues that always keep chanting the

Divine Name:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਰੋਮਿ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

Gurmukh(i) rom(i) rom(i) Har(i) dhiaav-ei. (941)

(With every hair of his body, the holy person (Gurmukh) recites the Divine Name.)

People with a completely worldly outlook and given to the whims of their mind never realise the importance and spiritual significance of these organs, which God has blessed mankind with. They use these organs merely for self-serving ends and sensual pleasures. As the eyes, nose, and teeth help them in their pursuit of pleasure, they take good care of them and never think of damaging them. But since hair do not contribute to their life of self-indulgence and sensual pleasures, they never hesitate to desecrate and cut them.

On the other hand, those who are aware of the true purpose of life and who

long for union with the Divine, regard their hair as a priceless gift of God. On no account do they treat their hair with irreverence. They take good care of them, like any other organ of the body. In fact, from eternity to the present day, all Avatars, prophets, saints, seers, sages and godly men have treated their hair with utmost respect and have never desecrated a single hair from any part of their body. Clearly, hair have played an important role in providing spiritual nourishment to the mind. It is for this reason that Guru Gobind Singh has laid down the desecration of hair as a cardinal sin.

Flowing hair is the outstanding hallmark of a Sikh and the emblem of divine pride and honour. These are an embellishment to his imposing appearance conferred by the Divine, right from his birth. Thus, spiritually inclined human beings regard their hair as a blessing of the Divine for which they always offer thanks in their daily prayer (Ardas). The seeker always prays that his hair should remain intact with his body so that he can perceive the Divine Wisdom:

'Let the seeker shun the superficial gloss and glitter of the world and concentrate on the Divine reality of nature.'

In a verse of the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev reminds:

ਨਾਪਾਕ ਪਾਕੁ ਕਰਿ ਹਦੂਰਿ ਹਦੀਸਾ ਸਾਬਤ ਸੂਰਤਿ ਦਸਤਾਰ ਸਿਰਾ ॥

Naapaak paak(u) kar(i) hadoor(i) hadeesaa Saabat soorat(i) dastaar siraa.(1084)

(O man! Wash and clean your impure mind ; meditate on the True Lord and thus, let the consciousness merge with the all-Pervading One (Shabad Guru). Let your appearance always remain the same, as God bestowed upon you; and let a Dastar (turban) always adorn your head to cover the hair, which are considered as the divine tongues to recite the Divine Name.)

A turban not only protects the hair of the head, it is also a badge of a person's self-esteem and dignity, to uphold which would keep one away from evil deeds. It is a common saying that the elders call upon their children and relatives 'to uphold the honour of the turban'. The hair is a mark of the uniqueness of mankind, as emphasised by the Divine Master of Sikh faith. In a Hukamnama to the Kabul Sangat, Guru Gobind Singh hailed flowing hair on top of the head as his seal and commanded every Sikh to wear long, unshorn hair (of the body). This Hukamnama was issued under the Guru's signatures on 24 May, 1699. An excerpt from the Hukamnama:

"Ik Onkar! May the Satguru help me always. The Guru shall protect the whole Sangat of Kabul. I am pleased to bless you. Imbibe the Amrit of the Khanda from the Blessed Five. Wear your hair unshorn - these shall be my seal. Put the bracelet(Kara) of iron/steel (Sarabloh) on your wrist. Comb your hair in the morning

and in the evening. None in the holy congregation (Sangat) may partake of animal flesh (Abhakhia ka Kuttha); none shall partake of tobacco."

In Sikh history, the life of the saintly Bhai Taru Singh, perfectly illustrates the significance of hair to the pious humanity. He lived in the village Poohla of Punjab and had schooled himself rigorously in the Sikh way of life.

When in the 18th century, by a decree of the Mughal rulers, Sikhs were outlawed and rewards were officially announced for capturing of a Sikh alive or on presenting their severed head, living in the villages became difficult for the community. During these troubled times, Bhai Taru Singh used to serve every Sikh who visited his house affectionately. He revered them because they were holy persons, who had submitted themselves to uphold the divine principles as enunciated by the Gurus in those turbulent circumstances when the Sikhs were declared outlawed.

Tempted by the money in the form of reward, a villager of Poohla informed the Governor of Lahore, Zakria Khan, that a certain Sikh in his village regularly offered sanctuary to Sikhs and was determined to stir up trouble in the region. Following the complaint, Bhai Taru Singh, who was a very saintly person was arrested and brought to the court of the Mughal Governor at Lahore. Such was the divine glow on the face of the 23-year-old Taru Singh on account of reciting the Divine Name and hymns of the Gurus that it left a deep impression on Zakria Khan, who remarked, "O Allah! This man's face seems to reflect Your light. He must have been a Muslim." Then turning to Taru Singh, he said, "I am attracted by your angelic appearance and want to serve you by submitting my precious wealth at your feet to have the blessings of God (Allah). Such divine person like you must have been a Muslim." He added, "O Holy person! Embrace Islam for your further spiritual improvement and you will be given a royal monetary grant and a huge area of land together with a high official position in my court for life."

At this, a feeling of deep detachment from life and love for his Guru swept over Taru Singh and tears started pouring from his eyes. He replied in a divine mood, "You want to blacken my face. So many of my Sikh brothers and sisters have sacrificed their precious lives and attained martyrdom for upholding the spiritual principles of their Divine Lord for seeking His Divine blessings, which far exceed any of the most precious worldly bounties!" The Governor again tried to lure him with more tempting offers, "If you cut your hair and embrace Islam, you will have princesses as wives and huge awards."

Undaunted, the Guru's beloved Sikh replied, "O Governor! You can cut off my head but not my hair. My hair is a seal of blessing and a holy gift of my Divine Lord, which cannot be compared or equated with any worldly bounties. My Guru has

commanded me to wear my hair unshorn. They are the source of spiritual inspiration and divine bliss. Thus, to obtain the Guru's blessings and Divine Wisdom, I want to tread the Path of divine martyrdom like my brethren, who have already attained the same. To me, titles and ranks under your rule, large estates and the prospect of marrying the princesses are worthless in comparison to desecrating my hair to change my religion."

Hearing the fearless reply, the Governor became furious. Yet, when he beheld the brilliant glow on Taru Singh's face, he calmed down. He ordered the executioners to spare the life of the brave Sikh, if he agreed to have his hair cut. Through constant meditation on the Divine Name and recitation of Gurbani, Bhai Taru Singh had gained great spiritual powers. When the officials tried to persuade him one last time, he roared, "You shall not touch a single hair on my head, though you may remove my scalp if you wish." When the Governor heard this, he remarked that he would put him to death with strokes of his shoes. Bhai Taru Singh in a holy mood predicted that the Governor himself would die first with the stroke of the shoes, which were bestowed on him by his Guru. On hearing this, the Governor ordered the executioners to remove the scalp of Bhai Taru Singh. Accordingly, they executed him as ordered and threw him in a pit nearby so that he would die with the passage of time.

Soon after this, Governor Zakaria Khan suffered urine blockage. Many physicians tried to cure him but failed. The Governor started screaming with pain and visualised his imminent death. Bhai Shabegh Singh, a very learned man, who had studied Persian and Mathematics and had been recruited by the Governor to maintain the accounts of his Empire, was called. On seeing Shabegh Singh, the Governor started crying and asked what could be done to cure him of his pain. Bhai Shabegh Singh said, "O Nawab! You have done a great sin by removing the scalp of the divine Sikh. Now the flow of your urine will only be restored by seeking advice and prayers from the head of the spiritual clan of the Sikhs, Bhai Kapoor Singh, who is the Nawab." The Governor humbly said to Bhai Shabegh Singh, "For God's sake, please contact Nawab Kapoor Singh immediately so that I may be cured." When Bhai Shabegh Singh narrated the story to Nawab Kapoor Singh, he immediately advised, "Go and ask the the Governor's courtiers to hit Zakaria Khan's head with Bhai Taru Singh's shoe; this will restore the flow of his urine." With the consent of the Governor, the courtiers took Bhai Taru Singh's shoe and started hitting the the Governor's head with it. With a few strokes of the shoe, his urine started flowing. However, when they stopped striking the Governor's head with the shoe, the urine stopped again, and he started feeling severe pain. He requested his courtiers to

keep on striking his head with Bhai Taru Singh's shoe to maintain the urine flow. This process of striking the Governor's head with Bhai Taru Singh's shoe, was carried out for 21 days. Due to considerable pain, Governor Zakaria Khan died. After his death, Bhai Taru Singh performed a prayer (Ardas); the soul left his mortal body and merged with the Formless One (Divine Lord).

Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana (1866-1927), the prominent saint of the Sikh Panth, used to say that all men are born as Khalsa, i.e., with complete hair on the head. As one grows up with long hair, the barber cuts it, according to the rituals of various religions.

Scientists at the San Jose State University, United States, after thorough research on the functions of human hair, have concluded that a man who preserves his natural appearance (with all his hair intact) is seen to be pious-hearted, full of poise, personable, resolute, daring, generous, and far-sighted.

Sri Ramchandra: In his epic work Sri Ramchritmanas, the poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas (1532-1623) recounts that Rama, the legendary king of Ayodhya and an Avatar of Vishnu in the Treta Yuga, maintained his natural appearance and had long flowing hair.

ਸਕਲ ਸੋਚ ਕਰ ਰਾਮ ਨਹਾਵਾ । ਸੁਚ ਸੁਜਾਨਬਟ ਖੀਰ ਮੰਗਾਵਾ ।
ਅਨੁਜ ਸਾਹਿਜ ਸਿਰ ਜਟਾ ਬਨਾਇ । ਦੇਖ ਸੁਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਜਲ ਛਾਇ ।

Sakal soch karr Ram nahaavaa. Such sujaanbatt kheer mangaavaa.

Anuj saahij sirr jataa banaa-e. D-ai-kh sumantar jal chha-e. (Tulsi Ramayana)

Sri Krishna: In the Hindu tradition, Sri Krishna, an Avatar of Vishnu in Dwapar Yuga, is often called Keshava, which in Sanskrit means one whose hair (Kesh) is long, uncut and beautiful.

ਬੰਸੀ ਵਾਲੇ ਆਉ ਹਮਾਰੇ ਦੇਸ । ਤੇਰੀ ਸੋਹਣੀ ਸੂਰਤ ਲਾਂਬੇ ਕੇਸ ।

Bansee vaal-ai aaou hamaar-ai d-ai-s. T-ai-ree sohnhee soorat laanb-ai k-ai-s.

(Bhagat Surdas)

also

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਚਾਰੀ ਕਾ ਯਹ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ ਸਭੀ ਜਟਾ ਸਿਰ ਪਰ ਰਖੇ ।
ਸਿਰ, ਦਾੜੀ ਔਰ ਸਰੀਰ ਕੇ ਕਿਸੀ ਅੰਗ ਕਾ ਵਾਲ ਨ ਕਟਾਵੇਂ ।

Brahmchaaree kaa yeh Dharam h-ei Sabhee jataa sirr parr rakh-ai.

Sirr, daarhee aur sareer k-ai kisee angg kaa vaal na kataav-ain.

(Bhagvad Gita)

Frequent mention is made in the Vedas and Shastras - sacred Hindu texts - of the significance of long unshorn hair to humans and its key role in attaining worldly and spiritual powers. This is revealed by Giani Udham Singh, a Sikh scholar, in his book Kes Chamatkar.

Jesus Christ : The central figure of Christianity too, had long hair. This is depicted in his images created by his followers. It is believed that the Biblical prophets Moses, Jacob and Noah all had long hair.

Prophet Mohammed : The founder of Islam wore his hair long and unshorn, as did Abraham, the first Hebrew patriarch.

Gautam Buddha : In February 1992, the daily Tribune reported that during an excavation at Taxila (Pakistan), an idol of the Buddha was unearthed. It featured the founder of Buddhism, with long flowing hair on the head and a beard.

Eminent social scientists and authors have closely studied the significance and role of long, flowing, and unshorn hair in humans from various angles. Their views are given below:

Lady Macmillan : This British writer analyses the significance of hair to a Sikh in psychological terms and concludes: "My dear Sikh brethren! The flowing locks that adorn your heads are not mere strands of hair. In reality, these are electrical cables that connect you to the mighty powerhouse of Guru Gobind Singh. You are indeed fortunate that you have been blessed with this invaluable gift (the hair). Regard this emblem of the Guru as a splendid crown on the blessed forehead of Mother India."

M.A. Steele : "Flowing hair is a natural article of clothing, God has blessed man with. They are beautiful to behold and are like a crown of distinction on a man's head."

Rabindranath Tagore : This celebrated author and Nobel Prize winner often used to say that the appearance most becoming to a man was the one in which all hair had been allowed to grow in their natural state. When he experienced spiritual awakening, he began to preserve and maintain all the hair on his body with utmost care. As a result, he took on the appearance of a Mahatma (a holy man). With flowing beard and long hair, he looked like a true saint. He held the view that he did not grow the hair - they were given to him by the Creator as part of his human frame. All he did was to look after them with loving care.

Tolstoy : The world famous Russian writer would take great care of his hair and beard. When asked why he did so, he would say that hair were a means of getting closer to nature and that hair is to the body, like the vegetation is to the earth.

It is thus concluded that hair are a sacrosanct and an integral part of the human body. Nothing should be done to stop its natural growth, as it affects both the physical and the spiritual growth of man.

Sexual Relation with Anyone Other Than One's Spouse

A married couple should follow the instructions bestowed upon them while the marriage ceremony is performed in front of the Guru Granth Sahib in letter and spirit. It is emphatically impressed upon the marrying couple to remain pure and refrain from the cardinal sin of cohabiting with anyone, other than your spouse, under all circumstances. They are asked to remain loyal to each other. It is strictly prohibited by Guru Gobind Singh, who said that sexual relations with anybody other than the spouse not only leads to miseries, but also invites several types of serious diseases. The saintly person, who treads the Divine Path according to the instructions of the Guru, after getting initiation of Divine Nectar, should avoid frequent sexual indulgence. When a female conceives, the couple should discontinue physical relations till the child is born and starts walking and eating. This is called real celibacy for the householders.

If an Amritdhari Sikh commits this sin, he ceases to have the divine relationship with the Divine Father Guru Gobind Singh and the Divine Mother, Mata Sahib Kaur. Thus, he no longer remains Sikh of the Guru, who would save him from committing more sins. He would face downfall in his life and would repent for his sins at the time of death, because he did not follow the Guru's instruction.

These type of sinful sexual relations, with other than one's spouse, ruins the values of such a person and they forget meditation on the Divine Name, to attain self-realization. In fact, these relationships not only put a veil on his Divine Wisdom, but lead him towards hell. Many associated sexual diseases like Syphilis, Uodan, Gonorrhoea and AIDS engulf them. Of these, AIDS is the worst disease, which is not completely curable and is prevalent throughout the world significantly. When a Sikh repents honestly after committing this sin, he would try to follow the Guru's Path to wash away his sins. For this, he has to beg the pardon from the the 'five beloved ones' (Panj Piare) in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. After imposing a suitable punishment, they will initiate him again. If the Sikh then follows their instructions in letter and spirit and recites the hymns and meditates on the Divine Name honestly, he will then get rid of his sins and again tread the divine Path for getting the blessings of the Divine Lord (God).

All the governments of the world stress on human beings to not commit adultery. There are many examples in Sikh history, as well as in other religions, where the divinely inclined persons do not perform worldly marriage due to the fact that they have developed an immense urge and inclination to realise the Divine within by treading the Divine Path with full love and devotion. This, in fact, is called The Divine Marriage which is required to be performed by every human being, whether

worldly married or unmarried, to attain salvation in this very life according to the divine Law and the instructions of the divinely persons. In fact, man has come on this earth to realise the Divine within and merge with Him completely for getting salvation:

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

Bha-ee paraapat(i) maanukh d-ai-hureeaa. Gobind milanh kee eh t-ai-ree baree-aa. (12)

(O Man! God has blessed you with the human body to realise the Divine within in this very life.)

There are many examples in almost all the faiths where the persons from very young age develop intense urge and yearning to realise the Divine within. As such, they don't bother and do not have any inclination for worldly marriage. In the Sikh faith there are many examples, where married as well as unmarried persons have merged with the Divine in their very lives due to their spiritual capital accumulated in the previous as well as in the present lives.

Use of Intoxicants

On the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Desa Singh, a devoted Amritdhari Sikh of the Guru, wrote a code of conduct for the Sikh way of life. In it, the use of tobacco, eating animal flesh (meat), and all types of drugs are strictly prohibited. A Sikh, who uses these, would not remain a true Sikh of the Guru, according to the Sikh code of conduct.

Tobacco was never prevalent in India before the invasion of the country by the Britishers, who were in the habit of smoking. As an excuse to use tobacco, the Britishers propagated that it helped to strengthen the concentration, but at that time, they could not visualise its harmful effects. This led to many rich people, including the local rulers - the Rajas and Maharajas - smoking to please the British rulers. Following their footsteps, the common people also took to smoking. With the passage of time, smoking led to various diseases like heart ailments, asthma, oral cancer and many side effects leading to other minor diseases. Now the whole world is becoming aware of the detrimental effect of smoking. The death of hundreds of men and women has created the much needed awareness among all governments of the world and shaken them, with the result that they have started spending huge amounts to treat the diseases caused by this menace. As such, many governments have banned smoking in public places due to the effects of passive smoking on non-smokers. In this respect, governments - consciously or unconsciously - have now followed the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, who strictly forbade His followers (Sikhs) from smoking more than 300 years ago.

Indulgence in alcohol also does considerable harm to the body and mind. Diseases include liver damage, leading to liver cancer; the nervous system, which may lead to brain damage; stomach ulcers and many other diseases and their side effects. Also, many other drugs, especially the opium products collectively damage various systems of the body, like the brain, nervous system, cardio-vascular system and digestive systems. At present, huge money is being spent on drugs by people to cure the above mentioned diseases. Many people eventually get addicted, which may ultimately lead to death. Considerable money is spent by all governments of the world to eradicate this menace, by educating public on the dangers associated with drug and alcohol abuse. Many addicts turn to committing crimes in order to obtain money to feed their addiction. This has resulted in high levels of crimes in our societies across the world.

Foreseeing this type of menace by intake of alcohol and other drugs, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master gave an edict to Sikhs, as well as to the entire humanity, not to indulge in vices of alcohol and other drugs. As such, anyone who calls himself a Sikh of the Guru is bound to follow the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, not to indulge in taking drugs or alcohol etc. If a Sikh violates the instruction of his Divine Master, he would tread the path of many miseries, like losing wealth and suffering bad health and diseases and would ultimately tread the path to hell. It is a fact that the inner soul of anyone, who indulges in these vices dissuades him from falling into these bad habits, if he wants to tread the Divine Path for his welfare - worldly and spiritual. But, the ignorant ones do not pay any heed to this inner divine voice, having been engulfed as they are in many bad habits.

Eating Animal Flesh

In Sikh way of life, eating of any type of animal flesh is strictly forbidden as per the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh. According to Sikh code of conduct (Rehat Maryada), it is a taboo and a cardinal sin. A Sikh, who eats meat of any kind prepared in any way cannot claim to be a Sikh of the Guru, regardless of whether the meat is prepared according to Muslim or Hindu customs. There is a belief among some meat eating Sikhs that Guru Gobind Singh had prohibited eating meat prepared in the Muslim way (Halal). According to these meat-eating Sikhs, the Guru had not prohibited eating meat prepared in the Hindu way which is -a Hinducutting the head of an animal with a single stroke of the sword (Jhatka).

Guru Gobind Singh, being the Divine Prophet for humanity, nurtured no ego or duality. In fact, for Him, the whole humanity comprised the children of the same Divine Father (God), irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. How could He

say that meat prepared in the Hindu way is not sinful, whereas that prepared by the Muslim way is sinful and prohibited to eat? Whoever creates this type of duality in humanity cannot be a follower of the Sikh Gurus. The Guru has emphatically enunciated that all human beings are created by the Divine Lord, Who according to the divine principle is considered the Divine Master of the whole humanity regardless of any religion, caste or creed for they are merely the ways to tread honestly to merge with the Divine. His Holiness has enunciated that Hindus, Muslims and other sects of humanity should be considered as One human form, because the same Divine light pervades within not only human beings but also in every creature of the Universe. Guru Gobind Singh expounds in the following hymn that all persons, whether belonging to Hindu or Muslim religions, are the beloved children of the Divine One:

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ, ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ, ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੋ ।

Hindu Turak ko-oo, Raafjee Imaam Saafee, Maanas kee jaat sab-ei ek-ei pehchaanbo.

Thus, the animal flesh (meat) is the same and there is no difference, whether it is prepared in the Hindu or the Muslim way.

The detailed description of not eating any kind of meat is given later in the chapter entitled 'Why a Sikh should not eat animal flesh'.



Guru Granth Sahib

The Divine Sikh Scripture

The Divine hymns enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev were first compiled in the form of a booklet (Pothi), which was handed over to his successor Guru Angad Dev, who included His own hymns into it and further handed it over to Guru Amardas, the third Divine Master, whose hymns were also incorporated in it. Since all other devoted Sikhs were very busy in spreading the message of Guru Nanak Dev to humanity, for which they were engaged in various affairs, they could not collect the holy book in which the hymns of the three Gurus from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Amardas were incorporated. Since the Pothi was with Guru Amardas, Baba Mohan, son of Guru Amardas kept it in his custody, so that it would not get misplaced or destroyed. At the same time, the hymns expounded by Guru Ramdas were in custody of His successor Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Arjan Dev undertook the gigantic holy task to compile all the hymns of not only the Sikh Gurus, but also of other saints, who merged their identities with the Divine (God) by shedding their ego completely. Gurbani, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev, amply clarifies that ego is a huge hurdle to merge completely with the Divine:

ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਛੋੜਿ ਭਏ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੀ ॥

Dubidhaa chhod(i) bha-e Nirankaaree. (685)

[O Man! Shed your ego. You would then become Divine (God).]

Dubhida means a mind in duality, which is, in fact, ego. All those, who merged with the Divine, shed their ego completely. Such saints and sages lived in India in the past, though they initially followed their own faith in letter and spirit like high-caste Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Muslims, Rajputs and low-castes like cobblers, barbers and weavers etc., who became Divine by shedding their ego completely. They also recited hymns in their own native languages, which Guru Arjan Dev incorporated in the Granth Sahib.

Guru Arjan Dev collected the original divine compilations (Pothi Sahib) in which the hymns of previous Gurus were incorporated. He started reciting all the hymns of the Sikh Gurus as well as the Divine saints of India originally belonging to high and low-castes, creeds, classes and various religions. Bhai Gurdas, the great scholar, performed the divine task of writing all these hymns as expounded by Guru Arjan Dev.

It took about four years to complete this huge divine task. The compilation of all these hymns in the form of a holy Scripture was named the Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan Dev installed it in Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar, now also called Golden Temple by non-Sikhs. Baba Buddha was designated as the Divine Priest to sit behind the Granth Sahib for waving the Fly-Whisk (Chaur). At dusk, the Divine Granth Sahib was wrapped in clean clothes and was taken by Guru Arjan Dev on His head and placed on a special palanquin. During night, the Guru in reverence used to take rest on the floor in the same room. By sleeping on the floor, he gave utmost respect to the Granth Sahib.

With the passage of time, due to the great struggles and battles undertaken by Guru Hargobind against the Mughals, who used to inflict atrocities on the poor masses, the Divine book known as the Granth Sahib was taken by Dhir Mal, the grandson of Guru Hargobind, in his custody. Guru Gobind Singh, after fighting many battles with the Mughals, blessed the forty liberated ones (Chalee Mukte) at Muktsar, who shed their blood to defeat the Mughal army and reached Sabo ki Talwandi in Bathinda district of Punjab to rest for some time. The ruler of the area Bhai Dalla, was a devotee of the Guru. Here, the Guru wished to complete the Granth Sahib by incorporating the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He sent 25 Sikhs to Bhai Dhir Mal to bring the original script of the Granth Sahib, so that the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur could be incorporated. Dhir Mal bluntly refused to hand over the original Granth Sahib and tauntingly remarked that if Guru Gobind Singh called Himself a true Guru, why could He not compose the entire Granth Sahib himself? Hearing this, Guru Gobind Singh dictated the whole Granth Sahib from His Divine Wisdom to Bhai Mani Singh and incorporated the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur at the appropriate places. It took about nine months to complete this task. After this, Baba Deep Singh made four copies of the Granth Sahib. The original copy of the Granth Sahib was taken to Hazur Sahib (Nanded) by Guru Gobind Singh, where He bestowed the Guruship upon the Divine Granth Sahib and from then, it is Guru Granth Sahib for the Sikhs. The details of anointment of Guru Granth Sahib has been mentioned in the life story of Guru Gobind Singh in this book.

Languages of Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib is the treasure-house of Indian as well as foreign languages. The divine hymns were recited by the Gurus and different divine saints in different languages. A major section of the Guru Granth Sahib is written in language of the saints (Sant Bhasha), but Punjabi, Hindi, Sanskrit, Marathi, Sindhi, Arabic and Persian languages are also used for composing the hymns. The dialect of these various languages had also been used by various saints, while expounding the

hymns. Punjabi has also been used in various dialects. At that time, Gurus, as well as many other saints of India had used such words, while expounding hymns, which are not normally found in any of the languages. The main language of Gurbani despite being various dialects of Punjabi, the fact remains that it has been written in various other languages. As such Guru Granth Sahib in reality is the interfaith Divine Scripture to get the Divine Wisdom by the whole of mankind.

In Guru Granth Sahib, besides the hymns of six Gurus of the Sikh faith, there are also hymns of eighteen saints, originally belonging to various castes, creeds and religions of India. There are also eleven high-caste Brahmins called Bhatts, who were intensely longing to realise the Divine Within. They visited various pilgrimages to perceive Divine Knowledge to become intuned with the Divine within for getting self-realisation, but could not perceive the same. Their thirst for Divine Wisdom was quenched when they finally had the divine company of Guru Arjan Dev at Amritsar. Their doubts were cleared after listening to the divine discourses of the Guru and following the divine instructions in letter and spirit to meditate on the Divine Name, they realised the Divine within.

5874 Divine Hymns of the Gurus and the saints, mentioned earlier, recited in 31 different musical measures (Ragas) are compiled in 1430 pages of the Guru Granth Sahib. All the six Gurus had authored their hymns with the name 'Nanak' mentioned at the end of every hymn Who was the first Guru of Sikh Faith known as Guru Nanak Dev. But to distinguish as to which Guru had enunciated which divine hymn, it is written in the beginning of every hymn in the form of Mehla, e.g., Mehla I (means recited/authored by Guru Nanak Dev) and Mehla II, III, IV, V and IX as of Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur, respectively.

All the Gurus have emphatically emphasised, 'O Man! You are born to meet your Divine Master and completely merge with Him by shedding your ego.' This can only be done by reciting the hymns and the Divine Name with utmost devotion and love. In other words, one's mind should not be engrossed in worldly affairs and should develop an immense urge to meet the Divine within in this very life, while performing worldly duties faithfully, but remaining unattached. While rendering worldly affairs and earning a livelihood and performing duties for supporting the family, one should emphatically submit to the Divine Lord: "I have no power and intellect to render these duties. O my Divine Master! You are getting these done according to Your Divine Will, through my body, which is just a machine bestowed by You, to get the worldly duties performed through it. Whatever is achieved through this, it is Your Divine grace and everything belongs to You." This is called Karma Yoga:

ਕਰਮ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਿਹਕਰਮ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਬੈਸਨੋ ਕਾ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਧਰਮ ॥

Karam karat hov-ei nehkaram. Tis(u) b-ei-sno kaa nirmal Dharam. (274)

According to this hymn, all the worldly performances mentioned above, become worship. Guru Gobind Singh emphasises:

ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹੋਂ ਸੁਨ ਲੇਹੁ ਸਭੈ ਜਿਨ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਕੀਓ ਤਿਨ ਹੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਾਇਓ ॥

Saach(u) kahon sunn l-ai-hu sabh-ei Jinn prem kee-o tinn hee Prabh paa-e-o.

(Tav Prasad Sawaeeye)

(O Human Beings! Hear my Truthful utterances! You can only realise the Divine within for getting self-realisation, if you develop immense love with the Divine by shedding your ego completely.)

According to the Gurus, the essence of Divine Love (Prem) is to have love with the Divine while remaining egoless. The hymns, as enunciated by Divine Masters, motivate human beings to merge with the Divine in this very life, by treading the Divine Path. The Divine Love is the key to success, to merge with the Divine in this very life for getting self realisation. In order to help man achieve this objective, the Gurus used appropriate musical measures for expounding Gurbani. These, divine measures (tunes), according to the state of mind of a person, immensely motivate the minds of even the most egoistic persons to tread the Divine Path.

The entire Gurbani incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib has been recited in 31 Ragas except for the starting hymns of Japuji Sahib; the hymns are recited in Sanskrit language called Salok Sehaskriti and Swaeeye (the divine stanzas) recited in Punjabi language by eleven Bhattas. All other hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib have been recited in these thirty-one musical measures (Ragas): Sri Raag, Maajh, Gauri, Asa, Gujri, Devgandhari. Bihagrha, Wad-hans, Sorath, Dhanaasri, Jaitsri, Todi, Bairarhi, Tilang, Suhi, Bilawal, Gaound, Ramkali, Nat Narayan, Mali Gaura, Maru, Tukhari, Kidara, Bhairo, Basant, Sarang, Malaar, Kanrha, Kalyan, Parbhati and Jaijawanti.

The Divine Hymns of the Six Sikh Gurus

The Divine Master	No. of Divine Hymns	No. of Ragas
Guru Nanak Dev	974	19
Guru Angad Dev	63 Slokas	In Vaars (Odes)
Guru Amardas	907	17
Guru Ramdas	679	30
Guru Arjan Dev	2218	30
Guru Tegh Bahadur	116	15

The Divine Hymns of 05 Muslim Saints

S. No.	Saint	Shabad	Residents of	Caste	Period
1	Bhagat Farid	116	Multan	Muslim	1173-1266
2	Bhagat Kabir	535	Uttar Pradesh	Muslim Weaver	1398-1518
3	Bhagat Bhikhan	2	Uttar Pradesh	Muslim	1480-1573
4	Rababi Balwand	5 Hymns	-----	Muslim by faith	-----
5	Rababi Satta	3 Hymns	-----	Muslim by faith	-----

The Divine Hymns of 24 Hindu Saints

S.No.	Saint	Shabad	Residents of	Caste	Period
1	Bhagat Jaidev	2	Bengal	Brahmin	1201-1273
2	Bhagat Trilochan	4	Maharashtra	Vaish	1267-1335
3	Bhagat Namdev	61	Maharashtra	Calicographer	1270-1350
4	Bhagat Sadna	1	Sindh	Butcher	1270-1350
5	Bhagat Ramanand	1	Tamil Nadu	Gaud Brahmin	1366-1467
6	Bhagat Ravidas	40	Uttar Pradesh	Cobbler	1378-1529
7	Bhagat Sain	1	Rajasthan	Barber	1390-1440
8	Bhagat Dhanna	4	Rajasthan	Jat	1415-1475
9	Bhagat Pipa	1	Rajasthan	Rajput	1426-1562
10	Bhagat Surdas	1	Uttar Pradesh	Brahmin	1478-1573
11	Bhagat Parmanand	1	Maharashtra	Brahmin	1483-1593
12	Bhagat Beni	3	Bihar	Brahmin	-----
13	Baba Sunder	6 Hymns	-----	Kshatriya	-----

Continued...

Divine Hymns of 11 High Class Enlightened Hindu Saints -Brahmins - (Bhatt's)

14	Bhatt Kalsahar	54 Hymns	Brahmins
15	Bhatt Gaayand	13 Hymns	Brahmins
16	Bhatt Bhikha	2 Hymns	Brahmins
17	Bhatt Kirat	8 Hymns	Brahmins
18	Bhatt Mathura	14 Hymns	Brahmins
19	Bhatt Jalap	5 Hymns	Brahmins
20	Bhatt Salhh	3 Hymns	Brahmins
21	Bhatt Bhall	1 Hymns	Brahmins
22	Bhatt Bal	5 Hymns	Brahmins
23	Bhatt Harbans	2 Hymns	Brahmins
24	Bhatt Nall	16 Hymns	Brahmins

It is worth mentioning that in the holy books of all other religions of the world; only the hymns of their Prophets have been incorporated, while hymns of other faiths have never been included. According to the Sikh faith, the Divine Realm is One, where only the Formless Divine pervades. Whoever meditates on the Divine Name with full love and devotion loses his identity, i.e., eradicates his ego completely and merges with the Divine and thus reaches the stage of Divine Realm. In spiritual Realm, there is no difference between these Divine persons and the Divine Lord (God). These Divine persons initially belonging to different faiths, caste, creed or religion and even initially worshippers of different idols of gods and goddesses with different rituals; ultimately started treading the divine Path by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. They entered the Divine Realm by shedding their ego completely and merged with the Omnipresent, which is the Formless Blissful stage. Their Hymns have been incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib on the same pedestal along with those of the Sikh Gurus. Thus, for a Sikh, all the hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib have the status of the Guru to be worshipped.

In fact, there is no worldly Name of God. The seekers after Truth, after perceiving various virtues of the Divine, have named Him according to His various attributes and perceptions. The Sikh Gurus have given various Names to the Divine for meditation, irrespective of any religion, caste or creed, whereas, the Prophets of other religions and their followers, used to recite the Name of the Divine, as expounded only by them, to get self-realisation. The various Names of God as

accepted by Sikh Gurus for holy recitation to attain the Divine bliss and as incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib are given in the following table:

**The Names of God recited by different saints
mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib**

Divine Name	No. of Times	Divine Name	No. of Times
Hari	8344	Narayan	89
Ram	2533	Antarjami	61
Prabhu	1371	Jagdish	60
Gopal	491	Satnam	59
Gobind	475	Mohan	54
Parmatma	324	Allah	46
Karta	228	Bhagwan	30
Thakur	216	Nirankar	29
Daata	151	Krishna	22
Parmeshwar	139	Waheguru	13
Murari	97	Wah Guru	3

Therefore, the Divine teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, are for the whole of mankind and not confined only to Sikh faith. The Guru Granth Sahib is called an Interfaith Divine Scripture and is Shabad Guru which is all-Pervading (The Divine Lord) and not an idol or picture like other faiths. Such Guru is above all the worldly comforts and miseries. The Guru is pleased with any seeker, who follows its preachings in letter and spirit without indulging in any sort of worldly possessions and thoughts.

Guru Granth Sahib is not like a human body, therefore it does not feel the effects of the elements at any time. The followers cannot get the blessings of the Divine by simply installing air-conditioners and costly coverings (Rumalas) and other decorations of gold and silver or any other articles of worldly comfort. We can obtain the Divine Wisdom of the Guru Granth Sahib only by following the teachings and instructions incorporated in it in letter and spirit, with full love and devotion, and tread the Divine Path for getting self-realisation in this very life.



Glimpses from the Sikh History

The Ten Gurus

There have been ten Gurus or spiritual preceptors of the Sikh faith - from Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master. During their life span of 239 years, through their hymns and teachings, they emphatically stressed that mankind, which indulges in lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, could only be saved from the awful miseries, if the same is motivated to tread on the Divine Path to realise the Divine within. By this outlook, every seeker would change from self-centred materialistic outlook to realise the Divine within and without, to see One in All and All in One.

Whatever the Gurus uttered was considered the Divine 'Word' for the benefit of the whole of mankind, the recitation of which motivates the person to realise the Divine within. The followers of the Gurus were considered as Sikhs i.e. seekers after Truth.

The Divine Masters always propagated the universal outlook to see One in All and All in One so as to create spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace in the world. The ten spiritual Masters were the embodiments of the Divine Lord. The hymns of six Sikh Gurus and eighteen divine saints, some of them high-caste Hindu priests (Brahmins), kings, warriors (Kshatriyas); others from low-castes; five Muslim saints and other divine persons, who initially belonged to low-castes like cobbler, weaver as also eleven high-caste Brahmins called Bhattas have been incorporated in the Divine Scripture called the Granth Sahib, which was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev and dictated to His disciple poet-Saint Bhai Gurdas - a renowned scholar.

Before Guru Gobind Singh cast off his physical frame at Nanded in Maharashtra, India, which is known as Sachkhand Hazur Sahib, His Holiness placed the Divine Granth Sahib on His divine seat and circumambulated five times and bowed His head before the divine Scripture and acknowledged the same as the eleventh Eternal Guru -The Guru Granth Sahib. He further instructed His followers, i.e., the Sikhs, to follow the Guru Granth Sahib as their Eternal Guru, henceforth. The Guru Granth Sahib embodies of the hymns of not only of the Sikh Gurus, but also of other divine persons, who initially belonged to different castes and creeds (low or high) including

that of the Muslim faith, who after reaching the Divine Realm merged with the Divine completely.

In fact, there is no caste, creed, race or religion in the Divine Realm. Religions are the different paths to tread on to realise the Divine within and without, which, in fact, is the ultimate goal of human life. Ultimately the seekers lose their initial identity and enter the Divine Realm, where there is no caste, creed or religion or any figure except the Formless One. Thus, every human being, who honestly treads the holy path initially chosen by him, with an urge to merge with the Omnipresent reaches the stage of the Divine Realm, which is the Formless One. In this stage, one loses his identity completely and becomes One with the Divine. In the Guru Granth Sahib this stage is known as Begampura, the abode of the Formless One or the Formless City without sorrows and worries, as depicted by Bhagat Ravidas, the cobbler, but his hymns were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, a unique interfaith divine Scripture. When a Sikh bows his head in reverence before the Guru Granth Sahib, he does not bow before the hymns of Sikh Gurus only, but also of the other divine persons including Muslim Saints, who initially belonged to high or low-caste, creed, as well as from other religions who had reached the Divine Realm by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. Thus, Sikh faith should be considered as an interfaith religion.

An ordinary person considers the ten Gurus (Divine Sikh Masters) as separate historical divine figures, yet they were One in the Spiritual Realm, as they were the embodiments of Shabad Guru, the Divine 'Word':

ਜੋਤਿ ਓਹਾ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਇ ਸਹਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਫੇਰਿ ਪਲਟੀਐ ॥

Jot(i) ohaa jugat(i) saa-e Seh(i) Kaa-e-aa ph-ai-r(i) paltee-ei. (966)

According to the above hymn, all the ten Divine Masters are the embodiments of the Supreme Being, but the worldly person visualises their physical frames differently and differentiates them according to his worldly outlook, as a common man does according to different frames. Similar is the case with the saints and sages, who initially started their spiritual way of life as per the customs of the religions they belonged to, but after reaching the Divine Realm, they shed those old identities and became One with the Divine.

Guru Nanak Dev

Guru Nanak Dev was born in 1469 at Talwandi Rai Bhoi, now known as Nankana Sahib, in Shekhupura district of Pakistan, to Mehta Kalyan Das, commonly known as Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta. He had an elder sister named Nanaki.

Education : While still a small child, Nanak was sent by his father to the

village teacher, priest (Pandit) Gopal Das to learn the Devnagari script, i.e., Hindi language. With his reed-pen, the divine child (Nanak) wrote words of such profound spiritual wisdom, on his wooden tablet that the teacher fell on his feet.

He was amazed at the depth of his student's Spiritual Wisdom at such a tender age. He pleaded with his father, Mehta Kalu that he had no ability to teach Nanak because his Divine Wisdom was much higher than his own. The teacher added that favoured and blessed by the Creator, this child was born with the Divine Knowledge, thus he had no words to teach him.

Later on, Guru Nanak Dev's father sent him to Pandit Brij Lal to learn Sanskrit. Here again, Nanak expounded such words of the Divine Wisdom in Sanskrit that he virtually bowed before his so-called student, Nanak, with great reverence. The teacher explained to Mehta Kalu that his son had all the spiritual knowledge and the Divine Wisdom. He was already a divinely learned person and no one could teach him anything more.

Frustrated, Mehta Kalu sent his son to a Muslim teacher, Maulana Qutubudin, to learn Persian, which was the official language of the time. Here again, the Muslim teacher was stunned to hear of the Divine Wisdom and spiritual knowledge of the divine child, Nanak. In fact, Maulana Qutubudin started following the divine utterances of Nanak to improve his own Divine Wisdom. The Muslim teacher met Mehta Kalu and spontaneously said, "O Mehta Kalu! Your son appears to be the incarnation of the Divine, who has all the spiritual knowledge of the world and thus, I am unable to teach him anything." Thereafter, Mehta Kalu was so disgusted and disappointed that he did not send his son to any school and decided to engage him in worldly affairs.

Grazing the Cattle : Mehta Kalu did not want his only son to wander about like a mendicant. Therefore, one day he asked him to graze the cattle so that he could be brought to senses. Nanak obeyed his father and took the herd for grazing. After a short while, Nanak got so engrossed in meditation on the Divine Name that he forgot his worldly duty. When he returned from the trance, he found that the cattle had grazed the wheat crop of the nearby field. The crop owner was so enraged that he petitioned before the local ruler Nawab Rai Bular to recover his loss and punishment for the child. On the petition, the ruler sent a team of experts along with the owner to access the extent of loss to the crop. The inquiry team was stunned to see bumper crop in the field and there was no loss of crop at all due to grazing by the animals. The ruler not only dismissed the petition, but also rebuked the owner for making false allegations against Nanak. The crop owner expounded that Nanak appeared to be a miraculous child. The Nawab saluted the Divine Wisdom of the

holy lad Nanak with great reverence presuming that he appears to be an incarnation of the 'Divine'. From that day on, the Nawab, Rai Bular became the disciple of Nanak and instructed his minister, Mehta Kalu, not to rebuke his son under any circumstances.

Once when Rai Bular, while passing by, saw Nanak sleeping in the sunshine. A cobra with its spread out hood was canopying the face of the divine lad to provide shade and protect him from the piercing hot rays of the sun. When the snake saw Rai Bular, it fled from the place. This miraculous deed further strengthened the divine faith of the ruler in the holy boy.

The Divine Bargain - Sacha Sauda - Laying the foundation of free community kitchen : The frustrated Mehta Kalu wanted his son Nanak to be engaged in some business to earn his livelihood. He gave his Divine Son 20 rupees to go to the nearby market known as Chooarkhana to purchase some valuable articles, which could fetch better profit by selling the same in the local market. His father, Mehta Kalu also sent Bhai Bala, a matured trustworthy subordinate, along with his son, so that bargaining could be done for better profit with the help of Bala. On the way to Chooarkhana, Nanak saw, in a nearby forest, a group of hungry ascetics meditating in an assembly. Being very kind-hearted and compassionate to God loving people, he purchased sufficient food items with all the money, cooked food and served to these hungry ascetics engaged in meditation, brushing aside the advice of Bhai Bala that his father would be enraged. After taking the food, the ascetics showered all their blessings upon young Nanak, who considered it a Sacha Sauda, the divine bargain. By providing food to the hungry saints with twenty rupees, Nanak laid the foundation of the institution of free kitchen for the community. The tradition still continues and is now known as Guru ka Langar (free community kitchen), in all the Gurdwaras across the world. Thus, free food from the kitchen is served to all, whoever visits the Gurdwaras, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The partaking of food from this free kitchen of the Gurdwaras is considered to be very pious.

Employment in the state granary (Modikhana) : In a fit of rage, father Mehta Kalu scolded and rebuked his son. Hearing this, Rai Bular called for Mehta Kalu and was angry with him as to why he had scolded Nanak. After hearing the complaint of Mehta Kalu, Rai Bular sent young Nanak to Sultanpur Lodhi along with his brother-in law, Jai Ram and recommended to the ruler, Daulat Khan Lodhi of Sultanpur to engage Nanak in some honourable job. Lodhi offered Nanak the job of handling the Government stores, from where the eatables and other articles were distributed to the Government servants at subsidised rates and to the common

people of the city with some fixed profit. One day, in divine bliss, Nanak voluntarily started distributing eatables not only to the government servants, but also to the common people of the city free of cost without weighing the stock. In a deep divine trance, his only method of distribution was by counting to twelve. When he finished Terah (Thirteen - 13), he went on distributing all the eatables by uttering the word Terah, which divinely means: 'O my Lord! I'm Your disciple'. He started giving eatables to everybody whosoever came. Under such divine ecstasy, realising the Divine in everyone, he did not charge anything even from the commoners of the city for the eatables they took. Finding young Nanak in this ecstatic state, everybody from the city got the eatables without making any payment. On seeing this, the officials in charge got enraged and complained to the ruler, Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi that Nanak had distributed the eatables and exhausted the entire store without taking any money from the commoners of the city. In a fit of rage, they explicated that the government store had been allowed to be looted by the ascetic Nanak. The ruler got so enraged that without asking for any explanation and investigation, he came with the police officers and auditors to check the stores. As the store was being checked by the officials, Nanak in divine ecstasy kept on reciting, 'Terah', 'Terah' which meant, 'O God! I am Your servant, You alone are my Divine Master', 'O God! I am Your servant, You alone are my Divine Master.' Lo behold! Almighty Lord filled the stores with all the bounties perceiving the utmost love and devotion of His disciple, who was constantly reciting His Divine Name. After thorough investigation, the ruler realised the miracle that had taken place, the commodity had increased and as such the government had to return 760 gold pennies to Nanak as a result of the surplus stock present in the stores. Everybody was astonished and pronounced that Nanak was a godly person that's why this miracle had happened. The ruler asked forgiveness from Nanak and paid the amount due to Him. Initially, Jai Ram, Nanak's brother-in-law was worried that both he and Nanak would have to go to jail as a punishment for the grave negligence. After receiving payment for the surplus in the excess store, Nanak left the job.

Marriage : While in Sultanpur, Nanak was married to Sulakhani, daughter of Mool Chand of Pakhoke Randhawe village of Gurdaspur district of Punjab. The story goes that young Nanak's parents took him to Batala for the marriage ceremony, in which low-caste people like Mardana were also present. On arrival, some responsible people told the in-laws that Nanak was somewhat of an ascetic and had least interest in the household affairs; and that he did not earn any livelihood. The 'in-laws' were worried for their daughter post-marriage and her progeny. They consulted the Brahmins to find means of getting rid of Nanak. The clever Brahmins

made arrangements for Nanak's stay and rest very close to an old muddy wall that was about to crumble. They thought that as He rested for the night, the weak muddy wall would fall on him and kill him. Thus, they would be saved from marrying their daughter to Nanak. Some well-wishers of Nanak warned him that the wall being very unstable might fall on him and kill him. However, Nanak smiled and expounded, "This wall will remain intact and unharmed for centuries to come." Thus, the 'in-laws' had no alternative, but to marry their daughter to Nanak. Till today, that wall still stands intact at the same place. After marriage, Nanak accompanied by his bride, returned to Sultanpur Lodhi. With the passage of time, two sons were born to the couple, Shri Chand (1494) and Lakhmi Das (1497).

Disappearance into the Rivulet Vein : While at Sultanpur Lodhi, Nanak's day would start with bathing in the Rivulet Vein in the ambrosial hour before getting engrossed in deep meditation. One day as usual, leaving his clothes with his attendant Mardana, Nanak stepped into the deep waters of the river and disappeared. When he did not come out for quite some time, Mardana raised an alarm that his Master Nanak had drowned in the river. On hearing this, the ruler Daulat Khan Lodhi sent his men to trace Nanak. They dredged the river and combed the adjoining forest but failed to find him. The entire town, led by the ruler, went into deep mourning at the great loss. According to the religious philosophy of India, the body of a person comprises of five elements - air, water, fire, earth and cosmos. According to spiritual philosophy perceived by Indians, one who has become divine, can shed his body elements and merge with the Omnipresent. His devoted disciple Bhai Mardana had full faith that Nanak would reappear for the divine cause to save humanity from lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Mardana sat down on the banks of the river Vein and began to sing the hymns.

After three days, Nanak reconstituted his body with the five elements of the cosmos and came out of the river and recited the Moolmantra, which comprises the glories and virtues of the Divine Lord for the spiritual uplift of humanity. Now the Divine Scripture of Sikhs, the Guru Granth Sahib begins with this Moolmantra as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev:

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

॥ ਜਪੁ ॥

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥ ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥

Ik Onkaar Sat(i) Naam(u) Kartaa Purakh(u) Nirbhaou Nirveir(u)

Akaal Moorat(i) Ajoonee Saibha-n Gur Parsaad(i).

Jap(u)

Aad(i) Sach(u) jugaad(i) Sach(u). H-ei bhee Sach(u) Nanak hosee bhee Sach(u). (1)

(The meaning of this Moolmantra has already been given on page 15 of this book.)

As the Guru reappeared from the rivulet, the entire population of Sultanpur Lodhi perceived Him as embodiment of the Divine and bowed before Him. Guru Nanak Dev expounded, 'No one is a Muslim nor a Hindu, but all are the children of the Divine One.' On hearing this, the Muslim clergy provoked the ruler, Nawab Daulat Khan to challenge Guru Nanak Dev to participate in Namaz (the Muslim prayer) in the mosque if he did not differentiate between Hindus and Muslims. The Guru agreed to do so, but in the mosque, He kept standing, while others performed prayers. After the Namaz, the ruler asked Guru Nanak Dev why he did not bend his body for performing the Namaz. He replied that he too (the ruler) was also not performing Namaz because his mind was wandering in Kabul city for purchasing the best breed of horses. Hearing this, the ruler was stunned and confessed: "O Nanak! You are a divine person who has perceived my wandering mind in Kabul". Then the Qazi (head priest) asked Guru Nanak Dev as to why He did not perform the Namaz with him. In return, Guru Nanak Dev told the Qazi that he too did not feel the presence of God (Allah) in the mosque because while performing the Namaz, his mind too was wandering and worried about the newly born calf of his mare falling into a well in his house. Thus, he too, was not present in his holy prayer (Namaz)." Hearing this, both Nawab and Qazi bowed before Guru Nanak Dev saying that He was the incarnation of Allah, who knew everything.

Under the commandment of the Divine Lord, Guru Nanak Dev was sent in this world to spread the message of the Divine Truth among the masses to mitigate their miseries and sufferings by reciting the Divine Name. He left Sultanpur Lodhi and went to Eminabad along with his devoted companion Bhai Mardana to meet Bhai Lalo, a poor and honest carpenter, who was longing for the divine directions to tread the Divine Path for self-realisation. When the Guru reached Bhai Lalo, he was stunned to have the divine glimpse of the Guru. He offered the place of rest in his thatched hut, served loaves of coarse and rough grain to them for eating. The Guru relished those rough loaves full of Divine Love and affection from Bhai Lalo. However, Mardana was upset after having the rough loaves. On it being emphasised by the Guru that the loaves were the Divine Nectar, which would shed his ego, Mardana too relished the same.

Malik Bhago, the ruler of Eminabad, performed a Yagna (serving sumptuous food on a mass scale to both rich and poor). All the priests and commoners belonging to low castes of the city assembled at the place, where the feast was to be taken

together. Guru Nanak Dev and his associates, Bhai Mardana and Bhai Lalo, however, didn't participate. On the complaint of an official, Malik Bhago sent the police to bring them to participate in the Yagna. Guru Nanak Dev brought along the rough loaves of Bhai Lalo. When the delicious food, well-prepared with soft bread, was placed before Guru Nanak Dev, he did not eat it. When Malik Bhago asked the Guru as to why he was not eating the delicious food, Guru Nanak Dev said, "Your food contains the blood of the poor, whereas, the rough loaves of Bhai Lalo contain the milk earned by hard toil." Malik Bhago was astonishingly enraged on hearing these words of disrespect. He challenged Guru Nanak Dev to prove his allegation. Guru Nanak Dev took the delicious loaves of Malik Bhago in His left hand and the coarse grain loaves of Bhai Lalo in the right, and squeezed both of them. Lo behold! Blood started oozing out from the delicious loaves of Malik Bhago and fine milk from the coarse loaves of Bhai Lalo. Seeing this, Malik Bhago was horrified and submitted to clarify the divine phenomenon. Guru Nanak Dev remarked, "O Malik Bhago! Your delicious food was acquired by squeezing the blood of the poor, i.e., by snatching their honest earnings by hook or crook. Whereas, the coarse loaves of Bhai Lalo, were made of his honest earnings. As such you were treading the path to hell, whereas Bhai Lalo was following the path to heaven."

After visualising this horrible scene, Malik Bhago shed his ego and fell at the feet of Guru Nanak Dev and begged his pardon for his sins. The Guru showed him the righteous path in accordance with the Divine Law. After giving the spiritual blessings to Bhai Lalo and Malik Bhago, He left the city.

From there, Guru Nanak Dev went to Sajjan, a conman of Tulamba, where he had built an inn. He used to provide good sleeping accommodation for travellers, but at night, he would kill them and dump the dead bodies in the well after robbing them of their wealth. Guru Nanak Dev went especially to Sajjan's inn to set him on the righteous path, for the good deeds performed by him in his previous births. Sajjan, the conman, put all the sumptuous eatables before Guru Nanak Dev to please him, so that he could rob him later on. Instead of taking these bounties, the Guru started reciting a hymn, the theme of which was that the deceitful and wicked persons would undergo all the miseries of the hell at the end of their life. That they could only be saved from such miseries, if they submit to the Divine Will and after repenting for their bad deeds, they could tread the Divine Path. Hearing these divine words from the Guru, Sajjan was so shaken up that he underwent the dreadful vision of hell. Under the holy trance, he fell at the feet of Guru Nanak Dev and begged pardon in repentance for his past sins and by submitting himself at the feet of the Guru, he begged his pardon and prayed, "O My Divine Master! Save me from

the fire of hell for my sins, and bestow upon me your divine blessings to follow your divine teaching for shedding my sins completely." Guru, the embodiment of the Divine, perceived the good deeds of his previous lives and asked him to tread the Divine Path for getting rid of his sinful actions, by imbibing the holy sermons honestly and with full devotion. Sajjan started treading the Divine Path as per the advice of Guru Nanak Dev and thus achieved divine bliss after reciting the Divine Name honestly with full love and devotion. He started serving humanity with full love and devotion. Thus, he became a devout follower of Guru Nanak Dev after following His divine instructions in letter and spirit and became a Saint. He started preaching His Master's divine message among the masses to mitigate their sufferings and lead them on to the Divine Path. From here, Guru Nanak Dev reached Sultanpur Lodhi.

In the year 1497, Guru Nanak Dev decided to leave Sultanpur Lodhi to spread the message of the Divine Lord to the bewildered humanity. Bebe Nanaki, Guru Nanak Dev's sister, considered Him to be the incarnation of the Lord from the very beginning and had utmost Divine Love for Him. But worldly attachment is a great negative power. Under the influence of brotherly attachment, revered Nanaki put Guru Nanak Dev's two little sons in his lap and requested him to stay on for their upbringing. Guru Nanak Dev smiled and said, "O my sister! This is merely the worldly attachment, the Divine has ordained me to save the thousands and millions of His children engulfed in the fire of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride and are being oppressed by the egoistic rulers and pseudo-priests." With a divine smile, he left for his first spiritual journey. These remarks of Guru Nanak Dev touched Daulat Khan as well Jai Ram, who also started treading the Divine Path.

First Spiritual Journey (Udasi) - 1497-1510 : Guru Nanak's first Udasi was towards the East and it took the Guru to a number of places of pilgrimage, where he preached and spread the message of Truth and Love. During this journey, Mardana, His Muslim disciple, accompanied Him. Guru Nanak Dev reached Kurukshetra, the sacred place, where a large number of Hindu priests (Brahmins) and other devotees had gathered on the auspicious occasion of the solar eclipse to perform the prayers. Guru Nanak Dev often used to create such divine actions at the pilgrimages so as to attract the priests and masses towards Him, so that he could spread the divine message for the betterment of the humanity as ordained by the Divine Lord. Here, Guru Nanak Dev was sitting in a secluded place, where a prince (defeated by their enemies) with his mother was travelling through the forest. They could not find anything to eat and because of severe hunger, they killed a deer but were afraid to cook it on the auspicious day of solar eclipse, when many priests

and devotees were gathered at Kurukshetra. On this day, as per the Vaishnava (holy) tradition, no one was allowed to ignite the fire to cook anything because of the austerity being observed on this occasion. The mother and the prince came to know that Guru Nanak Dev had come to Kurukshetra and that He was considered Divine and no one would do any harm to them if they took His refuge, and cook the deer to prepare the flesh food to satiate their hunger. In fact, under the Divine Law, this episode was created by Guru Nanak Dev to attract the priests and the general masses towards Him to spread the real message of spirituality for their spiritual uplift. The prince ignited a huge fire, the smoke of which spread far and wide and was noticed by the priests and the public.

In one of their sacred books written in previous eons, it is mentioned that in the era of spiritual downfall, also known as Kalyuga in Indian mythology, when people including the clergy would forget spirituality to meet the Divine, and would indulge in pseudo-rituals and worldly pleasures, an incarnation of God by the name Guru Nanak would take birth to lead the bewildered humanity towards righteous path. A highly respected and a renowned priest after reading that prediction in their holy book started calling himself the incarnation of Nanak, the Divine one in the form of human being, to set bewildered humanity on the holy path. People used to call that head priest Nanun (incarnation of Guru Nanak). He also called himself Nanun. They rushed in a procession to Guru Nanak Dev along with Nanun, in anger, and questioned Him as to why He did not prevent the prince and his mother from igniting the fire and going against the tradition of that auspicious day and that too for cooking animal flesh. The details of this dialogue between the priest and Guru Nanak Dev has been given in detail on chapter “Why Eating Animal Flesh is Prohibited for a Sikh?” under the heading “Guru Nanak Dev’s Discourses with Brahmin at Kurukshetra on page no. 412.

The Haridwar Episode : From Kurukshetra, Guru Nanak Dev went to Haridwar. On the auspicious day of Vaisakhi, a large number of priests and Hindu devotees used to gather to offerwater to their dead ancestors, according to the prevailing Hindu tradition. All those devotees were king bathing in the River Ganges, and were offering water towards the East, which, according to their belief, would quench the thirst of their dead ancestors. To put the pilgrims and the priests on the right path of spirituality, Guru Nanak Dev started offering water of the River Ganges towards the West, which was the direction towards Punjab. This annoyed the priests, who questioned Him, "Are You mad, that You are offering water towards the West against the traditional ritual?" The Guru humbly replied, "My crop in West Punjab is parched due to lack of moisture and so, I am throwing water

in that direction to save my crop from withering." The priests questioned His stupid action and said to the Guru, "How is it possible that water offered by You can irrigate Your crop hundreds of miles in the west, whereas it falls into this river itself within a few yards?." Guru Nanak Dev said, "How is it that your water being thrown towards East could possibly quench the thirst of your ancestors, who have subtle bodies and are roaming in the cosmos thousands of miles from this place?" Many of the wise priests understood His Divine Wisdom and bowed before Him in reverence for His Divine Knowledge. Guru Nanak Dev told them that after reciting and meditating the Divine Name, they would definitely quench the thirst and would have their ego dissolved for getting salvation. In a lengthy discourse, they clarified their doubts and started meditating on the Divine Name.

Visit to Gorakhmata : This is the main centre of the people with occult powers (Siddhas). The followers of Guru Gorakh Nath had heard about the spiritual power of Guru Nanak Dev. They feared that He might take over this renowned place due to his spiritual powers. They buried a boy in the earth to show a miracle to the Guru. These pseudo Saints presented a bowl of wine before Him and told Him that by drinking it, He would be in tune with the Divine. Guru Nanak Dev, with a divine smile, told them that the sinful drink would distract devotees from the spiritual path and they would be engrossed in worldly pleasures. These divine words touched the hearts of some of the devoted hermits. Then, the head of the hermits clan, enquired from the earth (in which they had buried the boy), as to whether the earth belonged to Guru Nanak Dev or the hermits (Siddhas). Twice, the buried boy replied that the earth belonged to the Siddhas. Then Guru Nanak Dev knowing the hermits' play chided, "O boy! You are still lying." When the Siddhas asked the same question the third time, there was no reply from the earth. The horrified Siddhas dug out the earth and found that the boy had stopped breathing and he appeared to be dead. Feeling defeated, the Siddhas requested the Guru to revive the boy. Guru Nanak Dev asked the boy to recite the Divine Name (Satnam Waheguru). Amazingly, the boy recovered and he started reciting the Guru's Mantra Satnam Waheguru. All the Siddhas were so much hypnotised with this spiritual act that they requested the Guru for forgiveness and asked for His divine blessings to show them the True Path of spirituality. They gifted their entire land to the Guru, and thus the name of the place was changed from Gorakhmata to Nanakmata.

From here, Guru Nanak Dev went further up higher hills, where some pseudo-hermits were misleading the local population with their miraculous powers. Guru Nanak Dev wanted to set them on the right path. Here Bhai Mardana felt hungry and begged for food from these hermits. They refused to give him the eatables and

asked him to take the bitter fruits of Soapberry or Soapnut (Reetha). Hearing this, Guru Nanak Dev asked Bhai Mardana to take the fruit of any of the Reetha trees and it would be sweet. Bhai Mardana found that the fruit of the tree had become very sweet. The hermits (Siddhas) were surprised to see this miracle and became the Guru's devotees. They sought His advice for treading the Divine Path. Guru Nanak Dev blessed them to recite the Divine Name to get self-realisation. Later on, the local population started growing the seeds of this tree and thus the progeny of these trees started producing sweet fruits. Such acts of Guru Nanak Dev should not be considered as miracles. They were performed to set the pseudo-saints on the Divine Path. From here, the Guru went to Mathura, where he spread the message of reciting the Divine Name to attain self-realisation, instead of worshiping idols.

Further on, Guru Nanak Dev visited Banaras, a renowned centre of pilgrimage of the Hindus. Here, the head priest Chatur Das discussed with the Guru the importance of his religious rites for pleasing God. After hearing what he had to say, the Guru advised him not to indulge in pseudo worship of idols if he wanted to tread the Divine Path to realise the Divine within. After a prolonged discussion, he realised that the Divine Path preached by Guru Nanak Dev was the real one to tread on to realise the Divine within. He became a devout follower of the Guru and started meditating on the Divine Name.

From here, Guru Nanak Dev went to Gaya, where he preached the real meaning of spirituality and asked the religious people to recite the Divine Name for getting self-realisation instead of indulging in pseudo rituals for the benefit of their dead kith and kin. The Guru emphasised that only the Divine Name could help them.

Patna : At Patna, Guru Nanak Dev gave Mardana a precious diamond to sell it in the market for a good price, which may be used for charity. The traders, who were engaged in selling artificial diamonds and imitation jewellery did not offer any price for the diamond saying that it was just a stone. Then Mardana went to a goldsmith, who considered this diamond a good stone, but offered no price for it. This shows that the people engrossed in worldly affairs do not value the precious material. Then Mardana took the diamond to the shop of Salas Rai Johri, who was a pious man. Seeing this invaluable diamond emitting spiritual rays, he expressed that nobody on earth could pay the price of that piece of diamond. He bowed before that precious diamond and in reverence he presented Rs 500 for feeling spiritual bliss from its rays. He then humbly asked Mardana the source from where he obtained that unique diamond, which was emitting spiritual vibrations. Mardana narrated the virtues of his Guru. Hearing this, Salas Rai Johri came to Guru Nanak Dev to seek His blessings. After perceiving his divine devotion, the Guru gave a divine

advice to Johri that he had realised the divine motive of the human life. Guru Nanak Dev gave him the Divine Name, for recitation with utmost love and devotion to get self-realisation in that very life. Guru Nanak Dev made Salas Rai Johri a preacher for spreading the Divine Name and motivate others to tread the Divine Path for getting self-realisation. It is worth mentioning here that one of the descendants of the family of Salas Rai Johri namely Rattan Chand later became a devout Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master.

After spreading the preaching of the Divine Lord, Guru Nanak Dev went from Patna to Kolkata and then to Dhaka. While travelling, he went to a village where the dwellers were very notorious and mischievous and used to give very negative advice to anyone, who came in their contact. Guru Nanak Dev told the people of that village to remain settled there. Then, Guru Nanak Dev went to another village, where the dwellers were very pious and rendered selfless service not only amongst themselves but also to the passersby with full affection and devotion for getting the blessings of the Divine Lord. As per their noble virtues, they rendered divine service to Guru Nanak Dev and his associate. The Guru told them to leave the village and scatter over the whole area for earning their livelihood.

On seeing this, Mardana could not resist enquiring about Guru Nanak Dev's surprising action and humbly submitted to the Guru, "O my Divine Lord! You have asked the notorious residents of the last village to remain settled there, while, with love and affection, You have asked these villagers, who have rendered service to You with love and devotion, to scatter to other areas." Guru Nanak Dev told Mardana that the residents of the previous village were very notorious and egoistic; as such they should remain confined there only so that they should not spread these evils among the people of other areas, whereas, the noble persons of this village would spread the spiritual virtues among the people residing in other places, thus creating spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace. On hearing this, Mardana humbly touched the Master's feet and exclaimed, "O Divine Master! Nobody can perceive Your divine actions. You have really come to this world to establish spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace."

Then, Guru Nanak Dev proceeded to Assam and settled at a secluded place away from the city. When Bhai Mardana started crying because of hunger, the Guru allowed him to go to the city to beg for food. It is astonishing to know that the Guru either used to create food from the elements of the cosmos, like oxygen, nitrogen, carbon dioxide and other gases or used to take leaves of the trees as his food. Bhai Mardana went to the city and entered a beautiful house, which was glittering with unknown power. This was the house of Noor Shah, the queen of witchcrafts, who

used to enslave persons with occult powers. After reciting black magic Mantras, she gave food to Bhai Mardana, which hypnotised him and he started behaving like a lamb, following the commandments of Noor Shah, under the spell of her occult powers. When Guru Nanak Dev perceived it with his divine insight, He headed to Noor Shah's house. She used all her occult powers to enslave the Guru. After she failed to do so, she observed a spiritual aura around Guru Nanak Dev. Seeing this, she was so horrified that she fell at His feet and became unconscious. The Guru started reciting the Divine Name, which touched her heart, due to which she regained her consciousness, and queen sought His pardon with folded hands. Seeing Guru Nanak Dev, Mardana too rushed towards his Divine Master and touched his feet and regained his divine consciousness. Noor Shah, after getting the spiritual bliss at the feet of Guru Nanak Dev, became His devoted disciple. The Guru blessed her with the Divine Name to recite with love and devotion, due to which, she became a spiritualist. The Guru anointed her to preach Divine Wisdom to the people of the area for getting solace and peace of mind and thereby obtain salvation.

From Assam, Guru Nanak Dev reached Jagannath Puri, where everyone was reciting the evening prayer (Aarti) by lighting earthen lamps. The Guru did not join them. After culmination of the Aarti, the ruler of the city, along with all the priests of the temple, gathered around the Guru and asked Him why He did not participate in the Aarti. Upon this, Guru Nanak Dev recited His own Aarti:

ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥

ਧੂਪੁ ਮਲਆਨਲੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਚਵਰੋ ਕਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਬਨਰਾਇ ਫੁਲੰਤ ਜੋਤੀ ॥

Gagan m-ei thaal(u) rav(i) chand(u) deepak ban-ai Taarika mandal janak motee.

Dhoop(u) mal-aan-lo pavanh(u) chavro kar-ai Sagal banra-e phoolant jotee. (663)

(The whole cosmos is a Divine Tray of the Creator of the Universe, the Divine Lord. All the stars, moons and suns of the whole cosmos are acting as earthen lamps to emit lights for the prayer of the Almighty Lord performing the divine prayers and the whole of the vegetation of the Universe is shedding fragrance upon the Divine Lord. I was performing Aarti in the glory of the Divine Lord of the Universe.)

Hearing this spiritual hymn, the king as also the priests of the temple became disciples of Guru Nanak Dev for making them realise that they should cultivate Divine Knowledge to attain self-realisation.

