

Superstitions & Rituals in Sikh Practices

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Superstitions & Rituals in Sikh Practices

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Ph. D.

Canadian Sikh Studies and Teaching Society

Vancouver, B.C. Canada

Dedicated To

Respected

Professor Tilok Singh Ji Grewal

M.A., LLB.

Raikot (Dist. Ludhiana)

Who always guides and supports me to brighten my future. Their entire family always considers me a part of their family.

Respected

Dr. Gurbaksh Singh Ji

M.Sc., Ph. D.

(Ohio, USA)

Retired Professor and Dean

Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana

Who, for more than 10 decades, thrived on creating respect for the Sikh form and Gurmat principles among the youth of foreign countries (Canada, USA, Singapore, Malaysia, England). He inspired many people like me to read and think about Gurmat literature or clarified many theoretical points of Gurmat.

Brief about the author of this book

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About the Edited Version

The book "**Incursion of Superstitions & Rituals into Sikh Religious Rites**" was initially published by the Canadian Sikh Study and Teaching Society in 2004 and reissued in 2007. The book received high praise from readers. Several articles in the book have been revised, and new articles have been added in response to requests from the Sangat and other interested individuals. The title of the book has been changed from "Religious Rites" to "Sikh Rites." It is hoped that this updated version will be well-received. Some scholars have recommended translating the book into English so that Sikh youth raised in the Western world can understand the superstitions associated with Sikh rituals.

In the Guru Granth Sahib, we are taught the true teachings to eliminate rituals and superstitions propagated by priests. Everyone is encouraged to be honest and perform good deeds. The essence is that a person with a pure heart, living in accordance with Gurbani, is following the right path and does not subscribe to superstitions and illusions.

**ihrdY scu eyh krXl swru]
horu sBu pwKMfu pUj KuAwru]**

(pRBwql m: 1, pMnw 1343)

Enshrine the True One in your heart; this is the most excellent action.
All other hypocritical actions and devotions bring only ruin.

(Prabhati M: 1, Page 1343)

It has now become important for us to be aware of this issue by understanding Gurmat and eliminating superstitions or karmic actions.

A few sincere individuals contributed to this new version, and we are grateful to them. Bibi Kamaljit Kaur (Kamal) transported the manuscript from Vancouver and delivered it to Dr. Gurdev Singh Horan in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar (Mohali), where Dr. Sahib had the manuscript typed. The typed manuscript was reviewed and sent for printing by Amarpal Singh, a resident of Surrey, Canada. Many thanks to all these individuals.

Dr Puran Singh

Editor, Sikh Marag

About The Book

Gurmat is a new and unique ideology. This theory and ideology brought a great revolution in Indian society, and great thinkers also acknowledged its significance. Today, we are not benefiting from Guru Mata's knowledge due to carelessness and are straying in the darkness of ignorance. The leaders of the Sikh movement believed that there should not be a priestly class among Sikhs, but many of our preachers are adopting the appearance of priests. Due to ignorance among Sikhs, a new class has emerged, known as the 'Sant Samaj' (Saint Society). Many members of the Sant Samaj have covert relations with the government, or government agents are in contact with the Deredars (Shrine owners).

Nowadays, Babas (Sages) have huge air-conditioned luxurious cars and massive air-conditioned deras (Shrines). If we examine the history of the Sikh Gurus, we will understand how the Gurus lived simple lives, faced severe crises with their families, and continued to fight for human rights. However, over the past three decades, the Sikh community has endured endless crises, with thousands of Sikhs martyred and burned alive. Surprisingly, none of the babas of the Sant Samaj were harmed, and none of them protested against the government during these crises. Instead, the government utilized these babas against the decisions and interests of the Panth (Sikh Community).

The self-made Babas are not advocates of the Panth, nor do they support promoting Gurmat. Their thinking is akin to the adversary category because they are instructed to follow the policies of political leaders. When the Sikh Panth sought to accept and implement the Nanakshahi calendar, the Indian central government opposed it through these Babas. The growing superstitions and illusions among Sikhs are also attributed to these Babas and their Deras.

This book is a humble attempt to challenge some of the superstitions and illusions associated with religious rituals through the virtues of Gurmat, aiming to free people from many delusions. The Khalsa Panth has a specific code of conduct for interpreting religious rites and performing them. We should adhere to it for the sake of sectarian (Panthak) unity and sectarian (Panthak) interests.

Preface

In the present time, those working for the interests of the Kaum (community) are becoming increasingly concerned about the decline in the Sikh Kaum (community). The unique identity of the Sikh community is consistently challenged by opposing forces, whether it be the government or the Deras (shrines) established by them. Today, as the leaders of these Deras make headlines for criminal activities such as rape, even the respected figures and scholars within the Sikh panth are being implicated. While the prevalence of Deravad and numerous Bhekhi Sadhs (disguised sages) is more apparent now due to government support, it is worth noting that during the time of the Gurus, many Bhekhi Sadhs who opposed the Gurmat movement attempted to deceive the people through their disguises. Bhatt Bhikha Ji confirms this in the Guru Granth Sahib:

rihE sMq hau toil swD bhuqyry ifTy]
sMinAwwsl qpsIAh muKhu ey pMifq imTy]
brsu eyku hau iPirE iknY nhu prcau lwXau]
khiqAh khqI suxl rhq ko Kusl n AwXau]
(sveley mhly qljy ky, pMnw 1395)

I have been searching for the saints; I have seen so many Holy and Spiritual people.
The hermits, Sannyasis, Ascetics, Penitents, fanatics and Pandits all speak sweetly.
I wandered around lost for a year, but no one touched my soul.
I listened to preachers and teachers, but I could not be happy with their lifestyles.
(Savaiye Mahale Teeje Ke, Page 1395)

Bhatt ji shares his experience from his research, revealing that he had a strong desire to meet Saints who were truly spiritual. He spent a year wandering in search of such enlightened beings. The Sadhs he encountered appeared to be disguised as beggars and ascetics, and despite their sweet words, Bhatt ji found no inner peace in their way of life. These Sadhs would often tell stories to sway people, yet they themselves were living in a state of duality.

hir nwmu Coif dUjY lgy iqn@ ky gux hau ikAw khau]
(sveley mhly qljy ky, pMnw 1396)

Those who have abandoned the Lord's name, and become attached to duality –
why should I speak in praise of them?
(Savaiye Mahale Teeje Ke, Page 1396)

The reason is that the bhekhis who were present at that time are still the same today, but their numbers have increased even more. This has caused concern among those working for the welfare of the Panth. We need knowledgeable preachers who are active and spiritually inclined to educate people about the true principles of Gurmat. Efforts have been made to avoid any discussions that could lead to controversy or go against the traditions established by the Panth in the Rehit Maryada.

I am deeply grateful to Das Bhai Jasveer Singh Ji (Head Granthi, Akali Singh Gurudwara, Vancouver) and Dr Gurbaksh Singh (Washington), Director of Dharma Prachar Vahiran Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee Shri Amritsar Sahib, for their valuable feedback on the draft of the book and their suggestions for modifications.

In the service of Guru-Panth

Puran Singh

Foreword

The religion founded by Sri Guru Nanak Sahib, after he submerged into the Veyin River in 1499 AD, does not entertain superstitions and illusions. In this religion, illusory actions are condemned, and man is encouraged to reject illusions. The question may arise, what are these illusory actions? In simple terms, these actions lack a basis in cause and effect and lack logical authority, commonly known as superstitions. Raga Asa is a Gurbani Verse composed by Guru Nanak Sahib where he refutes various superstitions, particularly religious rituals and customs. Whether it is the practice of walking with a mask covering the nose and mouth by the Jains, the burial ritual according to Muslim customs, the Sati ritual, the caste system, the cleanliness of a Brahmin's kitchen, or the performance of Ram-Leela, Guru Nanak Sahib exposes the emptiness of these rituals through logic. Today, in Sikh religion, many superstitions and delusions have become common with religious practices, rituals, and customs that lack a logical foundation. We recite and listen to 'Asa Di Vaar' every day at Amrit vela. It is important to remember that Guru Nanak Sahib's teachings in this verse apply not only to us but also to other religions. In his book discussing **Incursion of Superstitions & Rituals into Sikh Religious Rites**, Dr. Puran Singh has attempted to dispel the superstitions and illusions that have silently crept into religious practices through observation of other religions. This is a courageous endeavor in itself. Often, despite knowing the truth, many of us remain silent when confronted with such superstitions due to fear of criticism. The Guru has instructed every Sikh to live consciously and not remain ignorant. In the 'Asa Di War', the Guru enlightens Sikhs about the illogical rituals performed by others, stating, "Their subjects are blind, and without wisdom, they try to please the will of the dead" (AMDl rXiq igAwn ivhUxl Bwih Bry murdwru]). Therefore, it is imperative not to blindly accept anything without scrutiny. I commend Dr Puran Singh for his efforts and pray that the Guru bestows strength upon him and continues to guide his servant. I encourage readers to delve into this book themselves and share it with others to help them follow the path illuminated by the Guru, as a Sikh should not only lead themselves but also guide others, "They save themselves, and save all living with them" (Awip qrih sgly kul qwry]). I am deeply grateful to Dr Puran Singh for the privilege of writing this "Foreword".

Gurnam Kaur

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Superstitions and Illusions: Brief Discussion

In common parlance, the terms superstition and illusion are used interchangeably, but it can be challenging to pinpoint their exact definitions. According to 'Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha Mahan Kosh', superstition is considered a concept, thought, or perception, while illusion is seen as its meaning. This suggests that there is a close relationship between superstition and illusion. To better understand illusions, it is important to provide some evidence from Gurbani so that we can differentiate between superstitions and illusions:

khu nwnk guir Koey Brm]
 eyko Alhu pwrBRhm] (rwmklI m: 5, pMnw 897)

Says Nanak, the Guru has rid me of doubt.
 The Allah and Parbrahm are One and the same. (Ramkali M: 5, Page 897)

jw kY ibnisE mn qy Brmw]
 qw kY kCU nwhI fru jmw] (gauVI m: 5, pMnw 186)

Those who have the carefree Lord abiding in their minds.
 They are not afraid of death at all. (Gaurhi M: 5. Page 186)

Puto AWfw Brm kw mnih BieE prgwsu]
 kwtI byrI pgh qy guir kInI bMid Klwsu] (mwrU m: 5, pMnw

1002)

The egg of doubt has burst; the mind has been enlightened.
 The Guru has shattered the shackles on my feet, and Has set me free.
 (Maru M: 5, Page 1002)

Due to not being clear about God, we can imagine many forms or have delusions about Him and lack of understanding about His worship and rituals etc. According to Master Tara Singh Ji:

“Both devotion and superstition have the same outward form, but there is as much difference between them as between nectar and poison. The base of devotion is selfishness, and the edge of superstition is selfishness. The devotee surrenders himself to the Guru, the superstitious uses the Guru for his own purposes by taking his own-self as a reference.” (Piram Piala, Page 35)

Great individuals have developed new and revolutionary principles for the betterment of society and to elevate the mental well-being of people, freeing them from the vices prevalent in society. In addition to the establishment of new religions, new traditions have also emerged. However, the illusions and superstitions that have persisted since ancient times continue to influence human minds, despite having no connection to religion. These superstitions have become intertwined with religious practices by the common people, making it challenging for them to break free from their grip. When individuals are

superstitious, their minds remain restless and unsettled. Instead of seeking solace in Gurbani or Gurmat Marag, they turn to fraudulent Babas or Pirs. These cunning individuals take advantage of the vulnerable mental state of such people and manipulate them for their own gain. The prevalence of superstitions and delusions in India has greatly benefited the priestly class, as evidenced in Gurbani:

Awpn aUc nlc Gir Bojnu hTy krm kir audru Brih]
cauds Amwvs ric ric mWgih kr dlpku lY kUip prih]

(rwmkll kblr jl, pMnw 970)

You think that you are high, but you take food from the houses of the lowly; You fill up your belly by forcibly practising your rituals.

On the fourteenth day, and the night of the new moon you go out begging; even though you hold the lamp in your hands, still, you fall into the pit.

(Ramkali Kabir Ji, Page 970)

It is important to mention that the market for these superstitions is not limited to India; superstitions and superstitious beliefs can be found among people of all classes worldwide. Despite advancements in science, superstitions and illusions persist in the Western world as well. This is often due to the integration of superstition and illusion into religious practices. For example, Muslims always face Mecca when praying, known as Namaz. When burying the dead, their heads are turned towards Mecca. Women are often restricted from participating in religious activities and are required to wear a burqa, though in many countries, the strictness of this practice has lessened, with the burqa being replaced by a head-covering cloth called the hijab. Women are also typically required to pray separately from men and are not allowed to accompany men to the mosque. Friday is considered a holy day for Muslims. In contrast, Jewish people regard Saturday as an auspicious day.

An incident that occurred a few years ago must be mentioned here: during the Olympic Games in Seoul (South Korea), Jewish athletes refused to participate in the games on Saturday, but some athletes joined anyway. The Israeli government had announced that action would be taken against those who participated in the games on Saturday. Christians consider Sunday holy. Until the 17th century, there were special laws by the governments of countries that believed in Christianity, according to which it was necessary to go to church on Sunday. Some time ago, the head of a political party in Canada had to face failure in his insistence on considering Sunday as holy. Although there were many other reasons, it is impossible for a political leader not to do any work on Sunday. The number thirteen is

considered inauspicious among Christians. The Christian architect who designed the outline of the city of Chandigarh did not build Sector-13.

Chinese people never want a tree in front of their house door. According to them, there should not be any obstacles for the entry of prosperity or wealth into the house. Hindus consider Tuesday an inauspicious day and Wednesday an auspicious day. It has also been heard that this religious superstition has been legally imposed in many places in India, based on which meat eating and the sale of meat have been banned on Tuesday. In Sikhism, Guru Sahibs disapproved of such superstitions and illusions, rejecting the notion of good and bad days:

mwh idvs mUrq Bly ijs kau ndir kry]
(bwrhmwhw mWJ m: 5, pMnw 136)

The months, the days, and the moments are auspicious, for those upon whom the lord casts His glance of grace.
(BarahMaha Maanjh M: 5, Page 136)

Still, our forgetful brothers have doubts about the days. Special days are considered sacred.

We are commanded to:

Akll swihbu syvIAY Akll pwelAY mwnu]
(vwr swrMg m: 1, pMnw 1245)

Wisdom, which leads us to serve our Lord and Master; through wisdom, honour is obtained.
(Var Sarang M: 1, Page 1245)

In the light of Gurbani, it appears that there is no space for delusion among Sikhs, yet in the presence of the Gyan Guru, the voice of ignorance emerges. Master Tara Singh ji states:

“Without wisdom, one cannot truly forsake their intellect. And, whoever loses their intellect in this manner becomes a hypocrite. Therefore, relinquish intellect with wisdom and attain a higher intellect. Seek the guidance of the Guru so that one shall not forsake the counsel of the mind and instead follows the counsel of a devil over the Guru's counsel.”

(Piram Piala, Page 32)

Akli swihbu syvIAY Akli pwelAY mwnu]
Akli piV@ kY buJIAY Akli klcY dwnu]
nwnk AwKY rwhu eyhu hoir glW sYqwnu]
(vwr swrMg m: 1, pMnw 1245)

Wisdom, which leads us to serve our Lord and Master; through wisdom, honour is obtained. Wisdom does not come by reading textbooks; wisdom inspires us to give in charity. Says Nanak, this is the Path; other things lead to Satan.

(Var Sarang M: 1, Page 1245)

According to, the famous Chinese thinker, Confucius:

"A wise man is faithful with wisdom and understanding, not with blind faith."

Simple Gurbani Recitation (Sadharan-Path) or Gurbani Recitation in a Continuity (Akhand Path) and Superstition About Their Outcomes (Fal-Prapti)

As far as the tradition of Saadhar Paath or Akhand Paath is concerned, it is written in 'Sikh Code of Conduct (Sikh Rehit-Maryada)' as follows:

"Akhand Paath should be recited by the family or the congregation, let them do it themselves, together with a man, relative or friend... If a man cannot recite by himself, he should listen to it from a good reciter, but this Lest the reciter recites alone and no member of the congregation or family listens.... keeping Kumbh (water in a pot), Fat-Oil Lamp (Jot), Naliyar (coconut), etc. during Akhand or any kind of recitation or It is discretionary to continue the recitation of another verse alongside or during the Akhand (Path) recitation."

(Sikh Code of Conduct 'Sikh Rehit-Maryada', Page 17)

If the method of recitation has been prescribed by the sect (Panth), then devotee families or Akhand Path enthusiasts should adhere to the guidelines provided by the sect. A real-life example illustrates this point: a few years ago, a family in Canada received a letter from the management of a historic Gurdwara outside Punjab, informing them about the scheduled completion ceremony of an Akhand Path they had booked. The family was excited and attended the ceremony with enthusiasm, hoping to hear their family's name in the prayers. However, as the prayers continued, the names of other families were mentioned, and their family's name only appeared in the 21st place. They realised that the Akhand Path was shared by 21 families, which left them disappointed. This experience taught them that the higher annual income of certain Gurdwaras is often a result of devotee families' blind devotion to the Akhand Path. Today, even in foreign countries, special prayer spaces are being constructed for the recitation of Akhand Path to boost the income of Gurudwara Sahibs.

In many places, inexperienced devotees are unaware that individuals without knowledge of reciting Gurbani are conducting Akhand Path services. A devotee connected to a shrine disclosed a mysterious revelation that two Pathis at that location do not know how to read Punjabi or only know a few words. Despite this, they are leading the Akhand Path service. It raises the question of who truly benefits from the Gurbani recitation by such Pathis. Therefore, the blame lies with us for not instilling the habit of

reading the Guru Granth Sahib in ourselves and our children, turning religion into a business. The fault lies not with the looters but with those who allow themselves to be looted.

In 2002, a devoted family in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, organized a Sri Akhand Path at a Gurudwara Sahib. They invited friends and close family members to attend the event. When a close family member entered the Gurudwara, he noticed that five Akhand Paths were being recited simultaneously in the same area. Perplexed, he returned and waited outside for the inviting family to arrive. Upon their arrival, he expressed his confusion, stating, “I went inside, several Akhand Paths were being recited and I couldn't identify which one of the Akhand Paths are you conducting?” The head of the devotee family admitted, “Even we are unsure which one of these Akhand Paths is our designated one?”

According to Gurmat, there is no benefit in celebrating various series of Gurbani readings and events with great pomp. The administrators of Gurdwaras also encourage people to conduct more Akhand Path recitations, which leads to increased Sangat visiting the gurdwara and higher income. It is evident that many managers focus primarily on the financial aspects rather than imparting the true knowledge found in Gurbani. Numerous so-called sects have established Gurudwaras claiming not to charge for Akhand Path recitations, yet they accept donations and other forms of money, ultimately earning more than other organizations. The Sangat should realize that thoughtless actions may not yield any benefits.

Bwel ry gurmuiK bUJY koie]
ibnu bUJY krm kmwvxy jnmu pdwrQu Koie]
(islrwg m: 3, pMnw 33)

O beings of Destiny, one who becomes Gurmukh and understands this is very rare.

To act without understanding is to lose the treasure of this human life.
(Siriraga M: 3, Page 33)

pwTu pVY nw bUJel ByKI Brim Bulwie]
(islrwg m: 3, pMnw 66)

He cannot be understood by reading scriptures; the deceitful pretenders are deluded by doubt.

(Siriraga M: 3, Page 66)

piV piV poQI isimRiq pwTw]
byd purwx pVY suix Qwtw]
ibnu rs rwqy mnu bh nwtw]

(gauVI m: 1, pMnw 226)

You may read, recite and study the scriptures, the Simratees, Vedas and Puraanas;

But without being imbued with the Lord's essence, the mind wanders endlessly.

(Gaurhi M: 1, Page 226)

mUrK AMDy qRY gux syvih mwieAw kY ibauhwrl]
AMdir kptu audru Brx kY qwel pwT pVih gwvwrI]

(vwr swrMg, m: 3, pMnw 1246)

The blind fools serve the three qualities, the three dispositions; they deal only with Maya.

With deception in their hearts, the fools read sacred texts to fill their bellies.

(Var Sarang, M: 3, Page 1246)

The Gurbani verses above emphasise that actions done without thought, reciting Gurbani without comprehension, or reciting Gurbani for financial gain are not beneficial. According to Bhai Kaanh Singh Ji Nabha:

“Many Sikhs believe it is virtuous to pay for Gurbani recitations rather than engaging in personal reading. They may even attempt to buy spiritual merit by sending money (for Gurbani recitations) through the mail. Instead of spending money on such formalities, efforts should be directed towards promoting education, the teachings of Satguru Nanak should be shared globally by translating Gurbani into various languages to truly benefit and gain merit.”

(Gurmat Martand, Page 423)

As far as the tradition of the Akhand Path is concerned, according to Panthak scholars, there was no tradition of the Akhand Path during the Guru's period, and it was never performed. Dr. Ganda Singh, a renowned scholar and historian of the Sikh Panth, stated:

“The Akhand Path has become a hollow ritual. Continuous recitation day and night without anyone listening to it was not approved by the Guru Sahibs during their time. The practice of the Akhand Path was invented half a century after the death of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. During times of crisis when

Sikhs were ready to sacrifice their lives for righteousness and fighting for the Panth, Akhand Path may have been important. However, during peaceful times, it is more appropriate to perform Sahaj Path, which was acceptable even during the Guru's time. Sahaj Path can be easily done by any family member or all members together. It can be heard and have a positive impact on the mind.”

(Gurudwara Gazette, August 1986)

According to Dr. Maan Singh Nirankari, the Akhand Path tradition was continued by Nirmala and Udasi Sadhus, who built their shrines next to Hindu shrines. In those places, it was customary for Pandits to recite Hindu scriptures continuously. Nirmale and Udasi Sadhus adopted this practice and started reciting the Akhand Path of the Guru Granth Sahib.

(Sikh Dharam De Sidhant, Page 27)

During the Akhand Path, many rituals are performed that are not related to Gurmat. Devotee families, out of blind devotion, also place items like coconuts, water pots (Kumbh), and oil lamps as a gesture of respect. Dr. Kartar Singh once asked a Hindu priest about the significance of these items since the Granthi Singhs were unable to explain. The Hindu priest explained that the lit lamp symbolises the worship of the god of fire, the coconut represents the worship of God Ganesha, and the water pot is used for worshipping the water god. The red cloth is associated with the worship of goddesses. This raises the question of whether we should worship gods and goddesses or focus on Akalpurkh (the timeless being).

(Gurmat Prakash, September 2003, Page 62)

According to Gurbani or Gurmat, there is no permission to recite 51 or 101 Akhand Paths together just as a ritual. However, there is a superstition among the people that conducting an Akhand Path is essential to obtain good results. Those who propagate such superstitions or illusions lack devotion towards Gurmat.

Mainly for political eloquence, to inform people about the opening of a new shop, or due to superstition, Akhand Paths are conducted during events

such as the birth of a child, death, or marriage. It is a harsh reality that during these events, only a few members sit and listen to the path, while the rest engage in unnecessary activities. Instead of blaming the Pathi Singhs, we need to change ourselves and understand that recitation is not the sole responsibility of priests or Pathi Singhs; it is a test of life and we should perform these deeds ourselves. About four to five years ago, someone wanted to start a barber shop, i.e., a shaving business, in a village in the Sangrur district. This business was inaugurated with an Akhand Paath event, and the Granthi Singh prayed for more customers. Now, the followers of Gurmat should contemplate who truly benefited from the Akhand Path in such a scenario.

These days, In foreign countries, astrologers also provide people with mantras-yuktis based on their beliefs. However, according to Gurmat, believing in astrology goes against its teachings. Astrologers and professional Pathis often have clandestine agreements, with astrologers advising many families to conduct Akhand Paths. This further strengthens and perpetuates superstition and delusion in people's minds. Once, a preacher was praising a family during an Akhand Path ceremony, stating that the benefits of the Akhand Path are equivalent to an Asmedh Yagya. However, many people are unaware of what an Asmedha Yagya entails. In this Yagya, a horse is sacrificed and consumed, following the rituals of Hinduism. It is crucial to question the significance of this Yagya in Gurmat teachings.

The intelligence of our preachers has become bankrupt, and on the other hand, most of the administrators of Gurudwaras are ignorant of Gurmat. Those who do not care about the preaching of Gurmat and only seek to increase the income of the Guru-ghar. Awakening is happening in some places. For example, a new type of Akhand Paths has started in the Mumbai area, where devotee families recite the entire path in 7 days. This year, the management of a Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver has decided not to perform Akhand Path and is encouraging devotees to perform Sahaj Path instead.

In conclusion, there is a request that there is no ritual of 'Sukhna' or 'Mannat' in Gurmat. Instead of continuous recitations (Akhand Path), only

steady recitations (Sahaj Path) should be done. Sahaj Path should also be recited with consideration of Gurmukhi grammar and vocabulary (Teeka Sehat), i.e., with meaning. Easy recitations can be done from Sanchis (equally divided parts/texts of Guru Granth Sahib). If you haven't learned to read/recite Gurbani Path, you should try to learn. It is not a difficult task for educated people to learn the recitation of Gurbani path or understand the grammar of Gurbani.

Superstition about the prayer of the mid of Akhand Path

(Madh di Ardas)

During events, chaos is often observed in many places when offering 'Kirpan' (Kirpan Bhet) for the 'Karah Prashad'. Similarly, many families become anxious due to a lack of understanding about the mid-prayer (Prayer offered when half of the akhand path is recited) during Akhand-Paath. After the mid-prayer of Akhand Path, the entire family focuses on preparing 'Deg' / 'Karah Prashad' as if they are afraid of missing a train. There is a sense of sin if the 'Gurbani Shabad' of the mid is missed or if the deg and the Singh performing Ardas are not ready at that time. During a recitation ceremony at someone's house in Vancouver, there was no Singh available for the mid-prayer, so the Pathi Singh reciting the Akhand Path instructed to recite the mid-prayer. The reader also had a superstition that something bad would happen if the mid-prayer was not offered. An argument ensued between the family members and the Pathi, with the family members accusing the Pathi of breaking the continuity of the Akhand Path, while the Pathi blamed the family members for not making arrangements for the mid-prayer. The issue was eventually resolved.

The main purpose of conducting a recitation or an Akhand Path is to narrate a happy or virtuous action done by someone, but often superstition takes over. We tend to become more superstitious while performing rituals, worrying about the arrival of the Pathi, arrangements for the service, cancellation of a Pathi's turn, or delays in the mid-prayer of the Akhand Path affecting the timely closing ceremony. Considering these factors, it can be said that it is challenging to find mental peace or enjoy listening to Gurbani while conducting an Akhand Path.

The prevailing belief or practice is that during Akhand Path, prayers are offered when the Patha comes to the mid. When it comes to page 705, the Gurbani Shabad appears:

<>siqgur pRswid]
slok]
Awid pUrn miD pUrn AMiq pUrn prmesurh]

One universal Creator is understood through the grace of the true Guru.
Sloka.

In the beginning, He was pervading; in the middle, He is pervading; in the end He will be pervading. He is the transcendent Lord.

The brief meaning of this is: Almighty (Akalpurkh) is perfect from the beginning, He is perfect now, and He will be perfect forever. Meaning - God is perfect at all times, past, present, and future. Now let's consider how the significance of this Sloka came to be associated with the middle of the Akhand Path. The reality is that this Sloka has no connection with the concept of Mid (Madh); it is unknown when and by whom the tradition of offering a prayer at the Mid of this Sloka began. Before the printed version, Guru Granth Sahib was handwritten. At that time, the page layout may have been different, or the tradition of offering a prayer at the Mid may not have existed. There is no historical evidence available on this matter. It is possible that the custom or tradition of associating the Mid with the Sloka of '**Var Jaitsari**' itself was established.

In this book, an explanation is provided about the origin of this tradition and why the middle point was considered to be on page 705. According to them, the 'Sloka Varan and Vadhik' begins from page 1410. Considering these slokas as additional, they placed the Mid at the middle of 1410, or page 705. Even if we assume that the '**Sloka Varan and Vadhik**' verses are to be considered extra, then the mid of page 1409 should be considered since the slokas start from 1410. Who has the authority to determine that the midpoint of 1410 is at 705? Furthermore, all Gurbani is the Bani of the Gurus, so how can we consider the Gurus' Bani as extra? Or how can the verses of 'Sloka Varan and Vadhik' be considered extra?

It is a tradition that has been observed to offer the prayer at 705, especially in the middle of the Akhand Path, but this practice does not align with Gurmat principles. This practice is not included in the Sikh Code of Conduct (Rehit-maryada). Therefore, it is not necessary to offer the prayer in the middle or rush to make special arrangements and practices during the middle of the Akhand Path. There should be no superstitions associated with

this. Prasad should be prepared for serving in the congregation, and the ritual of praying at the mid should be avoided.

The tradition of taking Vak or Hukamnama from Guru Granth

Sahib: Can Vak be good or bad?

There was an incident in the years 1980-1981 when some people took me to a gentleman's house. The Jatha (group of like-minded individuals) had a single motive to encourage eligible men to contest for higher positions in the committee. We arrived at the gentleman's house, and the Jathedar (group leader) said, "Bhai Sahib! You must get ready for the service of Gurdwara Sahib." The gentleman refused. Then, one of the group members suggested that if he couldn't decide, he should ask Guru Sahib. I was wondering how to ask Guru Sahib? The person who suggested the idea explained how the decision could be made. He said, "Perform the Prayer (Ardas) and get the Hukamnama, then make a decision according to the Hukamnama that appears."

I don't remember whether he received the Hukamnama at that time or later, but he eventually agreed to take a high position in the Committee and succeeded in that role. A few years after the incident mentioned above, I asked a Panthak scholar to clarify my doubts about whether one could ask the Guru for guidance on contesting elections. He replied that it is a matter of superstition and that there is no mention in any Gurbani shabad about whether to contest committee elections or not. The decision to contest elections should be a personal choice or a family decision. Relying on the Guru or seeking a decree for such decisions is pure superstition.

A friend shared an interesting incident with me. Once, a Singh had to travel from Nepal by plane around 1982-83. This Singh did not board the plane for three days because he would pray and seek Hukamnama and was not granted permission to board the flight. I believe if he had taken an international flight and spent \$2000, such superstitions would not have arisen. Sometimes, we consider financial gain and loss when engaging in superstition and hypocrisy. The Guru's message to us is that:

AYsw kMmu mUly n klcY ijqu AMiq pCoqweIAY]

(rwmkll m: 3 AnMdu, pMnw 918)

Don't do anything that you will regret in the end.

(Ramkali M: 3 Anand, Page 918)

That means not to engage in wrongdoing, harm others, or deceive. If a decision needs to be made about boarding a plane based on the hukamnama, there is no specific instruction in any shabad to either board or not board the plane. Reflecting on this tradition in the context of Gurmat teachings can be enlightening. The practice of seeking Hukamnama began with the establishment of Guru Granth Sahib in 1604 AD after the installation of Birh at Amritsar, and the hukamnama appeared:

sMqw ky kwrij Awip KloieAw hir kMmu krwvix AwieAw rwm]

(sUhl m: 5, pMnw 783)

The Akalpurkh Himself has stood up to resolve the affairs of the Saints; He has come to complete their tasks.

(Suhi M: 5, Page 783)

It should be clarified that the Gurbani shabad does not imply that Akalpurakh granted permission for the establishment of Guru Granth Sahib. It was customary to recite verses from Guru Granth Sahib, similar to how we start every task with a prayer. After compilation, the Fifth Guru initiated the practice of reading and reciting a shabad from Guru Granth Sahib.

