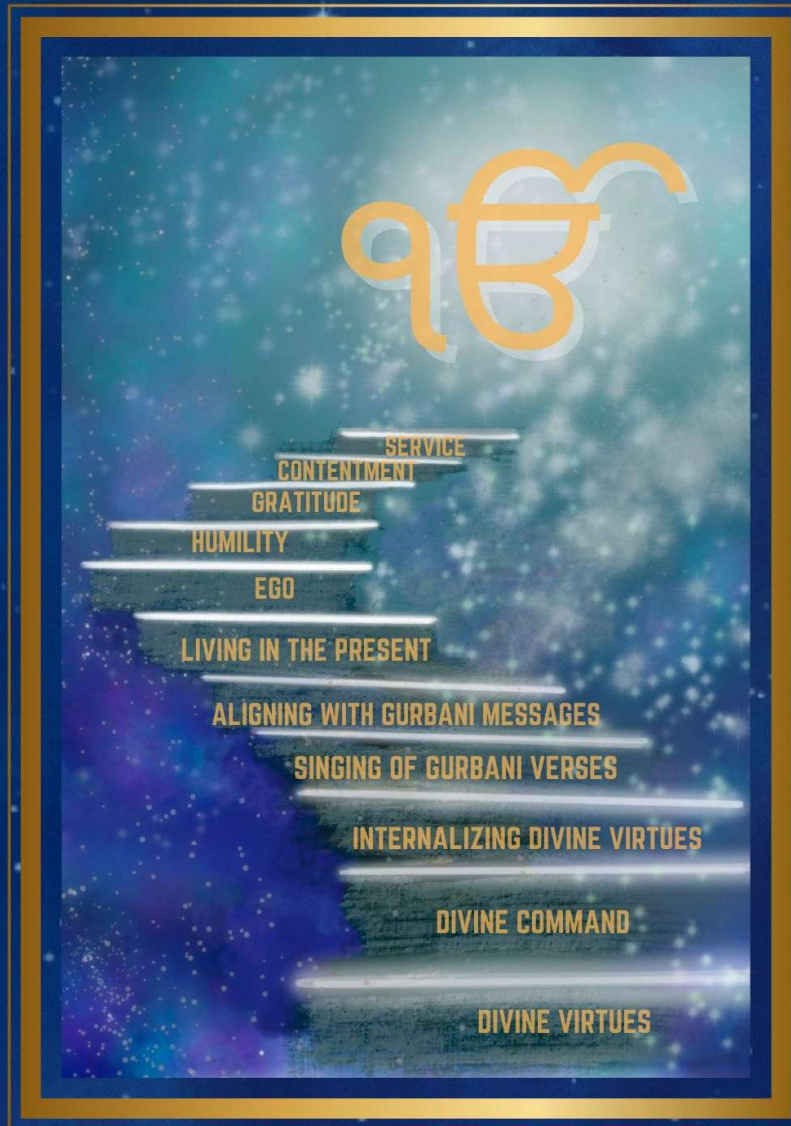


STIKHI FOR ME

Here & Now



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1. Introduction to *Sikhi* Spirituality

This book seeks to briefly explain to our youth (ages 15–17) some key aspects of the spirituality of *Sikhi* as explained by our Gurus (1469–1708 CE) and now contained in the Gurbani enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS). In doing this, we have tried to rely only on *shabads* in SGGS and not on any other text, especially *Sakhees*.

In his verses (*bani*) explaining ‘*Sikhi* spirituality’—i.e., the messages of the ‘*Shabad Guru*’ in SGGS that guide us on the enlightening spiritual path towards becoming a *sachiar* (Godly)—Guru Nanak provided a clear understanding of the Creator and His Divine Virtues. He says this in the opening verse of SGGS. The English translation of the verse, highlighting its spiritual message, is as follows (see Notes below):

The One omnipresent God who is in existence, who is the Creator Being, fearless and without enmity, timeless and formless, does not take life forms, and who is self-created, is realized through the enlightenment of the Shabad Guru. (SGGS: 1) ⁽¹⁾

This understanding of the Creator (*Karta Purakh*) and His attributes or Virtues provide the firm foundation upon which *Sikhi* spirituality is built.

Guru Nanak was comfortable referring to the Creator with many of the names used in the Hindu and Muslim religions. This is because the Creator has no proper name, and all the names we use for Him refer to His Virtues. In his *bani*, Guru Nanak also acknowledged the verses of some of the other spiritual people that were consistent with his own messages. Guru Nanak collected verses composed by 15 *Bhagats* and included these in the same book (*pothi*) in which he recorded his own messages of spirituality. He then personally handed over his *pothi* to Guru Angad when the latter was appointed the second Guru of the Sikhs. The same process was followed by Guru Nanak’s successor Gurus.