Guru Nanak Dev then went to a nearby village, where the water was salty, as it was located near the sea. On the request of the habitants of that area, Guru Nanak Dev dug a small well (Baoli), which was full of sweet water. Here, a Gurdwara stands, which is under the control of the Udasi sect.

In Jagannath Puri, a pseudo-saint used to pose that he was the incarnation of

God and that he knew everything on this earth. He used to keep a bowl full of water in front of him. When Guru Nanak Dev met him, he closed his eyes pretending to be merged with the Divine to obtain the knowledge of the whole Universe. Guru Nanak Dev picked up his bowl and placed it behind him. When the pseudo-saint opened his eyes, he saw that his bowl was missing and got worried. The Guru said to him, "You are pretending to be god and that you know everything of the world, then how come you do not know where your missing bowl is?" Hearing these divine words and beholding the divinity radiating from the Guru's face, he fell at His feet to seek His blessings to tread the Divine Path.

In Rohilkhand, in some secluded part of the hilly area, Guru Nanak Dev heard the hues and cries of the slaves comprising young children, women and men, who were forcefully captured by the Muslim tribes (Rohillas) and were sold in the market like animals. The Guru stayed on a hillock of Rohilkhand along with Mardana and could not sleep the entire night after hearing the cries and wailings of those slaves. The Guru suggested to Mardana to go from here for a week or so because he would not be able to bear of hardships, the Guru would have to undergo. Mardana, started weeping and asked the Divine Master when and where he would meet Him again. The Guru told him that after ten days, wherever he would be, He would meet him there.

After Mardana left Guru Nanak Dev, a mighty Rohilla captured the Guru and ordered Him to follow him. He lodged the Guru in a locked room. The wife of the Rohilla saw the divine light in the Guru's room. She begged her husband to release the divine person, whom he had enslaved. He snubbed her by saying that he would fetch as much as two Turkish horses by auctioning Him in the open market. The next morning, he dressed up Guru Nanak Dev and took Him to a very high place in the market, so that everybody could see the Guru and bid higher for Him. When the Guru was being auctioned, He heard the cries of the enslaved children, women and men who were also to be auctioned in the same market. Hearing their hue and cry, the Guru prayed to the Almighty Lord to redress their miseries.

Eventually, the Guru was sold to the ruler of the area for a considerable sum of money and two Turkey horses. The ruler asked the Guru to fetch water from the nearby well, which providentially turned dry. He was sent to the other wells in the vicinity, but they too were dry. Thus, without water, there was a lot of hue and cry in the city. The ruler observed a divine aura around the Guru. He could also see that the pitcher (water jug) was moving in the air much ahead of Guru Nanak Dev. The ruler perceived that He was a divine soul. All residents of the city came to the ruler, and raised a lot of hue and cry because of the vanishing of water from their wells. The ruler fell on the feet of the Guru and pleaded forgiveness for his sin of

captivating such a divine person. Perceiving their repentance was with great humility, the Guru bestowed upon them the divine blessings and told Rohillas to release all the enslaved men, women and children and establish a Dharmshala (abode of resting for the passersby) and arrange food for them. The Guru told them not to enslave anyone ever again. They followed the directions of the Guru in letter and spirit, with divine humility and directions. Thus, the Rohillas became God-fearing and developed an urge to become divine persons by serving humanity. Hereafter, they served the passersby with full love and devotion as instructed by Guru Nanak Dev. After this, the Guru returned to the same hillock, where Bhai Mardana met him.

Guru Nanak Dev, alongwith Mardana, visited Sultanpur Lodi, and went ahead on to the banks of the river Ravi. Here some rich persons donated a huge chunk of land to Him, where the Guru established a village known as Kartarpur for the devotees to reside there.

Second Spiritual Journey (Udasi) - (1510 - 1516) : After spending some time at Kartarpur in Punjab, Guru Nanak Dev started his second spiritual journey, now towards southern India. During this sojourn, the Guru was accompanied by Bhai Saido, Bhai Sheehan and Bhai Mardana to spread the spiritual message of the Divine Lord to the masses. The Guru's first halt was at Sirsa, where many Muslim saints were performing extremely rigorous penances to meet the God (Allah) by eating only one grain of barley everyday for forty days at a stretch. They believed that by so doing, they would not only attain occult powers, but would also meet the Allah. They had heard of Guru Nanak Dev as a very saintly divine person. During the spiritual discourse, they told the Guru that a true ascetic should be able to remain on one grain of barley everyday, just like them for forty days at a stretch. They then gave forty grains of Barley to Guru Nanak Dev and asked him to perform the penance at a fixed place. The Guru remained intuned with the Divine for full forty days without eating, drinking and moving. He remained immersed in deep transcendental meditation. After forty days, when all the Muslim saints gathered around Guru Nanak Dev, they found the same forty grains of Barley, still intact and there were no signs of weakness on the Guru's body. On the contrary, His face was radiating with divine light. This touched their heart and they perceived the spiritual bliss. They listened to His divine sermons and grasped the technique to tread the Divine Path by reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion to merge with the Divine within. As a result, they became committed devotees of the Guru and followed His spiritual instructions. Gurdwara Chilla Sahib commemorates Guru Nanak Dev's visit to Sirsa. Chilla means meditating on the Divine Name for forty days without taking any food.

From here, the Guru accompanied by his companions, reached Bikaner, where people were performing intense penances to realise the Divine within. The Guru expounded that by merely undergoing great penance one could not perceive the Divine Wisdom. He told them that the way to realise the Divine within was by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion and performing good deeds, while living in this world. Gurdwara Kulait Sahib had been built here in memory of the visit of Guru Nanak Dev.

From Bikaner, Guru Nanak Dev reached Ajmer, where He preached the divine principles to tread the Divine Path for realisation of the Divine within, to Hindu and Muslim ascetics. Then Guru Nanak Dev reached Onkareshwar, where He preached the Divine message to the preachers of the temple. It was here that Guru Nanak Dev recited the hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib under the title Onkar. From here Guru Nanak Dev reached Indore, where stands the Gurdwara Charan-Paduka to commemorate His visit.

Then, Guru Nanak Dev, along with his companions, reached the thick forests of Central India, where a carnivorous man, known as Kauda Rakhash, the cannibal, lived. He used to capture the passersby and boiled them in oil before eating their flesh. His previous births were good, but he was trapped in the company of carnivores. Here, Bhai Mardana, the beloved companion of the Guru, felt very hungry, having not eaten for many days. That alibi of hunger was created by Guru Nanak Dev to put the carnivorous Kauda Rakhash on the Righteous Path. When Mardana went in search of food in that forest, he was captured by Kauda Rakhash, who then started dreaming of him as his meal. Right then, Guru Nanak Dev appeared on the scene to confront Kauda Rakhash, who was not only stunned, but hypnotised by the divine glimpse of the Guru. Pious deeds of his earlier lives came into play and his beastly deeds performed in this life shook his conscience. Kauda started trembling and fell at the Guru's feet, from where he imbibed spiritual vibrations. While trembling with folded hands, he repented for his horrible deeds and prayed to the Guru to pardon his heinous sins. Kauda felt the spiritual bliss as he fell at the Feet of Guru Nanak Dev and became His disciple. The ever Merciful Guru pardoned him and blessed him to tread the Divine Path by reciting the Divine Name for getting self-realisation in this very life. KaudaRakhash became a devout follower of Guru Nanak Dev and he, not only became a divine person, but also spread the divine message of the Guru, far and wide.

Journeying further on, Guru Nanak Dev reached Sangladeep (Sri Lanka) via Rameshwaram. The ruler of Sangladeep, Raja Shivnabh was the follower of the Vaishnava tradition. The king was deeply influenced by the Guru's devotee,

Mansukh, who had visited him during his business tour. He was impressed by Mansukh's divine teaching bestowed upon him by Guru Nanak Dev at Sultanpur Lodhi.

The king was keen to meet the Guru. Mansukh had suggested to him that he should develop great love, affection and an urge to meet the Guru, and He would surely come calling to shower His Divine blessings. After Mansukh returned to Lahore, ruler Shivnab always remained in a state of great urge and longing to meet Guru Nanak. Perceiving this urge to meet Guru Nanak Dev, many pseudo saints called themselves Guru Nanak Dev to impress upon the king and make him their follower. But the king did not find that virtue in them, which was told by Mansukh. In order to ensure that he did not get deceived, the king started testing the pseudo-saints by sending beautiful young women with rich bounties to lure them. These pseudo Nanaks fell in their traps and were arrested. The King was fed up with these pseudo-saints.

Perceiving the urge of the king of Sangladeep, Guru Nanak Dev went there and sat in the withering garden, which came to bloom on the recitation of the Divine Name by the Guru. Hearing of His arrival, the king sent beautiful women to test Him, but Guru Nanak Dev remained immersed in divine love and did not pay any attention to their sensual advances and dainty food. Rather, the Guru considering them to be the daughters of the Divine and gave them spiritual sermons to become good human beings. On learning this, the king rushed to see Guru Nanak Dev and prostrated before Him on beholding His divine glimpse. He took the Guru to his palace and sought the Divine Name and the spiritual blessings to tread the Divine Path. The Guru asked the king to build a temple for reciting the Divine Name in the holy congregation (Dharamsal).

After spreading the Divine message, Guru Nanak Dev came to Rameshwaram perceiving the urge of Pandit Hardas to have a glimpse of the Guru and seek His divine blessings. At Rameshwaram, Prophet Ramchandra had built a temporary bridge to reach Sri Lanka to liberate His holy wife Sita from the clutches of Ravana, the king of Sri Lanka, who had abducted and captivated her.

From Rameshwaram, Guru Nanak Dev reached Kajliban forest, where the ascetics (Siddhas) had set up an important centre. The Guru taught them the message of truthful living and belief in the Divine, who is One in All and All in One. For perceiving this Divine Wisdom they should not indulge in showing occult powers (miracles) to attract the public become their followers.

Guru Nanak Dev then went to Nanak Jheera, where people were wailing in distress, for not having water. Guru lifted a big stone and the water gushed out.

From that day, there is no dearth of water, which continues to be available in plenty even today. From Nanak Jheera, Guru Nanak Dev returned to Kartarpur.

Third Spiritual Journey (Udasi) - (1516-1518) : After a short stay at Kartarpur in Punjab, Guru Nanak Dev commenced his third spiritual journey, which took Him towards North India in the Himalayan region to spread the message of the Divine Truth. He was accompanied by three of his disciples, namely, Bhai Hasu, an ironsmith, Bhai Sheehan, a calico printer, and Bhai Mardana. The Guru first went to Kashmir, where he met Pandit Brahm Das, who was very proud of his pseudo-spiritual knowledge by merely reading Vedas - the ancient spiritual scriptures written by the Divine Rishis. Without treading the Divine Path honestly, as mentioned in these holy Scriptures, Pandit Brahm Das had only attained bookish knowledge. He had a long debate with Guru Nanak Dev on rituals to be followed for attaining spiritual knowledge. After the spiritual discourses, Guru Nanak Dev emphatically told him that his pseudo-knowledge would inflate his ego, which was a great hurdle in treading the Divine Path. Pondering deep on these discourses, the Pandit repented that he had wasted his whole life in following only the rituals and did not know the reality to tread the Divine Path for obtaining self-realisation in this very life. After his complete devotion and submission to the Guru for seeking divine blessings, the Guru showed him the righteous path to attain self-realisation. Pandit Brahm Das followed the Guru's teachings in real earnest by reciting the Divine Name and rendering selfless service to humanity. Thus, he became an ardent disciple of the Guru. This led him to get self-realisation in this very life by shedding his ego completely.

From Kashmir, Guru Nanak Dev went to the Shivalik hills, passing through the area of Makhwal, where now Anandpur Sahib has been established, He reached Kiratpur. Here Pir Buddhan Shah was craving to seek the blessings of the Guru. Perceiving his urge, Guru Nanak Dev met him and bestowed upon him the Divine knowledge to realise the Divine within.

From Kiratpur, Guru Nanak Dev crossed the Shivalik Hills of Haripur and reached Sirmour and rested at a place now called Baru Sahib. From here, the Guru went to Tehri Garhwal and reached Badrinath. This is the shortest and straight route to Badrinath from the Shivalik hills on foot. Badrinath is considered a great pilgrimage of the Hindus. The place remains very cold and the pilgrims were afraid to take a bath in the icy water. Here, the Guru dug out a deep hole, from which warm water gushed out. In the present times, all pilgrims take bath in that tank containing warm water.

From Badrinath, Guru Nanak Dev crossed the mountains of Hemkunt and reached Nepal. After spreading the Divine message among the seekers, he went to

Sikkim and Bhutan also and spread the divine message there too. A Gurdwara built by the Sikh army commemorates the visit of Guru Nanak Dev. From there, the Guru crossed over to China, where a city Nanking has been established in the name of Guru Nanak Dev. After spreading the spiritual message among the masses, Guru Nanak Dev reached Tibet and climbed the Kailash Mountain, which is the highest peak near the great lake Mansarovar - also referred to as the Sumer Parbat. At Kailash, Guru Nanak Dev had spiritual discourses with the ascetics (Siddhas). The prominent among them were Gorakhnath, Bhangarnath, Bharthari, Gopi Nath, and others. Here the head of the Siddhas, Gorakh Nath tried to intimidate the Guru by performing miracles in order to bring him to his fold. But, all his efforts proved in vain and he gave up. Gorakhnath, then sent Guru Nanak Dev to bring water from the pond, where the Siddhas performed miracles and instead of water, it was filled with of precious articles like gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, and so on. Guru Nanak Dev went there but after seeing all these miracles, he returned empty-handed. On being enquired by Gorakhnath as to why he had not brought the water, the Guru replied that there was no water except all their miracles. On hearing this, the Siddhas were highly amazed by the Divine Wisdom of Guru Nanak and submitted to Him. After facing the defeat, the Siddhas humbly enquired who was His Guru, whom He followed. The Guru in divine ecstasy replied, "The Divine 'Word' is His Guru, and the tune of His mind is His disciple." In further discourses, Siddhas put many questions regarding his spiritual way of life, the Creation of the world and role of the Divine. Guru Nanak Dev convinced them that the Real Path of spirituality was to cultivate Divine Love and devotion and remain contented in His Divine Will. However, despite these Divine sermons showered by the Guru, Siddhas did not imbibe any of the spiritual virtues and followed their own path.

From Sumer Parbat, Guru Nanak Dev travelled through Tibet and reached Lhasa. His Divine preachings made many Tibetans His followers and perceived Guru Nanak Dev to be the incarnation of Padam Sambvehey, who preached Buddhism in Tibet. The Tibetan followers of Guru Nanak Dev keep their hair intact. They also visit Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar and prostrate and circumambulate the whole holy pathway around Harmandir Sahib (Parikarma) by prostrating their body with every step.

From Tibet, Guru Nanak Dev visited Kinnaur, where the local people have established a small temple in His memory. From here, Guru Nanak Dev reached Ladakh after crossing the high mountains of Spiti and Lahaul area of Himachal Pradesh. At Ladakh, He held a big mountain boulder on his back to save the city. This boulder was pushed by a miraculous ascetic to destroy the city. At this place, a

giant Gurdwara has been established in His memory. From here, the Guru reached Sialkot by passing through Jammu and Kashmir.

At Sialkot, Hamda Gaous, a Muslim ascetic (Faqir) was undergoing an immense penance to ruin the city of Sialkot as its people were not following the dictates of the Muslim Saint. For penance, he confined himself in a small dome, which was completely sealed from all sides, so much so that even air could not enter into it. When Guru Nanak Dev saw the dome with His divine vision, it cracked and crumbled down. The furious Muslim Saint, who was performing deep penance rushed towards the Guru and in a fit of rage, he challenged Him as to why he had broken his dome and disrupted his trance. He wished to doom the whole of the Sialkot city because its habitants were devils and they were not following the holy law of the God (Allah). Guru Nanak Dev told him that there were some people, who had the fear of God. For convincing him, he gave two paise to Bhai Mardana for purchasing falsehood and truthfulness. Bhai Mardana went to every shop in the city but no one could understand his query and laughed at these sermons of Mardana. When he visited the shop of Moolah Khatri and asked him to give him falsehood and truthfulness for two paise, He took the money and wrote on a piece of paper: "Eradication of one's ego in this very life is true living whereas living for worldly pleasures is falsehood." When Mardana came with this note, Guru Nanak Dev showed the same to the Muslim Saint Hamda Gaous, who felt sorry, and became the follower of Guru Nanak Dev.

Moolah Khatri also became the disciple of Guru Nanak Dev. He left his house and shop and accompanied Guru Nanak Dev, who proceeded on the onward journey to Kartarpur. On the way in a dense forest, the mind of Moolah Khatri got distracted on perceiving attachment with his wife. He requested the Guru to allow him to go home, but the Guru wanted him to become a holy person for which he had come in this world. Without getting permission from the Guru, Moolah Khatri, having lustful thoughts of his wife ran back to his house. After sometime, Guru Nanak Dev again went to Moolah Khatri's house to shower His blessings on him, but his wife spotted Guru Nanak Dev coming towards the house to take Moolah. She immediately took Moolah to the backyard store, which was filled with cow-dung patties and bolted the door. After reaching Moola's house, Guru Nanak Dev called out thrice, O Moola!, O Moola!, O Moola!" But his wife, on each occasion, replied that he was not there. After hearing these negative words from Moola's wife, Guru Nanak Dev remarked, "All right, then he is no more there".

The Guru retreated (retracted) and sat outside the village in a forest. When Moola's wife opened the door of the store, where he was hiding, she found Moola

dead. He had been bitten by a poisonous snake. She started crying and the neighbours gathered and asked what had happened. They took the body of Moola to the place where Guru Nanak Dev was sitting along with His companions. They requested the Guru to revive the dead Moolah. Guru Nanak Dev said, "It was not in the fitness of Divine Order. However, in my tenth incarnation, I would shower the self-realisation upon him". (See the the chapter - The Mysterious Ways of the Gurus - Hunting Wild Animals on page 420, where the story of how Moolah Khatri got self-realisation from Guru Gobind Singh while on a hunting trip is mentioned). After this, Guru Nanak Dev moved on to His travels and returned to Kartarpur with His companions.

Fourth Spiritual journey (Udasi) - (1518-1522) : During this spiritual sojourn, Guru Nanak Dev travelled towards the west with Bhai Mardana and visited Muslim holy places. From Kartarpur, he reached Pakpattan, where Sheikh Farid had meditated in the past and had established his spiritual centre there. His present Divine follower, Sheikh Braham, headed the spiritual seat of Sant Farid and was very impressed to meet Guru Nanak Dev. He got many of his doubts cleared during the spiritual discourses with Guru Nanak Dev. They exchanged verses on spirituality and the Guru explained, "The Divine Realm is One for All, and one can get Divine Wisdom by reaching there, by following any religious path with love and devotion."

From Sheikh Braham, Guru Nanak Dev collected the hymns of Sheikh Farid, which were later incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

From Pakpattan, Guru Nanak Dev visited Multan, Bahawalpur and after travelling through the Sind province (now in Pakistan), reached Iran. From Iran, he crossed the ocean and arrived at Mecca, which is the most sacred shrine of the Muslims. Here, he made the Muslim clergy realise that no faith could claim that after following only their religion, one could realise the Divine within. All faiths of the world were, in fact, different paths to tread honestly by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. It would eradicate the ego completely, which is a great hurdle to realise the Divine within to see One in All and All in One. Different faiths provide different ways and paths to tread honestly with full love and devotion to reach one destination, i.e., the Divine Realm, where there is no religion, rituals or worldly worries and only the Formless pervades. Thus, by merging with the Divine, one loses his identity (ego) and becomes the Divine. It is wrong to nurture hatred towards other faiths. He clarified that the Omnipresent is not confined to one place alone.

During the night, the Guru slept in a normal way. But according to the Divine Will, unconsciously His feet were facing towards Mecca. Under the Divine Will, a

clergyman - Qazi Jiwan, on seeing Him in such a posture, kicked Him many times and rebuked Him. He admonished Him as to how He dared to face His feet towards Mecca, the abode of God, while sleeping. Guru Nanak Dev humbly replied, "Turn my feet in the direction, where there is no Mecca, i.e., where God does not reside." Qazi Jiwan ruthlessly turned the feet of the Guru towards the east where, according to his faith, God does not reside, but he visualised Mecca there too. He again turned the feet of the Guru mercilessly in other directions too, but in every direction he visualised Mecca. When he finally got exhausted from constantly turning Guru's feet, he enquired, "What type of divine person are You that whichever direction I turn Your feet, I see the vision of Mecca?"

Thus perceiving the Guru as a Divine person, he said "Kindly look in the book You are carrying and which contains Divine knowledge and tell us whether the Hindu is higher in the Realm of the Divine or the Muslim?." Guru replied, "Without the spiritual capital, both Hindus and Muslims would weep in the end. Spiritual capital is to be acquired by performing divine deeds in this very life according to the Divine Law." In fact, the divine deeds performed with love and devotion lead a person to the Divine Realm to realise the Divine within and without and to see One in All and All in One. In the end, the entire clergy was so impressed by Divine Wisdom of Guru Nanak Dev that they bowed before Him with reverence taking him as the Divine Messenger of Allah. From Mecca, the Guru visited Madina and had spiritual discourses with the Muslim clergy there.

Guru Nanak Dev, then visited Baghdad, where he sat at a secluded place on the outskirts of the city. The Guru asked Mardana to play the Rabab (rebec, the classical string musical instrument) and expounded hymns (Gurbani) in the appropriate Raga. According to the Muslim faith, singing the praises of the Divine Lord in any kind of Raga is prohibited. After hearing the hymns, a large section of the Muslims armed with stones and bricks gathered around to stone Guru Nanak Dev. However, as they tried to throw the missiles, their hands got frozen and they were unable to move their bodies.

The news reached the Muslim Saint Shah Balol that a miracle-man had descended the city and had hypnotised the people of the city. He was further told that those who wanted to hit him with stones and bricks became motionless, just like statues. Hearing this, Shah Balol rushed to the place and on catching a glimpse of the Divine Guru Nanak Dev, he was spiritually moved and requested Him to bless his home. The Guru went with him and in the discourses, Shah Balol submitted that according to their religion, there are only seven higher and lower worlds. With His Divine Wisdom, Guru Nanak Dev made him realise that there were

countless higher and lower worlds with their countless suns and moons. He also made the Muslim Saint realise that in the Universe, there are countless other worlds beyond this earth. To further dispel the doubts of the Saint, Guru Nanak Dev asked Shah Balol's son to shut his eyes and to count how many worlds were up and down located in the cosmos. After sometime, he opened his eyes and elucidated to his father and other followers, about his experience of visiting countless planets. He brought many bounties from those countless worlds and put them before his father. After seeing those, Shah Balol was fully convinced, and he bowed before Guru Nanak Dev with reverence saying, "You are the Divine Messenger of Allah."

From Baghdad, Guru Nanak Dev went to Italy and France. In Italy, Guru Nanak Dev met the then tenth Pope and exchanged spiritual discourses with him. In this dialogue, Guru Nanak Dev impressed upon the Pope to use his influence to end the practice of slavery. The Guru further emphasised that by following the Divine Path and by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion, one could attain salvation in this very life. (This meeting has been mentioned in Nielson Encyclopaedia of 1913).

Returning from European countries, Guru Nanak Dev visited Russia and Afghanistan also, delivering the message of the Divine Lord. On this tour, Mardana carried with him a string instrument called Rabab. Guru Nanak Dev used to ask him to play the Rabab as soon as He perceived the Divine Hymn.

In Afghanistan, Bhai Mardana's Rabab got damaged and he purchased an Afghani Rabab. The use of such Rabab is prevalent in Kashmir even today. To culminate his longish tour, Guru Nanak Dev reached Hasan Abdal, where the water was cascaded down from a very wide spring located at the hill-top, which was under the control of Wali Kandhari, who was a pseudo-Muslim saint performing miracles to attract people become his followers. When he heard about Guru Nanak Dev's arrival at Hasan Abdal, he blocked the water, which was used by the public. Mardana was very thirsty. The Guru sent him to fetch water from Faqir Wali Kandhari, who had the custody of the fountain of water spring. However, the pseudo-Saint, Wali Kandhari, refused to give even a drop of water to Mardana, who was almost dying of thirst. He also remarked, "If your Divine Master Guru Nanak Dev has the divine power, then ask him to pull water from the base of the mountain." Mardana came down from the hillock and narrated the whole story to the Guru. Wali Kandhari was extremely proud and egoistic, and the Divine Guru wanted to teach him to be humble and God-fearing. Thus under the Divine Law, it happened that the water of his reservoir of the spring flowed down to the place where Guru Nanak Dev was sitting. When that happened, Mardana and all the people of that village were very

happy to take water from the spring to quench their thirst. In a fit of rage, Pir Wali Kandhari rolled a heavy boulder with his occult powers towards Guru Nanak Dev to kill him. The Guru kept reciting the Divine Name and held the boulder with his hand. Lo! The boulder halted on the spot and with the blessings of the Divine, Guru Nanak Dev's hand got imprinted on the boulder. It is astonishing to know that the imprint of the holy palm of Guru Nanak Dev still remains etched on the boulder till this day. To commemorate the visit, a splendid Gurdwara Panja Sahib, has been established. The boulder with the Guru's palm etched on it has also been preserved. Seeing Guru Nanak Dev's greatness, the ego of Wali Kandhari got mitigated and he became the follower of the Guru for getting Divine Wisdom.

The Guru continued on his travels and reached Eminabad (Saidpur) and halted in the house of Bhai Lalo. Here, He recited a Hymn through which He prophesied that there would be widespread oppression in the city. He foretold that Babar (founder of the Mughal Empire), would soon invade India and would teach the ruling oppressors a lesson. In due course, Babar attacked Eminabad, looted the wealth of the city and lodged its habitants in jail as prisoners. In order to mitigate the sufferings of humanity, in his own unique way, the Guru himself became captive of the invading army along with other citizens of Saidpur (Eminabad) and all of them were imprisoned. The prisoners were made to undergo hard labour. They were given querns (a primitive stone mill), and ordered to grind large quantities of grain with their hands. However, when Guru Nanak Dev started reciting Divine Hymns (Gurbani) in praise of the Divine Lord, all the querns began to rotate on their own, under the Divine Command. Seeing this miracle, the Mughal Emperor Babar was wonder-struck and aghast. He felt that the Divine Lord had performed this miracle because he had captivated the Guru. He fell at the Guru's feet, and sought His forgiveness, and also prayed to seek blessings for his successful conquest. The Guru asked him to free all the prisoners and return their looted possessions. Babar complied with the Guru's directions and the Guru blessed him and pointed out that as long as he was just and fair to his principles of ruling, his rule would flourish. As and when there would creep in deterioration, destruction and cruelty in the actions of his descendants, their rule would come to an end.

Guru Nanak Dev then reached Kartarpur, where his wife and two sons Baba Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das along with other followers like Baba Buddha, Bhai Bagirath and Mansukh and many others were waiting for His Holiness.

From there, Guru Nanak Dev went to join a fair at Achal Batala to spread the divine message. Here, the Yogis (Siddhas of Gorakhnath) had established a stage for preaching the doctrine of Yogic postures and wanted to attract people to become

their followers. When people heard that Guru Nanak Dev had arrived at Achal Batala, they were attracted towards Him and came calling to catch a glimpse of His Divine self, and listen to his Divine sermons, to tread the Divine Path to mitigate their sufferings. Seeing this, the Siddhas became very furious and started performing many miracles not only to frighten the Guru, but also to show their power to the people. (For details, refer to page 11).

After preaching the Divine Message among the masses at Achal Batala, Guru Nanak Dev reached Multan, which was populated with Muslim Saints. All the renowned Muslim Saints of the city came to Guru Nanak Dev for the spiritual discourse. They placed a bowl full of milk before Him. It symbolised that the city was already full of Saints, and so how would He adjust Himself therein for Divine preaching? Guru Nanak Dev put a small Jasmine (Chameli) flower on the surface of the milk, meaning that He would not interfere in their spiritual preaching and would remain aloof. After spiritual discourses with the Guru, the Muslim saints were so impressed that many of them became His followers. One of them, a renowned Muslim Saint, Bahauddin, after imbibing the preaching of Guru Nanak Dev in letter and spirit, perceived the manifestation of the Divine in every direction.

Founding the Tenets of the Sikh Faith at Kartarpur: Bhai Lehna a resident of village Khadur was a devotee of goddess Jwalamukhi and used to go on annual pilgrimage there. One morning he went for a bath in the nearby stream and found Bhai Jodha meditating under a tree and singing the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev. The hymns touched Bhai Lehna so deeply that he became curious to know the author of these hymns from Bhai Jodha, who told him that Guru Nanak Dev had recited these hymns for the spiritual uplift of mankind. Bhai Lehna enquired about the whereabouts of Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Jodha told him that the Guru was presently residing at Kartarpur. Bhai Lehna decided to have the glimpse of the Divine Guru at Kartarpur first, and then proceeded with his fellow pilgrims to pay obeisance to goddess Jwalamukhi.

On his next pilgrimage to goddess Jwalamukhi, Bhai Lehna asked his fellow devotees to stay overnight at a place eight miles from Kartarpur and wait for him. In the meantime, he went to Kartarpur on horseback to meet Guru Nanak Dev. At the same time, Guru Nanak Dev left his Divine seat and went on foot to receive his devotee, Bhai Lehna. On the way, Bhai Lehna asked the old man (Guru Nanak Dev) "O Holy old person (Babaji!), Where is the divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev?" He directed Bhai Lehna to follow Him. After reaching the Gurdwara (Dharamsal) the Guru asked him to tie his horse outside and go into the temple to meet the Guru. While Bhai Lehna tied his horse, Guru Nanak Dev entered the Dharamsal from the other side and sat on His divine seat. Bhai Lehna went to see Guru Nanak Dev

with folded hands and head bent down, a sign of reverence. Reaching the seat of Guru Nanak Dev, he bowed his head on His feet, and after getting His blessings, when he lifted it to have a glimpses of the Divine Master, Lehna was astonished to find that He was the same person, who had brought him here. He was so overwhelmed with reverence that tears started rolling down his eyes, he was sobbing profusely. Guru Nanak Dev tried to pacify him, but he went on weeping and uttering humbly that he had committed a great sin, that his Divine Master was leading his horse on foot. The Guru soothed him and asked him his name. He submitted, "The people call this lowly by the name of Lehna (which means to get back something given to other as a loan)". With a divine smile, the Guru expounded, "The lenders always come on horseback, and the borrowers go to them on foot." This was the divine prophecy of Guru Nanak Dev that Lehna would inherit the Divine Wisdom from the Guru. At that stage, Bhai Lehna could not comprehend this divine prediction, but he completely submitted to His Divine Master for seeking self-realisation. He decided that he would follow the commandments of Guru Nanak Dev, in letter and spirit, under all circumstances.

Lehna now suggested to his fellow beings that they should proceed for the pilgrimage and decided to stay back. His companions came to Kartarpur to persuade Bhai Lehna to accompany them on the pilgrimage to Jwalamukhi. Lehna humbly replied that he had found the abode of the Divine from where his thirst of getting Divine knowledge to perceive the Divine within would be quenched. For this, he had been striving all his life. Despite persuasion by the devotees of the goddess, he refused to accompany them.

One night, Bhai Lehna saw a divine lady in saffron clothes, cleaning the Dharamsal of Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Lehna could not resist asking who she was, doing such menial service in the divine temple of Guru Nanak Dev during the middle of the night. She replied, "I am the same goddess, whom you used to worship." She further added, "I got all the worldly bounties from the house of Guru Nanak Dev, who according to my vision is the true Divine Lord and showers all the bounties on mankind. As such, I also consider Him incarnation of the Divine and get all the bounties and shower them on to my devotees." Saying this, she vanished. This episode further strengthened the belief of Bhai Lehna for submitting himself completely to Guru Nanak Dev for perceiving the Divine Truth and seeking self-realisation in this very life.

Spiritual Tests of Bhai Lehna

Bhai Lehna and the two sons of Guru Nanak Dev, while serving him, were tested

on several occasions to see who among them had come up to the Divine standards expected from a true Sikh. But the revered sons of Guru Nanak Dev, Baba Sri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das fell short of His expectations. Being sons, they were always questioning and finding reasons to refuse the orders of their Father and did not consider Him as the Divine Master. Bhai Lehna, on the other hand, had unflinching faith in the Guru's commandments. Thus, being a true Sikh (student of spirituality), he took the Guru's word as the Divine commandment and obeyed His spiritual orders in letter and spirit for getting His Divine blessings. After obeying the orders of his Divine Master with full faith, he automatically found place in the divine heart of Guru Nanak Dev, as per the Divine Law.

Guru Nanak Dev tested Bhai Lehna on various occasions and on each occasion, he obeyed the Divine Master to show to the world that the real student of spirituality (Sikh) should imbibe those spiritual values as enunciated by His Divine Master for treading the holy path to reach the Divine Realm. Guru's sons, on the other hand, did not obey His orders rather they always argued with Him even on petty matters considering Him as their worldly father. Thus they could not perceive the Divine Wisdom to ascend on the Divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev.

Here are some examples of the tests that Bhai Lehna was put through by Guru Nanak Dev:

1. Bhai Lehna brought a huge bundle of salt for the the community kitchen (Langar)of Guru Nanak Dev at Kartarpur Sahib. After unloading the same, he reached the place where Guru Nanak Dev was getting His rice crop weeded. There he immediately started uprooting the rice plants, because he could not differentiate between the weeds and the rice plants. Guru Nanak Dev said, "O Bhai Lehna! You have to plant Divine Wisdom in the world, rather than removing it leave this work." After finishing the weeding, two bundles of weeds full of muddy water were packed to be taken to the house to feed the cattle. The Guru first asked his two sons to carry those bundles, but they refused, stating that there were many workers, who could do the job. Then, Guru Nanak Dev turned to Bhai Lehna, who, without any hesitation, carried the bundles on his head.

Constant drops of mud water spoiled his clothes. Guru Nanak Dev's wife told her Husband that the fellow, who had brought a bundle of salt for the kitchen, appeared to be very well off, so why did He ask him to carry the bundles of muddy weeds on his head, which had spoiled his precious silken clothes. Guru Nanak Dev remarked with a Divine smile, "This is not muddy water, but the Divine saffron Nectar." In fact, Guru Nanak Dev caused that wondrous spiritual

sequence of events on his spiritual student, Bhai Lehna, in order to show to the world that the divine urge, humility and complete obedience and submission to the Divine Master was an example for the ideal Sikh to cultivate the divine humility for realising the Divine within.

2. When asked to retrieve a vessel thrown into a pool of muddy water by Guru Nanak Dev, Bhai Lehna did so without a moment's hesitation, whereas both sons of the Guru refused to follow the instructions of their father.
3. On the Guru's command, Bhai Lehna gladly washed his clothes in the middle of the night, whereas His sons refused to oblige.
4. In the middle of the night, the muddy wall of the house crumbled. The Guru asked His sons to build the wall. They refused with the argument that they would get the work done by the masons the next morning. However, when Guru Nanak Dev turned His sight towards Bhai Lehna, he immediately started constructing the boundary wall of the Guru's house. It crumbled again and was built by Bhai Lehna again. After several attempts, the wall was stabilised only around the ambrosial hour.
5. In the ambrosial hour everyday, Bhai Lehna accompanied the Divine Master to the banks of the river Ravi and used to hold his clothes in his lap, while Guru Nanak Dev used to meditate in neck deep chilly water, even during the months of extreme winter, to mitigate the sufferings of humanity. One day, the Divine Master was meditating in neck deep water, while Bhai Lehna was sitting on the bank holding His clothes. Thinking, that His Master was doing such a penance in neck deep icy water, why should he not follow Him, nurturing this thought, Bhai Lehna entered the chilled water of the river and started meditation. However, within a few minutes, he became unconscious and was about to drown in the deep water. Guru Nanak Dev at once rushed and held his hand and dragged him out of the river. When Guru Nanak Dev patted him, he fell on the Guru's feet and felt the Divine vibrations, which induced him to regain consciousness. Then the Guru said to him, "O my dear disciple! Whatever arduous meditation I am doing in chilly deep waters of the river Ravi, it is for mitigating the sufferings of humanity through you. You would accumulate the Divine Power through me for mitigating the sufferings of the humanity and to spread the message of Divine Truth for the spiritual welfare of the whole mankind. You need not undergo such penances. You only need to recite the Divine Name and follow the instructions with full love and devotion."
6. Once during a continuous heavy rainfall, which lasted for a few days, the food in the Langar ran out. Guru Nanak Dev first asked his sons to climb up and

shake the thorny acacia tree so that fruit falling from it may be distributed to the holy congregation. They bluntly refused stating that all the leaves of that tree had been shed and it had become barren, so where did He expect any food to fall from? After hearing that refusal from the sons, He just glanced at Bhai Lehna, who perceived this sight of His Divine Master as an order to carry out the task. Bhai Lehna at once began climbing the thorny tree, and started shaking the branches so that the food would fall. The elder son of Guru Nanak Dev, Baba Sri Chand told Bhai Lehna in a taunting manner, that their father was old and that His poor eyesight could not see if the tree had any leaves or not. He further remarked, "You, being a young person surely can see whether there is any food on the tree?" Bhai Lehna humbly submitted, "O my brothers! My duty is to obey the orders of my Divine Master to shake the tree and not to see whether food falls from it or not. It is in the hands of my Divine Master to get it done." Bhai Lehna shook the thorny acacia tree. Lo and behold! Various types of delicious foods started falling from the tree. This is not a miracle, but the demonstration of the Divine Power in obeying the instructions of the Divine Master.

7. Promptly complying with the Guru's command, Bhai Lehna stepped forward to burn the fresh stock of crop, recently harvested to fill the granary. This shows that obeying the Divine Orders is much higher than the worldly wealth. It is also the sign of detachment to tread the Divine Path.
8. Once Guru Nanak Dev took a a coin of two paise (taka) in his palm and clenched the same in His fist. He then said to his sons, "What is in my hand?" They bluntly said that there was only a two-paise coin in His palm, and nothing else. Then Guru Nanak Dev asked other disciples one by one. With folded hands, they all humbly replied, "O Divine Lord! We saw only a taka in Your hand." When the Guru repeated the same question to Bhai Lehna, he started sobbing and submitted with folded hands, "O Divine Master! Whenever I see with my eyes, the whole Universe, skies, suns, moons and stars are in Your hands. As You narrated in Japuji Sahib that there are countless of galaxies, suns, moons and stars, they are also in Your Divine hands, and in fact, You are the Divine Master of the whole Universe." After hearing this divine reply everybody was stunned, but Guru Nanak Dev was very happy to see that His beloved disciple had completely shed his ego.
9. One night, Guru Nanak Dev sent every Sikh, including his sons, to find how much of the night had passed, and how much had remained. They all told Guru Nanak Dev that a little more than half of the night had passed according to the

movement of the stars. When the Guru sent Bhai Lehna to find out the time after seeing the movement of the stars, he obeyed the order and went outside, but did not look up to the sky and came back. He humbly submitted before the Guru, "O Divine Master! You are the Creator of the whole Universe. I, being your lowly disciple cannot say how much of the night has passed and how much of it remains, because it is all in Your hands (Divine Knowledge)." With folded hands, he added, "Lord! You are the Creator of the Universe; the Creator of time, the Creator of night and day. Whatever part of the night pleases You let pass, has passed and whatever part You wish to hold back, remains."

10. Once, appearing like a monster ascetic, Guru Nanak Dev started walking towards the forest with a strong and long staff in his hand, wearing a long cloak with many deep pockets. He was followed by dogs, his devotees, and others, including the revered Bhai Lehna, Baba Buddha, Bhai Bhagirath, and many more. First, Guru Nanak Dev took the silver coins out of his pocket and showered them on the path of the forest. Many persons, after picking up the silver coins, went away. After walking some way ahead, Guru Nanak Dev dropped the gold coins on the path like rain. Many of the devotees were attracted to the yellow metal and picked them up, filled their pockets, and went away. After this, only three main devotees remained, namely Baba Buddha, Bhai Bhagirath and Bhai Lehna, who continued following him without any attraction for the worldly wealth showered by the Guru. Then, after walking a short distance, He wielded the staff strongly on Baba Buddha, Bhai Bhagirath and Bhai Lehna, and asked them to turn back. Baba Buddha slipped into a pit, Bhai Bhagirath took shelter under an old tree, but Bhai Lehna kept following. Guru Nanak Dev started beating him with His staff and asked him to run away. Bhai Lehna followed the Divine instructions and ran back, but after some distance returned to the Divine feet of the Guru, who again took the staff and shouted at him, "Why have you come back?" Bhai Lehna humbly submitted with folded hands, "O my Divine Lord! Others may be having their homes to go to, but You are my only shelter, where else do I go? My dwelling is only at Your Divine feet." The merciful Guru expounded, "Your dwelling place is My Heart. Now, you have become My limb (Ang)":

ਨਾ ਬਾਬਾ ਗੋਰ ਮੇ ਨਾ ਬਾਬਾ ਮੜੀ ਮੇ ਬਾਬਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਕੇ ਹੀਐ ਮੇ ।

Naa Baba gor m-ai Naa Baba marhee m-ai Baba Nanak Gur Angad k-ai hee-ei m-ai.

(Puraatan Janamsakhi)

[Nanak is neither in tomb nor in the mausoleum (grave); He is in the heart of Angad.]

Walking a little ahead, there lay a corpse covered with a white sheet. Guru

Nanak Dev asked Bhai Lehna to eat the dead corpse. Bhai Lehna followed the instructions of the Guru, and approached to eat the flesh of the dead body. When he lifted the sheet, he saw the Guru's reflection and there was no human body.

Note : It is worth mentioning here that in the above tests, Guru Nanak Dev's sons, Baba Sri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das, bluntly refused to obey the instructions of their father. Other Sikhs, however, tried to follow the divine instructions, but did not meet the expectations of the Guru, while Bhai Lehna followed the same in letter and spirit, and succeeded.

For paucity of space, it is difficult to narrate all the holy experiences of Bhai Lehna, wherein he shed his ego completely by following the commandments of his Divine Master in letter and spirit and merged with the Divine, when others failed to do so. After passing all these hard trials, Guru Nanak Dev took him to his divine abode, where the holy congregation had gathered. In this gathering, Sulakhani, the wife of Guru Nanak Dev and their two sons Baba Shri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das were also present. Sulakhani perceived that the Guru might bestow the Guruship (the divine throne) to Bhai Lehna rather than to one of her sons. To remove her doubt that they were not fit to follow the divine instructions of their father, Guru Nanak Dev created an incident, whereby a cat holding a dead mouse in its mouth came and dropped it near the Divine seat of the Guru. Guru Nanak Dev asked his sons to throw out the dead mouse. They bluntly refused to oblige and told their father that He should ask someone else because they were not prepared to touch the dead animal. As Guru Nanak Dev turned to Bhai Lehna, without waiting for any instruction, he perceived His divine Master's orders and immediately picked up the dead mouse and threw it outside. Sulakhani was now convinced that her sons didn't follow the instructions of their father.

Guru Nanak Dev now asked Bhai Lehna to take the Divine seat. Tears rolling down in eyes, he hesitantly pleaded, "O Divine Master! I am your disciple, you are my Divine Lord. How can You, the Divine Master bow before Your lowly disciple?" The Guru replied, "You have become Angad and have shed your self (ego) completely to merge with the Divine and become His form (Ang). I am not bowing before Your mortal frame but before the Divine pervading your body. So, in order to spread the Divine message to humanity, You have become the second Nanak." This is the first example in human history that a Guru had bowed before the physical frame of His disciple. It reiterates that in the Spiritual Realm the Divine is One, which pervades everywhere and in everybody, but only that person who sheds his ego completely can perceive Him and become so.

Bhai Lehna, as per instructions of His Divine Master, sat on the Divine seat.

Guru Nanak Dev circumambulated five times around Bhai Lehna and bowed before him, and in a symbolic gesture, Guru Nanak Dev offered five paise and a coconut before him, and asked His disciple Baba Buddha to put the frontal mark on the forehead of Bhai Lehna. He then told His followers that henceforth, they should follow the Divine commandments of Guru Angad Dev, His embodiment.

After visualising that Guru Angad Dev would not leave His divine company, He took him to Khadur Sahib and asked him to remain there so that His sons and others did not disturb him in His Divine mission. Guru Angad Dev then confined Himself in a secluded room, and asked Mai Verai not to disclose His whereabouts to anyone.

Subsequently, Guru Nanak Dev shed His physical frame and merged with the Formless One in 1539. As was customary, His body was covered with a thick white sheet by his followers - both Hindus and Muslims. The Divine Guru Nanak Dev, merged all the five elements of His body in the cosmos and nothing was left under the white sheet. During His life, Guru Nanak Dev had become equally popular as a Divine Master among both Hindus and Muslims. Both started quarrelling and claiming that He was their Prophet. The Muslims wanted to bury Him according to their rituals, while the Hindus wanted to cremate His body according to their customs. After a long struggle, when they removed the white shroud, there was nothing beneath it. So, both Hindus and Muslims tore the white sheet into two pieces. The Hindus cremated the half, and the Muslims buried the other half according to their respective customs.

Spiritual message of the Guru : The doctrines of Sikh faith discussed in this book are essentially the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. Readers are advised to remember this fact while studying the contents of this book.

Guru Angad Dev

Guru Angad Dev, whose original name was Bhai Lehna, was born into the Trehan family in March 1504 to Bhai Pheru Mal and Mata Sabhirai (some historians believe that her name was Mata Daya Kaur), in village Matte di Saran near Muktsar in Punjab.

Marriage : He was married to Bibi Khivi, daughter of Devi Chand, at village Sangharh near Khadur in Amritsar district. Two sons, Bhai Dasu and Bhai Datu, and two daughters, Bibi Amro and Bibi Anokhi, were born to the couple.

Meeting the Guru : Some historians write that due to some misappropriation of accounts, the ruler of the area had sent Bhai Lehna's father to jail. Bhai Lehna was very perturbed and embroiled in miseries. He came to meet Mai Verai, who

was related to the ruler of the area. Mai Verai was devoted to Guru Nanak Dev, who was meditating under a tree in her fields. She took Bhai Lehna to Guru Nanak Dev. Lehna narrated the whole story, on account of which his father was imprisoned. Being in deep miseries, Bhai Lehna could not visualise the divine status of the Guru at that time. Visualising the past and future of Bhai Lehna, the Guru told him that in a particular accounts book, there was some error on account of which the ruler was misled. He asked Bhai Lehna to get these errors rectified and then present the books to the ruler again. As per the instructions of Guru Nanak Dev, Bhai Lehna got the accounts book rectified, and presented them before the ruler. With the blessings of Guru Nanak Dev, the ruler was satisfied. He felt sorry and released his father from jail. After this, the whole family moved from Mattte di Saran to Khadur. This is such an eye-awakening example that when a pious person is in trouble, he cannot visualise the Divine Wisdom of a Saint. He is only concerned in seeking His blessings to mitigate his sufferings. Thus, engrossed in this trouble Bhai Lehna forgot Guru Nanak Dev after getting His blessings to mitigate his sufferings.

Later on, while living at village Khadur, Bhai Lehna, along with his companions, and the devotees of goddess Jwalamukhi, went on reciting the glories of the goddess throughout the night. Early in the morning, Bhai Lehna went for His bath in a nearby stream. There he heard the hymns being recited by Bhai Jodha, sitting under a tree. These hymns touched Bhai Lehna and he came close to Bhai Jodha to enjoy spiritual bliss. When Bhai Jodha finished his daily routine of recitation of the Divine hymns, Bhai Lehna enquired, 'Which Prophet has enunciated these hymns?' Jodha replied that this set of hymns is known as Japuji Sahib, and have been expounded by Guru Nanak Dev. Being hypnotised on hearing these hymns, he enquired from Bhai Jodha about Guru Nanak Dev and was told that the Guru was presently residing at Kartarpur, on the banks of the river Ravi. Bhai Lehna had forgotten the past, and developed an intense urge to have the glimpse of the Divine Master Guru Nanak Dev as early as possible. The details of his meeting with Guru Nanak Dev, and his annoinment as second Guru Nanak Dev has already been given in the life history of Guru Nanak Dev on page 265.

After Guru Nanak Dev shed his mortal frame at Kartarpur, the Sikhs were very eager to see Guru Angad Dev, the second Nanak. They requested Baba Buddha, a devout disciple of the Guru from his childhood, to take them to Guru Angad Dev, to get a glimpse of the Divine Guru and listen to divine discourses for their spiritual uplift. Baba Buddha went to Mai Verai at Khadur Sahib and asked the devout lady about the whereabouts of Guru Angad Dev. She could not resist from obeying the order of Baba Buddha, who was a devout disciple of Guru Nanak Dev. She told him

that Guru Angad Dev was meditating in the closed room which was locked from inside. Baba Buddha and the holy congregation (Sangat) started reciting the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev in a loud pitch with deep devotion outside the room. On hearing the hymns of His Divine Master from revered Baba Buddha, and other followers of Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev could not resist joining the divine congregation and opened His room.

Baba Buddha requested Guru Angad Dev that it was the duty of His Holiness to spread the preachings of Guru Nanak Dev amongst the masses. Accordingly, Guru Angad Dev established a congregation centre at Khadur Sahib, where He used to preach the Divine message of Guru Nanak Dev. He started a free kitchen for the visiting devotees, where, besides normal food, sweet rice pudding topped with refined butter (Kheer) was prepared and served by His wife Khiwi.

For the free kitchen run by Guru Angad Dev, for all, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, a devotee, Jiwa, used to bring rice pudding with pulses for offering to Guru Angad Dev. The Guru used to relish this food prepared with divine devotion and love. One day there was a heavy downpour and Jiwa was unable to take food for the Guru. Jiwa said his prayer (Ardas) that the rain should stop so that he could take the food. 'Lo and behold! The rain stopped immediately and he offered the rice pudding to Guru Angad Dev, who refused to take it. Bhai Jiwa was very upset and humbly submitted before the Guru, "What blunder have I committed that You are not partaking of the food?" The Guru explained that today's food was not worth taking because he had interfered in the Divine Order to stop the rain with his spiritual power.

Guru Angad Dev further explained that rain is beneficial for the production of the crop, which is eaten not only by the humans, but also by the lower species. Hearing this, Bhai Jiwa started repenting that he had committed a great blunder. He begged for His pardon and requested the Guru to take the food. Due to his repentance for his ignorance and upon compassionate grounds, the Guru took the rice pudding with instructions that he would never interfere in the Divine Law under any circumstances.

At Khadur Sahib, many Hindu scholars, priests, yoga exponents, ascetics (Siddhas), Muslim holy men, interpreters and judges of Islamic law and clerics from far and wide used to come and pay obeisance to Guru Angad Dev. They were curious to know what special spiritual attributes he had, which caused Guru Nanak Dev to bow before him. The whole world knew that during Guru Nanak Dev's four spiritual journeys (Udasis), all those who met Him were deeply impressed and wished to offer obeisance to Him. However, He being an incarnation of the Supreme Being,

he had never bowed before anyone. "Why then did He (Guru Nanak Dev) bow before You (Guru Angad Dev)?" used to be their query. With Divine humility, Guru Angad Dev used to say, "I had no merit, no virtue. I was like a helpless infant lying in a pool of filth. Guru Nanak Dev picked me up, washed me and then clasped me to his chest to bestow upon me His Divine Wisdom".

Contributions of Guru Angad Dev

1. He modified and standardised the existing alphabets of the Punjabi language to create the thirty-five letters (Penti Akhree) of Gurmukhi script. Thereafter, all sacred texts of the Sikhs were written in this script.
2. He supervised the preparation of Gurmukhi primers and elementary books for children and established schools for teaching of the language.
3. He collected the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev from various sources and compiled them in the form of a booklet(Pothi).
4. He sat down with Bhai Bala and asked him to narrate all the divine stories pertaining to the life of Guru Nanak Dev. These were then compiled in a book form and came to be known as Janamsakhi Bhai Bala.
5. He strengthened and popularised the traditions of congregational worship (Sangat)and free community kitchen (Pangat),started by Guru Nanak Dev.
6. He set up wrestling arenas (Akharas) to enable young men to take regular exercise to become physically strong. They would become strong and meditate on the Divine Name by controlling their negative instincts.

Once, Guru Angad Dev was engrossed in the performance of the wrestlers at Khadur Sahib. Emperor Humayun, after getting defeated by Sher Shah Suri, reached there to seek blessings of Guru Nanak Dev's descendant. Guru Angad Dev did not pay any attention to the defeated Emperor. Feeling ignored, the erstwhile King of India, got enraged at Guru Angad Dev and pulled out his sword. Guru Angad Dev remained serene and remarked, "This sword of yours could not withstand the mighty sword of Sher Shah Suri, and now in a fit of rage and ego, you are attacking the follower of Guru Nanak Dev." Hearing these divine words of the Guru, Hamayun was so shaken that he started weeping, and became so weak that he could not hold his sword, which dropped on the ground. He humbly fell on the feet of Guru Angad Dev and begged his pardon and asked for His blessings for regaining the throne of India. Perceiving his humility, Guru Angad Dev asked him to recite the name of God (Allah) and to pledge that after regaining the throne, he would rule according to the divine principles. He humbly imbibed the instruction of the Guru, and regained the throne of India.

7. When Guru Angad Dev was at Khadur, preaching the message of Guru Nanak Dev in the daily congregation, all ailments of the sick, on whom the Guru's eyes fell, got cured by God's grace. This has been clarified in the story of Maluka on page 166.

In Khadur Sahib, Tapa Shivnath, an ascetic, was jealous of the popularity and respect commanded by Guru Angad Dev among the masses. He always incited them against the Guru on one pretext or the other. However, people in general, had great respect for the Guru.

Once there had been no rain for a long time and farmers could not sow their crops. The ascetic Tapa saw this as a golden opportunity to incite people that since they were following a house-holder as their Guru, the rain gods had become angry and did not shower rain. Tapa told the villagers that if they chased out the 'pseudo Guru' from the village, he would use his occult powers for the rain. The innocent villagers believed the ascetic and requested the Guru to either make the rain fall with some miracle or He should leave the village. The Guru told them that rain was in the hands of the Almighty Lord and that he would not interfere in His Divine Will. To fulfil the wishes of the villagers, He left Khadur and shifted to village Khan Raizada.

At that time, the revered Bhai Amardas was in his native village, Basarke. On his return to Khadur, he was told what had happened in his absence. In the meantime, it still had not rained at Khadur, and the villagers apprised him with their problems. Despite many requests, the ascetic Tapa Shivnath could not bring rain with his miracles. He had not fulfilled his promise of rainfall despite the fact that they had asked Guru Angad Dev to leave the village to fulfil condition laid down by the pseudo-ascetic.

Being a devotee, Bhai Amardas could not bear such an insult of His Guru and told the villagers that wherever they would drag Tapa Shivnath, the rain would fall in that area. Accordingly, the villagers dragged Tapa throughout the village. Immediately, a heavy downpour saturated their fields. Tapa could not bear the beating and died. His body was thrown out of the village.

Then the whole village, under the guidance of the revered Bhai Amardas, went to Khan Raizada to request Guru Angad Dev to come back to Khadur and bless their village. Bhai Amardas bowed before the Guru, who turned His back. Once again, he tried to bow before the Guru, who again turned His back. Then, with a deep devotional outburst, he begged his pardon and enquired as to what sin had he committed because of which He would not bless him with His divine sight. The Guru said, "You have interfered with the Divine Order in order to get a rainfall, as

a result of which, the ascetic Tapa Shivnath has been killed. This is against the divine principle of Guru Nanak Dev and as such, I am unable to pardon this act."

With tears in his eyes, Guru Amardas humbly submitted that he had committed a great sin, which could be pardoned only by the Guru's grace, and he promised that he would never commit such a mistake again that interfered with the Divine Order and would follow His instructions in letter and spirit. The villagers also repented and submitted to the Guru that the Merciful and Gracious, may pardon them also. The most Benevolent Guru Angad Dev pardoned everyone and returned to Khadur on their request.

Goinda Marwah was a rich person, who wanted to establish a small township by building houses on the banks of river Beas to sell. Whatever he used to construct during the day, would crumble down during night. It happened many times, and some ascetics told him that evil souls were present in that area, who did not want humans to live there. Goinda Marwah was a great devotee of Guru Nanak Dev and as such he came to Khadur to seek the blessings of Guru Angad Dev. He narrated the whole story and humbly requested the Guru to bless his land by His visit so that he could get rid of these evil spirits. Keeping in view his divine devotion towards Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev sent his most devoted disciple, Baba Amardas to establish Goindwal. Due to the divine blessings of Guru Nanak Dev, the township of Goindwal was established. Baba Amardas came back to Khadur to resume the service to His Divine Master Guru Angad Dev. He used to bring a water-filled brass pitcher from river Beas, ten kilometres from Khadur, in the ambrosial hour for the Guru's bath. He rendered this divine service regularly for about 12 years, from the age of 62.

One winter morning, it was raining heavily. As per his routine, Baba Amardas was bringing water in the brass pitcher in the ambrosial hour from the river Beas. It was quite dark and as a result of heavy rain, he lost his way and fell in the weaver's pit. The weaver asked his wife, who had fallen into their pit. She replied, "Who else could he be but Amru, the homeless (Amru Nithavan), who has no shame in putting up with his nephew's in-laws and living on the crumbs thrown there. His nephew's father-in-law is no better. He is an imposter of a Guru, who has duped the innocent masses to follow him." On hearing these insulting words against his Guru, Baba Amardas got up and said, "O mad woman! My Guru is the Lord of the Universe. I have found my refuge in Him. How can you call me homeless?"

At day break, the weaver came running, crying and cursing his luck and narrated his tale of woe to Guru Angad Dev saying, "My wife has gone mad since the time Baba Amardas called her so. For sure, she has blundered, but I beseech You to

forgive her". When Guru Angad Dev learnt about this incident, he asked His disciple Baba Amardas to cast a compassionate glance on the mad wife of the weaver. Perceiving the commandments of His Divine Master, Baba Amardas showered a compassionate glance on the mad woman. Lo! The mad woman not only became normal, but also started reciting the glories of the Guru. Then Guru Angad Dev blessed Baba Amardas, "O divine devotee of Guru Nanak Dev! You are honour to those without honour, you are the protector of the unprotected, you are the support of the unsupported and you are the refuge of the homeless. Your selfless service has gained you a place of honour in the house of Guru Nanak Dev."

In recognition of his utmost selfless service, Guru Angad Dev bestowed Guruship upon Baba Amardas, the same way as Guru Nanak Dev had earlier made Bhai Lehna Guru Angad Dev. Accordingly, Baba Amardas was asked to sit on the divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev while Guru Angad Dev offered a coconut and five paise at his feet, circumambulated five times and bowed before Baba Amardas. He asked Baba Buddha to put the frontal mark, and thus Baba Amardas became the third Nanak (Guru Amardas). After this ceremony of Guruship, Guru Angad Dev asked His successor to go to Goindwal and settle there to spread the preaching of Guru Nanak Dev to the masses for their welfare and spiritual uplift. On the directions of Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas went to Goindwal and settled there to initiate many welfare projects for the masses.

In 1552, Guru Angad Dev shed His mortal frame and merged with the Formless One.

Guru Amardas

Guru Amardas was born in the Bhalla family to father Tejbhan and mother Sulakhani in village Basarke, near Amrtisar on May 5, 1479. He was married to Mansa Devi (also known as Ram Kaur), daughter of Devi Chand Behal. The couple had four children - two sons, Mohri and Mohan; and two daughters, Dani and Bhani.

Every year Baba Amardas used to go for pilgrimage to Haridwar, which is a holy place for the Hindus, located on the banks of the river Ganges in North India. Once, while returning from the pilgrimage, Baba Amardas rested at an inn, which was owned by a Brahmin, who was also a renowned palmist and astrologer. At night, Baba Amardas was sleeping in such a posture that his head and feet were visible. The Brahmin could tell the future of a person by reading lines on the feet and hands. He chanced to see the feet of Baba Amardas, which were embedded with Padam Rekha -the luckiest line on the feet - which denotes that such persons are supreme. Padam Rekha is embedded either on the feet of the Prophets, divine persons, or the very renowned kings.

Next morning, before departure, when Baba Amardas offered money for the night stay in the inn, the owner being a knowledgeable palmist pronounced that the Baba would become either a highly divine person or a renowned king. Then, he would get all the bounties from him. Hearing this, tears rolled down the eyes of Baba Amardas. He wondered that for realising the divine within, he had been visiting Haridwar regularly for twenty years, but still could not perceive the Divine Truth. The Brahmin palmist was so sure of his palmistry knowledge that he emphatically predicted that he was bound to become a divine person, and then he would come to him for seeking the divine bounties.

Wretched is he, who has no Guru (the divine guide): Baba Amardas was a Vaishnav and used to go on a pilgrimage to Haridwar every year, but even after many visits to the holy place, he had not yet found the bliss of self-realisation. Once, an ascetic (Brahmchari, who observes celibacy) was attracted by the divine virtues of Baba Amardas. He accompanied him to his village Basarke. As the food was being served, the Brahmchari casually enquired from Amardas who was his Guru? Baba Amardas humbly submitted that he was still in search of one. The Brahmchari became upset and angry. He would not partake of the food from a person, who had no Guru for getting instructions to tread the Divine Path and left the house in a huff after cursing the Baba. This incident shook the conscience of Baba Amardas, who vigorously started searching for the Guru from that very day.

Meeting the Guru : One early morning, Baba Amardas heard Bibi Amro recite the divine hymns. Bibi Amro, Guru Angad Dev's daughter was recently married to Baba Amardas's nephew. These hymns touched his conscious, and he developed an immense urge to become a disciple of the Guru, who had composed these verses. He asked Bibi Amro, "Whose hymns are you reciting?" She humbly replied, "My Divine father, who is now second Guru Nanak Dev, has imbibed all these hymns from His Mentor." He expressed a wish to meet the Guru. Bibi Amro took Baba Amardas to Guru Angad Dev. A glimpse of the Guru made Baba Amardas his devout disciple. Setting aside the worldly conventions of the society, he presented himself in the service of Guru Angad Dev's door-step; in other words, at the door-step of the father-in-law of his brother's son and rendered utmost divine service to the Divine Master. Baba Amardas was at that time about sixty-two years old, while Guru Angad Dev was only about thirty-six. Just after midnight every day, he would walk about ten kilometres to the river Beas for his bath, and

then fetch a pitcher of water for His Mentor's bath in the ambrosial hour. Throughout the day, he worked tirelessly in various services of Langar.

Guruship : On 25 March, 1552, Baba Amardas was bestowed the Guruship at Khadur Sahib by his Divine Master Guru Angad Dev, who followed all the rituals, as Guru Nanak Dev did for Him. (Guru Angad Dev's life story has already been given in the previous chapter.)

Contributions of Guru Amardas

- 1. Establishing Goindwal** : As per the instructions of Guru Angad Dev, Goindwal, a town on the banks of river Beas was established by Guru Amardas.
- 2. Baoli Sahib** : To cater to the needs of water for the community at Goindwal, Guru Amardas built a step-well with eighty-four steps leading down to it. Everyone, without any distinction of religion, caste or creed, was welcome to draw water for drinking and bathing from this step well.
- 3. Sangat and Pangat** : Guru Amardas emphasised the importance of the tradition of congregational worship (Sangat) and eating together seated on the floor in organised rows in the free community kitchen irrespective of caste, creed or worldly status (Pangat). As a matter of rule, whoever wanted to see Him - high or low - must first partake of the food in the Pangat. Once, Emperor Akbar came for the divine glimpse of Guru Amardas at Goindwal. He was told that the Guru would not meet him till he partook of the food sitting in the Pangat, along with others. It was very embarrassing for the officials accompanying the Emperor to sit with lowly people. However, shedding aside the advice of his courtiers, the Emperor sat in the Pangat and partook of the food with everyone. Then he went to Guru Amardas to seek His blessings. The Emperor was so impressed with the divine glimpse of the Guru that he offered a huge piece of land for the free kitchen at a place, which is now known as Amritsar. The Guru turned down the offer and remarked that the Divine Lord, with the contribution of the common people, runs the free kitchen. That is why this food is very pious.
- 4. Social Reforms** : Guru Amardas called for putting an end to the prevailing social evils like meaningless rituals, casteism, untouchability, fasting, worshiping at tombs, graves and cremation sites; and issued instructions to abolish covering of face as veil by women (Purdah). He exhorted his followers to meditate and reflect on the glories of the Timeless One.
- 5. Inter-caste marriage** : The Guru preached that all mankind being one,

marriages between individuals should not be based on the consideration of caste and creed, but on the merits of the prospective bride and groom.

6. **Condemnation of the Sati tradition** : It was an age-old practice in India to force a young widow to burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband and attain the status of Sati. Guru Amardas called for an end to this barbaric practice, and encouraged remarriage of the widow.
7. **Centers for spiritual guidance** : Guru Amardas established 22 major centres (Manjis) and 52 sub-centres (Pirhian) for spreading the divine preaching of Guru Nanak Dev among the masses to tread the Divine Path for shedding their ego, mitigate their miseries, and finally getting salvation in this very life. They were authorised to collect the donations for running free community kitchens and noble causes for humanity. These centres were managed and run by the devout Sikhs, many of them being women and a few Muslims.
8. **Chakk Ramdas** : Guru Amardas assigned Bhai Jetha (Guru Ramdas) and Baba Buddha the task of founding a new settlement - Chakk Ramdas (which later became the city of Amritsar). He himself went there to start the digging of the holy tank (Sarovar).
9. **The Divine Hymns** : In praise of the Divine Lord, Guru Amardas composed hymns, which were compiled and incorporated by Guru Arjan Dev in the Granth Sahib.

The fame and glory of Guru Amardas was not tolerated and accepted by the sons of Guru Angad Dev. One day, His elder son, Bhai Datu came to Goindwal to meet Guru Amardas. In a fit of rage, he shouted that he was the rightful heir to the Guruship, being the eldest son of the Guru and that He had snatched the inherited right from them with His clever tricks of pleasing their father. He was so furious that he lost his senses and kicked Guru Amardas. The embodiment of divine humility enquired, "Being of advanced age, I have no flesh on my legs and my hard bones might have inflicted pain and injury on your feet." Some historians write that Guru Amardas started massaging Datu's feet with great humility. Despite all this, Bhai Datu remained angry and left in a huff - grumbling and hurling abuses.

After this incident, the Guru felt that he had annoyed the family of His Divine Master, Guru Angad Dev and His presence here would further aggravate the situation. Under the Divine Will, he secretly left Goindwal on his horseback and went to a secluded place and confined Himself in a mud-house. He left the horse, which returned to Goindwal on its own. The Guru pasted a placard on the door with instructions, "Whoever opens the door of this mud-house would not remain His Sikh (follower) and would face punitive action for disobeying the orders of His Guru."

The congregation (Sangat) at Goindwal was very upset for not having the divine glimpse of Guru Amardas. They submitted to Baba Buddha to search for Guru Amardas. Baba Buddha set free the horse of the Guru in search of Guru Amardas. He, along with the devotees, followed the horse, which led them to the mud-house, quite a distance from Goindwal. When Baba Buddha saw the placard hanging on the door of the mud-house, he dared not open the door and invite the Guru's wrath. With his Divine Wisdom, the Baba found a solution to have a glimpse of the Guru. As the placard did not mention that the wall of the room could not be broken in, Baba Buddha broke in the wall of the mud-room from backside and went in alongwith the devotees to have a glimpse of the Divine Master. The Guru, of course, was very pleased to see Baba Buddha, who submitted to the Guru, "O Divine Master! The Sangat is impatient and longing for Your holy glimpse, but You have shun Yourself in a secluded mud-house." Baba Buddha requested the Guru to have mercy on them and return to Goindwal to bless His devotees. The Guru could not resist the request of the revered Gursikh of Guru Nanak Dev, and returned with them to Goindwal. Gurdwara Sunn Sahib, which means - breaking the back wall forcefully in the presence of all, commemorates the Guru's stay in seclusion.