Among Sikhs, there are superstitions and misconceptions surrounding receiving Gurbani-Vak or Hukamnama. A friend's son had to undergo surgery in December 2002 or January 2003. To address this crisis, a Sampat Path was organized in Punjab. After completing the Path, a Hukamnama was obtained, indicating that the surgery should be done soon, the message was conveyed on phone call. Even if the Hukamnama was favorable, would the surgery not have been performed if it was not? Firstly, the Hukamnama was likely interpreted according to personal desires, as the professional pathi may have explained it based on his own views. Secondly, surgery dates are scheduled in advance in Canada, and it would not be feasible to postpone the surgery due to an unfavourable Hukamnama.

Another intriguing incident involves a Babaji who served as a Granthi at a Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver. During the naming ceremonies for newborns, prayers were offered and Hukamnama was sought through the same Babaji. One day, a lady pointed out that the Hukamnama issued by the Babaji during multiple naming ceremonies was consistently the same:

guir pUrY myrI rwiK leI]

AMimRq nwmu irdy mih dlno jnm-jnm kl mYlu geI]

(iblvlu m: 5, pMnw 823)

The perfect Guru has Saved me. He has enshrined the Ambrosial Name of the Akalpurkh within my heart, and the filth of countless incarnations has been washed away.

(Bilaval M: 5, Page 823)

Prompting her to question how all the children would be named starting with the letter 'G'. Babaji responded, “Don't be upset, we can issue another hukamnama.”

Many Granthis choose shabads according to their preference and use them as hukamnama. In several places, the administrators of the Guru-ghars give specific instructions to the Granthi Singhs to issue hukamnama one after the other to please the families of devotees. The secretary always emphasises that serving the families is important, as Guru Maharaj has given a beautiful decree.

Those who believe that a particular Vak or Shabad can make a family happy, or that there is a Shabad or Vak that will upset a family, are mistaken. There is no such principle in Gurbani that suggests a person or family will be pleased or displeased after hearing a Hukamnama. The principles of Gurbani are clear, without bias or discrimination. Those who engage in good deeds are praised, while those who serve humanity and Akalpurkh are honoured. It is important to understand that all of Gurbani is a directive for us. When selecting a Shabad for the hukamnama or Vak, do not be misled. The Shabad can be chosen from

any page, but believing that it is good or bad, or acting based on it, is superstitious. Those who propagate such illusions or superstitions often mislead the unsuspecting public or Sangat for personal gain.

Discussion about offering Rumala

Since the establishment of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, it has been a tradition to keep the Birh of Guru Granth Sahib wrapped in Rumalas (special type of cloth) and to perform Prakash (opening and reading) by making special arrangements at an elevated place. Additionally, "Chour" is performed as a sign of respect by adorning it with Chandoa and Rumalas when the Guru Granth Sahib is Prakashit and a Diwan is organized. It is believed that the Gurus kept Sikhs away from idol worship to show respect for Guru-Shabd or Gyan Guru and to establish a unique tradition of Shabd-Vichar. Nowadays, a superstition has developed that if one does not offer a Rumala after reciting (Akhand-Path or Sahaj-Path), then they will not receive the full benefit of the service. Recently, my family recited Sehaj Path at home and conducted Bhog at the Gurudwara. My Singhani (my wife) asked the Bhai Sahib at the Guru-Ghar about Rumala, and he mentioned that it was not necessary, so we did not offer one.

Furthermore, superstitions are sometimes created by the Granthi Singhs or managers of the Guru-ghar when they ask devotee families to take Rumala from the Guru-ghar and offer a price for it to the Guru-ghar. This practice can be likened to buying a second-hand item from a store and paying the full price. Through this, the Gurudwara Sahib generates income, and the Rumalas are recycled. It is important to note that we have not taken the initiative to read the Panthak Rehit Mriyada and explore what is written regarding this matter. Under the heading of Bhog, part (a) states:

"At the time of Bhog, prayers should be offered and as per the financial condition of the devotee money should be given, according to the requirements of Shri Guru Granth Sahib for rumala, chaur, chahani, etc."

According to the requirements of Guru Granth Sahib, Rumalas, etc. should be offered, but we are victims of superstition, which has turned the offering of Rumalas into a misguided tradition. I have not seen any families inquiring from the Gurudwara Sahib management or Giani ji about the necessary items for Gurudwara sahib. Additionally, the administrators have rarely informed the devotees who conduct the Path about the surplus of Rumalas stored inside

Gurudwara Sahib, causing storage issues. Bhai Kaanh Singh ji Nabha writes about offering Rumala:

"In the Gurudwara Sahib where there is a beautiful collection of Rumalas for the Guru Granth Sahib, it is unnecessary to offer more when there is already an abundance. Offerings should only be made where there is a genuine need for Rumalas, and it should not become a ritual. Devotees show little interest in offering items like pillows, gadaila, chandani, duhar, etc."

(Gurmat Martand)

Many Chunjh-Gyanis (blind followers of texts) interpret Gurbani words according to their own desires to please devotee families. In Punjab, certain slokas are recited while offering a Rumala,

pRym ptolw qY sih idqw Fkx kU piq myrl]

(gUjrl m: 5, pMnw 520)

O Husband Almighty, You have given me the silk gown of Your Love to cover and protect my honour.

(Gujri M: 5, Page 520)

creating a sense of transaction with the Guru, which goes against the principles of Gurbani. There is no such implication in offering a Rumala in this Gurbani Shabad. Some individuals even ask in Ardas for the Rumala to cover the family's veils in the afterlife, which is a misguided approach.

We need to take revolutionary steps to address this issue and encourage people to understand and discuss Gurbani rather than conducting Paths as a mere formality. There is no need to create and offer Rumalas as a mere ritual. Every year, I witness trucks or buses adorned with Rumalas during Nagar Kirtan, which is a wasteful practice. Due to its small size, Rumala cannot be used to make clothes for poor people. Many traditional and superstitious individuals may not agree that Rumala should be used for making clothes for the poor. It would be more beneficial to cover the bodies of poor individuals rather than using Rumala to decorate trucks. Families should be encouraged to bring loose cloth instead of Rumalas, which can then be distributed among

the poor in India. Families should also learn to make clothes for poor children with their own hands, in line with the main principles of Sikhism:

Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyie]

nwnk rwhu pCwxih syie]

(vwr swrMg, m: 1, pMnw 1245)

One who works for what he eats, and gives some of what he has. O Nanak, he knows the path.

(Var Sarang, M: 1, Page 1245)

Offering Rumala shall not be made a Ritual

Now, in many places, mature individuals have started making clothes for young children from the used Rumalas. Firstly, one should not present a Rumala unnecessarily. There are already many Rumalas in Gurdwaras. Instead of Rumalas, other items can also be offered to the Gurdwara. If the Rumalas are without color or embroidery, children's clothes can be made from them, which can be distributed to needy families.

Secondly, instead of spending on Rumalas, opening separate tithe accounts and supporting the education of children from poor families is a truly meritorious act.

As far as giving importance to the offering of Rumalas is concerned, it is simply a ritual. For example, when devotees visit Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, they buy Rumalas spending money around 2- 4 thousand rupees and offer them inside. The same Rumalas are returned to the shopkeepers. It would be more beneficial to distribute clothes or school supplies to poor children instead of Rumalas. Many times, people offer a Rumala during worship, which has become a ritual, but it is not the right approach.

Performing the service of Chavar or Chour

In June 2003, I was present at an Anand Karaj (Sikh wedding ceremony) at a Gurudwara Sahib in Edmonton (Alberta). A man, living in my area, asked me why Chavar or Chour is performed over Guru Granth Sahib. On his question, I asked him about what he understood by performing Chavar. He said, "I have no clarity."

Common people do not have clarity about this, and sometimes it is also heard that it is for shooing away flies. Performing Chavar over the Guru Granth Sahib is a sign of respect. According to Indian tradition, only kings and Maharajas were considered worthy of such respect. We consider our Ishta Guru Granth Sahib ji as the greatest Guru, so we honour Guru Granth Sahib ji like an emperor among kings. By performing Chavar or Chour, we show respect to Guru Granth Sahib as the rightful owner of the Chavar (Chour) and throne, following Indian tradition.

When we refer to Guru Granth Sahib with the title of the owner of Chavar and the throne, it signifies that we regard Guru Granth Sahib as a true 'Emperor'. We need to follow the commands of this 'Emperor'. Once, there was a Prakash of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at the home of a devoted Sikh. They had laid out a beautiful sheet on the carpet. A self-taught Granthi Singh reprimanded the Sikh devotee, saying, "Do you not know how to show respect to Guru Granth Sahib? Why did you not bring a Takht (wooden throne)? Guru Granth Sahib is the owner of the Chavar and Takht (Throne)." That kind man needed to understand that when we refer to the owner of Chavar-Takht, we are showing that Guru Granth Sahib ji is held in high esteem, similar to emperors and kings (maharajas), and we regard Him as a great and 'True Emperor'. Just as we say that the Queen of England is the owner of the throne, but she does not sit on it.

In Guru Granth Sahib, there are some pieces of evidence regarding Chavar or Chour from which it is clear that performing Chavar is a sign of respect in Indian civilization, and such respect was given only to the emperors.

kysw kw kir cvru Fulvwv crx DUiV muiK lwel]
(sUhl m: 5, pMnw 749)

I make my hair into a fan, and wave it over them;
I apply the dust of their feet to my face.
(Soohi M: 5, Page 749)

DUpu mIAwnlo pvxu cvro kry sgl bnrwie PUIMq joql]
(Dnwsrl m: 1, pMnw 663)

The fragrance of sandalwood is the incense, the wind is the fan,

and all the vegetation are flowers in offering to you, O Luminous Lord.
(Dhanasri M: 1, Page 663)

Another new tradition is being promoted, which does not look right. Many devotees are always looking for an opportunity to get the service of a Chavar. Service can be done in many ways, but if the service of Chavar is considered greater than other services, then it is ignorance. Let it be, as sometimes it depends on the devotion. When the Pathi Singh is reciting Guru Granth Sahib or taking the Hukamnama while being in the service of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, it does not seem right that Chavar is being performed by another person at that time. I have discussed with many Panthak scholars in this regard. According to which, when a Pathi or Granthi Singh is reciting path while in the service of Guru Granth Sahib, it is his own choice to perform Chavar or not. If another person performs Chavar while Pathi or Granthi Singh is taking the Hukamnama, then the Chavar will be performed on Pathi or Granthi Singh and not on Guru Granth Sahib.

In order to solve this complexity, the managers have made long and heavy Chavar in many places. That is because more than one Saroop of Guru Granth Sahib is present at the same place, Pathi Singhs recite and the attendants perform the Chavar above. Therefore, we should hesitate to perform and begin new rituals or traditions. Chavar service should be done by the one who is reciting the path from Guru Granth Sahib Ji, it is not necessary to serve Chavar by any other person.

In the Khalsa Panth, Guru Granth Sahib is entitled of getting the service of Chavar, but in many places, Chavar has been seen being performed on the dead bodies of saints or sages, which is not in accordance with Gurmat tradition. Apart from this, it is right to respect the objects related to the Guru Sahibs as their darshan reminds of the Guru, but it is wrong to worship them. Finally, it is very important to unify the cult traditions so that the devotees do not establish new rituals and traditions on their own.

Sometimes there is a dispute about whether Chavar should be performed while standing or sitting. There should be no superstition about it. It is better that a Sevadar or Granthi Singh should perform Chavar while sitting, but if there is a chance that the Sevadar or Granthi needs to rest for some time, then any devotee can be asked to perform Chavar, then Chavar can be performed while standing. Do not believe that standing up and performing Chavar shows more devotion or respect.

Free Kitchen of Guru or....?

Guru Da Langar or....?

On page 49 of 'Des Pardes Times' published in Edmonton on August 22, 2002, I was deeply saddened to read about the true incident mentioned by Dr. Jaswinder Kaur Bindra. It described how the devotee Bibi prepared the Guru's langar with great enthusiasm while organizing the Kirtan event. When the Singhs-Singhnis did not eat the langar, we have to understand how much it would have hurt the devotee Bibi. Who were the ones who hurt her? Were they Sikhs or Gaur Brahmins, or someone else? Such bad incidents happen every day. Two years ago, my Singhni went to someone's house for a kirtan event. She also served while preparing the langar. While eating langar, at the end of the event, she asked, "We had also made okra in the langar, where is that dish?" The answer was, "Sister, that dish was made only for the Singhs." My Singhni asked, "Are we not Singhs?" "Actually sister, that dish was made only for Sarb-Lohiye (the ones who only use traditional whole-steal utensils to prepare and eat food)."

Two types of Langar for the same event. Is this Gurmat compatible? The above incident in Calgary is a new question mark for the young generation. On the one hand, families or Sikh organisations make efforts to make them firmly believe in Gurmat, but on the other hand, seeing the self-created traditions of such stubborn Sikhs, they will not be encouraged to adopt Sikhism. That lady had prepared the langar with devotion and love, but not eating the langar prepared by her hands was to hurt her feelings. In the words of Dr Jaswinder Kaur, "If we believe in the basic sense of universality, then we have to break these narrow boundaries and be free. Therefore, it is important that, instead of closing our arms, we all shall be ready to embrace everyone."

When my wife said that we should also organise a kirtan event, I agreed with the condition that there would not be two langars. Our community (Kaum) is already small and divided into many groups. On the other hand, the influence of Deras is increasing day by day, like the tradition of Jogis, new meditation methods are becoming popular and Gurbani ideas are not being propagated. One has to be aware of the people who are guilty of this.

Doubt is increasing among the people and they are also surprised that many persons who appear as Sikhs do not even take Deg (Karah Prashad), like some persons do not eat prasada (unleavened bread) from langar. It is heard that those persons do not eat or take prasada (unleavened bread) for two reasons. First, some people do not use utensils other than iron

(Whole steel). Secondly, they become suspicious whether those preparing the langar are Amritdharis or not. Another reason has also been heard. Not sure how true this is, but Singhs of many Jathas (Groups) eat langar prepared by their own Jatha, they do not accept langar prepared by the Amritdhari of another group. This so-called tradition has become popular after the Guru period, there was no such tradition in early Sikhs and there is no historical evidence that two langars were prepared at that time.

Panth Ratan Giani Sher Singh ji considers such a disease to be the main cause of blight in India. Hindus considered Muslims as 'Malechh' (The opponents) and Muslims used to call Hindus 'Kafir' (The non-religious). A Hindu could eat from the hands of a dirty Hindu but not from a clean Muslim. Giani ji writes that if the condition is taken that one should not take food from the hand of anyone other than the one who keeps rehat (Sikh Conduct of Life), many Singhs would say only the rehat of their own group is right and will not accept the rehat of others. Just the same as nine people to eat and thirteen stoves to cook. The Khalsa kitchen is so open that not a single person can be kept out of it. Khalsa ji, read Gurbani, don't rely on any '100 Saakhis' or such nonsense that gives advice contrary to Gurmat. Guru Nanak Sahib, went from place to place and conducted open langar, and broke the fanaticism of purity by Bipers, explained the definition of Jooth (Ork, or the residue):

jUiT n rwgl jUiT n vydl]
 jUiT n cMd sUrj kl Bydl]
 jUiT n AMnl jUiT n nwel]
 jUiT n mlhu virHAY sB Qwel]
 jUiT n Drql jUiT n pwxl]
 jUiT n pauxY mwih smwxl]
 nwnk inguirAw guxu nwhl koie]
 muih PyirAY muhu jUTw hoie]

(vwr swrMg, m: 1, pMnw 1240)

Impurity doesn't occur from music;
 Impurity doesn't occur from Vedas.
 Impurity doesn't come from the
 Phases of the Sun and the Moon.
 Impurity doesn't come from the food;
 Impurity doesn't come from
 Ritual cleansing baths.
 Impurity doesn't come from the rain,
 Which falls everywhere.
 Impurity doesn't come from the earth;
 Impurity doesn't come from the water.
 Impurity doesn't come from the air
 Which is diffused everywhere.
 O Nanak, the one who has no Guru,

Has no redeeming virtues at all.
Impurity comes from turning one's face
Away from the Almighty.
(Var Sarang, M: 1, Page 1240)

Going further, Giani Sher Singh ji clarifies that:

"There is nothing sacred or profane in the Khalsa. The goal of the Khalsa is 'One father, we are all children of the One'. Khalsa can eat langar served by anyone, in a pangat or at a table, even with non-Sikhs. Khalsa doesn't bother with such things. The religion of the Sikhs is not confined only to the Punjab or to some villages. The Sikhs are in America, Europe and everywhere, and can eat from the hands of and serve the brothers around the world. A Sikh should not go out like traditional Hindus or should come back and be punished for eating freely. It is not that the Sikhs should stay away from the world and live in a separate hut like a strict ascetic.

(Asli Kaumi Darad, 14 April 1928)

Sikhs have started using the Gurmat vocabulary improperly. As people give invitations to the family that today is 'Our Langar', or it is preached from the stage that 'So and So Singh's Langar' is on so and so day. We have broken the will of 'Guru-Langar' or 'Guru Ka Langar' and written our names. The words can be used correctly, it can be said that the so-and-so family has taken the service of Guru's langar. As far as possible, special attention should be paid to cleanliness in cooking langar, the head should be covered and hands should be washed thoroughly. The use of milk fat oil should be reduced oil should be used judiciously in small quantities while preparing langar.

Those who claim that by eating langar cooked in iron vessels, the lack of iron in the body is fulfilled, it is baseless and there is no truth in it. Second, it is not necessary that everyone is deficient in iron. Sometimes the use of utensils made of good metal is considered good in terms of health and the utensils of bad metal can sometimes become dangerous. The experts can be consulted about this. So, the explanation of Sarb-Loh is not stated accurately.

Bhai Kaanh Singh Ji Writes:

"Many of our Sikhs have become self-impersonators of Swayanpaki and Vaishnavite belief systems, named Sarb-Lohiye and Bibeki sikh, but this is all arbitrary."

(Gumat Martand, Page 585)

It can never be possible that only iron utensils are used inside houses, stores or factories etc. where food and drinks are prepared. As far as pure-impure is concerned, we do not know whether those who make flour or pack pulses are smokers, whether they work after a bath or without a bath. Such small thinking is not acceptable in Sikhism. Sikhism can be propagated only by making people, like Bhagat Puran Singh Pingalwara, Bhai Ravi Singh Bhai Jaswant Ing Khalra or Bhagwant Singh Dilawari, full of service.

Is it necessary to bow to Guru Granth Sahib?

The etiquette of respecting Gurbani has started since the time of Guru Sahibs. After the establishment of Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Pancham Patshah Guru Arjan Sahib Ji bowed down to Guru Granth Sahib, and the norm of respect for Gurbani and bowing down to Guru Granth Sahib was established for all Sikhs. Where Guru Sahib established the unique custom of study of the Ultimate Being and His praise through Kirtan, he gave us the message of 'One Father, we are children of The One'. From the time of commencement of the Khalsa Panth in us, it is a common mandate to call Fateh (Mutual recitation of Fateh) on meeting each other and bow down before Guru Granth Sahib.

Today, there is doubt among many of the educated youth that, is bowing down to Guru Granth Sahib a civilised act? Secondly, is it also a superstition or delusion that bowing down to a religious book (Sri Guru Granth Sahib) is idolatry? Bhai Sahib Bhai Randhir Singh Ji (Narangwal), while discussing prostration with an English doctor, admits,

"Those who are ignorant of the merits of Guru Granth Sahib Ji are either blank Sikhs or disguised Sikhs."

(Ki Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Di Puja Butt Prasti Hae, Page 18)

It has already been mentioned that the tradition of respecting Gurbani is to bow down to it. It would be beneficial to write a true illustration regarding this tradition, which will clear all doubts. A Sikh scholar was requested by a family living in U.S.A., to solve a complex problem. Young men of some families used to go to the Gurudwara, but bowing down to the Guru Granth Sahib was considered foolish or uncivilized by them. Other families got worried that their children should not stop paying obeisance observing these youngsters.

The scholar (learned gentleman) appeared in the meeting of the youth and expressed his ignorance. He said to the youth, "Children! I am amazed at the stupidity of the American people. When they meet someone, they take off their hats." "Uncle, you may not know that it is a custom of whites to respect each other." Young boys answered. Speaking further, the scholar said, "Look! Americans are educated, advanced in the scientific field, yet they salute their flag during the Games (Olympics)." "That is, they show respect." The youth repeated their answer and said that saluting the flag is their tradition. The scholar was silent for some time. The youth thought that perhaps they had made a mistake in terms of respect.

After some time, the scholar broke the silence and said, "Dear children, today you have taught me a great lesson. You have taught me the lesson that my mother should have taught."

"Which lesson, respected uncle?"

"During my childhood, my mother used to take me to Gurudwara and forcibly made me bow before Guru Granth Sahib Ji by pushing my head down to the floor. But she never taught that bowing before Guru Granth Sahib is a ritual of Sikhs to show respect to the Gurbani." Immediately after he finished, the youngsters collectively said, "So, respected uncle. We shall bow before Guru Granth Sahib."

If we want to respect the Guru Granth Sahib by removing the turban because of the white people have such tradition, then it will be disrespectful to the Guru according to our culture. In our culture there is a tradition of paying respect by covering the head or donning a turban.

Special - Whenever the non-Sikhs come to Gurudwara Sahib, they should not be forced to bow before Guru Granth Sahib.

The custom of Bowing and superstition

In terms of culture, language, or religious differences, many traditions are seen throughout the world. The methods of bowing down or respecting are also different in the same way. In 1987, I reached Sri Amritsar Sahib with my two children (daughter 10 years and son 6 years) for darshan. As soon as I entered the periphery (parikrama), my daughter saw people bowing to the berry tree and she asked, "Father! Why are these people bowing here?" I was speechless for a while and said, "My Child, the memory of Guru Sahib is connected with the tree and for that reason, people bow down. But we will bow down to Guru Granth Sahib only." While we respect historic trees of Berry, Tahli, and Falahi with the title "Sahib", we also worship them with blind devotion. We have become so superstitious that in the recent Nagar-Kirtan in Vancouver, wicked organizers used fake weapons and people to bow before these to extort money from people. Just as the devils made the idol of Ganesha drink milk. How can Guru Sahib bless this 'contrary ritual'? It is our duty, to stay safe from such people.

Guru Sahib wanted to keep us away from illusions, but we choose to wander, even with the light of Gurmat. There is a new superstition about bowing, which brings both laughter and sorrow. A kirtania veer was doing kirtan and saying, "Brothers! Whenever you bow, your forehead should touch the ground. The bad deeds written on our foreheads are converted to good by touching our foreheads to ground. There was a so and so saint who got the mark by rubbing his forehead. We too must rub our foreheads on the floor." Bowing is a respectful tradition and not to erase bad writings written or carved on the forehead. According to Gurmat, there is no bad or good karma on the forehead, which can be cured by touching floor. Sometimes such a word is used as an idiom. In Gurbani too such words are used for idioms.

As far as the tradition of bowing is concerned, it is different among us. People of other religions have their own ways and they can also be identified, but we have a view. Many disguised sikhs are also devils, they have established a personal tradition of bowing according to their own thinking, even if it disturbs the Gurbani meditation of the Sangat.

Dandaut Karni: From Dandaut, it means bowing down or bowing straight like a stick. A Baba Ji came from Delhi some years ago. When they bowed down, they used to do dead-out and lay down in front of Guru Granth Sahib for a long time. With this, other devotees

had to stand and wait for their turn to bow. There may be many more people who believe in dandaut.

Keeping the palms up: Sometimes it is seen that some people bow down by keeping the palms up, because it is a superstition that the hands are raised to seek from God.

Keeping both hands together and holding them up: Many bow with both hands together and holding them up.

With both knees on the ground: Bow with both knees on the ground is a tradition among Muslims, but many bow down in a same manner.

Bowing while standing: Some brothers and sisters offer bowing while standing or bowing their heads only.

Long prayer while bowing: Such times are also seen when many devotees start offering long prayers while bowing before Guru Granth Sahib and other worshipers keep waiting in queues. It is not permissible to do this or pray for long while bowing. If the devotee has to pray, he should make an effort to pray slightly to one side so that the congregation is not disturbed. Religion does not mean that you show devotion on your part, but that same devotion becomes disruptive to others.

It will be useful to give an illustration in this regard. Almost, about 1964-65, Many airmen (Airforce Men) lived in tents at Halwara Air Force Station. In those days, hand-pumps used to make knocking sounds. A Singh would get up at Amrit time (Early in the morning). And used to bathe by drawing the water from the hand-pump. The sound of the hand-pump would wake up other non-Sikhs or fellow warriors as it was late at night for them. One day a friend said to himself, "What has happened to Sardar Ji, he doesn't even let us sleep." Singh heard these words. After that day, he stopped rattling the hand-pump and went to the canal to take a bath in silence. This humility and Sikhi Sidak had an impact on his colleagues as well.

A unique tradition of bowing down among Gursikhs

A few years ago, I read an article by Bhai Aridaman Singh Bagrhia, a great scholar of the Panth, in which he discussed the ridiculous ways of bowing down to people. According to him, we all should promote our own unique path 'Bir Asan' in which obeisance is done by placing the right knee on the ground and keeping the forehead on it. At the time of Amrit

Sanchar, one is asked to do 'Bir Asana'. If one is old, disabled or unable to perform obeisance in 'Bir Asana' due to illness or any other reason, then criticism should not be done, nor any delusion.

Bowing down is related to the state of mind, if we have full reverence for respect, then our bowing down is beautiful, otherwise, we are disrespectful and hypocritical, for this verse of Gurbani is perfect:

slis invwieAY ikAw QIAY jw irdY kusuDy jwih]

(vwr Aws w m: 1, pMnw 470)

But, what can be achieved by bowing down, when the heart is impure.

(Var Asa M: 1, Page 470)

It is a request to all Sikh families that we never ask children to bow before imaginary idols. Don't rub your forehead under the feet of Madis, Samadhas, and trees like, Berries, Tahlis and Falahis. We hear with great pride the case of Guru Gobind Singh ji receiving salary for saluting Dadu's Samadha. If we have to worship shrines and samadhas or trees contrary to Gurmat, then we are all paid.

Bowing down during Sikh Marriage Ceremony 'Anand Karaj'

During marriage or 'Anand Karaj', sometimes it seems that there is chaos. We have no rules about time restrictions. We cannot be late even a minute for work, but it is not in our culture to arrive on time for social or religious functions. We should at least be careful enough that while paying obeisance we shall not cause any disturbance to the ceremony.

As long as the bride and groom do not sit in front of the Guru Granth Sahib, at that time we feel it is okay to bow down because there is no interruption. If the boy and girl are sitting in front of Guru Maharaj, then one should greet from a distance and sit down. Groom's and Bride's families will not be happy if you, intentionally, pay obeisance when the couple is sitting in front. Sometimes they will even gouge out their eyes because their photography is disturbed. It is better to bow down before the couple sits down, if the couple is sitting in front, then one should refrain from bowing down. Many families forbid the late worshipers or relatives from bowing down after the start of the Anand Karaj ceremony.

Probably, it is an instance from 2001. A person was late to attend an Anand Karaj, when he arrived the Anand Karaj ceremony was being performed. He tried to pay his obeisance by

breaking the circle made by relatives. He seemed to be a staunch devotee or ignorant, only Vaheguru knows. He threw a Loonie (term used for coin of a CAD) from the distance, but to fortune, no one was hurt.

Gurudwara management should create awareness among the people in this regard and should request before and after the initiation of every Anand Karaj ceremony so that people are asked to maintain a sense of courtesy during the Anand Karaj, and pay obeisance from a distance after the couple is seated in front. After paying obeisance, one should be asked to sit in the back.

Superstitions about the Sarup of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

A new superstition is spreading among our people about Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Although this superstition is not very popular, it is very important to prevent it from spreading. It was in the year 1995-96 that I went to a shrine with two others, where there was a separate room specially for Akhand Path. A devotee lady was reciting Gurbani path. That lady recited incessantly and her recitation was incorrect. One of the Singhs next to me started to correct the text of that lady. As long as we stayed inside that room, this Singh continued correcting her recitation. Later, the lady alone was to recite, with no one to listen and no one to correct her. I came out and said to the fellow Singhs, "If this lady does not practice reciting, then why is she reciting?" That Singh said, "This Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib does not contain spaces in between the Gurbani words (such Sarup are called Larhiwar Sarup)." It saddened me to know that there is an illusion that the Pad-Chhed Beerhs, containing space between Gurbani words, of the Guru Granth Sahib are not to be enthroned and recited inside Darbar, even if there is a rare person who recites from the Beerhs with Gurbani inked in series (Larhiwar Sarup). The bigger tragedy is that recently in a city in Canada, some people refused to bow down to Guru Granth Sahib because the Gurbani words contained space between them (Pad-Chhed Sarup), so what can we expect from such people?

It is important to make it clear to superstitious people that in the olden days all Punjabi texts used to be written without space, as far as bowing before Guru Granth Sahib is concerned, it is our tradition to respect, but it is wrong to consider bowing down as Guru Darshan. Regarding this, it is written in Panthak Rehit Maaryada that reciting the Guru Granth Sahib and visiting the Sangat is the Guru's darshan. There is a special thing to pay attention to in Ardas, when we say, "Chant Vaheguru! while keeping the recitation and the view of Gurbani verse of Guru Granth Sahib Ji".

During the year 1985-86, a Baba of a Dera in Delhi brought a manuscript of the Guru Granth Sahib to Canada. He befriended a self-taught Granthi (Preacher) from Vancouver. He inculcated devotion in the devotees for that hand-written form (Larhiwar Beerh) and went to the houses of the devotees and obtained a handful of money. Perhaps people do not know that before the printing press, all the Sarup of the Guru Granth Sahib were handwritten. Even today, many manuscript Beerhs (Sarup) are available in Punjab and outside Punjab, even though the government (central) forcibly stole many handwritten Beerhs of Guru Granth Sahib and other historical books from Darbar Sahib. It is hoped that

if the Sikh leaders make efforts, the hidden valuable Sikh heritage can be recovered. There has also been alliance of Akali leaders with the central government. If they are sincere to serve then everything is possible. The government may have the superstition that tampering with Sikh historical sources or ancient manuscripts may obscure the existence of the Khalsa Panth.

About two decades ago Panthak scholars had tried to start a movement of apt-pronunciation of Gurbani. They were also largely successful. According to the opinion of the scholars, even now there is a difference of grammar norms (Laga, Matra) between the manuscripts and the printed ones, which needs to be corrected. Superstitious and orthodox Sikhs disagreed with the above idea and tried to mock the scholars in a satirical manner. "Take it. Look, our scholars say, the Guru has to be reformed." Sanatani or Deredars do not have much clarity about the doctrines of Sikhi. It seems that these people will be their successors, who were against the desecration of Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Considering the Laga-Matras as the organs of the Guru, that's why they were describing the modification of the Laga-Matras of the imprinted Beerhs as "the modification of the Guru". Some people also opine or think that punctuation is making the text impure because scholars might have made mistakes while punctuating.

The aforesaid allegation that there were mistakes in the selection process of punctuations does not seem correct. Yes, scholars may disagree with each other on some phrases, but there is no reason to argue. The scholars who performed pad-chhed were all-round scholars, and had an understanding of Gurbani grammar. It would also be appropriate to mention here that the two scholars, Principal Teja Singh and Professor Sahib Singh, who wrote the Grammar of Gurbani, did not study from any Dera. The revolution in Gurbani preaching today is due to the great and compassionate scholars. The commentators of Gurbani, narrators and writers of Gurmat literature in the Panth read the texts of these same scholars, even if they are students of Bhindran Taksal or Sato Wali Gali Taksal, because the real writers of Gurmat literature to understand and explain Gurbani were professor class scholars. For example, Professor Gurbachan Singh Talib, Dr. Gopal Singh all wrote Gurmat literature in English and Punjabi.