This has ensured that all the *Gurbani* composed by the Sikh Gurus and the *Bhagats* and others has reached us in its original form in SGGS, the only scripture of the Sikhs. It is the messages of *Shabad Guru* in this scripture that Sikhs are expected to understand, contemplate on, and follow in our daily lives.

Though *Gurbani* uses the terms and concepts prevalent during the times of the Gurus, these terms were re-defined in SGGS and given new Gurbani-based meanings that help convey *Sikhi*’s spiritual messages. A Glossary of some of these terms has been included in the book to help readers get the proper spiritual meanings of the *shabads* included in various chapters of this book. To facilitate understanding, some of the basic terms used in this book are also briefly explained in Chapter 2 (see below).

This book is intended to explain how Gurbani asks us to live in accordance with SGGS-based spiritual values and principles. Some of the values that one is asked to follow and live by include humility, contentment, patience, gratitude, equipoise, sharing with others, and many others. Some of these values are covered in the chapters on *Naam*, *Hukam*, *Simran*, *Keertan*, *Sangat*, *Haumai*, *Nimarta*, *Shukrana*, *Sahaj*, *Sewa*, and *Vertman Vich Rehna* (Living in the Moment). *Sikhi*

spirituality also says that we should not worry about the supposed past lives or future lives (after death) but focus solely on the present. These chapters make it clear that Gurbani teaches us about spirituality and philosophy based on reason and logic. It does not rely on or approve of blind faith and superstitious beliefs and practices on the part of the seekers of spirituality.

Guru Nanak visited many places of worship of Hindus and Muslims (two prominent religions of his times), and in very clear words explained that rituals have no place in *Sikhi* spirituality. He went to far-off places and travelled long distances over many years solely to give the message of spirituality to the masses. All his successors reinforced the same message of spirituality, as is evident from the voluminous Gurbani enshrined in SGGS. Some of the present-day common *Sikhi* practices are examined in view of the contents of this book as the last chapter.

At the end of each chapter a few practical examples have been provided for high school students. These examples, which cover the school and home environments, would assist students to implement the primary messages in the chapter in their daily lives. To make the examples interesting, the following fictitious characters have been introduced:

- Amrit: A thoughtful and kind-hearted student, curious about spirituality.
- Gurleen: Amrit's younger sister, known for her creativity and mischief.
- Surinder: Their wise and supportive grandfather, who often shares lessons from Guru Nanak's teachings.
- Jasmeet: Amrit's best friend, practical and ambitious but sometimes impatient.

Transliteration of the Gurbani verse used in this chapter is as follows:

1. *Ik Oankaar sat naam karta purakh nirbhau nirvair akaal moorat ajoonee saibhan gur prasaad.* (SGGS: 1)

Notes:

- (SGGS:1) ⁽¹⁾ = Sri Guru Granth Sahib, *Ank* 1,
- (SGGS:1) ⁽¹⁾ = Superscript ⁽¹⁾ refers to the transliteration of the Gurbani verse whose spiritual message in English has been used in the chapter.
- To facilitate understanding by those not familiar with the Punjabi language, the English version of this book provides the authors' English 'translation' of the Gurbani verse, highlighting its spiritual message. For those who know the Punjabi language, the Punjabi version of this book provides the Gurbani verse in its original form, i.e., in *Gurmukhi* script.



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The One Omnipresent God
Who is in existence,
Who is the Creator Being,
fearless and without
enmity,
timeless and formless,
does not take life forms,
and
Who is Self-Created,
is realized through the
enlightenment of the
Shabad.

2. Explanation of Some Basic Terms

The following terms used in this book are briefly explained to help the reader understand the context in which these are used in the chapters that follow. Usage of the terms may differ from how they are generally understood.

- *Shabad* Guru
- Divine Virtues
- The Creator within
- *Gurbani baniaye*
- Gurdwara

***Shabad* Guru:** This term has been used in this book to mean the message of the *Shabad* in SGGS. Guru Nanak was asked a direct question by the yogis: Who is your Guru?

Who is your Guru, whose disciple are you? (SGGS: 942) ⁽¹⁾

And Guru Ji provided an unambiguous answer:

Shabad is my Guru, and my conscience is the disciple. (SGGS: 943) ⁽²⁾

It is very clear that Guru Ji is talking about the *message* of the *Shabad*—i.e., the messages of *all* the Gurbani verses in SGGS—and not just the wording of it. It appears that the current confusion comes from a composition of a *Nirmala* priest – Gyani Gyan Singh around 1840 CE, more than a hundred years after Guru Gobind Singh ji passed away—who said:

All Sikhs are ordained to accept the Granth as the living body of the Guru. ⁽³⁾

Apparently, the misunderstanding comes from our mistakenly assuming that the above couplet was composed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

Note: *Nirmalas* were the group of people who managed the Gurdwaras in Panjab during the period ~1760s CE onwards when Sikhs were hunted down by Mughal forces and carried a price tag on their heads. The *Nirmala* priests were not trained in or initiated into Sikhi spirituality. Finally, they were ousted from Darbar Sahib in 1925, as they had introduced many Brahmanical rituals into Sikhi practices, including installation of Hindu Gods' idols in the Parkarma of Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

Divine Virtues: Since the message of *Shabad* is our Guru, we are required to understand the message and implement it in our daily routine life. Every message

in SGGS guides us to become spiritual. This can happen only if we inculcate (or develop or imbibe) these virtues.