Guru Amardas sheds his mortal frame : On 1 September, 1574, Guru Amardas annointed Baba Jetha to succeed him to the Guruship. He placed five paise and a coconut before his son-in-law, now Bhai Ramdas, who had served and obeyed Him with full devotion and love. Guru Amardas asked Bhai Ramdas to sit on the Divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev and circumambulated him five times and then bowed before Him. He then asked Baba Buddha to apply the Tilak (frontal mark) on His forehead and hailed Him as the fourth Nanak. Having accomplished His Divine mission, Guru Amardas shed His physical frame, and merged with the Divine, a few days later.

Guru Ramdas

Guru Ramdas was born to Haridas and Daya Kaur on 24 September, 1534 in Chuna Mandi, Lahore (now in Pakistan). Being the eldest son of his parents, people called him Jetha, which in Punjabi means 'the first born'. He also had a brother and a sister. The siblings were orphaned when he was barely seven. His maternal grandmother took them under her care and raised them in village Basarke, near Amritsar. Even as a young boy, Bhai Jetha learnt to work hard and made a living as a hawker selling roasted grams in the village.

When a group of devotees from Basarke went to Goindwal to pay their respect

to Guru Amardas, Bhai Jetha joined them. While at Goindwal, he felt so blessed that he decided to stay there, and serve Guru Amardas with complete devotion.

Marriage : One day, Guru Amardas's wife, Mansa Devi said to the Guru, "Our daughter Bhani is now of marriageable age. I wish we find a suitable match for her, someone like Bhai Jetha." Hearing this, Guru Amardas replied, "There is none other like Bhai Jetha in the whole Universe." Mansa Devi agreed that nobody could match Bhai Jetha in this world. They married their daughter Bibi Bhani to Bhai Jetha (Ramdas). The couple was blessed with three sons, Prithi Chand, Mahadev and Arjan Dev.

Serving the Guru : After marrying his daughter Bibi Bhani to Bhai Ramdas, Guru Amardas asked the latter to stay on in his household in Goindwal (the idea of the son-in-law putting up in his father-in-law's household is frowned upon in Indian society). While living in his father-in-law's place, Bhai Ramdas started serving the congregation at Goindwal with full devotion - not as a son-in-law, but as a humble Sikh. He submitted himself to serving his Divine Master and carrying out his commandments in letter and spirit. He quickly grasped the ideals of the Sikh faith, and moulded his life accordingly. During the voluntary selfless service (Kar Sewa) of digging of the step-well at Goindwal, he was the chief organiser of the work.

Trial : Guru Amardas knew it well that Bhai Ramdas was divinely ordained to be the next Guru. But he wanted to show the people that neither his sons nor his other son-in-law, nor any other Gursikh, could measure up to the high ideals expected of one, who would ascend to Guru Nanak Dev's spiritual seat.

Once, Guru Amardas called both his sons-in-law, and asked them to build a specific platform. Both completed their respective platforms by the evening. When the Guru inspected the platforms, he told each one, "This is not up to the mark, demolish it and build again." When built a second time, Guru Amardas again remarked that it was also not up to His expectations. "Build the right platform again", he said. When they built the platform the third time, Guru again remarked that it was not to His liking and asked both of them, "Build it again to my expectation". At this, Bhai Rama, the elder son-in-law (husband of Dani) lost his patience and remarked, "It is not possible for me to build better than this as I have built the best possible one. Since You have grown old, You are not able to visualise the quality of the platform, which I have built with my utmost effort. It is not possible for me to construct anything better than this." With these remarks, he left. But Bhai Ramdas once again dismantled the platform, and built a new one again with full devotion and patience and to the best of his ability. Again Guru Amardas told Bhai Ramdas that this too is not to his satisfaction and wanted to

see a better one built. Bhai Ramdas built the platform seven times, and eventually the seventh platform was approved by Guru Amardas. In fact, the issue was not to get the platform constructed again and again, but He was testing the patience, obedience and devotion to obey the Guru's command, which Bhai Ramdas with his Divine Wisdom visualised. He obeyed the command of his Guru by shedding his ego completely to merge with the Divine Master. Guru Amardas wanted to show to the congregation, including His sons and elder son-in law that Bhai Ramdas was the only one blessed to obey the command of Nanak with utmost love and devotion to shed his ego completely, and thereby the fittest to follow the footprints of Nanak to spread the spiritual brotherhood and Divine Peace in the world. Thus, he was the only one worthy of succeeding Guru Nanak Dev.

Guruship : On 1 September, 1574, at Goindwal, Guru Amardas followed the tradition of the Gurus and anointed Baba Ramdas as His successor, who then came to be known as Guru Ramdas, the fourth Nanak.

An Epitome of Humility and Courtesy : Once, Baba Sri Chand visited Amritsar. When Guru Ramdas heard that the elder son of Guru Nanak Dev was there, he rushed to receive him with full devotion and humility and showed utmost respect to the Guru's son. Baba Sri Chand asked Guru Ramdas why he had grown such a long beard. The Guru humbly replied with full devotion, "This has been grown to wipe the dust off the feet of your good-self, you being the elder son of Guru Nanak Dev." Hearing this, Baba Sri Chand was so pleased with His humility that he could not resist saying, "On account of these virtues of obeying and serving Your Divine Master Nanak with all humility and devotion, You and Your predecessors have snatched the Divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev. We, the sons of Guru Nanak Dev could not come up to the expectations of our father to ascend to His seat."

Guru ka Chakk : In 1574, at the behest of Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas founded a township Guru ka Chakk, which was later named Chakk Ramdas or Ramdaspur by Guru Arjan Dev. In the same year, he started digging a holy tank, which was later completed by Guru Arjan Dev, near a jujube wild shrub called Dukh Bhanjani Beri (the shrub that dispels sorrow). This became the celebrated Sarovar surrounding Harmandir Sahib (also known worldwide by the commoners as Golden Temple) in Amritsar.

Organisation of Preachers : Guru Ram Das organised a very sound and systematic method of teaching the spiritual values to the masses as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev. The preachers had moulded their lives according to the Divine instructions of the Guru to tread the Spiritual Path for realising the Divine within, for which man had come to this earth. Those saintly persons were earmarked

different areas, where they would propagate the spiritual values for self-realisation in this very life by treading the Divine Path. They were highly revered among the masses, and were called Masands. Besides preaching the divine message, they used to collect tithes (Daswandh) from the devotees and submitted the same to the Guru, to spend it for the noble cause of spiritual preaching and running the free community kitchen (Langar) for humanity. These preachers (Masands) spread the spiritual message to tread the Divine Path, far and wide, throughout India.

Guru Ramdas Sheds His Mortal Frame : Before shedding His mortal frame, Guru Ramdas tested the divine virtues of His three sons. The first son Prithi Chand was very clever and wanted to grab the Guruship by performing all the unworthy worldly techniques. Because of these malpractices, he was not liked by the divine congregation (Sangat) also. The youngest son Mahadev was engrossed in his own instincts of mind, and could not perform the divine services as per the instructions of his Father (Guru) . Out of the three sons, revered Arjan Dev followed the divine instructions of his Father, with full love and devotion.

Tests for the Three Sons : Some close relatives of Guru Ramdas came to Amritsar from Lahore to invite him for the marriage of their son. The Guru told them that since He was busy in completing the construction of the Sarovar and also in other divine services, he would send one of his sons to attend the marriage ceremony. He asked his eldest son Prithi Chand to attend the Lahore wedding, on behalf of the family. He was very clever and thought that if he went there, the Guru might confer the Guruship on His younger son. He was busy in collecting donations for spending on various works also. In other words, he was money-minded and greedy. He bluntly refused, and told his father that he had no time to attend the marriage, pretending that he had a very busy schedule of rendering service to the Sangat. The Guru then asked Mahadev, who also refused to do so saying that he was not interested in the worldly affairs. Finally, when Guru Ramdas asked his third son Arjan Dev to go to Lahore to attend the marriage ceremony, he at once bowed before the Guru in reverence and went to Lahore as per the instruction of his Divine father. The Guru asked him to spread the divine message of Guru Nanak Dev among the masses in Lahore. He also told him not to return to Amritsar until he was asked to.

Revered Arjan Dev attended the marriage ceremony and performed other duties as instructed by his divine father. After a long time, when he did not get any message to return, he wrote a letter and sent it through a Sikh messenger to be delivered to the Guru. When the Sikh reached Amritsar with the letter, Prithi Chand took it from him assuring him that he would present the same to the Guru.

The Sikh returned to Lahore. After some time, when there was no response to his letter from the Guru, Arjan Dev sent a second letter to the divine father through another Sikh. This letter too was snatched by Prithi Chand, who assured the Sikh that he would hand it over to the Guru. Again, when there was no reply from the Divine Father to return to Amritsar even after a long period, Arjan Dev sent a third letter through another Sikh, with a strict instruction that he should personally submit it to Guru Ramdas and none else. On reading this devotional and divinely third letter, the Guru asked Prithi Chand why he had not delivered the previous letters. Prithi Chand remained silent, and could not give any satisfactory reply. Guru Ramdas sent Sikhs to his house in search of the previous two letters. The Sikhs, on instructions of the Guru, searched the house of Prithi Chand and traced the previous two letters and presented them to the Guru. After reading these letters, the Guru was spiritually so moved that He at once called Arjan Dev back to Amritsar.

After several tests, Guru Ramdas anointed his third son Arjan Dev on the divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev for spreading His message to the masses. This ceremony was performed on 1 September, 1581. After performing the rituals on the pattern started by Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Ramdas installed Arjan Dev on the Divine seat of Nanak by offering a coconut and five paise, circumambulated five times, bowed before him, and asked Baba Buddha to put the frontal mark on his head. As such Arjan Dev became the fifth Guru Nanak Dev, and was thus called Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Ramdas now asked Guru Arjan Dev to complete the hymn written in the three letters by reciting the fourth stanza in continuation of the previous letters in praise of the Divine Lord. Guru Arjan Dev, now the fifth Guru, recited the fourth stanza in which he used the suffix Nanak because he had now become the fifth Nanak:

ਭਾਗੁ ਹੋਆ ਗੁਰਿ ਸੰਤੁ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਘਰ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

ਸੇਵ ਕਰੀ ਪਲੁ ਚਸਾ ਨ ਵਿਛੁੜਾ ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਤੁਮਾਰੇ ਜੀਉ ॥

Bhaag(u) hoaa Gur(i) sant(u) milaa-e-aa. Prabh Abinaasee ghar meh paa-e-aa.

S-ai-v karee pal(u) chasaa na vichhurhaa Jan Nanak Das tumaar-ai jeeou. (97)

(Due to my divine luck, God has given me a chance to meet the Guru. By following His divine instructions in letter and spirit, to tread the Divine Path, I realised the Divine within, which developed my outlook to see One in All and All in One. Now I should serve my Divine Master with full devotion and love, so that I should go on reciting His Divine Name without wasting a moment." Thus, the fifth Nanak expounds: O my Divine Master! I am completely submitted to You.)

Shortly thereafter, Guru Ramdas shed his mortal frame and merged with the Formless One.

Guru Arjan Dev

Guru Arjan Dev, the son of Guru Ramdas and Bibi Bhani, was born in Goindwal on 15 April, 1563.

Childhood : Even from early childhood, he could perform the most wondrous acts. One day, as a toddler, he crawled towards his maternal grandfather's bed and once he was there, he tried to climb up. "Who is it?" asked Guru Amardas. "It's your grandson (Dohta)," replied His daughter, Bibi Bhani. To this, the Guru responded spontaneously, 'Dohta Bani ka Bohitha' (the grandson is a treasure-house of hymns) and added, "O my grandchild! Be in no hurry, your time would come soon to ascend this Divine seat."

Marriage : Guru Arjan Dev married Mata Ganga at village Mau in Tehsil Phillaur of Jalandhar district. Their only child was a son, named Hargobind.

Guruship : He attained Guruship on 1 September, 1581.

Prithi Chand's Hostility : Prithi Chand, the eldest brother of Guru Arjan Dev, always nurtured ill will for him, because he feared that the Guruship might be conferred upon him. When Guru Arjan Dev indeed became the fifth Guru, Prithi Chand's rage knew no bounds. He hatched a conspiracy with the Mughal General, Sulhi Khan; and invited him to attack Guru Arjan Dev. When Sulhi Khan started from Lahore to launch his attack on the Guru, some of the Sikhs in the congregation requested Guru Arjan Dev to send a letter to the General clarifying their stand that they had not done any damage to the rule of the Mughal Empire, so why should they attack the Guru? After hearing the suggestion, the Guru remained calm and serene, because He was immersed in the Divine within.

When the devotees perceived that this suggestion was not acceptable to the Guru, they submitted an alternative suggestion of sending a couple of noble Sikhs to General Sulhi Khan to clarify that the followers of Guru Arjan Dev had not taken any action against the rules and regulations of the Government. After hearing that suggestion, the Guru again remained quiet and immersed in the Divine within.

Then the holy congregation submitted the third proposal that they should do something to prevent General Sulahi Khan's attack. After hearing the third suggestion, the Guru told the congregation, "We should have utmost faith in the Divine and should concentrate our minds to recite the Divine Name." The Guru's tune merged with the Divine within and prayed that whatever is the Divine Will, would be acceptable to them. The virtues of the Divine Lord were to protect His devotee. At this, Guru Arjan Dev humbly responded in the voice of the Divine in the following hymn:

ਪ੍ਰਥਮੇ ਮਤਾ ਜਿ ਪਤ੍ਰੀ ਚਲਾਵਉ ॥ ਦੁਤੀਏ ਮਤਾ ਦੁਇ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਪਹੁਚਾਵਉ ॥
ਤ੍ਰਿਤੀਏ ਮਤਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਉ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥ ਮੈ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਤੁਹੀ ਧਿਆਇਆ ॥

Pratham-ai mataa je patree chalaavou. Duttee-ai mataa du-e maanukh pahuchaavou.
Trittee-ai mataa kichhu karou upaa-e-aa. M-ei sabh(u) kichh(u) chhod(i) Prabh tuhee dhiaa-e-aa. (371)

As per the Divine Order, General Sulhi Khan, riding the horseback, came with a huge force to attack Guru Arjan Dev at Amritsar. On the way, Prithi Chand requested Sulhi Khan to visit his brick kiln, because, he wanted to show the General his great influence on the masses and his own established sound business. As soon as Sulhi Khan reached the boundary of the burning brick kiln, his horse was so frightened that the Divine Force pushed the General into the burning kiln. Thus, General Sulhi Khan, along with the horse, was roasted with the burning bricks. After perceiving this horrible scene, the army of the dead General fled for fear of the Divine.

When word of Sulhi Khan's death reached Guru Arjan Dev, he prayed to the Divine Lord, expressing His Divine spiritual feelings through the following hymn.

ਸੁਲਹੀ ਤੇ ਨਾਰਾਇਣ ਰਾਖੁ ॥ ਸੁਲਹੀ ਕਾ ਹਾਥੁ ਕਹੀ ਨ ਪਹੁਚੈ ਸੁਲਹੀ ਹੋਇ ਮੁਆ ਨਾਪਾਕੁ ॥

Sul-hee t-ai Naaraa-e-nh raakh(u).

Sul-hee kaa haath(u) kahee na pahuch-ei Sul-hee ho-e mooaa naapaak(u).(825)

(The Almighty Lord saved us from Sulhi Khan. He could do nothing and the Divine Power pushed him into the burning kiln, where he was roasted completely.)

Birth of Hargobind : The Guru's consort, Ganga, remained childless for many years after marriage. Since she was the wife of the Guru, everybody used to bow before her and rendered all types of services, as a result of which she developed some ego in her mind. As she was not rendering any service to the Sangat, Guru Arjan Dev wanted to set her on the Divine Path. One day, she became frustrated and requested her husband to bestow His blessings upon her for having a child. Guru was all-powerful, being in tune with the Divine Lord and of course, could shower any type of blessings, as He did on His devotees. However, he wanted to eliminate her ego. He told her that if she served the morning food to the supreme blessed Sikh of Guru Nanak Dev, Baba Buddha, who resided a few miles from Amritsar in a small forest, now known as Bir of Baba Buddha, then the divine Sikh would shower divine blessings on her for having the child. Mata Ganga asked her maids to cook good food, and she dressed herself with the choicest garments, and travelled in a chariot along with her maid servants to serve food to Baba Buddha. The chariot was running so fast that a huge cloud of dust was blown into the sky. Seeing this, Baba Buddha enquired from his devotees, "What has happened that the dust is blowing up towards the sky?" They replied that Mata Ganga was

approaching on a fast running chariot. Baba Buddha unconsciously remarked what calamity had befallen the Guru's wife that her chariot was rushing like a storm.

When Mata Ganga met Baba Buddha, and respectfully offered the food, he remarked that he was not hungry, and let the food be distributed among the congregation (Sangat). The fact was that Baba Buddha did not partake of the food due to the egoistic actions of the revered Ganga. When she requested for a child, Baba Buddha remarked that Guru Arjan Dev was Himself the Divine Lord, having all the powers to confer bounties on the entire world. Only He could bless her with a child. Mata Ganga returned home disappointed and submitted to Guru Arjan Dev that the Baba Buddha neither had food nor did he shower blessings for a child. Guru Arjan Dev asked whether, she herself had prepared the food and went on foot to offer it to Baba Buddha? She replied in the negative. The Guru remarked that this was her ego and not humility. Divine Blessings are positively correlated with divine humility. The Guru suggested that by shedding her ego, she should prepare the food herself and walk barefoot to Baba Buddha, a very revered Sikh of Guru Nanak Dev, for offering the food and seeking his blessings.

Guru Arjan Dev, being Divine, knew that a godly blessed son was coming to their house. He would end the cruelty being perpetrated by the Mughal rulers, but he wanted to inculcate divine humility in his wife so that she could raise the divine son who would check the cruelty of the ruling class being inflicted on the poor masses.

On her Divine husband's advice, Mata Ganga prepared the food herself and took it on her head walking barefeet to Baba Buddha. Seeing this divine humility, Baba Buddha was overjoyed, "O divine Mother! I am feeling very hungry. Serve me the food that you have brought." From the food, he took a big onion and put it on the wooden pillar of the cot and crushed it with his fist and exclaimed in Divine Bliss, "O Mother Ganga! Guru Nanak Dev is sending a strong divine son, who will thus crush the atrocities being perpetrated by the rulers on the poor masses." After getting these blessings, the revered Ganga grew very serene and blissful, because her ego had now been completely eradicated due to the blessings of the divine follower of Guru Nanak Dev. When she returned home, she narrated the whole story to Guru Arjan Dev, who remarked that complete submission (without a trace of ego), to the divine persons definitely gets holy blessings. The prediction of Baba Buddha came true. Within a destined period, Hargobind was born to Mata Ganga. Hearing this, Prithi Chand and his wife became desperate and started planning to kill the newly born of Guru Arjan Dev.

Welfare Services : Soon after assuming the Guruship, Guru Arjan Dev began

and completed the various construction works initiated by Guru Ramdas. These include the following holy services:

1. The holy tanks (Sarovars) at Ram Sar, Santokh Sar and Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar
2. Built a township at Guru ka Chakk, which was first named Chakk Ramdas and later, Ramdaspur and is now called Amritsar
3. Built a huge Sarovar at Tarn Taran alongside the Gurdwara
4. Opened a centre for curing lepers
5. Spiritual centres at Chheharta Sahib in Amritsar and Kartarpur in Jalandhar
6. Several other holy works for the welfare of the congregation (Sangat)
7. Digging a step-well (Baoli) in Lahore and the construction of a Gurdwara at Guru ka Bagh (near Amritsar)
8. It is worth mentioning here that when the foundation-stone of Harmandir Sahib (also known as the Golden Temple by the commoners, particularly by the non-Sikhs) was to be laid, Guru Arjan Dev included Pir Mian Mir, a Muslim Sufi Saint, along with other Sikhs, like Baba Buddha. This is a unique secular example that the foundation-stone of the prominent Sikh Shrine was laid by a Muslim Saint.

Collection of Daswandh : To meet the day-to-day expenses, various construction projects and philanthropic activities, Guru Arjan Dev gave a formal call to his followers to part with their earnings. He decreed that henceforth, every Sikh was to give a tenth of his income for the noble cause.

Compilation of the holy Scripture : With the poet-saint Bhai Gurdas as His scribe, Guru Arjan Dev compiled a huge divine volume containing the hymns, not only of all his predecessors and His own, but it also included the hymns of eighteen saints from across India. In addition to this, the hymns of eleven Bhatts, who were high-caste Brahmins, but were longing for the Divine Wisdom (Brahm Gyan) were also incorporated. These Bhatts, visited all the pilgrimages of India and met many saints, sages and ascetics to perceive the Divine Wisdom to attain self-realisation. However, they could not quench their thirst for Divine Wisdom and were frustrated. They heard about Guru Arjan Dev to be a divine person and during their spiritual discourses at Amritsar,, they dispelled their entire ego and got Divine Wisdom.

Out of the eighteen saints and sages, whose hymns have been included in the Granth Sahib, five belonged to the Muslim faith, and some of them were high-caste Brahmins, like Bhagat Ramanand, some of them were barbers and even butchers, who had become Divine. Some belonged to the downtrodden, like Bhagat Ravidas, a cobbler. Then there is a king, Pipa also. When a devotee studies the hymns of

Guru Granth Sahib, he would call it an interfaith Divine Scripture, because no other scripture of any religion has included the hymns of the holy persons belonging to other religion.

The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev : Chandu, a courtier of Emperor Jehangir made an adverse comment on the Sikh Gurus about marrying his daughter to Hargobind. The Sikhs of Delhi took exception to these remarks of Chandu against Guru Nanak Dev's mission, and submitted to Guru Arjan Dev, not to accept the offer of Chandu's daughter for marriage to Hargobind. Guru Arjan Dev rejected the marriage proposal. Feeling humiliated, Chandu, a high official in the Mughal administration, started feeding the Emperor with false reports of the Guru's involvement in a conspiracy against him. Jehangir was already ill-disposed towards Guru Arjan Dev, and was averse to the idea of Hindus as well as Muslims becoming the Guru's followers.

Guru Arjan Dev was summoned to Lahore and told that either he should pay Rupees two lakh fine or include the hymns of Islam in the Granth Sahib or embrace Islam, otherwise He would be executed. Guru Arjan Dev said, "Money is the contribution of the devotees which cannot be given for any purpose other than the divine. Secondly, Granth Sahib has already been completed and the hymns of many Muslim saints including one, who was descendant of Prophet Mohammed have been included. As such, no more additions can be made in this spiritual book. As far as my embracing Islam is concerned, I have already realised the Divine within and remain always intuned with the Divine, which is the ultimate Divine goal of human life. Religions are different paths to tread on reaching the Divine Realm, where there is nothing except the Eternal One. Since I have achieved this divine stage by following the Divine Path with full love and devotion in letter and spirit, I need not follow any other path, i.e., religion which ends when a divine devotee reaches the Divine Realm. Since, I have already treaded the holy path according to my Divine Master and merged with the Divine within, now I need not follow any paths or rituals. I am ready to sacrifice my life as per the Will of the Divine."

Chandu incited Jehangir, who became furious and handed Guru Arjan Dev over to Chandu to put him to death through very cruel means. Finally, He was boiled in hot water and then rested on hot iron plate ignited with fire and hot sand was poured on his head. Despite these cruel inflictions, Guru Arjan Dev was intuned with the Divine within and remained calm and serene. Hearing about these cruelties, His disciple Muslim Saint Mian Mir rushed to the scene and in a horrified mood exclaimed, "O my Divine Master! Allow me to smash and destroy both the Lahore and Delhi Governments who are committing so many atrocities on Allah's

Divine person." The Guru smiled and asked Saint Mian Mir, "From whom have you obtained such occult powers of smashing the cities?" He, at once came to his divine sense and humbly replied, "O Divine Master! It is You, who has bestowed all these occult powers on me." With a smile, the Guru told the Muslim Saint that these occult powers could have been used by Him too, but according to the Divine Order, one should remain in the Divine Will of the Almighty Lord. Hearing this, the Muslim Saint prostrated and went back. Guru's body was roasted and finally put into the cold water of river Ravi so that he drowned after suffering pain and miseries. The Guru blessed the tormentors with his divine smile, and attained martyrdom without any ill-will, perceiving it as the Divine Will.

Earlier, before leaving for Lahore, He had expressed the wish that Sahibzada Hargobind should ascend the seat of Guru Nanak Dev.

Guru Hargobind

Guru Hargobind, the son of Mata Ganga and Guru Arjan Dev, was born on 19 June, 1595 in village Wadali of Amritsar district.

Prithi Chand's Enmity : From Hargobind's early childhood, his uncle Prithi Chand made several attempts to eliminate him, but the holy child survived all such attempts. The caretaker, who was bribed by Prithi Chand to kill Hargobind pasted poison on her mammary glands and tried to breast-feed the divine child so that he dies. But the child refused to do so. After a little while the caretaker died of poison herself.

Once a bowl full of poisoned curd was offered to the divine child. He turned it away. The same curd was taken by a dog and it died immediately. A snake charmer was also engaged by Prithi Chand to release a poisonous cobra into the room of the child Hargobind. Some of the devotee Sikhs, who visited the room to have glimpse of the divine child, saw the cobra hissing in the room. They caught hold of the cobra and tried to kill it. Guru Arjan Dev asked them not to kill the snake, but catch it alive and release it in the forest, as the same had not harmed the child.

Education : Baba Buddha, a renowned Divine person, who originally was the disciple of Guru Nanak Dev, was entrusted with the responsibility of educating the divine child as well as training him in the use of arms.

Under the guidance of Baba Buddha, Hargobind learned the lessons of performing the worldly as well as spiritual duties as per prevailing tradition.

Guruship : Abiding by the wishes of Guru Arjan Dev, Baba Buddha, applied the frontal mark (Tilak) of Guruship on the forehead of the 11-year old Hargobind on 25 May, 1606. He adorned two swords around his neck, one towards the right

side and the other towards the left, which symbolised the combination of the worldly and spiritual affairs.

Miri-Piri : Miri means to live the life of a pious householder, earn a livelihood with honest toil, not only to sustain the family, but also to donate one-tenth of his earning for the noble cause towards humanity, irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

Piri indicates that a Sikh, while performing worldly duties honestly, must tread the Divine Path according to the holy instructions bestowed upon us by the Gurus in their hymns, so that one should tread the Divine Path honestly to realise the Divine within, i.e., attaining self-realisation in this very life.

At the time of the succession ceremony of Guruship, Baba Buddha adorned two swords (Kirpans) around the neck of Guru Hargobind - one symbolising worldly duties (Miri) and the other divine duties (Piri).

Marriage : Guru Hargobind was married to Damodari, daughter of Narayan Das. She was pious, gentle and courteous. Her spiritual qualities so impressed the congregation (Sangat) that on beholding her, they would remember the holy Bebe Nanaki, sister of Guru Nanak Dev. So much so that out of the high regard for her, the Sikhs began to address her Bebe Nanaki.

Revered Damodari bore Guru Hargobind five sons - Baba Gurditta, Baba Suraj Mal, Baba Ani Rai, Baba Atal Rai, Baba Tegh Bahadur - and a daughter, Bibi Viro.

It is interesting to know that all the sons of the Guru were born under the influence of huge spiritual capital, but nobody showed any miraculouous powers except Baba Atal Rai. The story goes that the nine years old Atal Rai, used to play regularly with his friends. One day, the young Atal Rai was playing in the field with his friend. They played into the night and still the game could not be completed. Under some mysterious circumstances his play-mate died at night due to snake bite. His dead body was covered with a heavy sheet. The next morning, Atal Rai's friend didn't turn up for the completion of the game, so he went to his house to call him. His parents told him that he was dead, and that they had covered his body with the heavy cloth. Atal Rai, in a joking mood, asked his friend to get up and play with him to complete the unfinished game. Hearing this, the boy got up and started playing with Atal Rai, the fourth son of Guru Hargobind.

After finishing the game when Atal Rai went to his father to pay obeisance, the Divine Father showed his displeasure. The boy started weeping. With folded hands, he humbly enquired what blunder had he committed? The Guru told him that he had interfered with the Divine Order by reviving his friend with his occult powers and remarked that two swords could not remain in one sheath, which meant that

either Guru could live or His son and thus one had to shed his mortal frame according to the Divine Will. Baba Atal Rai repented for having interfered with the Divine Order by raising his dead friend up. Perceiving the Divine wish of his Father, he left his mortal body. A nine-storey Gurdwara in Amritsar commemorates Baba Atal. Food prepared by the devotees is brought and served here to the Sangat. There is a common saying, 'Baba Attal, Pakee Pakaaee Ghal (O Baba Attal! Send the prepared food for the visiting devotees.)'

Instilling Feelings of Valour : After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the followers of the Guru submitted that the Mughal kingdom had developed enmity against the Sikhs and they could expect any type of suppression and that they should do something for self-protection against the invasion of these disoriented cruel rulers. Perceiving the prevailing circumstances, Guru Hargobind asked the Sikhs to develop physical strength and martial arts for defence. He conveyed to his followers (Sikhs) that henceforth, besides offering money for community affairs, they should also offer horses, arms and other combat material for self-defense.

He fortified the town of Amritsar and built a small fort called Lohgarh near its outskirts to secure it against enemy attacks. In 1609, he built the Akal Takht, earlier called Akal Bunga, where Sikhs gathered and discuss spiritual and worldly affairs. Here, apart from reflecting on matters relating to the teachings of the Gurus, issues related to the general welfare and defence of the Sikhs were also discussed. By recruiting brave warriors, Guru Hargobind began the process of raising a Divine army.

Release of Captives : In order to spread and strengthen his empire far and wide in India, the Mughal Emperor Jehangir captured many Hindu mini-rulers not only of central India, but also of the Himalayan region and sentenced them for life imprisonment in the fort of Gwalior. They were crying and praying to the Almighty Lord for His blessings for their release from captivity. Perceiving their prayers, Guru Hargobind went to Delhi with the intention to get these mini rulers released from the fort of Gwalior. Jehangir consulted his clever courtiers on how to put Guru Hargobind also in jail. Perceiving the Divine vibrations of the Guru, they suggested to the Emperor to request the Guru to visit the Gwalior fort to motivate the imprisoned rulers to tread the Divine Path rather than grumbling and undergoing miseries. The Emperor had also become increasingly apprehensive when he learnt of the bravery and growing military might of Guru Hargobind. He met the Guru with a cunning humility and started praising His divine glories. He requested the Guru to visit the Gwalior fort, and preach the imprisoned rulers and impress upon them to tread the Divine Path.

Despite the evil designs of Jehangir, the Guru under the Divine Law went to Gwalior fort and started imparting Divine sermons to the imprisoned rulers. The Guru preached them the importance to recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion, and showing utmost faith to the Divine Lord so that their sufferings could be mitigated. At the same time, Jehangir under the advice of his cunning courtiers held the Guru also captive and imprisoned him in the same fort. The All-knowing Guru Himself under the Divine Will had designed to be held captive in the fort in order to liberate these mini-kings and rulers of India.

Guru Hargobind used to hold morning and evening prayers, wherein all the chieftains participated. They regained the confidence on the Divine Lord after shedding their depressions. Under the Divine Order, Jehangir could not have sound sleep after arresting Guru Hargobind. He was dreadfully frightened by snakes and lions crawling on his chest during his sleep. He was so much frightened that he fell seriously ill and feared death. Begum Noor Jahan, his wife, narrated the whole story to the Muslim Saint Mian Mir, a great devotee of the Guru. He told her that her husband had committed a great sin by arresting the Divine Guru in Gwalior fort, ill advised by his wretched courtiers. Now the only way to save the life of Jehangir was to release the Divine Guru with respect and devotion. Hearing these sermons through his wife, Jehangir issued order for the immediate release of Guru Hargobind to seek His blessings. The Guru turned down the request of Jehangir saying that unless all the imprisoned rulers were released, he would not leave the Gwalior fort. Jehangir then, on the advice of his wife and pious courtiers conveyed to the Guru that so many imprisoned rulers as could hold on to His gown, would be released. The Guru then asked his devotees to prepare a big tunic with fifty-two strings. Each captivated ruler held one string of the tunic and got out of the fort. In this way, all the captives were released from the prison. In a nutshell, the Guru came to Gwalior fort to get these fifty-two rulers released on listening to their prayers. Praises of Guru Hargobind were sung and He was hailed as Daata Bandi Chhor, one who secured the release of royal captives. Guru Hargobind was brought to Delhi in a royal procession.

Guru Hargobind reached Amritsar on the day of Diwali (festival of lights), when all the Sikhs rejoiced on meeting their Divine Master after a long time and in the spiritual bliss joined in lighting the streets and their homes with earthen lamps and from there on, Diwali is celebrated by the Sikh community every year.

Guru kills the Lion : When Jehangir met Guru Hargobind, and begged to be relieved of his misery, he was cured by the blessings of the Guru. He developed immense faith in the Guru. There was a ferocious lion in the nearby forest of Delhi,

which used to kill people but none could contain it. The Emperor requested the Guru to accompany him for killing the lion. All the courtiers joined the Emperor to kill the lion with the arrow, but it escaped. Ultimately, Jehangir requested Guru Hargobind to eliminate the animal. The Guru provoked the lion to attack, and then with one stroke of His sword, the lion was killed. Seeing the bravery, not only the Emperor but also the courtiers, were so impressed that they expressed their gratitude and said that it was only due to His divine power that the Guru killed this ferocious animal. The lion too was also blessed on having been liberated by the Guru.

King and the True King : Another episode from the life of Guru Hargobind is worth mentioning. Two separate tents for hearing the grievances of the poor and solving their problems were set up near Agra. One was for Jehangir, who held court for hearing the problems of the people. Close by a divine court was held in a different tent for Guru Hargobind. Many devotees from Delhi came for a divine glimpse of the Guru, and to get their doubts cleared through His divine discourses. There was an old man, who used to sell a bundle of grass in the market and used to sustain himself on two paise earned from one bundle of the grass. One day he got two bundles of grass, sold them in the market, and earned four paise. He wished to offer two paise before Guru Hargobind and seek His divine blessings and self-realisation. By mistake, he went to the court of Jehangir and offered the two-paise coin and requested him to bestow upon him His divine blessings. Hearing this, Jehangir said, "You have come to the wrong place. I could give you all the bounties of this world including a huge chunk of land for Governing, but I have no power to bless you with the Divine Name for self-realisation, for which I myself am a seeker." He took back the coin from Jehangir and started towards the tent of Guru Hargobind. The Emperor offered several inducements and told him that it was his insult. He could take whatever he wished for, but perhaps the old man was aware that the spiritual blessings could only be had from the house of Nanak. He offered the two-paise coin to Guru Hargobind for obtaining the divine blessings. Seeing his deep devotion, the Guru blessed him to tread the Divine Path for getting self-realisation. He was very excited and satisfied.

Battles : After Jehangir's death, Shah Jahan ascended the Mughal throne. He pursued a much harsher policy against the Sikhs. In order to protect the rights of the poor and the downtrodden, Guru Hargobind fought four battles against the Mughals. He won all those battles, but did not seize even a square inch of land to establish His own rule. It is thus apparent that Guru Hargobind waged only a divine crusade (Dharmayudh) for the righteous cause, which was grossly exploited and neglected by the previous rulers' selfish motives.

It is worth mentioning here that during the period of the Guru, Hargobindpur Township was established near Gurdaspur in Punjab. Here, the Guru got a Dharamsaal (the divine Temple) constructed for the Sikhs to worship. The Guru also got a mosque constructed for his Muslim followers for offering prayers according to their religion. This is an outstanding example of secularism.

Propagating the Divine Faith : After the last battle, Guru Hargobind settled down at Kiratpur on the banks of the river Sutlej. From there, He travelled far and wide, preaching the message of Divine Truth. Journeying to Kashmir, Nanakana Sahib, Pilibhit and the Malwa region, He preached the message of Guru Nanak Dev and showered His blessings upon the masses to follow these preachings, as a result of which many Hindus and Muslims embraced the Sikh faith. He sent many ascetics (Udasi Sadhus) to the far flung areas of the country to spread the divine message of Guru Nanak Dev.

Guru Nanak Dev's elder son, Baba Sri Chand, was meditating at Badh Sahib, near Pathankot in Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Guru Hargobind went to meet Baba Sri Chand and showed great reverence towards him, as he was the son of the first Divine Master of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak Dev. Baba Sri Chand enquired from Guru Hargobind, "How many sons do You have"? Guru Sahib answered with utmost reverence, "Four." He asked Guru to give one to him to spread the message of the Udasi sect throughout India and thus, to spread the message of Guru Nanak Dev. Guru Hargobind offered his eldest son Bhai Gurditta, who accompanied Him, to Baba Sri Chand, who later succeeded Baba Sri Chand. Baba Gurditta spread the message of Guru Nanak Dev all over India. Even today, there are many centres of Udasis, some of them in the far flung areas. Many Hindus are the followers of the Udasi sect throughout India and they recite the hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Founders- Townships and Shrines:

1. Founded the Akal Takht (Seat of Temporal Power) and built holy tanks at Kaulsar and Ramsar in Amritsar.
2. Founded the town of Hargobindpur.
3. Founded the town of Mahiraj in the Malwa region with the help of Mohan and Kale.
4. Set up a memorial - Dehra Sahib, near the Lahore fort, commemorating martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev.
5. Established the town of Kiratpur on the banks of the river Sutlej in the Shivalik foothills in Ropar district, where He lived during the last years of His life. Here Har Rai was born to Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind. He was

nourished both worldly and spiritually under the command of Guru Hargobind. A small parable from the life of the Guru is worth mentioning here. In Kiratpur, there was a beautiful garden with various types of attractive flowers. Har Rai used to wear long and wide tunic. Once he was accompanying his grandfather Guru Hargobind in the park and a flower got stuck to his wide tunic and got plucked. The Guru advised the grandson to wear such clothes that he could manage so that the beautiful flowers don't get destroyed. From that day, he wore a very short cloak.

Guru Harkrishan, the son of Guru Har Rai too was born at Kiratpur.

On the demise of Baba Buddha at Ramdas in Amritsar, Guru Hargobind performed the last rites. It is a unique case, which has no parallel in history that the most revered Gursikh of Guru Nanak Dev, being a completely divine person (Brahmgyani) never aspired to become the Guru. Whereas it was he, who formally anointed all the succeeding Gurus till Guru Hargobind by putting the frontal mark on the forehead of all the Gurus during his life-span. This proves that Baba Buddha had completely merged with the Divine and become Brahmgyani, one who attains complete Divine knowledge of the Creator of the Universe after shedding His ego completely.

Guru Hargobind sheds His mortal frame : Guru Hargobind anointed his grandson Har Rai to succeed him to the Divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev. During the rites of succession, he placed five paise and a coconut before Har Rai and circumbulated five times and bowed before His successor. Bhai Bhana, son of Baba Buddha applied the frontal mark (Tilak) of Guruship on Sri Har Rai's forehead, felicitating His advent as the seventh Guru Nanak Dev. On 3 March, 1644, Guru Hargobind shed his mortal frame at Kiratpur.

Guru Har Rai

Guru Har Rai, son of Baba Gurditta and Mata Nihal Kaur and grandson of Guru Hargobind was born on 16 January, 1630 at Kiratpur.

Education : Guru Hargobind personally supervised his early spiritual education. Along with the religious instructions, He was also trained in horsemanship, use of arms and other martial arts.

Marriage : Guru Har Rai was married to Bibi Krishan Kaur (alias Sulakhani), daughter of Sri Daya Ram of Anoop Shehar (in Uttar Pradesh). She bore Him two sons - Ram Rai and Harkrishan.

Guruship : Guruship was bestowed upon Guru Har Rai on 3 March, 1644.

Service to Humanity : Setting up a Hospital: Guru Har Rai devoted himself

to serve the poor and the needy; and tending the sick. He set up a hospital, where patients from far-flung areas and all walks of life would get treated. It is worth mentioning here that Prince Dara Shikoh, the son of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, fell ill and could not be cured despite several treatments by many royal physicians. Someone suggested to the Emperor that Guru Har Rai of Sikhs had established a very good hospital at Kiratpur and that he should try the medicine from there. When the main courtier of Shah Jahan approached Guru Har Rai for the blessings to cure a deadly disease of Dara Shikoh, the Guru instructed His physician to give an appropriate medicine so that the prince would be speedily cured. After taking the medicine, the Prince got cured. Prince Dara Shikoh developed a great respect for the Guru and the Emperor sent a letter of thanks to the Guru, showing great reverence.

Divine Sport of the Guru - 'Hunting' Wild Animals: While on 'hunting' trips, Guru Har Rai would chase wild animals, but never kill them. Instead, he would trap weak and sick animals, nurse them back to health, and then release them into the forest.

Guru's Army : Guru Har Rai maintained a cavalry force of 2200 strong horsemen, who were brave enough to combat any war. But the Guru did not fight any war against anybody. When Dara Shikoh was trying to escape the chasing army of his brother Aurangzeb, he sought the Guru's protection at Goindwal. The Guru placed his troops on the way of the advancing Mughal army, and prevented them from crossing the river Beas. Meanwhile, Dara Shikoh made good his escape to Lahore. When some Muslim clerics (Maulanas) complained about this action to Aurangzeb, the latter summoned Guru Har Rai to Delhi. The Guru refused to go, and instead sent his elder son Ram Rai to represent Him at the Mughal Court. Ram Rai worked miracles there and left them dazzled. Then, the clerics and the Islamic scholars questioned Ram Rai about a verse in the Granth Sahib, which they felt offended Muslims. It runs thus:

ਮਿਟੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਕੀ ਪੇੜੈ ਪਈ ਕੁਮ੍ਹਿਆਰ ॥

ਘੜਿ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਇਟਾ ਕੀਆ ਜਲਦੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥

Mittee Musalmaan kee p-ai-rh-ei pae kumhiaar.

Gharh(i) bhaand-ai ittaa keea jaldee kar-ai pukaar. (466)

(The body of a Muslim becomes soil after it decays and merges with the earth. The subtle body wanders in the cosmos. When the soil of the decayed body is used for preparing pots and bricks, the subtle body in the cosmos wails that its physical counterpart is now being burnt for preparing pots and bricks.)

In order to please Aurangzeb, Ram Rai replied that the text had been corrupted

by ignorant persons, and His Majesty's religion, as well as his has been defamed. What Guru Nanak Dev actually says is: Mitti beimaan kee, i.e., the ash of the dishonest persons (not of the Muslims) falls into the potter's clod. The faces of the dishonest person shall be blackened in both worlds. The Emperor and all the courtiers were pleased with the reply. When news of the moral weakness of twisting the hymn of Guru Nanak Dev by Ram Rai reached Guru Har Rai, He disowned his son and ordered him not to show Him his face, as he no more remained his son, for he had altered a hymn of Guru Nanak Dev.

Guru Har Rai sheds his mortal frame : On 7 July, 1661, Guru Har Rai anointed His younger son Harkrishan to succeed him as the eighth Guru. During the succession ceremony, He made an offering of five paise and a coconut before him and circumambulated five times and bowed before Him according to the old tradition established by Guru Nanak Dev. Bhai Bhana, son of Baba Buddha applied the Tilak on the forehead of Guru Harkrishan.

Sometime later, Guru Har Rai shed His mortal frame.

Guru Harkrishan

Guru Harkrishan, the son of Guru Har Rai and Mata Krishan Kaur was born on 7 July, 1656 in Kiratpur (district Ropar) in Punjab. He was the great-grandson of Guru Hargobind.

Guruship : He succeeded to the Guruship on 7 July 1661 at the tender age of five years and three months, becoming the eighth Nanak. For the first time in the history of mankind, a child of such a tender age had become a Divine Master to spread the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev amongst the masses, so that they should tread the spiritual Path to attain the Divine Bliss. This Divine and momentous happening showed to the world that Divine Wisdom (Braham Gyan) has no correlation to a person's age, or his physical stature. It is just a matter of Divine grace bestowed upon those, who are completely attuned with the Divine within.

Ram Rai's hostility : When Ram Rai learnt of his younger brother's succession to the spiritual seat of Guru Nanak Dev, he filed a petition in the court of Emperor Aurangzeb, laying claim to the Guruship, being the elder son. He alleged that his younger brother had fraudulently seized the Guruship from his father. When Aurangzeb heard his case, he thought of a clever plan. He asked Raja Jai Singh, who was a follower of Guru Nanak Dev, to invite the child Guru Harkrishan to Delhi. Meanwhile, the Sikhs of Delhi had grown weary of Ram Rai's scheming tactics, and longed to have Guru Harkrishan in their midst. Bowing to the wishes of both,

the Sikh congregation (Sangat) of Delhi and of Raja Jai Singh, Guru Harkrishan agreed to visit the city of Delhi.

The Guru Leaves for Delhi : Earlier, Guru Har Rai had resolved that he would avoid all contact with the cruel Emperor Aurangzeb, because he had even imprisoned his own father and had inflicted atrocities on his own brothers to usurp the throne. While passing on the Guruship to his younger son, Guru Har Rai had advised Guru Harkrishan to remain aloof and neutral. Responding to the fervent pleas of Raja Jai Singh, and the Sikhs of Delhi, He set out for Delhi. On the way, Guru Harkrishan stopped at village Panjokhara near Ambala in Haryana.

Here, he met an arrogant local Brahmin, Lal Chand, who claimed to be a Scholar of the Bhagavad Gita. He said to the Guru mockingly, "You call yourself Harkrishan, implying that You are even greater than Sri Krishna, the author of the Bhagavad Gita. If You can simply interpret one stanza of the holy Scripture for me, I shall acknowledge you as my Guru." Guru Harkrishan replied, "I am just a humble servant of the Divine Lord, but my Divine Father has named me Harkrishan. Instead of asking me to translate the Bhagavad Gita, you can bring anyone you like from the village and he will interpret the Scripture as per the blessing of Guru Nanak Dev." The Pandit went to the village and brought the water carrier, Chhajju, who was both deaf and dumb. Guru Harkrishan touched his forehead with His cane and asked him to recite the Gita and explain the meaning of the sacred verses as desired by the Hindu priest. Within no time and to the utter surprise of the pseudo-knowledgable priest, the hitherto dumb and deaf Chhajju began to deliver an outstanding interpretation of the Gita. When the priest saw this miracle, he was shaken up and shed his entire ego and became humble. He fell at the feet of the child Guru Harkrishan, and begged forgiveness, and became His disciple to get the Divine Wisdom.

The Mansion of Raja Jai Singh : After stopping over at several places on the way, and teaching his gospel of Truth, Guru Harkrishan reached Delhi and Raja Jai Singh bowed before Him and took Him to his palace, where now stands Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Aurangzeb made several attempts to meet Him, but was unsuccessful. In Islam, one who performs miracles is believed to be spiritually advanced and close to the God (Allah). The Emperor, therefore, persuaded Raja Jai Singh to ask Guru Harkrishan to perform some miracles. The Raja thought of a plan. He asked his queen to disguise herself as a maid and sit in the centre of a group of several other maids in a hall. He then requested Guru Harkrishan to come and sit in the lap of his wife (queen), who would be pleased to offer Him her affections and regards, and seek the blessings. When the Guru went into the hall, he found no queen but

only maid servants there. So he started from one end and placed his wand on the head of each maid and moved on saying, "This is not the queen, this is not the queen," till he reached the queen herself, who was in the garb of a maid, and sat in her lap saying, "She is the queen." When Raja Jai Singh recounted this incident to Aurangzeb, he dismissed Ram Rai's petition, saying that Guru Harkrishan was an incarnation of the Allah and thus, He was entitled to be the eighth Nanak. One of Aurangzeb's sons developed great reverence and divine longing to have a glimpse of the Guru. He visited the Guru and got spiritual blessings.

Relief to the Suffering Humanity : When Guru Harkrishan visited Delhi, a terrible epidemic of small-pox was raging throughout the city. The Sikh devotees beseeched the Guru to shower His blessings upon them and mitigate their sufferings. The ever-merciful Guru took upon Himself the entire sufferings of the people and became very ill. In this way, He took disease of all onto His own body, and thus the entire population, not only of Delhi, but also of the surrounding areas became healthy. Perceiving that the time had come to shed His physical frame, He summoned the devotees, who prayed before Him, "O Holy Guru! After You shed this mortal frame, who would be our Guru to lead us on the Path of Divine Truth, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev?" Hearing this, the Guru took five paise and a coconut in his hand and pointing in the direction of the village Bakala, near Amritsar, spun his other arm thrice and expounded the words, 'Baba Bakale.' It meant that the heir to the seat of Guru Nanak Dev was meditating at village Bakala in Amritsar district.

Shedding the mortal frame: Shortly after this divine gesture of taking all the miseries of mankind upon his body, Guru Harkrishan shed His mortal frame on 30 March, 1664.

Guru Tegh Bahadur

Birth : Guru Tegh Bahadar was born on 1 April, 1621 to Guru Hargobind and Mata Nanaki at Guru ke Mehal in Amritsar. He was the fifth and youngest son of the Guru.

Marriage : Guru Tegh Bahadur was married to Gujri, daughter of Lal Chand Khatri. Their only son was named Gobind Rai. After his father Guru Hargobind shed his mortal frame, Tegh Bahadar, along with his wife and mother, left Amritsar and settled in village Bakala.

Guruship : Before shedding the mortal frame, Guru Harkrishan pointed out that the ninth Guru was residing at Baba Bakala in Amritsar district of Punjab. Hearing this, Dhir Mal and several other members of the Sodhi clan, set up 22 camps there, vying with each other to claim the Guruship. However, Guru Tegh

Bahadar was meditating in an underground cell at a secluded place, so that nobody could disturb him in meditation. He spent all his time in deep meditation and was merged with the Divine. After Guru Harkrishan shed His physical form, Sikhs were anxious to know the next successor of Nanak, who could lead them on the Path of Divine Truth.

It so happened that a merchant, Makhan Shah Lubhana, was on a voyage on the high seas, when his full-load ship, was caught in silt of the sea and due to a violent storm, could sink anytime.

Panic-stricken and horrified, he could not find any way out and was very distressed. The divine idea crossed his mind that there was no other power to save his ship except Guru Nanak Dev. Thus, he immediately prayed to the Guru and committed to offer 500 gold coins along with other offerings for the divine cause, if his ship reached the shore safely. He prayed, "O my Divine Master Guru Nanak Dev, there is no other Divine Power in the Universe to save me except your Divine Blessings." His earnest prayer was answered by the Guru, Who brought his ship to the destined shore safely.

After selling his goods, Makhan Shah Lubana came to Punjab to make his offerings to the Ninth Divine Master, the incarnation of Nanak. When he reached Baba Bakala, he found that 22 persons had claimed the seats of Guru Nanak Dev, and each one was claiming to be the Ninth incarnate. Makhan Shah Lubana was puzzled and wondered how to find the True Divine Master. Being an intelligent merchant, he thought of an idea to identify the true Guru. He started offering two gold coins before every pseudo-Guru, who showered his blessings upon him, but nobody bothered to ask him about his whereabouts. His urge to find the true Guru remained unfulfilled, and thus he became desperate. In that bewildered condition, he requested an old noble person, "Is there any other Guru, who can satisfy my inner urge?" He replied, "There is a descendent of Guru Hargobind, who is His fifth son. He lives in an underground cell and does not meet anybody." Makhan Shah became curious and rushed towards the cell for a glimpse of the holy Tegh Bahadur. However, in order to test whether he was the real Guru, the merchant offered two gold coins and bowed in reverence. Guru Tegh Bahadur opened his eyes and on seeing Makhan Shah Lubana, smiled and remarked: "O beloved Sikh! After promising 500 coins, you are offering only two, just to test the Guru. This is not in the fitness of the Divine faith." The divine words of the ninth Master shook the wisdom of Makhan Shah, who perceived the divine blessings and was so excited that he ran to top of the house and started proclaiming at the top of his voice, that he had found the true Guru. He expounded in a high pitch, "I have found the true

Guru. O bewildered brothers and sisters! Don't be disturbed in search of the true Guru. Come to me and I will show you the true Guru." He requested Guru Tegh Bahadur to come out of the cell to show a divine glimpse to the bewildered Sikhs.

At that juncture, a person sent by the pseudo-Guru, Dhir Mal, fired upon Guru Tegh Bahadur, but the bullet went past Him. Makhan Shah Lubana and his followers managed the disturbed situation, and established peace for the devotees to have glimpse of the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Due to the presence of a large gathering of devotees, the pseudo-Gurus ran away and Dhir Mal also became quiet and hesitated to utter a word against Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Baba Gurditta, the grandson of Baba Buddha, performed the ceremonies of Guruship upon revered Tegh Bahadur on that occasion.

The Message of Truth : In October 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur founded the town of Anandpur in the Shivalik foothills after buying land in Makhawal village from Raja Deep Chand, ruler of the state of Kehloor. Thereafter, the Guru, accompanied by his wife and mother, left on a tour of East India to spread the Divine Message for the welfare of humanity. Leaving Anandpur, he passed through Ghanauli, Ropar, Dadu Majra, Nau Lakha and other villages and reached Moolowal, where He stayed for five days. Moving on, he visited Farwahi, Handhaya, Bhamdehar, Khiwa, Bhikhi etc. staying overnight wherever He felt the need. Continuing His journey, He passed through Daleu, Alisher, Khiala, Morh Maisar Khana and reached the town of Sabo ki Talwandi, now known as Damdama Sahib, where He camped for several days.

Resuming his journey and travelling through a host of villages, he reached Dhamdhan. During the whole of this tour, He preached the Divine Message of Guru Nanak Dev for the spiritual uplift of mankind. Here, He met and blessed Bhai Ramdev, the water-carrier, who used to serve the congregation with great devotion. The Guru conferred on him the title of 'Bhai Meehan' (God of rain) and sent him eastwards to preach the spiritual way of life to mankind to create the Universal Brotherhood and Divine Peace in the world. While travelling towards East India, He passed through Kaithal and Thanesar and arrived in Kurukshetra. Then passing through Bani Bedar, He reached Karha Manakpur, where He halted for five days.

A local Yogi, Raj Maluk Das, became His ardent devotee on hearing His Divine Message to attain self-realisation in this very life.

Travelling further on, Guru Tegh Bahadur passed through Uttar Pradesh, visiting Mathura, Agra, Etawah, and Kanpur and arrived at Prayag in Allahabad, where He stayed at Ayepur Mohalla. A Gurdwara, Pakki Sangat, commemorates His visit there. From there, He passed through Mirzapur and reached Kashi

(Banaras), where He stayed at Resham da Mohalla. Next, He went to Sasaram and then further on to Patna, where He stayed in the house of Bhai Jaita, the confectioner (Halwai). Leaving His family there, He continued His onward journey to Munger, Bhagalpur, Raj Mehal, Malda, Murshidabad, Dhaka and finally reached Assam.

Helping Raja Ram Singh : In December 1667, Emperor Aurangzeb nurtured the idea to eliminate Raja Ram Singh, the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, so that he should not become powerful and might pose a threat to his kingdom. He hatched a plan to send the Raja to conquer Assam, where witchcraft and black magic was widely practised in those times, and whoever attempted to conquer that province, paid with his life. Raja Ram Singh, therefore, fearing the fate that awaited him, went under great stress. However, his mother was a great devotee of Guru Nanak Dev and told him to have full faith in the Guru, who would save him under all circumstances. She further told him that Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth incarnation of Nanak, was in Dhaka for preaching spirituality to the masses to follow the Divine path. Hearing these holy words from his mother, his inner self was stirred and he gained spiritual strength.

Raja Ram Singh followed the orders of Aurangzeb and went to conquer Assam with a heavy force comprising Muslims and Hindu soldiers. He went straight to Dhaka to seek the blessings of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He humbly submitted, "O Divine Master! You are the ninth incarnation of Guru Nanak Dev and our family is devoted to the Guru, who protects us under all circumstances whenever we pray for His Holiness's blessing." He further submitted, "O Divine Lord! I have been ordered by Aurangzeb to conquer the territory of Assam, which is protected by the witchcraft practitioners and magicians, who kill anyone attempting to conquer their territory. I have been ordered by Aurangzeb to fight these demons and conquer their territory. If I invade their territory, I would be killed by their witchcrafts and if I return without conquering, I would be punished to death by the Emperor. Now I have taken Your refuge - the ninth Guru Nanak, with the hope that You would save me. I humbly request you to kindly accompany me for my protection." Perceiving it to be the message of the Divine, Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied Raja Ram Singh to Assam. They established a camp at Dhubri to fight witchcraft in Assam. The whole Army of Raja Ram Singh was stationed on the banks of the river Brahmaputra. Guru Tegh Bahadur told the Raja's Generals to vacate the banks of the river and camp at some higher place because the witchcraft practitioners and the magicians could create heavy flood in the river which would sway away the army. The army, which had full faith in the Guru, vacated the banks and camped at a higher place. Some of the Muslim soldiers of the army tauntingly remarked that the Guru was not the

Allah, who had predicted so, because the river was flowing with little water. Therefore, they remained camped on the banks of the river. However, the prediction of the Guru came true as there was a heavy flood during the night, and it washed away all those, who had stayed on the river banks ignoring the Guru's advice.

This incident further strengthened the belief of not only Raja Ram Singh, but also of the entire army, which remained safe in the higher region. When witchcrafts failed to kill Raja Ram Singh and his soldiers, they threw a large boulder, but it got safely embedded on empty land. This miracle made the witchcraft practitioners more furious. They quietly motivated a woman witchcraft practitioner to kill the Guru, who at that time was meditating at a place called Dhubri, located on the bank of the river Brahmaputra. The woman pulled out a huge Banyan tree and took it to the place where the Guru was meditating, with the nefarious design to kill Him. The Banyan tree fell on a very small hillock just near the Guru's resort. She was aghast at this miracle. The witch was so overwhelmed at the sight of the Guru that she started crying and prayed for her safety. The Guru sent his followers to bring her safely to his place. When she perceived the divine power of Guru Tegh Bahadur, she fell at His feet and begged, "O my Divine Lord! Forgive my past sins and lead me on to the Divine Path for getting self-realisation." The Divine Master exhorted her to shed her wicked ways and tread the Divine Path by reciting the Divine Name. When all the magicians failed to conquer the army of Raja Ram Singh, the King of Assam came to the Guru to seek His blessings and compromised with Raja Ram Singh peacefully. He submitted his entire territory under the command of Raja Ram Singh and requested him that he may be allowed to manage everything under his command. Thus, a truce was signed and Raja Ram Singh became victorious. His devotion to Guru Nanak Dev was further strengthened, and with the blessings of the Guru, he commanded great respect and honour in the court of Aurangzeb.

The King of Assam, who was the Chief of the witchcraft practitioners of that area, did not have any son. He fell at the feet of the Guru and submitted with utmost humility, "O Divine Lord! Being the incarnation of the Almighty, bless me with a son." Guru Tegh Bahadur, perceiving his humility and devotion, told him that his request had been accepted by the Divine and he would be blessed with a son in due course of time. He further asked him how he would recognise that the son was born with the Guru's blessings, because he had already sought blessings from many miraculous persons. The Guru, having full knowledge of the past and the future, told him that there would be a divine mark on his forehead in the form of Ek Onkar. With the passage of time, a son was born with that mark on his forehead. When his father died, he became the ruler of Assam. He used to see the mark on his

forehead daily in the mirror. He curiously enquired about this mark from his mother, who narrated the whole story of the blessings of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Today at Dhubri stands a splendid Sikh Temple (Gurdwara), where Guru Tegh Bahadur had meditated. Camping at Dhubri, a message came from Patna that Guru Tegh Bahadur had been blessed with a divine son. On hearing the news of the birth of his son, Guru Tegh Bahadur proceeded straightway to Patna. After seeing the face of the newly born son, Guru Tegh Bahadur perceived that he was the incarnation of the Divine who had come in this world to perform divinely duties to save mankind from the fire of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, and put mankind on the Divine Path. The Guru named his Divine son as Gobind Rai.

Return to Anandpur : After staying for some time at Patna, the Guru decided to return to Anandpur in Punjab. Travelling through Buxar, Banaras, Ayodhya and other towns, He reached Anandpur after about three months. A little later, He called his family from Patna to Anandpur.

Kashmiri Brahmins' apathy : Under Aurangzeb's orders, Kashmiri Brahmins were being forcibly converted to Islam. They travelled to their sacred temple Amarnath for prayers. They perceived the divine instruction to go to Anandpur, where Guru Tegh Bahadur was occupying the divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev. Being the Divine Guru, He would save the Hindu Dharma. Flocks of Kashmiri Brahmins, led by Pandit Kirpa Ram, rushed to Anandpur and pleaded their case before the Guru: "O Divine Master! Help us save our Hindu Dharma, so that we may keep our frontal mark (Tilak) and sacred thread (Janeu) intact. A reign of terror has been let loose upon us by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to shed our articles of faith (Tilak and Janeu) and embrace Islam." Hearing their petition, the Guru was moved and attuned Himself with the Divine within. The atmosphere became very holy, serene and pious. The nine-year-old Gobind Rai asked his father, "What do these holy men want? How can these terrified people be saved from the tyranny of Aurangzeb?" The Guru told his son that this would be possible only if a Divine person sacrificed his life to protect their Dharma. Gobind Rai submitted with folded hands "O Divine father! Who is greater than You in the Divine Realm? It is You, who could save their Dharma by sacrificing Your life." Hearing the divine words from His young son, the Guru pacified and assured the Kashmiri Pandits that their Dharma would be saved by making a great sacrifice. He told them that they should convey it to Aurangzeb that if he could succeed in converting Guru Tegh Bahadur to Islam, all Brahmins would then embrace Islam automatically.

Arrival in Delhi : For the divine cause of saving the Hindu Dharma, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur and reached Agra after visiting Kiratpur, Faizabad,

Samana, Kaithal, Lakhan Majra, Rohtak and a few other towns. He was accompanied by five of his most devoted followers - Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Dayala, Bhai Udai and Bhai Jaita. Wherever He went, a large number of devotees welcomed Him and listened to His divine preaching for perceiving spiritual bliss. On the way to Agra, Guru Tegh Bahadur asked Bhai Jaita (Rangretta - belonging to scheduled caste) and Bhai Udai to go to Delhi and to send information to Anandpur as well as to Him after assessing the situation. At Agra, the Guru performed the Divine play for getting himself arrested by the forces of Aurengzeb. He was taken to the court of Aurangzeb, who expressed his surprise that the Guru neither wore a frontal mark (Tilak) nor a sacred thread (Janeu), yet He was prepared to lay down His life to protect the religion of the Hindus. The Emperor thus asked the Guru: "Why are You sacrificing Your life for those, who are, in fact, not Your Sikhs, but belong to the Hindu religion?" They wear Janeu and Tilak according to their religious rituals. The Guru replied that His concern was to protect the religion of the innocent Hindus, who were powerless and weak against the tyranny of the Emperor. Guru Nanak Dev was the refuge of those, who had no shelter. He further added that had there has been oppression and persecution against the Muslims, and had they sought protection from Guru Nanak Dev, the merciful, He would have gladly sacrificed His life to save their religion (Islam) also. Such was the divine tradition of Guru Nanak Dev. The hero of martyrs, Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਜੋ ਸਰਣਿ ਆਵੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਕੰਠਿ ਲਾਵੈ ਇਹੁ ਬਿਰਦੁ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਸੰਦਾ ॥

Jo saranh(i) aav-ei tiss(u) kanthh(i) laav-ei lh(u) birad(u) suaamee sandaa. (544)

(Whosoever comes to the sanctuary of the Divine person, He protects Him because of His Divine nature.)

The Crown of Martyrdom: Guru Tegh Bahadur and his companions refused to embrace Islam. So the Emperor's officers ordered the execution of Bhai Mati Das by being sawn in half from head to loins. Bhai Sati Das, his younger brother was wrapped in a bale of cotton fibre and burnt alive and Bhai Dayala was martyred by boiling his body in water. On 11 November, 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded on the direction of the rulers. The Guru gave His life and saved the Hindu Dharma. That is why even today, He is remembered as Hind di Chadar - the saviour of the divine faith of the whole mankind. At the time of martyrdom, a violent storm erupted and the entire crowd had their eyes filled with dust and they ran away. In the chaos that followed, Lakhi Shah Vanjara, a faithful devotee of the Guru got a chance to quickly pick the holy headless body of the Guru and respectfully placed it on his bullock-cart lined with straw, and sped away to his village Raisina (now in New Delhi). To avoid suspicion, he cremated the holy body of the Guru by placing it

on a pyre inside his thatched hut and setting it on fire. He later told people that his thatched hut had been burnt to ashes. On this site, now stands a great memorial in the form of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj.

Another Sikh Bhai Jaita Ranghreta wrapped the severed holy head of the Guru in a piece of cloth and set out for Anandpur, where he presented it to his son Gobind Rai. In a ceremony marked by reverence and dignity, the severed head was cremated at the spot where stands Gurdwara Sis Ganjat, Anandpur. Before He left for Delhi, Guru Tegh Bahadar had given instructions to his Sikhs that after Him, His son Gobind Rai should be ascended to the Divine seat of Guru Nanak Dev.

Guru Gobind Singh

Guru Gobind Singh was born to Guru Tegh Bahadar and Mata Gujari at Patna in Bihar on 25 December, 1666.

Pir Bhikhan Shah : A Muslim saint, named Pir Bhikhan Shah lived in the village Thaska in Karnal. At the time of the birth of Gobind Rai in Patna, the Pir broke the tradition and instead of facing Mecca, he faced eastward towards Patna while offering prayers (Namaz). When his disciples objected to that, the Pir said that the divine light of God (Allah) had descended at Patna. Then the Pir, along with a few of his followers set out for Patna to behold the holy child and obtain his blessings. The Pir was going to test whether the divine child would shower his divine blessings on Hindus or Muslims. For this test, he placed two earthen cups before the child. One cup filled with water represented the Hindus while the other filled with milk represented the Muslims. Lo behold! The holy child placed his hands on both the cups. Thus implying that under the Divine Will, He would shower his divine blessings on both the faiths - Hindus and Muslims - equally.

Divine feats of childhood : As he grew up in Patna, the Divine child, Gobind Rai, performed many wondrous deeds, often during play. While shooting arrows, he would break the earthen water-pitchers, which the poor local women carried on their heads. Knowing that they would complain to his mother, who would then be motivated to replace their broken earthen pitchers with brass ones. Exactly this happened when the poor local women complained to his mother Gujri, she gave them the brass pitchers and pacified them that her son had a spiritual outlook, and wanted to help them to get their clay pitchers replaced with the brass ones. Once, a devotee offered Mata Ganga a pair of gold bracelets for her divine son. The divine mother put those bracelets on the hands of her divine son. As was usual, the loveable Gobind Rai, along with his playmates went to play on the banks of the river Ganga and playfully threw one of the bracelets into the river. When his maternal uncle Kirpal Das asked him where he

had lost his golden bracelet, Gobind Rai took him to the riverside, removed the other golden bracelet, flung it into the river at the same place and pointing towards that said, "At that spot." His Uncle searched hard but was unable to find the bracelets. Through this wondrous act, the adorable Divine child made it clear to the humanity that wearing costly ornaments of gold, silver, diamond etc. are negatively correlated with perceiving the Divine Truth. Guru Nanak Dev also clarifies:

ਕੂੜ ਸੁਇਨਾ ਕੂੜ ਰੁਪਾ ਕੂੜ ਪੈਨਣਗਰੁ ॥

Koorh(u) su-e-naa koorh(u) roopaa koorh(u) p-ei-nanh-haar(u). (468)

(False is gold and false is silver; false are those, who wear it.)