In the end, it is a humble request to all the devoted heroes that our Guru is Guru Granth and Guru Panth. It would be useful to express the words written in Rahit Maryada, "Guru Panth is the whole group of All-ready Singhs (One with his belief in Gurbani and skills in

Weapon handling) called 'Guru-Panth'. It was prepared by ten Gurus and the Tenth Guru ji compiled it to its final shape and honoured it with Guryayi (Announced Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru of Sikhs).” (Page 23, edition February, 1995). Some scholars of the Panth are adamant that Guru Sahib handed over the realm of Guru to the Guru Khalsa Panth, among whom was Bhai Aridman Singh Ji Bagrhia. It is not our purpose to discuss this topic here, the main purpose is that sacrifice, service and Sikh principles be propagated. We have to rise above such new superstitions, that which Beerh of Guru Granth Sahib should be enthroned and recited from. Don't be delusional about it. Our main aim is to understand the message of Gurbani and implement it in lives. Our prayers are always before Akal Purakh Waheguru and we are worshippers of Nirakar. Our three-point principle is very clear:

Pooja Akal Ki,

Worship The Ultimate One

Pracha Shabad da,

Gurbani is the only doctrine

Deedar Khalse da.

Sight of Khalsa brings Contentment.

Manifested as The Physical Body Guru?

Once a scholar (Vazir of Guru Ghar) was narrating a historic event. The essence of his story was about the 'Word-Guru'. Just hinting at a popular superstition, he emphatically said that we have come to think of the Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib as an entity just like the body of an ordinary human being. Being a victim of this delusion, we have started new ways of respecting Guru Granth Sahib. Like, special beds are decorated and pillows are placed on the beds where Guru Granth Sahib ji's Sarup is placed. Pillows are placed on the beds, as is necessary for human beings, to rest the head while sleeping.

This narration was discussed a lot and the above-said thought was made controversial. A special complaint of Bhai Sahib was brought to the Gurdwara Committee and the committee inquired about the spirit of behind the narration. Thank God that there were educated gentlemen in the committee, who had the understanding of Gurmat, otherwise Sanatani Sikhs would have got the learned Bhai Sahib dismissed.

A gentleman told me a very unusual incident that, a Granthi Singh at the Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver, after the Rain-Sabai Kirtan, performed Sukh-Asan of the Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib and brought another Sarup to enthrone and perform recitation in Darbar. Let it be in this way, Rain-Sabai was only for twelve hours, but when Akhand Path continues for 48 hours continuously, doesn't Guru Granth Sahib get tired at that time? It has been 300 years since the founding of the Khalsa Panth, but alas! We did not know what our guru is, who is the guru? How to serve Guru?

In the year 1973, during summer days, I chose to spend the afternoon at an advocate friend's place in Ludhiana. I casually asked, Did you not get the air conditioner installed?" His answer was, "I have, but only in one room." I said, "Let's go inside that room." "No buddy, not going there, Baba ji is there." I asked, "What happened if Baba is there." "No, are not getting it, Guru Granth Sahib ji is there." Even though I do not have as much understanding of Gurmat, I said satirically, "Well, this is not right, you people are an educated family, but your thoughts seem so backward/outdated to me. "

We have no issues if people with average intelligence do not have a basic understanding in Gurmat. But those who wish to lead the community and have higher educational degrees hung on the walls and are far away from the basic concepts of Gurmat, how can they safeguard the community?

The Superstitions and Delusions While Taking

The Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib

From One Place to Another.

It is about the year 1984-85, I was fortunate to stay in a city in USA, where a lively Singh was living with his Singhni (Wife) and performing duty in a Gurudwara Sahib as a Granthi Singh. According to the scheduled program, he had to take the Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib ji to someone's house. Bhai Sahib further told his Singhni that a person is needed to sprinkle water in the path. "I have done that," said his good-wife. He asked, how? "I have already sprinkled water onto the whole of the path we have to follow to take the Sarup at the place. "It shall not be done like this", said Bhai Sahib. Sitting next to him, I did not leave my side and said, "Bhai Sahib ji, what sister ji has done, she has done it right, if her intention was to moist the dust." This sprinkling of water, clearing the way, was needed in those times when the roads were rough and dusty. Even today, one can see the practice of such a tradition, when a minister has to come or a decoration has to be done on the arrival of a chief guest. Finally, Bhai Sahib admitted that sprinkling water, drop-by-drop, is done only under superstition and delusion.

I will share, here, another eyewitness tableau. We were setting up a Gurmat literature stall in a Gurudwara Sahib in Vancouver, but we closed the stall due to rain. At that time, a family was carrying their home a Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib. One of the brothers was holding the Sarup on his head and the other was telling him to go, one more brother had stretched an umbrella over the Sarup, because it was raining cats and dogs. But the entire jatha was waiting for the sprinkler bhai to sprinkle water, drop by drop, in front. Perhaps the water of the lord Indra was not holy for them. When will we remove such thoughts or superstitions from our minds? This is not holiness, not even religious rites, but acting according to such superstitions is an expression of stupidity.

Is it mandatory to remove footwear and be bare-foot while taking the Sarup

of Guru Granth Sahib from one place to another?

In 1979, in a Gurudwara in Vancouver, B.C. the five hundredth anniversary of Guru Amar Das ji was celebrated. This was the first Nagar Kirtan (Gurmat procession) held in the city of Vancouver. In the Nagar Kirtan there were Panj Pyare (The Five Beloveds), five Singhs holding Nishan Sahib and all wore fabric-boots, as broken glass and cigarette butts were

common on the roads along the way. When some superstitious Singhs saw the rubber and fabric-boots of the Singhs, they probably thought that the religious significance of Nagar Kirtan might end. They quickly removed the boots from the feet of those Singhs without asking the management. It was a little cold at that time due to which a Singh caught a cold, got a sinus infection, and was unable to go to work for a month. After that, the management felt that boots were necessary for those Singhs. They themselves saw broken glass (fine) and cigarette butts in many places. For a few years, it was allowed for those who walked as Panj Piyare and with Nishan Sahib to wear ankle boots, but soon walking barefoot, started to be considered a religious practice for religious and superstitious Sikhs.

It is written in Rehat Maryada that Guru Granth Sahib should be carried from one place to another...if you have to wear shoes, then there is no delusion. Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha writes:

"Sikhs, out of curtesy and devotion keep the Sarup of Guru Granth Sahib Ji on their heads while taking to places, take off their shoes and go barefoot, also the Singh at Chawar/Chaur service and Kirtaniya Sikhs take off their shoes, but this is ignorance and superstitious action. It is not suitable to take off the shose, if the dirt of the shoe can be a cause of impurity, how much more can the excrement of animals lying on the road, such as dogs, impure the feet? Those who were Sikhs who walked in the company of Guru Sahibs, did not walk barefoot."

(Gurmat Martand, p. 382)

While the scholars of the community (Panth) were the masters of the morals, they were also the masters of far-sightedness. They put forward the sentiments of the people as a whole. Today, if there is snow on the roads, or the temperature is minus 5 to 30 degrees, or the roads are dirty with rain and mud, if we still consider it a pious act to be barefoot or insist on not wearing shoes, then it goes all in vain. The rituals and concepts of the religion are the identity of the religion. But, Gurmat doesn't consent the rituals performed out of blind devotion and superstitions.

Does Guru Granth Sahib accept Bhog?

Can we offer Bhog to Guru Granth Sahib?

We condemn the anti-sect parties for trying to disrupt the unity of the Khalsa Panth, but we consider ourselves blameless. In the year 1995, on the request of a family, we had to go to Bhindri'n i.e. Bhinder Kala'n to buy Kirpans. We went there and inquired about the kirpans and expressed our desire to buy a Siri sahib (Sword) made of stainless steel. Then we were told that 'Bhog' (Offering) cannot be performed without the Sarbloh Kirpan. I asked in surprise, "Tell me, why is it so?" They were speechless. In this regard, those Singhs did not discuss anything due to a lack of understanding of Gurmat.

An illustration is necessary to be shared here. The hands of Baba Ji of a shrine (Dera) started shaking, and it became difficult for him to untie the waist-string (Nala) of his Kachhehra (Short Pants of Singhs). So, the servants put buttons to make it convenient for the Baba ji. Gradually, the devotees of the camp also buttoned their Kachhehras, thus the tradition of buttoning the Kachhehra went common among devotees of that Dera. On asking why they buttoned their Kachhehra, they used to reply that their baba ji used to wear the same. That's just how we are.

Once, I asked the Wazir (Granthi Singh) of a Gurudwara in Surrey (BC) that why do you say 'Seet Prashad' in prayer (Ardas) and what is the meaning of 'Seet'? He replied that the meaning of 'Seet' is 'Seetal' (means Pure) according to Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha. I politely told him that Bhai Kanh Singh writes the meaning of Seet as 'Ork'/'used'/'left-over' (Jooth). He escaped away as soon as he heard this. I came to know that the Wazir had no will there, whatever there was to do with prayer or enforcing the doctrine, was the will and opinion of the administrators/management. It may be right for us to blame the opposing parties to some extent, but if we say that we say Seet (Jooth) prasad in prayer, or apply the rules etc., it depends on ourselves. Or there may be confusion about it too. It may also be possible that there are people in the committee, who have secret contacts with the opposition parties.

In many places, it is said while praying that 'Aap nu bhog lage' (You shall have it first), 'Aap Prashad chhako' (You shall have Prashad), 'Seet Prashad sangat vich atut varte' (The pure Prasaad be distributed among the devotees) or the line of Gurbani 'hun lavo bhog hari rai' (Oh Lord! Now have/eat the Parsad) is uttered. It is same as the priests have looted, the religiously unaware people, in the name of religion. Now the bearded Sardar's are

becoming Bipars (Pujaris Brahmins). This practice of 'Bhog Lagauna' belongs to the priests of the temples. He takes food and drinks from the devotees and makes them believe that the Thakur is having these, but it is he who is going to have it. Thakur is an idol, he can't have anything.

Boghwry BoigAw iesu mUriq ky muK Cwru]

(Aws w kblr jl, pMnw 479)

The priest enjoys the edibles, and puts nothing in the mouth of the Idol.

(Asa Kabirji, page 479)

How did the practice of 'offering to Thakurs' enter us? The main reason is that the religious places of the Sikhs were under the supervision of the Nirmala and Udasi sects during the Ghallugharas, where they adopted Bipar customs and rites. Rural people gradually misunderstood these rituals as part of Gurmat. Now, similar to the Nirmal and Udasi sects, new shrines are springing up like mushrooms in Punjab, every day. The Deredars are prospering among the naive people/followers. In the political sphere, the dominant people keep in touch with Deras or Sadhs (Fake saints) for the sake of votes. Today, these political people have the upper hand, not only in the gurdwaras managed by the Singh Sabha or local committees but also in the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. It is not only the devotees of Deras in Punjab who do not follow Rehat Maaryada, but Babas of these Deras have influence in many Gurdwaras. A few years ago, the Sant-Samaj made a mark against the Panthak Maryada by making and publishing their own Maryada. It can be said here that it is the opposing parties or selfish people behind making such Maryada or establishing the Sant-Samaj organization. Although there has been an awakening among the people and devotion to the saints (fake ones in disguise) has decreased, superstition is unlikely to disappear completely.

The grief is also great when the Jathedars (Religious Supremes in Sikhs) of Takhts are present to perform the coronation ceremony of the Deredars or at the ritual of donning the turban of their descendants.

The accepted Maryada (Doctrine) of the panth is that Karhah Prashad should be present in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and Ardasiya-Singh (The Singh performing ardas) should say, 'The deg of Karhah Prasad is present, and be accepted.' After the prayer, the

Hukamnama should be taken, and for approval, the Karhah Parshad should be offered the touch of the sharp edge of the Kirpan. If, like the priest of the temple, we have to say 'please accept our offering', then how is it our uniqueness? In many places, the managements are passive and watchers, just like the Dera devotees not knowing the reason behind the buttons of the earlier mentioned Kachhehra, the same is our case. The custom of offering Kirpan to Karhah Parshad is said to have started during the time of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

The same ritual is related to distribution of prasad by the Panj Pyare. Those who are superstitiously saying that the kirpan should be made of Sarab-Loh and who are in favor of offering the kirpan immediately after saying in the prayer that 'the prasad shall be accepted', we humbly request them that the tradition has nothing to do with spirituality of Sikhism. Regardless, we should take steps to integrate traditions for unity in Panth and toward Panth's uniqueness. But to use the words Bhog Lao, Bhog Lage or Seet Parsad (Jutha) Prashad etc. is not a Gurmat.

As far as the ritual of offering kirpan to the langar (Kirpan Bhet) is concerned, this is also not a Gurmat custom. To say Ardas for langar is the Maryada. Langar belongs to the Guru only, Ardas is done only to seek permission from the Guru and to express gratitude to Akal Purakh. A few years ago, King Nasser of Egypt refused to take prasad at Sri Darbar Sahib. He was a Muslim and Prashad had a religious colour. After some time, the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai also did not take prashad at Sri Darbar Sahib. His religion was Hindu. Kirpan was offered to Prasad. Sikhs should not complain about this if a follower of another religion does not pay obeisance or take Prashad at the Gurdwara.

As the edibles or Prashad is concerned, we all have illusions and superstitions because our thinking, our faith is ruled over by the mandates of our religion. We are told or convinced that a Sikh should not take prasad of a God or Goddess. A Muslim will not eat meat prepared in any other way. Jews will only eat kosher meat and Muslims will not eat halal (Jews and Muslims have the same method of kosher and halal). Today, very few people in foreign countries inquire how meat is prepared. Muslims are firm in their tune and always eat halal. All these things, according to the mandates of religions or traditions, arise superstitions on trivial matter. At the end of 2002, Muslims and Jews jointly appealed to the Canadian government that according to their religious tradition, the practice of making halal and kosher meat should not be considered as killing an animal by torture according

to Canadian law. In Canada it is illegal to slaughter an animal or bird by torture, but Jews and Muslims consider it a religious practice to prepare meat after torture.

Special: Muslims and Jews, whenever they eat outside, ask when taking meat-food, or hesitate to eat meat from outside, it shows that they have respect for their own religion. But in our country, it was only recently (2003) that there was an open discussion about the use of Halal meat and at first no one thought about the absence of religious and cultural respect among our people unlike Muslims and Jews.

About the Practice of offering Bhog of Langar

There was a warm relation with a family in Vancouver. That family, whenever it was time to eat bread, would put Dal (Dish prepared using Lentils and Pulses) and vegetables in a plate, then put milk in a glass and place it in front of the Guru Granth Sahib and do Ardas. Later, the same dishes would be mixed with other dishes. They called it 'Bhog Lagauna' (To offer Bhog). Then, on the explanation of a scholar, the family was freed from this worldly-ritual. Nowadays, many families or religious leaders of Gurdwaras put dishes made of lentils and vegetables in a plate and keep them in front of the Guru Granth Sahib for the Langar Ardas. They do Ardas and perform the worldly-ritual of Bhog. This ritual is performed by the priests of the temples and they offer Bhog to the idols. Due to ignorance of their ways, many Karma-Kandi Sikhs are now practicing the superstition of offering Bhog in this way.

Regarding the Distribution of Karhah Prashad

It would be in the year 1979-80, when I got the opportunity to attend the foundation day of the new Gurdwara Sahib in Calgary, Alberta. The event was attended by people of various races, especially whites. Special ladles or spoons were used when serving Karhah Prasad at the end of the event. This new custom was called right by educated people and wrong by some Sikhs. The management felt that non-Sikhs would not appreciate it if the Prasad was served with hands, as spoons or ladles are used to serve food in Western countries. In Western countries, eating and serving with hands is less accepted for hygiene.

In November 2003, I attended an Anand Karaj at a Gurdwara Sahib in the Vancouver area and at the end, the Prasad was served with special plastic gloves on their hands. Many people were surprised to see this new look. Many people were shocked to see plastic gloves in distributors' hands.

Seeing the new conducts in both the above places and knowing the main reasons for starting these, we need to think, something collectively as Panth. Nowadays, Sikhs are living all over the world and are adopting new influences according to the culture prevailing like, eating, drinking and living, etc. So, we can change some traditions by ourselves, if it does not make a difference in the spirit of the religious tradition. As earlier in langars, the devotees used to keep Parshadas (The bread served in Langar) on their Palms and take dal or vegetables on top, but according to the times, plates with special compartments are introduced, spoons are given and glasses for drinking water are given. This is the new age.

In the same way, if those who serve in langar in foreign countries take a course in cleaning etc., to be protected from many diseases. Inspectors check the places where langar is made, inside the langar halls and give instructions regarding cleanliness. Where this foreign culture has to take special or legal care of cleanliness, it is necessary to keep cleanliness at all the religious places of the country. From the point of view of cleanliness, if spoons or ladles are used while serving Kadrah Prasad, then, in my opinion, there will be no disruption. As Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha writes:

"The hands of the one who serves Karhah Prasad should be clean, there should be no marks or cracks on the fingers, a handkerchief should be tied over the mouth, if it is served with a spoon, it is much better than serving it with hands."

(Gurmat Martand, pages 291-92)

Special: We should also keep in mind that when non-Sikhs are present in the Sangat, their feelings must be taken into consideration. If they take prashad with pleasure then it is fine, no one should force them to take prasad.

Superstition Regarding The Recitation of Nitnem

The literal meaning of Nitnem is: 'Daily routine'. The tradition of Nitnem Maryada has started from Guru Nanak Dev Ji, which is evidenced by Bhai Gurdas Ji in his 'Var':

bwxl muKhu aucwriAY huie rusnwel imtY AMiDAwrw]

igAwnu gosit crcw sdw Anhid sbid auTy Dunkwrw]

sodru Awrql gwvIAY AMimRq vyly jwpu aucwrw]

gurmuiK Bwir AQrbix qwrw]38]1]

When Gurbani hymns are uttered, the brightness would spread and darkness dispel.

Discussions for the sake of knowledge and the melodies of unstruck sound were never heard there.

Sodar and Arti were sung and in the ambrosial hours Jup (Japu) was recited.

The Gurmukh (Nanak) saved the people from the clutches of tantra, mantra and Atharvaveda.38.1.

From the above stanza, it is clear that among the Sikhs Jup (Japu) was recited in the morning, So Dar in the evening, the name of which has become popular nowadays, and Sohila Bani was recited at night. Here the meaning of So Dar Aarti means Sohila bani:

iekw bwxl ieku guru ieko sbdu vlcwir]

(vwr soriT, m: 3, pMnw 646)

There is one Bani; One Guru; One Shabad to contemplate.

(Var Sorath, M: 3, Page 646)

According to this theory, it is necessary to have integration of morality within the Sikh community. The progress of the Community (Kaum) is possible only if the responsibility of printing Gurmat literature and prescribing Gurmat traditions is from a central place or under their supervision, only then the naive people can be saved from being misled. The tragedy is that many types of superstitions are prevalent among our community or illusions and superstitions are deliberately spread. It is necessary to give an example here. The

suffering of the year 1984 will remain unforgettable for the Sikhs, when after demolishing the Akal Takht Sahib, the symbol of the Sikhs' progress, there was an attempt to destroy the dignity of the Akal Takht Sahib.

After the demolition of the building of Sri Akal Takht Sahib, it a rumor was spread that the loss of Sri Akal Takht Sahib was due to the fact that a Lesser Bani from Rehras (Chhoti Rehras) was read there. The government wanted to be freed from the crime of demolishing Sri Akal Takht Sahib, so the rumours were released and spread. Perhaps most people don't know that when this tragedy happened, the textual tradition of the Bhindranwala, was implementing, and followed.

Why did we first have the superstition of short and lengthy texts of Rehras? One day I was in the house of a devotee family. When it was time for 'So Dar', he asked me to recite. I recited the prescribed 'So Dar' according to the Panthak Rehat Maryada, but due to superstition they did not get satisfied and, once again, recited the Rehras made according to the Maryada of the Deredars. It is a pity that the majority of people in our Sikh society like to remain devoid of the wisdom of Gurmat, as a result of which they quickly adopt the superstitions and practices popularized by the deredars and the government; the distribution of texts within the community, and they are getting divided on the basis of different religious practices. Guru Sahib had prescribed the Gurbani of Nithnem for the Sikhs with his own hand. The form of all these Gurbani verses is present in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The main verse of the morning is 'Jup' (Japu) meaning Japu ji. After that, five Gurbani verses of 'So Dar' and four Gurbani verses of 'So Purakhu' i.e. a total of 9 Gurbani verses, are the Gurbani verses for the evening, which are popularly named as Rehras. After 'So Dar' and 'So Purakhu', there are five Gurbani verses of 'Sohila', which is recited at bedtime. Guru Sahib himself created the form of the above Nitnem, then who are the ones who give the name of lengthy or short Rehras? Why the superstition of a short or lengthy Rehras? In 1936 A.D., to integrate the 'Gutkas' (Gurbani Pothi) printed by various groups (Jathe), the Guru-Panth added additional Gurbani verses and declared the new form of Nitnem Gutka (Nitnem Pothi). About this, I am quoting the words written by Sr. Mahendra Singh Josh, according to which the structure/form of Bani (Bani-Sarup) can be understood:

"The form of Rehras Sahib was fixed while preparing the present Panthak Rehat-Maryada and accordingly the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak

Committee started printing 'Gutkas' of Nitnem, but despite this, Rehras is still not recited in the same way everywhere."

According to Panthak Rehat Maryada, Nitnem Banis are 'Jup/Japu', 'Jaapu' and 10 Swayas (with 'Srivag Sudh') these Banis are to be recited during Amrit-Vela (morning), 'So Dar' (Rehras) in the evening and 'Sohila' during night at bedtime. The exact form of Panthak Nitnem is found in Gutkas printed by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee or Missionary College Ludhiana. Verses of 'So Dar', 'So Purakhu' and 'Sohila' Banis can be re-recited at there places again according to the Ragas.

It would be better that, where we have to read the Gurbani verses of Nitnem according to the order of the Guru, we should read the meaning of these Gurbani verses so that by getting the insight of Gurmat, the pride of being a soldier of the Guru Khalsa Panth arises.

The Gurbani verses of Nitnem have been determined with the efforts of the Panth, but, it is raised by Panth-dokhi (People against the Panth) and some hypocritical deredars that the number of Gurbani verses are reduced by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. This rumor makes no sense. It has already been mentioned that the Guru Sahibs had made it a norm by selecting verses for the recitation of Nitnem for the Panth. The common people had no understanding or clarity of the Gurbani verses of Nitnem. Regarding this Panth-Ratan Giani Sher Singh ji explains:

"Many brothers say that these days the Singh Sabha members have increased the number of Gurbani verses of Rehras, but they should think that before the Singh Sabha there was no rule for the recitation of Rehras or Chaupai. Rather, the truth is that people had put disturbance, in the form of various recitation by various groups, in Rehras and the Singh Sabha thought it necessary to arrive at results after deliberation."

Because superstition prevails at a large, we do not act rationally. Perhaps we also have an illusion that if we read more verses, we get more benefits, if we read less, then benefits are lesser. Many say that the benefits of Nitnem is not as much as that of meditation (Simran). Now the difficulty is that there is no such standard by which the benefits of meditation or Nitnem can be calculated. Many Babas, to their devotees, tell an easy way to turn the rosary beads (Simran on Rosary) instead of the Nitnem, so that people do not face the trouble of reciting Gurbani, especially from the Gutkas.

Those who are not at any job, can recite more Banis as they have more time, like reciting Sukhmani Sahib and Asa Di Var every day according to their devotion. If we calculate the time, three hours of time is required for Nitnem by adding more Gurbani verses. It is impossible for the common working man to spare so much time, whether we agree or disagree is a different matter.

Guru Sahib wanted to make Sikhs great persons and saint-soldiers, but we limited our target only to the Sikhs of the Dera or Babas. Instead of becoming saint-soldiers, we ourselves are becoming devotees of disguised and false saints. The great scholars of Gurmat have far-sightedly determined the Gurbani verses of the current Nitnem so that working Sikhs can also perform their Nitnem according to the norms of Gurmat, while working.

Our life can become great, only if we understand Gurbani and follow it in our life and follow Guru's order to strengthen the Guru-panth. Believing or thinking that there is a lengthy or short Rehras, it is pure superstition.

Following is the Special information and theoretical points about Gurbani verses of Nitnem:

(a) Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Gutka: Dasmesh Ji's Gutka is also among the Guru-Vasts (Belongings of Guru) lying in 'Baba Ala Singh Ji's Burj' inside Patiala Fort. According to the Mahan Kosh written by Bhai Kanh Singh Nabha, the description of the Gurbani verses recorded in Gutka is as follows:

"Jup/Japu Ji, Rehras- concluding at 'Saran Parai Ki Rakho Sarma', Kirtan Sohila, Gurbani verses and Slokas of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, Sloka Sehaskriti and Gatha."

(Page 737, 1981 edition)

'Old Panj Granthi' with Sikh family in England: They received this Panj Granthi around 1800 AD. It is a manuscript and all the verses in it are taken from the Guru Granth Sahib. Among the Gurbani verses of Nitnem, are the Gurbani verses of Jup/Japu, So Dar, So Purakhu and Sohila, as the above verses are recorded in Guru Granth Sahib till page 13.

A complex: A few years ago, a Gursikh wrote a letter to Sri Akal Takht Sahib. He said, "If I recite Nitnem Banis prescribed by Guru Sahib (up to page 13 in Guru Granth Sahib, then

I become Panth Dokhi If I do Nitnem according to the prescribed norms of Panth, then I become Guru Dokhi." Tell me some way, by which I can get rid of this complex.”

(b) Crux/Conclusion about Nitnem: As in 'Jup/Japu' Bani there is a question, "Kiv Sachiara Hoi'ai Kiv Kude Tutai Pal" meaning “How can one become truthful? And how can the veil of the illusion be torn away?”. The purpose of human-life, and the answer to the above question, is clear in this Gurbani verse. In this Bani, Guru Sahib has discussed the prevalent deeds of that time and we have been shown the Gurmat way to get liberation from such deeds. If we go into the number of recitations of Gurbani verses, then it is only a form of karma-kand. The real essence is to become true by following the teachings of the Guru and this is the purpose of life. Get rid of the prevailing superstitions or karma-kands.

Superstition About the Greatness of the Gurbani Verses

Some clever people have also published books, preaching the various significances of Gurbani verses, under Sankat-Mochan or other titles. In these books, Gurbani verses are divided into; to control your wife or husband, win a lawsuit or get relief from many diseases. In the same way, various virtues of reciting the verses of Nitnem have been expressed, but according to Gurmat, it is only to create superstition and delusion. The superstitions and delusions are like:

"Asa Di Var - to stop the cycle of birth-death-birth, Anand Sahib - for salvation of life, Chaupai- to safeguard, Savaiyae - to create self-dispassion and to refute hypocrisy, Jaapu Sahib - to pay obeisance to and utter praises of Akal Purakh, Jup/Japu Ji- knowledge of the universe and metaverse as well, So Dar- to get a place in Sachkhanda, Sohila- to avoid jamduts (angels of death)."

(Source: Gurbani Path Darshan, Bhindranwale)

In the Gutkas printed by them, the Dera Nanaksar followers has claimed the counting of human breaths to express the greatness of Sukhmani Sahib's Gurbani verse, that a human being takes 24 thousand breaths daily. Only the Dera followers know how they have matched 24 Ashtapadis (of Sukhmani) with 24 thousand breaths.

Explaining the benefits of reading Gurbani, Giani Sher Singh ji writes:

"Our Gurus have taught us ‘suixAw, mMinAw min klqw Bwau]’, means listen, understand, then decide after thinking well, and then keep it in your mind, and then act on it: They freed us from the mantra-trap by giving this priceless education. But we could not escape from the touchable disease of our neighbors and we also tried to make Gurbani a mantra. There are many scriptures, in which it is written that you will be granted; with a woman if you read this verse facing the other way, wealth if you read it in another way. We are using precious diamonds as sea shells. The need is to read the Gurbani verse with understanding, by discussing the meaning bit by bit and learn what methods the Gurbani verse tells to be free from worldly lifestyle.

(Writings on Life)

Perhaps one may have a delusion or superstition that chanting or reciting more Gurbani verses brings more greatness. I think it is necessary to give an illustration about this which I read from the autobiography of Bhai Nanak Singh. It is said that a Gurmukh arrived in the Gurdwara Sahib of a village, and started the series of the narration (Katha). One day a simple villager asked, "Baba ji! I am illiterate, if you, orally, teach Sukhmani Sahib, it will be very kind." Gurmukh accepted the request and make him learn the following couplet of the Gurbani verses at the beginning:

ismrau ismir ismir suKu pwvau]

kil klys qn mwih imtwvau] (gauVI suKmnI m: 5, pMnw 262)

Meditate, meditate, meditate in remembrance of Him, and find peace.

(Gaurhi Sukhmani M: 5, Page 262)

That devotee carefully started chanting this couplet and he connected eternally. After some time, that ordinary villager suddenly met the narrator. The narrator asked, "Dear! After learning the couplet in one day, your desire to learn Sukhmani is over." "Babaji," said the devotee, "Is there still any portion of Sukhmani left?" The narrator explained that Sukhmani has 24 Ashtapadi, and then there are slokas. Hearing this, the inquisitive villager said, "Mahatma ji! You are blessed. As you have learned such a lengthy Sukhmani Sahib by heart, I have been satisfied and contented by that couplet only.

The main purpose of the message in Gurbani is to make man a great person so that a great society of great people is created. Today, the name of the community is being defamed due to the inhuman acts of persons disguised in Khalsai attire, who are in favor of reciting more and more Gurbani verses daily. I think we have to follow the Panthak Maryada wholeheartedly to become loyal soldiers of the Panth. In 1982-83, when Sant Harchand Singh Ji Longowal came to Vancouver, he participated in the Amrit Sanchar ceremony as a panch (One of the Panj Pyare), on his turn to recite Anand Sahib Bani, he finished by reciting the first five and last stanzas according to the Maryada. But when the Singhs raised objection and asked, he said clearly, "Though I have a personal belief that the entire Anand Sahib should be read, I am a soldier of the Panth and being a soldier, have to be loyal, so I have recited the first five and the last stanza of Anand Sahib according to the Maryada." Though Sant Harchand Singh got Gurmat education under the influence of Dera, but, on

becoming an employee (Sevadar) at Akali Dal and Shiromani Gurudwara Prabadhak Committee, has always stayed firm at Maryada.

It comes about Singh Sahib Giani Kirpal Singh Ji, when he was appointed as Granthi of Sri Darbar Sahib, went to Sant Gurbachan Singh Khalsa Ji to discuss Maryada. Giani Kirpal Singh ji said, "The Maryada is different there, how will I do it? He replied, "Brother! We practice the Maryada of Dera, there the Maryada of Panth is followed, there you have to follow the Maryada of Panth."

The great saint of Iran, Sheikh Saadi, writes in his book 'Gulistan', that an old pilgrim used to pray at every stage of Hajj. Many a times the thorns pricked through his skin but he did not remove the thorns. He began to enjoy the process and became proud that there is no other Namazi (one who performs prayer in Islam) like me. It is said that the angel called him, saying 'hey good natured man, if you have worshiped, do not be proud of it. To render help and Giving happiness to one's heart is better than praying at every stage.' The real essence is to never have such illusions or superstitions in the mind that the greatness of Gurbani verse is more or the greatness of another Gurbani verse is more or less. Such illusions have been popularized by wicked people. Guru Sahibs have brought us under the shelter of Sri Guru Granth Ji. We have to read and understand the message of the Gurbani verses of the Shabad-Guru, only then we will have joy in our lives.