Guru Nanak explains the attributes of *Akal Purakh* (God) in the very first line of SGGS. He says that besides being the Ultimate Reality (*Sat Naam*), the Creator (*Karta Purakh*) is also Fearless (*Nirbhau*), and has No Enmity (*Nirvair*) towards any part of His Creation. Guru Nanak ji considers these to be the Creator's (Divine) Virtues.

The rest of the messages of Gurbani ask us to inculcate (or develop) these and other virtues, so that we may become more God-like or Godly (*gurmukh*, *sachiar*). We are expected to inculcate these virtues in our mind and conscience, just as Guru Nanak had himself done. Gurbani also asks us to make these virtues an integral part of our inner spirituality, i.e., it asks us to 'internalize' them—so that we may think, speak, and act accordingly.

This instruction in SGGS about the need to develop good values/virtues and make them an integral part of our own ('inner') spirituality is important. In order to 'internalize' the virtues, we must first carefully listen to the messages of Gurbani and then develop (or inculcate) the personal values and virtues within ourselves. For doing this, we need to properly understand, believe, and accept the spiritual meanings of Gurbani verses in our mind and conscience. By 'internalizing' the virtues through this deliberate internal process, we become capable of living our life in accordance with the messages of *Shabad* Guru given in SGGS, i.e., in accordance with the teachings of 'Sikhi spirituality.'

Many virtues are mentioned in SGGS. Some of these are fearlessness (*nirbhau*), no enmity (*nirvair*), humility or lack of ego (*nimarta*), contentment (*sahaj*, *santokh*), compassion (*dya*), forgiveness (*khima*), kindness (*mehr*), patience (*dheeraj*), and service (*sewa*), etc.

Since these are the virtues that derive directly from Guru Nanak's understanding of *Akal Purakh's* Virtues as explained in SGGS, Gurbani asks us to inculcate or internalize—i.e., develop, follow, and 'become'—these values/virtues. In this book on *Sikhi* spirituality, we have grouped them together and called them "Divine Virtues" or "Virtues" or simply virtues, depending upon the context. This makes it easier to cover the virtues that all of us need to understand, practice, and follow in our daily lives.

The Creator ‘within’: Prior to the advent of Guru Nanak in 1469 CE, not only the Hindu religion but all other religions believed in a God (or Gods) sitting up there somewhere in the sky and keeping track of humans’ deeds, both good and bad. When we die, this God or His agent was presumed to review all our deeds and punish or reward us based on these deeds. Moreover, this pre-1469 belief says that we should seek to please this God by respectfully chanting his name.

In SGGS, the Gurus changed the spiritual paradigm completely. Instead of a God sitting up there somewhere, Gurbani says that *Akal Purakh*—as the inculcated and internalized Virtues and the Creator’s Command (*Hukam*)—is inside every person, in his/her mind and conscience, meaning that the Creator is present ‘within’ us, as well as everywhere else. The following Gurbani verse makes it clear.

Why are you looking for the Creator outside of yourself? The Omnipresent, the Creator who is free of vices, is right inside you. Just as the fragrance is inside every petal of a flower and the image is inside the mirror, He is always inside you. (SGGS: 684) ⁽⁴⁾

Moreover, Guru Nanak’s concept of the Creator is a benevolent, passionate and caring entity. He does not punish his Creation. One reaps what one plants. The following verse is very clear.

My master always passionately takes care of me. Even for a moment He does not hurt or harm me. (SGGS: 784) ⁽⁵⁾ (One may like to read the entire *Shabad*).

In this book, most references to the Creator are to the One who is within us—as the Divine Virtues and as the Creator’s *Hukam* in our mind and conscience.

Gurbani baniaye: The phrase comes from the following verse in SGGS:

The message of Shabad is eternal. One should become what the message instructs. (SGGS: 304) ⁽⁶⁾

The messages of all Gurbani *Shabads* are instructions to inculcate Virtues and to live accordingly. Therefore, the phrase “*Gurbani baniyae*” simply means to become spiritual by following the messages of the *Shabad* Guru in SGGS.

Gurdwara: It is a place where SGGS is installed, and on a regular basis Gurbani *keertan* is recited, Gurbani verses are explained, and Sikh history is reviewed. One develops appreciation for Gurbani by listening to *Shabad* Guru in a melodious voice. Community members get an opportunity to understand and learn from the experts in the field.