Martial Arts : At Patna, the young Divine boy used to play martial arts along with his companions. This indicated that he would raise an army to stop the cruelty being inflicted on the poor.

Arrival in Anandpur : Guru Tegh Bahadur called his family from Patna. After camping at several places along the way, the child Gobind Rai reached Lakhnor. Here the Pir, Arif-ud-Din came to offer his respect to the Divine child believing him to be the 'light of the Divine Lord.' From here, the child Gobind Rai, along with his mother and other family members, eventually reached Anandpur.

Education and training : Guru Tegh Bahadur made special arrangements for the education and training of his young son. Under the guidance of scholar Sahib Chand, he became skilled, not only to recite the Gurbani, but also learnt all the languages spoken in India and neighbouring countries like Persian, Arabic, Urdu, Hindi and Sanskrit etc. As he grew up, he also received excellent training in the use of arms, horsemanship and other martial arts.

Guruship : According to the instructions of his martyred Father, Gobind Rai was bestowed with the Guruship by the holy congregation. Baba Ram Kanwar, a direct descendant of Baba Buddha, put the frontal mark (Tilak) on his forehead, and a plume(Kalgi) on his turban. Thus the nine-year-old Gobind Rai was annointed as the tenth Guru Nanak Dev.

Marriage and Children : Some people blessed with divine vision have revealed that Guru Gobind Rai was married to Mata Jeeto, daughter of Harijas Khatri of Lahore. The wedding took place on 20 June, 1677, at Guru ka Lahore, about 10 miles from Anandpur. The Guru's eldest son Ajit Singh was born at Paonta Sahib on 7 January, 1687 and his second son Jujhar Singh was born at Anandpur on 3 April, 1690. By constant meditation on the Divine Name, Mata Jeeto had become spiritually enlightened. One day, while in meditation, she had a vision of the martyrdom of her sons, where both her sons, after fighting gallantly, had fallen in the battlefield at Chamkaur Sahib. Also, Guru Gobind Singh had left the fierce

battle and was walking bare-foot in the forests of Machhiwara. As the vision continued, He lay down on the bare ground with a rusty earthen pot (Tind) for a pillow, and became absorbed in blissful remembrance of the Akal Purakh, His Beloved. The terrible scenes of battle shook her, and she narrated the scenes to her Divine husband, desperate to know if her vision would come true. When the Guru confirmed her vision, she said that she would not be able to bear the agony of what was sure to befall her. Hearing this, the Guru suggested that she should give up her life. Bowing before the Divine Will, Mata Jeeto shed her mortal frame on the Vaisakhi of 1693.

A year after the demise of Mata Jeeto, the young Guru bowed to the persistent pleading of His mother Mata Gujri and the Sikh congregation (Sangat), to enter into holy wedlock with Mata Sundari, daughter of Ramsaran Khatri of Lahore on the Vaisakhi of 1694. The Sikh history would not have been complete had Guru Gobind not remarried. Mata Sundri also bore Guru Gobind Singh two sons - Sahibzada Zorawar Singh born on 13 November, 1696, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh on 13 February, 1699 at Anandpur.

The third, so-called, divine wife of Guru Gobind Singh was Mata Sahib Devan, who was the daughter of Ram Basi Khatri. She was born at Ruhtas in Jhelum district, now in Pakistan. Even from early childhood, she would remain ever absorbed in meditation on the Divine Name and worship of the Supreme Being. When she reached marriageable age, her parents started looking for a suitable match for her. But, she dissuaded them from doing so, saying that she had vowed since childhood to make an offering of her mind, body and all her possessions to Guru Nanak Dev, and would spend all her life serving the Guru, keeping His lotus feet (Divine advice) in her heart. Seeing her resolve, her parents, accompanied by some Sikh devotees took her to Anandpur. When Guru Gobind Singh was apprised of Mata Sahib Devan's resolve, He said that under the Divine Will, or as a wordly custom, He could not marry any other woman. However, if she was completely devoted to the lotus feet of Guru Nanak Dev, and had not undergone the worldly marriage, she should dedicate her mind, body and wealth to Guru Nanak Dev. She may then enter upon a spiritual marriage with Him and devote her life to meditation and serving mankind, without any attachment or desire while observing and practicing complete celibacy. Hearing this, the parents of Mata Sahib Devan and the Sangat of Ruhtas decided to dedicate her at the holy feet of Guru Gobind Singh. Even though Mata Sahib Devan was not married to the Guru in the worldly sense, but her spiritual union with Him was so complete that He honoured her with the title of Jagat Mata (Mother of the Khalsa Panth) and placed the entire Khalsa brotherhood in her lap.

On the Vaisakhi of 1699, while preparing the bowl of divine Nectar (Amrit), the Guru gave Mata Sahib Devan the privilege of pouring the sugar-puffs into the holy water. As such, she was not the worldly wife, married to the Guru as per the worldly marriage ceremony. After getting initiated into Khalsa with Amrit, she was known as Mata Sahib Kaur. She served the Guru, and rendered service to the holy congregation, as a spiritual disciple of the tenth Master.

Battles by the Guru : Guru Gobind Singh took up arms in his crusade (Dharam Yudh) against tyranny unleashed on the poor belonging to the religions other than of the ruling class. In all, He fought fourteen major and minor battles and won all these, but refrained from seizing even a square inch of enemy territory for establishing His Empire. If we analyse vividly, the Guru's victories in the battles fought against the Mughal Empire, Guru Gobind Singh could have established a vast empire, at least in North India, then called Hindustan, which was spread across Ceylon to Afghanistan. According to his Divine outlook, the Guru was never the aggressor in any of these battles, but always defended to protect the poor and downtrodden. Thus, abiding by the Divine Will, He fought the holy wars (Dharam Yudhas) only to put an end to the brutal oppression of the downtrodden by the selfish and cruel rulers.

Visit to Nahan : Baba Ram Rai, the elder son of Guru Har Rai impressed Aurangzeb with his miraculous powers and by misinterpreting the hymn of Guru Nanak Dev, because of which His father Guru Har Rai had renounced him. On the other hand, Aurangzeb gifted him a large estate near Dehradun in the territory of the Raja Fateh Chand. This ruler also became his disciple because of his miraculous powers. He captured the territory of Nahan state also. Its ruler Raja Medni Prakash was afraid of the miraculous powers of Baba Ram Rai, who was considered the Guru of Raja Fateh Chand. When Raja Fateh Chand went on capturing the territory of the ruler of Nahan state, some saintly persons advised ruler Medni Prakash to take Divine refuge under the tenth Master (Guru Gobind Rai), who was much higher in spiritual powers than the Guru of his enemy, Raja Fateh Chand. Raja Medni Prakash went to Anandpur and humbly submitted before Guru Gobind Rai to shower His blessings by visiting the Nahan state. In fact, Guru Gobind Rai had to establish spiritual centres in the territory of the state of Nahan. Such developments forced Raja Medni Prakash to become a staunch disciple of Guru Gobind Rai and thus invited Him to Nahan. As soon as Guru Gobind Rai set His divine foot in Nahan state, Baba Ram Rai asked Raja Fateh Chand to vacate the seized territory of Raja Medni Parkash because he knew that his miracles would not work against tenth Nanak - Guru Gobind Rai. Ram Rai further added that his conscience too had become

the disciple of Guru Gobind Rai and that Fateh Chand should also seek the blessings of the Guru by compromising with Raja Medni Prakash. Raja Fateh Chand, not only vacated the seized territory of Raja Medni Prakash but also extended his hand of friendship towards him. Due to these Divine happenings, Raja Medni Prakash was deeply impressed by the virtuous powers of Guru Gobind Rai, and the residents of his state also bowed before the tenth Master with reverence.

In the surrounding forests of Nahan, a furious lion used to kill human beings. Therefore, everybody was under terror and out of fear did not venture the forest. Many attempts were made by the ruler of Nahan to kill the lion, but in vain. When Guru Gobind Rai visited the area, the entire population of the city requested Him to save them from the deadly animal. The Guru went into the forest of Nahan and the furious lion, as usual, tried to attack Him. He killed the lion with a single stroke of His sword. People, including the ruler of Nahan, were very happy with the divine feat of the Guru.

In the Nahan state there was a beautiful place surrounded by seven hills, where mineral water gushed out from the springs. Raja Medni Prakash used to drink that water for his good health. Impressed by the serenity of the place, he requested Guru Gobind Rai to visit it. The Guru knew about the sanctity of the place, where many sages, seers and saints had meditated in the previous eons, and Guru Nanak Dev too had blessed the place, while going to the Himalayan region.

Raja Medni Prakash and his courtiers accompanied Guru Gobind Rai on a visit to that place, where a large gathering of the surrounding hilly people assembled to have the divine glimpse of the Guru. When he climbed down from His horse, that place got sanctified by the touch of the Guru's lotus feet. Out of great reverence, people began to call that place 'Baru', which means 'big', i.e., holy persons had blessed the place. Later, it was discovered by Saint Teja Singh that according to the divine instructions of Saint Attar Singh it was chosen for establishing the centre of spirituality and value-based education. Now the place has grown into a big spiritual centre, along with schools and an Eternal University, where value-based education is being imparted to the children from across the globe. With reverence, people call this place Baru Sahib.

The town of Paonta Sahib : From Nahan, Guru Gobind Rai went to the Doon Valley and selected a serene spot on the banks of river Yamuna. As the Guru got down from the horse and placed His foot on that blessed land, it was called by the inhabitants as 'Paonta' (Paon means-feet and ta means-tika, i.e., to set on) which means that the Guru has blessed this land by climbing down from His horse and setting His feet on this place. People call it Paonta Sahib with reverence. On the request of Baba Ram Rai, Guru Gobind Singh also visited Dehra Dun and gave blessings to Raja Fateh Chand, his courtiers and countrymen.

At Paonta Sahib:

1. Guru Gobind Singh used to hold court here, where 52 resident poets used to recite their spiritual verses.
2. From here, Guru Gobind Singh sent five Sikhs to Kashi Banaras to learn Hindi and Sanskrit languages, so that the Wisdom of the hymns could be better understood and spread among those, who didn't know the Punjabi language. These Sikhs were told by the authorities of Banaras Kashi that they would have to adopt its dress code comprising of saffron cloak and Dhoti instead of the dress they were wearing. They came back to the Guru and narrated the terms of adopting the saffron uniform to become eligible for learning at Banaras Kashi. The all-Knowing Guru Gobind Rai told them that they should learn their languages, even if they were to adopt their dress code. On their return after learning Sanskrit and Hindi language from Banaras Kashi, these pioneers were called Nirmalas (pure), who started a tradition of scholarly studies of the sacred texts among the Sikhs and spread the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev throughout India in their native languages - Sanskrit and Hindi.
3. In 1687, Guru Gobind Rai fought the battle of Bhangani near Paonta Sahib. An alliance of Raja Bhim Chand and other hill chieftains launched an attack on the Guru's forces near the village Bhangani, located between river Yamuna and its tributary, Giri. The battle lasted three days, and resulted in the victory for Guru Gobind Rai, after the enemy panicked and fled the battlefield.

It was here that the Muslim saint Peer Budhu Shah of Sadhaura became a devout follower of Guru Gobind Rai. It was on his recommendation that the Guru inducted into His army five hundred Muslim soldiers (Pathans), who were jobless, and from Afghanistan Muslim territory. The Pathans betrayed the Guru and joined the enemy ranks. Then the Pir, in order to redeem himself, brought along his four sons and a host of his followers and fought valiantly against the enemy. Two of his sons and many of his followers fell in the battle. To celebrate victory at Paonta Sahib, the Guru gave away shield-full of gold coins to his loyal soldiers.

When Pir Budhu Shah came for the blessings of the tenth Master, the latter was combing His hair. Heartened at the sacrifice of the Pir, the Guru said, "O Divine Pir! Guru Nanak Dev has showered Divine blessings upon you. Ask for, whatever you desire, be it the reign of both worldly and spiritual spheres." With folded hands, the Pir said, "If You are so pleased, bless me with Your wooden comb (Kanga) with the loose hair enmeshed in it. This will be the divine bounty for me and the Divine Blessings for both - this world and the spiritual Realm."

Describing this episode in one of his verses, Bhai Nand Lal says:

ਦੀਨ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਦਰ ਕਮੰਦੇ ਆਂ ਪਰੀ ਰੁਖਸਾਰਿ ਮਾ । ਹਰ ਦੋ ਆਲਮ ਕੀਮਤੇ ਯਕ ਤਾਰਿ ਮੂਏ ਯਾਰਿ ਮਾ ।

Deen duneeaa darr kamand-ai aan paree rukhsaar(i) maa.

Har do aalam keemat-ai Yakk taar(i) moo-e yaar(i) maa.

(Bhai Nand Lal)

(The religious and worldly bounties are all with my Divine Master, whose face is radiating with spiritual bliss, and the price of even one strand of hair of my Divine Master is equal to the bounties of this world, as well as the Divine one.)

After receiving the priceless gift of the Guru's holy comb enmeshed with His holy hair, the Pir kissed it and touched it to his forehead. When he returned home, he handed over this divine gift to his wife Naseeran and told her how her two sons had sacrificed their lives in the holy battlefield for the Guru. From the worldly point of view, that was shocking news, but she didn't care for that rather, she prayed to the Almighty that He had blessed her sons to embrace martyrdom for the Divine cause.

Receiving the divine gift from Guru Gobind Rai, she kissed the Divine bounty with great reverence, and kept it in a safe place.

After the splendid victory, the Guru left Paonta Sahib for Anandpur.

Bhai Nand Lal : In 1693, Bhai Nand Lal, a Master of Persian poetry, sought refuge at the lotus feet of the Tenth Guru, and soon became one of His most devoted followers.

Punishing the corrupt preachers : Guru Amardas had set up 22 spiritual centres (Manjis) for propagating the divine faith as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev. His successors, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev, replaced the Manjis with a regular order of the missionaries (Masands), who were respectable, devout Sikhs. Besides preaching the Divine mission of Guru Nanak Dev, they were given the additional responsibility of collecting offerings for the Divine cause. In the early years, the Masands did wonderful work of spreading far and wide the Divine message of Guru Nanak Dev. However, with the passage of time, many of them became corrupt and started misappropriating the offerings meant for the Guru's treasury. During the time of Guru Gobind Rai, this evil had become widespread and deep-rooted. This reiterates that greediness is negatively correlated with spirituality. The Guru was, therefore, left with no choice, but to take decisive action. He gave exemplary punishment to the wrong-doers and eventually abolished the order of the pseudo-missionaries (Masands).

Amrit Chhakna - Holding the ceremony of Initiation with Divine Nectar (Amrit) : On Vaisakhi day, i.e., middle of April (the first day of the new year of the Sikhs) in 1699 at Anandpur, the Guru founded the 'Khalsa Panth' by

blessing the Sikhs with divine nectar (Amrit). To start with, in a huge congregation of more than 35,000 people, the Guru came out from the tent with a naked sword in his hand, and roared like a lion that He required the head of a Sikh to strengthen the foundation of the Sikh faith initiated by Guru Nanak Dev. Hearing this, Daya Ram, a resident of Lahore (North India) belonging to a high Khatri (Kshatriya) caste of the Hindus, promptly rushed to the stage to seek the divine blessings. The Guru cut off his head with a stroke of His sword.

Again, Guru Gobind Rai gave a call to the large gathering for another head of a Sikh. On hearing this Divine Voice, a Sikh, Dharam Chand, resident of Delhi province, and belonging to a central Indian Jat family (farmer community), rushed to the stage and offered his head. The Guru took him on to the stage and cut off his head too, in full view of all. Seeing this, some weak-minded Sikhs started slipping out of the congregation, for fear of death. Guru again loudly called for the head of another Sikh. This time Mohkam Chand, a tailor belonging to a lower caste of the Hindus of Dwarka Nagri of Gujarat province (Western India), rushed to the stage and offered his head. The Guru cut off his head also with the Divine Vision.

Guru Gobind Rai again affectionately expounded, "Is there any other Sikh, who wants to offer his head for the Divine cause?" On this Divine call, Himmat Rai, a water carrier belonging to lower caste of Hindus of Jagannath Puri of Odisha province (East India), ran to the stage to seek blessings of the Divine Master. The Guru severed his head also. After this, once again the Guru expounded loudly, "Is there any other Sikh to offer his head for the Divine Mission of Guru Nanak Dev?" Then Bhai Sahib Chand, belonging to a barber family and resident of Bidar of Karnataka province (South India), rushed to offer his head to the Guru, and seek divine blessings. The Guru severed his head too.

Guru Gobind Rai then put divine nectar in the mouth of every beheaded Sikh and they stood up like lions. After all the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Payaras) got up, the Guru took them to the tent, where they were dressed in a distinct style of clothes before they came out with the Guru on the stage. The Divine Master humbly submitted before the 'Five Beloved Ones', who were called Guru Khalsa, after partaking of the Divine nectar. By instituting the ceremony of Amrit and offering the Divine nectar to His beloved followers, Guru Gobind Rai conferred a unique honor upon them, and gave them the status of Guru Panth (the Khalsa collectively, as the Guru), i.e., organisation of the divine persons. People would be astonished to know that the bestower of the divine nectar upon His disciples (Sikhs), now Himself bowed before the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piaras) and requested them with folded hands, to bestow upon him the Divine Nectar (Amrit). The 'Five Beloved Ones'

(Panj Piaras) remarked that they had received the Divine Nectar by offering their heads to the Guru. They said, "What would You offer for getting the Divine Nectar?" He replied that He would offer His whole family for the divine cause of Khalsa Panth. After getting initiated from His 'Five Beloved Ones', the Guru was renamed from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh. After that thousands of men and women got initiated with Amrit. The men had the word 'Singh' (Divine lion) and the women, the word 'Kaur' (Divine princess) suffixed to their names.

A report entitled Trials of the Five Beloved Ones by Abu-ul-Turani (a spy of Aurangzeb) - is an eye witness account of what happened on this day in the Divine Court of Guru Gobind Singh:

'Abu-ul-Turani was an agent of Aurangzeb and worked as a spy in the court of Guru Gobind Singh, and used to send a daily report to the Emperor regarding daily happenings at the place. In his report, he gave an eyewitness account of the momentous events on the Vaisakhi day of 1699. About a mile and a half east of Batala town on the road to Gurdaspur, lies the village of Qilla Tek Singh. Giani Buta Singh, a renowned scholar lived there. Apart from growing crops, he also practiced traditional medicine. In his private library was found a book in Urdu written by Abu-ul-Turani:

There was a spy named Abu-ul-Turani, sent by Aurangzeb in the court of Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur for getting day-to-day information of the events of the Guru's Divine court. He would go to the Guru daily to pay respect in the disguise of a Brahmin, wearing a Dhoti, sacred thread (Janeu) and frontal mark (Tilak) and used to send the daily secret report of the happenings in the Guru's Court to Aurangzeb. He shared living quarters with the Guru's gardener, Gulaba. Every day he would visit the Guru's Court and in a show of mock reverence would fall at the Guru's feet. Seeing his antics, the all-knowing Guru would just smile, for He could see through Turani's hypocrisy, and knew who he really was. In his book, Kalgidhar Chamatkar, Bhai Vir Singh has also made a mention of the Mughal spy. For about a year and a half, he kept a secret watch on the Guru's Court. In his memoirs, Abu-ul-Turani narrates the events, as they unfolded on the Vaisakhi day of initiation in 1699, in his report, which was sent to Aurangzeb, as follows:

'On the auspicious day, Guru Gobind Singh prepared the bowl of nectar (Amrit) at Anandpur. The gathering was thirty-five to forty thousand Sikhs. We know of four Mughal Takht - seats of power - Delhi, Agra, Lahore and Kalanaur, but the Guru's Takht was so grand that it put the Mughal Takhts in the shade. The Guru was wearing a splendid robe, and the Divine glow on his face was hard to bear. The Guru got up, drew his sword and in a loud, commanding voice demanded, "I need

the head of a Sikh." Without a moment's hesitation, and without stopping to think, a Sikh Daya Ram rose and presented himself before the Guru. Then in full view of the gathering, the Tenth Guru struck a blow with the sword cutting off Daya Ram's head. A feeling of awe engulfed the audience, most of whom were stunned into silence. The Guru got up a second time and addressing the gathering in a loud and severe voice said, "I need the head of another Sikh." Instantly, one Dharam Chand got up, went across to the Guru and bowed before him. A single stroke of the Guru's sword severed the head of Dharam Chand from the body. Confusion and panic broke out and people started running away. In the midst of this commotion, the Guru, in a powerful voice, once again demanded a head; and one after another, Himmat Rai, Mohkam Chand and Sahib Chand were beheaded. Some devotees fled to the Guru's mother - Mata Gujri and narrated to her the incredible happenings in the Darbar.

The Guru cleaned the bodies, by washing off the clothes on the bodies of the five Sikhs. The floor too was scrubbed and all traces of blood were removed. Then the Guru of the non-believers (Kafirs) rearranged the severed heads and headless bodies randomly and skilfully sewed each head and body together; this took him about three hours. Each of the restored bodies was covered with a white sheet. He then sent for a stone mortar, on which He placed an iron bowl (without handles). After pouring some water into the bowl, He began to prepare the divine nectar (Aab-e-Hayat). Then a lady from the Guru's family came over and added something to the water being stirred. The Guru of the Kafirs kept stirring the water with a dagger while reciting some hymns (Kalmas). This process continued for an hour or so. Now the Divine Nectar was ready.

Next, the Guru took the sheets off from the bodies, one by one. Then He sat down by the side of Daya Ram, opened his mouth and poured some nectar into it; then he sprinkled some Nectar on his hair and eyes five times. Having done so, He asked him to repeat the salutation Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. No sooner had the Guru said these words, than Daya Ram got up and exclaimed in a loud voice Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh. At this, the entire congregation was left dumb-founded. The thousands present held their breath, as they sat enchanted by the miracle performed by the Guru. Then one by one, the Guru roused from the dead, each slain Sikh in the same way -by pouring Nectar into the mouth, sprinkling some in the hair and in the eyes, and asking for a repetition of the salutation. The Guru then took all five into an adjoining tent. After a while the Guru came out followed by the five Sikhs, who were now wearing new clothes. These Blessed Five, just restored to life, then stood outside the tent. And the Guru, on bent knee, asked them to bestow on Him as well, the gift of the

holy Nectar. But they immediately questioned Him, wanting to know what He would offer to deserve such a priceless gift. In reply, the Guru gave His word that He would sacrifice His whole family and everything He owned for the cause of Panth (the Divine Path). Pleased with His answer, the Five Divine ones blessed the Guru with the holy Nectar (Aab-e-Hayat) and renamed Him Gobind Singh from Gobind Rai. The word 'Singh' was also suffixed to the names of the five Sikhs, who became Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Himmatt Singh, Mohkam Singh and Sahib Singh.

Turani further narrates, 'I was filled with remorse, and wept bitterly for the reason that I was spying on the Guru (Divine), which I realised was a great sin, and for which I would go to hell.

Following the Guru, thousands of those present took the holy nectar. When I saw this, I was unable to restrain myself. I repented what I had done and chided myself. Soon, I found myself drawn towards the Guru as if pulled by a magnetic power. I fell down at His feet and begged Him to bless me with the gift of the holy nectar. The Guru, who could undoubtedly see through my pretence, gave me a forgiving glance and patted me on the back. He then gave me the Aab-e-Hayat and blessed me with a new name - Ajmer Singh. In that instant, I was convinced that all my sins accumulated over several lives had been washed away. I enrolled myself in the Guru's army and fought many a battle coming face to face with the forces of tyranny. I sent my last report to Aurangzeb, the Emperor. In it, I gave a detailed account of all the incredible events which took place in the Guru's divine congregation (Diwan) and which I had been privileged to behold. In strong and clear terms, I warned the Emperor not to cross swords with the Guru, who is the incarnation of God himself on this earth and to refrain from cruelty. I told him that if he failed to heed my advice, his whole family and even his dynasty would be wiped out from the face of the earth."

Turani's report is absolutely clear that the Guru sought the heads of the 'Five Beloved Ones' in full view of the entire congregation, and didn't keep anything secret. By interchanging one another's head, the Guru liberated human beings from the distinction of caste, creed and class, thereby proving his dictum:

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ।

Maanas kee jaat sabh-ei ek-ei pehchaanbo.

(Akal Ustat)

(Recognise the whole mankind as the Creation of the Divine Lord, irrespective of caste, creed and religion because the same Divine pervades in all.)

(Note : This report of Abu-ul-Turani has the approval of Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee, and several other institutions, which have accepted and published the same.)

The Hola Mohalla : The Guru introduced a unique way of Holi, which was in keeping with the glorious traditions of the holy minded, brave and freedom-loving Sikh nation. The devotees would gather in the morning for meditation and recitation of the hymns. The evenings would be given over to display the swordsmanship and equestrian contests as also other martial sports.

1700 to 1703 : During this period, Guru Gobind Singh fought four battles. In one, Painde Khan was killed by an arrow shot by the Guru. In another, Dina Beg fled the battlefield after being wounded. In yet another, Sayyad Beg with around 500 soldiers fought with the Guru, and after the defeat, he was so impressed with the divine power of Guru Gobind Singh that he left the Generalship of the Emperor's army, and became a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh for treading the Divine Path to merge with the Allah.

In Delhi, Aurangzeb in his royal session, placed a sword on a well-decorated table, and challenged all his Generals to take it to fight with Guru Gobind Singh. After defeating Him, he should either bring the Guru as a prisoner in his court or bring his severed head to be presented before him. Aurangzeb further added that the General would have to swear on the Quran to be worthy of this task. No one came forward. In a furious tone, the Emperor shouted that none of the Generals had the blood of Islam, to render the holy service. He said, "Whoever carries out his order, would be given lots of bounties and a large chunk of land to rule upon."

After listening to that, Sayyad Khan, the brother in law of Peer Buddu Shah of Sadaura, stood up and swore on the Quran, took the sword and submitted to the Emperor that he would bring Guru Gobind Singh to his court - alive or dead. Accompanied by a huge army, he marched towards Anandpur Sahib. On the way, he halted for a visit to his sister Naseeran, wife of Pir Buddhu Shah and told her where he was going and why. Hearing this, the revered Naseeran was stunned and with love and affection told her brother that Guru Gobind Singh was a great Prophet, an incarnation of the Allah and how he dared to fight with Him? Sayyad Khan snubbed his sister as she was showing sympathy towards his enemy. Brushing aside the advice of his sister, the General went ahead for Anandpur to fight with the Guru.

In the battlefield Sayyad Beg, who was earlier a general of the Mughal army, said to Sayyad Khan, "You are committing a great sin of fighting with the Divine Lord, Guru Gobind Singh. You will surely go to hell if you do not pay heed to my advice." After saying this, Sayyad Beg left the battlefield. Earlier, hearing the advice from his sister and now from Sayyad Beg, who had left the Mughal army to become a devout follower of Guru Gobind Singh. Sayyad Khan was puzzled and thought

that if Guru Gobind Singh was the incarnation of Allah, surely he would come to fight one-to-one, instead of getting the forces of both sides killed in the battlefield.

Perceiving what had crossed his mind, Guru Gobind Singh immediately appeared before the General, and clarified that He had no enmity with him. He had taken the oath to capture Him (The Guru) by fighting with his full force. Now, it was his chance to fulfil his pledge either to kill the Guru, or capture Him alive. After seeing the divinely radiating face of Guru Gobind Singh, he started trembling and his sword dropped from his hand. With an affectionate divine voice, the Guru said, "O Sayyad Khan! You swore on the Quran to either kill Me, or to capture Me alive." Sayyad Khan could not resist and surrendered on the divine feet of the Guru and said, "O Divine Master! You are my Allah (Lord) and Pran (life), thus how can I fight with the Divine." Guru helped him stand up, embraced and patted him with the divine love, and told him that one day, he would become a great saint of the Allah. Thus Sayyad Khan became the disciple of Guru Gobind Singh and took the Divine Name from Him and started reciting hymns in a secluded hilly area, and became saint with the passage of time.

The battle of Anandpur : In 1704, the entire Mughal force, allied by the forces of the hill states under the command of the Governor of Sirhind, laid siege around the fort of Anandpur for eight months. The food supplies in the fort ran out. Sikhs were trapped inside. They survived themselves by eating tree leaves and drinking the brew of tree bark boiled in water and carried out their fight bravely. Being initiated into the Khalsa fold, they were above pain. When the Mughal forces failed to capture the fort, even after blocking the food supplies, Aurangzeb wrote a letter to Guru Gobind Singh, swearing on the Quran that if the Guru vacated the fort, his forces would be granted a safe passage out to settle at some other place. Few weak-minded Sikhs approached Mata Gujri to persuade her son Guru Gobind Singh to leave the Anandpur Sahib Fort as Aurangzeb had given assurance to give safe passage to His followers by swearing on the Quran. However, the Guru replied to the mother that the Mughal Emperor would backout even after swearing on the Quran. When the mother instructed her son to obey her as a devout son, Guru Gobind Singh bowed before her instructions and left the fort of Anandpur Sahib with family and followers. Exactly what the Guru had perceived, did happen. The Mughal forces did not care about the vows on the Quran by their Emperor, and attacked the Guru, his followers, and his family. There was a pitched battle on the banks of river Sirsa.

The Sikhs fought bravely to protect Guru Gobind Singh and his family members, while they were crossing the river Sirsa. It was in a flurry that the valuable literature

and other belongings of the Guru were washed away. In the ensuing confusion, the Guru's two younger sons (Sahibzadas), Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, along with their grandmother, got separated from the Guru and reached the village Morinda. Here, their cook Gangu, who was accompanying them, took them to his house. Mata Gujri was carrying a bag containing some gold and valuables. After reaching Gangu's house, the mother placed that bag in a corner of the room. Gangu's mind got polluted on seeing the bag. He planned to steal this bag and shared the plan with his mother, who cursed him for committing such a sin. Despite the advice of his mother, he stole the bag. When Mata Gujri raised an alarm, Gangu became furious and severing his old ties with the divine family, handed over the mother and her two grandchildren, aged seven and nine years to the police.

The police took them to the court of Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, where Sher Mohammed Khan, the Nawab of Malerkotla and other chieftains were present. When the children raised the salutation *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*, Wazir Khan became furious and asked them to accept Islam. The children bluntly refused. They were sent to jail and held captive in a cold cell (Thanda Burj). During the night, they recited the Divine Name and in the morning the police again took the duo to the court of Wazir Khan. He ordered them to either embrace Islam, or be prepared to be killed. When the verdict was pronounced, the Nawab of Malerkotla objected that the Islamic law did not permit the act of cruelty on the innocent minors. Wazir Khan then ordered that the Sahibzadas be bricked alive.

When nobody paid heed to his objection, the Nawab of Malerkotla left the court in protest. Under the pressure of others present, including the clergy, Wazir Khan ordered the verdict to be carried out. Accordingly, the cruel process got underway. When Mata Gujri heard about the brutal act, she also breathed her last and shed her mortal frame.

The rich and pious Todar Mal of Sirhind requested the administration to allow him to cremate the Sahibzadas. The ruler set a condition that the place where the bodies of the children were to be cremated, the land would have to be purchased by spreading the gold coins (Mohars) vertically and not horizontally, so as to cover the entire area required for cremation. Todar Mal's family sold all their wealth and the dowry items of their daughter, who was to be married shortly, for this Divine cause. Todar Mal also begged for as many gold coins as he could get from his kith and kin so that he could purchase the desired land for the cremation of the bodies of the Guru's divine sons and their grandmother Gujri. Thus, he obtained the blessings of the Divine Lord with the cremation of the mother and two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

On the advice of Guru Gobind Singh, Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundari left

for Delhi accompanied by Bhai Mani Singh.

The Battle of Chamkaur : Guru Gobind Singh, his two elder sons Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh, with a band of 40 Sikhs set off for Chamkaur and took shelter in a mini mud-fort (Garhi) built by his devoted Sikh. The Mughal forces chased the Guru and surrounded the Garhi at Chamkaur. On 22 December, 1704, the two elder sons of the Guru and the Sikh soldiers fought bravely, killing thousands of Mughal soldiers, but in the end, being heavily outnumbered, they fell in the battle and wore the crown of martyrdom.

When Guru Gobind Singh Himself took arms and started to take the battlefield, the 'Five Beloved Ones' (Panj Piaras), stood before the Guru and submitted, "O Divine Master! All the Sikhs and Your two sons went to the battlefield to fight the enemy with the permission of their Guru. Now, You offer to go to the battlefield to fight with the enemy without getting permission from Your 'Five Beloved Ones', whom You anointed as the Guru-Panth-Khalsa after the initiation ceremony at Anandpur. We, the Panj Piare in the form of Guru-Panth-Khalsa order You to leave this fort and go to other parts of Punjab and raise the force of Khalsa to contain the cruelty of the Mughals and to further spread the Divine message of Guru Nanak Dev to the masses." Hearing this, the Guru bowed before Panth Khalsa and left Chamkaur for Machhiwara, alongwith Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Maan Singh, crossing all the barriers of the Mughal armies with their valour.

Two Muslim devotees of Guru Gobind Singh, Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan lived at Machhiwara. When they found the Guru sleeping on the pebbles in the jungle of Machhiwara, they bowed before Him and requested Him to bless their homes. Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Maan Singh, who were separated from the Guru at Chamkaur Sahib while fighting with the Mughal army, also came to Machhiwara in search of Guru Gobind Singh.

Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan planned with the other three Sikhs to take the Guru out of the vicinity, which was surrounded by the Mughal forces. They requested the Guru to wear the dress of Muslim saint (Pir), so that He could be carried out on a cot in the disguise of Uchch da Pir, (one, who was very close to the Allah and attained a high spiritual position). The Guru acceded to this request of Uchch da Pir by wearing the dress of Pir. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan told the Mughal forces "He is our Uchch da Pir." The suspicious Mughal commander called for another Pir, Pir Mohhamad, to verify whether He was really the Uchch da Pir. This Pir used to visit Anandpur Sahib for spiritual discourses with Guru Gobind Singh and was very impressed by His divine Wisdom and later he became His devotee for getting spiritual wisdom. The Pir also endorsed that He was, in fact, Uchch da Pir. Thus,

the Mughal forces allowed them to go ahead. Then Guru reached Heharan and blessed Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan and asked them to return home. This shows that for a divine cause, whatever is done, is done under the Divine Order and is acceptable.

Letter of Divine Victory (Zafarnama) : Advancing further, Guru Gobind Singh reached Dina Kangar, a village near Moga. From here, He addressed a letter of Victory (Zaffarnama) in Persian language, to Aurangzeb, who was then in South India. His emissaries, Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh, took the letter to the Emperor. The Guru wrote, "O Aurangzeb! You swore on the Quran not to attack my family or my followers, if we vacate Anandpur. We accepted your offer made in the name of God (Allah) and vacated our abode, Anandpur. You turned back from your word and attacked us. You betrayed not only our trust but also the Divine Lord by swearing on the Quran. You will certainly have to answer for this sin and for all your cruel deeds in the Lord's Court. The Divine Lord would push you to hell for dishonouring your pledge to His Holiness. You will not escape this cruel act and will have to undergo the sufferings of Hell under the Divine Order." Reading the Guru's letter of Divine Victory (Zafarnama), the conscience of Aurangzeb was so shaken that instead of recovering from his illness, he went deeper into his miseries and could not breathe properly. He wanted to die to escape the miseries, but could not do so. At the end of the Zaffarnama, the Guru wrote the Divine words Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh. The Emperor hesitated to read those Divine words. His daughter was a devotee of the Guru because of His Divine Wisdom and considered Him the incarnation of the Allah. Since Aurengzeb loved his daughter dearly for her spiritual inclination and she impressed upon him to read the Divine words of the Guru: Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh." That means, that Khalsa, the divinely human beings belong to the Lord, and thus the victory belongs to Him. As he read these words on the persuasion of his daughter, he breathed his last.

Such is the divine power in the words of the holy persons, that it killed the most egoistic and cruel ruler, so that he could be saved from committing further sins, and preventing him from going deeper into hell. Thus, the ever-compassionate Guru helped Aurangzeb to die peacefully after reading His letter.

The Battle of Muktsar : When the Mughal forces learnt of Guru Gobind Singh's arrival at Khidrane di Dhaab (a large pond near the mound of Khidrana), which in the present time is called Muktsar, they rallied there in thousands. The band of 40 Sikhs, who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh during the siege of Anandpur Sahib had returned home already. Hearing the story of their desertion, their wives

cursed them and referred to them as jackals. They taunted them to remain at home and do the household chores, while they, the true divine daughters of the Guru, would go to Khidrane di Dhaab and fight with the Mughal army. The deserters were so shaken by the spiritually charged words of their wives that they developed a sudden urge and courage to fight the Mughal army and attain martyrdom to get the blessings of the Guru. They were led to the battlefield by the pious Mai Bhago. They fought bravely with the Mughals until they fell and became martyrs. The Mughal army was so frightened by their bravery that they ran from the battlefield. Guru Gobind Singh was watching the fierce fighting, riding on horseback on a small hillock. He went to the battlefield, where 39 Sikhs died, but their leader Bhai Maha Singh was lying wounded. The Guru showered His blessings on the martyred Sikhs and holding the head of Bhai Maha Singh in His lap, asked him to seek the bounties of both the worlds - here and hereafter. While he was breathing the last breaths of his life, with folded hands, he requested the Guru to tear off the Bedawa - the letter of desertion. The Guru took out the letter from his pocket and tore it off in front of Maha Singh, who then left the world in Divine peace. The Guru gave the martyrs the title of Chali Mukte (forty liberated ones) and renamed Khidrane di Dhaab as Muktsar - the sacred pool of liberation.

From here, Guru Gobind Singh went to Sabo ki Talwandi, where His devotee Bhai Dalla was the ruler. He submitted before the Guru that he had a very brave army and if He ordered him for help in the battle of Anandpur, his army would have inflicted a great defeat on the Mughals. With a smile, Guru Gobind Singh said to him, "The struggle is still on and you will be given a chance to prove your army's bravery." In the meantime, a devotee blacksmith offered a gun to the Guru, Who was very pleased to see that beautiful gun. He asked Bhai Dalla to summon one of his soldiers so that he could test the target.

Bhai Dalla went to his soldiers and requested them to become martyrs in the name of the Guru and thereby attain salvation. Everyone refused to embrace martyrdom and attain salvation with the shot by the Guru, even if He was the incarnation of the Lord. Dalla, returned dejected and explained that nobody was ready to die in such a way. Then the Guru said, "O Bhai Dalla! Then you stand for testing the shot of the gun." Hearing this, Dalla was so horrified to embrace death with the gunshot of the Guru that he humbly replied that his mind was not ready to die in such a way. Then Guru asked Bhai Dalla to call any of His Sikhs for testing the shot of the gun. Hearing the Divine call of the Guru through Bhai Dalla, both Bhai Vir Singh and Dhir Singh came running to seek the blessings of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh asked them to stand close, with their shoulders touching each

other. They did so and the Guru fired the shot. The shoulders of both the Sikhs were injured by the bullet and they came to the Guru with smiling faces to seek His divine blessings. The Guru then told Dalla that these were the soldiers, who fought the war with Mughal forces with divine bravery at Anandpur Sahib. It was only because of the divine grace of Amrit (the divine nectar). After witnessing this courage, Bhai Dalla's innerself also stirred. He submitted to the Guru with folded hands that he and his family members may kindly be blessed with the Divine Nectar (Amrit). The Guru blessed the whole of the family of Bhai Dalla with the precious bounty of Divine Nectar.

Here, the wives of the Guru came from Delhi to meet Him. In a large congregation, when they did not see their sons, they humbly submitted, "O Divine Husband! Where are our four sons?" The Guru replied that they had attained martyrdom. The Guru further impressed upon them, "Just see with your Divine Wisdom that with the martyrdom of your four sons, thousands of Sikhs are still alive to take on the task of your beloved sons after partaking of Amrit." The Guru thus expressed His feelings:

ਚਾਰ ਮੂਏ ਤੋਂ ਕਿਆ ਹੁਆ ਜੀਵਤ ਕਈ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ।

Chaar moo-e to kias hooaa Jeevat ka-ee hazaar.

(So what? If four died, thousands are still there.)

Compilation of the Holy Granth Sahib : From Sabo ki Talwandi, Guru Gobind Singh sent 25 Sikhs to the grandson of Guru Hargobind, Dhir Mal, who had custody of the Adi Granth (the collection of the hymns of the previous Gurus, compiled by Guru Arjan Dev), with a view to incorporate in it the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur and update it as a complete Divine Scripture. But Dhir Mal refused to hand over the Adi Granth to the Sikhs and tauntingly remarked, "If your Guru has the Divine Wisdom, then why can't He compile the whole Granth himself?" Hearing of the refusal and the remarks of Dhir Mal, Guru Gobind Singh dictated the whole Granth Sahib to Bhai Mani Singh, the devoted Sikh and included the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur at the appropriate places and compiled a complete Granth Sahib which was later declared the 'Eternal Guru' at Nanded in Maharashtra, now called Hazur Sahib. Baba Deep Singh transcribed four copies from the original manuscript.

Guru Gobind Singh told that Sabo ki Talwandi would become Guru Kashi (a place of great learning) similar to other old renowned Kashis in India namely, Nalanda, Taxila and Kashi in Banaras. He further predicted, "O Bhai Dalla! See the canals of water are flowing." Bhai Dalla replied, "O Divine Master! It is the desert, and sand is blowing around. The sun rays on the sand make it look like

water." Then the Guru further said, "Look at the lushful gardens of oranges, mangoes, grapes." Dalla submitted, "O my Divine Master! The fruits of poppy pods (Akk) look like these fruits." Then the Guru further remarked, "With the passage of time, people would see fruit gardens all around." The Guru further predicted that there would be lushful crops of wheat, cotton etc. All three predictions of the Guru have already come true. Canals were flowing, fruit gardens were blooming along with lushful crops of wheat and cotton. The fourth prediction of the Guru was that the place would become Guru ki Kashi (a great learning place of spirituality along with scientific studies of the modern world). This prediction could not be fulfilled even after passing of more than three centuries. This would have been the most auspicious work for humanity and particularly the Sikhs to establish, Guru Ki Kashi - a unique learning centre of spiritual study, its origin, and to perceive the same in perspective of all religions, theme of which would be to see One in All and All in One. The Divine scriptures of all the religions of the world would be studied to realise the gist of the Divine within and without, i.e., to see One in All and All in One. Here Guru Granth Sahib would be translated in all the major languages of the world for conveying the Divine Truth to mankind as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev and his successors.

Now, The Kalgidhar Society, Baru Sahib has taken up this gigantic project with the approval of the Punjab Government, under the name of Akal University, Guru ki Kashi at Damdama Sahib, which is also known as Sabo Ki Talwandi.

Aid to Bahadur Shah : Following the death of Aurangzeb, there was a scramble for the throne among his sons. His eldest son, Bahadur Shah appealed to the Guru for help because even during Aurengzeb's regime, he nurtured a divine respect and devotion for Guru Gobind Singh. From Damdama Sahib, the Guru went to Delhi and then to Agra and helped Bahadur Shah to ascend the throne. The Emperor, Bahadur Shah requested the Guru to accompany him to South India. On that tour, the Guru stayed with him for thirteen months. At Nanded in the state of Maharashtra, the Guru set up a camp on the banks of the river Godavari and imparted the knowledge of the Divine Name to his followers to make them holy persons (Gursikhs). Here, the Guru also accomplished many spiritual deeds.

The Parable of the Diamond : At Nanded, Guru Gobind Singh always remained in spiritual bliss. One day, Bahadur Shah came to pay his respect to the Guru and presented Him a priceless diamond. The Guru took it and threw it into the river Godavari. The Emperor was surprised and could not resist asking the Guru, "O my Divine Lord! This is a very precious diamond and You have thrown it in the river like a stone." The Guru replied, "O dear Emperor! Go with your soldiers

and search for your diamond in the river." When the Emperor went to the river Godavari, he saw that the riverbed was full of precious diamonds, but he could not find his own. Embarrassed beyond words, the Emperor came back and fell at the Guru's feet and expounded, "O my Divine Master! You are not only the Creator of those precious diamonds, but of the whole world." After seeking His blessings, the Emperor travelled further on to southern India for expeditions.

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur : Bhai Madho Das had established a meditation centre on the banks of river Godavari. He acquired so many occult powers through which he used to humiliate other ascetics (Yogis), who visited his abode, asking them to sit on the cot. During the pseudo-spiritual discourses, Madho Das used to turn the cot upside down with his occult powers, and thus the visiting ascetics felt insulted and used to feel humiliated against the miracle powers of Madho Das. He used to show his miraculous powers in order to make his followers and others feel that he had more power than any of the visiting ascetics. He was a renowned person of the area, and people took him as a great saint, and many of them became his followers.

When Guru Gobind Singh heard of his pseudo miraculous powers, He wanted to set him on the right path by mitigating his ego for rendering selfless service to humanity. The Guru visited his centre, and sat on his decorated cot placed for visiting ascetics to sit. Madho Das used all his miraculous powers to turn the cot upside down, but his miracles completely failed to work against the Guru. He was upset over the defeat of his miraculous powers, and thus became meek. When he sought repentance for his acts of using the pseudo-miraculous power for demeaning others, Madho's ego got subdued to a great extent. Thus, he saw the Divine glow on the face of the Guru, and fell on His feet for his pardon. He humbly submitted to the Guru, "O my Divine Master! I have been very wrong for using the miracles due to which I could not get spiritual bliss and the Divine peace. Kindly pardon me for my sins and bless me with Your Divine Wisdom." The ever-merciful Guru advised him to shed the miraculous powers and contemplate on the Divine Name for realising the Divine within. Then Guru asked him, "Now, who are you?" He replied, "I have become your slave (Banda) and seek Your spiritual guidance to tread the Divine Path for becoming your devoted Sikh." Guru initiated him with Divine Nectar (Amrit) and renamed him Gurbaksh Singh. Sikh history remembers him as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur.

Guru Gobind Singh presented him a set of five arrows and a double-edged sword with the following Divine instructions to follow in letter and spirit:

1. He should go to Punjab with five Gursikhs and put together an army by

recruiting more Sikhs from North India to eliminate the egoistic cruel rulers, who were inflicting atrocities on the innocent people and establish peace in the Northern India, including Punjab.

2. He should not become a Guru by wearing a crown and plume on his head, but should remain a devoted Sikh to serve humanity as per the divine instructions of Guru Nanak Dev.
3. He has to fight lots of battles to establish divine peace among all sections of society, as envisaged by Guru Nanak Dev. Since he would be engaged in the arduous work of establishing divine peace, he should not marry and become a householder. Since he had crossed the age of marriage, he should remain a celibate, so that his mind remains fixed and concentrated on performing divine duties as destined by the Divine. He should remain engrossed only in performing divine duties assigned to him to realise the Divine within, for which man has come to this earth.
4. He should not set up a separate sect of Sikhs as his followers, but remain part of the Khalsa Panth so that there is no division in the ideology among the Sikhs. In other words, all Sikhs should remain cohesive and united and follow the instructions of hymns as enunciated by the Gurus (Gurbani) in letter and spirit.
5. He should establish divine socialism in North India and perform such deeds, which uplift the fate of the poor.

With these instructions, Bhai Gurbaksh Singh, later to be known as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur because of his bravery, came to North India with the five Sikhs. He gathered a large force with the blessings of the Guru and invaded Sirhind. He eliminated the cruel Governor Zakria Khan, who had inflicted great atrocities not only on the Sikhs, the family of the Guru, but also on poor people. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur conquered almost the whole of North India and developed a system of socialism for the first time in India, by giving the ownership of the land to the tillers. After spreading peace and conquering the whole of North India, his mind, was distracted from following divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh owing to the worldly power. By wielding absolute power, he developed an urge to become not only the Emperor, but also the Guru of some sects of the Sikhs. After invading hill states, he settled down at Chamba in the Himalayas. Intoxicated by the worldly power, he married the daughter of the ruler of the state. Due to these victories, power and fame, he put on a crown with a plume embedded in it, and further developed the instinct to become not only the ruler, but also the Guru of the Sikhs. This shows that worldly instincts develop with accumulation of power and wealth.

On account of his worldly actions, Sikhs were divided into two groups. One was called Tat Khalsa (true followers of Guru Gobind Singh) and other Bandai Khalsa (the followers of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur). Both the groups of Tat Khalsa and Bandai Khalsa claimed to be the custodians of the holiest Sikh centre, Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Some Sikhs having Divine Wisdom persuaded both groups to follow the holy path and seek instructions from the Divine as to who was the real Khalsa to become the custodian of Harmandir Sahib. They reached a truce to put two papers to get the directions from the Divine to determine, which Khalsa of the two would be custodian of the centre. Both the parties of the Sikhs put their written papers into the Sarovar surrounding Harmandir Sahib. They came to an agreement that the paper of the party that would remain floating would be the real Khalsa and would become custodian of the holy place. If the paper of the other party sinks in the water, they would shed the claim to be the custodian of the sacred centre. According to the Divine Order, the paper of Bandai Khalsa sank and that of Tat Khalsa remained floating. Thus, Tat Khalsa became the custodian of Harmandir Sahib. On account of this, there was downfall of Sikhs in general, but more importantly of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers. It was due to the non-compliance of the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh. It is a divine phenomenon that whoever follows the instructions of the Divine Master in letter and spirit, rises to great heights, to serve humanity. Whoever gets distracted from this Divine Path, is sure to be doomed.

Due to this division in the Sikhs, the Mughal forces got the upper hand to finish off the Sikhs in general but more particularly to capture Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and finish his followers known as Bandai Khalsa. As long as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur followed the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, he went on rising higher and higher, wiping out the Mughal Empire in North India, especially in Punjab. He did wonderful social and religious services. However, power polluted his mind, and he forgot to follow the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, which was the cause of his downfall. Another major factor of his downfall was that he married the princess of the King of Chamba and got engrossed in sensual pleasures, and also considered himself as the Guru of his followers, which was against the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh delivered to him at Hazur Sahib. Thus as per Divine Law, he fell down from the state of spirituality, and that was the beginning of his downfall. Ultimately, he was chased by the Mughal forces, and he took shelter in a small muddy fortress, which was surrounded by the Mughal forces, who did not allow any food or other items inside. In these miserable circumstances, he repented that he did not follow the divine instructions of his Guru. He now prayed

to Guru Gobind Singh to restore his faith to follow the Guru's Sikh way of life under all circumstances, even if he had to embrace martyrdom for the same. After performing this prayer with full faith and devotion to the Guru, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers' minds became very strong and remained intuned with the instructions of Guru Gobind Singh. They were mentally prepared to sacrifice of their lives. Guru Nanak Dev reveals:

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਾਰੂ ਸੁਖੁ ਰੋਗੁ ਭਇਆ ਜਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਤਾਮਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

Dukh(u) daaroo sukh(u) rog(u) bha-e-aa Jaa sukh(u) taam(i) na hoee. (469)

This means that when one is entangled in worldly miseries, he remembers the Divine Lord with full faith, love, devotion and humility. Thus, he faces all the miseries according to the Divine Will and becomes strong-minded for perceiving these miseries as bounties to tread the Divine Path. When one leads the luxurious worldly life, and accumulates worldly power and wealth, he forgets the Divine and with the passage of time, he falls in grace, in worldly as well as spiritual spheres, and all types of miseries inflict him. People start hating him. Such circumstances make him repent his actions, and his inner-self motivates him to take refuge in the Divine Lord. On the other hand, most wealthy and powerful men become most egoistic, and forget the power of the Divine and they start criticising the spiritual way of life. Under these circumstances, in order to set them on the right path, according to the Divine Law, their actions become their miseries which ultimately induce them to take shelter of the Divine by singing His glories and meditate on the Divine Name with full love and devotion.

By perceiving the divine blessings of Guru Gobind Singh, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers came out of the fortress, and became so strong in the Sikh way of life that they fought valiantly with the huge Mughal forces. They were finally captured and brought to Lahore. The Mughal Governor of Lahore ordered his army to take Banda Singh Bahadur and his followers as prisoners and they were tried and crucified at Delhi. So much so that the heart of Baba Banda Singh's young son was ripped apart and thrust in his mouth to humiliate him. Ultimately, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was crucified when he refused to embrace Islam.

Guruship to Adi Granth Sahib : Guru Gobind Singh decreed that the physical body of a human was never a Guru. It is the Divine within, which is the Guru. Shabad Guru is the real Guru, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev in Sidh Gosht, to control the mind from going astray, and prevent oneself from getting engrossed in the worldly affairs. According to the Divine Law, the Gurufelt that the message of the divine 'Word' (Shabad Guru) as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev had spread far and wide. The majority of the Gursikhs had clearly understood that the Divine

'Word' is the Guru in reality and as such they would spread the preaching of the Shabad Guru as incorporated in the Granth Sahib to humanity. Guru Gobind Singh felt that the time had come when the Shabad Guru, in the form of the Granth Sahib, should now become the Guru of the Sikhs, who should follow the Divine instructions incorporated in the same, with full love and devotion. The Guru decreed that after him, till eternity, the Granth Sahib would be the Guru Eternal. The sacred volume of the Granth Sahib was installed on a special platform and the Guru made an offering of five paise and a coconut before the Scripture. He then circumambulated it five times and bowed before it. Thus, the Guru conferred Guruship on the Granth Sahib and Sikhs were enjoined to seek the divine instructions from it for getting rid of their ego and merge with the Divine by reciting the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib, the Guru Eternal.

Shedding the Mortal Frame : As willed by the True Lord, the Divine purpose for which the Almighty had sent Guru Gobind Singh in this world was fully achieved. And under the Divine Will, the Guru had to embrace a secret martyrdom, in order to quell the rising tide of tyranny. One of the two Muslims (Pathans) sent by the Nawab of Sirhind Wazir Khan was purposely retained by the Guru as His personal attendant, despite the fact that He perceived and understood the whole plan of Wazir Khan. The Guru knew that they were sent to eliminate Him. Since He wanted to show to the world that He could also attain martyrdom by provoking them indirectly, he got stabbed with a dagger in his stomach by one of the Pathan attendants sent by Wazir Khan to kill the Guru. Then with a single stroke of His sword, the Guru cut off his assailant's head and brought him deliverance. After hearing the news, Bahadur Shah sent the royal surgeon to tend to the wound for healing. The wound improved and soon healed. But the Guru wanted to embrace martyrdom so that Sikhs should tread the Divine Path for keeping the spiritual way of life intact under all adverse circumstances including embracing the martyrdom. The martyrdom inculcates the Divine Wisdom in the seeker of the Truth, so as to remain above the bodily comforts, which are negatively correlated to perceiving Divine Wisdom and ultimately attaining salvation.

As such, one day the Guru shot an arrow in the open sky with such force that the stitches of his wound re-opened. Before this episode, the Sikhs humbly pleaded to Him not to do so, but the Guru brushed aside their advice because He wanted to attain martyrdom to mitigate the miseries of mankind. The health of the Guru deteriorated so much that He asked the Sikhs to light a pyre, enclosed with a thick sheet, so that nobody could see burning of His body, he lay on it. In fact, that was to show the humanity that his body was burnt. In reality, like Guru Nanak Dev, he

also shed the five elements (air, water, earth, fire and sky) from his body, and merged them in the cosmos according to the Divine Law. When the wooden pyre was burnt to ashes and cooled down, the Sikhs wanted to search out the remnants of the bones. To their surprise they could not find anything in the ashes. Thus, on 7 October, 1708, Guru Gobind Singh shed his mortal frame at Hazur Sahib in Nanded, India:

ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਮਿਲੇ ਜਲ ਕਾ ਜਲੁ ਹੂਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲੀ ਸੰਪੂਰਨੁ ਥੀਆ ਰਾਮ ॥

Sooraj kiranh(i) mil-ai Jal kaa jal(u) hooaa Ram.

Jotee jot(i) ralee Sampooran(u) theeaa Ram. (846)

(As the rays of the sun ultimately merge with the sun, and water merges with water, similarly the Divine soul of the Divine person merges with the Supreme Being, and the whole worldly play becomes the Divine One.)

The Spiritual Teachings and Divine Feats of Guru Gobind Singh

- 1. The divine 'Word' as the Guru (Shabad Guru) :** Guru Granth Sahib is the True Guru of the whole Universe and to follow its Divine instructions, in letter and spirit, leads one to self-realisation in this very life. This is the only way to realise the Divine within and without. In reality this is the self-realisation (Salvation) achieved while still alive. The worshiping of the bodies of the so-called holy persons or idols of gods and goddesses made of clay, stone or brass etc.; with full love and devotion are the very initial stages, which induce the commoners to tread the Divine Path by following the holy instructions of the divine persons incorporated in the divine scriptures in letter and spirit. By meditating on the Divine Name and following the divine code of conduct with utmost devotion to perceive the Divine Truth is the key to success. The holy instructions of the divine persons to motivate the seeker to tread the Divine Path, in fact, come from the Divine within, Who pervades everywhere.
- 2. Guru Granth Sahib** comprises hymns expounded by divine persons, who initially belonged to different castes and creeds like Brahmins, Kshatriyas, low-caste and even five Muslims saints, besides the hymns of only six Sikh Gurus, who may be seen by the seekers as different frames of the body, but spiritually they are completely Divine One.

As such, the Guru Granth Sahib is considered to be an interfaith Divine scripture. Guru Gobind Singh proclaims:

ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਤਬੈ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ ।

ਸਭ ਜਿੱਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ।

Aag-e-aa bha-ee Akal kee Tab-ei chala-e-o panth.

Sabh Sikkhan ko hukam h-ei Guru maan-e-o Granth.

[Sikh Panth was ordained according to the Divine Will of the Almighty Lord. As such, every Sikh (seeker after Truth) must consider the Guru Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru, according to the instructions of the Almighty Lord.]

3. To regard all mankind as one, and to love all, are the divine instructions of Guru Gobind Singh, who enunciates that the whole mankind, which is divided by the pseudo-intellectuals as Hindus and Muslims, has the same Divine Within. As such, from the spiritual perspective, the whole mankind is one because everybody has the same Divine within:

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ, ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ, ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੋ ।

Hindu Turak ko-oo, Raafjee Imaam Saafee, Maanas kee jaat sab-ei ek-ei pehchaanbo.

A typical example of this is found in the way of life of Bhai Ghanaiya, a devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, the details of which have been mentioned on page 67 of this book. This phenomenon was practically conveyed to the whole of mankind by Guru Gobind Singh through his devout disciple Bhai Ghanaiya, who served the wounded persons in the battlefield by providing drinking water and ointment, irrespective of his being a foe or friend, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. In other words, he was instructed to serve in the battlefield both Sikhs and Muslims, even though they were fighting each other according to the instructions of their Masters (generals/rulers). By serving the wounded, he laid the foundation of a mission of selfless service, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, friend or foe, which is much superior to the present day mission of Red Cross in which the third neutral body provides all these services.

4. **The holy wars** : The holy wars were fought by the Gurus to protect the whole mankind, irrespective of caste, creed and religion from the suppression of the rulers of the era in those days, from those who were committing atrocities with the intention of gaining supremacy due to their egoistic mind, craving materialistic possessions, and the greed of ruling ruthlessly. It is beyond the imagination of the intellectuals that Guru Gobind Singh, after winning all the wars by defeating the egoistic rulers, did not capture a square inch of land for establishing His Empire.
5. Guru Gobind Singh said that the code of conduct for the Divine principles laid for Sikhs should be followed in letter and spirit:

ਰਹਿਤ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਮੁਝ ਕੋ ਸਿਖ ਪਿਆਰਾ ਨਾਹਿ ॥

Rehat piaaree mujh ko Sikh piaaraa naah-e. (Rehatnama Bhai Desa Singh)

(The adherence of these noble principles was much more adorable to Him than merely the outward appearance of a Sikh, which meant nothing in the Spiritual Realm.)

ਰਹਿਣੀ ਰਹੇ ਸੋਈ ਸਿਖ ਮੇਰਾ ॥ ਉਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਕਾ ਚੇਰਾ ॥

Rehnhee rah-ai soee Sikh m-ai-raa. Oh Sahib m-ei us kaa ch-ai-raa.

(Rehatnama Bhai Desa Singh)

(A Sikh, who follows the prescribed code of conduct, meditates on the Divine Name, recites Gurbani and serves mankind with full faith, love and devotion, in reality, is my Master and I would be his humble disciple.)

6. 'He, who has realised the Divine within, and merges with Him by eradicating his ego completely, is called the true Khalsa, and thus there is no difference between Khalsa (Him), God, and Me', says Guru Gobind Singh in one of His hymns:

ਆਤਮ ਰਸ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨਹੀ, ਸੋ ਹੈ ਖਾਲਸ ਦੇਵ ॥

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਹਿ, ਮੈ ਮਹਿ, ਤਾਸ ਮਹਿ, ਰੰਚਕ ਨਾਹਨ ਭੇਵ ॥

Aatam ras jeh jaan-hee, So h-ei khaalas d-ai-v.

Prabh meh(i), m-ei meh(i), taas meh(i), ranchak naahan bh-ai-v.

(Sarabloh Granth, 533)

7. Guru Gobind Singh uses terms like Bhagauti, (Divine power), Kharag (Divine sword) and the names of other Divine weapons as the Divine power of the Supreme Being. By perceiving the value of these Divine weapons, the seeker has to overcome and shed the vices of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, to eradicate ego completely to merge with the Divine. If all the holy processes fail to establish divine peace and spiritual brotherhood on this earth, then the use of physical power, to put to end the cruelty and the oppressors, is justified:

ਚੂ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਰ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜ਼ਸ਼ਤ ॥ ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ ॥

Choo kaar az hamah heelt-ai dar guzashat. Halaal asatt burdan ba shamsheer dasat.

(Sri Dasam Granth)

8. One must always recite the Divine Name and remain intuned with the Divine within by shedding one's ego (anger), even while wielding the sword to suppress the atrocities on the poor. Guru Gobind Singh expounds:

ਧੰਨ ਜੀਓ ਤਿਹ ਕੋ ਜਗ ਮੈ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਚਿੱਤ ਮੈ ਜੁਧੁ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ॥

Dhann jeeo teh ko jagg m-ei mukh t-ai Har(i) chitt m-ei judh(u) bichaar-ei.

(Dasam Granth)

(Supreme is the man in this world, who always battles with his mind to suppress the evil instincts of lust, anger, greed, attachments and pride, while reciting the Divine Name.)

9. To preserve all the features of the body including hair, by keeping them intact

and unaltered, is the way to gladly submit to the Divine Will. This is what pleases Him, and this is what needs to be followed for seeking Divine Wisdom.

10. By reciting Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustat and other Divine compositions, Guru Gobind Singh has expressed and highlighted the glories of the Supreme Being in such perfection that one is left wonderstruck, and gets so inspired that he starts treading the Divine Path.
11. For the betterment of mankind and to put an end to cruelty and oppression, He sacrificed His entire family.
12. In the Letter of Divine Victory (Zafarnama) addressed to Emperor Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh explains that when all peaceful means to end tyranny fail, it is just to take to up the Divine Sword:

ਚੂ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ਼ ਹਮਾਹ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜ਼ਸ਼ਤ ॥ ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਬ ਸ਼ਮਸ਼ੀਰ ਦਸਤ ॥

Choo kaar az hamah heelt-ai dar guzashat. Halaal asatt burdan ba shamsheer dasat.

(Sri Dasam Granth)

13. The Guru emphatically enunciates that every Sikh must follow the tradition of holy congregation (Sangat), and partaking of food together by sitting on the floor in rows, irrespective of rich or poor, high or low (Pangat) as initiated by Guru Nanak Dev.

The Five Takhts - Seats of Holy Authority

A Takht is commonly understood to be a King's throne. However, in the Sikh tradition, the term Takht refers to the seat of holy authority, wherein decisions pertaining to worldly and spiritual matters related to Sikh faith are taken. During the times of the Gurus, spiritual teaching was imparted here and edicts were issued. In present times, in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, which is the embodiment of the Divine Truth, as enunciated by the ten Gurus and other divine persons, the 'Five Beloved Ones' holding the important holy seats of Sikh way of life; adjudge and give opinion and verdict to be followed by the concerned on an important issue - which is considered as the edict of the Guru.

These Takhts are now recognised as the seats of spiritual authority of the Khalsa. Here, issues pertaining to worldly and spiritual matters are decided upon, whereas, Gurdwaras are meant only for worship, meditation and the singing of the hymns.

The Five Takhts

(Holy Seats of Authority of the Sikh Faith)

Sri Akal Takht Sahib : It was built by Guru Hargobind, the sixth Divine

Master, who expounded the version of Worldly and Spiritual Realms (Miri Piri) in 1609. The Akal Takht (the seat of the Timeless One) has a pre-eminent role in the affairs of the Sikh way of life (Sikh community), and provides guidance to Sikhs on secular issues viewed from a spiritual perspective. Any edict issued from here is binding on all the Sikhs around the world. Any issue of vital importance to the Sikh faith is deliberated upon by the 'Five Chosen Ones', from all the five Takhts, sitting together at the Akal Takht in the august presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. After studying the issue, according to Sikh way of life, an edict is issued, which may be addressed to an individual or to the Sikh community at large. The incharge of these Takhts should tread the Divine Path with full love and devotion, eradicating their ego completely, and considering the whole community created by the Divine as One, irrespective of caste, creed, gender, high or low in worldly status.

Takht Sri Patna Sahib : This holy seat is situated in Patna, the capital of Bihar, and is the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Divine Master.

Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib : Located in the town of Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, India, this Takht commemorates the Vaisakhi of 1699, when Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth after initiating the 'Five Beloved Ones' with the priceless gift of Divine Nectar (Amrit) and later on He Himself took the same from them, who were categorised as Guru Panth. It is the place, where Guru Gobind Singh, while performing spiritual deeds spread the message of Divine Truth to mankind by shedding ego, irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Takht Sri Hazur Sahib : It is also known as Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib and is located in Nanded town of Maharashtra, India. It is the place where Guru Gobind Singh merged His mortal body with the five elements of Nature and became One with the All Pervading One i.e. Divine. It was here, that before shedding His mortal body, He bestowed the Divine authority - Guruship on the Guru Granth Sahib. He decreed that henceforth, all Sikhs, though initially belonging to different castes, creeds and religions, should have faith in the sacred scripture the Guru Granth Sahib as their Eternal Guru, and this has been amply clarified by Him in the following verse:

ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਤਬੈ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ ।

ਸਭ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ।

Aag-e-aa bha-ee Akal kee Tab-ei chala-e-o panth.

Sabh Sikkhan ko hukam h-ei Guru maan-e-o Granth.

Takht Sri Damdama Sahib : Located in Talwandi Sabo, a small town 28 kilometres south east of Bathinda in Punjab, this Takht commemorates the visit of Guru Gobind Singh in 1706. After retreating from Anandpur Sahib, He rested here

for some time, and went on to stay for more than nine months. The phrase Dam Lena in Punjabi means 'to rest a while' hence the name Damdama Sahib. His work during His stay here led to the blossoming of the Sikh faith in its full glory. It was here that He recited from His Divine memory the entire text of the Granth Sahib. The Guru blessed this place as Guru ki Kashi, i.e., the highest learning place not only in religious or Divine Wisdom, but also imparting value-based education in all spheres to motivate students to become holy persons, and render selfless service to humanity.

During the daily Diwan, the Guru would elucidate the hymns of the holy Scripture and would preach to the divinely congregation (Sangat). He also set about teaching Gurmukhi to the Sikhs and declared, 'This is the Guru-Kanshi and will emerge in future as a great centre of learning for value-based education.'