Chaunkda Path (Recitation of Gurbani verses while sitting in Crossed-legs posture)

A few years ago, some brothers tried to run a new tradition. It was a tradition that whenever you recite, you should sit in a specific posture of Chaunkda, if you are unable to maintain the posture the recitation will be interrupted. A 65-year-old lady reverently recites Gurbani verses regularly at a Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver. She spontaneously revealed to one of her friends that due to her health, sometimes she can't keep the posture. Her friend immediately replied negative by saying that the Gurbani recitation shall not be done in such a condition.

Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki has mentioned in his literary biography that he participated in the Gurbani Recitation organised at his own place (in his house), while his legs were covered with plaster due to injuries. If any Chaunkda Pathi had been present there, he would never have accepted Dr. Neki's Path.

Sikhism is not a religion of jogis (Ascetics), to make the body suffer for religious practices is not allowed here. If we read Bhai Vir Singh's Gurmukh Jeevan, he always advises that at least 7 or 8 hours of sleep is necessary for every man. Sometimes people wake up at two o'clock and meditate and after meditation and Nitnem they go to sleep again. No, there is no objection in doing so, it depends on the man what kind of deeds he performs. It is better that, we should sleep for 7 to 8 hours every day. Sikhism is the religion of workers/doers, not idlers. We should not create new illusions or superstitions. Worship of Almighty, recitation and kirtan should be done with love and devotion, and the rest as you feel physically comfortable. If there is a problem in Chaunkdi, then do not sit for a long time, but do not have superstitions about the seating posture.

Custom and Superstitions Related to Ardas

Ardas is a popular tradition in Sikhism which has been established since the time of the Gurus. There are countless verses in Gurbani, the subject and form of which, reveal the feeling of prayer or supplication:

quDu AwgY Ardwis hmwrl jlau ipMfu sBu qyrw]

khu nwnk sB qyrl vifAwel koel nwau n jwxY myrw]

(Awasw m: 5, pMnw 383)

I offer my prayers to You; my body and soul are all yours.

Says Nanak, this is all your greatness; no one even knows my name.

(Asa M: 5, Page 383)

qU Twkuru qum pih Ardwis]

jlau ipMfu sBu qyrl rwis] (gauVI suKmnI m: 5, pMnw 268)

You are our Lord and Master as well; to you, I offer this prayer.

This body and soul are all your property.

(Gaurhi Sukhmani M: 5, Page 268)

The current form of prayer in Sikhism is enriched with Sikh history and has evolved to reinforce the basic tenets of Sikhism.

Today, many superstitions and illusions are being popularized by some people to weaken the unity of the Panth. A little ago, a devotee rang up and asked a special question. The question was ‘when the Sangat is standing outside on the road, or praying in a playground, or when people are gathered during the funeral in the funeral hall, or at the time of ritual of ‘Milani’ (formal meeting of nearest relatives of bride and groom) during marriage, should one take off the shoes, or boots, or not? My answer was, “Sister! Don't be delusional about it. If the floor is clean, and mats are spread, even then taking off your shoes or not is your will. Sometimes there is snow or extreme winters, or if the place is not clean, don't remove shoes under any delusion. Abstinence is prohibited in Sikhism. Once a Granthi Singh, from Surrey (Canada) Guru-Ghar, was present at a funeral ceremony, he specifically instructed

the assembled Sangat to remove shoes. It is not right to practice this kind of ritual, and new superstitions and illusions should not be introduced on such occasions.

Another weakness in Sikhism is when we depend on specific persons to perform religious rites. After preparing the langar, the ladies will wait for Granthi Singh to pray for the langar. Ardasia Singh is searched to do Ardas at the time of a function or at the beginning of a Path. Every Sikh should learn Ardas by heart, and when necessary, he/she shall pray during the religious rites. There is another superstition in us that if we pray ourselves, the work will not be successful. For this purpose, the demand for Babas or Bhais increases. There is no need for an intermediary to do Ardas or pray to Almighty. Here I share a personal memory from 2008, it was my niece's Anand Karaj. Barat (the Groom accompanied by his near and dear ones) had arrived and our family was waiting for someone anxiously, so I asked who are you waiting for? They replied that they were waiting for Bhai Sahib so that the Ardas of Milani could be done. I offered myself to do the ardas and purpose was served. There is an importance of devotion and emotion for prayer, which must be generated within devotees. If our mind is somewhere else but we pray to God through words, this prayer is just a ritual and emotionless. We should always try, whether there is any happy or sad event in our house or outside, we should do Ardas ourselves!

To whom do we do Ardas?

A Sikh begins every work with an Ardas, however brief the Ardas may be:

klqw loVIAY kMmu su hir pih AwKIAY]

(islrwg kl vwr m: 4, pMnw 91)

Whatever work you wish to accomplish, tell the Almighty.

(Sirirag ki Var M: 4, Page 91)

sBu ko qyrw qUM sBsu dw qUM sBnw rwis]

siB quDY pwshu mMgdy inq kir Ardwis]

(islrwg kl vwr m: 4, pMnw 86)

All are Yours, and you belong to all, you are the wealth of all.

Everyone begs from you, and all offer prayers to You each day.

(Sirirag ki Var M: 4, Page 86)

It is clear from the above Gurwak (the words/verses of Gurbani) that our prayer is before the formless God, whose special form has been depicted by Guru Nanak Sahib from 'ੴ' to 'Gur Prasad', who cannot be imposed, cannot be fabricated.

It would have been the year 1982-83. The Sikh News Board meeting was held in Kamloops, B.C. (Canada). Ardas was done for the beginning of the gathering, but whoever did, did it facing the imaginary pictures on the wall. It was also considered, later, whether it was right to do it this way or not. It was not right, according to Gurmat. Inside Gurdwara Sahib, Ardas is done standing in front of Guru Granth Sahib, but the Ardas is done before 'Hari Peh' (The Almighty). In the last part of the Ardas, we humbly plead: "O the pride of the commons, the prestige of the failure, the shelter for the homeless, the true Father Vaheguru." We do not worship the shape of the Guru Granth, we respect, the knowledge form of the Guru Granth, Gurbani is foundation for our lives, but we seek from Nirankar. If there is no presence of Guru Granth Sahib, Ardas can be offered facing any side. One thing we must be sure of is that:

ihku syvl ihku sMmlw hir ieksu pih Ardwis]

(jYqsrl m: 5, pMnw 710)

I served the One Lord, I contemplate the One Lord, and to the One Lord, I offer my prayers.

(Jaitsri M: 5, Page 710)

That is, one should humbly follow the Gurmat Parampara by keeping only the One (Almighty) in mind:

suKdwqw BY BMjno iqsu AwgY kir Ardwis]

imhr kry ijsu imhrvwnu qW kwrju AwvY rwis]

(sRlrwgu m: 5, pMnw 44)

So offer your prayers to Him, the Giver of peace, the Destroyer of fear.

Showing His mercy, the Merciful Master shall resolve your affairs.

Many brothers, in the Sikhi Sarup, in our society are victims of superstitions and illusions spread. In the villages, Ardas is also offered in front of the graves of elders, the graves of Pirs (Spiritual Preacher/Teacher) or the mausoleums in memory of imaginary martyrs, which is purely discretionary. It has been seen in many places that Arda is done in front of the objects of the Gurus and urges are made for the fulfilment of wishes.

In Delhi or other big cities, rich people write cheques or hand out expensive currency notes to the Ardasia Singh during Ardas. It seems like people give away money to the performers right after the performance. We will consider it as a mocking game, not a prayer to God, Nirankar. A family or a person wants their name to be mentioned in prayers, is superstition or feeling of glorification. On the one hand, we believe that God is all-powerful, all-knowing, on the other hand, if any name is omitted from the prayer, then we protest to the management, we fight openly because our mind is full of ego and have No trust in God. A Sikh should remain humble and stay in the sense of contentment that comes from God. In the end, seeking the good of the Almighty for the whole world is the uniqueness and specialty of the Sikh prayer 'Ardas'.

Ardas for the good of all

The tragedy of September 11, 2001, which happened in the city of New York, USA, shook the hearts of the whole world. There was an uproar in the whole world. After this tragedy, a prayer day was organized by people of all classes and religions. The Sikh community was also represented, Giani Jagtar Singh Ji Jachak, from New York, sang the following Shabad of Pancham Patshah (Guru Arjan Sahib) from the Guru Granth Sahib, which was translated into English by a Sikh doctor.

sBy jIA smwil Apxl imhr kru]

AMnu pwxl mucu aupwie duK dwldu BMin qru]

Ardwis suxl dwqwir hoel issit Tru]

lyvhu kMiT lgwie Apdw sB hru]

nwnk nwmu iDAwie pRB kw sPlu Gru]

(vwr swrMg, m: 5, pMnw 1251)

In Your mercy, You care for all beings and creatures.

You produce corn and water in abundance; eliminate pain and poverty,
and carry all beings across.

The Great Giver listened to my prayer, and the world has been
cooled and comforted.

Take me into Your Embrace, and take away all my pain.

Nanak meditates on the Naam, the Name of the Lord;
House of Almighty is fruitful and prosperous.

(Var Sarang, M: 5, Page 1251)

The Sikh Doctor translated the above mentioned Gurbani verse as:

Oh Vaheguru! Show your mercy and take care of all living beings, produce plenty of food and water and save the living beings by removing their sufferings. The Almighty accepted this prayer of the entire creation and the calmness spread over the creation. In this way, O

Lord! Embrace all living beings and remove all their miseries. O Nanak! Serve the Lord, His will fulfils all desires.

In the said prayer, Almighty was not asked to punish or destroy those who committed inhuman acts. Gurmat's principle is that everything that happens in the world is under His command, we should obey His command with contentment:

qyrw klAw mITw lwgY]

hir nwmu pdwrQu nwnku mWgY] (Awws m: 5, pMnw 394)

Your actions seem so sweet to me.

Nanak begs for the treasure of the Naam,
the Name of the Almighty. (Asa M: 5, Page 394)

Many a time, we get confused not knowing about the principles of Ardas or we fall into superstition that what we think is right and what others think is wrong. Most of us become selfish and start thinking ill of someone, we ask Almighty in prayer to harm others. We forget that in the last part of the Ardas, there is a demand for the good of all (Sarbat Da Bhala). In the year 1982-83, a young woman was run over by a car in front of the Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver and she died. There was a lot of anger in the Sangat (congregation) after this. Many women asked Granthi Singh, of Gurdwara Sahib to say special words in Ardas that 'Whoever has done this accident, O Vaheguru, punish those evil people.'

According to Gurmat Kaswatti (The Testing technique of Gurmat), what happened was not right. If we judge the harm of others, or ask to punish them, the great and unique words at the end of Ardas saying 'Tere bhane sarbat da bhala' will become meaningless. Guru Sahibs were martyred and many Singhs suffered torture on their bodies, but always accepted Almighty's will in a humble manner:

mnu qnu AwgY jIAVw quJ pwis]

ijau BwvY iqau rKhu Ardwis] (pRBwql m: 1, pMnw 1345)

I placed my mind and body in offering before You;
I dedicate my soul to You.

As it pleases You, You save me, Lord;
this is my prayer. (Prabhati M: 1, Page 1345)

jo quDu BwvY so Blw scu qyrw Bwxw] (vwr gauVI m: 5, pMnw 318)

Whatever pleases You is good; True is the pleasure of Your will.

(Var Gaurhi M: 5, Page 318)

Let us be clear about the doctrine of Gurmat and let us share this principle with others that there is a teaching in Gurbani:

ibsir gel sB qwiq prwel]

jb qy swDsMgiq moih pwel]rhwau]

nw ko bYrI nhl ibgwnw sgl sMig hm kau bin Awel]

(kwnVw m: 5, pMnw 1299)

I have totally forgotten my jealousy of others,

Since I found the Sadh Sangat, the company of the Holy. Pause.

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

(Kanrha M: 5, Page 1299)

We should ask for good in prayer even for the bad, not to think bad of anyone. Our feeling should be, that, even the bad person should leave the path of evil and follow the true path. We pray while desiring "Nanak Naam Charhdi Kala, Tere Bhane Sarbat Da Bhala" and become worry-free by believing in Vaheguru's name wholly, but, have to undertake every action ourselves.

Fictitious Deeds Nowadays.

For some time, we have been reading in the newspapers that the 100th or 200th Ardas for a particular work was performed. It is not taught in Gurmat. A few months ago, when a young child fell into a borewell in Sangrur district, the custom of offering prayers started everywhere. Well, pray and ask for courage to do good deeds. When Babur came as an aggressor, at that time the priests offered endless Havans, prayers but Guru Nanak Sahib says that all went in vain.

A Gurwak in this regard is:

kotI hU plr vrij rhwey jw mlru suixAw DwieAw]

Qwn mukwm jly ibj mMdr muiC muiC kuier rulwieAw]

koel muglu n hoAw AMDw iknY n prcw lwieAw]

(Aww m: 5, pMny 417-418)

Millions of religious leaders failed to halt the invader,
when they heard of the Emperor's invasion.

He burned the rest-houses and the ancient temples;
cut the princes limb from limb, and cast them to dust.

None of the Mugals went blind, and no one performed any miracle.

(Asa M: 5, Pages 417-418)

Guru Nanak Sahib lays the foundation of the doctrine of Miri-Piri, when says:

pwp kl jM\ IY kwblhu DwieAw jorl mMgY dwnu vy lwlo]

(iqIMg m: 1, pMnw 722)

Bringing the marriage-party of sin, Babar has invaded from Kabul, demanding our land as his wedding gift, O Lalo. (Tilang M: 1, Page 722)

Baba Nanak Sahib showed courage and called the army, of the great king, 'Paap Ki Janj'. Sanatan Dharma people want us to do Yag or Havan for success, to bring rain, to ask for permission for passage, to stop rain, to pray and sit with closed eyes. Such traditions are contrary to Gurmat. The Gurus themselves did great works for the people, even if there was a famine, shortage of water, they made every possible effort. They did not ask "let us pray, things will be done by themselves." Nowadays disguised Babas or Deredars make people indulge in superstitions and false rituals. The Gurbani verses of Guru Granth Sahib ji keep us away from fictitious deeds.

Forms of Prayer: Short or Lengthy Prayer

In the beginning of the 20th century, the opening stanza in the prayer was 'Sri Bhagauti Ji Sahai. Vaar Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki...' which has been credited as Mangalacharan, remains a hot topic. Some Panthak scholars disagreed with this form of Mangalacharan. The exact form of prayer is contained in Gutkas printed by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sikh Rehat Maryada, or Missionary College. It is the duty of all Panthak organizations that the Sarup of Mangalacharan, established by the Khalsa Panth should be followed.

As far as short or lengthy Ardas is concerned, these are time-based or individual decisions, but according to Panthak Maryada there is only one form of Ardas. Sometimes devotees add additional adjectives while praying, for example when the name of Guru Gobind Singh ji is mentioned, they use too many adjectives, like, the one with white eagle, Rider of the 'Blue' horse, Amrit de Date, Sarbans Dani, 'Badshah Darvesh Guru Gobind Singh' Bhai Nand Lal keeps reciting several stanzas in the praise of Dasmesh Pita. This lengthens the Ardas.

In older times, the offerings made by the Kings and Emperors, for the Karhah Prashad, have also been mentioned in Ardas at Sri Darbar Sahib. But, due to the increase in the length of Ardas and according to Gurmat, such practice was abolished. In many places in foreign countries, the names of devotees are spoken in Ardas, and out of ignorance, many devotees insist on calling their names.

Secret/Silent Ardas

It seems to be a newly commenced practice. During a wedding or a celebration, the secretary says from the stage that Giani ji will offer a secret prayer. At this time, only the bridegroom, bride and their parents stand. It is not right to begin the custom of such new vocabulary, i.e. secret prayer or short prayer. As far as the name 'Gupt Ardas' has become popular, it is not according to Gurmat. The form of our prayer is the same, whether it is at the beginning or at the end of the Anand Karaj. Stage secretaries and Granthi Singhs should never say that there will be a short prayer or a secret prayer. Secondly, one should not add additional adjectives to the Gurus in the prayer. The form of Ardas approved by the Panth should be practised everywhere.

The convenors of the Nirankari movement (earlier) always followed the tradition of saying 'Satnam Simar Ke' instead of 'Bhagauti Simar Kai'. According to Gurmat Kasvatti, it seems

to be correct. Many places in foreign countries have started saying 'Satnam Simar Ke' instead of 'Bhagauti'.

There are many Gurbani verses in the form of prayer (Ardas) in Guru Granth Sahib, which can be used as prayers. Secondly, it is also not necessary to recite a specific length of prayer, only then it is permissible. Prayer relates to your innermost feelings and can be any words spoken personally. According to Gurmat, one should not make demands, in prayer, to fulfil one's desires. As many stories have been common in history that Guru Arjan Sahib's mahal Mata Ganga ji went to pray to Baba Buddha ji for getting a son. Such fictional stories are, conspiracy stories to portray the personality of the Gurus as ordinary people. Some time ago a Granthi Sahib in Patiala was suffering from fever, someone suggested that Bhai Sahib Akali Kaur Singh ji pray for relief from the pain, Akali ji was asked to pray. He prayed, and in his prayer requested Sacha-Patshah to grant the Singh the strength to accept the will of Almighty. The bottom line is that we should never pray for personal needs or comforts.

According to Gurmat, 'Akal Purakh' is not sitting at any special place, but, present in the hearts of us all:

kbIrw muLw munwry ikAw cFih sWeI n bhrw hoie]

jw kwrin qUM bWg dyih idl hl Blqir joie]

(slok kbIrw jI, pMnw 1374)

Kabeer; O Mullah, why do you climb to the top of the tower/minaret?

The Lord is not hard of hearing.

Look within your own heart for the One,

for whose sake you shout your prayers.

(Salok Kabir Ji, Page 1374)

Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib is says:

Gt Gt mY hir jU bsY sMqn kihE pukwir]

khu nwnk iqh Bju mnw Bau iniD auqrih pwir]

(slok m: 9, pMnw 1427)

The dear Lord abides in each and every heart;
the saints proclaim this as true.

Says Nanak, meditate and vibrate upon Him, and you shall
crossover the terrifying world-ocean.

(Salok M: 9, Page 1427)

Dr. Balbir Singh ji writes: "Educated youth ask - is prayer heard? Is prayer answered? Perhaps, but an answer is not necessary. Prayer is obligatory, answer is optional." The Irish writer and thinker Oscar Wilde has even said that, "Prayers should not be answered. If a prayer is answered, it does not remain a prayer, but becomes a series of honour and pride." The Ardas of a Sikh is accepted, only, if it is, above the trivial needs and wants, for the betterment of all. To be submerged in the omnipotent is the fruit/result in itself.

What Length of Dohera Shall be recited After Ardas?

The main topic of this article is about reading 'Dohera' after prayer. There is an opinion of the scholars regarding Dohera, according to them, it is very important to have the same Maryada in all the Gurdwaras. If this is not possible, our generations will run away from Sikhi and we will be left with nothing but regret. Tension will increase within us and the power of the entire Kaum will be destroyed. Many gentlemen say that there is nothing related to Dohera in the Sikh code of conduct (Sikh Rehat Maryada). But if there is no complete knowledge about something, the opinion or writing of the wise should be taken as a basis. Or it is worth asking the Dharma Prachar Committee. Why every Gurdwara has its own rules? Regarding this, there are painful words of a Panthak scholar:

"The Source Form of all Ten Gurus is One, and Guru Granth Sahib ji is entitled of the throne. But, what about a new practice of reciting a different couplet after 'Agya Bhai Akal Ki' at the end of the Ardas. Like, the Ardasia of every Gurdwara, associating the Gurudwara with one of the Guru, recites a specific couplet representing that Guru, as you will hear at Sis Ganj Sahib, Delhi:

qyg bhwdr ky clq, BXo jgq ko sok[

hY hY hY sB jg BXo, jY jY jY sur lok[

The whole world bemoaned the departure of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Whit the world lamented, the Gods hailed his arrival in heavens."

(Article by – Bhai Manohar Singh Marco)

Go elsewhere and there you will hear different couplet:

"At all the Takhats, the couplet 'Agya bhai Akal ki...Raj Karega Khalsa...' is recited after the prayer, but at Hazur Sahib, the couplet 'Guru Manyo Granth' is not recited at all."

(Bhai Nirvair Singh)

"Summary of the Maryada of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib (Amritsar), 'From the Guru's treasury and by devotees, the Prashad arrives in the Darbar. Granthi Singh does Ardas (which is printed in Rehat Maryada, and enumerated in the Gutkas printed by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee) as is accepted in Panth. After bowing down, the entire congregation stands and chants 'Agya Bhai Akal Ki...Guru Granth Ji Manio... Raj Karega Khalsa'... The above three couplets are chanted in enthusiasm and Khalsai War Cry is recited loudly."

(Gurmat Prakash, Special Issue, July 1990)

The views of Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki who was an eminent scholar, poet and medical doctor and also the president of Sikh Students Federation, are very clear and plausible:

"After prayer, it is customary to recite three couplets. The first two of these are taken from Giani Gian Singh's Panth Prakash and the last couplet is taken from Bhai Nand Lal's Tankhahnama, which are as follows:

Agya Bhai Akal Ki Tabhi (Tabai) Chalayo Panth.

Sabh Sikhan Ko Hukam Hai Guru Manio Granth.

Guru Granth ji Manyo, Pragat Gura ki deh.

Ja ka hirda shudh hai, Khoj Shabad meh leh.

OR

Jo prabh ko milbo chahai, Khoj Shabad Meh leh.

The basic principles are as follows

First thing: Bhai Gurdas affirms that Guru Nanak Sahib ji laid the foundation of a unique Panth:

mwirAw iskw jgiqR ivic, nwnk inrml pMQ clwieAw[

QwipAw lihxw jlvdy, guirAwel isir CqR iPrwieAw[

joql joiq imlwiekY, siqgur nwnk rUp vtwieAw[

(vwr 1, pauVI 45)

In the world, He established the authority and started a religion,
devoid of any impurity (Nirmal Panth).

During His lifetime He waved the canopy of Guru seat
on the head of Lahina (Guru Angad) and merged His own light into Him.
Guru Nanak then transformed Himself.

(Var 1, Paurhi 45)

The same Nirmal Panth was given the name of 'Khalsa Panth'. The second thing is to accept
Guru Granth Sahib as Guru. This principle has already been clarified in the Guru Granth
Sahib:

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥

ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਖਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥

(nt m: 4, pMnw 982)

The Gurbani Words, Bani is Guru, and Guru is the Bani;
Within the Bani, the Ambrosial Nectar is contained.

If His humble servant believes, and acts according to the Guru's Bani
then the Guru, in person, emancipates him.

(Nat M: 4, Page 982)

Guru Gobind Singh ji ended the chain of personal Guriyai and established the common
Guriyai of the Guru-Granth and the Guru Panth. That order has been confirmed in this
couplet.

Third thing: Through the search for Guru-Shabad, one gets insight about Akal Purakh, and
by obeying the words of Gurbani, the spiritual life can be uplifted.

gur kl bwxl gur qy jwql ij sbid rgy rµgu lwie]

pivqu pwnv sy jn inrml hir kY nwim smwie]

(pRBwql m: 3, pMnw 1346)

Those who are attuned to the love of the Shabad,
Know the Guru, through the words of Gurbani.

Sacred, pure and immaculate are those humble beings
who are absorbed in the Name of the Lord.

(Prabhati M: 3, Page 1346)

rwj krygw ^wlsw Awkl rhy n koie [

KuAwr hoie sB imlihNgy bcy srn jo hoie]

(qn^whnwmw Bwel nµd lwl jl)

The Khalsa will rule and the rebels will be eliminated.

All will be obliged to join, only those who surrender will survive.

(Tankhahnama Bhai Nand Lal Ji)

The above couplet was first begun to be recited during the time of Baba Banda Singh Bahdar (1710-1716) after prayers.

Scholars opine that:

"The tradition of reciting these three couplets, after prayer, is old. The first couplet highlights or confirms the Sikh principles. And, when the Sikh community was going through a period of oppression, it expressed the desire to establish a state and resisted oppression with determination. Which (in the last couplet) is a symbol of Charhdi Kalaa."

(Ardas: Rup, Darshan te Itihas)

Although the first three couplets are not written by the Guru Sahibs, but, confirm the commands of the Guru Sahibs and historical writers have propounded the principles of the Guru in poetry and called these the words of the Guru Sahibs. Apart from these three couplets, there are many other couplets which were popularized by the priests and Mahants in Deras, but the additional couplets do not confirm the Gurmat-Principles, but these

contradict them and these are an expression of what the Sikhs said, not the order of Guru Sahibs.

For example additional couplets are:

vwihgurU nwm jhwz hY cVHy su auqry pwr[

jo SrDw kr syNvdy gur pwr auqwrnhwr[

KMfw jw ky hwQ myN klZI sohy sls[

su hmrl riKAw kry klZIDr jgdIS[

nwnk gurU goibMd isMG pUrn gur Avqwr[

jgmg joiq ibrwj rhl sRI Abcl ngr mJwr[

auT gel sBw mlyC kl kr kUVw prSwd[

fµkw vjy Pqih kw inhklµk Avqwr[

id`ll q^q pr bhygl Awp gurU kl &Oj[

cvr iPrygw sls pr bVI krygl mOj[

The name of God is a ship, whosoever boards will reach the destiny (heaven).

Those who worship with devotion, the Guru welcomes them in the heavens.

One who holds Khanda in His hand, Kalgi on His turban.

Will safeguard us, is Kalgidhar Jagdish (Guru Gobind Singh).

From Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, all are the Sampuran Gurus.

Now the Jot is settled inside Sri Abchal Nagar.

The army of enemies has all gone, after spreading the evil.

Now the news of Fateh of the Righteous is spread all over.

Guru's Fauj will sit on the throne of Delhi.

The Guru's Fauj will enjoy the Chawar and the rule.

There are many other couplets which, instead of explaining the principles of Sikhism, make the principles self-contradictory, laughable, intermingled or intertangled. Principal Satbir Singh ji also instructs that, the couplet, 'Waheguru naam jahaj hai, chade su utre par....Khanda ja ke haath mein kalgi sohe sis' etc. should not be recited:

Jaikara shall be recited after reciting the following couplet.

rwj krygw ^wlsw Awkl rhy nw koie [

KuAwr hoie sB imlyNgy bcy Srn jo hoie [

The Khalsa will rule, the rebels will be eliminated.

All will be obliged to join, only those who surrender will survive.

Dr Kuldeep Singh writes, on page 13 of Gurmat Prakash January 1983:

"Historical heritage mentioned in Ardas fills us with self-confidence and propels us forward."

This is the reason why the last words of the couplet recited after the prayer are:

rwj krygw ^wlsw, Awkl rhy n koie[

KuAwr hoie sB imlyNgy, bcy Srn jo hoie[

The Khalsa will rule, the rebels will be eliminated.

All will be obliged to join, only those who surrender will survive.

This is the ultimate faith of Khalsa Ji's prayer. The goal of this faith is high, the aim is high, and the vision is high. A religion whose vision, ideals, and aim are so high can never go into a state of decline. Only with this lofty aim does the Sikh attain the state of high conduct and Charhdi Kalaa.

Blind devotion for Disguised Babas

Perhaps it has become an integral part of the culture of Punjabis that they have immense respect for ascetics and saints. As the country's population is increasing, the number of deras in Punjab is increasing at the same pace, but even more. Secondly, the thinkers of Kaum (Community) of Punjab are worried about another thing, that, Punjabi culture is getting an unnecessary color of western culture and drugs are being common among the youth. More use of drugs is taking place in Malwa-region and it is said that devotion towards Sadhs is also more in the region. At the beginning of the year 2003, there was a news in a Punjabi newspaper that 'Every nine villages of Malva has forty-six Babas in an average'. The common saying of such Babas is, "we start a shop or business only according to the demand of the customers." This means that people in these villages of Malwa would have immense devotion towards Baba.

The fame of the Babas is spread by the agents, hired by the Babas. It is said that one Baba's was not getting popular. He stationed an agent on the most frequented road. The agent enquired from the people going to the Dera, "where are you going?". they replied that they were going to Baba's Dera. He said that your Baba is a coward, he has no power, let's test your Baba today, and went to the Dera along them. On reaching there (the Dera), as Baba started to narrate according to the secret plan, the agent stood up and started shouting, "You are Disguised as Baba. You have no power."

The Baba humbly responded, "Bitter words shall not be spoken for the saints."

The agent further said, "What type of saint are you?" If you are a saint, tell me how much money do I have in my pocket?"

Baba said, "Babas shall not be tested."

"Why, babas shall not be tested?" said the agent.

"O devotee, come on, if you insist on asking, I will tell you how many rupees are in your pocket. There is a ten-rupees note in your pocket." The agent fell at Baba's feet and started apologizing.

The youth of Punjab wasted away with the use of drugs and the middle-class people of Punjab are going into debt due to the water table getting lower. Desperate people are taking the path of suicide. Even if the rural people get little education, employment is not found

based on such educational qualifications. One has to offer lakhs of rupees to get jobs in Punjab. But, setting up your own Dera is the easiest way to earn more money. Surprisingly, people who are surrounded by troubles go to the Deras of Sadhs to find a solution to their problems. Many people may not know that the Sadhs ran these Deras as trading centres to collect money. Just a few months ago, the stories of Dera Sacha Sauda and Noor Mehaliya were discussed and people came to know about their reality. Almost all Deras are established to gather wealth or create divisions within the community.

Deras are promoted by governments, through special agents. The support of Deras is taken to fulfil government or political goals by spending lakhs and crores of rupees. As the Sikhs recently passed and announced the Nanakshahi calendar, but, the government did not approve of such a unique and forward thinking. The government, made the Deras oppose the calendar adopted by the Sikhs, although how could the simple-minded people of Dera know of the calendar? They served the government's purpose, to fulfil the government's will, without thinking.

It would be the year 1967-68. By bringing a Sadh to the locality of Gurusar Sudhar, a pond was created, which was not needed at all. One day the same baba was taking a bath in the attic. Hundreds of people stood in queues for an auspicious opportunity to drink the dirty water from his bath, mistaking it for holy water. I don't know what the significance of that contaminated water would be. This is the visible proof of the blind devotion, of the ignorant people. In the locality, from where the baba was, it was spread that Guru Hargobind Sahib had blessed that five saints would stay in this village, one would be revealed and four would remain in secret. But Guru Sahib did not use the term 'saint' even for any divine being, then who are the clever people who spread such rumours? According to Gurmat, this can only be a made-up concept and is purely Manmat.

Another true story is that a Bhai from a village in the Ludhiana district, by shaving his head and face and wearing Saffron-coloured clothes, pretended to be a saint, but could not get popular in his locality. Finally, he built a dera in a village in the Bathinda district. Once some elderly woman of his native village went to attend funeral ceremonies in the village of Bathinda. There they heard a rumour that a sadh was doing penance here. Those ladies had an urge to see Baba. Many, of them, would have thought that Baba knows everything and fulfils a wish, but when the women reached the dera, Baba was pretending to do penance. One lady recognized him at first and said, "You fools! Don't you recognise, he is

so-and-so from our village." The hypocrite Sadh called a lady and said in a low voice, "Go! First, you didn't let my business prosper in your village, and now please don't disclose my secret here. Go, for God's sake." Almost all deras prosper and are built like this. People who are real ascetics, while doing their work, chant the name of Almighty, practice the principle of 'Vand Shako' (distribute among the neediest before relishing), and do not cheat people.