The Gurdwara plays a pivotal role in the life of a Sikh from childhood onwards. A child learns social skills, meets other people from the community, and gets a sense of service (*sewa*) by working in the *langar* (community kitchen), taking care of shoes, serving others with humility, etc.

It is not a place where one can go to either physically meet the Guru or the Creator—for the *Shabad* Guru cannot be physically ‘met’; instead its messages can only be understood in the mind and followed in terms of what we think and speak, and how we act. Nor can we just go to a Gurdwara to ‘beg’ personally for the Guru’s favors or rewards or pay a hired professional to plead for material things in exchange for a monetary sum.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Teraa kavan guroo jis kaa too chelaa* || (SGGS: 942)
2. *Sabadh guroo surat dhun chelaa* || (SGGS: 943)
3. *Sabh Sikhan to hukan hai Guru manyo granth||*
Guru granth ji manyo pargat guran ki deh|| (*)
4. *Kkaahe re ban khojan jaiee* ||
Ssarab nivaasee sadhaa alepaa tohee sa(n)g samaiee ||I|| rahaau ||
Ppuhap madh jiau baas basat hai mukar maeh jaise chhaiee ||
taise hee har base nira(n)tar ghaT hee khojahu bhaiee ||I|| (SGGS: 684)
5. *MiTh bolaRaa jee har sajan suaamee moraa* ||
Hau sa(n)mal thakee jee oh kadhe na bolai kauraa || (SGGS: 784)
6. *Satigur kee baanee sat saroop hai gurbaanee baneesai* || (SGGS: 304)

(*) No. 3 is *not* in SGGS. It is a composition of a *Nirmala* priest, composed more than a hundred years after Guru Gobind Singh ji left this world.

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3. Divine Virtues (*Naam*)

1. The word *Naam* means "name" in Punjabi, but Guru Nanak uses it to describe the Creator's divine qualities and virtues. While the Creator is called by many names (e.g., Allah, God, Ram), these names represent attributes or actions of the Creator rather than an assigned name. For example, names like "*Sat*" emphasize Truth and the Creator's eternal existence.
2. Guru Nanak teaches that the Creator is self-created, meaning that no one Created or named Him. Instead, people recognize Him through His Virtues like truth, kindness, and justice, which Guru Nanak calls "*Naam*." These virtues should guide us on how we should live our lives.
3. The teachings of Gurbani emphasize understanding and living by these divine virtues, and not merely repeating God's names. By embracing virtues like humility, truthfulness, and compassion, we purify our minds and live a spiritual life.

The literal meaning of the Punjabi word *Naam* is 'name', but Guru Nanak uses the word *Naam* to refer to the Creator of everything that exists in the universe. When Guru Ji was writing *bani* more than five hundred years ago, he knew that the Creator was known to humanity by many names, such as Allah, Ram, Rahim, the Lord, God, etc. But in his various *Shabads* in SGGS, Guru Ji tells us of his own unique experience and understanding of the Creator. He says that the Creator, whom he refers to as *Karta Purakh* in the opening verse of SGGS, is known to us through His attributes or Virtues. Guru Nanak refers to these virtues as *Naam*. Gurbani asks us to inculcate or develop the virtues within ourselves—in our mind and conscience—and to live according to the messages of *Shabad* Guru which explain how and why we must strive to do so.

Gurbani says that the various names that we humans give to the Creator are descriptive and functional attributes of Him. In Gurbani, the descriptive names of the Creator are called *Kirtam Naam*. This term comes from *Kirt* meaning deed or action. The following Gurbani verse illustrates this usage.

The description of Yours that I utter are functional, descriptive, and attributional names. Even Your name Sat is also one of your attributes. Sat means always true, in perpetual existence. (SGGS: 1083) ⁽¹⁾

In spiritual terms, *Kirtam Naam* translates as the Creator's virtues and the Creator's merits as perceived by those who choose to walk on His path. It means all the descriptive names of the Creator are given by his devotees (*bhagats*). Each name represents a particular attribute that the *bhagat* found fitting in with his/her spiritual journey. Thus, there are many names of the Creator. All names are of equal importance. No one can say that a particular name is better or more important than the others.