***Saints, whose Hymns have been Incorporated
in the Guru Granth Sahib***

Muslim Saint Sheikh Farid (1173-1266)

Sheikh Farid belonging to the Muslim faith settled at Pak Pattan near Multan, now in Pakistan. His forefathers were related to Prophet Mohammed. He became a divine person by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. Guru Nanak met Sheikh Brahm, the tenth descendant of Sheikh Farid and collected his hymns, which were later incorporated in the Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev. In one of the hymns, Sheikh Farid expounds that sugar, jaggery, honey and buffalo milk are all very sweet and delicious. A person awfully engrossed in eating all these things, which arouse passions, cannot tread the Spiritual Path to meet the Divine within and without, as incorporated on page 1379 in the Guru Granth Sahib.

In another hymn, Sheikh Farid clarifies that the seeker should eat very simple coarse bread and drink plain cold water, which induces the person to tread the Divine Path. On the other hand, He warns the seeker that he should not have craving for the delicious foods enjoyed by the rich, who have no urge for treading the Spiritual Path. This hymn has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1379.

Sheikh Farid in another hymn, further advises seeker after Truth that he should not develop enmity even for his enemy, rather he should help him under all circumstances. By doing so, his body would remain free from any ailment and his mind would be inclined to tread the Divine Path. This hymn has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1382. Farid further emphasises that if the seeker doesn't meditate on the Divine Name in the ambrosial hour, he is considered like a dead man while alive. He expounds: "O Man! If you have forgotten God; the Divine has not forgotten you." This hymn has been as incorporated in the Guru Granth

Sahib on page 1383.

Sheikh Farid in another hymn further advises the seeker that if somebody hits him under the influence of anger, he should remain calm and quiet without feeling or showing any tinge of anger. Rather, he should go to his house and touch and lick his feet with utmost humility. Such was the wisdom of Sheikh Farid, the embodiment of humility. This hymn has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1378.

Saint Jaidev (1201-1273)

Saint Jaidev was a Sanskrit poet, born in Orissa, India. Even in his childhood, he had immense knowledge of the Vedas and the Shastras. He wrote many hymns, which were popular in the temple of Jaganath Puri. However, in the end, he realised that mere reading and writing would not help him to realise the Divine within. He came in contact with some divine persons and according to their divine advice, he started reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion perceiving His presence within and everywhere. This utmost devotion on meditation of the Divine Name made him realise the Omnipresent - within and without. In this spiritual ecstasy, he expounded two divine hymns with the grace of the Divine Lord, which have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Namdev (1270-1350)

Saint Namdev (1270-1350) was born in the village Narsi Bahmani, in Hingoli district presently called Narsi Namdev in Maharashtra. By profession, he was a calico-printer/tailor and belonged to the low-caste. From childhood, on hearing the stories of Divine Persons, he was devoted to realising the Divine and started reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. With the passage of time, he realised the Divine within. Once, the followers of the local deity went to the temple reciting the glories of the Divine with drum beats, to catch a glimpse of the idol. The young Namdev also joined them and in divine ecstasy, started beating his leather sandals. Because of this unholy act, they pushed him towards the back of the temple. He went on singing the sermons of the Divine and became intuned with the Divine within. Lo and behold! The gate of the temple moved around towards the direction where Namdev was reciting the Divine Name and the deity showed the reflection of God. Seeing this miracle, all the devotees fell at His feet. They started considering him as a saint and became His followers.

Namdev's father used to worship the idols of the deities. He used to put a small pot full of milk before the deities and recite the glories of the Divine. After that he used to bring that milk to his kitchen. Once, he was required to go out of station to

attend some function of a near relation at a distant place. He asked Namdev to perform the daily prayers by offering a bowl of milk to the deities, but he forgot to impart instructions to bring the bowl of milk for using in the kitchen after the prayers. The lad saint Namdev milked the cow and placed the bowl full of milk before the deities. He then humbly with full devotion by contemplating his sight on the Divine within started praying: "O my Divine Lord! Bestow upon me Your blessings by having milk so that my mind is imbued in Divine Bliss and my father will also be happy for following his instructions." After deep contemplation when Namdev opened his eyes, he was very happy to see that the Divine Lord had taken the entire milk. This episode has been illustrated in a hymn in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਦੁਧੁ ਪੀਉ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੇ ਰਾਇ ॥ ਦੁਧੁ ਪੀਉ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨੁ ਪਤੀਆਇ ॥
ਨਾਹੀ ਤ ਘਰ ਕੋ ਬਾਪੁ ਰਿਸਾਇ ॥

**Doodh(u) peeou Gobind-ai Raa-e. Doodh(u) peeou m-ai-ro mann(u) pateaa-e.
Naahee ta ghar ko baap(u) risaa-e. (1163)**

After the death of his father, Namdev and his mother were residing in a thatched hut. After sometime the hut started leaking during the rainy days. His mother gave some money to Namdev to purchase material from the nearby town for repair of the hut. When he reached the town, a hermit rushed towards him and exclaimed, "O saintly boy! I am very hungry. Please feed me food from this nearby shop." Namdev took the hermit to the eating shop and asked the owner to feed him. The hermit was very hungry and went on eating so much so that all the money got exhausted. After giving him blessings, the hermit left the place. Namdev was worried as to how would he get the hut repaired without the money. He could bear the chiding of his mother, but the neighbour's harsh comments regarding him to his mother would hurt her. Namdev went to a rivulet and slept on its bank till midnight and after taking bath, he planned to enter his house thinking that he would not come out to hear the taunts of the neighbour to his mother. On reaching home, he was astonished to find a palatial building. His mother hugged him with joy that he had sent such a team of builders, who had completed such a marvellous work within no time. Namdev started shedding tears due to the utmost blessings of the Divine Lord in the garb of a hermit who had built such a marvellous house, so much so that he could not express this holy story to his mother. In the morning, all the neighbours from the village gathered around Namdev and started enquiring about the builder, who constructed such a palatial house in no time so that they could also get their work done from him even by paying double the labour charges.

Namdev in divine ecstasy replied, "O my dear neighbour! The builder accepts Divine Love only, and not money, if anyone wants to get such house built." This

hymn by Namdev in the Guru Granth Sahib narrates the whole incident:

ਰੀ ਬਾਈ ਬੇਢੀ ਦੇਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥ ਦੇਖੁ ਬੇਢੀ ਰਹਿਓ ਸਮਾਈ ॥

ਹਮਾਰੈ ਬੇਢੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਨ ਅਧਾਰਾ ॥

ਬੇਢੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਮਜੂਰੀ ਮਾਂਗੈ ਜਉ ਕੋਊ ਛਾਨਿ ਛਵਾਵੈ ਹੋ ॥

Ree baaee b-ai-dhee d-ai-n(u) na jaaee. D-ai-kh(u) b-ai-dhee rah-e-o samaaee.

Hamaar-ei b-ai-dhee praan adhaaraa.

B-ai-dhee preet(i) majooree maang-ei Jaou ko-oo chhaan(i) chhavaav-ei ho. (657)

From these divine episodes, the glory of Namdev spread far and wide. However, Namdev followed his profession of calico-painting while remaining intuned with the Divine Name.

For long, Namdev continued preaching the divine glories among the masses to motivate them to tread the Divine Path. Towards the end of his life, while preaching the Divine Name, he reached Punjab, where he shed his mortal frame in village Ghuman in 1350. His hymns are enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Trilochan (1267-1335)

Saint Trilochan was born in a Vaishya family in the year 1267 in the village Pandarpur of Sholapur district in Maharashtra. Trilochan literally means three-eyed person in the Spiritual Realm, i.e., the seer to see the happenings of the past, present and future. He was a contemporary of Namdev, who mentions Him in His hymns, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Although He was married, yet with a saintly bent of mind, He used to render great service to the saints, who visited him. Due to divinely services rendered by the saint, his mind was engrossed in meditation to realise the Divine - within and without.

He heard of the spiritual fame of Namdev and decided to have his glimpse to imbibe the Divine Wisdom in his spiritual discourses. Reaching Namdev, he saw him engaged in performing worldly duties, while reciting the Divine Name at the same time. Seeing Namdev engrossed in worldly affairs, he developed a doubt in his mind, that how he could be the perfect divine person? Perceiving the doubt in Trilochan's mind, Saint Namdev clarified the same by reciting the following hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਨਾਮਾ ਕਰੈ ਤਿਲੋਚਨਾ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਰਾਮੁ ਸੰਮਾਲਿ ॥ ਹਾਥ ਪਾਉ ਕਰਿ ਕਾਮੁ ਸਭੁ ਚੀਤੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Naamaa kah-ei Tilochanaa Mukh t-ai Ram samhaal(i).

Haath paaou kar(i) kaam(u) sabh(u) Cheet(u) Niranjan naal(i). (1376)

(O dear Trilochan! Chant the Divine Name with your tongue while performing the worldly duties with your hands and feet. But, let your consciousness remain attuned with love of the Divine Lord.)

Saint Namdev clarifies the technique to realise the Divine Lord - within and without. Namdev tells Trilochan that he should go on reciting the Divine Name with his tongue with full love and devotion, even while performing the worldly duties with hands and feet.

Saint Trilochan's four hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Sadna (1270-1350)

Saint Sadna, also called Sadna Qasai (Butcher), was a Muslim saint, who was born at village Sehwaan in Hyderabad, Sindh (now in Pakistan). Near his meat shop, there were shady trees and drinking water facilities, where passersby, including many saints, used to halt for some time and have some rest. From his teenage, Sadna used to hear the stories of the divine persons from the saints who took rest under the shady trees. He showed inclination to tread the Divine Path, but could not leave his profession of butchering the animals.

One day after selling the entire flesh-stock, he was about to close the shop, when a customer came running and asked to give a sizeable quantity of meat to serve his guests. Sadna told him that he had sold the entire meat and that he could give the same only the next morning. The customer, being very close to Sadna, pressurised him to cut a leg of the goat and give it to him to please his guests. On hearing this, Sadna was very much puzzled for he was a pious man. But under the great pressure of his friend, he went towards the goat to cut the leg of the animal.

When he saw the goat's eyes, he perceived that the animal was laughing at him with shining eyes conveying that he would be adopting a cruel method, which was not in sync with the Divine Law. The divine cry of the animal touched Sadna's heart and the dagger fell from his hands. The same Divine within both, i.e., Sadna and the animal, shook the heart of the former, making him realise that the cruelty on anyone would lead the person to hell. Repenting for his sins, Sadna started crying and told his friend that henceforth he would not continue this profession, and commit such a sin further. From that day onwards, Sadna started reciting the Divine Name and intensified his association with holy persons. With his utmost devotion and love to realise the Divine within, he became a Muslim saint (Faquir) and started spreading the message of the Divine (Allah) amongst the masses and finally came to Punjab, where he shed his mortal frame at Sirhind. His hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Ramanand (1366-1467)

Saint Ramanand is considered to be the reviver of the Ramanandi sect. He is

said to have been born in a Brahmin family of Tamilnadu in Southern India, from where, in the later part of his life, he shifted to the holy city of Varanasi (Banaras). He was a great saint and spread the movement of Bhakti far and wide. Many of his followers became divine persons (Saints).

Saint Ramanand was spiritually inclined right from his childhood. He became the disciple of Acharaya Raghavanand, also known as Dakshinayat Rishi, who lived at Jagannath Puri, a renowned Hindu sacred place in Odisha. Ramanand spent most of his life in Kashi (Varanasi), where due to his spiritual bent of mind, he studied a large number of Hindu Scriptures to realise the Divine within.

He was spiritually inclined from his childhood and studied vast number of Hindu scriptures in Kashi (Varanasi) to realise the Divine within and without and to see One in All and All in One. In the early stages, he used to worship the idols of Lord Rama and His wife Sita. Since he was honestly endeavouring to realise the Divine, he started reciting the Divine Name 'Rama' i.e., the Almighty Lord pervading everywhere. Due to his utmost devotion to realise the Divine within, the recitation of the Divine Name became so intense that every hair of his body was reciting the Divine Name 'Rama' and emitting divine vibrations, within and without. Ultimately, he became the Divine One.

A hymn of Saint Ramanand as incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib is given below:

ਕਤ ਜਾਈਐ ਰੇ ਘਰ ਲਾਗੋ ਰੰਗੁ ॥ ਮੇਰਾ ਚਿਤੁ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਮਨੁ ਭਇਓ ਪੰਗੁ ॥
ਏਕ ਦਿਵਸ ਮਨ ਭਈ ਉਮੰਗੁ ॥ ਘਸਿ ਚੰਦਨ ਚੋਆ ਬਹੁ ਸੁਰੰਧ ॥
ਪੂਜਨ ਚਾਲੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਠਾਇ ॥ ਸੋ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਤਾਇਓ ਗੁਰ ਮਨ ਹੀ ਮਾਹਿ ॥
ਜਹਾ ਜਾਈਐ ਤਹ ਜਲ ਪਖਾਨ ॥ ਤੂ ਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਸਮਾਨ ॥
ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਸਭ ਦੇਖੇ ਜੋਇ ॥ ਉਹਾ ਤਉ ਜਾਈਐ ਜਉ ਈਹਾ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮੈ ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਤੋਰ ॥ ਜਿਨਿ ਸਕਲ ਬਿਕਲ ਭ੍ਰਮ ਕਾਟੇ ਮੋਰ ॥
ਰਾਮਾਨੰਦ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਰਮਤ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਾਟੈ ਕੋਟਿ ਕਰਮ ॥

Kat jaaee-ei r-ai ghar laago rangg(u). M-ai-raa chit(u) na chall-ei mann(u) bha-e-o pangg(u).

Ai-k divas mann bahee umangg. Ghas(i) chandan choaa bah(u) sugandh.

Poojan chaalee Brahm tthaa-e. So Brahm bataa-e-o Gur mann hee maah-e.

Jahaa jaaee-ei teh jal pakhaan. Too poor(i) rah-e-o h-ei sabh samaan.

B-ai-d Puraan sabh d-a-kh-ai jo-e. Oohaana tao(u) jaaee-ei jao(u) eehaan na ho-e.

Sat(i)gur m-ei balihaaree tor. Jin(i) sakal bikal bhram kaat-ai mor.

Ramanand Suaamee ramat Brahm. Gur kaa Sabad(u) kaat-ei kot(i) karam. (1195)

(Where shall I go now, because I have realised the Divine bliss within my heart, which is the source of life and spiritual bliss. My mind now does not wander, because my egoistic mind has vanished, and I am engrossed in the Divine Truth completely.

One day an immense desire rose in my mind to go to the temple to worship God, for that I rubbed the paste of sandal wood mixed with fragrances of various kinds. Before going to the temple, I instantly realised the Divine within by His grace. The same Divine made me realise Him in my own heart.

Wherever I go to the temple, I only see water and stone images, but O Divine Lord! You have made me to see You pervading everywhere. I have studied all the Vedas and Puranas, but ultimately realised that instead of continuously studying all these revered books, I should concentrate on the recitation of Your Divine Name in my heart with complete love and devotion, realising Your presence, within and without. O my Divine Master! I wholeheartedly sacrifice myself upon You, as You have cleansed my egoistic mind completely and made me to merge with You completely. I have lost my identity by eradicating my ego completely and merged with You. I have come to the conclusion that reciting the Divine Name eradicates millions of bad deeds, which make the seeker to merge with the Divine completely.)

Saint Ravidas (1378-1529)

Saint Ravidas was a cobbler by profession. But due to his Divine Wisdom, he was popular as a saint in Eastern, Northern and Western regions of India in the 15th century. His parents were in the leather trade, and were well off. He was barely five days old when Bhagat Ramanand visited his house and blessed the child. Ravidas was born to Raghu and Ghurbinia, who lived near the city of Varanasi. According to history, he was born in a village named Seer Govardhanpur, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, India. His hymns and verses made an everlasting impact on meditation (Bhakti) movement throughout India.

When Ravidas attained the age of discretion, his father inspired him to join the family business. But Ravidas was imbued with humane values. The money he received from his father for business would be spent on the welfare of the saints and the needy. His father was extremely perturbed and banished him from the house.

By this time, Ravidas was already married. Rather than resenting his father's actions, he quietly left the house and started living in a make-shift hut with his wife. He set up a small wayside shop for mending shoes, but he did not abandon his love for God. His extreme devotion to the Divine and cultivation of Universal Love induced hundreds of people of all castes to join him in worship. This resulted in envy among the Brahmin priests, who raised the matter in the Court of the Muslim Nawab of Kashi. The Nawab was a man of righteousness, and put the matter to a miraculous test, he realised that Ravidas was really a divine person.

Ravidas's selfless devotion and love for humanity spread far and wide. Maharani Jhally of Chitaur was a benevolent and pious woman. Her ardency brought her to Banaras on a pilgrimage. Despite disapproval of the Brahmin priests, she straight-away went to the Temple of Ravidas, who was in his divine ecstasy at the time, reciting his hymns (Raag Sorath, page 658-59). The Maharani was captivated. Eventually, she became his disciple and abandoned all her luxurious trappings. Her husband, the Maharana, turned against her, over her adopting a cobbler as her Guru. He was enraged when she returned. He could be pacified only after listening to some of the hymns of Bhagat Ravidas, but still wanted to put her new Guru through a test to invalidate the allegations of the Brahmins. Ravidas, the cobbler, was invited to Chitaur and requested to participate in an oblation. The Brahmin priests, of course, refused to eat while a cobbler, considered to be low-caste, was seated in the same row. Ravidas voluntarily moved away. But miraculously, every person distributing food appeared to look just like Bhagat Ravidas to the Brahmins. (Another account states when the Brahmins sat down to eat, they saw Ravidas seated between every two of them). They complained to the Maharana, who perceived the hidden meaning of this marvel, and became an ardent devotee. Ravidas remained in Chitaur for a long time. It is said that Mira Bai became his disciple as well during that period. As per some accounts, he died at a ripe old age of nearly 120 years in Banaras.

40 hymns of Ravidas have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master.

When one realises the Divine within and without, he attains the stage of the Formless Divine Realm to see One in All and All in One, and loses his ego completely. It is such a blissful stage without any sorrows, pleasures, sufferings or fear, and which is not expressible. Saint Ravidas has expressed this stage in one of his hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਬੇਗਮ ਪੁਰਾ ਸਹਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਉ ॥ ਦੁਖੁ ਅੰਦੋਹੁ ਨਹੀ ਤਿਹਿ ਠਾਉ ॥
ਨਾਂ ਤਸਵੀਸ ਖਿਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਮਾਲੁ ॥ ਖਉਫੁ ਨ ਖਤਾ ਨ ਤਰਸੁ ਜਵਾਲੁ ॥

Begam Pura sehar ko naaou. Dookh(u) andoh(u) nahee teh(i) thaaou.

Naa tasvees khiraaj(u) na maal(u). Khough(u) na khataa na taras(u) javaal(u). (345)

[The dweller of this worry-less state of mind (Begampura Shehar) fears no one, remains in a worry-less state, completely free from worldly miseries; nor is he burdened by the anxiety of any future scarcity. He is always in a state of spiritual ecstasy.]

Saint Sain (1390-1440)

Saint Sain was born towards the end of the fourteenth century. He was a royal

barber in the court of Raja Ram, king of Rewa. He used to massage the king daily for the relief of body pains. Once, he came in contact with a divine person and joined his company for treading the Divine Path. The sage told him the technique of reciting the Divine Name to realise the divine bliss within for getting salvation in this very life. Following the instructions of the divine person in letter and spirit, he was so much engrossed in the divine bliss that one day he forgot to go to massage the king. Lo and behold! In his place, the Divine, in the form of Sain massaged the king in such a way that all the king's pains vanished.

When Sain got up from the deep meditation, he started trembling with fear that the king would punish him. However, having faith in the Divine, mustering great courage, he went to massage the king. When the king saw him, he was overjoyed, "O Sain! Today you have done the massage in such a wonderful way that the whole pain of my body has vanished." Sain, at once realised that God is so bountiful that He saves His devotees Himself by undergoing hardships. From that moment, Sain left the king's job and devoted himself to the Divine Master with such devotion that he merged in Him completely.

His Hymn has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. He shed his mortal frame at Varanasi in 1440.

Saint Kabir (1398-1518)

Saint Kabir is commonly supposed to have lived for 120 years from 1398 to 1518, which associates him with other famous divine figures of that era like Guru Nanak Dev.

According to one traditional version of his parentage, Kabir was born to a Brahmin widow at Lahartara near Kashi. The widow abandoned Kabir to escape the stigma associated with births outside marriage. A poor holy hearted Muslim picked up the child from the basket floating in a rivulet. He was brought up by the Muslim weaver family Niru and Nima. As he grew, his urge to realise the Divine increased and he started searching for the Divine Path to fulfil his holy desire in this very life. He heard of the fame of the Divine Wisdom of Saint Ramanand to perceive the Divine Name for recitation to attain salvation in this very life. He, being a poor Muslim, perceived that such a high spiritual person, i.e., Ramanand would not bestow upon him the Divine Name. He conceived the idea that by being touched by Ramanand's feet, he would automatically get the Divine Name to tread on the Divine Path.

One day in the ambrosial hour, he laid down on the footsteps of the river bank, where Ramanand used to take bath before his daily routine of meditation. Under

the Will of God, when Saint Ramanand stepped down to take bath in the rivulet, his feet touched the child and as usual he expounded the Divine Name 'Ram' and went down to take bath. Kabir picked up the Divine Name and started reciting the same with full love and devotion, day in and day out, while performing all the worldly duties. Even after getting married to Loe, he carried on his meditation rather more intensively and with the passage of time became a renowned saint of both Hindus and Muslims. Many saints from other religions started visiting his house and he took care of them with full love and devotion, despite the fact that his wife used to grumble at his keeping company with the ascetics.

Kabir did not follow the strict path of rituals of both the religions, i.e., Hinduism and Islam. But with his honest devotion to tread the divine Path led to shed his ego completely, he followed the simplest way of treading the divine Path by reciting the Divine Name with complete love and devotion. He developed the Divine Wisdom to see One in All and All in One and expounded many hymns in His glory. He condemned many pseudo-rituals of almost all the religions which become hurdles in the realisation of the Divine within and without.

Kabir's legends describe his victory in trials by a Muslim King (Sultan), a high-caste Hindu priest (Brahmin), a Muslim clergy (Qazi) and a merchant. The hymns enunciated by Saint Kabir reflect the Universal Truth to see One in All and All in One and his profound faith in the Divine Order. He was completely merged with the Divine within and enunciated the divine hymns for the spiritual welfare of humanity. These hymns have been incorporated in the Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master.

Saint Dhanna (1415-1475)

Bhagat Dhanna was born in 1415 in a Jat family in the village of Dhuan Kalan near Deoli city, in Tonk district of Rajasthan. Dhanna was an ordinary farmer and used to graze the cattle in the pasture located close to a pond. This pond was considered auspicious because on the bank of it a renowned priest (Brahmin) Trilochan, used to worship stone idols. Seeing it, Dhanna was also motivated to enquire the benefit of this worship. He asked Trilochan about the worshipping of stone idols. Trilochan told Dhanna that God was pleased to bestow all those bounties on the devotees that they seek. It prompted Dhanna to request Trilochan to give him one stone deity for worship. Trilochan told him that the deity required a lot of offerings and worship. Dhanna replied that he would worship according to his instructions. In order to brush aside the request of Dhanna, Trilochan told him that he should bring all the bounties as offerings, to get the deity the following morning.

Next morning, Dhanna took all the bounties and Trilochan accepted them and handed over to him a weighing stone wrapped in a beautiful cloth and told him the technique of worshipping the deity. Dhanna placed the deity at a suitable place and followed all the instructions of bathing the deity, and offering it sumptuous food to eat. With folded hands, he started praying before the deity to take food, else he would remain hungry till the deity accepted his offerings. Dhanna sat down, and with his folded hands started reciting the Divine Name with closed eyes and went on pleading for his request to be fulfilled.

Due to this austerity and divine love and devotion for a long period, the Divine manifested in his heart and took food. After that Dhanna took the same and went on worshipping the Divine within. To his surprise, all the field works like ploughing, seeding, irrigating the crops and grazing of animals got done automatically. With the passage of time, Dhanna became a renowned saint. This episode has been narrated in one of the odes (Vaars) of Saint poet Bhai Gurdas. Four hymns of Saint Dhanna have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Pipa (1426-1562)

Saint Pipa was born as Pratap Rao, at Gagaron, in the present Jhalawar district of Rajasthan in a Khichi Chauhan Rajput family. He was a ruler turned saint. Venerated in the region of Punjab among Sikhs, his lone devotional hymn incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib is widely quoted by most preachers. Since childhood, He was a Sakta follower. Thereafter, He adopted Vaishnavism in the company of Ramanand, and then adopted the Gurmat way of life. His hymn in the Guru Granth Sahib is considered to be the most influential in the propagation of the Bhakti movement in India. Initially, he was the worshipper of goddess Bhawani in the form of an idol. Later on, he became the disciple of Ramanand, who was an ascetic. He accepted ascetic (Bairagi) faith under his influence.

Pipa devoutly followed all of the ascetic Karmas, and finally decided to give up his throne and retired to a life of seclusion and started idol-worshipping. After sometime, when he could not find divine pleasure within, he abandoned idol-worship and started reciting the Divine Name with utmost love and devotion, keeping in mind the presence of the Divine within and without. With the passage of time, the recitation of the Divine Name with utmost devotion, eradicated his ego completely, and thus he became a Divine person to see One in All and All in One. In this divine bliss, he recited the hymn, wherein he concludes that God is pervading everywhere and whoever merges with Him, gets rid of the cycle of birth and rebirth. In other words, he gets salvation. One hymn of Pipa has been incorporated in the Guru

Granth Sahib.

Saint Surdas (1478-1573)

Saint Surdas was a 15th century blind saint, poet and musician, known for his devotional songs in glory of the Divine. He was born in 1478 in village Sihi, Faridabad, Haryana, India. His utmost devotion and concentration on the recitation of the Divine Name led him to realise the Divine within and everywhere. Being blind, he became very popular among the masses. One hymn of Surdas has been enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Saint Bhikhan (1480-1573)

Saint Bhikhan was born in 1480 at village Kakori near Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. He belonged to the Muslim faith. He was the most learned person during the times of Emperor Akbar. He was a saintly person and was engaged in spreading the divine message to the people to tread the Divine Path for getting divine peace. Two of His hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. He left his mortal frame in 1573.

Saint Parmanand (1483-1593)

Saint Parmanand, a Maharashtrian saint, whose hymn has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, was born in 1483. He lived at Barsi, located to the north of Pandharpur, in the present Sholapur district of Maharashtra. In the early stage of his life, he developed a great love and devotion to realise the Divine for getting salvation. He started meditation by worshiping idols of different deities and prostrating hundreds of times before them. By following such rituals, he became more and more egoistic, could not realise the Divine and developed a great unrest within. Then he came in contact with some divine persons, who showed him the path of love and devotion for reciting the Divine Name to realise the Divine everywhere - within and without. By doing so with utmost love and devotion, he realised the state of divine peace and ultimately got salvation. One of his hymns has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1253.

Saint Beni

It is believed that Saint Beni was the contemporary of Guru Nanak Dev. From his hymns, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, it is apparent that he laid more stress on devotional prayer and meditation on the Divine Name with utmost dedication. He is one of the eighteen saints and Sufis, whose verses find a place of honour in the Guru Granth Sahib. It is believed that he spent most of his time in prayer and meditation

and often neglected the household needs while in meditation and prayer.

He was a highly educated scholar, with a very humble temperament. He was ever ready to serve the true preceptor to get the blessings of the Divine.

Bhagat Beni followed the path of reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion to see One in All and All in One, but did not undergo hard penances. His three hymns have been included in the Guru Granth Sahib under musical measures as Sri Raag (93), Ramkali (974) and Prabhati (1351).

Guru Arjan Dev also says that Bhagat Beni attained enlightenment only through the holy 'Word'. Bhai Gurdas mentions in one of his odes that God in the form of a king went to Beni, who was completely absorbed in the Divine within, and fulfilled all His wordly needs and protected His honour among the masses.

Satta-Balwand

Satta and Balwand were the Muslim hymn singers in the divine court of Guru Arjan Dev. They were descendants of Bhai Mardana, Muslim by faith, who accompanied Guru Nanak Dev in His various spiritual sojourns (Udasis).

Baba Sundar

Baba Sundar, celebrated for his six-stanza composition, Ramkali Sad(u), incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, was the great grandson of Guru Amardas. His father, Anand Das, son of Baba Mohri, was a man of a great devotion. Sundar grew up in an environment of faith and piety, and developed deep affection and reverence for Guru Amardas, his great grand-father. Theme of his verse 'Sad(u)', meaning 'call' is the surrender of Guru Amardas, described in terms of his having been recalled by the Almighty God. The hymn states how Guru Amardas had completely surrendered Himself to the Will of the Supreme Being, ever remaining absorbed in meditation of the Divine Name.

Eleven High-caste Brahmins (Bhatts)

The Bhatts belonged to high-caste Brahmins and were very eager to attain Divine Wisdom (Brahm Gyaan). For this purpose, they visited almost all the pilgrimages of India to meet some enlightened persons to quench their spiritual thirst. Nobody could satisfy their search for the Divine Wisdom. Ultimately, they heard about the spirituality of Guru Nanak's house, and knew from where they could quench their thirst of Divine Wisdom. Some of them had the association of Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas; and after clearing their doubts, they got Divine Wisdom. This message was spread among other Bhatts, who were divinely

associated with Guru Arjan Dev. After clarification of their doubts and eradication of their ego completely, they also became divine and expounded the glories of the Divine, which were incorporated in the Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev. The hymns by the bards (Bhatt Bani) spread over twenty pages has been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

The eleven Bhattas, whose hymns are included in the Guru Granth Sahib are Kals-har, Jaalap, Kirat, Bhika, Salh, Bhalh, Nal, Gyand, Mathura, Bal and Harbans.

***Divine Persons of Previous Era mentioned
in the Guru Granth Sahib
King Janak***

King Janak was an earnest spiritual seeker. He was the father of Sita and married his daughter to Prince Ram Chandra, a Prophet in the third eon of the world, according to Indian mythology. There is an interesting story as to how King Janak became a divine person.

During his time, there was a saint Ashtavakara, who had eight deformities in his body. It is said that his father was also a knowledgeable person and used to give advice to his king. One day, the king put a spiritual question to his father, but he said that he would reply to the question later. He was actually puzzled and could not find a solution to the question. He came home and discussed the matter with his wife. His wife was pregnant and the would-be-son Ashtavakra was in her womb in his ninth month. He told the story to his wife and showed concern that he was confused as to what reply to give to the king's query. The unborn child Ashtavakra, who had carried spiritual capital from his past lives by studying spiritual books under the guidance of the spiritual Masters, and imbibed the gist of the whole of spirituality, and in other words, had become Brahmgyani, i.e., the knowledgeable person of the Divine, told his father from the mother's womb the appropriate answer to the question.

Instead of appreciating the reply of his unborn child, his father became furious and cursed him that he would have eight deformities (curves) on his body, when he would be born. The same happened: Ashtavakra got eight curves on his body. After birth, when he was able to talk and walk, he left home and went into the forest for deep meditation.

During that period, King Janak was a great ruler of India, a pious seeker after Truth to realise the Divine within and without. He spread the message far and wide that whoever would give him the Divine Wisdom within a short period - while mounting the horse's back - he would not only become spiritualistic, but also spread the divine message in his kingdom to create spiritual brotherhood and divine peace

in the world, otherwise he would not only become an atheist, but also spread the message that no Divine Power exists. This negative message was very dangerous to establish spiritual brotherhood and divine peace in the world. They, who were the masters of the Vedas and the Shastras; and were respected among the masses, became very upset and worried that if King Janak became an atheist, it would lead to chaos in the kingdom. However, even if they had read all the Vedas and the Shastras, they could not imbibe the spiritual wisdom to shed their ego completely to merge with the Divine. Rather, they acquired more ego, and pretended to be saints even without moulding their lives to shed their ego completely. They were very proud of their pseudo-knowledge regarding spirituality, as incorporated in the Vedas and the Shastras. As such, they brought their holy books - Vedas and Shastras, and came on the date fixed by the King. In a large Pandal, he placed a golden throne for the divine person, who could give him divine knowledge to enable him to merge with God in a short span of time of mounting the horse's back. He himself sat on a well-furnished carpet on the dais. All the learned persons carrying the Vedas and the Shastras in their hands, sat in the front rows to find solution to the King's query. Everybody was confused because they had only read the sacred books for their pseudo-spiritual knowledge, but could not mould their lives accordingly.

Saint Ashtavakara, while meditating in the forest, perceived this situation due to his Divine Wisdom and felt that if at this moment, King Janak was not bestowed the divine knowledge, he would become an atheist, with the result that most of the people of his kingdom, too, would follow him. He left his place and went straight towards the ground, where the pseudo-spiritualists were gathered with the holy scriptures to find the solution, but remained puzzled, and nobody dared to go to Janak to bestow him with Divine wisdom within the stipulated time. Saint Ashtavakra, with eight curves on his body, entered the ground and walked straight to the golden throne for imparting Divine Wisdom to the King. On seeing eight curves on his body, everybody started laughing at the deformed Ashtavakra. When Ashtavakra climbed the dais and sat on the golden throne, everybody with pseudo-knowledge of the Vedas and the Shastras, started laughing more loudly, perceiving that the man appeared to be insane. Seeing this, Ashtavakra asked King Janak, why had he gathered a congregation of cobblers. Janak was astonished on hearing this and humbly submitted, "O Saint Ashtavakra! They have all read four Vedas and six Shastras as well as other scriptures. How can they be considered cobblers?" Ashtavakara retorted, "All these pseudo-spiritualists have seen only my body with eight curves and that is why they are laughing. They have not perceived the Divine

within me, to which I am merged." Hearing this, there was an eerie silence. King Janak, touched the feet of Saint Ashtavakara, and humbly requested him to bestow Divine Wisdom on him. Ashtavakara asked him to submit his body, mind and the whole of his kingdom to him. The King, with great humility, submitted all these worldly bounties to Saint Ashtavakara. The Saint asked for the horse. When King Janak started to mount the horse's back, Saint Ashtavakara shouted with a divinely thunderous voice:

ਜਗਤ ਮਿਥਿਅਮ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਤਿਯਮ ਜੀਵੋਓ ਬ੍ਰਹਿਮਈ ਕੇਵਲੰਗ

Jagat(a) Mithyeyaam Brahm(a) Satyam Jivo(u) Brahmmai(i) Kewalang(g)

(O Janak! The whole world is illusion; only the Divine is the Eternal Truth. Shed your ego completely and merge with Him and become the Divine.)

King Janak at once realized and shed his ego completely, forgot his body, mind and kingdom, and merged with the Divine completely. Thus, he became a divine person and started imparting divine knowledge to seekers after Truth. This devotional story testifies that mere reading of the religious books is for attaining worldly knowledge and gains and for preaching others to make them followers. Such pseudo-knowledgeable persons cannot realize the Divine within, and thus merge with Him completely.

On page 591 in the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Ramdas clarifies that after meditating on the Divine Name, King Janak became a divine person, i.e., Gurmukh/BrahmGyani.

In another verse on page 1309 of the Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Ramdas mentions about King Janak:

(O worldly persons! Don't be puzzled by merely seeing the high and low-caste of the persons. Just follow the path of Saint Sukhdev and King Janak, who became Divine with complete submission and eradication of their ego with the recitation of the Divine Name.)

Such was King Janak, who merged with the Divine, and eradicated his ego completely, as mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 1398.

Bhai Gurdas, who became a divine person in the divine company of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master, writes in one of his odes (Vaars), that King Janak was a great saint, who remained unattached while ruling his kingdom.

Sage Vashisht

Vashisht was the Guru of Lord Rama. He inculcated the Divine Wisdom in Lord Rama and his sermons are compiled in a revered book called Yog Vashisht. The concept of spirituality incorporated in Yog Vashisht is more or less the same as

enunciated by the Sikh Gurus and other saints, whose verses have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Vashisht as a divine person has also been mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib on page 591:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪ੍ਰਹਿਲਾਦਿ ਜਪਿ ਹਰਿ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਨਕਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਈ ॥

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬਸਿਸਟਿ ਹਰਿ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਸੁਣਾਈ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਕਿਨੈ ਪਾਇਆ ਮੇਰੇ ਭਾਈ ॥

Gurmukh(i) Prehlad jap(i) Har(i) gat(i) paaee. Gurmukh(i) Janak(i) Har(i) Naam(i) liv laaee.

Gurmukh(i) Basisat Har(i) upd-ai-s(u) sunhaaee.

Bin(u) Gur Har(i) Naam(u) na kinn-ei paa-e-aa m-ai-r-ai bhaaee. (591)

(As Gurmukh, Prehlad meditated on the Lord, and was saved. As Gurmukh, Janak lovingly centered his consciousness on the Lord's Name. As Gurmukh, Vashisht taught the Teachings of the Lord. O my Siblings of Destiny! Without the Guru, no one has found the Lord's Name.)

Lord Rama

Dashrath, the King of Ayodhya, had three wives and four sons. Lord Rama was the eldest and His mother was Kaushalya. Lakshaman and Shatrugan were twins from his second wife Sumitra. Bhart was the son of his third and favourite wife Kaikeyi.

Lord Rama was very obedient, loyal and handsome, dear to all the three mothers and the people of Ayodhya. He was declared the heir apparent of Dashrath. The declaration was greeted with joy, but Manthra, the wicked maid-servant of Kaikayi reminded the queen of the King's promise, that her son would be made the King. On persistent persuasion of the maid-servant, and remembering that the king had once promised to grant her any two wishes or boons, she desired, she demanded from king Dashrath the banishment of Lord Rama from the kingdom for 14 years, and that her son Bhart be crowned the King of Ayodhya. The king had to keep his promise to his wife, and with a heavy heart, he ordered banishment for Lord Rama, who accepted the decree without any ado.

When his wife Sita and his younger brother Laxman heard that Lord Rama would be sent in exile for 14 years, they begged to accompany him to the forest retreat. When Bharat learned what his mother had done, he was very disappointed. He was whole-heartedly devoted to his elder brother Lord Rama. So, he sought Lord Rama in the forest. He pleaded with Lord Rama that the eldest should rule and prayed to him to return and claim his rightful place as the king. Lord Rama refused to go against the wishes of His father. So Bharat took Rama's sandals and pledged to place the same on the throne as symbols of Lord Rama's authority.

It shows how much love, respect and obedience prevailed at that time. This

influenced the individuals to obey the orders of their elders in letter and spirit by following the Divine Law (Raza). These divine actions eradicate ego of the humans and pave the way to merge with the Divine within, the reason why man has come to this earth. All the happenings which took place in the 14 years of exile of Lord Rama, have been compiled in a holy book by Rishi Valmiki in the Ramayana.

In Guru Granth Sahib, it has been mentioned that in the third aeon (Traita Yuga), Lord Rama was worshipped:

ਤੁਏ ਤੈ ਮਾਣਿਓ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਘੁਵੰਸੁ ਕਹਾਇਓ ॥

Tr-ai-t-ei t-ei maanh-e-o Ram(u) Raghuvans(u) kahaa-e-o. (1390)

(In the Silver Age of Traytaa Yuga, You were called Raam of the Raghu dynasty.)

Saint Namdev also expounds that His divine guide was Lord Rama, son of King Dashrath:

ਜਸਰਥ ਰਾਇ ਨੰਦੁ ਰਾਜਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਰਾਮ ਚੰਦੁ ਪ੍ਰਣਵੈ ਨਾਮਾ ਤਤੁ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਪੀਜੈ ॥

Jasrath Rae Nand Raja m-ai-raa Ram Chand(u) pranhv-ei Naamaa tat(u) ras(u) amrit(u) peej-ei. (973)

(My Sovereign Lord is Ram Chandra, the son of King Dashrath; prays Namdev. I drink in the Ambrosial Nectar.)

Namdev again expounds:

ਗੌਤਮ ਨਾਰਿ ਅਹਲਿਆ ਤਾਰੀ ਪਾਵਨ ਕੇਤਕ ਤਾਰੀਅਲੇ ॥

Gautam naar(i) Ahilyaa taaree Paavan k-ai-tak taaree-ale. (988)

(You saved Ahilyaa, the wife of Gautam; how many have You purified and carried across?)

According to an Indian myth, in Satyuga, i.e., first era of Truthfulness, there was a sage named Gautam. After witnessing the extra-marital relation of his wife Ahilyaa, he cursed her to become a statue. She prayed humbly and inquired how she would get liberated from that curse? The sage replied, "Prophet Ram Chandra would touch you with His feet in the era of Traita Yuga, the third era and you would attain the life of a human-being." She further prayed, "O my dear husband! The third age Traita would come after a long time, and till then I would remain stone!" Still attached to his wife, using his divine power he told her that Traita, i.e., third era, would start before the second era, when Lord Ram Chandra would touch her statue with his feet and she would attain human life. Thus, during Traita Yuga, the Divine Lord Rama touched the stone idol of Ahilyaa and she got liberation.

Lord Krishna and Sudama

In times gone by, the schools were called Gurukuls, the children of the rich and the poor used to study there without experiencing any discrimination. They used to get value-based education (Vidya), while performing all the duties of the Gurukul (school) themselves. There is a very inspirational story that Lord Krishna in his

childhood, used to study in a Gurukul with a poor Brahmin boy Sudama. After completing their studies, Lord Krishna became the King of Dwarka (Gujarat province in India) while Sudama remained poor and was struggling hard for his livelihood. Once his wife reminded him, "Your classmate Lord Krishna is the King of Dwarka. Why don't you go to him? He would definitely grant you some bounties for our livelihood." Poor Sudama asked his wife what he should take as an offering for his friend, Lord Krishna. She wrapped some raw rice and gave the same for offering to Lord Krishna. Sudama was wearing old and dirty clothes. When he reached Dwarka, at the palace of Lord Krishna, the guards scolded him and shouted harsh words saying, "How dare you enter the court of Lord Krishna, without permission?" Hearing the rebukes, Sudama started trembling. He informed the guards that he was a school friend of Lord Krishna, and his name was Sudama. Lord Krishna was sitting on the throne facing the main entrance. On seeing his Gurukul friend Sudama, Lord Krishna, rushed to embrace him. He touched the feet of his school friend with utmost humility. He took him to His throne and humbly asked him to sit on the same. He also rightfully asked for the gift of raw rice He was sure Sudama brought for Him and He ate it with great reverence. On seeing this scene, all the courtiers and visitors were astonished. They wondered why Lord Krishna had touched the feet of a poor person wearing dirty clothes. Lord Krishna, with folded hands, enquired about his family. A message spread all around that Lord Krishna was the school (Ashram) mate of poor Sudama. That is why Lord Krishna was showing so much affection and reverence and also utmost joy. Everybody started bowing before poor Sudama with great reverence. Such camaraderie and fellowship prevailed in the schools (Ashrams) of the saints.

While seeing him off, Lord Krishna gave a lot of bounties to Sudama with which he became rich. This was the character of the students of the Gurukuls where value-based education was imparted in those days. This episode has been mentioned in the tenth ode (Vaar) of Bhai Gurdas, a revered saint, who scribed the Guru Granth Sahib on the dictation of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master.

Child-Saint Prehlad

Prehlad has been given a special status in the Sikh faith as he is mentioned in the Gurbani. He is considered a Gurmukh and given a place of honour in the Gurbani as he was a true devotee of God. He is also referred to as Bhagat Prehlad. He was a God-loving person. His father Hiranyakashyap (Harnaaksh), the king, was egoistic and a Manmukh, who did not believe in the supremacy of God and only believed in himself.

The king by performing severe penances and meditation had been granted a boon that he would neither be killed by a man nor beast; neither with a weapon nor without it; neither during the day nor at night; neither indoor nor outdoor; neither on earth nor in the sky. It is through this boon that he sought an undisputed Lordship over the material world. He declared, "There is none stronger than I. I am the Lord of the three worlds and shall be worshipped as such." Due to his overwhelming ego, he considered himself to be god.

Once Prehlad, the son of King Harnaaksh, was passing through the city and saw a woman potter praying to Lord Rama (the all-pervading One), whom the potter referred to as God. After the potter had inadvertently lit the oven's furnace to bake her pots, she realised that a litter of kittens was in one of the pots. She felt it was too late to save the kittens. With tears in her eyes, she was praying to Lord Rama to save the kittens as she believed that only God had the power to perform such an act of mercy or miracle. "God could take care of my mistake, if He desired. He only could save the little kittens."

Prehlad said : "This is madness. How can the kittens remain alive in such a fire"?

Potter replied : "Yes Prince! God can do anything. He is the One, who can transform a small seed into a huge tree? He can make a king out of a drop of water in the womb of the mother. Is this not the glimpse of the God's divine action?" When Prehlad heard this, he said to the potter, "But you should pray before my father, Harnaaksh, the King, who is the Lord in this era."

The potter then suggested to the prince that she would worship the King if he saves the kittens. Prehlad was taken aback and got confused as to whether the King was really God. The condition of the potter worried him all night. He came to the potter's home on the day when the furnace was to be opened just to see whether the kittens were dead or alive. The potter took out one pot after the other, which were baked completely. In the same way, she went on to take out the pot, where the kittens were left. Lo! When she opened the pot, the kitten came out crying. Prehlad was astonished to see this miracle. How did the kittens survive in such a burning furnace? The potter told Prehlad that the Omnipresent Rama has all the powers to save one from the burning fire. We all are governed by the Divine Law of the Almighty Rama, who is the Divine Master of the world and the whole Universe. She further told Prehlad that his father was merely a mighty King of this city, but he doesn't have the power to save lives. It shook Prehlad's conscience and he started reciting the Gurumantra, 'Rama'. He realised that his father was not God, but an imposter and fake. Prehlad then openly defied his father's decree to be worshipped as God. The spiritual thoughts that lay dormant in the mind of Prehlad were awakened. He

realized that God is the only essence of life.

In his school also, he asked all the children and fellow students to recite the name of Rama, who is the real God, rather than of his father. Being the enlightened soul, Prehlad brought revolution in the kingdom, and almost everybody started reciting the Name of Rama - the Omnipresent. This created a great revolt, and Prehlad was arrested on the orders of his father.

Harnaaksh then ordered his courtiers to kill Prehlad. His courtiers first gave poison to the child, but his Divine Father, the 'Rama' saved him. Then they trained an elephant to kill Prehlad, but Prehlad again survived with the recitation of the Divine Name. They put him in a room filled with venomous snakes, which got so hypnotized on hearing the recitation of the Divine Name, that they started loving and kissing the boy for the holy soothing.

Thereafter, Harnaaksh made several attempts to kill Prehlad, who thought, "God that has saved the little kittens, will He not save me? He will definitely protect me." Prehlad kept on reciting the divine Name 'Ram'. The father got him to be thrown down the mountain, and again made him drown in the ocean, but on each occasion, Prehlad survived. Finally, he asked his sister Holika to enter a blazing fire with Prehlad in her lap. For, Harnaaksh knew that Holika had a boon, whereby, she could get out of the fire unscathed. Treacherously, Holika coaxed young Prehlad to sit in her lap, and she herself took her seat in the blazing fire. Holika, after great penances had imbibed the power not to be burnt in fire under any circumstances. Thus, she was confident that Prehlad would be burnt to ashes. Lo! Holika got completely burnt and Prehlad came out reciting the Divine Name.

Harnaaksh was so much imbued with pseudo-powers that he did not learn the lessons from these atrocities and could not bow before the Divine Power (Rama). The King then got erected an iron pillar, which turned red due to the fire burning inside, and Prehlad was ordered to embrace it, and see whether his Divine Lord 'Rama' could save him from the burning pillar. Prehlad recited the Divine Name, 'Rama' and embraced the pillar. Lo! With Divine Power, Narsingh, the Formless Divine Himself, came out of the pillar and killed Harnaaksh by tearing his body with His nails. Humanity should learn the lesson from this story that the Divine saves His devotees under all circumstances from worldly difficulties and leads them towards the path of salvation, and embraces them by shedding their ego completely.

While performing Asa di Vaar, every seeker after Truth (Sikh) recites the name of Prehlad and Namdev, as mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib every morning:

ਹਰਿ ਜੁਗੁ ਜੁਗੁ ਭਗਤ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਪੈਜ ਰਖਦਾ ਆਇਆ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਜੇ ॥

ਹਰਣਾਖਸੁ ਦੁਸਟੁ ਹਰਿ ਮਾਰਿਆ ਪ੍ਰਹਲਾਦੁ ਤਰਾਇਆ ॥
ਅਹੰਕਾਰੀਆ ਨਿੰਦਕਾ ਪਿਠਿ ਦੇਇ ਨਾਮਦੇਉ ਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਇਆ ॥
ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਐਸਾ ਹਰਿ ਸੇਵਿਆ ਅੰਤਿ ਲਏ ਛਡਾਇਆ ॥

Har(i) jug(u) jug(u) bhagat upaa-e-aa P-ei-j rakhdaa aa-e-aa Ram Raj-ai.
Harnhaakhas(u) dusat(i) Har(i) maar-e-aa Prehlaad taraa-e-aa.
Ahankaareeaa nindkaa pitth(i) d-ai-e Namdeo mukh(i) laa-e-aa.
Jan Nanak ei-s-aa Har(i) s-ai-viaa Antt(i) la-e chhaddaa-e-aa. (451)

(In every age, He creates His devotees and preserves their honour, O Lord King. The Lord killed the wicked Harnaaksh and saved Prehlaad. He turned his back on the egoists and the slanderers; and showed His face to Namdev. Humble Nanak has so served the Lord that He will deliver him in the end.)

Child-Saint Dhruva

Dhruva was the son of King Uttanapada. Literally 'Dhruva' means the one, who has become 'immortal.' The story of Dhruva presents an interesting reading. His father had two queens, named Suniti and Suruchi. Suruchi was much dearer to the King. The holy child Dhruva became divine with the recitation of the Divine Name with full love and devotion. So much so that even today, people address him as a shining star (Polar Star) or Dhruva Tara. Not only the children, but also the grown-ups should learn from the story of Dhruva as how to become divine in this very life.

One day, Dhruva (child) was sitting in the lap of his father as both of them were fond of each other. Although his father loved Dhruva very much, yet when his stepmother saw Dhruva in the lap of his father, she pulled him away from the lap of his father, with the remark that he had no right to become a ruler ahead of her own son. Weeping, Dhruva went to his mother and asked her whether she was a queen or a servant. She hugged and embraced her son and told him, "One becomes ruler only if he has spiritual wealth, which is acquired with the recitation of the Divine Name, with full love and devotion." She affectionately said to her son, "You should get the blessings of the Divine by reciting the Divine Name. With this, you will acquire so many divine blessings, not only to become the ruler of this state, but of the whole world, and everybody will worship you." Hearing this divine advice of his mother, Dhruva made up his mind to leave the palace, and go to the forest for meditation on the Divine Name.

When this news reached his father, the King rushed to persuade Dhruva not to go to the forest. He hugged Dhruva and told him that he would make him the ruler of half of his state just now and later on make him the King. Hearing this, child Dhruva was so astonished with the power of the Divine Name, that by merely making

up his mind to meditate on His Divine Name, he had been offered half of the state. If he would honestly recite and concentrate on the Divine Name of Rama, he might become the ruler of the whole world. He brushed aside the offer and worldly love of his father, and followed the advice of his mother to recite the Divine Name. He went deep into the forest, where the eternal sage Narad met him, and gave advice on how to meditate on the Divine Name. Accordingly, Dhruva meditated on the Divine Name with utmost devotion and love, and merged with the Divine within by shedding his ego completely. After this, he became famous as the child-saint, and everyone developed the urge to have a glimpse of young saint Dhruva and get divine blessings. Such are the miracles of recitation of the Divine Name with full love and devotion.

Saint Kabir in his hymns, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib motivates humanity by saying that everybody should recite the Divine Name with full love and devotion to become divine as child-saints Dhruva and Prehlad, and having done that merge with the Divine by following His Divine Principles:

ਰਾਮ ਜਪਉ ਜੀਅ ਐਸੇ ਐਸੇ ॥ ਯੂ ਪ੍ਰਹਿਲਾਦ ਜਪਿਓ ਹਰਿ ਜੈਸੇ ॥

Ram jap-e-o(u) jee ei-s-ai ei-s-ai. Dhroo Prehlad jap-e-o Har(i) j-ei-s-ai. (337)

(O my soul! Just as Dhruva and Prehlad meditated on the Divine Lord, so should you meditate on Him with full love and devotion.)

Other Divine Persons of the Previous Eons

Lord Buddha

Lord Buddha was born in 624 BC. When he was in his twenties, he saw many miseries and dead bodies, which touched him so much that he left his palace for attaining the state of worrilessness. He meditated at various places and perceived enlightenment at Gaya under the Banyan tree. Bhai Gurdas, who scribed the Granth Sahib on the dictation of Guru Arjan Dev, explains in the following hymns:

ਕਲਿਜੁਗਿ ਬੋਧੁ ਅਉਤਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਬੋਧ ਅਬੋਧੁ ਨ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟੀ ਆਵੈ ।

Kal(i)jug(i) Baudh(u) ao(u)taar(u) h-ei Bodh abodh na dristee aav-ei.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1, Pauri 18)

(In Kalyuga, one finds intellectualism incarnate, but discriminating between knowledge and ignorance is nowhere.)

According to Bhai Gurdas, Lord Buddha was a person with Divine Wisdom, who saw One in All and All in One. After he attained enlightenment on reaching the Formless State, where there is no worry, miseries or worldly virtues, he felt that everybody was following the instincts of mind - good or bad; and there was none to advise to tread the Divine Path. Buddha preached the following spiritual principles to get Divine Peace:

- Utmost devotion for perceiving Truth
- Purity of Thoughts
- Truthful Speech
- Righteous Deeds
- Truthful living
- Efforts with full Devotion
- Utmost Craving for perceiving Truth
- Utmost Concentration without any wavering of mind

Emperor Ashoka, after seeing the bloodshed in the battle of Kalinga, embraced Buddhism and spread the message of Lord Buddha throughout his kingdom, which included Mongolia, Nepal, Tibet, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Ceylon, Burma and the whole of India. His son and daughter pledged not to marry, but to meditate on the holy principles of Lord Buddha and spread his teachings far and wide to establish a worriless kingdom.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, a town in Judah to Mary and Joseph. He used to help his father in his work of carpentry, when he was in his teens. Even before that, when he was twelve, Jesus attended the feast of Passover in Jerusalem, where he impressed the scholars with his Divine Wisdom. He was baptised by John, the Baptist of Judah at the age of thirty, and he started preaching that Satyug (the Truthful era, the Kingdom of God) was coming on the earth, in which all people would live peacefully as the children of God. He went to Galileo to spread his holy message, which attracted many people, out of which twelve people became his close disciples, who used to assist him in spreading the holy message. They were known as the Apostles.

To spread the message of the 'Kingdom of God', Jesus performed many miracles, due to which masses started following him. Jesus' key messages include: God pervades everywhere and loves every creature. God existed since eternity and would keep on existing in the future. His existence would have no end. He has no equal either in Heaven or Earth. The Divine is within you and loves you. He has existed since eternity. He is the Almighty, Omniscient and Omnipresent. Whoever merges with Him by treading the Divine Path, would be rid of all his worldly sorrows and pseudo-pleasures and would remain in Divine Bliss. In the Lord's Kingdom, nobody is high or low and divine humility pervades there. Everybody is blessed - irrespective of caste, creed, colour, high or low. In this divine stage, one sees One in All and All in One, and no hatred exists.

These Ten Commandments to become divine persons, as revealed by God, codified by Moses and ratified and magnified by Jesus Christ, are the perfect expressions of God's Love. They are the foundation of all Biblical teachings, showing mankind how to express love towards God and fellow beings; and consequently the focal point of Christian life.

Jesus performed many miracles due to which a large population became his follower. The ruling class was horrified that Jesus might create a Kingdom in the Name of God.

Jesus had a final meal with his disciples in Jerusalem, which is called The Last Supper. Here, Jesus told his disciples that one of them would betray him. After the meal, Jesus and his disciples went to Gethsemane - a garden on the slope on the Mount of Olives, where the armed forces of the government arrested Jesus on the indication of one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, and took him to the Roman Governor of the state of Judah. The Governor directed the forces to take Jesus to Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. Herod sent Jesus to Pilate to put him to death by nailing him on the Cross. The final words Jesus uttered as he hung on the Cross were: 'Father, Forgive them; For they know not what they do.'

Rabia Basri

Rabia, an innocent Muslim girl, was sold as a slave to a rich Muslim ruler, Arabian. Seeing her devotion to the Allah, Rabia's buyer freed her so that she could meditate on the Name of Allah in the deep forests. Thus, she went through a hard penance and attained the Divine Wisdom.

Once, when Hazrat Rabia was on a mountain, the wild beasts of the forest gathered around her and stared at her in wonder. Coincidentally, Hazrat Hassan Basri (a Muslim seeker after Truth) went to meet Rabia Basri. On seeing him, all the wild animals ran to the forest, perceiving the fear of being killed by him. After seeing this scene, he was astonished that these wild animals and birds were not afraid of the saintly Rabia Basri, whereas, after seeing him, they had run away. He enquired from Saint Rabia Basri, "Why did the animals that loved you, fled to the forest after seeing me?" Hazrat Rabia asked, "What did you eat today?" Hassan Basri replied, "Meat." Hazrat Rabia told him, that is why they have smelt that you were their enemy, who would kill them for his food. This shows that the animal's soul can also perceive the intention of man.

Inspirational Story

There was a mini ruler in an Arabian country. He was very pious Muslim and

performed the divine prayers to seek the blessings of the Allah but could not perceive the divine within. He bought a slave from the open market and brought him to his house. He asked him what type of garments would he wear and what type of food would he take. What type of duties and works should be given to him for service? Hearing all this, he begged pardon with folded hands while touching his Master's feet and pleaded, "O my Master! I am your slave and it is my divine duty to serve you with utmost devotion; eat whatever you provide, and perform those duties you ask me to. Being a slave, I have completely shed my ego and submitted myself to you with my body and mind."

Since the ruler was a godly person, the divinely innocent utterances of the slave touched him. Hearing these words of the slave, the King started crying in love and affection towards God (Allah), realising that even he could become His slave by shedding his ego completely.

Every human being should learn a lesson from this parable-that we should become the slave of the Divine and follow His instructions in letter and spirit by performing all the duties in this world as a human being.



Opinion of People of Other Faiths About Sikh Way of Life

Christians

Max Arthur McAuliffe

This Englishman, a former member of the Indian Civil Service authored a six-volume treatise on Sikhism - *The Sikh Religion*. He says, "O men of the West, I bring from the East, the Sikh religion which is very straightforward and simple to follow. It has no place for pretence or hypocrisy. It forbids the eating of meat and consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants. It enjoins upon its followers to inculcate qualities like faithfulness, compassion, truthfulness, ethical conduct and brotherly love for all mankind.

"When the Sikh Gurus took up arms against oppressive rulers of the day, they were impelled not by bigotry or sectarian beliefs, but by the desire to save their fellow-men from the tyranny and cruelty of those holding the reins of power."

To this McAuliffe adds:

"The Sikh religion differs as regards to the authenticity of its dogmas from most other great theological systems. Many of the great teachers the world has known have not left a line of their own composition, and we only know what they taught through tradition, or second-hand information. If Pythagoras wrote any of tenets, his writings have not been handed down to us. We know the teachings of Socrates only through the writings of Plato and Xenophon. Buddha has left no written memorials of his teachings. Kungfu-tze, known to Europeans as Confucious, left no documents in which he detailed the principles of his moral and social systems. The Founder of Christianity did not reduce his doctrines to writing, and for them we are obliged to trust the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John."

"The Arabian Prophet did not himself reduce to writing the chapters of the Quran. They were written or compiled by his adherents and followers. But, the compositions of the Sikh Gurus are preserved and we know first-hand what they

taught. They employed the vehicle of verse, which is generally unalterable by copyist, and we even become in time familiar with their different styles. No spurious compositions or extraneous dogmas can, therefore be represented as theirs."

McAuliffe tells us further:

"Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the concept of Hinduism or Mohammedanism."

J. D. Cunningham

(Commander of the British forces during the Sikh Raj in Punjab)

Cunningham writes in *A History of the Sikhs*: "Guru Gobind Singh transformed his peace-loving followers into fearless warriors having the courage, strength and audacity to challenge a lion in its own den. They could easily have dared, if the occasion arose, to hurl defiance at the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in his own court. The lowest of the low-born became the equal of those from the highest classes. Seated together in in orderly fashion (Pangat), members of all four castes ate together from a common vessel. They thus, merged into one; indeed, all men became one."

To describe their fearlessness and bravery, he states, "The Sikhs have the courage and strength to challenge a lion in its den."

Arnold Toynbee

This universally acclaimed British historian of the 20th century in his 12-volume classic on the history of mankind *A Study of History*, pays rich tribute to Guru Gobind Singh as a Divine Master of the highest order. He writes with great warmth and reverence about the sterling qualities of the Khalsa, created by the Guru and believes that it is impossible in the present world to find someone, who can surpass them.

When certain organisations in the West including the United Nations Organisation came to know about the spiritual wisdom contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, they chose a selection of compositions from the scripture and arranged to have them translated into English, and other European languages. To write a foreword to this book, they could find none wiser, more learned or highly regarded than Toynbee, who had studied in depth and critically appraised the fundamental principles of all great religions and social structures. In his foreword, he writes that the Guru Granth Sahib is a perfect spiritual guide, shining a new light on the way which leads to the highest good of all mankind. The Path of meditation on the

Divine Name (Naam) shown by the Guru Granth Sahib leads the seeker to attain all the sublime qualities obtainable on the path of action (Karam) and path of knowledge (Gyan); yet in the scripture, the Supreme Being has been portrayed only in the form of the Divine 'Word' (Shabad) and Divine Name (Naam).

In his foreword to the UNESCO publication 'Sacred Writings of the Sikhs', Toynbee writes:

"Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in the days of increasing communications between all parts of the world and branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures, the Guru Granth, will have something special and of value to say to the rest of the world."

Furthermore, Toynbee says that the path shown by Guru Gobind Singh is the perfect one. Treading it by following the principles of Gurmat even while going about one's worldly duties, it is possible to attain union with the Eternal One. While outwardly carrying out all his mundane tasks, deep within, a Sikh is a Sanyasi (one who has renounced the world). He believes that his Guru is by his side as he toils to earn his daily bread. He leads his life according to the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib and becomes one with the Supreme Being. Thus, two centuries before Lenin (the famous socialist leader and founder of Soviet Russia), Guru Gobind Singh had shown to the world a path of much higher value than the one shown by the Soviet leader.

Once an American lady asked Toynbee that after having met people from all parts of the world belonging to various faiths and cultures, who in his view was the most handsome man in the world? He said, "A Gursikh with a flowing beard." With a look of amazement she then asked him who in his view was the most ugly person. To this he replied, "A Sikh who has cut his hair." This answer further aroused her curiosity and she decided to pursue a study of the Sikh religion.

Pearl S. Buck

The American author Miss Pearl S. Buck, who won the Nobel prize for Literature in 1938, gave the following comment on receiving the first English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib (The Sikh Holy Book):

.... I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God, to the recognition

and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzles me, until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 16th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe upon which we all live is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to a person of any religion or of none.

They speak for the human heart and the searching mind...

(From the foreword to the English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib by Gopal Singh M.A. Ph.D. 1960)

Bertrand Russell

The famous British mathematician and philosopher has this to say about the Sikh religion: "If some lucky men survive the onslaught of the third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them." When someone asked him whether this religion was capable of guiding mankind even before the outbreak of the third world war, he said, "Yes it has the capability, but the Sikhs haven't brought out, in broad daylight, the splendid doctrines of this religion, which has come into existence for the benefit of all mankind. This has been their greatest lapse, and they must accept the blame for it."

H.L. Bradshaw

H.L. Bradshaw, an American writer and historian says, "This religion is in proximity with science, that is why this religion will be the last resort for the future generations." Elsewhere he says, "Sikhism is a universal world faith and has a message for all men. This is amply illustrated in the writings of the Sikh Gurus. Sikhs must cease to think of their religion as just another good religion, and must begin to think in terms of it being the religion for the new age; without doubt, the path shown by Guru Nanak is the path for future generations to tread. Other religions provide only a partial glimpse of the truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of truth.

Miss Mary

During the course of their rule in India, the British found the Sikhs to be courageous, fearless and possessing other admirable qualities. As a result, they were induced to take up the study of their unique religion. They came to the conclusion that Sikh philosophy provides a balanced view of life in terms of man's

spiritual, social and moral/ethical needs. They then tried to present a distorted picture of Sikhism so that the masses would be repelled by it, and it would become easy for Christian missionaries to convert Indians to their own faith. Among those tasked with presenting a false picture of the Sikh religion was an English lady named Ms. Mary. But when she made a comprehensive study of Gurbani, she got so inspired that she converted to Sikhism.

Ms. Dorothy Field

Another American author, Dorothy Field in her book 'The Religion of the Sikhs' writes that apart from imparting spiritual instruction, the Sikh Gurus emphasised the need to carry out ethical principles in one's daily life. She says that on the battlefield, the Sikh warrior is neither cruel nor an oppressor, nor is he blood-thirsty. He fights for justice, based on just principles and using just means. After a deep study of the Guru Granth Sahib, she concludes that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion. The power of the Sikh religion is such that it will appeal to the people of the West who have a practical approach to life. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatic standpoint, then in some aspects, this religion would rank first among all world religions.

Dr. Noel King

"In order to understand world history, the piety of Sikhs is significant because it is such a religion which urges us to live life to its full." These are the views of Dr. Noel King, Professor, Department of Religious Studies, California, U.S.A. He writes, "The greatest achievement of the studies of McAuliffe is that he told the people of the world that Sikhs have an invaluable treasure in the form of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It contains no tales or tedious narratives about mythical beings; it has no Tantras - magical incantations, or Mantras - mystical formulas or Jantras - magical symbols, or geometrical figures. In this sense, it is distinct from the Hindu sacred texts - the Vedas, Shastras and Puranas and even from the Islamic holy book - the Quran. It contains the highest truth as revealed direct to the Sikh Gurus.

Milton Friedman

During a visit to India, this famous American economist once praised the Sikhs and remarked that this community not only provides food for the nation, but also defends its borders. Not only this, the Sikhs had an important role to play during India's freedom struggle. In a light moment, he even remarked that if India was to be leased out to the Sikhs, the problems of poverty and under-development would be quickly solved. Further, there would be no fear of any foreign invasion.

C.F. Andrews

This God-fearing Englishman, who was a close associate of Mahatama Gandhi, visited Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh near Amritsar in 1921 during the Gurdwara Reform Movement, and witnessed the non-violent campaign of the Sikhs there. The sight of groups of Sikhs coming forward and bearing the physical violence of the police without hitting back - the bloodshed and the suffering faced by the protestors moved him greatly. He told the Deputy Commissioner of Lahore that one had heard and read about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and to this day, the whole Christian world has been denouncing the killers of Christ. But that day, he (C.F. Andrews) had witnessed hundreds of Christs in the form of Sikhs being brutally beaten, killed and charred to death. He was wonderstruck and even comforted by the fact that there was no trace of fear or violence as the Sikhs faced up to the police brutality. They happily sacrificed their lives while following the path shown by the Gurus.

William Warburt

During the Guru Ka Bagh agitation in 1921, William Warburt, special attaché to the Lt. Governor of Punjab was assigned the job of sending secret reports to the administration. Praising the Sikhs, Warburt wrote that the Sikh Gurus had instilled strong moral values in their followers in accordance with the verse "None now is our foe, nor a stranger - with all we are in accord" (SGGS 1299). On receiving these reports which appeared to be excessively favourable to the Sikhs, the Lt. Governor expressed his displeasure and summoned Warburt to Lahore. In his meeting with the Lt. Governor, Warburt stated that he had found the Sikhs to have such high moral character and to be so full of compassion for all mankind that although he happened to be opposed to them in his official capacity, if occasion demanded, he would gladly leave his wife and children in their care.