Tricks or Miracles for Gaining Fame

This is about a Dera near Jagraon. The new Deredar became the owner, of the dera, after the death of the earlier deredar. One day when some of his devotees were sitting near him, he suddenly got up and started pouring buckets of water to one side. When the encouraged devotees asked, Baba Ji said that the hut of one of his devotees had caught fire and, to some extent, he had saved his hut from destruction. The deredar also told the location of that devotee. Some agents were present in the gathering, who made a plan to inquire and one or two devotees went along. When they went there, they saw that his hut was slightly burnt. It was the same time when Deredar used to throw buckets of water. When the agent told the whole incident to that devotee (with burnt hut) in front of the devotees, he cried hypocritically and said that he was already looking for the one who saved his hut. “Come on, tell me, where is Babaji?” he said. It is said that, within a short time, fame of the Dera spread far and wide.

Cremation Rituals and new Practices

A brief and clear explanation of the deceased's rites is given in the Sikh Rehat Maryada. But it is impossible to follow the Sikh Rehat Maryada during the cremation ceremonies in western countries. But a few points are clear, like, it is Manmat, to collect the ashes from the cremation area and pour them in Ganga, Patal-puri, Kartarpur Sahib and other places." (Page 22, 1983 edition). People rarely read the above instruction and it is a, blindly followed, superstitious custom to take and pour ashes to Patal-puri at Kiratpur, Punjab.

In year 1999, my paternal uncle passed away. There, the body of the deceased was kept in the 'funeral home'. Granthi Singh of Gurdwara Sahib recited Japu Ji Sahib and the body was taken for cremation. This happened in Edmonton (Canada). When Japu Bani was recited there, I was surprised that, in B.C. (Canada) there has never been a reading of Japu Ji, but the Granthi Singhs of the Gurdwara Sahib share the Gurmat thoughts with the Sangat, present, and explain the Gurmat side about death or death. Ever since the Sangat has built, its own, place for cremation, Japu Ji's recitations are performed there by the Granthi Singhs of the Gurdwaras. Once a Bhai Sahib said that Japu Ji's Bani would be very helpful for the salvation of mortals.

As far as I have heard about Britain, a new practice is followed there. Before cremation, the dead body is taken to the Gurdwara Sahib, where special prayers are offered. Don't know why such a new practice was started. Who started it? Panth-thinkers have to think about such practices in foreign countries, as Sikh families are against sending ashes to special places, but, if they pour ashes into a canal, river, or the sea, then it becomes a legal violation because there are strict regulations in foreign countries to prevent water pollution. Although some Gursikh families do this, silently and secretly, but this act will also be immoral, when the law prohibits doing so. New measures or methods have to be made for it.

Nowadays many white families, who are not staunch followers of Christianity, have no illusions about burial or cremation, cremation is cheaper than burial. I asked my co-worker that, when Christians cremate, what do they do with the ashes? He replied that, he himself had cremated his father and brought the ashes and put them in the garden of the house. I liked his method. In foreign countries, after cremation by gas or electric stoves, the bones are ground, leaving only ashes.

The management committees of many religious places also create new superstitions among people. In fact, their motive is to attract people. Even though the importance of performing kirtan during the last rites of deceased in Gurmat has been accepted, smart people are running their il-practices by introducing new practices to the gullible families. Once there was an opportunity to go to a last rites at Gurdwara Sahib and the Mukhvak/Hukamnama came:

hmrl gxq n gxlAw kwel Apxw ibrdu pCwix]

hwQ dyie rwKy kir Apuny sdw sdw rµgu mwix]

(soriT m: 5, pMnw 619)

He did not take my accounts into account; such is his forgiving nature.

He gave me His hand, and saved me and made me His own;
forever and ever, I enjoy His Love.

(Sorath M: 5, Page 619)

That brother explained the anti-Gurmatism with his wit which was also funny. "Babaji used to say, (It is not clear which Babaji?) complete the bhog ceremony within ten days for the deceased person, that's it, then it is my responsibility, I will make him free." Just think, how do we know whether a person will go to hell or heaven? No one can tell. Gurmat does not believe in special places of imagined hell and heaven. If salvation is obtained only by doing recitation after death, then this deal is very cheap, that is, rob, commit fraud, do mischief all your life, the family has to do recitation according to this tradition, you will get a place in heaven directly. Gurmat does not approve of such rumours and there is no guarantee of salvation by reciting rituals or reciting in one's name.

We need to know the Gurmat's side regarding salvation. In Sikhism there is no importance of attaining salvation after death. This will be understood through the Gurbani verse by Bhagat Namdev ji:

mUey hUey jau mukiq dyhugy mukiq n jwnY koielw]

(mlwr nwmdyv jl, pMnw 1292)

If You liberate me after I am dead, no one will know if I am liberated.

(Malar Namdev Ji, Page 1292)

Oh God! If I get salvation after death, what is the benefit of the salvation then? For, how will anyone know about that?

Other evidence:

sbid mrY so mir rhY iPir mrY n dUjl vwr]

(isrlrwg m: 1, pMnw 58)

One who dies in the Shabad is beyond death, and shall never die again.

(Sirirag M: 1, Page 58)

Real dying is killing the mind with the Sword of wisdom, i.e. conquering the mind through Gurmat. Once a higher state of mind is attained, the creature is liberated from the worldly life. In War Asa, Guru Nanak Sahib is saying:

jlvn mukiq so AwKIAY mir jlvY mrlAw] (*Awsw m: 4, pMnw 449*)

One who dies in the Shabd is beyond death, and shall never die again. (Asa M: 4, Page 449)

That is, we have to attain salvation while we are alive. People who create superstitions or commit robbery in the name of religion that by performing any rites on the deceased will lead to heaven or salvation, it is not a fact but wishful thinking.

In Raga Asa, the fourth Patshah states that those who have remembered Vaheguru or ParmAtma are liberated:

sy mukqu sy mukqu Bey ijn@ hir iDAwieAw jlau,

iqn tUtl jm kl Pwsl] (*Awsw m: 4, pMnw 348*)

They are liberated, they in fact are liberated, who meditate on the Lord;
the noose of death is cut away from them.

(Asa M: 4, Page 348)

iehu sµswru ibkwru sµsy mih qirE bRhm igAwnl]

(gauVI m: 5, pMnw 13)

This world is engrossed in corruption and cynicism.

Only those who know Almighty, are saved.

(Gaurhi M: 5, Page 13)

Nothing is wrong with those who create folk tales and make people have hope. Psychologists also use their own methods to induce hope. But people should be careful of those crooks claiming to have the ticket to heaven. Sometimes, a superstition is also created that one can attain heaven if alms are given in the name of a deceased person. It will be good to give an illustration regarding the benefits of charity.

It is said that once after the death of a 'donor', he appeared in the court of Dharmaraj. When his charity was calculated, Dharmaraj pronounced the decision to throw him into hell. That person pleaded that every year he used to do Yags, numerous religious-recitations, fed people for free, why the hell for him? Dharmaraj said, "You have done all of that for your ego and not done anything according to the needs of the needy." His appeal was rejected, and while he was been taken to hell, he screamed a lot. At last, Dharmaraj ordered to check the life account of that man. A messenger said that its new account has been found, its charity is great and this brother can become a resident of heaven forever. Dharmaraj asked what was in that account. The messenger said, "Once he saw a child, who was going to school barefoot during winters. Out of pity, he picked up his son's old shoe and gave it to the barefoot child." So, realizing the need of that poor child, giving old shoes is also a virtue and there is no benefit or fruit from the Akhand Path or other karma done to show-off or satisfy the ego.

According to Gurmat, sorrows and pleasures come to the body and every creature has to leave this world. As Gurmat says:

rij n koel jlivAw phuic n cilAw koie]

igAwnl jlvY sdw sdw surql hl piq hoie]

srPY srPY sdw sdw eyvY gel ivhwie]

nwnk iks no AwKIAY ivxu puiCAw hl lY jwie]

(slok vvrW qy vDlk m: 1, pMnw 1412)

No one lives long enough to accomplish all his wishes.

Only the spiritually wise live forever; they are known for their intuitive awareness.

Bit by bit, life passes away, even though the mortal tries to hold it back.

O Nanak, unto whom should we complain?
Death takes one's life away without anyone's consent.

(Salok Vara te Vadhik M: 1, Page 1412)

We see every day that people are leaving the world, children are being born, whether the age is old or young:

jo jnmY so jwnhu mUAw]

(AwsW m: 5, pMnw 375)

One who has been born will die.

(Asa M: 5, Page 375)

It is good for us to accept God's will, and to be mentally worry-free. As Farid ji says:

Prldw duKu suKu ieku kir idl qy lwih ivkwru]

Alh BwvY so Blw qW lBl drbwru]

(slok Prld j], pMnw 1383)

Frid, look upon pleasure and pain as the same; eradicate corruption from your heart.

Whatever pleases the Almighty is good; understand this, and you will reach His court.

(Salok Farid Ji, Page 1383)

Let us be alert from cunning people, do auspicious deeds while we are alive, consider it a virtue to help the needy, and let the remembrance of the Almighty dwell in our hearts. The rest, which are rituals or superstitions, that, placing full ashes in a certain place will bring salvation or benefit the deceased, there is no truth in it. Gurbani says:

iek dJih iek dbIAih ieknw kuqy Kwih]

ieik pwxl ivic austIAih ieik Bl iPir hsix pwih]

nwnk eyv n jwpel ikQY jwie smwih]

(vwr soriT m: 1, pMnw 648)

Some are cremated, and some are buried; some are eaten by dogs.

Some are thrown into water, while others are thrown into wells.

O Nanak, it is not known, where they go and into what they merge.

(Var Sorath M: 1, Page 648)

Some people burn the dead, some bury them, some dead are eaten by dogs, some are drowned, some are kept in wells. Guru Sahib is saying that by doing this one does not know where the souls reside.

There are variations in funeral rites among different communities. There is no superstition here, because salvation is impossible by cremation or performing rites according to other traditions.

Sometimes we do new rituals, by ourselves or follow others, which are not according to Gurmat. Just as we keep the picture of the deceased before the Guru Granth Sahib or offer the bed, utensils, clothes, shoes etc. of the deceased before the Guru Granth Sahib. This is Biparan's custom, they used to think that the dead creature can be delivered to the next world by the priest, but we are doing many deeds without thinking. As the administrators are finding it difficult to maintain the Rumalas of the Guru Granth Sahib, in the same way, the number of quilts and mats in the Guru-ghars is increasing every week. Nothing will reach the dead body, preachers or scribes are mum about these bad rituals and they don't want people to have clarity about Gurmat, that's why the Sikh families are not free from Biparan rituals or Manmat.

Fascinating true story

Finally, here are the thoughts of a Chinese thinker regarding the simplicity of funeral rites:

"Simplicity is preferable to extravagance in the funeral rites. It is more appropriate to feel heartfelt sorrow than to show it in performing the rites of mourning."

What is the form of Nagar Kirtan?

According to Mahan Kosh, the meaning of Nagar Kirtan is "that Kirtan which should be performed in the city, while roaming on a route." In many towns or cities in India, Sangats perform kirtan together in some areas in the morning, which is called 'Prabhat Pheri'. Only a few families participate in Prabhat Pheri and Guru Granth Sahib is not present. On the other hand, in Nagar Kirtan, Guru Granth Sahib ji has special Presence on a truck or trolley and the five beloved ones (Panj Pyare) carrying Sri Sahib. Panj Singhs walk holding Nishan Sahib. Sometimes special bands also march and kirtani jathas perform kirtan and the congregation also recites the Gurbani verses. Nagar Kirtan is attended by devotees enthusiastically and long processions are arranged inside the cities and the stages are also set up at different places.

As far as, the background or origin of Nagar Kirtan is concerned, I cannot say anything about whether this tradition started during the Guru period or later. I remember that I was a student of the Khalsa School and the school used to organize Nagar Kirtan on the eve of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji's birth anniversary, in which a two to three kilometres route was planned. The school children performed the duty as Five Beloved Ones, later the selection of the five beloved ones began to take place from among the congregation. Ahead would be the school band and the whole school and the students of both the colleges would be in full swing adding to the blaze of Nagar Kirtan.

Nowadays, the custom of Nagar Kirtan has become more popular. As the number of Sikhs abroad has increased, Nagar Kirtans are organized at different times. In this article, I will discuss about the Nagar Kirtans that happened or are happening in Surrey or Vancouver, Canada, and see if the nature of these Nagar Kirtans is Nagar Kirtan or not? I think the first Nagar Kirtan in the city of Vancouver was in 1979 to celebrate Guru Amardas Ji's five hundredth-year centenary, which was organized by a joint committee of the two Gurdwara Sahibs and with the support of the Sangat. I was among the five beloved ones and according to the decision of the committee, the five beloved ones were wearing rubber shoes, but someone (a devotee) forcibly removed the shoes and we had to walk, barefoot, a distance of more than five miles.

Thank the Guru that no one was hurt by the broken glass on the road, otherwise, huge news of the Sikhs would have been published. Who is to decide whether it is a sanctity to walk barefoot or impurity to walk with boots?

After a few years, there was an increase in the Charhdi-Kala (A mental state of Living Life at the Fullest) of the Sikhs and instead of one, two Nagar Kirtans became popular, and both the Nagar Kirtans were scheduled on the same day. Now the organizers of both the Nagar Kirtans make their own efforts to attract as many devotees as possible. Some administrators ordered weapons from India, some brought ancient manuscripts, some tried to order only the robes of the Gurus. The purpose of all is the same, to lure more people to attend the Nagar Kirtan. One year, a committee called for old weapons from India and said that they are the weapons of the Gurus, and made the blind-devotees worship those weapons and collected money. On the other hand, shopkeepers want the Nagar Kirtan route to pass-through them, so that they can sell their suits. Nagar Kirtan meant to have Kirtan in a town or city. Now we have to see if we listen to Kirtan? Or do white people listen to kirtan?

A few years ago, the Gurdwara management specially invited political leaders from Punjab. The local political leaders here also want to express their existence to the congregation, and the organizers are also in the same mood, to mug-up a few sentences to congratulate the congregation and grab some popularity. In order to increase the congregation, the organizers also included bhangra and giddha performers, so that even when people go home, they discuss bhangra and giddha performers. But what is the purpose of Nagar Kirtan?

In the beginning, people thought that Nagar Kirtan made our presence known among the white people and that the enthusiasm of the young people for the Sikh form could be inspired by the blaze of the rising Singhs. Tracts about Sikhism in English can be distributed among the white people, but as far as the purpose of Nagar Kirtan and our discipline is concerned, it is completely bankrupt. Twice, the organizers of Nagar Kirtan have been fined for not maintaining cleanliness and the shopkeepers also remain concerned with their sale. They also ignore the garbage lying in front of their shops because they have no devotion, they only aim to attract customers. If they were honest, they would have picked up or removed the garbage from the front of their shops. In fact, it is the responsibility of the organisers. I think if I had to pay for the cleaning, I could get-by with about \$100 and avoid the fines and press coverage.

In fact, we are fed up with the preaching of Gurmat. In Punjab, during Gurdpurabs, political parties do not promote Gurmat by setting up their own stages, they use the political arena to spread false propaganda against each other. Whether Gurdpurab is celebrated in the land

of Anandpur or Muktsar, the main purpose of none of them is the propagation of Sikhism. We have distorted the form of these joint fairs or nagar kirtans. Such events have become meaningless and their present form has degenerated into cultural or singing, noisy or rural fairs, where people eat samosas and pakoras and go home exhausted at the sight of crowds of people. The purpose of Nagar Kirtan was to worship the Guru, to have devotion to the Guru, to instil pride in the Sikh traditions. Sorry! Instead of getting any special benefit, where we tread on the beautiful grass planted by people, we express happiness by serving the langars and contentment by distributing the langar, meeting friends and being free from attachment. On the other hand, the organizers are happy to organize the annual Nagar kirtan as per their election manifesto.

Here are some suggestions regarding the Saroop (Form) of Nagar Kirtan:

1. Discipline is very important in Nagar Kirtan. It can be arranged. Congregants walk in rows and the number of persons shall be fixed for each row.
2. The Saroop of Nagar Kirtan can be further enhanced if a group of children from Khalsa schools participate in uniforms and to make a good impression, the children of the schools perform Gatka etc.
3. In Nagar Kirtan floats should be beautifully decorated, showing glimpses of Sikh history. It would be good if there were scenes, related to martyrs and Sikh culture.
4. The kirtaniye should perform divine kirtan, considering Indian music or Gurmat music as the base. A couple of groups should have stringed instruments so that our music can also be effective.
5. It is not permissible to raise slogans or show political colours in Nagar Kirtan. Our real aim is to present glimpses of Sikh religion, history and Sikh music and to praise the Almighty through Sikh music.
6. Holding two Nagar Kirtans in the same locality, on the same day, is a loss to the entire community. The government here will be happy that the Sikh community is divided. If we seek help from the government during a crisis within the community, there will not be much achievement or success. Nagar kirtan should be held together on different occasions, if some of the organizers jointly perform nagar kirtan on Baisakhi and others with the advice of another event, such as Gurgurab of Guru Nanak Dev Ji or on Gurgaddhi Divas of Guru Granth Sahib. It is true that we may have differences due to ideas, but when a high event

is to be organized, it should be done together as a community. By doing this, the Sikh community will be benefitted, a fine example of high traditions and the spirit of unity will be established for the sake of the community.

7. Nagar Kirtan should be limited to praise the almighty or expressing the rich aspects of Sikhism. One should refrain from including Bhangra or Giddha or political gainers. Come on! Let us work together to uplift the community and educate the Sikh community, especially about the importance of Sikhism for the future.

Are the Pictures of Gurus Essential or a Superstition

In the year 1969-70, an educated relative of mine specially collected imagined images of Guru Nanak Dev Ji during the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. In total, a hundred pictures, but each picture was different from the other and the poses were also different. I don't remember what was his opinion about the imaginary pictures, but I was surprised that every shopkeeper or artist Gurus was creating pictures of Gurus as per their imagination. I continued to have devotion to the Gur-images, especially those created by Sardar Sobha Singh Chitrakar, and this influence continued till 1985-86. When Gurmat wisdom was attained, no imaginary images of Gurus were kept in the house. But there is more devotion in women, so the shops of those who make imaginary pictures are running and idols are being sold.

Sometimes the pictures are made so crudely that it is not pleasant to look at them, but due to some superstitious reasons, such pictures are also worshipped and considered magical. A couple of years ago, a family moved from another province and settled in British Columbia. We visited the family and saw the picture of Guru Gobind Singh ji, on the mirror, in their house, which was of poor quality and had the appearance of a beard trimmed like a drug addict of the village. I boldly said, "where did you get this picture from, and I don't even want to see it, you have preserved it and decorated it." His wife replied, "Veer ji, we travelled thousands of miles just because of this photo, we did not face any obstacle on the way." Now how to change this kind of thinking? For these people, that imaginary picture became magical. If we ask what miracles the picture showed, no answer will be given, just by discussing in this way, the faith of more naive people will increase in the pictures.

If we tell someone about imaginary pictures that this idolatry is not in accordance with Gurmat, their answer be, "which pictures should we worship, these are only put up to tell children." If we assume that Gurmat will be propagated with imaginary pictures, then the effect of the principles of Gurmat would be visible all around, till now. Perhaps people have a misconception that pictures and statues are not the same. Whether an idol is made of clay or stone, paper or a picture on paper, all are made according to the same spirit. If people worship idols in temples, they worship the pictures too.

All Sikhs are religiously instructed that "making or keeping idols (idols) in Gurdwaras, paying obeisance before the pictures of Guru Sahibs or Sikh elders is Manmat". They say, "We have put up pictures of the Gurus, but we do not worship them." They don't even know what the purpose behind those pictures can be? I think that we are being influenced more

by the traditional rites of the majority communities. The government or the majority community made efforts, earlier, and now such efforts are being made at the government level to usurp the minority community of Sikhs. History is a witness that, they almost indulged the big religious movements of the country, like Buddhism and Jainism. The Buddhists, who exist, they are also made to worship idols. Now their emphasis is on the Sikhs. Hence, many Guru Ghars have fictitious pictures of Gurus and painters mislead the gullible people and propagate in favor of fictitious pictures to increase their earnings.

The Guru Sahibs have given us clear principles, provided a unique personality to the community, and enshrined us in the Guru Granth Sahib, which is full of Guru knowledge. Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha writes, "Idol worship is prohibited in Gurmat." (Gurmat Martand, p. 782) In this regard, the Guru Sahibs have issued us Hukamnamas through Gurbani, which we have in the original form:

nwrId kihAw is pUj krWhI]

AMDy guMgy AMD AMDwr]

pwQru ly pUjih mugD gvwr]

Eih jw Awip fuby qum khw qrxhwru]

(vwr ibhwgVw, m: 1, pMnw 556)

As Naarad instructed them, they are worshipping idols.

They are blind and mute, the blindest of the blind.

The ignorant fools pick up stones and worship them.

But when those stones themselves sink, who will carry you across?

(Var Bihagarha, M: 1, Page 556)

People have become blind and mute, which means they have kept quiet, that's why the idiots are worshipping the stones, The stone that sinks itself, how can it help others reach ashore?

kbIrw Twkuru pUjih moil ly mnhiT qIrw jwih]

dyKw dyKI sIWgu Dir BUly Btkw Kwih]135]

kblr pwhnu prmysuru klAw pUjY sBu sμswru]

ies Brvwsy jo rhy bUfy kwll Dwr]136]

(slok Prld jl, pMnw 1371).

Kabeer, some buy idols and worship them; in their stubborn-mindedness, they make pilgrimages to sacred shrines.

They look at one another and wear religious robes, but they are deluded and lost.

Kabir, someone sets up a stone idol and all the world worships it as the Lord.

Those who hold to this belief will be drowned in the river of darkness.

(Salok Farid ji, Page 1371)

Kabir Sahib says that those who worship the idol by buying, with money, and go on a pilgrimage as a mandate, do this as they follow each other and go astray. They do not enjoy it. The whole world is worshipping the stones as gods and the people walking on this path are drowning in deep waters, meaning they are going to get lost in wanderings:

jo pwQr kau khqy dyv]

qw kl ibrQw hovY syv]

jo pwQr kl pWel pwie]

iqs kl Gwl AjWel jwie]

Twkuru hmrw sd bolμqw]

srb jIAw kau pRBu dwnu dyqw]

AMqir dyau n jwnY AMDu]

B®m kw moihAw pwvY PμDu]

n pwQru bolY nw ikCu dyie]

Pokt krm inhPI hY syv]

(BYrau kblr, m: 5, pMnw 1160)

Those who call a stone their God.

Their service is useless.

Those who fall at the feet of a stone-God;

Their work is wasted in vain.

My Lord and Master speaks forever.

Almighty gives His gifts to all living beings. Pause .

The Devine Lord is within the self, but the spiritually blind one does not know this.

Deluded by doubt, he is caught in the noose.

The stone does not speak; it does not give anything to anyone.

Such religious rituals are useless; such service is fruitless.

(Bhairao Kabir, M: 5, Page 1160)

Those who call a stone idol God or Lord Master, all their service goes in vain and those who bow down at the idol's feet, all their labour goes in vain. Our God always speaks and gives gifts to all beings. A fool does not know that God is within him and falls into the trap, of superstition. This stone idol neither speaks nor can give anything. Such fake karma i.e. idol worship is futile and no fruit can be obtained.

From the above proofs, it is clear to us that, Gurmat strongly opposes idol worship, even though people claim that they do not worship idols, but my own experience is that this fact is not entirely true. I have also seen baptized-Sikhs (Amritdhari Sikhs) offering essence sticks to the pictures. If there are pictures in the house, the parents are seen asking the little children, "Look baby! Babaji! Bow down." That's the beginning of idolatry. In 'Nanak Naam Jahaj', the film actors are shown praying in front of the imagined picture of Guru Nanak Sahib, although, the main organization of Sikhs supported this film in a good way, but ignored the deed against Gurmat. People and young children must have accepted the effect of that action, meaning praying in front of the picture.

Today, plastic idols of Guru Nanak have been made in the cities and devils have also installed electric torches in it and people with devotion have decorated those small plastic idols in their homes. At Mehdiana (a village of Ludhiana district), blind people (ignorant) go to see the idols and Mehdiana's income has increased tremendously, and it is being imitated by others. It has been discussed many times that idols of Gurus are being made

and installed in certain Gurdwaras, but who will mandate Gurmat over the people? The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee should pay attention to this. Professor Sahib Singh and Bhai Veer Singh, scholars of the panth, tried on their part that this disease of Gur-images should not spread too much and as much as it has spread, it should be eradicated.

In 1951, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee sought the opinions of some scholars, for taking a particular decision. They wanted Guru-pictures, to be made by the best painters, and the same pictures should be popularised. Professor Sahib Singh expressed his views in a letter, written to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, as follows:

“But it is surprising that you have taken only one side. How have you already made this myth that there is no harm in making pictures and that making pictures will increase the propagation of the Sikh religion? "For better or for worse, we have come from that community and are still close neighbours to those who worship idols and who do not consider it a bad thing to dance by disguising as the great/holy men. It was a difficult task, for Khalsa Panth, to remain on the path/aim that the Guru Patshah had assigned to it. We have also started looking at religion in the same way. That is why we are attracted by idolatry in different forms. Muslims were also our neighbours, but the encroachment on Hindu work and the past atrocities of the Turks did not let us learn anything from them. Those people have been trying to build their lives according to loving the Bani found in the Bigani language (Arabic) without pictures and idols and have been succeeding in it to a large extent. Bhai Gurdas ji wrote in very clear words:

gur mUriq gur sbdu hY[

Gurbani verses of Guru Granth Sahib ji is the image/picture of the Gurus.

"In the presence of this immortal picture (Gur-Shabad), the effort to persuade the Sikh community to return to perishable pictures will be a means of taking the panth behind thousands of years. But the picture is also to be completely fake. Are the divine arrows of Guru Nanak really have lost their sharpness, that the fake pictures are needed to get the effect. Islam didn't need to do so." "Many saints and sages who want to become little Gurus, and who want people to bow before them, are seen offering incense sticks, wearing veil, and asking people to bow down to these images. By placing these pictures in front of the Guru Granth Sahib, every Sikh is forced to kneel in front of the pictures and when the Shiromani Committee stamp is put on the picture, God knows what will happen in the Aarti

of these pictures. How will these pictures be used? People will hang them in their homes and thus these pictures will be given the same respect and respect as other pictures of the owner of the house by serving only as a decoration of the rooms.

"What will the Sikh gradually learn to respect his Gurus? The image of the Guru, the beautiful girls, and cinema artists, for the decoration of the room, will reach the same level. The scenario is already prevailing. Go to the homes of the picture lovers. By becoming the guardian of the pictures, the Shiromani Committee will take the Sikhs away from 'Gur Murat Gur Shabad Hai' and leave them as idol worshippers."

Undersigned

(Sahib Singh)

Islam has spread almost all over the world. The same fear is killing the Christians and the Christians with its power also ended the religious rights in France, in which the Sikhs also came under its grip. After September 11, the population of Muslims in America has not decreased but has increased. They do not believe in images or idols and preach the tenets of Islam vociferously.

A few years ago, statues of ancient soldiers mounted on horses were installed outside of Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver, Especially the statues were ordered from India, which cost a lot. There was a lot of discussion about it. On the other hand, the opposing faction of the administrators said that the idols of these old Singhs were the beginning of Manmat and idol worship. At the end, it was the ruling committee's decision and for a few years the statues were adorned outside the Gurdwara Sahib. These soldiers came to Canada in 1897 and there was a photo of them and the statue was made based on that photo. When the new faction took control of the Gurdwara Committee, they made a quick decision to pull down the statues, but left the statue of Guru Nanak Dev Ji to remain as it was. The stone image (statue) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji is placed in front of the Gurdwara Sahib and that too is against the principles of Gurmat. Many naive people bow down to that imaginary idol. Most of the managers have nothing to do with spreading the Gurmat and removing the Manmat, the real issue is the power and the expression of pride.

Another faction also disagreed with the statues of the above discussed military Singhs and set up their own separate Gurdwara. Almost all of these managers are Amritdharis and run the management based on the Sikh Rehat Maryada. Sikhs organize special programs for

children, where they have the facility to learn kirtan and tabla, where people are given free time to perform kirtan. Every Friday, a lady who is also an amritdhari and PhD in psychology, conducts a class about Sikhism for children. But they too may have drawn imaginary pictures of Gurus in the corridor of Gurdwara Sahib by an artist to attract more people, or I don't know why. These administrators used to run a very beautiful system and the people were happy, but because of these imaginary pictures, the administrators have become famous. A great mistake has been made, apart from the imaginary images, that is, the inauguration of these imaginary images has been done by Panj Pyare. This new tradition was established, the imagined pictures or statues were installed by the Panj Pyare, after offering prayers.

When the statues of horse-riding Singhs were installed in the premises of the Vancouver Gurdwara Sahib, they took written permission from the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and the decisions that are made at the central-shrine are discussed on every tongue. Was the new ritual to create the imagined images on the walls (corridor) of Guru Ghar approved by Sangat? Or Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee? But such rash or thoughtless decisions do not increase much in the promotion of Gurmat. For the promotion of Gurmat, work can be done on Gurmat grounds.

At a Gurdwara Sahib in the Vancouver area, there is an imaginary-picture of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, which is also very large in size. In the year 1978, I asked someone that, while Singhs, serving the Chaur (Chawar), why do they not stand straight and stand on one side. He said, "They are very devout and do not turn their backs to the image of Baba behind them." A special curtain is placed in front of that image, which is moved forward at night. This is a different image created by the 'Nanksar Thaath' people. A Sikh scholar said, "In this photo, the feet are shown the palm up, in which the painter has tried to show the Padama." They call this image as the real image. A funny story is also popular in this regard. Even if we assume that the image is the real image of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, then what will be gained from it? Can image avert a crisis? Can image promote Sikhism? The heirs of that original idol fought among themselves for the ownership of the Dera. Four persons became Babas, after the death of Baba Ishar Singh. Yes, if they had the light of Gurmat, there would never have been a fight and this Dera would have been a part of the central-shrine of the Sikhs.

Gurmat's decision is clear:

siqgur no sBu ko vyKdw jyqw jgqu sµswru]

ifTY mukiq n hovel ijcrs sbid n kry vlcwru]

(vwr vfhµs, m: 3, pMnw 594)

All the living beings of the world behold the true Guru.

One is not liberated by merely seeing Him, unless one contemplates the word of His Shabad.

(Var Vadhans, M: 3, Page 594)

During the Guru-Kaal, there were many who had seen the Gurus, but no one attained transcendence just by only seeing them. Guru Nanak had two sons, other Gurus also had sons, but only the ones who followed the orders and principles of Guru attained transcendence. We shall write the above Gurbani couplet at the entrance of each and every Guru Ghar, and the following shall be written along:

gurmUriq gur sbdu hY, swD sµgiq ivic prgtl AwieAw [

(vwr 24, pauVI 25)

In fact the physical body of the Guru is ‘Gurbani Verse’ of the Guru which comes perceptible only in the form of holy congregation.

(Var 24, Paurhi 25)

The Guru Panth has also given a brief explanation of Guru-Darshan in Rehat-Maryada:

"Obeisance before Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, looking at Guru Rup Sangat respectfully and receiving or listening to Avaza (Mukhvak) are the darshan of Satguru."

If we understand Gurbani and read it, understand it and live our lives based on Gurbani, then it is good for us, if we help in the propagation of these principles, then it is good for the Panth. Bhai Gurdas ji also gives us this message:

gurmuiK jnmµ skwrQw, gurbwxl piV smiJ suxyhl[

(vwr 1, pauVI 3)

Man by becoming gurmukh-Guru oriented, makes his life meaningful; he reads Gurbani and makes others understand (the importance of) bani.