The Gurbani term for these numerous attributes of the Creator is therefore *Naam*. Consequently, as used in SGGS, *Naam* refers to the unfathomable virtues, merits, description etc. of the Creator. In short, ***Naam* is the Gurbani word for Divine Virtues.**

Gurbani asks that we live by such **personal attributes and virtues** as good moral character or truthful living (*sat*), contentment (*sahaj*, *santokh*), compassion (*dya*), faith (*dharam*), and patience (*dheeraj*). In addition, it provides guidance on such virtues as humility (*nimarta*), service (*seva*), forgiveness (*khima*), calm (*sehj*), trust (*visah*), love (*pyar*), wisdom (*bibek*), spiritual understanding (*gyan*), and abiding within His Divine Command (*Hukam*). For example, SGGS says that:

- Truthful living requires living within His Divine Command and imbuing the senses and the mind in the Creator. This leads to contentment and self-control. Then, our life gets rooted in Virtues. With contentment, the desire for asking ends.
- Spirituality is also an outcome of compassion, humility, and the absence of pride. The actions driven by pride are self-serving and often do not benefit others. Hence, the vice of ego must be diminished, and the virtue of selfless service must be inculcated.
- *Sikhi* spirituality is thus one of love, not of hate or fear. It says that we should love our Creator as well as His Creation. If we wish to realize the Creator within, we should not break anyone's heart.

Gurbani thus says that after understanding the virtues, we must 'internalize' these virtues—meaning that we must first attentively listen to the messages of Gurbani regarding the personal values and virtues we must develop within ourselves, and then properly understand, believe, and accept their spiritual meanings in our mind and conscience through deliberate effort, thus becoming capable of living our life in accordance with the messages of *Shabad* Guru (i.e., '*Sikhi* spirituality') given in SGGS. In other words, we need to understand the virtues, reflect on how these virtues apply to our life, and practice these virtues in our thoughts, words, and actions. Some of these messages of Gurbani are further discussed in the chapters that follow.

As stated earlier, the word *Naam* has been used in SGGS numerous times. It is very enlightening and necessary to **reflect upon how Gurbani uses, explains, and elaborates upon the Creator's Divine Virtues (*Naam*) and His *Hukam* in various *shabads* in SGGS.**

Some **examples** are as follows:

1. *Nanak's conscience is filled with Virtues. (SGGS: 1136) ⁽²⁾*
2. *The One Creator is my Intimate, Best Friend, and Companion. The Naam, the Divine Virtues are Nanak's only Support. (SGGS: 197) ⁽³⁾*
3. *All creatures exist in His Hukam. The entire universe operates within His Hukam. (SGGS: 284) ⁽⁴⁾*
4. *He is self-created as is His Hukam. Then from His Hukam, He expanded Himself into nature, residing within, to oversee it in earnest. (SGGS: 463) ⁽⁵⁾*
5. *When one removes ego, only then does anyone obtain Virtues. (SGGS: 361) ⁽⁶⁾*
6. *Ego (a vice) and Virtues are mutually incompatible; the two do not dwell in the same place. (SGGS: 560) ⁽⁷⁾*

7. *Contemplate the of the Shabad Guru and internalize Virtues. With your eyes and ears, realize Him everywhere. (SGGS: 517) ⁽⁸⁾*
8. *All virtues come from the Creator. Without the Creator-connecting Guru's message one cannot get Virtues. (SGGS: 753) ⁽⁹⁾*
9. *Only Virtues provides me with enlightenment. I put the oil of vices into it, and the vices get burned away. (SGGS: 358) ⁽¹⁰⁾*
10. *Only by immersing oneself in Virtues, the mind gets cleansed of vices. (SGGS: 229) ⁽¹¹⁾*
11. *Without the Naam, how can there be any kind of good conduct? (SGGS: 1330) ⁽¹²⁾*
12. *One whose mind internalizes Virtues, that person is cleansed of all vices. (SGGS: 281) ⁽¹³⁾*
13. *My spiritual life is unenlightened without Virtues. (SGGS: 1332) ⁽¹⁴⁾*

Commonly, *Naam* is (mis)understood as a proper name of the Creator. This leads us to wrongly believe that repeating the *Naam* will either make us spiritual or the Creator will bestow us with material things. Understanding *Naam* as the Creator's Virtues will help us focus on the messages of *Gurbani*. By understanding the divine messages, contemplating them, and realizing them, we can strive to become the Virtues. [In the chapter "*Simran*" we shall discuss "*Naam Simran*" as explained in SGGS.]

Practical Examples:

At School: A Lesson in Kindness

Amrit walked into class one morning to find his friend, Jasmeet, frustrated over a failed math quiz. "I don't get why I can't score higher!" Jasmeet grumbled. Amrit thought of something his grandfather had told him the night before: "Helping others is living kindness, a divine virtue taught by Guru Nanak." Smiling, he said, "Let's work on this together after school. I can explain those tricky algebra problems." Jasmeet hesitated but nodded, feeling grateful. That evening, with patience and encouragement, Amrit helped Jasmeet understand the concepts. By the end, Jasmeet's frustration had turned into confidence.