Continuing his praise for the Sikhs, Warburt reported that the Sikhs never steal, nor would they ever do violence to a helpless woman; their religion forbids them from doing so, and Sikhs are true to their religious vows. They keep away from the company of thieves and dissolute persons. Truth is their religion and they are ever mindful of it. They will never kill women and children from the enemy camp captured in war; rather, they will offer them protection.

P.M. Wylam

P.M. Wylam, author of *An Introduction to Sikh Belief* writes that the divine teachings of Guru Nanak are simple to follow and are like a beacon to show the path of liberation to all mankind. The Guru taught that worship of the One Eternal

Being with love and devotion while feeling His presence at all times will enable the seeker to become one with the One. In the simple words of Guru Nanak, the true Lord is our father, and therefore all men are brothers. The Sikh religion teaches us to rise above man-made divisions based on caste, creed and gender and join the congregation as equals to offer worship to our Heavenly Father. Following the path shown by Guru Nanak, the Sikhs earn their bread with the sweat of their brow, share it with the needy, and meditate on the Divine Name.

Falcon

In his Handbook on the Sikhs, Captain Falcon, an officer in the British Indian Army wrote that Sikhs remain even tempered in all circumstances. They are robustly built, full of energy and have great natural ability. They remain firm in difficult times. They are hardworking, brave and intelligent and have the resilience to take all setbacks in their stride. A Sikh is not tied down by the shackles of casteism, and has a loving attitude towards all.

Dr. W.O. Cole

During a lecture in India in 1985 on the 'Mission and Message of Guru Nanak Dev', W.O. Cole of U.K. said, "Remember the tenets of Guru Nanak, his concepts of Oneness of God and the Universal Brotherhood of man. If any community holds the key to the national integration of India, it is the Sikhs all the way."

General Bardwood (British Commander)

Referring to the high moral character of the Sikhs, Gen. Bardwood once remarked, "I shall not have the slightest hesitation or anxiety in leaving my wife and daughter under the protection of a Sikh soldier because I know well that they will be fully secure in his charge." (cited in Gurmat Prakash, Amritsar, Feb., 1997)

C.H. Loehlin

In his book 'The Sikhs and Their Scriptures', Loehlin writes that at the time of the partition of India in 1947, Sikhs vigorously defended the Muslim state of Malerkotla and any Muslim wishing to go there from elsewhere in Punjab was safely escorted to his destination. The Sikhs made sure that no Muslim - man, woman or child in Malerkotla came to any harm, nor was any Muslim property destroyed. They did so in gratitude to the brave gesture shown by a former Nawab of Malerkotla more than two centuries ago. In 1704, Nawab Sher Mohammed Khan had spoken out against Wazir Khan, the governor of Sirhind when the latter had ordered the execution of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh- Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh

for refusing to embrace Islam. Long years have passed, but this noble act is still fresh in the collective memory of the Sikhs, and to this day, they have been offering protection to the Muslims of Malerkotla.

Sir Alexander Burnes

In his book *Travels into Bokhara* (1834), Burnes writes that the fearlessness, calmness and boundless courage of the Sikhs passes all belief. They are large-hearted and the bravest among all Indians. Transcending all barriers of caste and creed, they are loving and warm-hearted towards others. With these virtues bestowed by the Guru, they earn the admiration of the whole world.

Edward A. de Bittencourt

He writes, "The Sikh religious philosophy stands for close connection of man with the world. It does not preach asceticism or a negative attitude towards the world."

Kenneth Marks

In 1976, during a discussion in the British Parliament, the Under-Secretary of state for the Environment, Mr. Kenneth Marks stated, "The Sikhs have the most prodigious record of honourable service to this country in the past, and are still making a valuable contribution to British society in many ways. They are loyal, law-abiding and devout people."

Guru Nanak Dev - Guru of the Hindus and Pir of the Muslims

In 1913, The Punjab Historical Society, Lahore held a meeting in Shimla to discuss the life and works of Guru Nanak. It was presided over by then Lt. Governor of Punjab. Many Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Christian scholars took part in the discussions and presented their papers. When the Sikh intellectual Sir Jogindra Singh spoke on the divine life and message of Guru Nanak, a Hindu religious leader Ram Sharan Das got up to say that Guru Nanak was a great Hindu social reformer. At this, a Muslim delegate Nawab Zulfikar Ali Khan of Malerkotla countered him and said that Guru Nanak was a great Muslim Faqir. He told the gathering that Mardana, a low-caste Muslim used to be in constant attendance of the Guru; his first disciple Rai Bular too was a Muslim. These observations prompted the British Lt. Governor to get up and say that he disagreed with both these points of view.

"I have read the works of Guru Nanak and am convinced that he was a great Christian sage. From this, it is clear that the divine message of Guru Nanak is meant for the whole of mankind.

W.G. Archer

W.G. Archer, who was Curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London writes, ' the Guru Granth Sahib has universal appeal, but the Sikhs have failed to make its teachings known to the rest of the world. Mankind today is in dire need of the message of peace and love enshrined in this scripture.'

Marcus Braybrooke

Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths, Patron of the International Interfaith Centre, Oxford, U.K., in his article, Sikhism: The Religion of the Third Millennium, says:

'Guru Nanak's revelation came directly from God. He had a direct vision of the truth. What then has Sikhism to say to members of other religions and to the world? Firstly, the recognition that God cannot be confined to one religion; secondly, Sikhism, like the Christian Gospel, affirms that every person is precious to God. The Langar is open to everyone regardless of caste, creed, colour or sex. Sometimes it is the men, who serve the food to women. For, in the teachings of the Gurus, as in the teachings of Jesus, women enjoy equal dignity in the eyes of God. Man is only an instrument of service: The giver of goods is God, the Guru of us all.

We can give thanks that as we enter the Third Millennium, the central message of Sikhism is that of human unity in God's love, which as I believe, the interfaith movement has helped us to recognise as the message at the heart of all faiths. It is now increasingly acknowledged by many of those who hold political and economic power."

Dr. H. Bielende

(from the article, Erosion of Christianity by Alien Faiths)

In a gathering in Swindon, England, elders and members of some Christian groups asked probing questions to H. Bielende regarding the Sikhs and their faith. For instance, Bielende was asked:

Q: "Are you a Sikh?"

A: "What is a Sikh?" The word Sikh, according to my Punjabi dictionary, means a disciple. And a disciple is one who follows a certain master, belief, and teachings. The word discipline' derives from the same source. You are asking me if I am a disciple. The answer is, yes. I am trying to follow the path which will lead me to God. In doing so, I am trying to follow the set of disciplines laid down by Sri Guru Nanak. If that makes me a Sikh, then so be it. You, brother, are also a Sikh, in as much as, you are trying to follow the path which will lead you to God. There are

many paths which lead to this hall; there are many roads which lead to Swindon; there are many paths which lead to God. A Sikh is a seeker after Truth. And God is Truth.

Percival Spear

Spear was an Englishman, who taught modern Indian History at Cambridge University and at St. Stephen's College in Delhi. Describing the firmness and steadfastness of the Sikh character, he writes, 'On being flayed, the Sikhs do not become husk, but emerge as strong as steel.'

The Battle of Saragarhi

A contingent of 21 Sikh soldiers of the 36 Sikh Regiment showed unflinching courage on the field of battle on September 12, 1897, while defending a communications post at Saragarhi in present day North West Frontier Province of Pakistan, against an attack by over 10,000 Afghan tribesmen; all 21 perished. The narrative of this unparalleled act of bravery of the Sikhs in World History is included in the French Military School text books and is also one of the eight collective stories on bravery published by UNESCO for children.

As a memorial to these brave soldiers, the British Indian government built Gurdwara Saragarhi in Amritsar, and erected a tablet there. The inscription reads:

"The Government of India have caused this tablet to be erected to the memory of the twenty-one non-commissioned officers and men of the 36 Sikh Regiment of the Bengal Infantry, whose names are engraved below as a perpetual record of the heroism shown by these gallant soldiers who died at their posts in defence of the fort of Saragarhi, on 12 September, 1897, fighting against overwhelming numbers, thus proving their loyalty and devotion to their sovereign, the Queen Empress of India, and gloriously maintaining the reputation of the Sikhs for unflinching courage on the field of battle."

Views of a Thai National

Colonel Phin Mubukant

Colonel Phin Mubukant was Minister for Religious Affairs in Thailand in 1963. Addressing a gathering, he once said, "I have been vastly impressed by the reputation of the Sikhs for bravery on the battle-field. I believe that in the well-being of the Sikhs lies the well-being of India; in the progress of the Sikh faith lies the progress of India. If the Sikh faith is allowed to blossom in its full glory, and the cultural and educational aspirations of the Sikhs are placed on an equal footing

with the aspirations of other communities, there is no reason why the whole nation will not reach the heights of success. I understand that among Indians, the Sikhs are among the few people who have kept alive the ancient heritage and mode of dressing of this great nation." (Source: Kes Chamatkar Giani Udham Singh)

Opinion of Russian people to adopt Sikh Faith

For about seventy-five years, almost the entire USSR remained under the clutches of communist dictatorship till the year 1992. During that period, Russia could not progress economically as well as spiritually. By the end of 1992, when the communist dictatorship ended, many of the states somehow or the other, broke away from USSR and established their own sovereign governments according to their outlooks.

During this long period of communism, the common people forgot the values of any religion and spirituality. Due to lack of spiritual values, man behaves like a beast in the form of a human being, and tries to wield his own authority and ideals on common people. As such, the people of USSR were confused, due to lack of human values after 1992. Since the entire population was engrossed in a materialistic outlook, under the fear of dictatorship, no one could dare to find his own way to imbibe the spiritual values, by following any type of religion. In fact, religion is a spiritual discipline to tread the Divine Path, without which, humanity develops animal instincts.

The wise persons of Russia started searching for spiritual values through which they could perceive the real human values for running their worldly affairs under the Divine Law. Even after studying many religions, they could not find the real spiritual values, by imbibing which, they could get spiritual bliss and peace of mind, while rendering worldly services to fulfil their household duties. When they heard of the Sikh faith established by Guru Nanak Dev, they specially came to Punjab and studied the Sikh faith in great detail at Patiala. After realising the spiritual values of the Sikh faith in depth, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev, they were so impressed that they exclaimed that this spiritual faith could soothe wounds inflicted by communism during the past seventy-five years. The reporters of The Tribune met them to enquire about their views on the Sikh faith. The head of the delegation, Sidho Rov, exclaimed that the spiritual principles of the Sikh faith had touched their hearts, and they wanted to follow it, as it appeared to be much better than other faiths, because Guru Nanak Dev had explained the spiritual values on the pattern of socialism, where all people are considered to be equal, irrespective of their materialistic status and religious outlook. Guru Nanak Dev's theme of spiritual

values and Divine faith are based on three outstanding value-based principles of spirituality:

1. Earn your livelihood keeping in mind the very valuable principle of 'work is worship'.
2. Share your livelihood with the needy by parting one-tenth of your earnings for the noble cause.
3. Meditate on the Divine Name, keeping in view that all creatures have the same Divine Light pervading in them. After the passage of time, with this Divine devotion, one realises One in All and All in One. This spiritual outlook leads a man to create spiritual brotherhood on earth.

The delegation further said that all the seekers in Russia were endeavouring to translate the Guru Granth Sahib and other divine principles of the Sikh Faith into the Russian language, so that the Russian people could imbibe these spiritual values in letter and spirit, while treading the Divine Path to create spiritual brotherhood in the strife-torn country.

Devotional views of Dalai Lama

Dalai Lama, the Noble Prize winner for peace, affectionately expounds, 'In the spiritual realm of the world, Guru Nanak Dev is one of the most supreme spiritualists to spread the Divine Truth, and spiritual brotherhood for establishing spiritual peace in the world.'

According to the Tibetan Buddhists, Guru Nanak Dev is considered the supreme spiritualist. They consider Guru Nanak Dev to be the incarnation of their Divine Master, Padam Sambvey in this era. They have constructed many temples to recite the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. In this respect, Tibetans are divided in two groups. One of them is so devoted to Guru Nanak Dev that its followers do not shave their hair. When these Tibetan devotees visit the Divine Sikh Temple, Harmandir Sahib, they walk around the large sacred pool of water by prostrating their body with every step.

The revered Dalai Lama further expounds that Guru Nanak Dev was sent by the Divine Lord to establish Divine Peace in the world, which He did by preaching divine peace through His hymns as per the spiritual instructions of the Divine Lord.

Vision of Sikh Faith by the Islamic Saints and Philosophers

A Muslim Saint - Bulle Shah of Punjab - explained with his spiritual vision that

the entire Indian population would have been converted to Islam due to Muslim rule/coercion, had the Divine Lord not sent Guru Gobind Singh in this world.

Mughal Emperor Akbar of India

Guru Amardas, the third Divine Master of Sikhs established the city of Goindwal and started community kitchen (Langar) carrying forward the tradition set by Guru Nanak Dev. His instruction was that, whoever wished to see Him, should first partake of the food from Langar, sitting on the floor along with common people. Akbar was very broad-minded and secular in outlook. Besides Islam, he respected other religions too. He had no issue in his house, on account of which, he also prayed in most of the holy places. When his wish for having the child was not fulfilled, he developed a craving to perform supplication at the Guru Nanak Dev's divine seat, on which at that time Guru Amardas, as the third Guru Nanak Dev was seated. He went to Goindwal to have the divine glimpse of Guru Amardas and to pray for his wish. Reaching Goindwal, he was told that whoever wanted to meet the Guru, should first partake of food in the common kitchen by sitting on the floor along with the common people. His courtiers did not relish these instructions, and they submitted to the Emperor that the entourage should return, because the people of India would say that the Emperor of India took food by sitting on the floor along with the commoners. Since Akbar was committed to have a glimpse of Guru Amardas to fulfil his wish, he did not care for the advice of the courtiers, and sat with the commoners and partook of food.

On seeing Guru Amardas, he was so inspired with the holy glimpse of the Divine Master that he prostrated and sat on the floor near the feet of the Guru. Perceiving the inner urge of the Emperor, Guru Amardas told him that his wishes would be fulfilled with the blessings of Guru Nanak Dev.

With passage of time, Akbar's wish was fulfilled. He submitted to the Guru that he wanted to give a large piece of land for running the free community kitchen. The Guru refused to accept the land, with the remark that Guru Nanak Dev's community kitchen runs on the offerings of the commoners. Hearing this, Akbar was moved, and he developed the utmost respect for Guru

Nanak Dev and His successors. After receiving the blessings, he returned to Lahore.

Qazi Noor Mohammed

Qazi Noor Mohammed, the official camp historian of the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali, remarked that Sikhs were very pious. They follow their Spiritual Path, as laid down by Guru Nanak Dev. They did not deceive and they respected women

with reverence, as their own mothers, sisters and daughters, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. Truthfulness, devotion and rendering free service to others, was engrained in their blood by following the teachings of their Divine Masters in letter and spirit. So much so, that they gave protection even to the women and children of the enemy soldiers, who were killed in the wars.

Nadar Shah Durrani

When Nadar Shah Durrani failed to win the battles against the Sikhs, in a bit of rage, he asked the Governor of Lahore, which religion the Sikhs belonged to and what their deeds were? The Governor submitted that they were the followers of Guru Gobind Singh. After taking a bath in the Amritsar Sarovar, and paying obeisance in the holy Temple, they hide in the forests, sleep on the saddles of their horses, and eat wild fruits, vegetation and roasted grams. Hearing this, Nadar Shah remarked, "Beware! They would occupy your ruling seat one day, if they are not eliminated."

Ghulam Jallani's findings about the bravery of Sikhs

Ghulam Jallani articulated the details of the battle of Multan. He used to remain in a Sikh disguise amongst the Sikh soldiers. He wrote that the Sikh soldiers wanted to conquer Multan (Punjab) by crushing the fort of the city with a huge canon. While fighting, the wheel of the cannon was broken, and it became difficult to conquer the fort. Perceiving this, the soldiers loudly recited the Divine Name of the Guru and lifted the cannon with their shoulders, because they were so dedicated and enthusiastic to take part in that noble cause. Of course, the shoulders of the Sikhs were injured due to the heavy cannon. Jallani wrote and reported that by seeing the exemplary bravery of the Sikh soldiers, he wanted to take part in that endeavour, but restrained himself. The reason was that if he died, no one would have written about the bravery of those Sikh soldiers in the history of the world.

Mohsin Fani

Mohsin Fani, a noted Persian historian, writes in his book *Dabistan-e-Mazahib* (School of religion) that Guru Hargobind did not wield the sword in the field of battle under the influence of any kind of rage even against the enemies. The sword was wielded by the Guru for protection of the downtrodden. He further writes in the second part of his book on page 249, 'Guru Nanak Dev had forbidden his followers to partake meat and drink wine, and further instructed not to kill innocent animals for any purpose. When Guru Arjan Dev heard from the congregation that some of

the Sikhs were not following the instructions of Guru Nanak Dev in letter and spirit, he again issued an edict that henceforth, none of his followers would partake meat of any creature or drink wine.'

Dr Mohammed Yusuf Abbasi

Dr. Abbasi was the head of the department of History of the Qaide-Azam University, Islamabad in Pakistan. In his writings, he expresses that the Guru Granth Sahib is the treasure house of the Divine Wisdom for the whole world. Whoever delves into its hymns, not only will his doubts be cleared, but he will start treading the Divine Path to realise the Divine within. The Divine within a man, is called Zamir in Muslim perception. Whoever follows the instructions of his Zamir, can conquer the worldly miseries, according to the hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Dr Mohammed Iqbal

Dr. Iqbal was a renowned Urdu poet of Punjab who had great devotion, affection and respect for Guru Nanak Dev. He says that the Guru's manifestation in this world was not at all less than the glory of Prophet Ibrahim, who appeared in this world more than five thousand years ago. Dr Iqbal writes that Guru Nanak Dev had so much Divine Power that he used to attract all persons, irrespective of any religion, caste or creed due to His Divine Love and Affection, and used to shower His blessings on whoever came in contact with Him, to tread the Divine Path.

Sayyad Habib Shah, a friend of Dr Iqbal, had studied all the religions, and in the end, he came to the conclusion that Japuji Sahib, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev, was the Divine Wisdom and theme of the Divine Lord. Owing to devotional inspiration, he started translating Japuji Sahib for the welfare of all mankind. When Dr Iqbal came to know about his divine work, he sent a telegram to Habib, in which he affectionately instructed him that, while translating Japuji Sahib, he should beg for the Divine Power to translate it faithfully, regardless of any wavering of the mind, keeping in view the values of any other religion of the world, because Guru Nanak Dev had expounded these hymns, and had rendered divine service to the Islamic religion much more than any other great Muslim.

Moulavi Ghulam Ali

Moulavi Ghulam Ali was the courtier of Farrukhsiyar, the grandson of Emperor Aurangzeb. He writes in his book *Twareekh Mohabetey Azam*, (History of Divine Love) that Guru Nanak Dev's divine preaching used to transform stone-hearted

persons into affectionate holy persons. The preaching of His hymns infused Divine Bliss, and inspired all worldly persons to tread the Divine Path to attain Divine Peace. The Moulavi added that Sayyad Pir Hussain, who was considered the Divine Master of Islam at that time, had high respect for Guru Nanak Dev in his heart. He had great faith that the Divine Lord (Allah) had bestowed so many divine virtues, love and affection on Guru Nanak Dev, and that by following the same in letter and spirit, he could achieve the divine state like that of the Prophets. He says, 'God has given all these Divine Powers and virtues to Guru Nanak Dev and none else in this era.' With profound confidence, he expounds that the followers of the two main religions of India, namely the Hindus and Muslims, would shed duality by following the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev in letter and spirit. He further states that with the passage of time, all would follow the Sikh faith, because it does not follow the pseudo-rituals that were carried out by both these religions. As such, the Sikh faith would be perceived by everybody to become one of the sons of the Divine Lord, who is also One for the whole of the Universe. (Reference Twareekh Khalsa Part-II).

Bravery of the Sikhs Written By a Pakistan General

In his book Crisis of Leadership, during the war of Bangladesh, Major General Mukesh Khan of the Pakistani army wrote, "The Sikh soldiers were so brave that Pakistan's defeat was mainly due to the presence of those Sikh soldiers in the fighting of that war. We could not face the bravery of those Sikh soldiers because they did not hesitate to sacrifice their lives in the battlefield. They used to fight with such great valour and will power that they gathered enough power to defeat a much larger army of the enemy."

Version of Renowned Hindus about Sikh Faith

Rabindranath Tagore

The Noble Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore was a renowned saint-poet of Bengal, who scribed the Indian national anthem. On being asked to write the international hymns for the world, he remarked that such a hymn has already been expounded by Guru Nanak Dev in the form of the 'Divine Aarti', a divine verse, which was wondrous and could not be equated with any worldly song. The glory of the Divine Lord (Aarti), as expounded by Guru Nanak Dev starts thus:

ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥

Gagan m-ei thaal(u) rav(i) chand(u) deepak ban-ai Taarika mandal janak motee. (663)

(The whole Universe is a divine plate in which suns and moons are the lamps, in which stars of the whole Universe are placed as divine jewels.)

Revered Tagore enunciated that in this hymn, Guru Nanak Dev had depicted the glory of the Divine. Tagore considered this hymn of Guru Nanak Dev as the greatest revered divine song in praise of the Divine Lord, for the whole of mankind, and also as the best essence of the glory of the Divine Lord. Tagore also wrote many poems regarding the bravery of the Sikhs, keeping in view the sacrifices of Bhai Taru Singh, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and other Sikh martyrs. He states, 'Guru Gobind Singh, by infusing the Divine Spirit, made the common people with defeated mentality, brave, courageous and divine persons of India.' The Guru had established the Khalsa Panth (divine persons), which is beyond imagination and has no parallel in the world. The Guru, the embodiment of the Divine, sacrificed his entire family and wealth to carry out the mission of the Divine Lord, for the benefit of humanity and ultimately merged with the Divine. Dr Lalwani writes in his book on Guru Nanak Dev that Tagore was so inspired that he translated many hymns of Guru Nanak Dev into the Bengali language, and incorporated them in his book *Gita Battah*.

Swami Vivekanand's Views on Sikh faith

'Guru Nanak Dev was born in the sacred land of India. He gave a message of love and peace to the whole world and preached the same through his teachings. He was full of affection for everyone, and his arms were always outstretched, as if to embrace the whole world. There was no difference between a Hindu and a Muslim for him. He was a common Guru to all. He was the Guru of the entire human race.' (The complete works of Swami Vivekanand Vol. III page 366)

Swami Vivekanand was so greatly influenced by the wonderful custom of propagation of Amrit, the consecrated water administered in the Khalsa, that whenever he used to write a letter to anyone, he used to give a high place to the ovation written by Guru Gobind Singh, 'Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh' (Vivekanand's Letter No. 207)

Swami Brahmanand inspired by Sikh faith

Swami Brahmanand expressed in the last days of his life that he remained wandering here and there to perceive the Divine Truth, for he did not know that this Divine Wisdom was incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. As such, he could not tread the Divine Path as enunciated in the Guru Granth Sahib. He further expounded that wandering here and there for perceiving the Divine Wisdom within, to attain self-realisation in this very life, is useless, except to follow the divine teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib in letter and spirit to achieve self-realisation in the present life.

"I found this Divine Truth when I visited the divine temple, Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar and after perceiving the Divine Truth in the hymns incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Moulding my mind according to the hymns and preachings incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib to attain self-realisation, I would have to take another birth for this divine cause."

After expressing this holy desire for attaining self-realisation to his disciple Swami Satyanand at Haridwar, he shed his mortal frame immediately, so that he could quickly get birth into the Sikh faith to tread the Divine Path according to the instruction of the Guru Granth Sahib. (From the book Gyan Parkash).

Swami Nityanand

Swami Nityanand expressed that with the urge to attain Divine Wisdom, he remained immersed in performing various types of yogic postures. When he still remained in darkness after performing these yogic postures, and could not realise the holy wisdom to tread the Divine Path, he started reciting the Guru Granth Sahib and concentrated on the Divine Name, as enunciated in the hymns. He then attained Divine Peace of mind. He further expressed that when he recited and concentrated on the Divine Name Waheguru, he got Divine Bliss, which he had never experienced by performing yogic postures. Attaining this Divine Bliss, he repented that he had wasted his whole life in performing bodily exercises in search of the Divine. Then he started reciting the Divine Name, by treading the Divine Path to realise the Divine Wisdom within, and shed all yogic postures.

Vinoba Bhave

Vinoba Bhave was a great social reformer and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. When the popular hymn-singer, Bhai Dharam Singh Zakhmi, met Vinoba Bhave, the latter was so excited to see him that he requested him to sing the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev, in which He has eulogised the glory of the Divine of the Universe. By this the Bhodan Andolan leader meant the Aarti.

Dharam Singh Zakhmi recited the glory of the Divine by singing:

ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥

गुगु मलआनलें पवणु चवरो करे सगल बनराए फूलंत जोती ॥

Gagan m-ei thaal(u) rav(i) chand(u) deepak ban-ai Taarika mandal janak motee.

Dhoop(u) mal-aan-lo pavanh(u) chavro kar-ai Sagal banra-e phoolant jotee. (663)

Hearing this hymn in a holy tune, Vinoda Bhave exclaimed that Guru Nanak Dev is a Supreme Divine person, who says that the whole of cosmos is a holy infinite plate, in which the suns, moons, stars, all act as sacred lamps and the

fragrance of the vegetation of the whole of the world, is like incense sticks. He further expressed that in this Divine Glory, the whole of the cosmos takes part. That is why this divine song is not confined to any sect of the world, but is for the entire humanity. Vinoba Bhave also translated the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev.

Mahatma Gandhi

The father of nation had glorified the struggle of Guru Ka Bagh - the place of divine worship, where an intense struggle was performed by heroic Sikhs, who laid the foundation-stone for the liberation of India from the clutches of the British, by bearing brutal atrocities with patience and by obeying the Divine Will.

Mahatma Gandhi also condemned the atrocities inflicted on the Sikhs at Gurdwara Nanakana Sahib by the British Government.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya

Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya was divinely moved to see the Sikhs following the Divine Path, and undergoing all type of hardships. He believed that the Sikhs could bring freedom for India, with their great sacrifices, because they followed the Divine Will, as enunciated by their Gurus. He inspired all Hindu families to make at least their eldest son a Sikh, so that he, being a Sikh, could protect not only his family, but would also render service to the country.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was a great devotee of Sant Attar Singh Mastuane Wale, and he travelled to Mastuana to request Sant Ji to lay the foundation-stone of the Banaras Hindu University. Sant Attar Singh acceded to his request, and laid the foundation-stone of the first professional college of the world-renowned University.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar said the following with regard to the Sikh faith:

1. The Sikh faith is a real Divine Path for all those persons, who want to obtain Divine Peace, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, and especially for the downtrodden ones.
2. 'Shri Guru Granth Sahib is a divine guide for me for realising the Divine Peace within,' and he adds, 'This might be divinely beneficial for my brethren because the hymns of Guru Granth Sahib condemn the differences caused by different religions, castes and creeds, rich and poor, high and low.' On account of all these divine virtues, he was so impressed that in the conference of divine

preaching held in 1935, he expressed his wish to become a Sikh. He also helped the Sikhs to establish the Khalsa College in Mumbai.

Sadhu TL Vaswani

In his book, *Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj*, Sadhu Vaswani expressed that many people had asked him, whether the future religion of India would be Hinduism or Islam or Christianity? He writes in his book: "But, I express my feelings that whatever I have perceived from the divine preaching of Guru Nanak Dev, I would perceive that the future religion of India would be the Sikh faith, in which there are divine virtues for the welfare of the whole mankind."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

(Quoted by Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions*, Prentice Hall 4th Edn 1999, p. 401)

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said that Guru Gobind Singh 'raised the Khalsa to defy religious intolerance, religious persecution and political inequality...'. Those who grovelled in the dust rose proud, defiant and invincible in the form of the Khalsa. They bore all sufferings and unnameable tortures, cheerfully and unflinchingly... India is at long last free. This freedom is the crown, the climax, and logical outcome of the Sikh Gurus' and Khalsa's terrific sacrifices and heroic exploits.



Why Eating Animal Flesh is Prohibited For a Sikh?

A seeker after Truth, by definition, is the follower of the ten Gurus (Divine Masters). He follows the code of conduct of spirituality, as enunciated by the ten Gurus, a line of succession that started with Guru Nanak Dev, and ended with Guru Gobind Singh, and is now the eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib (the divine Sikh Scripture). A Sikh is ordained to tread the Divine Path with full faith to attain self-realisation in this very life, by following the divine teachings of his Divine Masters, as enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib in letter and spirit, with full love and devotion. In fact, the sole aim of any person belonging to any caste, creed or religion is to ultimately attain self-realisation by treading the Divine Path in the company and association of the divine persons.

During the life of an individual, there are so many pitfalls of worldly illusions and temptations that could pollute his mind, especially wealth and sumptuous food, and the instincts to be engrossed in a luxurious life. Animal flesh, even though a repulsive food, is highly sumptuous for everybody, including a Sikh, who strays from the spiritual principles. There are so many examples enunciated in Gurbani which express that eating of animal flesh is the greatest hurdle to tread the Divine Path. As mentioned earlier, if a person follows the Divine Path according to the instruction of his Divine Master, he will ultimately reach the divine stage of being One in All and All in One. Such a Sikh is called Gurmukh (God-oriented), because he has followed the divine instructions of his Divine Master in letter and spirit. If a person, on the other hand, in bad company, follows the instinct of his mind, and indulges in worldly pleasures, he is called Manmukh (self-willed) in Gurbani. According to the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, it is clarified that Manmukh is a person who follows the worldly instincts and pleasures of his mind, and thus undergoes all kinds of miseries in this world. On the other hand, a person who follows the instructions of the Divine Master in letter and spirit, merges with Him by treading the Divine Path and enjoys Divine Wisdom:

ਜਿਤਨੇ ਨਰਕ ਸੇ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਭੋਗੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਲੇਪੁ ਨ ਮਾਸਾ ਹੇ ॥

Jitn-ai narak s-ai manmukh(i) bhog-ei Gurmukh(i) l-ai-p(u) na maasaa h-ai. (1073)

A Sikh must, therefore, mould his conduct in accordance with these teachings and make a success of his journey through life. On the contrary, a Sikh who is engrossed in evil temptations and the pursuit of the pleasures of the flesh is not really a true Sikh, but a Manmukh. We have to decide whether we wish to turn into a Manmukh, or lead the life of a Gursikh. If we wish to become a Gursikh, then in our daily life, we must put into diligent practice, the Guru's teachings.

The tenth Divine Master, Guru Gobind Singh, prohibits every Sikh from eating any kind of animal flesh, which is prohibited in various codes of conduct (Rehatnamas), and has called it a cardinal sin.

In Gurbani too, the eating of animal flesh is forbidden:

ਅਭਾਖਿਆ ਕਾ ਕੁਠਾ ਬਕਰਾ ਖਾਣਾ ॥ ਚਉਕੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥

Abhaakh-e-aa kaa kutthaa bakkraa khaanhaa. Chaouk-ai uppar kis-ei na jaanhaa. (472)

[So-called religious persons (Brahmins) used to eat meat, but they debarred other vegetarian persons who did not eat meat, from stepping into their so-called holy kitchen.]

Guru Nanak Dev's verdict on the issue of the eating of the flesh of the dead animals (Murdar) is clear :

ਹਕੁ ਪਰਾਇਆ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਉਸੁ ਸੁਅਰ ਉਸੁ ਗਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਹਾਮਾ ਤਾ ਭਰੇ ਜਾ ਮੁਰਦਾਰੁ ਨ ਖਾਇ ॥

ਗਲੀ ਭਿਸਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਈਐ ਛੁਟੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

ਮਾਰਣੁ ਪਾਹਿ ਹਰਾਮ ਮਹਿ ਹੋਇ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਗਲੀ ਕੂੜੀਈ ਕੂੜੇ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

Hakk(u) praa-e-aa Nankaa Us(u) sooarr us(u) gaa-e.

Gur(u) Pir(u) haamaa taa bhar-ai Jaa murdaar(u) na khaa-e.

Galee bhisat(i) na jaa-ee-ei Chhutt-ei sach(u) kamaa-e.

Maaranh paah-e haraam meh(i) Ho-e halaal(u) na jaa-e.

Nanak galee koorhee-ee Koorho pall-ei paa-e. (141)

In Persian, Murdaar is something that is obtained from that which is dead'. Thus, 'Murdaaar' means the flesh of a dead animal - the animal may have died a natural death or been killed by a human driven by selfish desire. In either case, its flesh would constitute 'Murdaaar'. The Guru has pronounced the eating of flesh as a great obstacle in the Spiritual Path; hence, it is a taboo for the one, who wants to tread the Divine Path. The first two words in the above verse Hak Paraya mean the right of another, which is immensely correlated with snatching the life of another creature for one's self-gratification.

For the gratification of his senses, man slays an animal and eats its flesh; and takes away its right to live. In this verse, Guru Nanak Dev exhorts man towards a life of righteousness by strictly forbidding the eating of animal flesh. He makes it

clear: 'O man! If you refrain from eating flesh (Murdaar), the Guru will always support and sustain you, wherever you go.' Eating flesh for a Sikh is a taboo in the same way as is the eating of flesh of a pig for a Muslim or the eating of beef for a Hindu. Animal flesh is an odious product, the eating of which can be very detrimental to the seeker.

Further, the Guru says that mere empty talk through indulgence in specious arguments, logical disputation or over-subtle reasoning and trying deceptively to portray a decadent life style as virtuous living may seem very agreeable, but will never lead to God-realisation. Only truthful living, and by meditating on the Divine Name with loving devotion and constant awareness of His benign presence, and breaking free from the bonds of sensual pleasures, will enable the consciousness to dwell forever in the Realm of Truth (Sachkhand). One cannot purify the impure and the immoral by adding more impurities to it. If we keep accumulating things that stoke up the desires for flesh, then evil impressions will be etched deeper and deeper on the Antahkaran, i.e., the invisible divine computer of the mind where everything is recorded. We will stray from the Path of God-realisation and be whirled around in cycles of birth and rebirth. The impressions of impure and immoral deeds on the mind can be cleansed only by singing the praises of God - the Highest Truth, as enunciated by Guru Angad Dev:

ਕੁੜਿ ਕਮਾਣੈ ਕੁੜੋ ਹੋਵੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਵਿਗਾਸਿ ॥

Koorh(i) kmaan-h-ei koorho hov-ei Nanak siphat(i) vigaas(i). (474)

(If you accumulate vices, your mind will be polluted with evil impressions, which can be erased by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion.)

Guru Nanak Dev also expounds:

ਭਰੀਐ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਓਹੁ ਧੋਧੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਕੈ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

Bharee-ei matt(i) paapaa k-ei sangg(i). Oh(u) dhop-ei naav-ei k-ei rangg(i). (4)

(The impressions of our sinful actions, which are etched on our minds, can be completely erased only by meditating on the Divine Name, with full love and devotion.)

To a Muslim, eating pork is a taboo, while eating beef is legitimate. To a Hindu, on the other hand, eating beef is a sin, while eating pork is not so. Choosing examples from the irrational beliefs and superstitions of both the religions, the Guru points out clearly the distinction between sinful and virtuous deeds. Virtually speaking, animal flesh, whether beef or pork, is all the same. Denying someone the right to live is indeed like eating the flesh of a dead animal. When a man sets out with indomitable spirit on the Path to divine Realisation within (Atma), which, in reality, is the same Supreme Reality (Parmatma), lifts him by degrees to a higher and higher spiritual state. By and by, in the most subtle and spontaneous manner, a host of

divine qualities like forbearance, love, compassion, forgiveness, patience, contentment and giving up the pursuit of pleasures, awaken in his heart, which lead him to realise the Divine within.

Animal Flesh (Kuttha)

In the Punjabi language, the synonym for carcass (Murdaar) is Kuttha, which means the flesh obtained by slaughtering or killing an animal in different ways. Although the literal meaning of the word Kuttha is 'that which is obtained by slaughtering or torturing the animal', the origin of the term is derived from 'Kuhanan' in Sanskrit, which is one of the oldest languages of the world, and which was used in India for thousands of years before the arrival of the Muslims. Kuhanan was always used in the sense 'that which has been slaughtered' or 'that which has been hacked to death'.

The Guru used the word Kuttha, indicating 'flesh' or 'carcass', the eating of which arouses lust and evil passions, which are big obstacles in the Path to Divine Realisation. Thus, in all the prescribed codes of conduct for Sikh, and all other manuals embodying such a code, the edict against the eating of Kuttha can only mean 'eat no flesh'. It is irrelevant whether the animal has been killed in the Muslim way, or the Hindu way.

Some people use the term Kuttha to mean flesh obtained by killing an animal as prescribed under Islamic law called Halal. Since Gurbani strictly forbids the eating of flesh, these people, in order to justify its eating, propagated the myth that Kuttha referred to Halal and that eating flesh obtained by the Jhatka method, i.e., by beheading the animal with one or two strokes or even more, was perfectly legitimate. In 1945, the Consultative Committee on Religious Affairs (Appointed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee), while amending the prescribed code of conduct, originally approved by the SGPC in 1936, appended a footnote, which stated that Kuttha meant Halal flesh, i.e., obtained by killing an animal or bird according to Muslim way of killing. In the draft version of the Code of Conduct of the Sikh Panth, which came into effect in August 1936, and which was approved on 12 October 1936, only the term Kuttha was used, and no further explanation was offered. Evidently, here the term Kuttha meant animal flesh, the use of which constituted a cardinal sin (Bajar Kurehat), since the time of the Gurus.

In the Rehat Maryada (also known as Rehatnama) founded by Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Choupa Singh said it is prohibited to eat animal flesh (Kuttha), which arouses passion and lust. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh called the Kuttha, i.e., flesh, whether prepared in a Muslim or a Hindu way, as an unpardonable crime against

the Amrit. All Sikhs, in letter and spirit, until 1936, followed this practice. By that time, wealthy intellectuals and some leaders had started indulging in pleasure-giving sumptuous food like other wealthy persons belonging to Hinduism, and other religions. As such, they started eating meat prepared according to Hindu rites. In 1945, SGPC again held a meeting in this respect, in which many wealthy pseudo-intellectuals and leaders were included under the name of Consultative Committee on Religious Affairs. The meeting approved the decision of the committee held in 1936, that Amritdhari Sikhs should not eat meat. But under the influence of these wealthy and worldly intellectuals, who had started eating animal flesh as sumptuous food, the committee somehow or the other inserted a footnote, in which it was mentioned that meat prepared by killing the animal in a Muslim way should not be eaten under any circumstances.

This step triggered a furious debate among the Sikhs, who were divided by this unfortunate controversy. Those Sikhs, given over to a life of pleasure, found justification for eating flesh under the pretext of the footnote that flesh prepared in the Muslim way was a taboo, and made the false assumption that flesh prepared in the Hindu way was legitimate to eat. They then argued that the Guru had given approval for eating Jhatka (cutting by one or two strokes) and not Kuttha, meaning Halal prepared the Muslim way. Others, who were following the Guru's instructions for seeking Divine Truth, considered the eating of Kuttha, referred to any kind of flesh, as a sinful obstruction for treading the Divine Path, as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh.

Halal and Jhatka?

The Western invaders belonging to the Muslim faith conquered a large part of India, plundering and looting as they went on. They seized from the original inhabitants, the Hindus, their wealth, women, lands, cattle, possessions and whatever else they fancied or came their way.

Over the years, feelings of bitterness and hatred took root between the two communities, alienating the Hindus and the Muslims from each other. The Hindus began to call Muslims barbarian or uncivilised (Malechh), and the Muslims responded by calling the Hindus Kafir, which means not following the Divine Law as conferred by the Almighty on Muslims. For their meat, which they called Halal (which means 'according to religious law' in Arabic), the Muslims began to slaughter their animals by ritually reciting the credo of Islam (Kalma), while slitting the jugular vein, resulting in the death of the animal. The Hindus found this practice abhorrent and to oppose the Muslims, they coined the term Jhatka for preparing their meat in the

prevalent method of beheading the animal with a single or two strokes of the sword.

Before commencing any work, a devout Muslim invokes the blessing of Allah by saying Bismillah. Thus, the Muslim method of slaughtering an animal was called Bismil and among common folk, the meat thus obtained was called Halal (pure one to eat). However, it has nothing to do with the killing of an animal or the manner in which it is killed. No Urdu, Arabic or Persian dictionary describes the word Halal in terms of killing, hacking or dismembering an animal. In Arabic, Halal means pure, undefiled or sacred as opposed to which Haram means impure or that which is a taboo. Muslims became habitual to eating meat, because in the desert of Arabia, no vegetable or vegetation was easily available; they started eating animal flesh, reciting their divine religious hymns, and called it Halal, which means pure and acceptable to eat. From the details of this history, one arrives at the conclusion that Muslims were compelled to eat meat of an animal in the deserts, where there was no vegetation, or it was impossible for any other kind of crop to be grown on even a moderate scale. As such, they were compelled to eat meat to satiate their hunger.

In the same way, the word Jhatka does not belong to Sikh literature. It finds no mention either in Bani of Guru Granth Sahib, or in the divine works of Bhai Gurdas, or in the writings of Bhai Nand Lal. None of the early memoirs or treatise on Gurmat records the use of this word. It is not even irrefutably established when it was first used in Sikh literature. Nor is it known since when, the traditional reading of what it connotes has been accepted in the Sikh Panth. The word Jhatka finds mention only in Mahankosh (encyclopaedia of the Sikh) for the first time compiled by then intellectuals, many of whom belonged to the Hindu faith, under the guidance of Kahan Singh Nabha (1861-1938) and other wealthy intellectuals. None of the Gurus, saints or Bhagats, in their compositions or teachings, have ever used the word Kuttha to mean Halal meat, or meat obtained by slaughtering an animal according to Islamic law.

A close study of the Guru Granth Sahib reveals that in the entire scripture, the word Kuttha appears only thrice, and in no instance can it be interpreted to mean Halal, or meat obtained by the Muslim method. In fact, Halal means pure. Guru Nanak Dev expounds:

ਤਿਸ ਦਾ ਕੁਠਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੇਖੁ ॥ ਲੋਹੁ ਲਬੁ ਨਿਕਥਾ ਵੇਖੁ ॥

Tis daa kuttha hov-ei s-ai-kh(u). Lohoo labb(u) nikattha v-ai-kh(u). (956)

[If the Muslim ruler's (Sheikh's) life is shaped according to the Divine Law, then greed, considered as blood, is spilled out of his body, and thus, he becomes pure to tread the Divine Path.]

and

ਅਭਾਖਿਆ ਕਾ ਕੁਠਾ ਬਕਰਾ ਖਾਣਾ ॥ ਚਉਕੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ॥

Abhaakh-e-aa kaa kutthaa bakkraa khaanhaa. Chaouk-ai uppar kis-ei na jaanhaa. (472)

[So-called religious persons (Brahmins) used to eat meat, but they debarred other vegetarian persons, who did not eat meat, from stepping into their so-called holy kitchen.]

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master says:

ਪਾਪ ਕਰੇਦੜ ਸਰਪਰ ਮੁਠੇ ॥ ਅਜਰਾਈਲਿ ਫੜੇ ਫੜਿ ਕੁਠੇ ॥

Paap kar-ai-darh sarparr mutth-ai. Azraaeel(i) pharh-ai pharh(i) kutth-ai. (1019)

(Those, who committed sins, are sure to be ruined. Azraa-eel, the Angel of Death, seizes and kills them.)

Those, who are of the opinion that Kuttha means Halal meat, cite in their defence the second hymn above and interpret the phrase Abhakhia ka Kuttha to mean killing an animal slowly, while reciting the Muslim creed (Kalma), as prescribed under the Muslim law. But this interpretation is not justified. The term Bhakh or Bhaakh means an item of food, which is legitimate to eat. Abhakh or Abhaakh, on the other hand, means food, which is forbidden to be taken by a seeker. The word Abhakhia is used in this sense in several verses, as enunciated by Guru Nanak Dev in the following hymn:

ਅਭਖੁ ਭਖਹਿ ਭਖੁ ਤਜਿ ਛੋਡਹਿ ਅੰਧੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਨ ਕੇਰਾ ॥

Abhakh(u) bhakheh(i) bhakh(u) tajj(i) chhodeh(i) Andh(u) Guru jinn k-ai-raa. (1290)

(They eat the uneatable; they reject and abandon what they should eat. Such a teacher is incompetent, and doesn't know anything of the reality of the Divine Truth.)

Guru Arjan Dev expounds:

ਲੋਭੀ ਜੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਈ ਭਖੁ ਅਭਖੁ ਸਭ ਖਾਇ ॥

Lobhee jant(u) na jaanh-ee bhakh(u) abhakh(u) sabh khaa-e. (50)

(The greedy person is intensely involved in worldly pleasures, consumes everything, whether edible or non-edible.)

In the above verse, the meaning of the word Abhakhia, considered by some writers to be the 'language of barbarians' is inappropriate, because the Gurus themselves had used Arabic and Persian languages in Gurbani. How can they have called these languages barbaric (Melechh)? In fact, through this hymn, it was the Guru's purpose to rid people of their superstitions, misconceptions, hypocrisy and egoism, and thus enable them to walk on the Path leading to the Divine Truth. Addressing a high-caste Pandit (Brahmin), Guru Nanak Dev says, "O Pandit! With the morally forbidden goat-flesh, you cook a dainty dish and devour it with relish. Then, self-righteously, you proclaim that your kitchen is a sacred place, and tell others not to enter it, lest they defile it by doing so. Deploring this hypocrisy, what

sort of purity are you laying claim to? You stop others from entering your kitchen, fearing they will defile it, yet you gorge yourself on animal flesh, and this is against the Divine Law."

A similar view has been expressed by Guru Nanak Dev:

ਤਗੁ ਕਪਾਹਗੁ ਕਤੀਐ ਬਾਮਣੁ ਵਟੇ ਆਇ ॥

ਕੁਹਿ ਬਕਰਾ ਰਿੰਨਿ ਖਾਇਆ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਆਖੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

Tagg(u) kpaahahu katee-ei Baa(h)manh vatt-ai aa-e.

Kuh(i) bakkraa rinn(i) khaa-e-aa Sabh(u) ko aakh-ei paa-e. (471)

[O Brahmin! Spinning threads from cotton and twirling them together, you make a Janeau (sacred thread), and falsely claim that wearing it confers purity. But you killed a goat, cooked its meat, ate it, and offered it to others, thus inducing others to indulge in worldly lust and pleasures. So, the Janeau (sacred thread) for purity of mind is correlated to the lustful pleasure of eating animal flesh, which is against the Divine Law.]

It is clear from the above verses that the Gurus considered eating of animal flesh a sinful act, which robs man of his spiritual capital. Another group of non-Muslim writers interpret the word Abhakhia (non-edible flesh) as Halal meat prepared according to Islamic way and claim that eating such meat distracts the mind from spirituality, but meat prepared according to the Hindu way is considered spiritually pure and pious to eat.

These learned men seem to have failed to discern the divine perspective of Guru Nanak Dev - the Divine incarnate in human frame. By interpreting Abhakhia to mean 'meat prepared according to the Islamic injunctions', they diminished the grandeur of Guru Nanak Dev's divine vision. The whole idea thus negates the popular perception that Guru Nanak Dev was the Guru of the Hindus and the Pir of the Muslims. Guru Nanak Dev and the successive Sikh Gurus, who were Divinely One in the spiritual realm, deplored the meaningless divisions of religion, caste and creed. They taught that duality was the biggest obstacle on the Spiritual Path. How could they, then, have suggested that meat prepared according to the Islamic way was unacceptable while meat prepared according to the Hindu way was acceptable? Thus, meat remains meat whether it is prepared according to the Hindu or the Muslim way. A verse in Gurbani enunciated by Guru Arjan Dev makes it clear:

ਨਾ ਹਮ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਨ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ॥ ਅਲਹ ਰਾਮ ਕੇ ਪਿੰਡੁ ਪਰਾਨ ॥

Naa hamm Hindu na Musalmaan. Alah Ram k-ai pind(u) praan. (1136)

(I am not a Hindu, nor am I a Muslim. My body and breath of life belong to Allah and to Rama - which are the same in the Divine Realm and thus, there is no duality in the Divine Sphere.)

Guru Nanak Dev and the successive Sikh Gurus are considered One, because in

all the hymns, the verse closes with 'Nanak', and not with their own respective names. All the ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh, came to this world with the sole objective of leading mankind on the Path of Divine Realisation. They taught that all persons belonging to any caste, creed or religion are brothers and sisters, and they attempted to draw aside the veil of dualism that engulfs humanity. When we consider them as the incarnation of the Almighty Lord, it is inconceivable that they could have promoted a dualistic idea, which is against the Divine Law. How could they say that the bread prepared by the Hindu is pure and eatable, while that of the Muslim is impure and uneatable? We may expect this type of duality from common people, but not from the divine ones. History is witness to the fact that all the Gurus had followers from all faiths, especially Hindus and Muslims. They came to this earth to spread spiritual brotherhood and guide their followers to shed duality to tread the Divine Path. Only the rulers of that era were against the Gurus, because they were upholding the destiny of the downtrodden, which the rulers did not relish. Thus, all the Gurus have amply clarified that eating Tamasic food, especially flesh, is odious and should be shunned by persons endeavouring to tread the Divine Path.

That is why, Guru Gobind Singh, while initiating the Sikhs with Amrit (the Divine Nectar), issued strict instructions not to take Kuttha (flesh) so that they should not get distracted from the Divine Path. The tenth Guru has amply clarified that Khalsa is the one, who has completely realised the Divine within. He further expounds, 'Khalsa', Me and the Divine Lord are one and the same.'

ਆਤਮ ਰਸ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨਹੀ, ਸੋ ਹੈ ਖਾਲਸ ਦੇਵ ॥

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਹਿ, ਮੈ ਮਹਿ, ਤਾਸ ਮਹਿ, ਰੰਚਕ ਨਾਹਨ ਭੇਵ ॥

Aatam ras jeh jaan-hee, So h-ei khaalas d-ai-v.

Prabh meh(i), m-ai meh(i), taas meh(i), ranchak naahan bh-ai-v.

(Sarabloh Granth, 533)

(He, who has realised the Divine within is known as Khaalas Dev, i.e., a divine person, bereft of all vices. There is no difference at all among God, Me and the Khalsa.)

One of the four cardinal sins, expounded by the Guru, was to partake of any flesh food prepared by Hindus or Muslims. He did not categorise Kuttha as Halal, i.e., meat prepared by the Muslims, as many Muslim seekers after Truth, were his very devoted followers, like Pir Buddhu Shah, Syed Beig, Sayaad Khan etc., the former generals of Aurangzeb.

The following verses composed by the Tenth Divine Master bring out this point:

ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕੋਊ, ਰਾਫਜੀ ਇਮਾਮ ਸਾਫੀ, ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਚਾਨਬੋ।

Hindu Turakk ko-oo, Raafjee Imaam Shaafee, Maanas kee jaat sab-ei ek-ei pehchaanbo.

(Guru Gobind Singh says that Hindus and Muslims, as well as the revered persons belonging to the Muslim faith, i.e., Rafzi - Shias, Imams - the Sunnis and Sufis - who tread the Divine Path after perceiving the higher stages of spirituality, are all considered equal as human beings created by the One Divine Power. As such, human beings belonging to all human categories have the same Divine within. In the Spiritual Realm, we should consider the whole of the humanity as the creation of One Divine Father.)

and

ਦੇਹਰਾ ਮਸੀਤ ਸੋਈ, ਪੂਜਾ ਔ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਓਈ, ਮਾਨਸ ਸਬੈ ਏਕ ਪੈ ਅਨੇਕ ਕੋ ਭ੍ਰਮਾਉ ਹੈ ।

Dehraa Maseet soee, poojaa au nivaaj o-ee, Maanas sab-ei ek p-ei anek ko bhramaaou h-ei.

(Akal Ustat)

Life in the world is the manifestation of the Divine. We worship and recite the Divine Name (Naam) for eradication of the ego and to merge with the Divine. In this context, Guru Gobind Singh expounds that the glory of the Divine (God), who is one for the whole humanity, is recited in the Hindu temple, Muslim mosque, and other places of worship. In other words, the Divine resides equally in the temple, mosque, churches and other places of worship. Similarly, worship/prayers performed by the Hindu, Muslim, Christians and persons of all religions are performed for getting the blessings of the One Divine Master, who is called by different Names; Rama for Hindus, Allah for Muslims, and God by Christians, as mentioned in their respective holy scriptures. All human beings have the One Divine Lord within, and in the whole of the Universe. All worship the same Lord to eradicate their ego, to merge with the Divine for getting salvation. But, by following their different customs and rituals, they segregate themselves accordingly, due to which many doubts and differences creep in for following the religious Paths, which become the cause of hatred and conflicts between the followers of different religions. If everybody meditates on the Divine Name with full dedication by following the teachings of his religion honestly, he would definitely reach the Divine Realm, which is the Formless One, without religion, caste, creed, worldly sorrows, or sensual pleasures. In this Realm, one loses his ego completely and merges with the Divine which, in fact, is salvation. Caste, creed and religions are the different paths to reach this Divine Destination, which is common for the entire humanity. Then, why do humans fight with each other in the name of caste, creed and religion?

Bhai Ghanaiya embodied these ideals. He would go about the battlefield carrying water in a pitcher and offer it to the wounded, even among the enemy ranks, who were all Muslims soldiers. Moved by such exemplary service, the Guru clasped him to his bosom and even gave him medicament and bandages so that he could provide

care to the wounded - both friend or foe alike, whether Sikh or Muslim. Guru Gobind Singh inculcated this divine idea in him that all human beings irrespective of caste, creed or religion are the children of the one Divine One, who created them without any caste and creed.

The Guru emphasised: 'O Ghanaiya! All persons are created by the same Divine, who pervades everywhere, among Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, etc.'

A living example of the Gurus' message of brotherhood and equality is the tradition of free community kitchen (Langar) in the Gurdwaras, where all superficial barriers that divide humanity are broken. Whether high or low, irrespective of their faith, everyone partakes of food together, seated on the floor. When meat is never served in the community kitchen (Langar) of any Gurdwara throughout the world, then why have we created a duality to distort the meaning of Kuthha which, in fact, is the meat prepared by the Muslim way or the Hindu way? Meat was never served in the Langar of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar.

It is unfair and a grievous error to link the Gurus' Name with the dualistic ideas of whether to eat or not to eat meat, or to make a distinction between the Hindu and Muslim method of slaughtering an animal for their sumptuous food, and to suggest that one method was acceptable and the other was not. In fact, the entire man-made philosophy is not acceptable in the Divine Court. This idea violates the sanctity of the Guru Granth Sahib, and would be distressing for the faithful in treading the Divine Path. It detracts from the Guru's greatness and lowers His exaltedness among the masses. Viewed from the spiritual angle, to the truly devout Sikh, Kuthha is merely Murdar or the flesh of a slaughtered animal, and he should not eat it, and should refrain from the dualistic idea of Halal and Jhatka, which divides humanity through such types of dangerous controversies. The greatest unity is that meat is never served in any of the Gurdwaras of the world. Even meat-eating Sikhs have never thought of introducing meat in Guru ka Langar for fear of being cursed.

The Origin of Meat-Eating Among the Sikhs

Going far back in history, we find that in ancient times, sages (ascetics, saintly souls and seekers after Truth) refrained from eating meat. Among the four divisions of society, those who sought the true purpose of life by walking on the Spiritual Path leading to realisation of Supreme Being (Brahm) were called Brahmins (high-caste priests). They were held in high esteem in society and over a period of time, people began to worship them, and bring them offerings. Such glorifications and free gifts fed their vanity and their minds, which were earlier focused inwards, on

the Divine within, and had now started to turn outwards to enjoy worldly pleasures. Over a period of time, they were ensnared by a pleasure-seeking life. They were overpowered by the pleasures of the palate, and other forms of self-indulgence. They even started eating meat, which provides the most delectable experience to the palate.

Obviously, the clever Brahmins, who were the custodians of the sacred texts, had a far better understanding of religious matters than the common people, so they cleverly spread the myth that in order to please the gods and goddesses, and ensure the successful outcome of their rituals, animals would have to be sacrificed at holy places. They even had this idea quietly inserted in their sacred books. Thus, began the ritual of animal sacrifice in Hinduism and simultaneously high-caste persons (Brahmins) started eating meat to satiate their craving for the lustful taste of the tongue, and the common people simply followed their footsteps. Before the coming of Guru Nanak Dev, the Brahmins had spun such an intricate web of empty ritualism and superstitions that most people were inextricably entangled in it.

After hearing the gospel of Guru Nanak Dev, only such men were able to follow Him, who had steeled themselves to rise above earthly pain and pleasure, and were strong-willed. These were the Sikhs, who held the 'Word' and 'Will' of the Guru, to be the highest and irrevocable. In striving to uphold this belief and to fulfill the Will of Guru Nanak Dev and his nine successors (Guru Gobind Singh being the last), the Sikhs faced many trials and made great sacrifices. Some of them were self-realised souls, i.e., attuned with the Divine within. They helped others to tread the Divine Path.

We can infer from the teachings of the Gurus that in those days, all Sikhs were vegetarians. This gave them inner strength and some of them, though saintly in outlook, became fearless warriors. They rose up against the cruel invaders, and routed them in the battlefield to bring an end to the people's sufferings.

The vegetarian diet and recitation of the Divine Name gave them such inner strength, that they could withstand any type of physical torture, even leading to death at the hands of the cruel tyrant rulers, but never wavering in their determination. By the grace of the Guru, their grit and self-mortifying way of life bore fruit and kingship eventually came their way. Twelve confederacies (Misls) came to power in Punjab and subsequently Maharaja Ranjit Singh ascended to the throne. The weak-minded Sikhs, who strayed from the Divine Path, as enunciated by their Gurus, were drunk with power. Being intoxicated by worldly status and power, their consciousness drifted away from the Divine and was drawn towards the allurements of worldly comforts. They were ensnared by sensual pleasures, and started eating meat, and

sank inexorably into a life of ease and luxury. Unthinkingly, like the Hindu and Muslim rulers and dictators, these power-hungry Sikhs took to eating meat and drinking. But all along, the devout Sikhs and their associates kept away from the evil of meat-eating. They strove to live by the Guru's teachings, and made their earthly sojourn successful. They continue to do so even today.

A broad survey will show that even today the practice of eating meat is widespread only among Sikhs living in towns and cities. Here they are more likely to indulge their senses and wallow in the pleasures of the flesh. However, among the simple village folk, this evil hasn't spread that much, and they have meat in their meals only on special occasions like marriages etc.

Meat-Eating - A Mere Delight of the Palate

There is a general proverb that man eats to live to be a good human being, and not live to eat. Man must eat appropriate vegetarian food to nourish himself and not indulge in sumptuous food, like meat eating, which spoils the health of the body for the craving of the palate. According to present day medical research, 99.9% of those who eat meat, do so, merely for the pleasure it gives them. Now-a-days, a wide range of nourishing vegetarian food is available, yet man kills animals for meat, merely for pleasure. In the olden days, 90% of the population ate vegetarian food, and they used to live long and healthy lives.

Driven by the pleasure principle, man tends to eat far in excess of his need. As a result, he falls victim to evil habits and suffers from deadly diseases. A verse in Gurbani reminds us that pleasures of the flesh take the mind towards evil, and leave an indelible stain on it. Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਜੇਤਾ ਮੋਹੁ ਪਰੀਤਿ ਸੁਆਦ ॥ ਸਭਾ ਕਾਲਖ ਦਾਗਾ ਦਾਗ ॥

J-ai-taa moh(u) preet(i) suaad. Sabhaa kaalakh daagaa daag. (662)

(All the attachments and lustful pleasures and the tastes of the sumptuous junk food create negative impressions on the mind of a man and discourage him from treading the Divine Path, for which he has come on this world.)

Flesh is a Tamasic food, which promotes darkness and dullness of inertia. It vitiates the mind and causes it to stray from the Path of Truth. And then, who knows how long it might be, how many lives may have to be wasted, how much suffering has to be endured before the mind again returns to the Divine Path?

Meat-Eating Feeds Evil Desires

According to Gurbani, food is of two kinds - Bhakh and Abhakh. Bhakh is good food, which is fit to eat, e.g., vegetarian food like fruits, vegetables, cereals, milk

etc. Abhakh is the Tamasic food, which not only harms the body, but also creates distraction for the mind. It includes mostly meat of any kind, eggs, tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, opium and others intoxicants that ruin a person's life.

The Divine Master (Guru) says that the mortal frame of man is the temple of God wherein dwells the Divine Himself. By remembering the Divine Name, a man's consciousness acquires an inward looking tendency, and moves beyond worldly pleasures. With the passage of time, he gains the Divine Wisdom, and thus mitigates his ego completely and merges with the Divine, which is, in fact, the real pleasure in the whole of the Universe. Guru Amardas expounds:

ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਏਹੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹੈ ਗਿਆਨਿ ਰਤਨਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥
ਮਨਮੁਖ ਮੂਲੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ ਮਾਣਸਿ ਹਰਿ ਮੰਦਰੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

Har(i) mandar(u) eh(u) sareer(u) h-ei Giaan(i) ratan(i) pargat(u) ho-e.

Manmukh mool(u) na jaanhnee Maanhas(i) Har(i) mandar(u) na ho-e. (1346)

[This body is the Temple of the Lord, in which the jewel of spiritual wisdom is revealed. The most egoistic persons following the negative tendencies of mind (Manmukhs) do not know the divine virtues within. In fact, they are completely ignorant that their body is a temple where the Divine resides.]

Our bodies are the temples of God, but we have turned them into graveyards by stuffing them with meat, and other lustful foods that arouse lustful desires. The mind of such an ignorant person gets attracted towards the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. Lustful and junk food that provokes animal passions clouds the mind and reinforces it to do harm. Such a mind holds back the consciousness (the faculty to think, discriminate and decide) from ever getting close to the transcendental state of Divine Bliss. In order to eradicate the craving of the mind for the pleasures of the flesh, the Guru has forbidden the use of meat and other Tamasic foods. Such self-discipline strengthens the consciousness and enables it to tread the Spiritual Path. Under the influence of higher discriminative mind (Buddhi), and with the blessing of the Divine, one reaches the goal of Divine Realisation with utmost ease.

Of all the sensual pleasures, the Divine Master (Guru) describes the enjoyment of meat as the worst and most deadly. Guru Nanak Dev expounds:

ਰਸੁ ਸੁਇਨਾ ਰਸੁ ਰੁਪਾ ਕਾਮਣਿ ਰਸੁ ਪਰਮਲ ਕੀ ਵਾਸੁ ॥
ਰਸੁ ਘੋੜੇ ਰਸੁ ਸੇਜਾ ਮੰਦਰ ਰਸੁ ਮੀਠਾ ਰਸੁ ਮਾਸੁ ॥
ਏਤੇ ਰਸ ਸਰੀਰ ਕੇ ਕੈ ਘਟਿ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥

Ras(u) su-e-naa ras(u) rupaa kaamanh(i) Ras(u) parmal kee vaas(u).

Ras(u) ghorh-ai ras(u) s-ai-jaa mandar Ras(u) meethaa ras(u) maas(u).

Ai-t-ai ras sreer k-ai K-ei ghat(i) Naam nivaas(u). (15)

[In this hymn, the Divine Master (Guru) enumerates various temptations, which act as distractions and impediments in the way to Divine Realisation. These are: Greed - for accumulating gold and silver. Lust - the fondness for perfumes and fragrances, the fascination for riding horses, the longing for a beautiful mansion with soft velvety couches, the hankering after sweet, savoury foods, and animal flesh. The Divine Master concluded in the end that eating flesh is the worst for treading the Divine Path. If the human body is entangled in these pleasures, one can't recite the Divine Name to realise the Divine within.]

In this hymn, after describing the physical pleasures that serve as obstacles in the Spiritual Path, the Divine Master (Guru) concludes that the pleasures of eating animal flesh is the worst for man to tread the Divine Path.

While discussing at length a subject, sacred or profane, whenever we give examples to elucidate a point for the benefit of our listeners, we usually begin by quoting general examples related to the subject and leave the key example for the end. If, for the common good, a clarification is required on an important issue, a decision is arrived at after open discussion at a forum. Here the debate is set rolling, first by minor speakers, and then followed by more wise speakers, till finally, the most acclaimed master of the subject in the gathering is invited to sum up the main points and conclude.

Thus, by this analogy, Gurbani makes it amply clear that of all the cravings that cling to man, the pleasure derived from meat-eating is the most challenging to tread the Divine Path. As he takes to a diet of meat, which is Tamasic, it arouses the powers of darkness and delusion, besides a man is also drawn towards other sensual pleasures mentioned above. Thus, weakened, he becomes greedy and debauched; addiction to intoxicants follows, and he gets mired in the pursuits of other evil temptations. His consciousness, which, to begin with, was centred on the fountain of divine Love within, gets distracted by the pleasures of flesh. It drifts towards the outside world, and man becomes a great sinner. A cruel fate then awaits him; he dies, and is then whirled around in the painful cycle of transmigration.

Sikhs, who seek spirituality, believe that the pleasure of eating meat is indeed evil and therefore they should avoid it. As a result, the other sensual pleasures mentioned above spontaneously lose their appeal as well. They become very feeble, and lose their negative effect.

The food that a man eats, determines his thinking, which ultimately shapes his life. For, thoughts determine his works; works determine occupation and mould his conduct. Simple nourishing vegetarian food alone can make the mind pure. Whatever a man eats affects his thoughts. As the saying goes: 'As is the food, so are

the thoughts'. It is true that a simple vegetarian diet, which includes leafy vegetables helps in meditating on the Divine Name. On the other hand, lustful eating of impure, savoury, Tamasic food leads to impurity of thought, speech and action, and it even makes the body sick. According to Gurbani, meditation on the Divine Name is food for the soul, and whatever hinders it, should be avoided. This has been amply clarified by Guru Nanak Dev:

ਬਾਬਾ ਹੋਰੁ ਖਾਣਾ ਖੁਸੀ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥ ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਏ ਤਨੁ ਪੀੜੀਐ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਵਿਕਾਰੁ ॥

Baba hor(u) kxanhaa khusee khuaar(u).

Jitt(u) khaadh-ei tann(u) peerhee-ei Mann meh(i) chaleh(i) vikaar. (16)

(Eating of sumptuous and junk food spoils the stability and bliss of the mind. Having such type of food, the body develops many diseases and the mind is attracted to evil temptations.)

Arduous indeed is the journey leading to self-realisation. The Guru says that the Spiritual Path is sharper than a sword's edge, and finer than a strand of hair. For, evil temptations and worldly desires constantly perturb the mind, and prevent it from achieving a state of unvarying steadiness. The third Divine Master Guru Amardas says:

ਖੰਨਿਅਹੁ ਤਿਖੀ ਵਾਲਹੁ ਨਿਕੀ ਏਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਜਾਣਾ ॥

Khann-e-ahu tikhee vaalahu nikkee Ait(u) maarag(i) jaanhaa. (918)

(The path they take is sharper than a two-edged sword, and finer than a hair.)

It takes monumental effort of will, fervent prayer, and unremitting toil of the mind to unite with the God-head dwelling within. But a momentary lapse, and giving in to the evil temptations, can push one into a life of depravity; and the mind that has been honed through painstaking effort, and has reached the pinnacle of perfection can come crashing down, as it were, in an instant.

There is scientific evidence that at the time of slaughter, noxious chemicals are produced, and released into the blood-stream of the cowering, terrified animal. When a person eats meat, these chemicals enter his body, and have the effect of arousing and aggravating in him the propensity to do evil.