(Var 1, Paurhi 3)

sbdu gurU gur jwxIAY, gurmuiK hoie suriq Duin cylw [

swD sµgiq scKMf ivic pRym Bgiq prcY hoie mylw [

(vwr 7, pauVI 20)

One should accept the ‘word of the Guru’ (Gurbani) as the Guru, and by becoming gurmukh one makes his consciousness the disciple of the Gurbani.

(Var 7, Paurhi 20)

pwrbrRhmU gur sbdu hY sqsµig invwsl [*(vwr 9, pauVI 1)*

Word of the Guru (Gurbani), and not His body, is transcendent Brahm who resides in the holy congregation.

(Var 9, Paurhi 1)

He (Guru Sahib) did not say to worship the Guru by placing the picture in front, or by making a picture, but he told it in very beautiful words that our Guru is the Gurbani, its the knowledge, to concentrate in it and enjoy sitting in the sangat is to become a disciple of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh ji, before leaving this world, ordered us to know what is his real form and whom to seek from. Bhai Nand Lal ji asks from Guru ji:

qum ju khw gurdyv jI, drSn kir gur Awie[

IKley qumrw drs khW? kho moih smJwie[

sRI gurU vwc: (aunHW dw au~qr)

qIn rUp hY moih ky, suno nµd icq lwie [

ingux srgux gursbd hY, khhuµ qoih smJwie [

(rihqnmw BweI nµd lwI)

O Guru, you have asked to seek the sight of Guru.

But how to sight you? Please make me understand.

Response of Guru Sahib:

O Nand Lal! Listen carefully, there are three forms me.

Nirguna, Sarguna, and Gurshabad (Gurbani), understand it.

(Rehatnama Bhai Nand Lal)

Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha summarizes these words as follows:

1. Nirguna (which is devoid of all three Gunas).
2. Sargun (Sri Satguru).
3. Guru Granth and Panth.

The author of 'Prem Sumarg' has also given similar thoughts to the above:

jo cwhy mYN gurU nwl g`lW krW,

qW Sbd pVHy sB inSw hovsl[

Ar jo cwhy ik drSn krW,

ijQy ^wlsy dw iek`T hovy,

auQy jwie kY Adb nwl drSn krY,

pRqlq kir ky[

drSn gurU dw pRwpq hovygw[

Whosoever wants to talk to the Guru, if reads the Gurbani, would attain satisfaction. And whosoever wants to visit, wherever there is a meeting/gathering of the Khalsa, go there and visit politely, adore them. Darshan of the Guru will be attained.

koier isMG, *guriblws pwqSwhl 10*:

guirAwel kw nih Ab kwl[

iqlk n dyvihgy iks Bwl]96]

srb su sµgiq ^wls mwn[

sRI Aiskyqu god mY jwn[

IV pkVwie Sbd kw rUp[

jo mwny so isMG AnUp]97]

drSn gur kw hY svDwn[

sRI gRµQ jI swihb mwn[

Koir Singh, Gurbilas Patshahi 10:

The time of Guryai is over now.

Will not search for the next Guru.

One shall enjoy the company of Khalsa.

Shri Asket (The One) is amongst the Sangat.

Shabad Guru shall be adorned as the Ultimate Guru.

One who believes will be the ultimate Singh.

The solution of all odds is the sight of The Guru (Gurbani Recitation).

Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is, and shall be, honoured as the Ultimate Guru.

Many historians also explained Guru Ji's orders after Guru Ji left the bodily world, from which his messages towards the Panth is clear. Just as the Guru Panth is to worship the Nirākaar i.e. Akal, the Guru Granth and the Guru Panth are to accept as the Guru and seek or meditate on the Guru-Shabad, not to accept any other corporeal Guru or picture/image. If Guru Sahib wanted, He had the capacity, He could have His image made by a good artist. What would be the significance of 'Sikh revolution' if there was a good feeling for the images or idols of the Gurus? We would have been doing the deeds that Sanatan Dharma people used to do. The uniqueness of Sikhism is that we do not give any importance to images or idols, we have to remain the priests of Akal by relying on or seeking the support of Guru Gyan or Gur Shabad. Our Panthak Three-Point Principle:

pUjw Akwl kl,

prcw Sbd kw,

dldwr ^wlsy kw[

Worship only Akal,

Recitation and Understanding shall be attained of Gurbani Shabad of Guru Granth Sahib

One shall seek the sight/company of Khalsa.

We should obey the Guru's commandments and not buy imaginary pictures of the Guru or install them anywhere, because one who believes in the Guru-Shabad does not need an imaginary picture or statue of the Guru.

PS: "Sardar Sobha Singh, the painter who created the imaginary picture of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, had earlier photographed a Darshani Singh Bhai Bhag Singh of Gurdaspur and his face was impressive. Sobha Singh gave him a new look with the brush and titled the image as image of the Guru. This incident was told by the Sikh missionary S: Santokh Singh (Australia) in 1978, other pictures would have been created in the same way.

The imagined photo, of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji, has been popularised by Mr Sobha Singh Ji by making minor changes in his own photo. There is another special and historical tragedy, as we blame Nirmala and Udasi Sadhs for popularizing bad customs and continue to believe that images and idol worship started at their hands, that in the circumambulation of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, the gods and goddesses Statues were kept and there was also an imagined image of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in which he was shown performing prayer to seek blessings from the goddess. There was no special movement to remove these idols from Parikrama. This work for the good of the panth was done by Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha by asking the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar. He was told about Gurmat. Hindus and some orthodox Sikhs also protested the removal of the statues. These statues were removed in 1905.

Khalsa ji! Are we not laying the foundation of idol worship tradition by making pictures on the walls of Guru Ghar? Be Cautious! Do not become a partner in the conspiracy of Bipper people (Anti-religion people).

Superstition About the Gurbani Verses under the Title ‘Sankat Mochan’

Some time ago, I used to spend time with those who set up stalls of Gurmat literature. Many devotees, brothers or sisters, mostly women came to the stall to buy a book of Sankat Mochan Shabads, but they were disappointed because we did not have such a book

available. Today, clever people, due to superstition in the people, do many deeds for their financial gain and such deeds are contrary to Gurmat principles. I was reading the preface of a Sankat Mochan book, which reads:

"A Gursikh and a Sehajdhari gentleman, who has faith in My Guru Nanak, recites according to the complete method, then his sorrows, troubles, worries, are removed. No troubles affect such persons."

First of all, the author of the book has said that a gentleman who recites according to the complete method and who has faith in Guru Nanak, but we are commanded by Guru Nanak Dev ji to serve the Nirgun form of God and to have faith in God alone. As far as the removal of pain and suffering is concerned, these are a part of human life and we ourselves are the cause of a lot of pain and suffering.

It is written about the greatness of a Shabad that the Shabad, should be recited for 40 days by facing the sun at Amrit-Vela for 108 times daily, which will help win the case and be promoted in the job, but it is written above the Shabad: " get a job, be promoted, And win the case." If by doing so the above-mentioned tasks are fulfilled then unemployment can end. But it can also disrupt the process. As it has been said that "for 40 days at the time of Amrit Vela, facing the sun", if the sun is not visible, Where should the sun be brought from?

How is this method possible where there are six months of day and six months of night? Secondly, where it rains for many days and the sun is not visible, what should be done there? Thirdly, to become pure is also incomprehensible. If a person is already pure, he does not wish to be promoted in the job, and does not face the consequences of the court trial. Man does dharma-karma and religious-recitations to become holy.

Above another Shabad, was written: "the mind be pure and happiness be attained." The cleverness of clever people is also remarkable. In the method of the first shabad, it was instructed to do 108 recitations every day, and in the second Shabad, he wrote that the mind will be pure by reading it. He wrote 108 recitations for 40 days in the following method. There is no clarity about what is to be pure. For example of the Shabad chosen to win the case, if the same Shabad is recited by both parties (who have a case between them) then, who will win the case? The author is silent about it.

Many Shabads are rewritten repeatedly, and their meanings are explained differently. Clever people know people's interests and select great shabads according to those interests:

"To get wealth, gains in business, to find good fortune, to get rid of diseases, to get pleasures, to get rid of conflicts, to remove evil diseases, attainment of a husband, removal of poverty, freedom from anxiety, attainment of wealth, attainment of a son."

Titles have been repeatedly written in the will of the above achievements. Only the Shabads are manipulated. As poverty is removed, the acquisition of wealth or the discovery of buried treasure is associated with the same feeling. Such desires are not according to Gurmat. Fulfilling the mind's desires with such reading methods is a bad habit. People who wish to cure diseases or achieve many things by reciting or chanting Shabads are unaware of Gurmat.

The concept of chanting to be selected or attain something is a ritual in Sanatana Dharma. Chanting or reciting the mantra in them is to lure the deities. This fulfils the wish of the mantra practitioner as the deities are under the power of the mantra. Guru Granth Vishwakosh, a Hindu scripture, recognises Four main mantras: 1. Siddha Mantra, 2. Sadhak Mantra, 3. Susidha Mantra, 4. Ari Mantra.

Mantras for family happiness and unity, mantras for peace of anger, mantras for eliminating diseases, and all the mantras are required, to be recited 108 times. Then, Jantar for eliminating the enemy, Jantar for protection, child protection Jantar, captive redemption Jantar, conflict victory Jantar, antiepileptic Jantar, paediatric Jantar, urinary control Jantar. Mantra chanting is not necessary for Jantar.

The main reason to explain briefly about, mantra and Jantar is to make it clear to us that the recitation or methods of chanting shabads for 108 times, are all Sanatani or Biparan customs only. Gurmat does not accept such mantra-chanting methods. By accepting the principle of servitude to God, the pure form of God, the principle of obeying God, the concept of suffering and happiness, doing honest work, making moral values and honesty a part of life, and accepting the principle of birth and death or life salvation, to disapprove Bipran custom or thought. Although, the Sikhs have used many traditional terms, such as Mool-Mantra etc. In Sanatan Dharma, the main mantra of the deity is called Mula-Mantra.

In Gurmat, counting of recitation or chanting, chanting by facing on a particular side, etc. are not acceptable. There are proofs in Gurbani:

duKu klysu n Bau ibAwpY gur mMqRu ihrdY hoie]

(isrIrwgu m: 5, pMnw 51)

The one who Suffering, agony, and fear do not cling to one whose heart is filled with the Gur-Mantra.

(SiriRag M: 5, Page 51)

If God's name is in our hearts, His memory is fixed, then there is no sorrow or conflict because the one who lives in the will of God, knows the pain as well as the happiness and the one who takes refuge of the fearless is free from fear. When we have no enemy, no unknown, then which enemies should we destroy and if we have no enemy, then from whom should we win the case:

nw ko bYrl nhl ibgwnw sgl sµig hm kau bin Awel]

(kwnVw m: 5, pMnw 1299)

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

(Kanrha M: 5, Page 1299)

mn Apuny qy burw imtwnw]

pyKY sgl isRsit swjnw] (*gauVI suKmnI m: 5, pMnw 266*)

One who eradicates cruelty from within his own mind.

Looks upon all the world as his friend.

(Gaurhi Sukhmani M: 5, Page 266)

We have to love God and consider suffering and happiness as His gift, because if we are attached to Maya and Attachments, then there will be only suffering:

Bwel ry mlqu krhu pRØBu soie]

mwieAw moh prliq iDRgu suKI n dlsY koie]

(*isrlrwgu m: 5, pMnw 46*)

O sibling of Destiny, make God your friend.

Cursed is the emotional attachment and love of Maya; no one is seen to be at peace.

(SiriRag M: 5, Page 46)

If we have love for God, we get liberation from worldly sufferings:

sjxu siqguru purKu hY duKu kFY haumY mwir]

(isrlrwgu m: 4, pMnw 41)

The true Guru, the Primal Bring is your friend, who shall drive out pain and subdue your ego.

(SiriRag M: 4, Page 41)

In Gurmat, the being is shown an easy path for a happy life and salvation. Gurbani is a guide for the entire humanity, so we need to understand Gurbani and read it, if we understand the message of Gurmat, then we will get rid of the superstition of the repeated recitation of the Shabad for the solution of troubles. All Gurbani shabads holds the same rank. These clever people have created superstitions that this is the fruit of so-and-so verse, that is the fruit of so-and-so verse. We have to give importance to the shabad and with understanding the idea behind the Shabad there will be clarity about Gurmat. The order of Gurbani to those, who are looting by using Shabads as tricks like chanting of tantra-mantra to solve the troubles, is:

iDRgu iqnw kw jlivAw ij iliK iliK vycih nwau]

(vwr swrµg, m: 1, pMnw 1245)

Cursed are the lives of those who read and write the Lord's Name to sell it.

(Var Sarang M: 1, Page 1245)

Use of Incense Sticks, Perfume, and Oil Lamps (Jot) inside Guru Darbars

As far as the use of dhoof (Incense Sticks) and jot (Oil Lamp) is concerned, it is an ancient practice that dhoof is used to perfume the place. Nowadays, there are ready-made incense sticks, which produce different types of fragrances. In the olden days, incense was made specially and ghee was also added to it, and its smoke was thickened by putting it on fire.

In closed houses it is impossible to bear the smoke of such incense material. There is no bad feeling during the use of these objects, but the devotion is in abundance, or the tradition is made so that there is no shortage in the benefits of the event or the Path without the fragrance. These days there are different types of aromatic oils, if you put them in electrical plugs, they will give aroma for at least a month. Just as the smoke of incense or agarbatti is not acceptable to everyone, in the same way, manufactured incense oils that are not suitable for everyone. If you want to use incense, first know that no one has respiratory disease or no one suffers from sitting in the smoke. If it is done, then it will be unrighteousness or Manmat.

One day I had to attend a function at someone's house. I was also reciting Sukhmani Sahib and the head of the devotee family started sprinkling attar (scented oil) i.e. sprinkled perfume on everyone. I couldn't tell if the fragrance was for women or men, but it almost took my breath away. Kept on reciting, could not make noise, but recited with difficulty. It is not known when the custom of sprinkling fragrant oil in this way started, but in most Deras, perfume is sprinkled on the Saroops of Guru Granth Sahib and on the congregation. It is not good to do it this way, because this aromatic oil is not good for health. Aromatic oils are not allowed in Canadian hospitals, especially children's hospitals. Although there is abundant use of fragrances, not everyone can use them. Many people are harmed by such things. So, we should not sprinkle such fragrant oils on people.

As far as lighting Jot is concerned, its background is related to lighting. The flame is lit by adding ghee. It is also believed that ghee is holy and using the holy item in religious ceremonies has more religious significance. Nowadays, there are modern means of light, but lighting a Jyot has become a tradition and there is no religious significance in lighting a Jyot. In this regard, Sikhs have made it clear in the Rehat Maryada that "lighting Jot, ringing bells etc. is not according to Gurmat". It is Manmat to keep Kumbh, Jot, or coconut etc. during Akhand Path or any other type of recitation or to continue reciting any other Bani at the same time.

These days there are many such sages, who start new rituals. As they will tell the devotees that the Jyot must be lit while reciting. Perhaps they will be the only ones who can tell whether lighting a Jot or reciting by lighting a Jot has any more fruit or any other spiritual benefits?

In the end, this is the request that we should not do anything without thinking and understanding. There is nothing wrong with putting incense or perfuming the environment, but if the place is clean and ventilated then no incense or perfume is needed. Especially sprinkling of scent (perfume) etc. is not good. Many people do not like or can't bear the smell of cents etc. As far as the ritual of lighting a ghee lamp is concerned, it is not an act of religion or for the sanctity of the event. Among our people, milk or ghee were considered sacred objects, and the original purpose of lighting a ghee lamp was for light, but now lighting it is a ceremonial ritual, nothing more. We should not create new superstitions, but in the light of Gurmat, we should eliminate unnecessary rituals or traditions.

The Superstition Regarding Nishan Sahib and Its Sewa

The triangular flag of the Sikhs is named Nishan Sahib, which is Basanti or Dark Blue in colour. The literal meaning of Nishan is a symbol or Flag, and it also has other meanings that is semantic commands and symbols. Independent countries in the world have their own

flags and different colours and symbols are placed on the flags of different countries for their unique identity. The colour of the flags of many countries is according to the specific colour approved by their religion, for example, the flag of a Muslim country is green or has green in it. The fifty stars in the American flag represent the fifty states of America. The flag of UNO is white because white is a symbol of peace.

There is not much material available regarding the history of the Nishan Sahib of the Sikh community. Principal Satbir Singh ji quoting the ancient Panth Prakash says that Guru Nanak Dev ji saw a kind of saffron mark swinging on Sachkhand and brought it for the panth from there. The above is not a historical fact, but rather ridiculous. Which Sachkhand? Is there any Sachkhand other than the earth? According to Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha, the first Nishan Sahib was swung by Guru Hargobind Sahib on Akal Bunga in 1665. Its earlier name was Akal Dhvaj. After that, Sardar Jhanda Singh, Jathedar of Bhangi Misal, installed Nishan Sahib on Sri Darbar Sahib in Sammat 1829. In Sammat 1833, Bawa Santokh Das and Pritam Das Udasi sadhus erected two big tall Nishans, one for Sri Darbar Sahib and the other for Akal Bunga, in front of Akal Bunga at Darshani Deorhi (Gurmat Martand) Later Sardar Desa Singh Majithia installed a steel Nishan Sahib, replacing the Nishan made of wood, and later Maharaja Ranjit Singh presented the Nishan Sahib.

The symbol of the Khalsa Panth is the symbol of Kharhag on the Nishan Sahib and Farhara is of Basanti colour. (Mahan Kosha) Khanda or Kharhag symbols also have significance and these symbols symbolize Miri-Piri. Sometimes there is also a symbol of <> on the farhara, which indicates the Oneness of God. As far as the interpretation of Basanti or dark blue (Surmai) colour is concerned, there has been no consistency. Some call this colour, a seasonal colour which is an expression of happiness and spring, others say Basanti is the colour of sacrifice for Sikhs.

According to Gurmat, we should not get caught up in the meanings of colours. It is our duty to follow, whole heartedly, the tradition established by the founders of the Panth, but it is also necessary to criticize the tradition which has been carried out to copy others.

The flag is respected in every country and the flag is saluted during military parades or sports events. This tradition is unique to every country. If a country's flag is burned or rolled up, the person is considered guilty under the law, even though the American flag is routinely burned in Muslim countries today. To do so is to irritate the rulers of that country and to show that the sovereignty of that country is not accepted.

As we have mentioned that every free country has its own symbol (flag), but slave countries have no flag. This Nishan Sahib of the Sikh community was established by Guru Hargobind Sahib, when he created the Sri Akal Bunga, equivalent to the Mughal government, and unfurled the Nishan. This was a great revolt against the Mughal Empire, as Guru Sahib also created the Sikh army.

It is also clear that when the tradition of placing Nishan Sahib at Darbar Sahib, Sri Amritsar and Akal Takht Sahib started, it became a norm to install Nishan Sahib at all Sikh Gurdwaras. This triangular and unique Nishan Sahib belongs to the Sikh community and became the Nishan Sahib as a symbol of an independent nation during the Guru period. Later, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur laid the foundation of the Sikh state and hoisted the Nishan Sahib. During the reign of the Misals, there was a Misal Nishanwali, whose main duty was to hoist the ensign after victory. Although the Sikh state is no more, but as a Sikh nation we have Nishan Sahib, which also expresses the uniqueness of the religion. When there are Nagar Kirtans, there are five Nishan Sahibs leading. As per the Panth, all the Gurdwaras should have the Nishan Sahib and the Sikh Rehat Maryada states:

"In every Gurdwara, the Nishan Sahib should be installed at a higher place. The colour of the Nishan Sahib's dress should be Basanti or Surmai and the Nishan Sahib's top should have a Sarbaloh Khanda or Bhala."

I am surprised today, when many Deredars do not like to install Nishan Sahib, a symbol of the superiority of the Panth. They should be determined that if they do Parkash of the Guru Granth Sahib and have a Sikh saroop, then why don't, the blessings of the Guru Sahibs, install this unique mark, the Nishan Sahib? Recently, there was a special order from Sri Amritsar in this regard that it is necessary to have 'Nishan Sahib' inside all Gurdwaras.

There is no established tradition regarding the length or thickness of the Nishan Sahib. In many places the Nishan Sahib is 50 or 101 feet or even 125 feet high. To determine its height, one must follow the city corporation's rules or regulations. There is no need for any cooperation to install Nishan Sahib abroad. With the new hydraulic system, the 125 feet Nishan Sahib is lowered and erected easily and no other wires are installed. But there is an old system in our country, on which a special person climbs to unfurl the farhara. This work is very difficult and many may have suffered injuries. We should install Nishan Sahib in all places according to the new system, which will make it easy to put Vastar (Cloth) or Farhara on the Nishan Sahib.

It has been mentioned earlier that the citizens of every country are proud of the national flag and sacrifices are made to keep that flag flying. Because the flag is a symbol of the country's sovereignty, a symbol of freedom. When I was younger, I used to bow my head to the Nishan Sahib of the historical Gurdwara Sahib of my village, that too from afar. But Nishan Sahib was never clothed. Its length was also heard to be 101 feet. At that time many women were seen bowing down to Nishan Sahib and money was also offered. Our school teachers used to say that don't put money on Nishan Sahib, but, do devotees listen to anyone.

As I have mentioned earlier in an article about this, Sewa of Nishan Sahib was performed on a Gurburab in the Gurdwara Sahib of my town. Service meant wrapping new Faraha and clothes. A bucket of milk was brought for this task and the Sarpanch Sahib of the village said that Nishan Sahib has to be given a bath with milk. At that time, many children were standing there with their bodies half bent and they did not even have shoes on their feet. I did not mind the bath and said that you should not waste so much milk, if you have to give a bath, make raw-lassi (A diluted milk with an abundance of water) and give the rest to these poor and hungry children. Sarpanch Sahib accepted my suggestion and did the same. There were not even 'Panj Pyare' present.

It is a new practice in our community that Nishan Sahib should be made bathed with milk and the presence of the Panj Pyare during the offering of Faraha and new cloth is also a new practice, which does not seem to be in accordance with Gurmat, but also those who establish or perform Gurmat rituals are taking decisions under the influence of Bipran. Educated boys/girls will think that it is a Sikh tradition that thrones, and steel-built Nishan Sahib should be made bathed with milk? But the Gurus had made us the worshippers of Akal and inspired us to serve God as Nirguna. We are now doing the opposite of Gurmat.

This Nishan Sahib is a capital of the community and cannot belong to any single person. But today a new disease is spreading that people pay money to manufacture and erect a Nishan Sahib and write their name on the stone saying that this Nishan Sahib was installed with the donations by a certain family. Good people! How can we be donors? Lakhs of sacrifices were made for this Nishan Sahib, so this Nishan unfurled. We need clarity regarding Gurmat and washing the floors of Guru Ghar and Nishan Sahib with milk is not a pious act but an act of ignorance.

It is also important to clarify so that no one has superstition. The height of Nishan Sahib does not have much significance. Today, just as the capital of the Panth is spent by building the buildings of Gurdwaras, putting gold on the domes or using special marble, in the same way there is a competition for the height of the Nishan Sahib.

Sometimes we put precious clothes on the Nishan Sahib, which is bound to spoil quickly in rain and wind. We should compete in the field of preaching the Guru Mat, not in the luxurious buildings of the Guru-ghars or the lofty Nishan Sahibs.

Nishan Sahib reveals the unique personality of our nation. Therefore, we pray for the historical heritage in which we try daily to keep the pillars, flags, bungas forever. For the glory of the Khalsa heritage, we need to have the clarity of Gurmat along with the preaching of Gurmat.

Baseless Customs and Rites associated with Nishan Sahib

In Canada's province, B.C. Surrey, along with a Gurdwara Sahib, there's a Hindu temple. The flag of that temple is of saffron colour and the Nishan Sahib of Gurdwara Sahib is also of saffron colour. Both look the same from a distance. It has occurred to me that the colours of the Sikhs' Nishan must be blue. Keeping the present day in mind, all the Gurdwaras should have the Basanti colour of the Nishan Sahibs. Dr Harjinder Singh Dilgiri writes that Sikhs used to have blue Nishan. This means that the siropaos that are given by the gurdwaras are also saffron in colour, and the Nishan are also looking saffron in colour, which does not look good. There seems to be a conspiracy behind this, that even among the Sikhs, the colour of RSS became popular. Now the ritual which has become more popular is bathing Nishan Sahib. If we accept the Karma-Kand in its full form, Nishan Sahib should be bathed daily. In fact, this ritual is a copy of the rituals taking place in Shivalias or temples. They bathe Shivling with milk, we started bathing Nishan Sahib with milk. One of our fellow journalists shared a snapshot of Yuba City, California. This is the incident of the first week of November (2019). When the Sikhs or the Gurdwara authorities took off Nishan Sahib's old clothes, people scrambled to get the old clothes. Don't know what they have to get from the torn and old waste of that cloth?

It should have been that if we have settled in foreign countries then we should be free from karma-kand. Gurbani refutes all karma-kand, we stand in opposition to Gurmat and do not

leave behind superstitions or karma-kand due to lack of understanding. As mentioned earlier, the colour we call 'saffron' is the colour saffron, which is of the RSS. It seems that RSS has infiltrated its colour in our community and Sikhs consider it the colour of sacrifice. Now we have to sacrifice to get liberation from karma-Kand. Otherwise, just like cow's udder and cow dung are being eaten as holy in Sanatan Dharma, how much less are we to strive for the old torn removed cloth from Nishan Sahib's, or drink the dirty water of Charan Ganga. If we consider ourselves, followers of Nirmal Panth or Khalsa Panth that is known for its uniqueness, then let us limit ourselves to the ideology of Guru Granth Sahib. Some time ago, an appeal has been made by some panthak organizations at Sri Akal Takht Sahib that all Nishan Sahibs of the Khalsa Panth should be blue in colour.

Improper use of Gurbani by preachers

For us "Bani is Guru, Guru is Bani". We will not worship anybody, for it is the Guru's order for us. We have great respect for Gurbani, even reverence, but do not consider to understand

the Gurbani Shabad. This is the reason why most preachers use Gurbani inappropriately for their personal motives and get away from the real purpose of Gurmat. In this article an attempt will be made to consider the most commonly used Gurbani quotes of four/five Gurbani Verses and their exact meaning.

Once upon a time at a Gurdwara Sahib, a devotee family took langar sewa in celebration of their son's birthday. On that occasion, a Dhadi preacher praised the family, saying a holy Sentence of Gurbani, “puql gµFu pvY sµswir” (Puti Ganddh Pavae Sansari) and said that the lineage in the world continues only with sons and mothers who do not give birth to sons, their lives are miserable. Those mothers who had daughters but not sons were also present in the Sangat; also the families who had no children. Many families, due to ignorance, may also think that an educated preacher will be correct and the given interpretation of Gurbani would also be correct. Some families were also angry at what the preacher said and complained to the Gurdwara Committee, but the preacher was smart, he avoided it.

This quote is misused by many preachers because their main motive is to make the family happy. It is also true that due to the influence of superstition or ignorance, many families celebrate the birthdays of sons only, with great pomp, and do not celebrate the birth of girls. Actually, this quote or the whole Shabad of Gurbani has nothing to do with the birth of a son. This Shabad is given by the first Patshahi (Guru Nanak Sahib) under the title 'Majh Ki Vaar', which is on page 143 of Guru Granth Sahib. In this Shabad, Guru Sahib has used the thoughts of the people in the world or the sayings prevalent in the society:

kYhw kµcnu qutY swru] Agnl gµFu pwey lohwrū]

gorl syql qutY Bqwrū] puqNI gµFu pvY sµswir]

rwjw mMgY idqY gµFu pwie] BuiKAw gµFu pvY jw Kwie]

kwlw gµFu ndIAw mlh Jol] gµFu prlql imTy bol]...

nwnku AwKY eyhu blcwru] isPql gµFu pvY drbwir]

(vwr mwJ, m: 1, pMnw 143)

When pieces of Gold or Bronze or Iron break,

The metal-smith welds them together again in the fire, and the bond is established.

If a husband leaves his wife,

Their children may bring them back together in the world, and the bond is established.

When the king makes a demand, and it is met, the bond is established.

When a hungry man eats, he is satisfied, and the bond is established.

In the famine, the rain fills the streams to overflow, and the bond is established.

There is a bond between love and words of sweetness....

Nanak says this after a deep reflection:

Through the Almighty's praise, we establish a bond with His Court.

(Var Majh, M: 1, Page 143)

That is, if gold or alloy breaks, the goldsmith or blacksmith welds it together. If a woman separates from her husband, the world can be reconciled through children. If the king asks for (tax) and the subjects keep giving, then their relation remains the same. A hungry person becomes connected with his body by eating bread. If it rains, then famine or hunger ends. Love remains stable with sweet words..... Similarly, Guru Sahib promotes that by praising God, a love relationship (Devotion) with God is maintained.

There is no such meaning of the above shabad that there is a lineage in the world through sons. Guru Sahib used the worldly things of worldly people as examples and the most important thing is to praise God, so that we remain connected with that Almighty.

Another Shabad that preachers read a lot at weddings or celebrations. Instead of the 'rahau' (rhwa) Pankati (a sentence of Gurbani) of this Shabad, another Pankati is sung as if it were permanent.

" IK KuslAw pwiqswhlAw jy siqguru ndir kryie] (Lakh Khusiya Patishaiya Je Satguru Nadri Karei)".

Hundreds of thousands of princely pleasures are enjoyed, if the True Guru bestowes His Glance of Grace.

The purpose of the preacher is that the sangat should be delighted to hear 'Lakh Khusiya' (Hundreds and thousands of princely pleasures). This Shabad has nothing to do with the

event of happiness, and the real meaning of the Shabad is clear in the following lines of 'Rahau':

myry mn eyks isau icqu lwie]

eyks ibnu sB DµDu hY sB imiQAw mohu mwie]

(isrlrwgu m: 5, pMnw 44)

O my mind, focus your consciousness on the One.

Without the One, all entanglements are worthless; emotional attachment to Maya is totally false.

(SiriRag M: 5, Page 44)

O my mind! Be united with one God, because without God the whole world is a tangle of maya, attachment and filth. The line ' IK KuslAw pwiqswhlAw (Lakh Khusiya Patshahiya)' means that if there is Vaheguru's grace, there is happiness equal to conquering millions of thrones. If God gives me a little Naam (Naam-Simran), my body and mind become calm, but such things can happen to a person who had performed some auspicious acts in his previous life.

In this Shabad, is the glory of achieving God (prmwqmw dl pRwpql) and the life of that person is successful, who praises and accept the will of Vaheguru. If, only, the Akal Purakh favours, then transcendence takes place.

There was a kirtan ceremony at the house of a devotee family. A ragi group performed the kirtan of Shabad:

AauKI GVI n dyKx dyel Apnw ibrdu smwly]

hwQ dyie rwKY Apny kau swis swis pRiqpwly]1]

pRB isau lwig rihE myrw clqu]

Awid AMØiq pRØBu sdw shwel Dµnu hmwrw mlqu]rhwau]

(Dnwsrl mhlw 5, pMnw 682)

He doesn't let His devotees see the difficult times; this is His innate nature.

Giving His Hand, He protects His devotee; with each and every breath, He cherishes him.||1||

My consciousness remains attached to God.

In the beginning and the end, God is always my helper and companion; blessed is my friend. ||Pause||

(Dhanasari M: 5, Page 682)

The Kirtani Jatha made a mistake in the pronunciation of the Shabad by straying from the true meaning of the Shabad, instead of " AauKI GVI n dyKx dyeI (Aukhi Gharhi Na Dekhan Dei)" read ' dyKx del (Dekhan Dai)'. Tried to read this Shabad as a form of prayer.