At Home: A Test of Honesty

Later that week, Gurleen rushed to Amrit's room, clutching her diary. "Amrit Veerji, I think someone peeked at my drawings!" she said, on the verge of tears. Amrit frowned. "No one should take credit for work that isn't theirs," he said. "Guru Nanak's teachings remind us that honesty builds trust." The next day at school, Amrit overheard a classmate claiming Gurleen's drawings were their own. Calmly, he confronted the student, sharing the importance of honesty and giving credit where it's due. Embarrassed, the student apologized, and Gurleen's work was rightfully recognized.

Teamwork with Humility

In history class, Amrit's team worked on a project about Guru Nanak's teachings. Everyone contributed, but Amrit ended up presenting their findings. When the teacher praised the project, Amrit quickly added, "It was a team effort. Everyone worked hard." His humility earned him the respect of both his classmates and his teacher, reflecting another divine virtue: recognizing others' contributions.

Respecting Nature

At home, Surinder Ji watched as Amrit and Gurleen argued over whose turn it was to take out recycling. "You both know Guru Nanak emphasized respect for all creation," he reminded them. "Caring for the environment honors the Creator's work." The siblings worked together to sort the recycling, realizing it wasn't about chores—it was about doing their part to respect nature.

Overcoming Ego

At the school debate competition, Amrit's team lost in the finals. Disappointed, Jasmeet muttered, "The judges were unfair." But Amrit shook his head. "We did our best. Let's learn from this for next time." Surinder Ji's words echoed in his mind: "Ego and virtues cannot live together. Embrace humility to grow."

Living the Virtues

By practicing kindness, honesty, humility, respect, and patience, Amrit discovered that Guru Nanak's teachings weren't just for reading but for living. As he shared these virtues with others, he found his school and home environments becoming brighter and more harmonious. At the year-end awards, Amrit received a surprise recognition: the "Heart of Gold" award for his positive influence on others. He dedicated it to his family and the timeless teachings of Guru Nanak, saying, "These virtues guide me every day."

Through these small but meaningful acts, Amrit realized that practicing virtues transforms not only oneself but also the world around us.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

- (1) *Kirtam naam kathe tere jihabaa. Sat naam teraa paraa poorabalaa.* (SGGS: 1083)
- (2) *Nanak kai ghar keval naam. 4.4* (SGGS: 1136)
Note: in Gurbani, the word ghar is invariably used for mind, conscience.
- (3) *Meeth saajan sakhaa prabh eik. Naam suaamee kaa nanak Tek.* (SGGS: 197)
- (4) *Naam kae dhaare sagale jannt. Naam ke dhaare kha(n)dd brahama(n)dd* (SGGS: 284).
- (5) *Aapeen(h)ai aap saajio aapeen(h)ai rachio naau.*
Dhuyee kudharat saajeeai kar aasan ddiTho chaau. (SGGS: 463)
Note: The word "naau" comes from Neym, Neyum meaning law, order, "Hukam."
- (6) *Aap maare taa paae naau. 2* (SGGS: 153)
- (7) *Haumai naavai naal virodh hai dhui na vaseh ik Thae.* (SGGS: 560)
- (8) *Antar gur aaraadhanaa jihavaa Jup gur naau.*
Netree satgur pekhanaa sravanee sunanaa gur naau. (SGGS: 517)
- (9) *Naamai hee te sabh kichh hoaa bin satigur naam na jaapai.* (SGGS: 753)
- (10) *Dheevaa meraa ek naam dhukh vich paiaa tel.* (SGGS: 358)
- (11) *Naam ratae mun nirmal hoi. 4.* (SGGS: 229)
- (12) *Naam binaa kaise aachaar. 1.* (SGGS: 1330)
- (13) *Naam sung jis kaa mun maaniaa. Nanak tineh niranjan jaaniaa. 3.* (SGGS: 281)
- (14) *Jal jaau jeevan naam binaa.* (SGGS: 1332)



4. Divine Command (*Hukam*)

In *Sikhi* spirituality, **Hukam** means the Divine laws or the Creator's Command that governs everything in the universe. These laws are universal, unchanging, and govern everything—nature, human actions, and even our thoughts. Living in harmony with the Creator's Divine laws is the key to spiritual growth and peace.

The Creator and His *Hukam*

Gurbani explains that the Creator is both *Nirgun* (unmanifest, Transcendent) and *Sargun* (with attributes, Immanent). It says that having created the world, the Creator (*Akal Purakh*) stands apart from His Creation—and yet is *within* everything too. The Creator manages all His creation through His *Hukam*. The divine command or *Hukam* of the Creator (*Hukamee*) has created the many different forms (multitude) of creation, but the Creator operates above His own *Hukam*:

The Creator's Hukam is the force within His creation. The Creator Himself operates above His own Hukam. (SGGS: 2) ⁽¹⁾

SGGS says that everything in the Creation emanated from the *Hukamee* (the Creator):
That I am alive is an honor within the confines of His Hukam. The consequences – joys and sorrows – of my deeds good and bad, are within the Creator's Hukam. Some are blessed with the realization of the Creator within, while multitudes remain constantly astray in their search without. (SGGS: 1) ⁽²⁾