The hormone adrenaline present in meat is only partially destroyed by cooking, but the amount that survives the process can induce fear and anger in man.

Meat-Eating and Compassion Towards Animals

Immersed in a life of depravity and its evil pleasures, man inconsiderately slaughters animals for his food. He forgets that animals are his fellow-beings, for just as he, they too are part of the animal kingdom. Just as he, they too have feelings and awareness of mind. Let a man see that the Divine Power in him is the same as in all living beings. If he has compassion for all living creatures, he would be saved

from the miseries of the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and arrogance. Guru Arjan Dev says:

ਦਯਾਲੰ ਸਰਬਤ੍ਰ ਜੀਆ ਪੰਚ ਦੋਖ ਬਿਵਰਜਿਤਹ ॥

Dayaal-n sarbatar jee-aa Panch dokh bivarjiteh. (1357)

(By cultivating kindness for living beings, they have overpowered the five evils.)

Of all the virtues, compassion is Supreme and forms the basis of religion. It implies a strong feeling of sympathy for others' suffering, and a desire to help them.

In His divine composition Japuji Sahib, Guru Nanak Dev expounds that the Divine Law (Dharma), willed by the Timeless Being, binds and regulates Nature; and this Dharma is born of His compassion. Thus, compassion is a great virtue that helps one tread the Divine Path. It blooms in the heart only when the devotee firmly believes that the Lord is ever-present, and as such, he is motivated to tread the Divine Path to realise Him within.

ਧੌਲੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਦਇਆ ਕਾ ਪੂਤੁ ॥

Dhaul(u) Dharam(u) da-e-aa kaa poot(u). (3)

(The mythical bull is Dharma, the son of compassion.)

In Hindu mythology, there is a belief that the entire earth is supported on the horns of the holy bull. But Guru Nanak Dev says that no live bull has supported the earth, but that bull is the Divine Law, framed by the righteousness and compassion of the Divine Lord.

Engrossed in the pleasure of flesh-eating, man gradually sinks into a life of depravity and addiction to various intoxicants. Compassion and righteousness have no place in his heart, and unthinkingly, he inflicts torture and cruelty upon animals. Gurbani teaches us that kindness to living beings is a great virtue, which takes us on to the Path of honesty, with full devotion, so as to realise the Divine within. Guru Arjan Dev says:

ਅਠਸਠਿ ਤੀਰਥ ਸਗਲ ਪੁੰਨ ਜੀਅ ਦਇਆ ਪਰਵਾਨੁ ॥

Atthsath(i) teerath sagal punn Jee-a da-e-aa parvaan(u). (136)

(Kindness and compassion towards all beings, helps a person tread the Spiritual Path to realise the Divine within, which is much higher than bathing in the sixty-eight sacred pools of holy pilgrimages and the giving of charity to fulfil worldly desires.)

Generally, those who have a craving for meat, defend their position by arguing that compassion should be shown only towards humans, who, because of their intellect, enjoy supremacy over all Creation. It is quite pointless to show kindness to animals, which lack Divine Wisdom. However, this argument is superfluous, and for their own defence for breaking the Divine Law, because every living creature has the Divine within, otherwise it will not exist. Consider what Guru Arjan Dev

has to say:

**ਕਰਤੂਤਿ ਪਸੂ ਕੀ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਾਤਿ ॥
Kartoot(i) pasoo kee maanas jaat(i). (267)**

(Even human beings, considered to possess the Divine Wisdom within, perform much worst than the beasts.)

According to Gurbani, the highest and purest function of the mind is to realise the Divine within. Those, who tread the Divine Path while rendering all worldly affairs according to the Divine Law, are considered wise. Those having human form, go astray and are distracted, according to their mind's egoistic instincts. They are like those animals, that also have intellect. Like humans, animals also go about their daily life eating, roaming and procreating, besides performing worldly affairs, as trained by their human masters. The only difference is that they do not have the spiritual instinct to realise the true goal of life, i.e., realising the Divine within. Such persons may have a human body and mind, but their deeds are just like those of animals, as mentioned above.

Anyone, because of his intellect, may attain a position of high authority and become a judge, Nawab or a ruler, but he can go astray and wander in his own egoistic sphere under the spell of his pseudo-powers, and lose the instinct to realise the Divine Truth in this very life. Such persons, follow the instinct of the mind, and are no better than animals. Gurbani pronounces harshly on the deeds of such persons:

ਸੋ ਪੜਿਆ ਸੋ ਪੰਡਿਤੁ ਬੀਨਾ ਜਿਨੀ ਕਮਾਣਾ ਨਾਉ ॥
ਪਹਿਲੋ ਦੇ ਜੜ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜੰਮੈ ਤਾ ਉਪਰਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਛਾਉ ॥
ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ॥ ਜਾਇ ਜਗਾਇਨ੍ ਬੈਠੇ ਸੁਤੇ ॥
ਚਾਕਰ ਨਹਦਾ ਪਾਇਨ੍ ਘਾਉ ॥ ਰਤੁ ਪਿਤੁ ਕੁਤਿਹੋ ਚਟਿ ਜਾਹੁ ॥

So parh-e-aa so Pandit(u) beena Jin-hee kmaanhaa Naaou.

Pehilo d-ai jarh andar(i) jamm-ei Taa ouper(i) hov-ei chhaanou.

Raaj-ai seeh mukadam kutt-ai. Jaa-e jagaa-in(h) b-ei-tth-ai sutt-ai.

Chaakar nehdaa paa-in(h) ghaaou. Ratt(u) pitt(u) kuttiho chatt(i) jaahu. (1288)

(He alone is well-read, intelligent, scholarly, accomplished and enlightened, who with single-minded devotion, steadfastly meditates on the Divine Name with full love and devotion. Just as a seed first sprouts roots, that weave their way into the earth, and only then does the shoot come up and grows into a big shady tree, likewise, in man, true knowledge comes only when he becomes a seeker and sows the seeds of the Divine Name in his heart. On the other hand, a man might wield great authority, but if he has no love, compassion and fear of God in his heart, he is no better than a cruel animal. Taking this analogy further, the rulers are like fearsome lions, while their lackeys roam the countryside like

dogs and terrorise their subjects. These cruel men lacerate the wounds of the people, as if they were wearing a fearsome lion's claws. In other words, the rulers, like lions, drink the blood of the masses, i.e., snatch their hard earned wealth through their henchmen, who act as their dogs.)

It is a proven fact that someone, who has strayed away from the Path of Truth, is no better than an animal. Then what qualms does the meat-eater have? If animal flesh is acceptable, then why hesitate to eat human flesh? As such, there is nothing new about it. We know that in the past, there were cannibals, who were called Demons (Rakhshas). Sikh history records the life of KaudaRakhash, who shed all his evil ways after having the glimpse of Guru Nanak Dev, and after getting His Divine Blessings to tread the Divine Path.

History is replete with such Kaudas. Recently, there have been many instances where human beings have been found to have eaten human flesh.

Gurbani enjoins kindness not just towards humans, but also towards animals, which also possess a mind for understanding and feeling, but lack the wisdom to perceive the Divine within. Indeed, these animals deserve more compassion than humans, for they are destined to undergo endless sufferings, and wander here and there for food and sustenance as feeble, meek and pitiful creatures. Thus, it is a point of agreement that animals are not devoid of feelings, and like humans, possess the ability to experience and express a whole range of emotions. Both humans and animals are part of the animal kingdom, and have similar bodily functions. Both need food for their nourishment - they either search for it, or work for it. Both produce offspring(s) for further propagation of their species. They hear, fear, see, breathe, eat and do other similar functions like human beings. Both possess the sense of touch, and communicate with other species through distinctive modes of communication.

Their means of sustenance too is similar. Man works for his livelihood. Wild animals are either carnivorous or herbivorous, and look for such types of foods in the forest, while domesticated animals earn their food and livelihood by working under the command of their human masters. Like human beings, animals too possess the five sense organs through which they depict lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, and also have five working organs (Karma Indris) like humans, for subsistence of their body.

Whenever the Gurus exhorted their followers to eschew the five evils - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - they drew examples from the animal world. In Gurbani, the dreadful consequences of being driven by lustful passion are exemplified by the elephant. Overcome by the desire to mate, he rampages through the forest in

frenzy, and thus distracted, he is easily chased and captured by the trappers. And then all lifelong, it bears painful prodding of the controller's spear:

ਕਾਲਬੂਤ ਕੀ ਹਸਤਨੀ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਰੇ ਚਲਤੁ ਰਚਿਓ ਜਗਦੀਸ ॥
ਕਾਮ ਸੁਆਇ ਗਜ ਬਸਿ ਪਰੇ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਰੇ ਅੰਕਸੁ ਸਹਿਓ ਸੀਸ ॥

Kaalboot kee hastanee mann baouraa r-ai Chalat(u) rach-e-o Jagdees.

Kaam suaa-e gaj bas(i) par-ai mann baouraa r-ai Ankas(u) sah-e-o sees. (335)

An artificial figure of a she-elephant made of straw and paper is placed on the thin wooden rod over a wide deep pit. When a bull elephant, under the influence of lust, is attracted to mate with that artificial she-elephant, it falls in the deep pit, and gets trapped by the trained humans. O crazy mind! The Lord of the Universe has staged the drama in this world. Attracted by the lure of sexual desire, the elephant is captured and the halter is placed around its neck, and to train it, they strike with a three-edged spear on its head, and thus, it undergoes all the sufferings for the livelihood of human beings. This happens under the sexual instinct of the wild animal.

Similarly, to bring home the consequences of greed, Gurbani gives the analogy of a monkey. The trappers develop such a technique in which they put roasted grains in a small narrow-necked earthen pitcher into which the hand of a monkey can go, but after the hand is filled with the grain, it cannot come out. The greedy monkey would not release the handful of grain and therefore, cannot escape from the narrow neck of the earthen pitcher and thus, is caught by the trapper. The trapper trains the monkey by beating it to dance to the tunes of the master. Thus, for the rest of life, it is enslaved and dances to earn livelihood for the master. This shows that greed ruins the life of a creature, as well as a human being who develops a sense of greed due to lack of Divine Knowledge. Kabir depicts the situation thus:

ਮਰਕਟ ਮੁਸਟੀ ਅਨਾਜ ਕੀ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਰੇ ਲੀਨੀ ਹਾਥੁ ਪਸਾਰਿ ॥
ਛੂਟਨ ਕੋ ਸਹਸਾ ਪਰਿਆ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਰੇ ਨਾਚਿਓ ਘਰ ਘਰ ਬਾਰਿ ॥

Markatt mustee anaaj kee mann baouraa r-ai Leenee haath(u) psaar(i).

Chhootan ko sehsaa par-e-aa mann baouraa r-ai Naach-e-o ghar ghar baar(i). (336)

Referring to the charming allure of worldly pleasures (Maya), a verse by Kabir warns the foolish mind how the parrot completely falls under the spell of Nalini, and is unable to leave it due to its greed, and gets trapped. In the same way, man is ensnared by Maya and remains forever engrossed in it and suffers a lot of miseries in life:

ਜਿਉ ਨਲਨੀ ਸੁਅਟਾ ਗਹਿਓ ਮਨ ਬਉਰਾ ਰੇ ਮਾਯਾ ਇਹੁ ਬਿਉਹਾਰੁ ॥

Jiou nalnee soo-a-taa gah-e-o mann baouraa r-ai Maa-e-aa ihu biouhaar(u). (336)

(Like the parrot caught in the trap, O crazy mind! You are trapped by the affairs of the Maya.)

To elucidate the meaning of craving (Trishna), Guru Arjan Dev cites the predicament of the hapless antelope in the desert. In the scorching sun, the thirsty

deer runs towards mirages, in all directions, looking for water, but finds none. Similarly, hankering after materialistic possessions, one wastes his valuable life, just like the deer that chases the mirages. It is a fact that in pursuit of worldly wealth, man wastes his entire life:

ਮ੍ਰਿਗ ਤ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਅਰੁ ਸੁਪਨ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਵਡਾਈ ॥

Mrig trisnaa aru supan manorath Taa kee kachhu na vaddaaee. (615)

Both humans and animals have a memory, and show love, anger and jealousy in degrees determined by their temperaments. They experience fear, pain and suffering. A verse in Gurbani gives hint that birds too, like men, have a mind. The lovely cranes with snow-white plumage fly away into the sky far from home, but always remembers their nestling back in the nest, and are ever mindful of their welfare and safety:

ਊਡੇ ਊਡਿ ਆਵੈ ਸੈ ਕੋਸਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਪਾਛੈ ਬਚਰੇ ਛਰਿਆ ॥

ਤਿਨ ਕਵਣੁ ਖਲਾਵੈ ਕਵਣੁ ਚੁਗਾਵੈ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਕਰਿਆ ॥

Oodd-ai oodd(i) aav-ei s-ei kosaa Tis(u) paachh-ei bachar-ai chhar-e-aa.

Tinn kavanh(u) khlaav-ei kavanh(u) chugaav-ei Mann meh(i) simran(u) kar-e-aa. (10)

(While the cranes have flown away hundreds of miles, what keeps the young back in the nest going, is their love and longing for their mothers.)

Bhagat Namdev gives the spiritual examples to Bhagat Trilochan, who doubts the spiritual status of Namdev, who while rendering his worldly duties, was reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion as mentioned in the hymn, incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਮੰਦਰੁ ਏਕੁ ਦੁਆਰ ਦਸ ਜਾ ਕੇ ਗਉ ਚਰਾਵਨ ਛਾਡੀਅਲੇ ॥

ਪਾਂਚ ਕੋਸ ਪਰ ਗਉ ਚਰਾਵਤ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਬਛਰਾ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥

ਕਹਤ ਨਾਮਦੇਉ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਤਿਲੋਚਨ ਬਾਲਕੁ ਪਾਲਨ ਪਉਢੀਅਲੇ ॥

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਬਿਰੂਧੀ ਚੀਤੁ ਸੁ ਬਾਰਿਕ ਰਾਖੀਅਲੇ ॥

Mandar(u) ek(u) duaar das jaa k-ai Ga-oo charaavan chhaddee-al-ai.

Paanch kos par ga-oo charaavat Cheet(u) su bachharaa raakhee-al-ai.

Kehat Namdeou sunahu Tilochan Baalak(u) paalan pouddhee-al-ai.

Antar(i) baahar(i) kaaj biroodhee Cheet(u) su baarik raakhee-al-ai. (972)

(The cow is let loose from the mansion by persons having ten gates (two eyes, two nostrils, two ears, mouth, genital and anus and the Divine Tenth Door in the body, through which, man realises the Divine within) to graze in the field located at a distance of five miles away, but the cow while grazing, keeps her attention focused on her calf kept in her master's house. Namdev tells Trilochan that the child is laid down in the cradle. His mother is at work, inside and outside, but she holds her child in her thoughts for providing comforts to him by swinging his cradle during her work.)

Through this hymn, Sant Namdev makes it clear that one's mind can remain attuned with the Divine within, while performing one's worldly duties, according to the directions of the Divine within.

It is also clear that animals too, like humans have the instincts and love for their progeny. Bhai Gurdas says:

ਕਛੂ ਅੰਡਾ ਸੇਵਦਾ ਜਲ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਧਰਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਧਰੰਦਾ ॥

Kachhoo andaa s-ai-nvdaa jall baahar(i) dhar(i) dhiaan(u) dharandaa.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 26, Pauri 28)

(The female turtle comes out of the sea to lay and bury its eggs in the sand on the shore. She then always keeps track of them while searching for food in the water, and thus guarded, they hatch in the fullness of time.)

It is evident from the above verses that birds and animals too have a mind (Chitt) like humans. In times of adversity, these creatures appeal to God for help as humans do; and, as in the case of humans, God listens to their entreaties, takes pity on them and saves them. Take for instance, this prayer by Guru Tegh Bahadur:

ਜਬ ਹੀ ਸਰਨਿ ਗਗੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਿਧਿ ਗਜ ਗਰਾਹ ਤੇ ਛੂਟਾ ॥

Jabb hee saran(i) gahee kirpaa nidh(i) Gaj graah t-ai chhootaa. (632)

(The earnest prayer of the animal is also answered by the Divine to help him. As soon as the elephant remembers the Divine, to escape from the clutches of octopus, God saved it.)

The conclusion is very clear. If the Divine Lord (Akal Purakh) shows compassion towards animals, how is a man justified in inflicting cruelty upon these meek, defenceless creatures? However, those animals, which bring harm to the human beings, by spoiling their crops and property, or by inflicting harm on their person, it is legitimate for the humans to protect themselves to the extent of killing them, if necessary.

Researches undertaken by scientists and philosophers have led to similar conclusions, which are briefly described below:

1. A general consensus exists today that non-human species of animals have minds. (Ref: The Human Use of Animals by F. Barbara Orlans, Tom L. Beauchamp, Rebecca Dresser, David B. Morton and John P. Gluck)
2. There is ample empirical evidence that animals have various powers of deliberation and decision-making, excellent memory, imagination, and the like. (Ref: The Descent of Man by Darwin.)
3. Animals, like humans, have the same senses to experience pleasure, pain and suffering. [Ref: Utilitarian writings by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)]
4. Animals can both understand and reason. Animals have the capacity to understand and have developed complicated, sometimes, elaborate forms of

social interaction and communication. [Ref: Scottish philosopher and historian David Hume (1711-1776)]

5. Nearly all the external signs that lead us to infer pain in other humans, can be seen in other species, especially the species most closely related to us, the species of mammals and birds. The behavioural signs include writhing, facial contortions, moaning, yelping or other forms of calling; attempts to avoid the source of pain, appearance of fear at the prospect of its repetition, and so on. In addition, we know that these animals have nervous systems very much like ours, which respond physiologically like ours do, when the animal is in circumstances in which it would feel pain: an initial rise of blood pressure, dilated pupils, perspiration, an increased pulse rate, and, if the stimulus continues, a fall in blood pressure. (Ref: Animal Liberation by Peter Singer.)
6. "I personally can see no reason for conceding mind to my fellow men, and denying it to animals... I, at least cannot doubt that the interests and activities of animals are correlated with awareness and feeling in the same way as my own, and which may be, for all I know, just as vivid." (Ref: Lord Brain, One of the most eminent neurologists of our time.)
7. As we go up in the evolution of animals from invertebrates to vertebrates, the development of all senses showing the presence of a brain is found. As the brain controls, integrates and coordinates all body parts, it commands various organs of the body to work accordingly. Not only in human beings, but all vertebrates, like fish, amphibians (like frogs), reptiles (like snakes or lizards), aves (birds), mammals (like lions and dogs) have fore-brains, mid-brains, hind-brains, which perform various functions. The fore-brain (cerebral Hemisphere) is meant for will, emotions, memory and intelligence; The mid-brain, sense of sight; hind-brain (Cerebellum) controls equilibrium and body posture; the medulla oblongata controls all the involuntary actions of body. (Ref: Animal Behavior by MP Arora and Animal ecology and behavior by HR Singh.)

Thus, for obvious reasons, Gurbani strictly forbids cruelty towards animals, and denounces violence towards any living being. Without doubt, kindness towards living beings and violence towards them are mutually contradictory ideas. According to Gurbani, if we are to embrace the sublime virtue of kindness towards living creatures, then we must renounce all violence towards them. Saint Parmanad in His hymn incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib clarifies:

ਹਿੰਸਾ ਤਉ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਨਹੀ ਛੂਟੀ ਜੀਅ ਦਇਆ ਨਹੀ ਪਾਲੀ ॥

Hinsaa taou mann t-ai nahee chhootee Jee-a da-e-aa nahee paalee. (1253)

(Cruelty has not been eradicated from your mind, if you do not have affection and regards, and wish well for others with your full kindness of mind.)

Several verses in Gurbani testify to the fact that the Gurus denounced and forbade the practice of slaughtering animals and eating their flesh. Kabir expounds:

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਹਹੁ ਮਤ ਝੂਠੇ ਝੂਠਾ ਜੋ ਨ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ ॥
ਜਉ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਏਕੁ ਖੁਦਾਇ ਕਹਤ ਹਉ ਤਉ ਕਿਉ ਮੁਰਗੀ ਮਾਰੈ ॥

B-ai-d kat-ai-b kah-hu matt jhootth-ai Jhootha jo na bichaar-ei.

Jaou sabh meh(i) ek(u) Khudaa-e kehath haou Taou kiou murgee maar-ei. (1350)

(Do not say that the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran are false. Those who do not contemplate them are false. When you perceive and say that in everybody the same Divine Lord pervades, to give the creature a life to perform his duties in this world, then why should one kill and snatch a life from that hen for the pleasures of the palate, which lead him to hell.)

ਰੋਜਾ ਧਰੈ ਮਨਾਵੈ ਅਲਹੁ ਸੁਆਦਤਿ ਜੀਅ ਸੰਘਾਰੈ ॥
ਆਪਾ ਦੇਖਿ ਅਵਰ ਨਹੀ ਦੇਖੈ ਕਾਹੇ ਕਉ ਝਖ ਮਾਰੈ ॥

Rojaa dhar-ei manaav-ei Alah(u) Suaadat(i) jee-a sanghaar-ei.

Aapaa d-ai-kh(i) avar nahee d-ai-kh-ei Kaah-ai kaou jhakh maar-ei. (483)

(You keep your fasts to please Allah, while you murder other beings for pleasure of sumptuous food. You look after your own interests and do not see the interests of others, this is against the Divine Law. Then why do you indulge in this vicious circle of going to hell?)

Kabir goes on to add:

ਜੀਅ ਬਧਹੁ ਸੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਥਾਪਹੁ ਅਧਰਮੁ ਕਹਹੁ ਕਤ ਭਾਈ ॥
ਆਪਸ ਕਉ ਮੁਨਿਵਰ ਕਰਿ ਥਾਪਹੁ ਕਾ ਕਉ ਕਹਹੁ ਕਸਾਈ ॥

Jee-a badhahu su Dharam(u) kar(i) thaapahu Adharam(u) kahahu katt bhaaee.

Aapas kaou munivar kar(i) thaapahu Kaa kaou kahahu kasaaee. (1103)

(You kill living beings for your religious performance, and then call it a righteous action, then O brother tell me! What would you call an unrighteous action in the Divine Realm? You call yourself the most excellent sage after killing the animal in the name of religion; then whom would you call a butcher?)

Guru Arjan Dev also clarifies:

ਬੇਦੁ ਪੜੈ ਮੁਖਿ ਮੀਠੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ ਜੀਆਂ ਕੁਹਤ ਨ ਸੰਗੈ ਪਰਾਣੀ ॥

B-ai-d(u) parh-ei mukh(i) meethee baanhee. Jeeaan kuhatt na sangg-ei paraanhee. (201)

(You recite the Vedas in a sweet voice with your mouth, but you do not hesitate to kill the animal for your sumptuous food and false tastes. This is considered to be a sin under the Divine Law.)

Kabir asks a very pertinent question:

ਪਕਰਿ ਜੀਉ ਆਨਿਆ ਦੇਹ ਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਕਉ ਬਿਸਮਿਲਿ ਕੀਆ ॥
ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪ ਅਨਾਹਤ ਲਾਗੀ ਕਹੁ ਹਲਾਲੁ ਕਿਆ ਕੀਆ॥

Pakar(i) jeeou aan-e-aa d-ai-h binaasee Maatee kaou bismil(i) keeaa.

Jot(i) saroop anaahat laagee Kahu halaal(u) kiaa keeaa. (1350)

(You seize a living creature, bring it home and kill its body, but you have killed only the clay. The light of the soul passes into another form. So tell me in your religious rite, what have you killed in the name of God, who creates all the living beings?)

Saint poet Bhai Gurdas writes in one of his Vaars:

ਮਾਸ ਖਾਨਿ ਗਲਿ ਛੁਰੀ ਦੇ ਹਾਲੁ ਤਿਨਾੜਾ ਕਉਣੁ ਅਲੋਆ

Maas khaan(i) gal(i) chhuree d-ai haal(u) Tinaarhaa kaounh(u) aloaa.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 37, Pauri21)

(What will be the fate of those, who cut the throat with a knife, to eat flesh of an animal just to please their mind with sumptuous food? This leads them away from the Divine Wisdom.)

Fate decrees that what happens to you tomorrow comes from what you do today. On this worldly journey, he who acts with kindness, will hence receive kindness in return; he, who does evil, will, in time to come, suffer the torments of hell. He, who shows compassion towards meek and dumb animals, who are part of God's Creation, shall have mercy shown to him in the court of the Timeless One; and his sins shall be forgiven. Such is the immutable Law of Nature:

ਜੈਸਾ ਕਰੇ ਸੁ ਤੈਸਾ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

J-ei-saa kar-ai su t-ei-saa paav-ei. (662)

(As one sows, so shall he reap. This means, whatever one does, he reaps the fruit of the same.)

Pointing to this infallible Law of Nature, Gurbani proclaims that to inflict pain on animals, and to kill them for eating their flesh is barbaric. Such men shall face divine wrath when the Divine Judge opens His ledger and calls them to account. Muslim saint Kabir is very emphatic about it:

ਕਬੀਰ ਜੋਰੁ ਕੀਆ ਸੋ ਜੁਲਮੁ ਹੈ ਲੇਇ ਜਬਾਬੁ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥

ਦਫਤਰਿ ਲੇਖਾ ਨੀਕਸੈ ਮਾਰ ਮੁਹੈ ਮੁਹਿ ਖਾਇ ॥

Kabir jor(u) keeaa so julam(u) h-ei L-ai-e jabaab(u) Khudaa-e.

Daftar(i) l-ai-khaa neeks-ei Maar muh-ei muh(i) khaa-e. (1375)

(It is tyranny to commit atrocities; for this the Lord shall call you to accountability. When your account is called for, you will be put in the fire.)

Gurbani gives stern warning that all visits to holy places, fastings and penances come to naught for those, who eat flesh, as it is taboo, and they will face the fires of hell. Kabir in one of His hymns seems to be delivering the final verdict:

ਕਬੀਰ ਭਾਂਗ ਮਾਛੁਲੀ ਸੁਰਾ ਪਾਨਿ ਜੋ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਖਾਂਗਿ ॥
ਤੀਰਥ ਬਰਤ ਨੇਮ ਕੀਏ ਤੇ ਸਭੈ ਰਸਾਤਲਿ ਜਾਂਗਿ ॥

Kabir bhaang maachhulee suraa paan(i) Jo jo praanee khaan-h-ai.

Teerath baratt n-ai-m kee-ai T-ai sabh-ei rasaatal(i) jaan-h-ai. (1377)

(Those mortals, who consume marijuana, fish, wine and betel - no matter what pilgrimages, fasts and rituals they follow - they will all go to hell.)

Some of those, who eat meat, argue by way of excuse, that they merely buy it because it is ready - prepared and packed. Therefore, the butcher is the culprit, who by slaughtering the animals earns his living. Let such people enlighten themselves of the fallacy - for the butcher only meets their needs. If there was no demand for meat, then there would be no need for killing an animal. Thus, for satisfying man's craving, the butcher accumulates sin, but surely, the buyers must also have to face the blame for animal slaughter, and they alone must answer for it in the Divine Court. Admittedly, the butcher too is guilty, for he makes a living by slaying dumb and innocent creatures.

Throughout the world, there are some remote areas, for instance the North and South poles, which remain snow-bound all year round, where no vegetation grows. In some of these areas, live people, who are called Eskimos. For sustenance, they eat fish obtained from the surrounding oceans. For them, there is no alternative of sustenance to live on. Since there is no other vegetation or any other food, eating fish for their survival is legitimate, and not a sin. Under these circumstances, they too can become holy persons by reciting the Divine Name.

Animal Flesh is Not a Natural Diet for Humans

The whole Creation of the Universe, consisting of 8.4 million different species, which include inert matter, the plant kingdom and the animal kingdom render service to mankind, which has the Divine Wisdom to realise the Supreme Being within. In fact, the human being is an incarnation of the Divine, if he follows His holy instruction. Man is born to realise the Divine within, by meditating on His Divine Name and virtues. Due to his Divine Wisdom, man is considered to be superior among all the species of this Universe. These species, including inert matter, are ordained to serve human beings according to the Divine Law, so that they can also improve their fate for achieving the ultimate divine goal through evolution. As such, according to the Divine Law, it is the destined duty of human beings to render service to all, and utilise the natural resources, according to the Will of the Divine Lord, so that the ecological balance is maintained, according to the natural rules and regulations designed by the Supreme Being.

As per the Divine Law, inert matter of the Universe is destined to serve and support its superior class, i.e., the plant kingdom, which, in turn, is destined to serve and support the animal kingdom, including human beings. In other words, inert matter renders food to the plant kingdom, which, in turn, provides food to the animal kingdom including human beings. The food of the entire animal kingdom, including human beings, is vegetarian, which is derived from the plant kingdom. But there are exceptions in the animal kingdom, like cat and lizard families, which eat other animal species. According to this divine principle, God has created the physical frame of all these species accordingly:

1. The skeletal frame of the carnivores is different from the herbivores. Carnivores are provided with sharp claws, whereas herbivores have no such provision.
2. Vegetarian animals, including man, have been provided with plenty of pores in their skin for sweating, which keeps the body cool, whereas carnivores do not have pores. They perspire through the tongue and cool their bodies by panting.
3. Carnivores have sharp teeth to tear flesh, whereas herbivores have normal types of teeth through which they can easily chew vegetation.
4. Intestines of carnivores are only three times their body-length, so that after digesting meat, they excrete the refuse quickly before it turns into poison. Whereas, herbivores' intestines are up to twelve times their body length, to completely digest the vegetarian food, discard its remnants through various modes, so that the nutrients of their food are completely absorbed. It is thus amply clear that their bodies are unfit for eating flesh.
5. The saliva producing organs of vegetarians are fully developed, whereas in the carnivores, they only have small saliva organs.
6. The saliva of herbivores is alkaline, while in the case of carnivores, it is acidic. Thus, eating meat by man is clearly a violation of the Divine Order, which inflicts diseases.
7. Carnivores have a very strong acidic stomach for complete digestion of flesh and bones, whereas vegetarians are provided with twenty times less dilution of acid for digestion of vegetarian food.
8. If a particular class of living being defies the natural law of food assignment and loots the food assigned to another classification, then this 'interference' upsets the natural balance, with horrible results, according to the Divine Law. For example, if carnivorous wild animals were to leave their natural forest habitat and start attacking populated towns and cities in search of food, then the killing of wild animals is justified to ensure the protection of humans and keeping the

balance of the circle of life. Similarly, if insects overstep their jurisdiction of the food assigned to them to harm others' food, then to reduce their numbers through any means for maintaining the environmental balance, is not a sin.

Food grains and vegetables form the natural food for man assigned by the Divine Lord. Some people argue that even vegetation has got life and then do we not become sinners by eating them? Here, it is important to clarify that vegetation is not endowed with wisdom - unlike the animal kingdom. According to the Divine Order, the plant kingdom has been created to support its superior kingdom, i.e., the animal kingdom. The herbivores (animal kingdom) must survive by getting food from the plant kingdom. Hence, whatever happens is always according to the Divine Order and does not come under the category of sin.

Prohibition of Meat in the Gurus' Edicts (Hukamnamas)

The research of Sikh history reveals that the Gurus had prohibited Sikhs from eating meat. Some such holy edicts are listed for reference:

Guru Hargobind said, 'One should not go near meat and fish.' (Hukamnama No 6, page 12, Hukamname te Nishan)

...ਮਾਸੁ ਮਛੀ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਵਣਾ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਦੀ...

...Maas(u) machhee d-ai n-ai-rh-ai naheen aavanhaa sangat(i) dee...

(Hukamnama No. 6, Page 12)

The Divine Order to the devotees of East India: "Do not go near meat and fish." (Hukamnama No. 9, Page 15, Hukamname te Nishan)

...ਮਾਸੁ ਮਛੀ ਦੇ ਨੇੜੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਆਵਣਾ ਪੂਰਬ ਦੀ ਸੰਗਤਿ...

...Maas(u) machhee d-ai n-ai-rh-ai naheen aavanhaa Poorab dee sangat(i)...

(Hukamnama No. 9, Page 15)

"Do not consume liquor and meat" (Guru Gobind Singh's sermon to Bhai Daya Singh, one of the 'Five Beloved Ones' in Sudharm Marg Granth)

...ਮਧ ਮਾਸ ਖਾਯ ਨਾਹੀ

...Madh Maas khaa-e naahee

"Do not consume hemp, tobacco, opium, poppy, wine, meat or fish. Do not indulge in theft and adultery." (Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, Hukamnama No. 13, Page 13, and Hukamname te Nishan)

ਭਾਂਗ, ਤਮਾਕੂ, ਫੀਮ, ਪੋਸਤ, ਦਾਰੂ, ਅਮਲ ਕੋਈ ਨਹੀਂ ਖਾਣਾ ਮਾਸ ਮੱਛੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਖਾਣਾ ਚੋਰੀ ਜਾਰੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨੀ।

...Bhaang, Tamaakoo, Pheem, Posat, Daaroo, Amal koee naheen khaanhaa.

Maas machhee naheen khaanhaa. Choree jaaree naheen karnee.

(Hukamnama No. 113, Page 113, Nishaan t-ai Hukamnaam-ai)

"Do not touch wine or meat. Those, who gamble and consume wine will go to Hell." (Rehat Namah Bhai Daya Singh)

ਜੁਆ ਖੇਲੈ, ਮਦ ਪੀਐ ਸੁ ਨਰਕ ਮਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ...ਮਦਰਾ, ਮਾਸ ਕਉ ਛੁਹੈ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

Jooaa kh-ai-l-ei, madd pee-ei su narak meh(i) jaav-ei...Madraa, Maas kaou chhooh-ei naahee.

Customary Practice in Langar during Guru Angad Dev's Times

Since the times of Guru Nanak Dev, we have not come across any instance of serving meat in the traditional community kitchen (Langar). Some historians have created confusion in the minds of the innocent people that meat was served in Guru Angad Dev's Langar. Such references are misleading and probably inserted by those, who advocate the consumption of meat by the Sikhs. Satta and Balwand, in their odes (Vaars) included in the Guru Granth Sahib, make a mention of the dainty dishes served in the Langar during the period of Guru Angad Dev, but there is no mention of flesh being served.

Khivi, the noble soul, was like a tree with the shade of thick leaves. In her Langar, Kheer was distributed, which is prepared by cooking rice and milk enriched with refined butter (Ghee), and it tastes like nectar (elixir) and finds reference in the Guru Granth Sahib as mentioned below:

ਲੰਗਰਿ ਦਉਲਤਿ ਵੰਡੀਐ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਖੀਰਿ ਘਿਆਲੀ ॥

Langar(i) daoulat(i) vandee-ei Ras(u) Amrit(u) kheer(i) ghiaalee. (967)

(In the Langar was ever dispensed porridge topped with Ghee, refined butter (Ghee), flour and sugar.)

and

ਨਿਤ ਰਸੋਈ ਤੇਰੀਐ ਘਿਉ ਮੈਦਾ ਖਾਣੁ ॥

Nitt rasoe t-ai-ree-ei Ghiou m-ei-daa khaanh(u). (968)

Muhsan Fani: Mobid, alias Mosni Fani, belonging to the Muslim faith and a contemporary of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Divine Master, writes in his book *Dabistan-e-Mazahib* that Guru Nanak Dev had strictly prohibited the use of meat and tobacco by His followers. He was against the killing of animals and he never ate meat. Guru Arjan Dev repeated the injunctions of the first Guru, when He came to know of a few stray cases of its violation by His followers. He wanted His Sikhs to strictly follow Guru Nanak Dev's instructions in this regard, in letter and spirit. Saint Kabir and Saint Dhanna, whose hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib, never mentioned meat as part of their eatables. Saint Kabir demands from God in this hymn the following necessities for his sustenance:

ਦੁਇ ਸੇਰ ਮਾਂਗਉ ਚੁਨਾ ॥ ਪਾਉ ਘੀਉ ਸੰਗਿ ਲੁਨਾ ॥

ਅਧ ਸੇਰੁ ਮਾਂਗਉ ਦਾਲੇ ॥ ਮੋ ਕਉ ਦੋਨਉ ਵਖਤ ਜਿਵਾਲੇ ॥

Du-e s-ai-r maangou choonaa. Paaou gheeou sangg(i) loonaa.

Adh s-ai-r(u) maangou daal-ai. Mo kaou donaou vakhat jivaal-ai. (656)

[Two kilos of flour I ask. A quarter of a kilo of Ghee with salt, half a kilo of pulse (Dal) I seek. On this probation, feed me twice daily.]

Saint Dhanna also asks for the necessaries from God:

ਦਾਲਿ ਸੀਧਾ ਮਾਗਉ ਘੀਉ ॥ ਹਮਰਾ ਖੁਸੀ ਕਰੈ ਨਿਤ ਜੀਉ ॥

ਪਨੀਆ ਛਾਦਨੁ ਨੀਕਾ ॥ ਅਨਾਜੁ ਮਗਉ ਸਤ ਸੀ ਕਾ ॥

ਗਉ ਭੈਸ ਮਗਉ ਲਾਵੇਰੀ ॥ ਇਕ ਤਾਜਨਿ ਤੁਰੀ ਚੰਗੇਰੀ ॥

ਘਰ ਕੀ ਗੀਹਨਿ ਚੰਗੀ ॥ ਜਨੁ ਧੰਨਾ ਲੇਵੈ ਮੰਗੀ ॥

Daal(i) seedhaa maagaou gheeou. Hamraa khusee kar-ei nitt jeeou.

Pan(h)eeaa chhadan(u) neekaa. Anaaj(u) magaou satt see kaa.

Ga-oo bh-ei-s magaou laav-ai-ree. Ik taajan(i) turee chang-ai-ree.

Ghar kee geehan(i) changee. Jann(u) Dhanna l-ai-v-ei mangee. (695)

[I beg for pulses, flour and some purified butter (Ghee) whereby my heart may be delighted. Seek I also shoes and good clothing. And grain grown over well-ploughed lands. A cow and buffalo milk I seek, as also a good Arabic mare. Thy servant Dhanna then begs also for a wife - A good housekeeper.]

Thus, in these ymns of the divine persons like Kabir and Dhanna, no mention or demand has been made for any kind of flesh food.

Guru Nanak Dev's Discourses with Brahmins at Kurukshetra

We find a reference in the Sikh history, wherein Guru Nanak Dev had allowed the erstwhile royal mother and Prince, who had been driven by their enemies into forest and had found their way to Kurukshetra, to cook a deer, which they had hunted on the way in the forest, to satiate their hunger. But before relating this episode, it is necessary to find out from the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev, whether he favoured flesh eating. As mentioned in this book earlier, Guru Nanak Dev condemned the eating of animal flesh in his hymns on various occasions. However, whenever Guru Nanak Dev went to the Hindu pilgrimages, in order to give the divine message to the priests and masses, He used to perform various astonishing actions, which looked like miracles. When the devotees gathered around Guru Nanak, at the pilgrimage places, He then would give them the holy message to tread the Divine Path and follow the divine message in letter and spirit for attaining salvation.

After examining the events of Kurukshetra, we find that Vaishnavite Brahmins firmly believe that simply by abstinence of flesh food and by following other rituals,

without meditating on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, they could attain salvation. Because of their concern for purity of food, these people allowed themselves to be worshipped by the ordinary people. They strictly prohibited the lighting of fire during the auspicious day of solar eclipse at Kurukshetra.

In order to attract these priests, whose head Nannun proclaimed that he was the incarnation of Guru Nanak Dev; whose name was mentioned in their ancient scripture as the incarnation of God in the dark age of materialism (Kalyug) to preach the Divine Truth among people for attaining self-realisation. Guru Nanak Dev usually employed novel methods to attract the attention of the people at the pilgrim centres to deliver His message of Divine Truth. The permission He gave to the royal duo - mother and son - to cook the deer-meat during the time of solar eclipse at Kurukshetra, must be seen in this perspective.

As expected, a large number of people including Brahmins and the learned Pandit Nanun leapt towards Guru Nanak Dev and the mother-son duo, who were cooking the flesh of deer. They intended to attack Guru Nanak Dev, but they were prevented from doing so by some hidden Divine Power and His divine glimpses. When a group of Pandits tried to shout at Guru Nanak Dev, who politely addressed them that such rituals, which they followed would not lead them to the Spiritual Path for perceiving the Divine within or merging with the Divine Lord completely. They had acquired only bookish knowledge, which made them egoistic, and would lead them to nowhere. Thus, in reality, they could not realise the Divine within and got engrossed in showing off pseudo-spiritual knowledge to attract people. On hearing the divine sermons of Guru Nanak Dev, their egoistic mind was very much shaken up. After getting their doubts cleared from Guru Nanak, they perceived spiritual bliss from His divine utterances. The Guru emphasised upon them that they were not really following the Divine Path, but were engrossed in pseudo-rituals, to show to the world that they were the real devotees merged with the Divine within. These divine words cleared their doubts and they submitted before Guru Nanak Dev to get divine blessings and asked Him to give His bounty from the food He had got cooked by the defeated royal family. To the astonishment of everybody, the dish was converted from flesh to a pudding of rice and milk (Kheer). These types of things happen in the Spiritual Realm, where the different combinations of atoms and molecules change their form. Modern science also believes in such processes.

Scientific Version: Most vegetarians and non-vegetarian food items consist of three main primary nutrients viz; carbohydrates, lipids, and proteins made up of polymers of sugars, fatty acids and amino acids respectively, in addition to small

quantities of vitamins, micronutrients and nutraceuticals. The quality and palatability of various food items depends upon the ratio of various monomers in carbohydrates, lipids and proteins and their ultimate proportions.

Before accepting the divine advice of Guru Nanak Dev, the head priest Nannun and his devotees belonging to the Brahmin caste aggressively argued on the matter of consuming of meat, which is inversely co-related with spirituality. Though Guru Nanak Dev was also not in favour of taking flesh food, still He gave them the spiritual arguments that merely by not taking the meat, they could not meet God, which is a subject of utmost divine love and devotion. Guru Nanak Dev stated that it was their misconception that only by shedding one evil, they could realise Divine within. There were so many other virtues which were needed to be imbibed, specially the recitation of the Divine Name with full love and devotion, and also by shedding many other vices, committed under the influence of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride, that they could realise the Divine.

Guru Nanak uttered a hymn on this occasion to remove the doubts of the priests, which stress that by just shedding one evil amongst many other cannot help a person to realise the Divine. Thy hymn reads as follows:

ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਨਿੰਮਿਆ ਮਾਸੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ ॥
ਜੀਉ ਪਾਇ ਮਾਸੁ ਮੁਹਿ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹਭੁ ਚੰਮੁ ਤਨੁ ਮਾਸੁ ॥
ਮਾਸਹੁ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਕਢਿਆ ਮੰਮਾ ਮਾਸੁ ਗਿਰਾਸੁ ॥
ਮੁਹੁ ਮਾਸੈ ਕਾ ਜੀਭ ਮਾਸੈ ਕੀ ਮਾਸੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਾਸੁ ॥
ਵਡਾ ਹੋਆ ਵੀਆਹਿਆ ਘਰਿ ਲੈ ਆਇਆ ਮਾਸੁ ॥
ਮਾਸਹੁ ਹੀ ਮਾਸੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਸਭੋ ਸਾਕੁ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਬੁਝੀਐ ਤਾਂ ਕੋ ਆਵੈ ਰਾਸਿ ॥
ਆਪਿ ਛੁਟੇ ਨਹ ਛੁਟੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਚਨਿ ਬਿਣਾਸੁ ॥

Pehlaan maasahu nimm-e-aa Maas-ei andar(i) vaas(u).

Jeeou paa-e maas(u) muh(i) mil-e-aa Hadd(u) chamm(u) tann(u) maas(u).

Maasahu baahar(i) kadh-e-aa Mammaa maas(u) giraas(u).

Muhu maas-ei kaa jeebh maas-ei kee Maas-ei andar(i) saas(u).

Vaddaa hoaa veeeah-e-aa Ghar(i) l-ei aa-e-aa maas(u).

Maasahu hee maas(u) oopj-ei Maasahu sabho saak(u).

Satgur(i) mil-i-ei hukam(u) bujhee-ei Taan ko aav-ei raas(i).

Aap(i) chhutt-ai neh chhoottee-ei Nanak bachan(i) binhaas(u). (1289)

For further removing the doubts of the Hindu priests, the Guru amply clarified by reciting the above hymn. The Guru told the priests; "Flesh has given you the birth, i.e., you have come from the mother's womb; and your mind dwells in the body made of flesh and bones. When you came out from the mother's womb made of

flesh, you sucked the milk from the mother's breast, which was again made of flesh. The entire structure of your body including the body organs, are all made of flesh. When one grows older, by accumulating flesh, you marry and bring home the bride, whose body is also made of flesh. You produced the off-springs, which too are made of flesh. You deal with your relatives and friends whose bodies are also made of flesh."

The Guru further told the priests, "You would get rid of the bondages of the flesh, which puts you in the cycle of birth and rebirth, if you realise the Divine within, by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. Only then you will realise the Divine Law, according to which, one has to render the holy performances for attaining self-realisation. One cannot get rid of the cycle of birth and rebirth by performing any type of actions under his ego."

Guru Nanak Dev further states:

ਮਾਸੁ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਰਖੁ ਝਗੜੇ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣੈ ॥
ਕਉਣੁ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਉਣੁ ਸਾਗੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਕਿਸੁ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਪੁ ਸਮਾਣੈ ॥

Maas(u) maas(u) kar(i) moorakh(u) jhagrh-ai Giaan(u) dhiaan(u) nahee jaanh-ei.

Kaounh(u) maas kaounh(u) saag(u) kahaav-ei Kis(u) meh(i) paap samaanh-ai. (1289)

(By reciting the Divine Name and following the Divine Order, one attains divine self-realisation. In other words, one reaches the realm of the Formless Divine, which is an ultimate stage of self-realisation after shedding all the worldly doubts and treading the Divine Path by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion.)

Guru Nanak Dev, the humble servant of the Divine, says,

ਏਤੇ ਰਸ ਛੋਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਹੈ ਵਿਚਾਰਾ ॥

Ait-ai rass chhod(i) hov-ei San-e-aasee Nanak kah-ei vichaaraa. (1290)

(One only becomes divine, when one sheds tastes of all types of sumptuous foods, which further ignites ego, whether prepared from flesh or vegetables.)

By reciting this hymn, Guru Nanak Dev explained the Divine Wisdom to the revered Brahmins, who had assembled at Kurukshetra. He said to them, "Instead of following the Divine Path to get Divine Wisdom, we remain engrossed in petty rituals. You have just come to me, not to acquire Divine Reality, but for time-wasting arguments on the petty matter of eating or not eating the flesh. That is why even from the Vedas and other scriptures, you have not tried to realise the Divine Wisdom, and ultimate goal of life to reach the divine sphere, i.e., the Formless divine stage, where there is nothing except the Formless Divine. This is called Brahm Gyan in Indian language i.e. the ultimate Divine Wisdom, for which man has come on this earth. In that divine Formless state, there is no flesh and vegetarian food for feeding of the craving of the mind, which has already been eradicated and vanished by

reciting the Divine Name. Similarly, all the delicious tastes of the food prepared from flesh and vegetables disappear due to the recitation of the Divine Name and thus acquiring Divine Wisdom, which is the stage of Supreme Bliss and Equipoise, where there is no worldly sorrow or happiness, no worldly tastes of sumptuous or bitter foods, and difference between eatables and non-eatables; because at this stage, one is completely engrossed in the Divine and reaches the Divinely Realm, where there is no worldly pleasure or sorrow and performance of any kind of deeds."

In this context, the Guru further emphasises to clarify this point. When one's divinely tune of mind reaches the stage of the Formless One by reciting the Divine Name, there is no action for committing a sin or good deeds, because there is nothing of the manifestation of the matter or of physical body as well as the worldly mind to commit any performance, whether good or bad. At this stage, one merges with the Divine, who is Formless and Omnipresent, where there is no sin or worldly pleasure but only spiritual bliss."

ਜਬ ਅਕਾਰੁ ਇਹੁ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਦ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਟੇਤਾ ॥ ਪਾਪ ਪੁੰਨ ਤਬ ਕਹ ਤੇ ਹੋਤਾ ॥

Jabb akaar(u) eh(u) kachhu na drist-ai-taa. Paap punn tabb keh t-ai hotaa. (290)

(When one reaches the Realm of the Divine, he does not perceive anything of the manifestation of matter and merges with the Eternal One. In that state, there is no sin or worldly virtues; as enunciated by Guru Arjan Dev in the above mentioned hymn.)

For a divine person, there is no difference between various kinds of food, because he has reached the stage of the Formless Divine Realm, where there is no thought of sin or virtue, because he is above all worldly deeds. For the student of spirituality, who has to tread this Divine Path, it is important not to take any type of food including flesh, which diverts his mind to indulge in sensual pleasures. Thus, flesh food is so sumptuous and tasteful, that it induces the mind of the seeker to indulge in worldly pleasures.

The persons, who eat meat and then take shelter in the divine utterances of Guru Nanak Dev that the foods made of flesh and vegetables are the same, think as if they had already reached the stage of the Formless Divine Realms, where nothing is good or bad, and where only Formless One i.e. Divine pervades. It is their great folly to perceive such type of thoughts when they have not yet perceived to tread the Divine Path.

ਗੈਂਡਾ ਮਾਰਿ ਹੋਮ ਜਗ ਕੀਏ ਦੇਵਤਿਆ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੇ ॥

G-ei-ndaa maar(i) hom jagg kee-ai Devat-e-aa kee baanh-ai. (1289)

Guru Nanak Dev says, "O priest! Your ancestors wanted to take meat in older times. In order to justify this, you inserted the pseudo-holy pattern of sacrificing the rhino for invoking the Gods and Goddesses. This was just for misleading and

convincing the common people to make such type offers for pseudo-pleasing the deities. Ultimately, this meat becomes their own sumptuous food, because the deity does not take anything."

ਮਾਸੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਬੈਸਿ ਨਕੁ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਰਾਤੀ ਮਾਣਸ ਖਾਣੇ ॥
ਫੜੁ ਕਰਿ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਨੋ ਦਿਖਲਾਵਹਿ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਸੂਝੈ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਅੰਧੇ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਕਹੀਐ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਸੂਝੈ ॥
ਅੰਧਾ ਸੋਇ ਜਿ ਅੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਵੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਸਿ ਲੋਚਨ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਕੀ ਰਕਤੁ ਨਿਪੰਨੇ ਮਛੀ ਮਾਸੁ ਨ ਖਾਂਹੀ ॥
ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਪੁਰਖੈ ਜਾਂ ਨਿਸਿ ਮੇਲਾ ਓਥੈ ਮੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਹੀ ॥
ਮਾਸਹੁ ਨਿੰਮੇ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਜੰਮੇ ਹਮ ਮਾਸੈ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ॥
ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਕਛੁ ਸੂਝੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਚਤੁਰੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਪਾਂਡੇ ॥
ਬਾਹਰ ਕਾ ਮਾਸੁ ਮੰਦਾ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਘਰ ਕਾ ਮਾਸੁ ਚੰਗੇਰਾ ॥
ਜੀਅ ਜੰਤ ਸਭਿ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਹੋਏ ਜੀਇ ਲਇਆ ਵਾਸੇਰਾ ॥
ਅਭਖੁ ਭਖਹਿ ਭਖੁ ਤਜਿ ਛੋਡਹਿ ਅੰਧੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਨ ਕੇਰਾ ॥
ਮਾਸਹੁ ਨਿੰਮੇ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਜੰਮੇ ਹਮ ਮਾਸੈ ਕੇ ਭਾਂਡੇ ॥
ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਕਛੁ ਸੂਝੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਚਤੁਰੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਪਾਂਡੇ ॥

Maas(u) chhod(i) b-ei-s(i) nakk(u) pakarheh(i) Raatee maanhas khaanh-ai.

Pharh(u) kar(i) lokaan no dikhlaaveh(i) Giaan(u) dhiaan(u) nahee soojh-ei.

Nanak andh-ai siou kiaa kahee-ei Kah-ei na kah-e-aa boojh-ei.

Andhaa so-e je andh(u) kmaav-ei Tiss(u) ridd-ei se lochan naaahē.

Maat pitaa kee rakat(u) nipann-ai Machhee maas(u) na khaanhee.

Istree Purakh-ei jaan nis(i) m-ai-l-aa Oth-ei mandh(u) kmaaahee.

Maasahu nimm-ai maasahu jamm-ai Hamm maas-ei k-ai bhaand-ai.

Giaan(u) dhiaan(u) kachhu soojh-ei naahee Chatur(u) kahaav-ei paand-ai.

Baahar kaa maas(u) mandaa suaamee Ghar kaa maas(u) chang-ai-raa.

Jee-a jantt sabh(i) maasahu ho-e Jee-e la-e-aa vaas-ai-raa.

Abhakh(u) bhakheh(i) bhakh(u) taji(i) chhodeh(i) Andh(u) Guru jinn k-ai-raa.

Maasahu nimm-ai maasahu jamm-ai Hamm maas-ei k-ai bhaand-ai.

Giaan(u) dhiaan(u) kachhu soojh-ei naahee Chatur(u) kahaav-ei paand-ai. (1289)

In this hymn, the Guru gives many examples to emphasise that the Divine cannot be realised by wandering and performing pseudo-rituals or by serving food on a mass scale (Yagnas) for achieving only the worldly benefits, which are great hurdles for treading the Divine Path. The Guru shook up the gathering of the priests by the arguments regarding partaking of the flesh food. The Guru amply clarified that they were engrossed in tastes of the tongue due to sumptuous food and by inserting examples in their sacred book, priests took shelter for eating meat.

These examples were given in the hymn by the Guru at Kurukshetra to motivate

the priests to follow the Divine Path with full faith and devotion and to seek the Divine Name to attain self-realisation in the real sense by shedding flesh eating.

"By merely shedding meat, you pretend to be pure, just to show people, but at night, you enjoy the lustful sexual life with your wife's body made of flesh. You do not realise the Divine within, but pretend to do so. Nanak says that you are so ignorant of the Reality of the Divine that you cannot follow the Divine Reality. In reality, such a person, even if he has a pseudo-divine vision, is called blind, who performs sinful actions of deaf and blind (dumb), because he has no Divine Love within his heart to realise the Divine within. You are born with the union of ovum and sperm of your mother and father respectively, which is flesh in reality, but you pretend to show the people that you are a holy person, because you don't eat fish, and other flesh food. With the body of your wife made of flesh, you, under the influence of sexual lustful desires, commit sexual actions, merely to indulge in lustful pleasure, and not with the idea to produce progeny, which is considered as sinful. In fact, flesh is the source of our physical life and we all have been born from the flesh and as such, our bodies are made of flesh."

"You don't realise the Divine within to get Divine Wisdom, but you pretend to be a holy and wise person having the knowledge of all the holy scriptures". The Guru further shakes their pseudo-wisdom saying, "You are so egoistic that you consider other persons as lowly, but you have great attachment with your kith and kin, and consider them as superior to others. This is a great action of duality and ego, through which you can't find the Spiritual Path to tread on. All living beings have been created from flesh only, and for their lives and other actions, they get power from the Divine, which is Omnipresent. Besides the flesh food, you have not shed other sumptuous (Tamasic) foods, which divert you towards lustful thinking, because, you being a pseudo-spiritual guide appear to be ignorant of the Divine in the Divine Realm."

Guru again emphasised to persuade the pseudo-saints to follow the Divine Path by repeating the examples to reach the state that we all have come from the same source made of flesh, which gives birth to our bodies, all made of flesh also. "You have not realised the Divine within. It is also the sole source of flesh. But, O priests! You consider yourselves to be knowledgeable persons, who are pseudo-thinking."

ਮਾਸੁ ਪੁਰਾਣੀ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਤੇਬੀ ਚਹੁ ਜੁਗਿ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਮਾਣਾ ॥

Maas(u) puraanhee maas(u) kat-ai-been Chahu jugg(i) maas(u) kamaanhaa. (1290)

"Because your ancestors wanted to eat flesh food, they cleverly inserted the eating of it in the sacred scriptures, as a sacred food acceptable to God and Goddesses in the previous eons. This is not Divine Reality, and merely an alibi to satiate the

craving of eating sumptuous food."

ਜਜਿ ਕਾਜਿ ਵੀਆਹਿ ਸੁਹਾਵੈ ਓਥੈ ਮਾਸੁ ਸਮਾਣਾ ॥
ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਪੁਰਖ ਨਿਪਜਹਿ ਮਾਸਹੁ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹ ਸੁਲਤਾਨਾਂ ॥
ਜੇ ਓਇ ਦਿਸਹਿ ਨਰਕਿ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਉਨ੍ ਕਾ ਦਾਨੁ ਨ ਲੈਣਾ ॥
ਦੇਂਦਾ ਨਰਕਿ ਸੁਰਗਿ ਲੈਦੇ ਦੇਖਹੁ ਏਹੁ ਧਿਛਾਣਾ ॥
ਆਪਿ ਨ ਬੂਝੈ ਲੋਕ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਪਾਂਡੇ ਖਰਾ ਸਿਆਣਾ ॥
ਪਾਂਡੇ ਤੂ ਜਾਣੈ ਹੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਿਥਹੁ ਮਾਸੁ ਉਪੰਨਾ ॥
ਤੋਇਅਹੁ ਅੰਨੁ ਕਮਾਦੁ ਕਪਾਹਾਂ ਤੋਇਅਹੁ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣੁ ਗੰਨਾ ॥
ਤੋਆ ਆਖੈ ਹਉ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਹਛਾ ਤੋਐ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਬਿਕਾਰਾ ॥

Jaj(i) kaaj(i) veeah(i) suhaav-ei Oth-ei maas(u) samaanahaa.

Istaree purakh nipjeh(i) maasahu Paat(i)saah sultaanaan.

J-ai o-e diseh(i) narak(i) jaand-ai Taan unn(h) kaa daan(u) na l-ei-nhaa.

D-ain-daa narak(i) suragg(i) l-ei-dai Dekhahu eh(u) dhingaanahaa.

Aap(i) na boojh-ei lok bujhaa-e Paand-ai kharaa siaanahaa.

Paand-ai too jaanh-ei hee naahee Kith-hu maas(u) upannaa.

To-e-ahu ann(u) kamaad(u) kapaahaan To-e-ahu tribhavanh(u) gannaa.

Toaa aakh-ei haou bahu bidh(i) Hachha to-ei bahut(u) bikaaraa. (1290)

Guru Nanak Dev expounds in the above hymn, "With the pretence of invoking the pleasures of gods and goddesses, you performed the sacrifice of animals, but your ancestors ate their flesh to satiate their palate. Similarly, in the past, marriages were considered sanctified only when animals were sacrificed, whose flesh was used for preparation of sumptuous food. They did so under the influence of their greedy mind. All males and females were created from the flesh, which include kings and mini rulers. When you perceive that they would go to hell by eating flesh, then why were you attracted to accept their wealth and other costly bounties in charity?"

"O priest! You ponder over this Divine Wisdom with sincerity - how can you pretend to go to heaven when you are getting charity from the persons going to hell, due to eating of flesh food and performing other lustful deeds?"

"O priest! You don't understand this Divine Philosophy, but you pretend to possess Divine Wisdom and preach to others to be true, but it is pseudo Divine Wisdom."

"O priest! You don't understand the reality of the creation of the flesh."

"In fact, water is the main source of production of food grains, sugarcane and cotton. And it is the source of the whole Universe too."

"O Priest! You don't understand your source in reality, which is water, and consider it to be superior, but without the Divine Wisdom, you are the source of all vices. In fact, O Water! You and the whole of this Universe have been created by the

Divine, the realisation of which creates the environment of heaven."

To conclude, the humble Nanak says:

ਏਤੇ ਰਸ ਛੋਡਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਹੈ ਵਿਚਾਰਾ ॥

Ait-ai rass chhod(i) hov-ei San-e-aasee Nanak kah-ei vichaaraa. (1290)

(Forsaking these delicacies, one enters the Divine Sphere, where Formless One pervades and thus becomes a truly detached hermit, says humble Nanak.)

It was so wonderful of Guru Nanak Dev to consider Himself very humble and shower Divine Wisdom on all these priests as if they had shed all the vices, including eating flesh. With the Grace of the Divine, they will tread the Divine Path and become unattached from the world and merge themselves with the Divine Reality.

In fact, this is the gist of the preaching by Guru Nanak Dev to all the priests at the holy place, Kurukshetra.

In fact, this Divine Message of Guru Nanak Dev is for the entire mankind, to tread upon the divine Path by shedding the sumptuous (Tamasic) food, especially meat, which inflates egoistic vices:

ਹਰਿ ਆਪਣੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਭਾਵਦੀ ਜਨ ਕਾ ਜੈਕਾਰੁ ਕਰਾਈ ॥

Har(i) aapanhee vad-e-aeee bhaavdee Jann kaa j-ei-kaar(u) karaaee. (652)

(The Lord loves His Own Glory; and so His humble servant is celebrated and hailed.)

When most of the world goes astray, and the ego replaces spiritual virtues, the Divine himself takes birth in the form of a human being and preaches these virtues to guide devoted persons to tread the Divine Path with complete love and devotion, so that they should spread the holy message throughout the world. These divine persons are known as Prophets, Gurus, Sages and Saints, who get the utmost reverence in this world through their divine deeds and preaching.

The Mysterious Ways of the Gurus - Hunting Wild Animals

To a Sikh, the Guru embodies the Divine Light of the Timeless One. Taking the Guru's word as infallible lets the seeker forge his life in the Guru's teachings:

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥

Kiv sachiaaraa ho-ee-ei Kiv koorh-ei tutt-ei paal(i).

Hukam(i) rajaaee chalnaa Nanak likh-e-aa naal(i). (1)

[Question: How can one be at-one with the Truth and how can the veil of ignorance (selfishness, worship of flesh and blood) be removed?

Answer: "O searcher after Truth, intune yourself with the Eternal Law, which controls the whole Universe, ever since its creation, and which is embedded in the

very depth of the human beings."To accept with grace, whatever pleases the Divine (Akal Purakh), is the essence of a Sikh and the hallmark of Gurmukh (an egoless person.)

A egoistic person (Manmukh) on the other hand, casts doubt upon the Divine Will and constantly remains in uncertainty about it:

ਗੁਰਿ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਾ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਵਹੁ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਕਰਣੀ ਕਾਹੇ ਧਾਵਹੁ ॥

Gur(i) kah-e-aa saa kaar kamaavahu. Gur kee karnhee kaah-ai dhaavahu. (933)

"A Sikh perceives the Guru's Word in letter and spirit, and will never let doubt creep in his mind over the Guru's apparel, mystical actions, astonishing deeds and the way of doing things. O man! Carry out the Guru's teachings with utmost love and devotion. Do not call into question His miraculous powers and wondrous deeds which are performed for exhorting mankind to tread the spiritual path."

Renowned scholars, G.S. Talib and Dr. Jodh Singh, in their annotation to Gurbani published by Panjabi University, expounded boldly that a Sikh must simply comply with the Guru's teachings and not be sceptical about his apparently mysterious ways. If the Guru works a prodigious feat of occult power, and thus puts a Sikh to the test, the latter must not waver in his devotion to the Guru, and he must remain steadfast in his faith:

ਜੇ ਗੁਰ ਸਾਂਗਿ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਿਦਕੁ ਨ ਹਾਰੇ ॥

J-ai Gur saang(i) vartadaa Sikh sidakk na haar-ai.

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 35, Pauri20)

(If the Guru performs any actions or miracles, the Sikh should not waver.)

To the mortal eye, the Guru's body is merely a flesh made up of the five elements, but to the Gurmukh, with his transcendental vision, the Guru is the Formless Divine (Akal Purakh), the Creator and Sustainer of the whole Universe. It cannot be overstated that He, who created life, alone, has the right to take it away. Gurbani proclaims that the Guru is the Supreme Being incarnate, who having created the world, pervades it:

ਆਪਿ ਨਰਾਇਣੁ ਕਲਾ ਧਾਰਿ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਪਰਵਰਿਯਉ ॥

Aap(i) Naraa-e-nh(u) kalaa dhaar(i) Jagg meh(i) parvar-e-ou. (1395)

(The Lord Himself wielded His Power and pervaded everywhere in the world.)

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਭ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਕਾ ਕਰਤਾ ॥

Brahm giaanee sabh srisat(i) kaa Kartaa. (273)

[The divinely-realised person (Brahmgyani) is, in fact, the Creator of the Universe, because he merges with the Divine by eliminating his ego completely and thus there is no difference between Him and the Almighty Lord.]

Those steeped in materialism (Maya), with their limited earthly vision, are

unable to perceive the immeasurable greatness of the Guru, who is an embodiment of the Divine (Akal Purakh). In their folly, such men tend to be sceptical about the mystical feats accomplished by the Gurus. It is widely believed that the higher the spiritual attainments of a Sikh are, the more easily with his divine vision, will he grasp the true significance of the divine Teachings of the Gurus:

ਏਵਡੁ ਊਚਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਊਚੇ ਕਉ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਇ ॥

Ai-vadd(u) oochaa hov-ei ko-e. Tis(u) ooch-ai kaou jaanh-ei so-e. (5)

[He alone, whose position is as high as the Divine (Akal Purakh) Himself, can know Him.]
and

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਜਾਨੈ ॥

Brahm giaanee kee gat(i) Brahm giaanee jaan-ei. (273)

(Only the God-conscious being can know the state of the God-conscious being.)

The Guru is the repository of the Divine Light and surely, only a God-conscious person alone can fathom the mystical meaning of the divine sport, e.g., the hunting trips engaged in by the Gurus. Before we seek to interpret the mystical acts of the Guru, we would do well to look within and see where we stand, whether we possess the insight or the ability in terms of spiritual attainments, to appraise these divinely inspired feats with our fickle minds. Thus, all historians and others engaged in research must bear in mind this viewpoint on the spiritual life, before they set out to give their personal views on the Guru's mystical acts. This is important if they are able to convey the full significance of these acts.

Let's ponder whether Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai and Guru Gobind Singh hunted game just like the Kings, Maharajas, Nawabs and others with limited vision. What was their idea of hunting? Was it just an arrogant show of might? Or were the animals killed for flesh in order to satiate the craving of the palate?

As ordained by the Heavenly Father, the Gurus in all their actions were moved, solely by the desire to help the suffering mankind. Since ordinary mortals lack the breadth of vision or the required level of understanding, only a God-conscious person can know the true worth of these actions. But it would be best not to get into controversies over these mysterious matters. Even for the sake of arguments, to concede that the Gurus chased and killed game and then ate the flesh, can we ever hope to know the true significance of such actions?:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਮਾਰਿ ਜੀਵਾਲੈ ॥

Satguru m-ai-raa maar(i) jeevaal-ei. (1142)

[The Satguru is the Divine Lord (Akal Purakh) Himself and has the power to raise one from the dead.]

There is no record in Sikh history that the Gurus ate meat. Parables suggesting

that they did so, are imaginary and their authors must have had an ulterior motive - may be they themselves ate meat and sought to justify it.