In this Shabad, Guru Sahib explains that God does not give his servant any time of suffering, rather he always protects the servant and keeps His merciful hand on his head. In the Pankati of Rahau, the meaning is 'O brother, my heart is connected with God, He is always a helper from the beginning to the end'. A scholar revealed the real meaning of the Shabad and said that this Shabad is not in the form of prayer. After discussing the Shabad, Ragi Singh expressed his anger towards the scholar.

Another Shabad that was used extensively by lay preachers after 1984; People's enthusiasm was also raised with its reference. This Shabad is in 'Majh Ki Vaar'. The Shabad is as follows:

so jlivAw ijsu min visAw soie]

nwnk Avru n jlvY koie]

jy jlvY piq IQI jwie]

sBu hrwmu jyqw ikCu Kwie]

rwij rμgu mwil rμgu]

rμig rqw ncY nμgu]

nwnk TigAw muTw jwie]

ivxu nwwY piq gieAw gvwie] (*vwr mwJ, m: 1, pMnw 142*)

They alone are truly alive, whose minds are filled with the Lord.

O Nanak, no one else is truly alive;

Those who merely live shall depart in dishonour;

Everything they eat is impure.

Intoxicated with power and thrilled with wealth, they delight in their pleasure, and dance about shamelessly.

O Nanak, they are deluded and defrauded.

Without Lord's Name, they lose their honour and depart.

(Var Majh, M: 1, Page 142)

Its meaning, as preachers think, is the opposite. Guru Sahib is saying, that in reality, only a person in whose mind God resides, lives. The man who loves the kingdom, wealth and dances shamelessly in this love, and the one who seems to be living without the Naam, whatever he eats or drinks is haram. Without the name of the Lord, people are being cheated, robbed and lose their dignity. Only two Panktiya (Gurbani Sentences) from the preachers " jy jIVY piq IQI jwie]sBu hrwmu jyqw iKCu Kwie] (Je Jivai Pati Lathi Jai|| Sabh Haram Jeta Kichhu Khai)" are preached, the other Pankatiya are omitted. Due to our lack of understanding of the meaning of Gurbani, the preachers, of the Bipar category, keep the motive of, "rotIAW kwrn pUrh qwl (Rotiyan Karn Purehi Taal)", as the main motive (Meanins – they beat the drums for the sake of bread.). Another Shabd that the Kirtaniyas use in a different sense than the original meaning is in the Gurbani Verse of 'Ramkali Ki Vaar' composed by Guru Amar Das Ji:

hir mMdru soel AwKIAY ijQhu hir jwqw]

mwns dyh gur bcnl pwieAw sBu Awqm rwmu pCwqw]

bwhir mUil n KojIAY Gr mwih ibDwqw]

mnmuK hir mMdr kl swr n jwxnl iqnl jnmu gvwqw]

sB mih ieku vrqdw gur sbdI pwieAw jwel]

(vwr rwmkll m: 3, pMnw 953)

That alone is said to be the Lord's temple, where the Lord is known.

In the human body, the Guru's Word is found, when one understands that the Lord, the Supreme Soul, is in all.

Don't look for Him outside yourself. The Creator, the Architect of Destiny, is within the home of your own heart.

The self-willed manmukh doesn't appreciate the value of the Lord's temple; they waste away and lose their lives.

The One Lord is pervading in all; through the Word of the Guru's Shabad, He can be found.

(Var Ramkali M: 3, Page 953)

In this Shabad, it is said that this body is Harimandar and actually that body should be called Harimandar from which the identity of God is known. Through this human body, following the order of the Guru, one finds God. People who are manmukh (self-righteous), do not have a high understanding of Harimandar, and lose their human birth forever. All human beings have the light of God, but it can be found only through the knowledge of the Guru.

The above Shabad was explained inappropriately and the word 'Harimandar' was made to mean 'Sri Harimandar Sahib'. While, this word was created by Guru Amar Das Ji and the construction of Harmandir Sahib was done by Guru Arjan Dev Ji. It could be said that the Dokhis (The Bipars) destroyed thousands of Harimandars, that is, they killed people. This murder was done there, from where Guru Sahib used to protect human rights. Directly meaning 'Harimandar' as Harimandar Sahib (Sri Amritsar) is wrong and inappropriate. In Gurbani, where the body is called 'Harimandar', the body is also called 'Dharma':

iehu srlru sBu Drmu hY ijsu AMdir scy kl ivic joiq]

guhj rqn ivic luik rhy koel gurmuiK syvku kFY Koiq]

(vwr gauVI m: 4, pMnw 309)

This body is the home of Dharma; the Divine Light of the True Lord is within it.

Hidden within it are the jewels of mystery; how rare is that Gurmukh, that selfless servant, who digs them out.

(Var Gaurhi M: 4, Page 309)

Many people also say that Guru Ramdas Ji did not even create Lavan (lwvW) for the sake of marriage-ceremony. There is truth in this, but there is no other method, for Anand-Karaj, than the use of Lavan. At this time, the husband and wife are encouraged to make the relationship according to the pattern of the union of the soul and the God, then they are asked to follow the duties towards each other by accepting the following life as religion. The important thing here is that the marriage is performed in the presence of the Sangat and in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib, prayers are offered to the Akal Purakh for a successful marriage.

Many Shabads in Gurbani can be read at appropriate times. In this article, we have tried to tell that no financial gains should be made by inappropriate use of Gurbani, but, the concept of sons and daughters, happiness and sorrow, grief and pleasure should be explained to the families in the light of Gurmat.

Naming Rituals and Superstitions

In all religions of the world, there are various naming rituals for newborn children, but it depends on the people how they choose the names of their children. Many families keep children's names without performing religious rites, and many families adopt religious traditions for giving names to their children, holding naming rites. Most of the naming ceremonies are attended at religious places, where family or other relatives are present.

In the Sikh Rehat Maryada, the rite of naming is briefly enumerated:

"After the birth of a child in a Sikh house, when the mother is able to sit up and take a bath, then (no number of days are fixed) the family and relatives shall prepare and take Karhaah Prashad to the Gurdwara, in the presence of Guru Sahib shall recite the Shabads of praise and gratitude, "prmysir idqw bñw (Parmesari Dita Banna) 'soriT m: 5' (Sorthi M: 5)", "siqgur swcY dIAw Byij (Satgur Sachai Diya) AwsW m: 5 (Asa M: 5)" etc. Suppose the text of Sri Guru Granth ji is present. In that case, the Mukhwak should be taken and Granthi Singh should suggest the name of the child from the first letter of the beginning and after taking the permission of the Sangat, the word 'Singh' should be added after the name of the boy and the word 'Kaur' should be added after the name of the girl. After six stanzas of "Anµdu swihb (Anandu Sahib)", Ardas shall be performed for the ceremony of the child's naming rituals and Karhaah Prashad be served."

There are very few families who completely follow the above criteria. Most of the families ask Granthi Singh to perform Ardas and check the baby's name. Granthi Singh takes Mukhwak and tells the first letter of the Shabad and the family comes home and tries to create a name, asks the advice of friends, then goes somewhere and names the child. Some families name the child first and then go to the Guru-Ghar to pray.

Until now, most families name their child with advice from relatives or friends or by copying the names given by some children. After the year 1989, many brothers like other communities have created a name dictionary, based on which new names are coming into existence and it has become easier for families to name a newborn baby boy/girl. According to Sikh tradition, the name should start from the first letter of the Mukhwak, but many families who have a background in the Rawalpindi area, when naming a child, start with the last letter of the first word of the Mukhwak. Because before the existence of the Sikh Rehat Maryada there was no integration in the traditions of the Sikh families.

Many brothers ask questions about when Guru Gobind Singh Ji, in 1699 AD, selected the Panj Pyare, did not change their original names, but added the word 'Singh' to their names. Nowadays, when Amrit Sanchar is held in foreign countries, the Panj Pyare inquire about how their naming rites took place. If Sikhs Rehat Maryda was not followed, they ask to have new names. It is very difficult to do so, which means that one has to go through a lot of given steps to get a new name. Actually, there is a need to change the 'mind' while entering Sikhi and it is necessary to make the principles of Sikhi important for practical life.

It is important for Sikh families that if they have to go to Gurdwara Sahib for the naming-rites of their newborn child, then there should be complete mental preparation for this Sikh tradition i.e. there should be determination. A couple of incidents have happened, which are not in accordance with the Sikh tradition. When Mukhwak is taken from the Guru Granth Sahib, sometimes the first letters of the word are such that more names cannot be coined or the families do not have the resources to coin the names. Such families go back to the Guru-ghar and ask Granthi Singh to perform Ardas and come up with another Mukhwak, so that their desired 'letters' come out. We should refrain from such a mistake. It is better, if the family is not firm on religious norms, then they should keep the name at home and pray later.

Some people in foreign countries feel that we should keep names like the whites, so that there is no difficulty in pronouncing them. It is superstition and there is no difficulty in pronouncing our Punjabi names. Yes, many sounds are not available in English, although some names are pronounced there, but not correctly. As in English, there is the absence of q, v, f, d, sounds, but it does not mean that we should not respect our names. Around the year 1970, a Sikh was appointed to a higher post. When the people working in his office asked him if they could keep his name short, he said, "I understand that you are not so stupid that you can't even pronounce my name." It was Dr Satwant Singh, who did not allow his name to be kept short. Some of our brothers and sisters have turned their backs on their language and culture and embraced the Western culture.

I will repeat the words of Dr Swaraj Singh about this:

"After living in North America for many years, it is my personal experience and impression that the pace of change is very fast compared to others in the Punjabi community. Straight simple Punjabi girls change so much after a year in Vancouver that it is impossible to

imagine. Narinder Kaur, Surinder Kaur and Paramjit Kaur change their hairstyles and become Nancy Grewal, Sandy Sandhu and Pam Gill and become unrecognizable. The situation of Jarnail Singh and Mahinder Singh is not much different from them, hearing their new names Jimmy and Moe, they seem to be the product of a gang instead of the villages of Punjab, history has repeated this truth time and again that without the cultural and social stability, economic achievements become worthless.”

(Aa Sikh Tu Ghar Aa, pages 43-44)

Perhaps, we do not know that Punjabi names are not difficult if others are told about the original pronunciation. The names of other nations are very difficult, such as the names of Russians or Eastern Europeans, where they are long and impossible to pronounce because we are not fluent in the sounds of their speech. Even Chinese, Jewish and German names cannot be written in their original form in English. So, we should not be under the illusion that having a name that imitates the names of white people can get special concessions. Respect your culture, language and religion and acquire educational qualifications and other qualities for higher achievements.

Discrimination against Sikh women based on superstition

While glorifying Sikhism, we say one thing clearly that Sikhism is the first religion in the world, which has given equal status to women. Guru Nanak Dev ji cursed those people who spoke ill of women:

so ikau mMdw AwKIAY ijqu jMmih rwjwn]

(vwr AwsW, m: 1, pMnw 473)

Why do you say bad things about the ones who give birth to the emperors?

(Var Asa, M: 1, p. 473)

Guru Amar Das ji raised his voice against the heinous social custom of that time 'Sati' and explained the true meaning of Sati through Gurumat:

sqlAw eyih n AwKIain jo miVAw lig j|µin@]

nwnk sqlAw jwxIAin@ ij ibrhy cot mrµin@]

(vwr sUhl, m: 3, pMnw 787)

Do not call them 'satee', who burn themselves along with their husbands' corpses.

O Nanak, they alone are known as 'satee', who die from the shock of separation.

(Var Suhi, M: 3, Page 787)

The Guru Sahibs broke the old social customs and appointed women as equals for the preaching of Gurmat. After the Gurus' period, we have kept aside the clear principles given by the Gurus and have popularised new rituals at our whim or under the influence of Bipar. Today, new doubts are arising in the minds of the young generation and children born and brought up in foreign countries that we are putting Gurmat principles into practice or we are keeping a difference between what we say and write and what we do? Will our chiefs or administrators of historical places be able to answer this or will they continue to establish committees to satisfy the people?

Before Gurus' period, there was superstition and illusion about purity and impurity in the society. Women were also considered impure. If there was a child born in one's house or a

death occurred in one's house, the lives of that family were considered impure, hence the word ' sUqk (sutak)' was used. The Gurus asked the people to rise above this delusion and tried to explain through scientific thinking that if such a thing is accepted as Sutak, then the kitchen can never get rid of the Sutak:

jy kir sUqku mMnIAY sB qY sUqku hoie]

gohy AqY lkVI AMdir kIVw hoie]

jyqy dwxy AMn ky jIAw bwJu n koie]

pihlw pwxl jlau hY ijqu hirAw sBu koie]

sUqku ikau kir rKIAY sUqku pvY rsoie]

nwnk sUqku eyv n auqrY igAwnu auqwry Doie]

(vwr AwsW, m: 1, pMnw 472)

If one accepts the concept of impurity, then there is impurity everywhere.

In cow-dung and wood there are worms.

As many as are the grains, none is without life.

First, there is life in the water, by which everything else is made green (gets its life).

How can it be protected from impurity? It touches our own kitchens.

O Nanak, impurity cannot be removed in this way: it is washed away only by spiritual wisdom.

(Var Asa, M: 1, Page 472)

Guru Sahib is explaining in very clear terms that such thinking that Sutak or impurity is derived from each other, is pure superstition:

sBo sUqku Brmu hY dUjY lgY jwie]

jmxu mrwx hukmu hY BwxY AwvY jwie]

Kwxw plxw pivq $\frac{1}{2}$ hY idqonu irjku sµbwih]

nwnk ijn@l gurmuiK buiJAw iqn@w sUqku nwih]

(vwr Awsw, m: 1, pMØny 472-73)

All impurity comes from the doubt and attachment to duality.

Birth and death are subject to the command of the Lord's Will; through His Will, we come and go.

Eating and drinking are pure since the Lord nourishes all.

O Nanak, the Gurmukhs, who understand the Lord, are not stained by impurity.

(Var Asa M: 1, Pages 472-473)

Wherever women are prohibited from serving or performing kirtan, there is the Sutak-Bhit (iBt/Impurity) thinking behind it. In most of the deras, women kneel at the feet of the Baba's in the blind devotion and then perform various types of services. At that time, there is no prohibition on women from these deredars, but why is it prohibited to perform service at worshipping centres or Sikh centres?

Let it be! As, it has been decided by the Panth that, Sikh women can perform all kinds of services or perform kirtan as well. All managements are to be congratulated for taking this revolutionary step. It is important to clarify, that, it is specifically mentioned in the Sikh Rehat Maryada that Singhanis can also be included among Panj Pyare during Amrit Sanchar. Deredars or Babas take other services and langar service from the women according to personal gains, but do not involve the women in the service during Amrit Sanchar. In many places women are not even given Prashad of Panj Pyare. Why this discrimination?

Today, in countries/abroad, in Akhand Paath series most of the Bibis (Females) recites Gurbani Path, if the Bibis cannot join as Panj Pyare, or if they are not considered to be worthy of the Prashad of the Panj Pyare, then why they are allowed to recite and serve the langar. Why is it considered holy? The same superstition exists in the Catholic sect of Christianity, where a woman cannot become a priest. It is one of the main features of the uniqueness of Sikhism that there is no discrimination between castes and Genders in Sikhism and women have the same right to religious practices as men. If the servants and scholars of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee are determined, then the prevailing customs in the Sikh society which are not according to the Gurmat can be eradicated. Sikh women should be free to serve in every field and should not be

discriminated against. A scholar of a Panth has given a new challenge to the Panthak leaders by discussing Gurmat principles. I think the Panthak leaders should abolish the established traditions contrary to Gurmat, otherwise, the mutual differences between administrators and Sikh intellectuals will increase. It is very wrong that if a new manager comes, instead of implementing all the decisions made by the first manager, he says wrong and gives his own opinion. It is very important for the administrators of Panthic organizations to know about Gurmat and Manmat and to take the opinions of Panthak scholars while explaining Gurmat principles.

In this connection, I add the views of Bhai Nirmal Singh (Germany) which are critical of orthodox Sikh thinking:

"Many have also been heard saying that if a Sikh lady were to join the Panj Pyare, then when Dasmesh Pita asked for head, a female too could have presented herself for the offering of the head. Is it so little that since the arrival of Satguru Guru Nanak Dev Ji, Saints, devotees and fakirs were already born by the holy souls, through whom Dhur ki Bani began to be recited on this earth and this earth began to be prepared for the manifestation of Sikhism. Is it any less to be the worthy mothers, the purest souls, of the ten forms of Nanak as ten Gurus? Is it any less to be worthy mothers of the mighty Sikhs and send them in the Sangat to present their heads when Guru Sahib asked for? Dear Sangat Ji, is it possible that our spiritual wisdom has grown to an extent to understand the essence of devotion and spiritual power of the holy mother souls who gave birth to the Gurus? Did these mothers not have stood before Dasmesh Pita, if their saint-soldiers sons had refused, to offer their heads, though they had to come by any means?"

(Sikh Heritage, March 2004)

Although according to Gurmat, there can be no discrimination based on caste, colour, race, or gender in Sikhism, Bipar's thinking still prevails in our Sri Darbar Sahib. Anti-Sikh forces have control over the administrators, so Gurmat principles are not being fully implemented. In India, women and lower castes (according to Bipra thinking) are prohibited from entering many religious places. It is written outside many temples that women are not allowed to enter during the days of Menstruation cycle, some Sikhs believe due to ignorance that women should not enter the Gurdwara Sahib during the days of Menstruation and they should not recite the Guru Granth Sahib. These ideas are not compatible with Gurmat but are anti-Gurmat. On June 3, 2015, women protested against

Baba Hari Singh Randhave Wale at Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran in Surrey, preach that when women menstruate, they become impure, a view contrary to Gurmat. Such a measure of being holy or impure is an invention of the ignorant and a delusional thinking. Menstruation is a law of nature. The great words of Guru Nanak Sahib are being misinterpreted. Gurbani is saying:

ijau jorU isrnwvxl AwvY vwro vwr]

jUTy jUTw muiK vsY inq inq hoie KuAwru]

sUcy eyih n AwKIAih bhin ij ipMfw Doie]

sUcy syel nwnkw ijn min visAw soie]

(vwr AwsW, m: 1, pMnw 472)

As a woman menstruate month after month,

So does falsehood dwell in the mouth of the false; they suffer forever, again and again.

They are not called pure, who sit back after merely washing their bodies.

Only they are pure, O Nanak, within whose minds the Lord abides.

(Var Asa, M: 1, Page 472)

Guru Sahib wanted to remove the superstition from the people that a person cannot become clean by maintaining external cleanliness. In fact, only that person is pure, in whom the name of God, meaning auspicious qualities resides. As far as women's menstruation is concerned, Guru Sahib used it metaphorically. When Bhai Hari Singh Randhave Vale asked Bhai Jasveer Singh Ji (Akali Singh Sikh Gurdwara, Vancouver), "Would you allow women to recite during the days of Menstruation?" His reply was: "I will allow it because it is natural." There is a process and every woman is free to do every work whether it is social or religious." Nowadays women participate in every field equally with men. In many places they also perform the services of Granthi at Gurdwara Sahib.

Superstition Regarding Keeping Purity

It is an incident of, the year, 1987 when Panthak scholar Giani Mewa Singh (Bhindranwale) came to Canada for a campaign-visit (Parchar-Feri). Coming here, he started the movement of pure pronunciation of Gurbani and the Sangat also showed enthusiasm to know Gurbani text, Gurbani-grammar and pronunciation secrets. One day, Giani ji came out of the ablution room, picked up the mud, and started wiping his hands with the mud. The wise scholar there asked that Giani ji! You didn't use soap? So Giani ji replied, "Giani ji, what should I do, because of living in Bhindranwali Taksal (Taksal is a centre for learning) for 22-25 years, even now these rites do not come out from within, even if I try hard, but sometimes the superstitions of the Taksal are revealed."

He did not even hesitate to reveal the reality. He was a man of integrity and a true upholder and guardian of Panthak Rehat Maryada. Let's assume that in older times it was not a custom to use soap among the people, so the superstition was established in the people that hands and utensils are cleaned-pure only with clay or sand. Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha writes:

"Many ignorant Sikhs don't wash hair with soap/shampoo. They say that hair need products like curd etc., which are edible." (Gurmat Martand, p. 338)

This superstition is still prevalent among the majority of people. While cleaning can be done with soap, not with curd and milk. It will be greasy, will attract flies and will soon lead to body odour.

The authority to implement or popularize the law of Pure-Impure rested with the Bipar or the priestly class. They perceived, that the people of the lower castes were deprived of dignity and even physical contact with them was to be avoided. Upper-class people could not even sit and eat with the backward/lower castes. The Guru Sahibs conducted langar practice, and built Sarovars (Clean water ponds) and Baowlis (Sources of consumable water) to free the people from discrimination based on castes/classes and pure/impure. Finally in 1699 On the occasion of Baisakhi, Panj Pyare from different castes were offered to have Pahul (The Amrit) from the same bowl by touching their lips to sip the Pahul, so that the lesson of "eyk nUr qy sBu jgu aupijAw (Ek Noor Te Sabhu Jagu Upajya. Means, whole of the world has emerged from same source)" becomes firm.

Despite the efforts of the Gurus, we have not been freed from the superstition of Pure-Impure. There is a true parable about this. Giani Sher Singh ji writes that, he had the good fortune to go to the house of a Sikh in Burma, who also had his children with him. That Singh believed in Pure-Impure. He proudly said, "Gyani ji! Although I am married to a Burmese and have children, but, I am strict in eating and drinking, as I cook my food and do not eat the food prepared by her." What a funny thing that, there is a physical relationship with that woman, but not of food. Hence, Giani Sher Singh says that the number of Sikhs has not increased due to such sectarianism and caste division, and Sikhs have not accepted Gurmat as an understanding, they are just proud of it by disguising it. Even today, many Sikhs do not eat food prepared by other Sikhs, they prepare their food themselves and eat. If someone touches it by mistake, they don't eat it at all, considering it to be impure. Bhagat Kabir Ji's Shabad will be appropriate for more clarity on the illusion of Purity and Impurity, which he narrated satirically to the Brahmin Pandit. They ask the Pandit to tell which place is sacred, and where to sit and eat food:

mwqw jUTI ipqw BI jUTw jUTy hI PI lwgy]

Awvih jUTy jwih BI jUTy, jUTy mrih ABwgy]

khu pMØifq, sUcw kvnu Twau]

jhW bYis hau Bojnu Kwau]

ijhbw jUTI bolq jUTw, krn nyq® siB jUTy]

ieMd®I kI jUiT auqris nwhI, bRhm Agin ky lUTy]

Agin BI jUTI, pwnI jUTw, jUTI bYis pkwieAw]

jUTI krCI prosn lwgw, jUTy hI bYiT KwieAw]

gobru jUTw caukw jUTw, jUTI dInI kwrw]

kih kblr, qyel nr sUcy, swcl prl ibcwrw]

(bsµqu kblr jl, pMnw 1195)

The mother is impure, also the father. The one they produce is impure too.

Impure they come and go. The unfortunate ones die in impurity.

Tell me O Pandit, O religious scholar, which place is uncontaminated/pure.

Where should I sit to eat my meal?

The tongue is impure, and its speech is impure. The eyes and ears are totally impure.

The impurity of sexual organs does not depart, though the Brahmin is burnt by the fire.

Impure is the ladle which serves the food. Impure is the one who sits down to eat it.

Impure is the cow dung, and impure is the kitchen. Impure are the lines used to mark its area.

Says Kabir, they alone are pure, who have obtained pure understanding.

The mother is a liar and the father is also a liar.

(Basantu Kabir ji, Page 1195)

Yes, it is important to take care of cleanliness, whether it is the cleanliness of the house, kitchen or body. Still, I do not accept purity-impurity under superstition and delusion if a person does not take care of physical cleanliness or is not careful while eating and drinking or consumes alcohol and tobacco. We should refrain from eating from such a person or sitting next to him. Sikhs should not have any caste pride in their minds and should not hate anyone based on caste or hesitate to eat or drink from them. A Sikh has to follow the teachings given by the Guru and become a whole-hearted person.

In 1984-85 Surrey, B.C., a Baba who preached in a Gurdwara Sahib said that the manner, in which the utensils are cleaned, in the langar, does not make them clean/pure. According to older tradition, we should clean the utensils with sand or ash, but the Sangat did not heed such inadequate advice. In foreign countries, there are special machines for washing the utensils of the devotees, and the utensils are cleaned in these. I don't know if it is so in India, but officers come to check cleanliness in foreign countries and it is necessary to follow special instructions in terms of cleanliness and there can be no negligence. In many places in India, sand or clay or ash is used to clean the vessels used to prepare the langar, which are then washed with water. It is not good from a cleaning point of view as the sand or soil, used for cleaning, is not replaced quickly. There is a fear of causing pathogens. As the dreaded and terrible diseases spread these days, it is necessary to use soap to clean the dishes, and have plenty of water, to prevent them. Religion never means that we cling to old superstitions. In order to avoid these diseases, doctors say that we should wash our

hands frequently with soap to avoid germs. Wherever possible, the use of new and modern facilities is essential.

For Sikhs, the real purity is the purity of the mind. If we cannot sit and eat with the lower castes or consider it impure, then we have not entered the Sikh diaspora. A few years ago, in Bathinda area, if a devotee family used to take, the Saroop of Guru Granth Sahib to their home, it was said that, under the caste system, taking the Saroop of the Guru to the house of the lower castes the Saroop has been impure and they refused to take that Saroop back. Those people who are superstitious, and for the sake of false purity can consider even the Saroop of the Guru to be impure, who will vote for such people? We should have a complete understanding of Gurmat's guidance. There is no such thing as delusion, it is mere superstition. Let us not be careless in terms of cleanliness and keep away from older wrongs or superstitions. In today's age, if one wants to clean-wash one's hands or utensils with mud or sand instead of using soap, then, it will be foolishness and not wisdom.

Maryada of The Completion Ceremony (Bhog)

of

The Akhand Path or Sehaj Path

A few years ago, I was present in a Gurdwara Sahib during a Bhog. Granthi Singh, who was performing Bhog ceremony, started reciting Japu Bani following the recitation of the Rigmala Path. After the completion of Japu ji's recitation, kept on choosing and reciting Shabads from the Shabad Hajaare. A former member of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was sitting with me. He said, "All the Guru Granth Sahib has been recited and it is not important to recite Japu Bani and other Shabads to perform the Bhog ceremony. That's why our youth are becoming communist comrades by seeing the unnecessary rituals of religion." At that time, I did not pay much attention to what he said.

A few days passed, Bhog's Saloks were being recited at a Gurdwara Sahib and the proceedings of the entire event were being broadcasted on the radio. Granthi Singh started reciting Japu Bani after reading Rigmala. I thought that, maybe five stanzas of Japu ji would have to be recited to start further reading, but after reciting the entire Japu ji, six stanzas of Anand Sahib were recited. If we look at the prevailing norms of the Panth, then in most places only six stanzas of Anand Sahib are read during the Bog. Due to printing error or not writing clearly in published Rehat Maryada, only one half of the person insists that the Anandu Sahib shall be read in full while performing the Bhog ceremony. Secondly, we have popularized many customs locally and they are never questioned, nor the Rehat Maryada is discussed. The general Sangat is not interested. Yes, if the Bhog ceremony is delayed and the organizers say that full text of Anand Sahib should be read, then sometimes the Sangats get fed up.

As far as the significance of the text is concerned, there is no difference. While Guru Granth Sahib is recited, recitation of Anand Sahib, Japu ji and other Shabads is done, which many brothers consider necessary to read at the Bhog too. The Gurbani verses are already read, then re-reading the same Gurbani does not give any more benefits. However, Rasmi/Sehaj Path or Akhand Path, which are being read/done without understanding, are not beneficial. The administrators are also aware of this fact, but due to the people's devotion to the Path

and secondly, because it is a source of income for the Guru-Ghars, the rituals are being followed blindly.

The Panth as a whole, could not decide whether the Bhog shall be performed by reading the Mundavani or the Ragmala. It was decided in the first formulated Rehat Maaryada that the Bhog will be performed following Mundavani, but the Deredars or other groups did not approve the above decision. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in the second edition of Rehat Maryada changed the first decision and printed:

"The recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Sadharan/Sehaj or Akhand) should be performed following Mundavani or after reciting ragmala according to the ongoing central ritual."

To get detailed information about this, one can read the recently published book 'Mundavani' written by Giani Gurdit Singh, in which, how Ragmala came out, where it came from and who is the real author of Ragmala, is given along with the evidence.

At this time, it is a custom of the Bhog that, either the Bhog shall be performed by reciting the Mundavani or the ragmala, after which the six verses of Anand Sahib are recited, or Kirtan Raagis can also sing, sometimes the whole congregation (Sangat) may also sing. In many places, this is the custom, and at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the Bhog is performed the same way, but the Ragmala is not recited there. The second rule is prevalent in the camps of Nanaksar Thath Wale or under their influence. As, at the end of the text, the Ragmala is read, then the entire text of Japu ji, finally a few Shabadss of Shabad Hazare, which are selected and read at different places, then six stanzas of Anandu Sahib.

Third Maryada (Practiced in common), the Ragmala after the completion of recitation of whole Gurbani Path, then the full reading of Anand Sahib. The fourth Maryada is that, the Bhog of the recitation is performed by reading the Ragmala, then Japu ji, followed by six verses of Anand Sahib. In most of the Gurdwaras, Bhog takes place as per panthak norms, the Bhog is performed either on Mundavani or by reciting Ragmala and after that there is a prayer by reciting six stanzas of Anand Sahib. The Panthak thinkers should strive for the integration of Maryada.

There is no doubt, about the fact, that, the first five and last stanzas of Anand Sahib are recited at the Bhog of the recitation at Sri Akal Takht Sahib. In many places, the same is the Maryada in the Gurdwaras as well. Yes, if anyone still has doubts, they should write a letter to the Dharma Prachar Committee and inquire.

Recitation of Sadu-Bani (sdu bwxl)

In Guru Granth Sahib on page 923, falls Baba Sunder Ji's composition 'Ramkali Sadu' in Raga Ramkali, in many Gurdwaras, it is recited at the funeral ceremony, after the Akhand Path recitation. This tradition seems to have spread by itself. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee does not even have, any instruction to read this verse, in the printed Rehat Maryada. One of the Granthi Sahibs of one Gurdwara Sahib did not recite Sadu Bani during the Bhog session, then a devotee lady said to Bhai Sahib, "Bhai Sahib Ji, you have made a big mistake today, you forgot to recite Sadu." Bhai Sahib replied that he did not read deliberately. Bhai Sahib's father had passed away, he performed all the rituals of Bhog by himself and did not recite Sadu Bani.

Thus, we should not have any superstition that Sadu Bani must be read. I think that, if, instead of reciting, it should be made a good idea to explain the simple meaning of this Gurbani Shabad and tell the people. Otherwise, many of the Shabads in this Gurbani verse can be confused by Paath Purana, Kesho Pandit, Phull, Harisar etc.