The Creator's commands are universal, always in existence in every place and at any time. Nothing exists outside His *Hukam*. These Divine laws (*Hukam*) govern everything that He has Created. The Creator's Command does not discriminate against anyone based on one's religion, country of origin, caste, color, or gender. One gets rewards based on one's deeds as dictated by the *Hukam*. It is explained in SGGS as follows:

Planting poison but hoping for sweetness—what kind of fairness is that? You can't get good results from bad intentions; that's not how spirituality works. (SGGS: 474) ⁽³⁾

Guru Ji has clarified in *Asaa Dee Vaar* that all are working within the *Hukam*; but here he has employed another term *Bhaau*, which literally means 'in fear' – thereby implying that there is total compliance and willing acceptance and obedience without hesitation, defiance, or a rest or break.

Everything in nature follows Your command—the air, rivers, fire, and earth. The clouds, sun, moon, and sky move as You direct. Strength, power, life, and death are all in Your hands. Your rule, called Hukam, has controlled everything since the beginning. (SGGS: 464) ⁽⁴⁾

As we can see from the above *Shabad*, everything is under the Command or “*Hukam*” of the Creator, and He is the only one on whom His laws (*Hukam*) are not applicable. He is above and beyond the rules that govern His Creation.

His *Hukam* is in operation within us as well. It cannot be that the Creator is within us, but His *Hukam* is not. It follows that the accounting of our deeds is within us too.

My existence is by His Hukam, even if His entire Hukam cannot be fathomed. (SGGS: 1) ⁽⁵⁾

Abiding within *Hukam*

The central question posed by Guru Nanak in the very first *Pauri* of “Jup” bani (respectfully known as ‘Jupji Sahib’) is “How to Abide within *Hukam*?”. This question has also been answered by Guru Nanak in the same *Pauri*. It is the topic elaborated on in SGGS— i.e., how to become a Creator-realized being by internalizing virtues within our conscience.

Q - How do I become a Creator-realized being within; how do I remove the obstacle of my non-realized state within?

A - The way to realize the Creator within is to remain within the confines of and abide in Sehej of His Hukam, as contained within me. (SGGS: 1) ⁽⁶⁾

The subsequent verses of the *Jup bani* are further elaboration of *Hukam*. *Hukam* can be clearly understood as the divine laws which govern the working of the mind, conscience, and nature. SGGS impresses upon us that the entire Creation runs on Divine Command (*Hukam*).

Inanimate matter always follows Natural laws, but humans are the only creature that does not live a life of full compliance with the Creator’s *Hukam*. This is our greatest failure. All that needs to be done on every human’s part is to come in compliance with “*Hukam*.” Understanding and acceptance of this leads to a life wherein our ego is restrained. Guru Ji has said this in SGGS very clearly:

The Creator is realized within for all; no one can realize Him outside of His jurisdiction which is within. Upon realizing the Creator within, even the thought that I exist outside of His Hukam ceases to exist. (SGGS: 1) ⁽⁷⁾

Natural laws cannot be amended, altered, diluted, compromised, or bypassed. The Creator is the one whose command (*Hukam*) runs His Creation—but humans have the freedom to choose how we live. Guru Ji wants us to understand how *Hukam* operates for us humans as well, so that we may live our lives in harmony with His *Hukam* as explained in the spiritually enlightening messages of SGGS.

*Guru Ji says that humans should lead our lives in acceptance of Hukam. He says:
My mind no longer wants to be in control. Instead, I only do what You command because You are the supreme Creator. I want to live my spirituality according to Your Will and guidance. (SGGS: 6) ⁽⁸⁾*

In the above *Shabad*, Guru Ji emphasizes the importance of living in acceptance of *Hukam*. Once a person lives in harmony with these Divine laws, then s/he has understood the mystery of *Hukamee*:

The moments I realize the Hukam of God's Command; in those moments I understand the mystery of the Creator (Prabh Sahib). (SGGS: 885) ⁽⁹⁾

Accepting *Hukam* and Inculcating Virtues

The ‘mystery’ is resolved by accepting Gurbani’s message that to realize the Creator within, we need to inculcate or develop His Virtues within us, in our mind and conscience. The SGGS says:

True is the Command of Your Will, True is Your Order. Your Grace enables me towards my spiritual journey. (SGGS: 463) ⁽¹⁰⁾

By inculcating Virtues within, one obtains the Creator’s Grace:

Obedying the Order of His Will, my five senses come in compliance with Hukam, and then my conscience becomes the Virtues. (SGGS: 471) ⁽¹¹⁾

This same message has been shared in SGGS in other verses as:

The sign of becoming Virtues is that the conscience gets enlightened with the Creator’s Hukam. (SGGS: 106) ⁽¹²⁾