Sikh history is replete with instances, where the Gurus and the Sikhs together chased and hunted down tigers and other fearsome wild animals, with a view to sharpening their battle skills. Many a time, Gurus took the life of animals like quail, partridge, snakes and wild boar with the intent of liberating them from the evil deeds (Karma) of their past lives. For instance, there lived in the time of Guru Nanak Dev, a man called Moola Khatri, who at the behest of his wife, ran away from the Divine Master and hid himself in a room in the backyard of his house in which dry cow-dung cakes were stored. When the most merciful Guru Nanak Dev went to his place to forgive him for his sins and thrice called out his name, each time, his wife answered that he was not there. Thus, the Guru perceived that Moola was not fit for salvation. After uttering those words, Guru returned to his nearby destination. But Moola met his doom - having been bitten by a snake - and died. Shocked by Nature's cruel blow, Moola's wife accompanied by the neighbours took the corpse to the Guru and placing before Him confessed their folly and pleaded for pardon and remission of the dead man's sins. The Guru told them to accept the Will of God, for what had happened could not be undone, and thus Moola could not be revived to life according to the Divine Law. But hearing their requests and pleading, the merciful Guru prophesied that Moola would be reborn as a hare and He (the Guru) would redeem him in His tenth incarnation. The prophecy came true. Many years later, when Guru Gobind Singh as the tenth Divine Master, rode into the forest in Nanded, in search of game, suddenly a hare appeared from nowhere and started to run away. Giving chase to the hare, the Guru shot it with an arrow and took its life, and with that death came deliverance. The Guru then respectfully cremated the dead animal. When the Sikhs, with humble submission, asked about His miraculous deed, the Guru narrated the whole story of Moola Khatri. Now a splendid Gurdwara Shikar Ghat marks the spot, where Moola Khatri, in the form of a hare, was cremated.

Amazing were the sporting exploits of Guru Har Rai, as he would ride into the jungle tracking wild animals. He caught sick and feeble animals, nursed them back to health, before releasing them back into their natural habitat.

The miracles credited to the Gurus only reflect the glory of the Akal Purakh. The harsh truth is that we crave for the worldly pleasures, and the craving of the palate arouses in us the desire to eat meat. But to cover up our weakness, we readily read and recount parables featuring the hunting excursions of the Gurus to justify our actions.

Meat-Eating Does Not Produce Bravery

The contention of non-vegetarians is that a person becomes healthy and brave after eating flesh. This argument is totally flawed. Bravery has nothing to do with physical strength. It is, rather, correlated with a strong will, which is acquired by concentrating on the Divine Lord by reciting the Divine Name. Such power takes a person beyond the fear of death, placing his faith in God, the moral courage to face up to both the enemies within, i.e., craving for sensual pleasures, which includes eating flesh, as well as the enemy without, i.e. the foe on the battlefield. The Guru affirms that he, whose heart is filled with the Divine Name, becomes as powerful as an army comprising of tens of millions of strong men:

ਜਿਸੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਕੋਟ ਕਈ ਸੈਨਾ ॥

Jis(u) Naam(u) rid-ei Tis(u) kot kae s-ei-naa. (1155)

(One, who recites the Divine Name within his heart with full love, devotion and concentration, becomes the Divine. He then acquires the power of millions of armies.)

For the Sikhs, the phrase Charhdi Kalaa, i.e., indomitable power refers to the inner holy strength of man and not to the might of his physical body.

The Sikh heroes of olden times had immense physical strength, fortitude, willingness to make sacrifices for the Divine Cause and the spiritual strength to embrace death through martyrdom - all these to a prodigious degree, solely because they strictly avoided meat, alcohol and other substances held taboo. Strong, both in body and mind, they were upstanding individuals, who always would keep their words. Pre-eminent among the honoured ranks of martyrs in the cause of Truth, Guru Arjan Dev expounds that he alone is valiant, in whose heart has bloomed the love of God, by shedding the five vices. By the grace of the Divine Master, the seeker, after eradication of his ego, completely gains dominion over the whole world:

**ਜਾ ਕਉ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗੁ ਲਾਗੋ ਇਸੁ ਜੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਸੋ ਕਹੀਅਤ ਹੈ ਸੂਰਾ
ਆਤਮ ਜਿਣੈ ਸਗਲ ਵਸਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ॥**

Jaa kaou Har(i) rangg(u) laago is(u) jugg meh(i) So kahee-att h-ei sooraa.

Aatam jinh-ei sagal vass(i) taa k-ei Jaa kaa Sat(i)guru pooraa. (679)

(He alone is called the divinely courageous, who is completely immersed in the Divine Wisdom in this age. With the blessings of his Divine Master, he realises the Divine within and thus, conquers the world in a spiritual way through which everything comes under his control, because of his Master who is completely Divine and is the controller of the entire Universe.)

In addition to the above quality, Sikhs of olden times were imbued with the Divine Power by the grace of Almighty, and it was widely believed that they measured

up to Guru Gobind Singh's famed assertion:

ਸਵਾ ਲਾਖ ਸੇ ਏਕ ਲੜਾਉਂ

Savaa lakh s-ai ek larhaaon.

(A legion of a hundred thousand and a quarter, strong shall I make a lone warrior of mine to take on.)

Sikh history records many instances when small bands of fearless Sikhs fought and routed the huge and mighty Mughal forces, whose diet almost completely comprised animal flesh.

Eating meat arouses sensual desires and progressively weakens a person both mentally and physically. Not only is he then unable to fight with the five evils within - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - but the fear of death also grips him and he lacks the tenacity to battle with the enemy. An individual, family group, community or nation that gives in to evil temptations, and allows themselves to be enslaved by the pleasures of the flesh, and become indolent, eventually go down the road to ruin with the passage of time. As a result, sooner or later, they are overpowered by the conqueror.

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur was renowned among his enemies for his bravery. Having won resounding victories in battles over a short span of seven years, his name struck terror in the hearts of his adversaries. Needless to say, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur and his entire band of fearless warriors were vegetarians. Over the entire span of Sikh history, all spiritual masters bearing various titles - Atamdarshi (divine person), Mahapurash (revered soul), Gurmukh (divinely realised one), Gursikh (devout Sikh) refrained from eating meat and forbade others to do so. To name just a few: Bhai Nand Lal, the 'Five Beloved Ones', Bhai Ghannayia, Baba Deep Singh, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh, Baba Bir Singh of Aurangabad, Baba Maharaj Singh, Baba Khuda Singh, Baba Sham Singh of Amritsar, Baba Karam Singh of Hoti Mardan (now in Pakistan), Sant Attar Singh of Mastuana, Sant Attar Singh of Reru Sahib, Baba Nand Singh of Kaleran, Baba Gurmukh Singh (Kar Sewa wale), Bhai Randhir Singh (founder of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha), Baba Jawala Singh of Harkhowal, Baba Jhanda Singh, Baba Harnam Singh of Naushera, Baba Harnam Singh of Rampur Khera, Baba Isher Singh Rare Wale, Baba Sundar Singh and Baba Gurbachan Singh of the Damdami Taksal, none of these revered souls as well as their associates and followers, ever ate meat. This tradition continues even today. Neither Baba Sri Chand (son of Guru Nanak Dev) nor Baba Gurditta (son of Guru Hargobind) ate meat nor do their Udasi followers do so, even today. Nirmala Sikhs too, who are

adherents of the Nirmala denomination founded by Guru Gobind Singh, eat no meat.

Meat is Not Essential for a Strong Physique

God has created a wide variety of nutritious vegetarian food for man. And so, eating meat goes against what Nature intended. There are only two exceptions where people take meat in their diet.

Firstly, if vegetarian food is not available, which is the case in many snowbound areas of the world and secondly for sensual pleasure. The simple truth is that a vegetarian diet easily meets our daily nutritional requirements. There is no compelling reason for anyone, including children and the elderly to eat meat. Meat-eaters constitute just one-sixth of whole of mankind. Meat is not at all essential to maintain a strong physique. Indeed, on reflection, certain interesting facts come to light:

- 1) Men who eat meat are unable to digest it well and succumb to many physical and mental ailments. Generally cancer, arthritis, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, inflammation of the intestine and disorders of the kidney and lungs are the diseases meat-eaters readily fall prey to.
- 2) Eating meat weakens the digestive system and leads to a chronic deficiency of calcium.
- 3) Animal fat is rich in cholesterol, which plays a large role in causing heart disease. Research has established that a vegetarian diet can reduce the clogging of arteries by up to 97%.
- 4) From the earliest times, when man first appeared on earth, flowers, fruits and vegetables formed his staple diet. Walker, an anthropologist, who has worked extensively on the dentition of early man, has proved that humanoids four million years ago lived on fruit and vegetables.
- 5) Charles Darwin, the renowned biologist and investigator, believed that early man survived on green berries and wild fruit. What applied to early man applies equally to modern man.

Modern research has shown that vegetarian food is easy to digest, that is why vegetarians are less disease prone. Vegetarians enjoy healthy lives, live long, have strong teeth and need to visit a doctor less often. And, of course, they spend much less on their medical bills compared to non-vegetarians. The body of a vegetarian is pure and perfect, blessed and sacred. A large part of our national income is spent on the prevention of diseases, while this prevention can easily be achieved by fostering a vegetarian way of life. It has been recorded that the seven oldest humans in history were vegetarians and they have testified that the secret of their longevity

was a vegetarian diet:

Kamele Toza from America - 187 years

Peters Jortan from Hungary - 185 years

Henry Jonkin from Parkshier - 161 years

Joseph Rington from Italy - 160 year.

Thomaspar from England - 152 year.

Lady Katherine, Countess of Desmond - 146 years

Jonathan Harport - 136 years.

If we survey the history of India, we find that many persons on a pure vegetarian diet have crossed more than 150 years of age, especially in the villages and Himalayan regions. There is a legend that Ascetics (Siddhas) increased their age with a vegetarian diet and breath control to over thousand years. Bhartharee, who was a king, renounced the world in search of God and became the disciple of Gorakhnath, a renowned Siddha of that era. He had a deep urge to realise the Divine within, but could not do so by performing these ascetic ways. When he got the company of Guru Nanak Dev at Achal Batala, he realised that the divine Truth is much beyond occult powers, which the Siddhas used to perform to lure the common people to make them their devotees. Thus, Bhartharee, an ascetic, who had the urge to realise the Divine within, became the follower of Guru Nanak Dev at Achal Batala, Punjab. History tells that he was 1400 years old at that time. It proves that for longevity and good health, a vegetarian diet is enough and meat eating is like inviting diseases and the age of persons who indulge in meat heavily, is much reduced according to recent studies conducted in Canada.

The Gurus' Views on Meat-Eating

More than three centuries ago, while creating a new order of humanity to tread the Divine Path, which was known as the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh pronounced that besides keeping the hair of the body intact, the initiated disciple (Khalsa) should not take any kind of flesh and should not have illicit relations, as they are the greatest hurdles to tread the Divine Path. As such, for the the divine (Khalsa), animal flesh is a great hurdle to tread the Divine Path.

Now, it has been established on spiritual and scientific basis that meat-eating distracts the mind from treading the Divine Path and arouses passion while invoking various kinds of diseases, i.e., blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, stroke, H5N1 Avian Flu, Mad Cow disease etc. Along with eastern countries, in western materialistic societies also, enlightened people follow a

vegetarian diet in huge numbers, renouncing meat as it is injurious to health. Having illicit relations leads to awful diseases like AIDS. Due to the spread of this deadly disease, doctors and scientists have estimated that within 20-25 years up to 25 crores people will face death due to this disease in India alone. Besides, more than 300 years ago, Guru Gobind Singh told humanity not to indulge in smoking and other deadly drugs. Now, countries across the world, including India, have banned smoking in all public places. Similarly, all the governments of the world are striving hard to check the indulgence of the deadly drugs.

Now, throughout the world, many vegetarian societies have been established, which propagate among the masses the harms in the form of various diseases, caused by eating flesh. Most of the Indian population is vegetarian, but now westerners are also becoming vegetarian on a large scale, due to various diseases caused by eating meat. But Guru Gobind Singh told the masses, especially his followers, not to eat meat (Kuttha) long ago. Now, the edict of Guru Gobind Singh is being followed by quite a large number of the world's population. The days are not far, when the wise governments of the world would ban the consumption of meat (just as smoking has been banned in the public places) because eating meat leads to many diseases.

Thus, the four cardinal sins, as expounded by Guru Gobind Singh more than 300 years ago, are being followed by almost all the governments of the world today. All the vegetarian societies of the world are spreading the message of Guru Gobind Singh not to eat meat, which might be accepted by all the governments of the world with the passage of time.

Are we by nature vegetarian or non-vegetarian?

Evolution of Man and Vegetarianism

Humans evolved over a period of about 24 million years. Archaeological findings indicate that human beings originated in East Africa. The most recent finding is that of Lucy's skeleton in Ethiopia, dated 3.2 million years.

The microscopic wear and tear and pattern of the teeth of many skeletons of pre-historic man found in Africa, indicate that human beings mostly ate fruits, seeds, grains, nuts and grasses. The traditional interpretation that 'humankind's evolution reflects its needs as a hunting carnivore' is disapproved. In fact, over the entire period of human evolution of 24 million years, humans have been vegetarian for more than 22.5 million years. There is no doubt that humanity came into being,

sustained on a diet that was almost wholly vegetarian.

Killing is not natural to human beings and it does not fit either with their physical or dietary nature. The ways and means of hunting and killing were devised, simply through necessity and the urge to survive. Meat became part of the human diet, when man discovered fire and learned to cook. As the human population grew, some of the human tribes migrated to cold temperate regions with less vegetation around, forcing them to eat meat.

With the settling of human society, agriculture was developed, which encouraged human beings to become more and more vegetarian. In Israel, about 33,000 years ago, humans used to gather and roast wild cereals. In Egypt, stone pestles and mortars, used to grind wild tubers and roots, have been found dated as early as 20,000 years. The first sign of agriculture found in northern Israel, dates back 13,000 years. Flint sickle blades have been unearthed, which were used to cut wild barley and emmer wheat.

Controlling others' lives, environment, hunting and killing other creatures seemed to be a symbolic gesture of power. As human society evolved, the sensation of this God-like dominance and power encouraged humans to eat meat. The ruling elite began eating meat, as a celebratory meal of offering animal sacrifice to Gods. Meat consumption was conspicuous and a token of dominant power. The more cattle was slaughtered, cooked and eaten, the greater became man's lust.

The consumption of meat coincides with offering a domesticated animal, whose flesh was reserved for men, to gods, leaving to divinity the smoke of the calcified bones and the scent of spices burned for the occasion. Men received the meat, because they wanted to eat meat and the gods had the privilege of smells, perfumes and other incorruptible substances. Under the garb of eating meat, animal sacrifices assumed spiritual significance.

Rulers and chiefs of Greece used to eat meat regularly, whereas the workers, labourers and peasants were to eat meat only on public festivals. There were sacrifices to the gods officiated by the priests. The first animal ever sacrificed was a pig. In that system, the gods were honoured, the community expressed its solidarity and a rare chance to eat meat became visibly prevalent.

In spite of infiltration of religious rituals leading to meat-eating practices, there were many sects worldwide that maintained the vegetarian way of life. The advent of agriculture and abundant supply of vegetarian food made killing of animals for food unnecessary. Some priests began to abstain from meat. Thus, the practice of smelling the aroma of sacrifice became a ritual, rather than eating meat. The vegetarian sect of priests in Egypt existed around 3200 BC.

Pythagoras and vegetarianism

Pythagoras was a renowned Philosopher of science and mathematics and was also a pioneer in preaching on the vegetarian way of life. He was born in 580 BC in Samos in Turkey. Pythagoras first became the student of Pherecydes, who was one of the seven wise men. Pherecydes explained the world in natural terms and said that all life came from the sea. He believed that everything is full of God and the soul is mingled with everything in the entire Universe. He is credited with the doctrine of metempsychosis, which holds the human soul to be immortal, passing on to another body, either human or animal, after death.

Pythagoras developed mathematical skills, which he put to work in solving practical problems - the height of a pyramid or the distance of a ship as seen from the shore. Pythagoras was the first musical numerologist, who laid down the foundations of acoustics, discovering the connection between the pitch of a note and the length of a string.

Pythagoras pursued the philosophy of soul, life and death, which was inherently bound by the Pythagorean diet. He was the first to promulgate a dogma of existence of the soul. Pythagoras saw the soul as an abstract concept beyond all material metaphors. He believed that the soul was immortal and could be transformed into other living creatures. All life form, therefore, should be treated as kindred. To kill and eat the living creatures, whether they be birds, reptile or fish, was to murder one's cousins and eat their flesh, for all people are reborn in the time flow, illusion caused by lost memory. Such rebirth could recur any number of times unless a person should succeed in breaking the vicious circle by strenuous ascetic performances.

Egyptians were the first to claim the idea of transmigration of souls into living creatures, whether bird, mammal, fish or reptile, and all the priestly sects abstained from eating meat. Vegetarianism was visibly practiced in Egyptian and Roman times. Pythagorean vegetarianism had deep roots in Ancient Egypt itself.

Pythagoras was never seen to weep or laugh, he was neither relaxed and gleeful nor depressed and glum. He was a man of inner serenity of great strength, of intellect and character and was secure and rigorous in his own belief. He claimed knowledge of his own pre-existence and believed that through complete abstention from meat, all of us could recall previous lives. Pythagoras was slim and energetic throughout his life and died at the age of 104.

Pythagoras abstained from meat and believed that more fibrous the food, more the body was purified and closer it could come to God. Mallow and Asphodel were an important part of the Pythagorean diet. Both these plants were primitive foods grown in Europe. They were thought to be miracle food, which could suppress hunger

and thirst. Another Persian priest, Cretan Seer Epimenides, took a pill every day of Mallow and Asphodel and lived for 299 years.

The Pythagorean diet is the ultimate and healthiest one. In order for humans to escape the imprisonment of their bodies, the soul has to go through a cycle of incarnations. In the interval between incarnations, the soul resides in Hades. To reach a final destiny from this endless cycle of incarnations, humans had to live an ascetic life full of restrictions, including ceremonies of purifications, complete abstinence from meat and other rules similar to Pythagorean teachings.

Other Religions Also Practice Vegetarianism

Scriptures of religions all over the world have taught us to see a reflection of the Heavenly Father in every living being and consider non-violence as the best religion. Most religions have detailed the harm done by eating meat and have called it an enemy of the longevity and a cause of degradation. All religions have prohibited the killing of any harmless and innocent living being. Some people, who consider the satisfaction of their appetites the prime objective of their lives, try to show, in pursuance of their self-interest and contrary to the teachings of their religious founders, that their religion does not prohibit meat-eating, but that is not true.

Hinduism : Gabriel Cousens in *Conscious Eating* and Steve Rosen in *Food for the Spirit*, have precisely concluded that Hinduism is the oldest of all Asian religions, which has strongly maintained its vegetarian perspective, perhaps from the beginning of written history.

The wisdom of the Vedas underlies a wide variety of spiritual paths, related to the practice of Hinduism. Also involved, is the practice of a vegetarian diet is the science of Yoga and the science of Ayurvedic medicine that itself originates from the Vedas.

While other major world religions are traceable to one particular founder, Hinduism has its beginning in such remote antiquity that it cannot be traced to any one individual. Its roots, however, are firmly planted in the ancient Vedic scriptures. The word 'Hindu' is not actually found anywhere in Vedic scriptures. The term was introduced by Muslims from neighbouring Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and Persia, who referred to people living across the River Sindhu, which borders India's northwest province.

Jainism : Ahimsa is the most important principles of the Jain faith established by Lord Mahavira. The Jain scriptures list 108 forms of violence. Violence in thought and actions, indulging in violence oneself or getting others to use violence or abetting violence by others, are all forbidden. Even to contemplate violence is a sin. Violence

is manifested in thought, word and deed. Even the utterances of words, which hurt another person is considered a sin. In a religion where tying up of animals, causing hurt to them, overloading them or even keeping them in cages is considered sinful, the question of eating meat just does not arise.

Buddhism : Gautam Buddha, who was once known as Siddhartha, started the Buddh Dharma. After attaining enlightenment, he categorically prohibited his disciples from eating meat.

In the Bodhi scripture (Lanka Avatar), it is quoted that Buddha said: 'For the sake of love of purity, the Bodhisattva should refrain from eating flesh. For fear of causing terror to living beings, let the Bodhisattva, who is disciplining himself to attain compassion, refrain from eating flesh.'

Further he clarified, 'Even if the animal is not killed by a person, who is eating meat, it is still inappropriate to eat meat.'

Again, there may be some people in the future who, under the influence of the taste of meat, will put forward many sophisticated arguments to defend meat-eating, but meat-eating in any form, in any manner, and in any place is unconditionally and once and for all, prohibited.

Buddha propounded: 'Meat-eating I have not permitted to anyone, I do not permit, and will not permit.'

In another Bodhi scripture (Surangama Sutra), Buddha says: "After my supreme enlightenment (Parinirvana) in the final time era (Kalpa), different kinds of ghosts were encountered everywhere, deceiving people and teaching them that they can eat meat and still attain enlightenment. How can a Seeker (Bhikshu), who hopes to become a deliverer of others, himself be living on the flesh of other sentient beings?"

A quote from Mahaparinirvana Sutra, the Bodhi scripture, sums up the importance of vegetarianism for Buddhism and perhaps all spiritual paths: 'The eating of meat extinguishes the seed of great compassion.'

Judaism : The first diet given to man in the Torah (also known as the Old Testament or the Five Books of Moses) is clearly vegetarian: 'I have given you every herb-bearing seed, which is Upon the face of all the earth and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree-yielding seed: To you it shall be for food...' (Genesis 1:29)

Genesis 3:18 adds further instructions to eat vegetables. In obedience to these injunctions, the people of Israel, for ten generations (from Adam to Noah), were frugivorous and vegetarian.

However, this adherence to God's law was short-lived. By the time of Noah, morality had diminished considerably. Animal sacrifice began (Genesis 4:4), and animal skins were now used as clothing (Genesis 3:21), and human beings began to

murder one another (Genesis 4:8, 23). It was during this period of 'falling into sin,' as the Bible describes it, that God gave concession for eating meat. Meat-eating became rampant.

After the great flood had destroyed all vegetation, God issued a temporary sanction to eat meat (Genesis 9:4). Shortly thereafter, God again attempted to institute a vegetarian diet. When the Israelites left Egypt, God provided manna (a non-flesh food), to help to sustain them during their arduous journey. Still, the Israelites demanded meat, and God supplied it along with a fatal plague for all who ate it (this is described in numbers 11:18-34 and in this book's chapter on Christianity).

Meat-eating had by now become thoroughly ingrained and widespread among the Jewish people, and the Bible indicates that God, after two attempts at instituting vegetarianism, was ready to permit meat-eating, with certain restrictions.

'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat....' (Genesis 2:16)

'..and thou shalt eat the herbs of the field.' (Genesis 3:18)

In Exodus 20:13, it says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' This sixth commandment is basic in terms of its compassion and love for all of creation. The exact Hebrew translation reads 'lo tirtzach'. This word refers to any sort of killing, and not just of humans. The practice of this commandment not only keeps the fundamental order in the world of nature, but supports the basic principle of compassion and love for all of God's creations that is taught in the Torah. It clearly supports the essential observance of vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is the basic and unitary commandment of diet needed to support a spiritual life in harmony with all its creation.

There is a Jewish tradition, which holds that man will again reach that Edenic state when the messiah comes. Accordingly, to approach a new and higher level of spiritual grandeur, many Jewish thinkers have already adopted vegetarianism in preparation for the messiah's appearance.

For instance, Shlomo Goren, the former Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Israel, is a devout vegetarian. Reputed as one of the greatest existential philosophers and modern Jewish thinkers, Martin Buber (1878-1965) also advocated a meatless diet. Isaac Bashevis Singer, who won the 1978 Nobel Prize in Literature, supported the doctrine of kindness to animals as underlying the basis of his vegetarianism. Rabbi David Rosen, the former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, and Shear Yashuy Cohen, the Chief Rabbi of Haifa, are tremendously supportive of the vegetarian way of life. The late Chief Rabbi Kook actively spoke out in favour of vegetarianism. His Hebrew booklet, *The Vision of Vegetarianism and Peace*, is one of the most convincing and thought-provoking pieces on Jewish vegetarianism.

Was Jesus Christ Vegetarian?

The Essenes, a Jewish community at Qumran, with very high human values and saintliness, did not follow Jewish thought many hundred years before the birth of Christ. Essenes were purely vegetarian and Pythagorean in their beliefs and habits, such as sharing all worldly goods, transmigration of souls, as mentioned by Pliny the Elder, Josephus and Philo of Alexandria. They did not eat meat in accordance with the law of Moses, which said, 'Thou shalt not kill'. They did not follow the practice of animal sacrifice, regarding a reverent mind as the only true sacrifice. Jesus Christ was brought up under the guidance of John the Baptist, who was purely vegetarian and preached to uplift people and taught vegetarianism. In the Essene Gospel of Peace, on page 36, Jesus is quoted as saying: 'God communicated to your fore father, 'Thou shalt not kill'.

Dr. Ewing points out that the highly respected Father Eusebius quotes Hegesippus (about A.D. 160), who said that James, the disciple and brother of Jesus, who became head of the Judaic Christians after Jesus, was a vegetarian who 'drank no wine, wore no wool, nor ate any flesh.' It was said that he followed this practice from birth. It is clear that all of Jesus' family, including himself, were raised as vegetarians and lived that way as adults. They refused to partake of flesh or wine.

St. Peter's food was bread, olives, and herbs. Mathew ate seeds, nuts, and vegetables, without flesh. Dr. Ewing also quotes an early Christian document, which presents Thomas as fasting, wearing a single garment, giving what he has to others, and abstaining from eating flesh and drinking wine.

In a teaching to his disciples in section XXXII, verse 4, of The Gospel of the Hebrews, Jesus is completely clear about his opposition to killing and eating animals:

'For of the fruits of the trees and the seeds alone do I partake; and these are changed by the Spirit into my flesh and my blood. Of these alone and their like shall ye eat who believe in me and are my disciples, for of these, in the Spirit, come life and health and healing unto man'.

In the Epiphany book, it is shown that the immediate followers of Jesus, the Judaic Christians, were vegetarians. According to the evidence presented in the book by Charles Vaclavik, *The Vegetarianism of Jesus Christ*, after Jesus left, the Judaic Christians were led for 30 years by Jesus's brother, James, who was vegetarian. There was a historical struggle among the three main factions of Christianity of those times: Judaic Christians, Christian Gnostics and Catholic Christians. Vaclavik's historical evidence suggests that the Judaic Christians were the very first Christians. They were the ones, who actually walked and prayed with Jesus. The Judaic Christians and Gnostics Christians were pure vegetarian

and the Catholic Christians were not. Early priests, such as Tertullian, St. John Chrysostom, Clement of Alexandria, St. Benedict, Eusebius, Papias, Cyprian, and Pantaenus, all supported vegetarianism as part of Christianity. It is no accident that these Christian leaders of the time were vegetarians, as they were still influenced by the direct teaching of the first Christians. After the Judaic Christians, Gnosticism developed; and around A.D. 70, the Catholic Christians began their ascent to power.

By the fourth century, the Catholic Christians became considerably more politically powerful than the other two sectarian groups of Christians. Most of the literature of the Judaic Christians and Gnostic Christians was essentially destroyed during the political repression of this time period. Many scholars think that in 325 A.D. the original Christian documents (Bible) were altered at the Council of Nice by the Catholic Christians to make them acceptable to the Roman Emperor, Constantine. Steve Rosen, in 'Food for Spirit', points out that meat-eating was not officially permitted until the fourth century, when Emperor Constantine of Rome, through his powerful influence, incorporated his version of eating meat in the Bible.

While translating the Bible from Greek to English, many blatant mistakes were made. As many of the original documents were destroyed by Romans, the accuracy of translation was affected by the limited understanding and philosophy of those who were translating. For example, the word 'meat', which appears nineteen times in the New Testament, seems to imply that Jesus sanctioned meat-eating. The most accurate understanding of the word 'meat' in the translation from Greek to English does not imply flesh food at all. The Greek word translated as 'meat' is more precisely translated as 'food' or 'nourishment', and not animal flesh. For example, Jesus did not actually say, 'Have ye any meat?' in John 21:5 but 'Have ye anything to eat?' And when the Gospels say that the disciples went to buy meat (John 8), it merely means to buy food.

Similar misinterpretation has occurred with the use of the word 'fish'. The misunderstanding of this word results in portraying Jesus as eating fish. Whereas, in the early church, the word FISH was a secret term. The Greek word for fish is J-CH·TH-U-S. It is made up of the first letters of the word 'Jesus Christ Theou Uios Soter', which translates as Jesus Christ Son of God Saviour. The word fish used in Greek had deeper meaning than the literal meaning of dead fish, which was physically eaten. In the second century book by Treneaus (A.D. 120-202), it is pointed out that during Babylonian times, there was a plant called fish-plant. These fish-plants were dried in sun, beaten in a mortar and baked into bread-like rolls, which was consumed by Jesus. The word 'plant' got left out of the word 'fish-plant' and

people started calling the bread rolls as 'fish', which later on was interpreted as the 'dead fish'.

Colin Spencer in his book *Vegetarianism* also writes that early head priests of the Roman Catholics were so much against vegetarianism that any vegetarian Christian, who ate a vegetarian diet in secret, was arrested and brought to a public place and burnt alive. Rosen writes that Emperor Constantine used to have molten lead poured down their throats if they were captured. Evidence that one was a meat-eater and happily married with a family was fit to be proof of orthodoxy. 'I am not a heretic (Cather),' an accused claimed in a court at Toulouse, 'I have a wife whom I love, I have children, I eat meat, I lie and I take oaths, I am a good Christian.' With the passage of time, this disappeared. Cathers (vegetarians) were considered as good Christians and respected by people. They were befriended and helped.

Epiphanius points out that the teaching of Jesus and the Essenes stood directly against the practice of the other Jewish sects and that of the Romans, who also practised animal sacrifice. Titus Flavius Clemens, one of the most respected of the early Christian fathers, is quoted in *Ethics of Diet* by Howard Williams as saying:

'Sacrifices were invented by men as a pretext for eating flesh.'

Clement of Alexandria (A.D.160-240) wrote: 'It is far better to be happy with vegetarianism than to have our bodies act as graveyards for animals.'

St. John Chrysostom (A.D.345-407) also taught that the unnatural eating of meat was polluting. The Gospel of the Hebrews describes John, the Baptist as a vegetarian and his food consisted of wild honey and cake made with oil. Another follower of Jesus was Paul, who stated:

'If food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat flesh at all and that I may not make my brother stumble. Destroy not the work of God for the sake of food. Whether ye eat or drink does all to glory of God.'

According to Dr. Ewing, the well-respected Christian Father, Flavius Clemens, the founder of the Alexandrian School of Christian Theology, wrote in A.D.190: 'It is good neither to drink wine nor to eat flesh.' Both St. Paul and the Pythagoreans acknowledged that eating meat is rather characteristic to a beast, and the fumes arising from the flesh pots darken the soul.

One of the great figures of Latin Christianity was Florente Tertullianis, who was born in Carthage in about A.D. 155. His spiritual understanding was so profound that he is referred to by the Bishop of Carthage as the 'Master'. In *Ethics of Diet*, Tertullianis makes it clear that Jesus was a vegetarian. According to researches carried out by Steven Rosen in the book, *Food for the Spirit*, Gabriel Cousens, M.D., in the book *Conscious Eating*, Colin Spencer in his book, *Vegetarianism: A History*

and Krsna Prasadam in his cook book, The Higher Taste say that Christ was a vegetarian.

Islam : Baba Farid, a renowned Muslim saint, whose Hymns have been incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev, was a great ascetic and underwent many penances to attain divine Wisdom from the Divine Lord (Allah). A renowned Sikh Saint-writer, Bhai Vir Singh, writes that Saint Farid underwent a great penance in the forest for twelve years, meditating on the Divine Name to perceive the Divine within. His mother was related to the family of the Prophet Hazrat Mohammad. During penance in the forest, the food of Saint Farid was mostly fruits of wild trees and tender vegetation. If one searches His holy life in depth, one reaches the conclusion that Saint Farid's food was completely vegetarian, who writes:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਸਕਰ ਖੰਡੁ ਨਿਵਾਤ ਗੁੜੁ ਮਾਖਿਉ ਮਾਂਝਾ ਦੁਧੁ ॥
ਸਭੇ ਵਸਤੁ ਮਿਠੀਆਂ ਰਬ ਨ ਪੁਜਨਿ ਤੁਧੁ ॥

Farida sakkar khandd(u) nivaat guruh(u) Maakh-e-ou maanjhaa dudh(u).

Sabh-ai vastoo mittheeraan Rabb na poojan(i) tudh(u). (1379)

(Taking sugar, candy, jaggery, and buffalo milk combined with honey are all very tasteful and sweet, but cannot be equated with the inexpressible pleasure of the Divine Name.)

Thus, for the seeker, reciting the Divine Name is so immensely tasteful that it cannot be explained in words. While mentioning all the above most tasteful dainty dishes, Saint Farid did not mention eating flesh, which was considered by him to be a passion-arousing food, which is negatively correlated with perceiving Divine Wisdom. Farid further expounds:

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਰੋਟੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਕਾਠ ਕੀ ਲਾਵਣੁ ਮੇਰੀ ਭੁਖ ॥ ਜਿਨਾ ਖਾਧੀ ਚੋਪੜੀ ਘਣੇ ਸਹਨਿਗੇ ਦੁਖ ॥
ਰੁਖੀ ਸੁਖੀ ਖਾਇ ਕੈ ਠੰਢਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਪੀਉ ॥ ਫਰੀਦਾ ਦੇਖਿ ਪਰਾਈ ਚੋਪੜੀ ਨਾ ਤਰਸਾਏ ਜੀਉ ॥

Farida rotee m-ai-ree kaatth kee Laavanh(u) m-ai-ree bhukh.

Jinaa khaadhee choprhee Ghanh-ai sehan(i)g-ai dukh.

Rukhee sukhee khaa-e k-ei Thanddhaa paanhee peeou.

Farida d-ai-kh(i) praaee choprhee Naa tarsaa-e jeeou. (1379)

(My bread is made of wood, which satiates my hunger. Those persons, who have taken sumptuous food will undergo a lot of miseries.)

Farid emphatically gives instructions to the student of spirituality that they should eat very simple food and drink simple cold water. They should not be attracted and cause their mind to waver by the sumptuous food eaten by the people, who do not know the spiritual path.

It is amply clear from the above Hymns of Saint Farid that He never took flesh food and remained vegetarian throughout his life. His devoted disciples like Sheikh

Brahm, Nizamuddin Aulia and others, who are regarded as perfect Muslim saints, like Farid, were also completely vegetarians, because vegetarianism and simple living are deeply correlated with spirituality. This denotes that the proverb, 'simple living and high thinking' is directly correlated to tread the divine Path. Other renowned Muslim saints, like Rabia Basri, who always remained immersed in the Divine within was completely vegetarian from her very childhood. Once Saint Rabia Basri was meditating in the deep forest and many wild animals like rabbits, deers, jackals and tigers were roaming there freely, perceiving the divine vibrations emitted from Rabia Basri's body. None of the animals were afraid of each other and grazed calmly. A renowned holy Muslim devotee of the area came to the forest to clarify his spiritual doubts from Rabia Basri, who was calmly engrossed in the Divine within and the forest animals were roaming there freely without any fear. As soon as he came to see Rabia, all the forest animals ran away. He was astonished to see the animals running deep into the forest on seeing him. He was so disturbed to see this scene that he could not resist enquiring why this had happened. The holy lady asked, "Have you eaten animal flesh today?" He confirmed that this was true. Then Rabia Basri told him that even animals can perceive a person to be their enemy, because he could kill them and take their flesh.

Steven Rosen, in his book *Food for the Spirit*, Richard C. Foltz, Professor of Religion Studies at the University of Florida, in *Sufism and Vegetarianism*, and Gabriel Cousens M.D, in *Conscious Eating*, all write that Prophet Hazrat Mohammad was also vegetarian. The food of the Prophet consisted of milk, curd, butter, pomegranates, grapes, figs, almonds, dates, milk pudding with rice, honey and fruits etc. Despite the fact that he had great love and affection for animals, he did not restrain any of his followers from not eating meat, because he had only the supreme purpose of spreading the religion of Islam far and wide among the folks of the Arabian countries, as the heads of the tribes of Arabian countries indulged in meat-eating. The Prophet's idea was to motivate them to spread the Islamic religion far and wide. But the Prophet gave the instructions to his followers that before performing Namaz (the prayer), the person must wash his mouth (to remove the remnants of food); and hands and feet also before entering the mosque for prayer, which is an indication of cleanliness. The Prophet also clarified that whosoever had sympathy, love and affection for creatures would get the blessings from God. It is also mentioned in the Quran (the holy book of Muslims) that whoever goes to Mecca for the Haj pilgrimage, should not indulge in hunting animals on the way, otherwise the pilgrimage would be cursed by the Allah. All the renowned Muslims saints (Faqirs) - Hamid Din Nagouri, Murid Khwaja, Moiniki Chisti, Saint Rabia

Basri, Sarsad Sufi, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen - were vegetarian.

Islam came into being when most of the west was engrossed in eating meat. Meat had become an integral part of the society, including religious sacrifices and rituals. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, a renowned Muslim, explains that initially a vegetarian way of life was too big a change for the people and became a stumbling block for them to adopt the Muslim religion. Mohammad, the prophet, told them, 'Do not kill. It is a sin. You are taking another life.' Because people were not able to follow this teaching, Mohammed then had to limit, but ultimately allow, the eating of flesh, because people did not have the consciousness that allowed them to go beyond their blood lust. There was a Bedouin Tribe whose custom was to eat lizards, and the prophet never forbade them from doing so. But He himself never ate a lizard. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen further explains Qurban as referred in the holy Quran requires people to sacrifice their life to the devotion and service of God, and that we should sacrifice our beastly qualities instead of the life of animal. Qurban is not slaughtering chickens, cows and goat. He encouraged vegetarianism, stating that arrogance, haste and anger may decrease by elimination of meat from the diet. He taught that consumption of plants and dairy products promotes peaceful qualities.

Many other spiritual Muslim leaders stress upon the need of being vegetarianism. Qadiri Sheikh Abdul Karim Jili said that many Sufi Tariqats have prohibited from meat-eating during retreats. He reaffirmed on Arabi's advice to avoid animal fat during retreats stating that 'Animal fat strengthens animalism, and its principles will dominate the spiritual principles.'

Chishti Inayat Khan introduced Sufi principles to Europe and America in the early part of the 20th century. He observed that vegetarianism promotes compassion and harmlessness to living creatures. A vegetarian diet aids in purification of the body, the opening of the channels of breath and refinement of spiritual faculties.

Richard C. Foltz, University of Florida, stated that throughout history, numerous Muslims have practiced vegetarianism for reasons of piety. Many South Asian Sufis have been vegetarian, including many members of the Chishti order - Suhrawardi Saint Hamid al-din Nagori and others. An early female Sufi, Zaynab, is said to have been persecuted for her refusal to eat meat.

Today, a growing number of Muslims throughout the world are practising vegetarian lifestyles, not only in the West, but in traditional Islamic environments as well. Turkey has several national vegetarian organisations. An old Istanbul neighbourhood known as 'Non-meat-eater' (Etyemez) derives its name from the vegetarian practices of a Sarifi sect. Iran has one registered vegetarian society based in Tehran - the Sana and Shafa Vegetarians.

B. A. Masri, former Imam of the Shah Jehan mosque in Woking, England, states that, "Life on this earth is so intertwined as a homogeneous unit that it cannot be disentangled for the melioration of one species at the expense of the other." Masri understands the superiority of the human species only in Taqwa (its spiritual volition), i.e., its capacity to make moral choices. Without this distinction, Masri believes, the differences between humans and other animal species are superficial. In fact, Masri notes, animals can even be humanity's teachers. For example, Ali, the Prophet's nephew and son-in-law, is reported to have said, 'Be like a bee; anything he eats is clean, anything he drops is sweet and any branch he sits upon does not break.' To kill animals to satisfy human thirst for inessentials is a contradiction in terms within the Islamic tradition.

Muhvi As-Sin ibn 'Arabi' admonishes the reader to be careful of his diet. 'It is better if your food be nourishing, but devoid of animal fat'. Shahid Ali Muttaqi said that ritual slaughter in Islam is merely customary, and not prescribed by law. In a recent essay, Muslim publisher Shahid Ali Muttaqi argues against the necessity of performing the traditional sacrifice on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. Contrasting Islam with Judaism and Christianity, he points out that the notion of either vicarious atonement for sin or gaining favour by offering the life of another to God is nowhere to be found in the Quran. All that is demanded as a sacrifice is one's personal willingness to submit one's ego and individual will to the Allah. Mutaqi concludes that the existence of animal sacrifice in Islamic custom is derived from the norms and conditions of pre-Islamic Arab society. Ali Muttaqi enjoins Muslims to cease to eat meat to merely satisfy ones ravenous cravings which are produced by nothing more than our nafs (lower self).

Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri tells a similar story about Ibrahim Ibn Asham, who, it is said, liked to go hunting. One day, as he was pursuing an antelope, he heard a voice asking him, 'O Ibrahim, is it for this that we have created you?' Immediately, he got down from his horse, gave his fine clothes to a shepherd in exchange for a wool tunic, and assumed the life of a wandering dervish.

Sayyid Fadhlullah states that vegetarianism is Halal. Meat is not compulsory. Any food is permissible, provided it is not harmful. Muslims are free to eat whatever they want, provided it is Halal.

Sheikh M. S. Munajjid states that there is nothing wrong with being a vegetarian or not eating animal products. Vegetarian products are not forbidden (Haraam), because the Almighty Allah says, 'O ye, who believe! Make not unlawful the good things, which Allah hath made lawful for you, but commit no excess for Allah loveth not those given to excess.' (Al-ma'idah:87)

Sayyidina Umar says that meat has an addiction like the addiction of wine. Engineer Asghar Ali writes in his Sufi Islam book that in the Kitchen (Langar) of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, the most popular Sufi in India, only vegetarian food was cooked.

Taoism : Taoism or Daoism, the movement of Dao (the way) is the major religio-philosophical tradition of China. Lao Zi is thought to be the founder as well as the author of its classic text, the Dao De Jing. The tradition holds that all beings and things are fundamentally one. This understanding combined with the suggestion that you live in life the most natural path has made its followers predominantly vegetarian.

As early as the sixth century B.C., Taoist theory has encouraged people to seek harmony with nature by leading a simple, balanced life, sustained by a predominately vegetarian diet.

Eating vegetarian and eating well is Taipei. Human beings are by nature born to be vegetarians.

Zoroastrianism (Parsis) : Zoroastrianism (also known as Magianism, Mazdaism or Parseeism), originally a sect that flourished in ancient Persia, is now centred primarily in Mumbai. Zoroaster, who founded this religion, was an ardent and well-known advocate of vegetarianism in Persia around 600 B.C. Under Islamic rule, many Zoroastrians fled from Iran in the seventh century A.D. and their modern successors are called Parsis in India. There is a strong adherence to the vegetarian way of life by the 2,00,000 Zoroastrians in the world today.

Health Based Reasons

Man is not designed to eat meat

This can be confirmed by comparing the physiology and anatomy of vegetarians and meat-eaters.

A piece of meat is just a part of a corpse, and its putrefaction creates poisonous wastes within the body. Therefore, meat must be quickly eliminated. For this purpose, carnivores possess alimentary canals only three times the length of their bodies. Since man, like other vegetarian animals, has an alimentary canal twelve times his body length, the rapidly decaying flesh is retained for a much longer time, producing a number of undesirable toxic effects.

Vegetarian diets are bulkier than those containing animal products, because they are relatively high in carbohydrates and fibre. Overeating, obesity and constipation are generally not seen in vegetarians. It can take up to five days, i.e., 120 hours for meat to be digested and eliminated. Putrefaction is the prime source

of growth of undesirable bacteria, which is the common cause for disease in flesh food.

A plant-based diet is eliminated from the body within a period of 24-hours, thereby preventing any potential accumulation of toxins.

The higher the fat in a vegetarian diet, the longer it takes for its digestion and elimination. If a diet of fruit juices and vegetable juices is taken, it takes 12 to 15 hours for digestion and elimination. If solid fruit and vegetables are eaten, it takes more hours for the same function. Everyone knows this fact in his daily life that while eating different types of diets, constipation and diarrhoea are correlated with the type of food consumed.

Factual Indicators of Vegetarianism

Prof. W.C. Rose of the University of Illinois and an authority on a protein diet, says, 'About 23 grams of protein in a day is all one needs.' Persons eating meat get on an average of 83 gm. of protein a day, which causes many diseases. It is a well-known fact that people may go for a number of days without protein, yet suffer no bad results. Fruit alone, if amply supplied in sufficient variety, would provide people with enough protein to meet the actual body demand of about 23 gm. Ellen G. White, a leading writer on health, writes: 'Meat is the greatest disease breeder that can be introduced into the human system.'

Denmark : During the First World War in 1918, the entire Denmark remained on a vegetarian diet for one year and established a world record of lowered death rate - 34% due to marked decrease in illness rate. Eating meat by the whole nation the next year sent the death rate back to its pre-war level.

Dr. E. V. McCollum, the leading nutritionist of John Hopkins University gives his opinion that anyone, who chooses to eliminate meat from his diet is better off.

People who consume animal products are 10 times more susceptible to heart diseases, 40% more susceptible to cancers and are at an increased risk for many other illnesses, including stroke, tuberculosis, obesity, appendicitis, osteoporosis, arthritis, diabetes and food poisoning. Meat contains pesticides and other toxic chemicals that are up to 14 times more concentrated than those found in plant food.

Dr. Alexis Carrel, Nobel Prize winner (Physiology and Medicine) in 1912, proved that the length of life depends largely on eliminating waste and adding nutrition to the cell. Aging and fatigue are hastened by meat, which increases wastes of various poisons that the animals would have eliminated. The urea and the uric

acid, which would have been eliminated by animals from their body, remains in the slaughtered flesh consumed by the person who eats meat. These poisons cause many disorders in the body. Another damage facing the meat-eater is disease found in animals, like the rapid rise of Leucosis in cattle-induced blood cancer or Leukaemia among the children in USA. Meat is the most putrefactive of all foods. When it attacks the intestines, it can make persons more violently ill than any other food.

Dr. Wendell Stanley, Nobel Prize winner (Chemistry) in 1946, confirms that cancer germs are communicative. People are continuously eating flesh that is filled with tuberculosis, cancerous germs and other fatal diseases. Saturated fatty acids in flesh food cause many ailments like heart diseases, atherosclerosis and many forms of cancer, stroke and degenerative diseases. A high intake of animal protein causes an excessive excretion of calcium, thereby causing the loss of calcium from bones, which in turn increases the risk of developing osteoporosis, kidney and gall bladder stones. Excess protein from a meat diet has been linked to kidney stones, osteoporosis and heart disease and some cancers. Any normal variety of plant foods provides more than enough protein for the need of the body. Large amounts of antibiotics are being fed to livestock to control bacterial diseases, which are becoming immune to these drugs at an alarming rate. Of all antibiotics used in USA, 55% are fed to livestock. These are passed on to those persons who eat their flesh.

John Robin's book, *Diet for New America* states that it is strange, but true that U.S. physicians are, as a rule, ill-educated in the single most important factor of health, namely diet and nutrition. Out of 125 medical schools in U.S., only 30 require their students to take a course in nutrition. The average U.S. physician is exposed to only 2.5 hours of study on nutrition. These doctors in the U.S. are ill-equipped to advice their patients to minimise foods, such as meat, that contain excessive amounts of cholesterol and are known causes of heart attack, cancer and other fatal diseases.

The following comparisons indicate that human beings resemble plant-eaters rather than meat-eaters.

Food consists of two components:

1. Essential nutrients.
2. Bioactive compounds for health promotion and disease prevention.

Plant-based diets or chemical power houses are rich in these bioactive compounds called phytochemicals. These phytochemicals include indoles, thiocyanates, coumarins, phenols, flavonoids, terpenes, protease inhibitors and plant sterols that may protect humans from many types of cancer and other diseases.

The National Academy of Sciences (USA) has recently suggested an increased intake of fruits and vegetables in diets. The protective effect of a vegetarian diet is believed to be due to the following values:

- a) **Mono and polyunsaturated fatty acids** are better for overall health, as compared to saturated fatty acids in flesh food.
- b) **The essential fatty acids**, like Omega 3, are found in green vegetables and linseed (Flaxseed) whereas Omega 6 fatty acids are abundantly available in plant food, which are very good for the brain, vitality and for protection from diseases.
- c) **Anti-oxidant vitamins**, which are very essential for protection from heart, cancer and other diseases are not found in flesh food.
- d) **Minerals like potassium, sodium and other micro nutrients** are abundantly available in plant food.
- e) **Phytochemicals**, which are very essential for prevention of diseases, are only available in plant food.
- f) **Fibre**, being very rich in plants, is very conducive for protection from many diseases, like constipation, intestinal colon cancer and diabetes. Flesh food has very little fibre contents.
- g) **Plant protein** is better than flesh food protein for avoiding occurrence of many diseases.

Effect on our organs

One body organ adversely affected by various toxins is the kidney. This vital organ, which extracts waste from the blood, is strained by the overload of poisons introduced by meat consumption.

Non-vegetarian animals can metabolise almost unlimited amounts of cholesterol and fats without any adverse effects. On the other hand, vegetarian species have a very limited ability to deal with any level of cholesterol or saturated fats beyond the amount required by the body. When, over a period of many years, excess is consumed, fatty deposits (plaque) accumulate on the inner walls of the arteries, producing a condition known as arteriosclerosis, i.e., hardening of the arteries. Because the plaque deposits constrict the flow of blood to the heart, the potential for heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots increases tremendously.

A high intake of animal protein causes an excessive excretion of calcium, thereby encouraging the loss of calcium from bones, which in turn increases the risk of developing osteoporosis, kidney and gall bladder stones.

Prevention of Disease

- Diets rich in plant foods - whole grains, vegetables, legumes, fruits, nuts, and seeds - are associated with reduced risk for cardiovascular disease and cancer.
- Nuts (e.g. almonds, groundnuts) are rich in mono and poly-unsaturated fatty acids. They decrease the levels of LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) and also decrease the ratio of total HDL to cholesterol.
- Fruitarians have the highest proportion of Vitamin C in their diet. It has been found that the fruitarian biochemical is similar to the neurons in the electrical synapses of the brain. It is believed that the perception of the senses is sharpest when there is less animal fat shrouding the nerves.
- A new modality for treatment of hypertension is based on dietary changes. This is known as DASH - 'dietary approach to stop hypertension'. This approach uses natural foods that are rich in potassium and low in saturated and total fat.
- In the US and other developed countries, cardiovascular diseases, cancer and strokes are the three leading causes of death. Vegetarian diets protect against all three of these.
- Gall stones are also less frequent in vegetarians.
- Increased intake of fruits and vegetables is associated with reduced risks of Alzheimer's disease, cataracts and some of the functional decline associated with ageing.
- Food sources rich in dietary fibre, folate and Vitamin C (such as fruits and vegetables) protect against gout.

Probability of Diseases in Non-vegetarian

Over a thousand diseases could be contracted by humans from eating the flesh and products of animals. Examples are Brucellosis, trichinosis, toxoplasmosis, asmosis, ptomaine, Histoplasmosis, Salmonella infection (prevalent in canned food).

Production of Biochemical Equivalent to Anger & Fright

Research has indicated a relationship between the adrenal poisons secreted by frightened, terrified animals during slaughter and aggressive behaviours. Adrenalin is a long protein chain enzyme, and persons who eat the animal's flesh are eating the biochemical equivalent to fright and anger.

Nutritional Reasons

The main protein foods in a vegetarian diet are the soya beans pulses (peas, beans and lentils), nuts, seeds and grains, all of which are relatively energy dense.

As the average protein level in pulses is 27% of calories, in nuts and seeds 13%, and in grains 12%, it is easy to see that plant foods can supply the recommended amount of protein, as long as the energy requirements are met.

High concentrated protein in flesh food is not conducive for the health of mankind. The natural source of protein from vegetation is far better for health purposes. Besides, there is plenty of protein in soybean, pulses, nuts and other seeds and is easy to digest.

Longevity

The Bible indicates that for ten generations before the flood, people lived an average of 912 years. After the flood, they began eating flesh food and the life of the next ten generations was shortened to an average of 317 years. A government study comparing the non-drinking, non-smoking Mormon Christians to non-drinking, non-smoking, vegetarian Adventist Christians, confirm that Adventists lived an average seven years longer. The National Geographic reported that the three tribes with the longest life spans in the world were Centenarian Vegetarians. They are the Hunzas of Tibet, the Azerbaijanis of the Caucasus and the Vilcabamba of Ecuador. The Eskimos of the North Pole live on mainly flesh food. Their average life span studied by experts is hardly 30-40 years. The following persons, who had some of the longest life spans in the world were vegetarians:

Camele Toza of America - 187

Peters Jortan of Hungary - 185

Henry Jonkin of Park Shire - 161

Joseph Regton of Italy - 160

Thomspar of England - 152

Lady Katherine, Countess of Desmond - 146

Jonathan of Harport - 136.

Bishnoi (Vishnoi) is a sect of Hinduism started by Guru Jambeshwar in Rajasthan, who was a Kshatriya (Rajput clan), around 1500 A.D. They follow 20+9 principles of humanity. They are strict vegetarians and do not take any intoxicants, drugs, alcohols, cigarettes etc. They do not even take cereals. Their diet consists of millets, grams, lentils, vegetables, green mustard, gram, spinach and other traditional old vegetables. They eat watermelon and its seeds, which are dried and mixed in the millet flour. They consume liberal quantities of curd and buttermilk from camels and sheep. They strictly follow Ahinsa, i.e., they do not kill animals, birds or even perennial plants in order to maintain the ecological balance.

In Bishnoi villages, wild animals and birds like deer, Nilgai, rabbits, peacocks

and other birds roam and flutter very close to the Bishnoi's houses, because these wild animals and birds perceive that they would not be harmed. In adjoining villages, where other communities kill and eat their flesh, not a single trace of these wild animals and birds is found. There are rare and unbelievable examples, where Bishnoi ladies have brought up deer babies by feeding them on their breast milk and feeding their own kids on sheep milk. There are also exemplary deeds of the Bishnois, who sacrificed their lives for defending wild animals and birds against hunters, like princes of the royal families. About 30 years ago, the average lifespan of the Bishnoi clan was more than 100 years and there were many examples in the past, where more than 50 percent of them crossed 125 years of age. Even now, when the western diet and culture has invaded this clan, they are still vegetarian and their average lifespan is still more than 90 years, which is 20 years more than the average lifespan of other communities of that area who eat meat.

Ecological Reasons

John Robbins says, "If people ate grains directly instead of cycling them through livestock, the benefits to the ecosystem would be staggering. There is not a single aspect of the ecological crisis that would not be immediately and profoundly improved by such a transformation. In fact, a shift to a more vegetarian diet is probably the most potent single act most individuals can take."

For every acre of forest land consumed by urban development, seven acres are devoured by the meat industry, for grazing and growing cattle feed.

The percentage of tropical rainforest deforestation directly linked with raising livestock is more than 50%.

The amount of forest loss for every hamburger produced from livestock raised on what was Central American forest is 55 square feet.

The amount of trees spared per year by each individual, who switches to a vegan diet is one acre.

Water needed to produce one pound of wheat is 25 gallons, whereas water needed to produce one pound of beef is 2,500 gallons.

The amount of water a person would conserve per year by switching from a meat-based diet to a vegetarian diet would be 1,423,500 gallons. If water used by the meat industry was not subsidised by U.S. taxpayers, a hamburger would cost \$35.

Pounds of food an acre of prime land can produce is:

Potatoes - 40,000 pounds

Carrots - 30,000 pounds

Tomatoes- 50,000 pounds

Beef - 250 pounds.

The percentage of US topsoil loss directly associated with raising livestock is at least 85%.

The percentage of total US land used for raising livestock is 45%.

The percentage of water pollution that can be linked to wastes from the livestock industry is more than 50%.

The percentage of US imported oil requirements that would be cut if the US switched to a vegetarian diet is 60%.

A family of four that cuts back on meat consumption by two pounds per week saves the equivalent energy of 104 gallons of gasoline in one year.

Growing plants for food uses less than 5% of the raw materials compared to meat production.

The percentage of Americans, who call themselves environmentalists is 76%, whereas the percentage of Americans, who are vegetarian is only 2.8%.

Pure vegetarian food choices make less than 5% of the demand on soil as compared to meat-oriented choices.

Livestock production accounts for 85% of all lost topsoil. The U.S. has already lost 75% of its topsoil.

The livestock in USA produce twenty times as much excretion as compared to its human population. Over half of this is not recycled.

Global Warming

Cattle and beef production is a significant factor in the emission of the three global warming gases - carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane. Much of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere is directly attributable to beef production: burning forests to make way for cattle pasture and burning massive tracts of agricultural waste from cattle feed crops.

Fifty-five square feet of rain forest is needed to produce a quarter-pound hamburger which releases 500 pounds of CO₂ into the atmosphere. CO₂ is also generated by the fuel used in the highly mechanised agricultural production of feed crops for cattle and other livestock. With 70 percent of all U.S. grain production now used for livestock feed, the CO₂ emitted as a direct result is significant. Cattle emit methane, another greenhouse gas, through belching and flatulence. Scientists estimate that more than 500 million tons of methane is released each year and that the world's 1.3 billion cattle and other ruminant

livestock emit approximately 60 million tons or 12 percent of the total from all sources. Methane is a serious problem, because one methane molecule traps 25 times as much solar heat as a molecule of CO₂.

Pounds of Edible Protein produced from One Acre of Land:

Soya beans	:	356 pounds
Rice	:	256 pounds
Corn	:	211 pounds
Other Pulses	:	192 pounds
Wheat	:	138 pounds
Milk	:	82 pounds
Eggs	:	78 pounds
All Meat	:	54 pounds
Beef	:	20 pounds

Philosophical Reasons

About 40% of the world's grain harvest is fed to animals; half of this grain would be more than enough to feed all hungry people of our planet.

On the land, what it takes to feed one meat-eating person, 20 pure vegetarians could be fed with it. Every day, 40,000 children starve to death, even though enough grain is consumed by American livestock every day. If Americans cut their meat consumption by only 10% it would free enough grain to feed everyone on the planet, who is presently starving to death.

Eminent Vegetarians of the World

There have been eminent and brilliant people in all walks of life amongst vegetarians like Lord Krishna, Buddha, Jesus Christ. In fact all the ten Sikh Gurus (Guru Nanak Dev, Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh) and all the saints and today 75% of their followers (Sikhs) and soldiers were/are vegetarians. Others include Socrates, Leo Tolstoy, Plato, Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw, Einstein, Swami Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Dayanand, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama Tirtha, and Mahatma Gandhi, who did not even eat the egg. Today, vegetarianism is considered safer, saner and a healthier way of life, so much so that a vegetarian person in the west is considered more modern today than what the situation was a few decades ago.

The account of some of the most eminent vegetarians of the world to inspire people to change to vegetarianism is noted below.

Philosophers

Some of the most eminent philosophers in the world, who were vegetarian, include such names as Aristotle, Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, and Rousseau.

Writers

We have a galaxy of eminent men of letters of world repute who were vegetarians by choice, like William Shakespeare, Milton, Alexander Pope, Shelley, Longfellow, Wordsworth, Leo Tolstoy, H. G. Wells, Voltaire, Thoreau, Plutarch, and George Bernard Shaw. The world famous Nobel Laureate from India, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, was also a vegetarian in later life.

Scriptural injunctions of some of these writers are:

George Bernard Shaw : Animals are my friends... and I don't eat my friends.'

Leo Tolstoy : '...man suppresses in himself, unnecessarily, the highest spiritual capacity - that of sympathy and pity towards living creatures like himself - and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel.'

Thoreau : 'I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribe have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilised.'

Plutarch : 'For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a head creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies, and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that has a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. How could eyes endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limb? How could his nose endure the stench? How was it that the pollution did not turn away his taste, which made contact with scores of others and sucked juices and serms from mortal wounds? It is certainly not lions or wolves that we eat out of self-defence; on the contrary, we ignore these and slaughter harmless, tame creatures without stings or teeth to harm us. For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life to which they are entitled by birth and being.'

'If you declare that you are naturally designed for such a diet, then first kill for yourself what you want to eat. Do it, however, only through your own resources, unaided by cleaver or cudgel or any kind of axe.'

Scientists

It is often believed that to gain prominence in Science, a non-vegetarian diet may be preferred to a vegetarian diet, but this is not so. Among the most notable

scientists of the world, many were vegetarians. Mention may be made of Newton, Pythagoras, Benjamin Franklin, Charles Darwin, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Dr. Huxley and Einstein. The world famous Nobel Laureate from India, Dr. C.V. Raman, was also a vegetarian. Bharat Ratna Dr. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, is also a vegetarian.

Spiritual Injunction of Albert Einstein : 'Vegetarian food leaves a deep impression on our nature. If the whole world adopts vegetarianism, it can change the destiny of humankind.'

Sportsmen

Dr. Irving Fisher, professor at Yale University, showed that when vegetarian rookie athletes was pitted against the best athletes of Yale, who were meat-eaters, the untrained vegetarians had more than twice the endurance as that of the meat-eating athletes. A series of comparative endurance tests conducted by him indicated that vegetarians performed twice as well as meat-eaters. Too much protein intake actually reduced the body's energy capacity.

A study by J. Iota Kayo and V. Kipani of Brussels University showed that vegetarians were able to perform physical tests two to three times longer than meat-eaters before exhaustion and were fully recovered from fatigue in one-fifth the time needed by the meat-eaters.

Johnny Weissmuller, world swimming champion, had made 56 world records when he was a vegetarian. But for five years, when he ate meat, he made no new ones. After several weeks on a well selected vegetarian diet, he was able to set six more world records.

Murray Rose, Australia World champion and a winner in the Olympic Games, is a vegetarian who has encouraged many sportsmen to follow a vegetarian diet.

One of the arguments often advanced in favour of a non-vegetarian diet is that it is more nutritious, because of its alleged higher content of protein, but this is far from truth.

Scientific research has established the superiority of a vegetarian diet from the point of view of nutrition and better health and less vulnerability to deadly diseases like cancer, heart attack, etc. The world famous wrestler Gama was a vegetarian, so also were Master Chandgi Ram and Guru Hanuman, eminent wrestlers. Stan Price, the world record holder in Olympics and R. Sweetgall, the world premier ultra-distance walker, Paavo Nurmi, the holder of 20 world records in distance running, are all vegetarians.

Likewise, Bill Picking, holder of a record in swimming across the English

Channel, and Murray Rose, holder of a world record in 400 meters and 1500 meters free-style, are also vegetarians.

International Body-Building champion, Mr. Andrews Chilling, and Pierrco Vernot, the world record holder of downhill endurance skiing, are all vegetarians.

Not only this, even in the field of Karate, Abete, winner of eight national Karate Championships was a vegetarian. K. Mehta, English Channel swimmer, Martina Navratilova, Kamlesh Mehta in Tennis, Vijay Merchant and Vinoo Mankad, the great Indian Test cricketers have all been vegetarians.



Conclusion

The gist of this book is to shake up the human mind to realise the purpose for which he has come in this world. All saints and sages of the previous aeons as well as the present era emphatically exhorts; "O Man! You are blessed with the precious life to realise the Divine within and without." All the Prophets, saints and sages have made it clear that to merge with the Divine, these three things are required:

- (a) **Earth** : The foremost requirement is to perform good deeds and serve humanity selflessly for perceiving the Divine Wisdom on earth. That is why it is called Dharamsal - a place where one can perform righteous deeds (Dharma), i.e., to earn his honest living through hard toil and part with at least one-tenth of his earnings for the noble causes, like helping the poor and providing them the value-based education; to create spiritual brotherhood in the world; food for the community kitchen (Langar) at holy places to serve one and all; irrespective of caste, creed, religion and status. Providing help to the people affected by natural calamities like earthquakes, Tsunamis and other such disasters. This can also be used for construction of the holy places for meditation on the Divine Name for establishing Divine Peace on this earth.
- (b) **Medium** : The human body, through which a person performs good or bad deeds according to the direction and status of one's mind.
- (c) **The Mind** : which motivates the body to perform good or bad deeds (Karmas). If the mind performs the egoistic deeds due to bad company, he rolls down to hell. On the other hand, if a man keeps company of the divine persons and meditates on the Divine Name with full love and devotion, he sheds his ego completely. Thus, the mind goes on accumulating the divine virtues by reciting the Divine Name while performing the worldly deeds according to the Divine Law. Ultimately he reaches the divine goal to realise the Divine. This divine stage creates spiritual brotherhood in the world, which was called in the previous aeons as Satyuga (the era of Truthfulness). Many saints and sages in this era have also attained this divine stage by following the Divine Law in letter and spirit which has been amply clarified in this book.

All religious scriptures have emphasised that man has taken birth to tread the Divine Path for realising the Omnipresent One - within and without and thus gets salvation. According to the divine Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, which, in

fact, is an interfaith scripture for the entire humanity, anyone can attain salvation in this very life if he follows the instructions of this divine Scripture in letter and spirit with love and devotion. It has also been emphasised in the divine Scripture that for the Seeker, it is mandatory to have association of the divine persons to tread the Path to realise the Divine within and without, in this very life.

Salvation of human beings

Salvation: It means liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth and merging with the Divine. It is positively correlated with the degree of ego in a man. Ego comprises of five vices - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. As long as some trace of ego remains in the man, he is caught in the cycle of birth and rebirth. By reciting the Divine Name with love and devotion, a person mitigates ego and thus merges with the Divine within and without. Since he is merged with the Divine, thus he is free from the cycle of birth and rebirth, which is salvation.

All religions of the world lay stress for a human to get salvation after death by performing good deeds and meditation on the Divine Name either in this very life or in the succeeding births as early as possible according to the will and devotion of man.

But all the ten Sikh Gurus have laid great stress to attain salvation in this very life and not after death or in the succeeding lives. This can be achieved only with full devotion, faith and immense urge of a Sikh to merge with the Divine by shedding his ego completely by reciting the Divine Name and hymns in association and under the guidance of the divine persons. This has been amply clarified by the Sikh Gurus and other saints, whose hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan Dev clarifies:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਆਤਮ ਹਿਤਾਵੈ ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋਊ ਕਹਾਵੈ ॥

Prabh kee aag-e-aa aatam hitaav-ei. Jeevan mukat(i) so-oo kahaav-ei. (275)

(Whosoever is imbued with the divine instructions of God, i.e., shedding of his ego completely in this very life and merge with the Divine within and without by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion gets salvation in this very life, i.e., he becomes free from the cycle of birth and rebirth. However, under the Divine Order, he takes birth to guide humanity to tread the Divine Path.)

Whoever follows the instructions of the Divine Lord with utmost devotion, he gets salvation by eradicating his ego completely in this very life. Guru Ramdas expounds:

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਸੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਮਰਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਮਰੀਆ ॥

Jeevan mukat(i) so aakhee-ei Mar(i) jeev-ei mareea. (449)

(Those human beings get salvation while still alive, who shed their ego comprising five vices, - lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride - and completely merge with the Divine within, in this very life.)



The Successful Pilgrimage

After getting initiated into the Khalsa fold with the Divine Nectar (Amrit) as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh, a Sikh should follow it with utmost dedication, to tread the Divine Path for merging with the Divine in this very life by eradicating his ego completely by reciting the Divine Name with full love and devotion. His motive to come in this world is thus fulfilled and he gets liberated from the vicious cycle of birth and rebirth in this very life. This can only be possible keeping company of the divine persons. Guru Arjan Dev in the following hymn amply clarifies that the pilgrimage of such a divine person in this world has become completely successful and thus he gets rid of the cycle of birth and rebirth:

ਸਫਲ ਸਫਲ ਭਈ ਸਫਲ ਜਾਤ੍ਰਾ ॥ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਣ ਰਹੇ ਮਿਲੇ ਸਾਧਾ ॥

Safal safal bha-ee safal jaatraa. Aavanh jaanh rah-ai mil-ai saadhaa. (687)