Amrit Sanskar: Method and Superstition

In Sikhism 'Amrit Sanskar' is considered more important than other rites of life. As far as the information about the background of the word 'Amrit' is concerned, its original source is the mythic lexicon or religious books of Hindu or Sanatan Dharma. Bhai Kanh Singh Ji Nabha's 'Mahan Kosh' also defines it according to Sanatani Ranga: "A drinkable substance whose effect does not let the death occur." But there is no such liquid in the world, nor will it ever be. It is also a myth that drinking nectar helps escape from death. In Gurbani, the word 'Amrit' has been used in different ways. As far as the word is used for the name of God, the doctrine of Gurmat is unique, according to which:

AMØimRqu plvhu sdw icru jlvhu...] (*gUjrl m: 5, pMnw 496*)

May the meditative remembrance of the Lord give you infinite delight. (Gujri M: 5, Page 496)

In other words, the person who has absorbed the name of God within himself, that person becomes one with the Almighty or the Great Light, his spiritual death does not occur. Some evidence regarding the word 'Amrit':

AMØimRqu hir hir nwmu hY myrl ijMduVley,

AMØimRqu gurmiq pwey rwm] (*ibhwgVw m: 4, pMnw 538*)

The name of the Lord, is Ambrosial Nectar, O my soul; through the Guru's teachings, this Nectar is obtained. (Bihagrha M: 4, Page 538)

ijju jl iniD kwrix qum jig Awey,

so AMØimRqu gur pwhl jlau] (*soriT m: 1, pMnw 598*)

The treasure of the Name, for which you have come into the world – that Ambrosial Nectar is with the Guru. (Sorath M: 1, Page 598)

The word 'Amrit' for edibles:

ijh pRswid Cqlh AMØimRq Kwih]

iqsu Twkur kau rKu mn mwih] (*gauVI suKmnI m: 5, pMnw 269*)

By His Grace, you partake of the thirsty-six delicacies.

(Gaorhi Sukhmani M: 5, Page 269)

As mentioned earlier, the original source of the word 'Amrit' is the books of Hinduism and this word has been in use since the Vedic period. This word is especially used in the practice of Somras. According to the legend, the sea was churned in search of this nectar and other precious objects, which eventually yielded, were called 14 gems, one of which was nectar. But Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699 AD, during the ceremony of the Khalsa, the practice of giving Khande Di Pahul was performed and the Khande Di Pahul was also called 'Amrit' and this method was given the name of Amrit Sanskar.

Detailed information, in the sources of Sikh history regarding Amrit transmission during Baisakhi of 1699 AD, is not available. While historical sources differ about the method of nectar transfer, there are also different opinions about the timing of this great event. For example, writing about the source of a 'Bhat Vahi':

"Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji Mahal Dasma...

Son of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, on Tuesday, the day of Vaisakhi of 1795 (Lunar Calendar) gave Khande Di Pahul to Five Sikhs and gave them the title 'Singh' as a last name. First, came Daya Ram Sopati Khatri resident Lahore, then Mohakam Chand Chhipa resident Dwarka, Sahib Chand Nai resident Bidar (Zaffrabad) city, Dharmchand Javanda Jat resident Hastanapur, Himmachand Jhivar resident Jagannath turn by turn stood up. Made them wear Blue costume and Guru ji himself wore the same too. Relinquished Huka, Halal, Hajamat (Hair-Trimming), Haram, Tika, Janeu Dhoti. Directed to disconnect from Meene Dhir Maliye, Ramraiye, Masand who trimmed their hair. Kangha, Kard, Kesagi, Karha, Kachhehra was given to all. Everyone became Kesadhari...."

(Bhat Vahi Bhadson Pargana Thanesar)

Historians have agreed on the exact time of Khalsa Sajna as 29 or 30 March 1699. Sirdar Kapur Singh 'National Professor of Sikhism' considers 30 March 1699 as correct date. (Prashar Prashan, p. 1) According to the Bikrami Sammat, this event took place on the first Visakha, when Guru Gobind Singh ji granted Sanad of perfection to the Nirmal Panth led by Guru Nanak Dev ji and Khande Di Pahul to join the Khalsa army. Established the procedure, the current name of which, 'Amrit Sanskar', came into vogue. Although many scholars disagree with the alternative name of this rite and consider the original name

'Khande Di Pahul' to be correct, but I think that words are interchanged in the names of traditions or rites within every culture, nation and religion. And sometimes the meaning is also changed. Better yet, it is okay to accept the panth-approved title 'Amrit Sanchar' and at the same time the historical name can also be used, i.e. we can say Khande di Pahul or Amrit Pan. It also does not seem right as the word 'Khande Di Pahul' has been omitted in the Rehat Maryada.

Procedure

The Guru Khalsa Panth has included the complete procedure of this rite in the Sikh Rehat Maryada and has also prescribed the Gurbani verses to be recited during the Amrit Sanchar. Some scholars are concerned about 'Banis', like the 'Chaupai' bani, they do not consider it as created by Guru because the main source of this bani is 'Charitro Pakhyan' recorded in the Dasam Granth. About which the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has decided that this is not created by Guru. Now we should follow the method and form approved by the Guru Panth. By rejecting the accepted method of Amrit Sanchar by the Panth, many deredars or historical Gur Asthans or Takhts outside Punjab have established their own norms, which do not fulfill according to Gurmat. Like Pahul of Khande for men, Pahul with Kirpan is prepared for women. Due to the rites established in this haste, respect for Sikhism is not being created in the young generation. On one hand, the government of the country is treating the minority people like a stepmother, on the other hand, the children of the new generation are turning their backs on national and religious traditions. (The panthak method of Amrit Sanskar is recorded in the Sikh Rehat Maryada published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.)

New superstitions and delusions

In the year 1980, Amrit Sanchar was organized by a Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver. During the preparation, the organizers gave a blanket on which Sunehra was to be placed, then a newly became Singh asked if this blanket is unused and fresh yet? The manager said that it is clean, but Singh said that only unused fresh blankets are used here. Think about it, if there is an unused fresh blanket, how many hands will it have passed through? From the hands of the factory workers, then to the wholesalers, then to the shopkeeper who sold the blankets. Do shopkeepers wash their hands before selling blankets? If we agree that it is important to keep clean. Seeing the stubbornness that Singh had, many thoughts arose in

their mind about why there were these superstitions, among the Sikhs, behind every little thing. When Das read the completely non-Sikh code of conduct, he did not write anything warm blanket in it, it is our own fabricated traditions that have been established. The non-Sikh standard is enshrined in:

(g) “bwtw srv-loh dw hovy qy cONkl, sunihry Awid ikxy sv`C clz pur r`ØiKAw hovy[”

“The bowl shall be of whole steel, Sunehra, etc. shall be kept at a table or on a Pure place.”

Another topic discussed a lot during Amrit Sanskar is the 'kutha' meat. Some religious figures did not accept the Panth's interpretation of the word 'Kutha' as correct. Those who took influence from their personality were against eating meat and there was not much discussion about eating or not eating meat even within the Sikh Rehat Maryada. Where the word 'Kutha' has been used in the Panthak Maryada, the explanation of the words 'Kosher' and 'Halal' is necessary. Let's leave it, as this is a Panthak matter, only they shall handle it.

In 1985, I received a phone call from the manager of a Gurdwara Sahib in Vancouver: "Have you ever removed/separated your kirpan?" And my reply was, "Why is this being asked?" The manager said that the gentleman, who is taking responsibility for the Amrit Sanchar event, his condition is that only those Singhs should be the 'Panj Pyare' ones who have never separated any Kakaar from their body in their life. I told him that the gentleman who is making such a bet, should be asked when he came from India, did he board the plane with Kirpan? I have not received an answer till today. Soon after 1984, this gentleman was influencing the people by promoting himself as 'Jujharu Singh' (One who had served in the 1984 Movement), and no one knew his real role, whether he was an agent of the Indian government or someone else.

15-20 years ago, a Singh, in Toronto had surgery at a hospital, was Amritdhari. He insisted that he would not separate the Kakaar from the body. There was a lot of discussion about it. Sometimes, MRI Or while taking other X-rays, we cannot wear combs or kirpans as they may interfere with the machines. Although there are only a few such Sikhs in the millions, but foreign newspapers get more spice to discuss. A few years ago, there was an incident regarding a primary school child in America who used to wear Kirpan. The school banned the child from wearing the small Kirpan, calling it a weapon and fearing that the child would use it to intimidate or threaten other children. The child's parents were also adamant that the child is Amritdhari, and it is his right to wear/hold Kirpan. If other children get scared, we will put the kirpan firmly locked and the child will not be able to take it out of

the sheath. If Siri-Sahib (Kirpan) is not to be taken out of its sheath, then, what is the purpose of being armed? Is this not a mere superstition or baseless determination?

Panthak scholars should make decisions in this regard, otherwise, the educated youth will run away from the esteemed tradition. For example, if one is wearing all Kakaar (especially Karha and Kirpan) and wants to participate in a wrestling competition, a tournament, or any other sport, it is impossible to participate. Many Amritdhari Singh Singhnis, when they go swimming or exercise, take off their underwear and put it on again. Those who do so, become depraved (Patit) or not? Who should decide this?

In hospitals, when heart diseases are treated by performing heart surgery or angioplasty, the hairs are trimmed, otherwise, the doctors do not perform surgery. Are those patients who went through such trimming depraved or not? Is it necessary for them to go through Amrit-Sanskar again? Sometimes, the patients have to go to the hospital twice or more in a month for their physical examination, at that time the Kakaar are separated, does the Sikh become Patit at such times or not? Due to superstition or lack of clarity on the matter from Gurmat scholars, many brothers and sisters attend Amrit Sanchar ceremonies to have 'Chula' or 'Amrit' again. My own opinion is that such stories are not compatible with Gurmat. Even if someone goes to a hospital, he/she should have 'Chula' again, if he/she travels in a plane, he/she should have 'Chula' again, eating meat by mistake should be considered Kurehat (Against the Rehat Maryada). (Sikhs are forbidden to eat only halal meat. Halal is the meat slaughtered according to Muslim rites and kosher according to Jewish rites.) The Sikh rehat Maryada mentions only halal meat and not kosher, although both kosher and halal have no difference. Panth has to think about this too, because, Sikhs live all over the world. Even if the child plucks the hair or the hair gets stuck somewhere and breaks, many gentlemen appear for the Amrit Sanchar ceremony.

There is also a lack of clarity regarding the imposition of 'Tankhah' (The punishment or procedure of punishing according to Panth). Two or three years ago, a Kirtan Durbar was being held in Surrey, Canada. While the kirtan was being performed, two or three Singhs, wearing the uniform of Panj Pyare performing the Amrit Sanchar ceremony, brought a Singh. Singh's hands were tied behind his back and when he was asked to pay obeisance to Guru Granth Sahib, it was very difficult for him to rise because his hands were tied behind him. This scene was like the policemen handcuffing the criminals and presenting them in the courts. This disturbed the Sangat and the entire Sangat started looking at the Singh and

the Singhs who had captured him. At that time whispering started and the kirtaniye also got disturbed. At that time, Amrit Sanchar was being done at the place in another venue, but, the question arises, what is the fault of that Singh, who was brought to the Guru's court, if the Guru Granth Sahib was not present during the Amrit Sanchar ceremony? Or was this demonstration done specifically to incriminate or defame that Singh? If there is no tradition of such punishment, then, who are promoting these new rites?

Those who participate in the service as Panj Pyare must be 'Gurmukh', able to solve many complex issues or problems as well. A little ago, in Amrit Sanchar, a lady attended the ceremony to have Amrit again. The lady confessed about 'Bajjar Kurehat' (Condemnation of Rehat) that she had been unfaithful, but, someone of the Panj Pyare wanted to know the details, and the lady, crying, told the secret and one of the Panj Pyare revealed the secret. When the lady's husband learnt about this, he divorced her. That lady had vowed to keep her life high, but forgiveness could not be obtained. We have to see who is to blame for this. What right did those Singhs have that the secret told in the closed room should be disclosed in public and we should also understand it as a sign that a person who just says that there has been a mistake should not go into the details of that mistake. That lady went wrong even, accepting the mistake and seeking forgiveness. A person who accepts mistakes and seeks forgiveness is a person of high spirit, the one who forgives is even greater than the one who is at mistake.

In the year 2003, the self-acknowledged Shiromani (saint?) said while doing the Katha, "see, many educated people are saying that according to Panthak Rehat-Maryada, women can also be included in the Panj Pyare at the time of Amrit Sanchar, if someone like me, even unintentionally touches Bibi, then my mind can be shaken. This Baba is considered a Shiromani Sant and has performed Amrit Sanchar to thousands of people, but his mind is very weak, that is, mental thinking at the level of life is inferior. How is a person, who has not cultivated his mind, a saint? But people yearn for the dust of his feet, under blind devotion.

During the year, 1985, Amrit Sanchar Samagam was organized by a deredar in my town. Amrit Abhilashi (people, who wanted to have Amrit) attended with much enthusiasm, but soon their enthusiasm was blown away. Baba, who organized the event, said that Ravidasee Veer should be on one side and the others on the other side. By saying this, some aspirants

came out of the event and they have not had the Khande Di Pahul till today. When I spoke to the Late Giani Mewa Singh Ji (in 1987), he admitted that Baba used to do the same.

In Vancouver, BC, there was always an annual Amrit Sanchar event, organized by the management of a Gurdwara. That year I was also in the organizing committee as an assistant secretary. Most of the same Singhs, who urged to join the Gurdwara Committee, would participate in this Amrit Sanchar event. This incident is from 1980-81. Preparations were made for the Amrit Sanchar ceremony, Sri Guru Granth Sahib was present in that room, Panj Pyare were ready, but none of the Amrit aspirants attended the ceremony. When questioned, the said that someone had told them that they would not be included in the committee. "When we are not to be included in the committee, why should we have have Amrit?"

There is another incident from the same year, which I like to share with the Sangat.

I received a call from a management committee, of another Gurdwara, that a permanent sponsored granthi is coming from India and I should pick and drop him to them. As asked, I made the arrangement for new Granthi Singh to arrive there by bus. On the first day itself, there was the ceremony of Anand Karja, which was handed over to them, but he did not even know how to perform the Anand Karja ceremony. After inquiring with the local Sikhs, he concluded the ceremony. The devotees became suspicious of him and even asked him whether he was Amritdhari or not. That Granthi Singh said, "I have had Amrit." Sangat asked, "From where?" He replied, "Narinder Biba and I have had Amrit together at Patna Sahib." The Sangat did not stop laughing, because Narinder Biba used to sing songs and to say so seemed like a joke. When I inquired about this, a Ragi group told the whole story, which was present in Patna Sahib at that time. The management of Takht Sahib had imposed a condition that only the songwriter or poet would go on the stage, who was Amritdhari. At that time, 'Granthi Singh' and Narinder Biba have had Amrit to fulfill the condition of the stage. By doing this, where one is deceiving oneself, there is a big deception by hypocrisy to the Sangat.

There are many other superstitions about Amrit Sanchar that some Jathe (Sikh Groups) are good at performing the ceremony, they say the Mool-Mantra from 'Aadi Satchu' to 'Hosi Bhi Satchu' and meat is prohibited. Many will say that Amrit should be had at Sri Akal Takht, Panthak Maryada is fully applicated there. Having Amrit or becoming a soldier of the Khalsa Panth is related to the mental state of every living being. Just as it is necessary

to have mental fortitude to join the army or police, in the same way one has to be honoured the son of Guru Gobind Singh by becoming a soldier of the Khalsa army, wearing the Khalsa uniform. Just as the Sahibzade created Sikh history by doing great deeds at a young age, in the same way, we should become soldiers of the Khalsa army by upholding the principles of Gurmat. If having Amrit is a condition for contesting elections or singing on stage, then taking Amrit in this way will be hypocrisy. Endless Amrit Sanchar ceremonies are being held, but the era of manipulation, quarrels and illegal usurpation of Maya by entering into politics and cheating is increasing in society. There are very few true sympathizers of Panth, who believe in the Panth's morals and truly support the unity of the Panth. It is requested that we should stay away from the new superstitions that are becoming popular. Whether a person or an aspirant goes somewhere to have Amrit and joins the Khalsa army, we should be very careful, that the Amrit Sanchar is according to Panthak-Maryada. In this is the good of all of us, the good of the entire Panth. In Gurbani, it is to embody the pure truth of Nirmal Panth:

scu qw pru jwxIAY jw irdY scw hoie]

kUV kl mlu auqrY qnu kry hCw Doie]

scu qw pru jwxIAY jw sic Dry ipAwru]

nwau suix mnu rhsIAY qw pwey moK duAwru]

scu qw pru jwxIAY jw jugiq jwxY jlau]

Driq kwieAw swiD kY ivic dyie krqw blau]

scu qw pru jwxIAY jw isK scl lyie]

dieAw jwxY jIA kl ikCu puMnu dwnu kryie]

(vwr Awsw, m: 1, pMnw 468)

One knows the truth only when he is truthful by heart.

The filth of falsehood departs, and the body is washed clean.

One knows the Truth only when he bears love to the True Lord.

Hearing the Name, the mind is enraptured; then, he attains the gate of salvation.

One knows the Truth only when he knows the true way of life.

Preparing the field of the body, he plants the seed of the Creator.

One knows the truth only when he receives true instructions.

Showing mercy to other beings, he makes donations to charities.

(Var Asa M: 1, Page 468)

scu krxl scu qw kl rhq]

scu ihrdY siq muiK khq]

(gauVI suKmnI m: 5, pMnw 283)

True are his actions; true are his ways.

True is his heart; Truth is what he speaks.

(Gaorhi Sukhmani M: 5, Page 283)

If we are determined in this Gurbani Rehat and be ready to surrender body, mind and wealth to the Guru, only then can we be qualified to become soldiers of the Khalsa army. Many management members will tell the unaware people that we follow the old procedure of Amrit Sanchar. This is pure superstition. It was mentioned at the beginning of this article that, the complete procedure of preparing Amrit Sanchar or Khande Di Pahul, prepared by Guru Gobind Singh Ji on Baisakhi of 1699, is not available in writing in any historical source. The Guru Khalsa Panth has determined the absolute standard of Amrit Sanchar by researching the available sources and basing on some facts presented by the scholars. We should not follow any other dera or baba's Maryada in spite of Panthak Maryada. To join the Khalsa army, it is necessary to be Amritdhari.

Prasad of liquors, Deras of drug addicts/drunksards?

For some years there has been a discussion about the abundance of drugs in Punjab. Political parties are accusing each other that this or that party created drugs or drug dealers. The new party, then in the elections, claims that Punjab will be drug free. No party is working for the betterment of Punjab, but, increasing their family-assets by usurping political power and earning crores of rupees, not for the good of Punjab. The young generation is immersed in drugs. The ground water of Punjab is running out. Many deras or Sadhs of deras are also responsible for these drugs. Punjabi singers have given life to these revelries. Here 'Chitta' is commonly used. And once a young person becomes addicted to drugs, it is impossible to be free.

The Gurus penned the teachings for the good of humanity and the message of Gurbani is very relevant today. On the other hand, those who sing lecherous songs have promoted the culture of drugs or alcohol in their songs. The most tragic aspect is that in many places, high events are held in memory of the deceased sadhs (who were drug-addicts/drunks) and in these places, alcohol is served freely. In three places in Punjab, such sentiments are rampant, about which our religious and political leaders are silent. At one place, near Jandiala Guru and Taran-Taran in Majha, is the tomb of Shaikh Fateh. It was the main centre of the worshipers of the Sakhi Sarwars, and they invented the falsely imagined Pir (The founder or one of the heads). Nishan Sahib was also installed here some time ago. Second, at Joga in Mansa Halka, Malwa, there was a Samadh of Jogi Pir, where liquor was served. Thirdly, in village Kala Sanghya of Doaba, district Kapurthala, liquor prasad is freely used. Becoming in good financial conditions, a few years ago, the NRI families began to show more devotion to the mausoleums and shrines in their villages. With this, their excitement started to increase. Popular singers at these Samadhs have popularized the Samadhs by discussing false miracles about Babas. Where some time ago these unattended Matiya or mausoleums were ignored, large Gurdwaras or deras have been built there.

As long as we do not get knowledge about the truth of Gurbani or the essence of Gurmat, we will remain bound in the chains of superstitions. If we understand the absolute ideology of Guru Granth Sahib and apply it to our lives, then we can get rid of the karma-kand being spread by idle babas or deredar.

As I have mentioned earlier, that, in the villages of Punjab, the once unattended Matiya or Samadhs have been built and popularised as miraculous places of worship. It was

propagandized in a conspiratorial manner that so-and-so enjoyed happiness here and was fulfilled. I will hesitate to name the villages.

It is surprising that, people get treatment at hospitals in Canada or England at government expense, later they preach that the miracle is done by the dera of such and such martyr or pir. In my village, there used to be a mast, who would keep an empty box and sit in the market. People used to give food and drink. When he died, the ignorant people made a big mound of him. A person who was mentally ill, did he take care of anyone after death? A Singh of our village demolished his Mati, then no one dared to rebuild it.

It is a superstition that martyrs or pirs can do anything to anyone? But smart people earn a fortune by holding fairs on these samadhs. Drug addicts go to these places and enjoy free drugs. Singers earn a lot of money by singing and dancing there.

As long as we do not learn about the truth of Gurbani or the essence of Gurmat, we will remain in the chains of superstitions.

Is There Need of Palki (Palanquin) or Palki Sahib?

Due to ignorance or lack of knowledge, we used the word 'Sahib' a little casually, this word is used for Akal Purakh in Guru Granth Sahib. This is a different topic. Nowadays, we have seen many traditions popularized which were not compatible with the Sikh tradition. In particular, most of the gurdwaras today have installed beautiful Palkis, which was not the Sikh tradition. In 1976, I had arrived in Canada. At that time Palkis were rarely seen inside the Gurdwaras, but to copy each other the administrators of Gurdwaras installed beautiful Palkis and started the Parkash of the Guru Granth Sahib in them.

Scholars who have knowledge of Gurmat believe that earlier palanquin was only used to carry Guru Granth Sahib from one place to another. Today we are making full efforts to make the palkis beautiful. A few years ago, the Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee built a golden palanquin (which was covered with 24 Carat gold) and there was a huge exhibition of that palanquin. That golden palanquin was also taken to Pakistan with fanfare. Just as our elders put a gold on Sri Darbar Sahib and gave a new name to Sri Darbar Sahib 'The Golden Temple', which was contrary to the Sikh tradition. Today we ourselves have forgotten the real name Sri Darbar Sahib. The main requirement was that the Sikhs or Sikh groups should tell the people about the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikhs used to encourage the new generation of the community to attain Gurmat knowledge, but we have limited our purpose only to putting gold on the golden palanquins or domes. The future of the Panth cannot be made golden by making golden palanquins or putting gold on the domes, but we can make our future golden by making all the Sikh Sangat and the people understand the ideology of Guru Granth Sahib Ji. A few years ago, there was a keen discussion about the service of putting gold on Sri Darbar Sahib. But it was necessary to pay attention to many other services within the Sikh community. Just as there was a need to pay immediate attention to the welfare of Sikhligar Sikhs and Vanjara Sikhs outside Punjab. The agenda of the opposing forces is to destroy Sikh heritage and history. We need to make efforts towards this by taking the opinions and suggestions of high-quality Sikh scholars. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee must take steps for the restoration of Gurmat traditions and the integration of ethics. Sadly, anti-Sikh forces have infiltrated our main institutions. Today it is necessary that we should save our unique Sikh traditions from saffronisation. Let's keep our distance from the leaders who betray the Panth. Instead of gilding domes and palanquins, it is necessary to make maximum efforts to promote our great heritage and Gurbani.

(Akll klcY dwn) Donate wisely

Nowadays, when we witness/hear that the Sikhs have started such a tradition of Nagar Kirtans, it seems that Nagar Kirtans are organized in every town, city and abroad where there are Gurdwaras. If we look at the history, it seems that the tradition of such nagar kirtans was not there during Guru's period. Let us believe that Sikhs in foreign countries must have felt that the glimpses of Sikh culture should be shared with non-Sikhs. Now seeing the form and abundance of Nagar Kirtans, many sincere writers are forced to come up with new names. Someone is saying that Pakhand Nagar Kirtan and many are saying 'Langar Kirtan'. Millions and millions of dollars are spent and nothing is achieved. On the other hand, devotee families consider that a great service is being done by serving langar at the nagar kirtans, distributing samosas, pakoras, sweets and various food items. Many people consider anchoring as an act of merit. Some people advertise their business companies by setting up langar stalls. Know the truth, our Kaum is losing crores of rupees, meaninglessly. Problems are faced by the local governments during Nagar Kirtans, as more vigilance and responsibilities to be levied on policemen. The families in the area where the events take place may face traffic disruptions due to road closures, many families will also be happy that the Nagar Kirtan gives them good opportunities to meet relatives.

In Raga Ramkali there is a Shabad by Bhagat Namdev ji, in which he discusses all the acts which Bipar Pujari promoted to rob the people. Nowadays, Bipers with beards and Kes are trying to make the same rituals a part of religion. For example, together with the political people, the rural people should make a pilgrimage trip, take a pilgrimage bath, reveal the shrine at a scattered place like Hemkunt, no turns for Akhand Paths for almost 10 years (Sri Darbar Sahib), and compare Akhand Path with the Asmedha Yag, to take the ashes and bones of dead beings to Haridwar or Kiratpur to achieve salvation. Bhagat Namdev ji, within the Couplet of Pause (Rahao), said to those who perform these acts:

Coif Coif, ry pwKMfl mn, kptu n kljY]

hir kw nwmu inq inqih lljY]1]rhwau]

(rwmkll nwmdyau jl, pMnw 973)

O hypocrite, renounce and abandon your hypocrisy; do not practice deception.

Constantly, continuously, chant the Name of the Lord. ||Pause||

(Ramkali Namdev ji, page 973)

Some rituals, which are considered important by Sanatan Dharma in modern times, like doing penance upside down at Banaras or Kashi, leaving the body there (Die), burning in fire, performing Asmedha Yag and donating gold etc. Bhagat ji is saying that there is no benefit in donating gold by weighing horses, elephants, one's wife, land, and one's self, all these deeds cannot equal the Lord's name (divine qualities).

Perhaps many will not agree with me, if I say that the biggest mistake was made by Maharaja Ranjit Singh by plating gold on Sri Darbar Sahib. He also wrote and told that this service was done by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Our Sri Darbar Sahib became, Golden Temple and Harmandir Sahib. Even changing the original name of Sri Darbar Sahib a huge historical mistake was made.

Some time ago I heard that new plating will be put using 160 kg of gold, which will bring more brightness to Sri Darbar Sahib. Lamps worth 15 crores were donated to Darbar Sahib by a Sikh devotee from USA. A few years ago, a gold palanquin was presented by the Sikhs of Delhi. If Sikhs were wise and equipped with Gurmat, instead of spending on a gold palanquin, various trust funds could have been set up to take care of the families of those killed in the 1984 massacre. We have not understood Gurmat. The Sanatan Dharma priests preach that there is more benefit of donating gold and silver. The basements of many temples in South India are filled with gold and silver, which were presented by the kings and maharajas. What is the benefit of that gold and silver to the common people? In the book Asli Ranjit Singh, one thing, in particular, came to be read that when Maharaja Ranjit Singh was on his deathbed, the Brahmins offered havan, recited mantras and made him donate many maunds of gold to the other Brahmins for the Maharaja's health. Brahmins donated to Brahmins. Did the Maharaja become healthy?

I will share the true incident of the year 1999. A lady from Vancouver also went on the Yatra (300 years with Guru) with my Singhni. That lady showed my wife a gold coin and told her that, she had to offer this gold to Sri Darbar Sahib, which she had vowed. That lady has also taken Khande Di Pahul. It seems that we have Amrit, but if we do not understand Gurmat, then, having such Amrit is also a karm-kand.

Even now, many people think that by serving langar, by offering gold for golden palkis, is a virtuous act. The truth is that, with such actions, neither you do your good nor the society's, but, usually we become a victim of ego. If, one wants the good of the whole world (even if we pray every day, for the good of the whole world) then take inspiration

from Khalsa Aid's director S. Ravi Singh, who also refused the honour offered by India. The reason for rejection was also given that the Government of India had oppressed the Sikhs. The 'Khalsa Aid' organization has raised the name of the Sikh community in the world. Christians, Hindus, Muslims, all praise this organization of Sikhs. No doubt, the Government of India is trying to abolish this institution.

The brothers, who spent crores to get golden lamps installed, instead, would have made new means for the employment of the poor and needy Sikhs or Vanjare Sikhs outside Punjab or adequate efforts had been made for the provision of education for their children, would have been a real meritorious work. Today, government schools in Punjab, in which children from poor families study, have no buildings, no teachers, and no water supply, apart from this the poor families are unable to pay their children's fees.

Wake Up! Sikhs.

Guru Nanak Sahib's Hoka was:

Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyie]

nwnk rwhu pCwxih syie] (*vwr swrµg, m: 1, pMnw 1245*)

One who works for what he/she eats, and give away some of what he/she has.

O Nanak, he/she knows the Path.

(Var Sarang, M: 1, Page 1245)

We have to be careful. We have to do real work and be honest and if we help the needy, then only we can be called righteous. Let's raise our opinion, be aware and be free of pride and act on "Akali Kichai Danu (Donate Wisely)", meaning that, donation is acceptable in Gurmat, with which there is good for the people in the society.

Respect (Satkar) Committee?

There is no doubt, that Guru Granth Sahib is our Shabad-Guru. According to the tradition of respect for Guru Granth Sahib, a special shrine is built for Guru Granth Sahib, light is placed on it and beautiful handkerchiefs are used and Chaur/Chawar is also waved on the illuminated Guru Granth Sahib during Diwan. The basis of this tradition of respect is that Guru Granth Sahib contains divine and great knowledge. According to the Gurmat tradition, it is important to pay outward respect, we bow down to the Guru Granth Sahib with respect and feel deeply that we obey the teachings of the Guru. In fact, if we want to respect then we have to read and understand the Gur-Updesh (Teachings of Guru) in Gurbani and apply it in our life, otherwise we are limited to external respect.

A few years ago, some self-enthusiastic individuals took the initiative to set up a respect committee. The use of the word 'Satkar' may mislead many people that perhaps these people are truly respectful of the Shabad-Guru. When we read news in newspapers or watch videos on social media, it is sad how these so-called respect committees brutally beat up poor elders and students. It is said that these reciters performed the services of reciting Akhand Path, organised by devotee families, in unfit places (cemeteries or cremation grounds). That is why they were beaten. The question arises that, the families who conducted Akhand-Path in such places, were they also beaten? Were their names revealed? A few years ago, dancing and bhangra were performed in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib near Phagwara. In Patna Sahib and Hazur Sahib women were made to wear Kakars and dance. In these places, Weapons are worshipped by slaughtering the goats and knocking the bells. Did the Satkar/respect Committee speak against those who desecrated Guru Granth Sahib Ji at Bargarhi? Statues are being erected in Gurdwaras outside Punjab, are they really supporters of the respect of Guru Granth Sahib ji or are they fake? The anti-Sikh forces are determined to publish such scriptures as equal to Guru Granth Sahib. Which even a person with normal intelligence cannot read. It has also been heard that the Satkar Committee (?) has forcefully taken away Guru Granth Sahib Ji from the houses of many devotee families. Allegations are being made on these families that their diet is not good, i.e. their diet is objectionable. Taking the Saroop of Guru Granth Sahib ji from the house of any devout Sikh, without their permission, is sheer trespass and it is a sin to hurt someone's heart. Such phenomena are illegal. Yes, if a Gurudam (Immitating The Guru) is being run in the guise of Guru Granth Sahib at any place (even if it is a Gurdwara), and body worship is being done. Then it can be asked to remove the Saroop of Guru Granth Sahib from such places. However, illegit or illegal actions should be avoided.

The Guru Sahibs wrote and published Gurbani for the entire humanity and all beings. Gurbani is not reserved only for Sikhs. It will be good that, we try to know more and more about the greatness of Guru Granth Sahib Ji and propagate its greatness, then it is certain that all people will respect Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The bottom line is that listening to the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib Ji and obeying them wholeheartedly is real respect.

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