So, recognition of the Creator’s *Hukam* is a significant and major step forward in our personal spiritual journey. If the *Hukam* is not recognized and life is not lived with it, Guru Ji says that man suffers. When *Hukam* is recognized through the messages of *Shabad Guru (Gurbani)*, then one is in a mental state of bliss:

Without understanding divine guidance, a person remains trapped in vices (negative traits or behaviors). However, once one attains enlightenment, meaning one truly grasps and follows the Creator’s will—one embodies virtues (positive qualities such as kindness, honesty, and wisdom). (SGGS: 400) ⁽¹³⁾

Gurbani says that a seeker who lives the present life as per the laws of the “*Hukamee*” will always be in a state of bliss.

The Creator’s grace is obtained upon abiding and accepting His Hukam. The spiritual outcome desired by my mind is obtained upon performing within His command. Consequently, my spiritual destination is reached within my conscience. (SGGS: 471) ⁽¹⁴⁾

In summary

The Creator can be experienced within our mind and conscience—by living in accordance with His *Hukam* or Command and understanding and becoming the Creator’s Virtues. In this way, we Abide within *Hukam*. When we live in accordance with *Hukam* and understand and follow the messages of *Gurbani*, we ‘realize’ the Creator within. This is the goal of Sikhi spirituality. It leads to a life of joy and bliss.

Practical Examples:

Scene 1: A School Discussion

It was a breezy morning at the Guru Nanak High School. Amrit and his best friend Jasmeet were working on a school project in their classroom. Their teacher had assigned them the topic of "Living in Harmony with Natural Laws," tying it to a recent lesson on Guru Nanak's teachings.

"I just don't get it," said Jasmeet, his forehead creased in frustration. "How do these spiritual ideas even apply to us? It's not like we're sages meditating in caves."

Amrit smiled thoughtfully. "It's not about being a sage. Guru Nanak said the Creator's Hukam – the natural laws of the universe – are in everything. Even in how we behave and make choices."

Jasmeet rolled his eyes. "Great, so you're saying my impatience with this project is against Hukam?"

"Kind of," Amrit chuckled. "But seriously, living by Hukam isn't just about following rules. It's about aligning ourselves with virtues like kindness, humility, and acceptance. Imagine if we all acted with those in mind."

Before Jasmeet could respond, their teacher announced that the class was dismissed. Amrit packed his bag, already thinking about sharing the day's conversation with his family.

Scene 2: A Lesson at Home

Back at home, Amrit found his grandfather, Surinder, sitting in the courtyard, humming a Shabad from the Guru Granth Sahib. Amrit and his younger sister, Gurleen, joined him.

"Dada Ji," Amrit began, "we learned about Hukam at school today. I understand the concept, but how do we live by it?"

Surinder's eyes sparkled, "Hukam is like the current of a river. If you try to swim against it, you'll exhaust yourself. But if you flow with it, you'll reach your destination peacefully. It's about understanding that everything – joy and sorrow, success and failure – happens within the Creator's command. Acceptance and gratitude are the keys."

Gurleen, who had been drawing nearby, chimed in, "Does that mean I should stop trying to fix my mistakes when I mess up my homework?"

Surinder laughed. "Not at all, little one. Accepting Hukam doesn't mean giving up. It means understanding that mistakes are part of learning. Correct them with humility, not frustration. That's how you grow."

Scene 3: Jasmeet's Realization

The next day, Amrit and Jasmeet walked to school together. Jasmeet looked unusually thoughtful.

"You know, I was thinking about what you said," Jasmeet admitted. "Maybe I've been so focused on controlling everything that I've been going against Hukam. Last night, I tried letting go of things instead of stressing over my studies. It felt... better."

“That’s it!” Amrit exclaimed. “Guru Nanak taught that the Creator’s Hukam is within us. When we stop resisting and align ourselves with virtues, we find peace”.

Jasmeet nodded. “It’s hard, though. Especially when things don’t go your way.”

Amrit grinned. “That’s why we practice. Every moment is an opportunity to align with Hukam.”

Scene 4: A Creative Reminder

At dinner that evening, Gurleen proudly unveiled a colorful painting. It depicted a flowing river surrounded by birds, animals, vibrant flowers and trees, with the title “Live in Harmony with Hukam” painted in bold letters.

“I made this for you, Dada Ji,” she said, beaming. “You said Hukam is like a river, so I painted one!”

Surinder hugged her warmly, “This is beautiful, Gurleen. It’s a reminder that the Creator’s command flows through all of us, just like this river.”

Amrit looked at the painting and smiled. The lessons of Hukam weren’t just ideas in a book; they were a guide for how to live – with humility, gratitude, and love.

As the family gathered around the painting, Amrit realized that he wasn’t just learning about spirituality – he was living it.

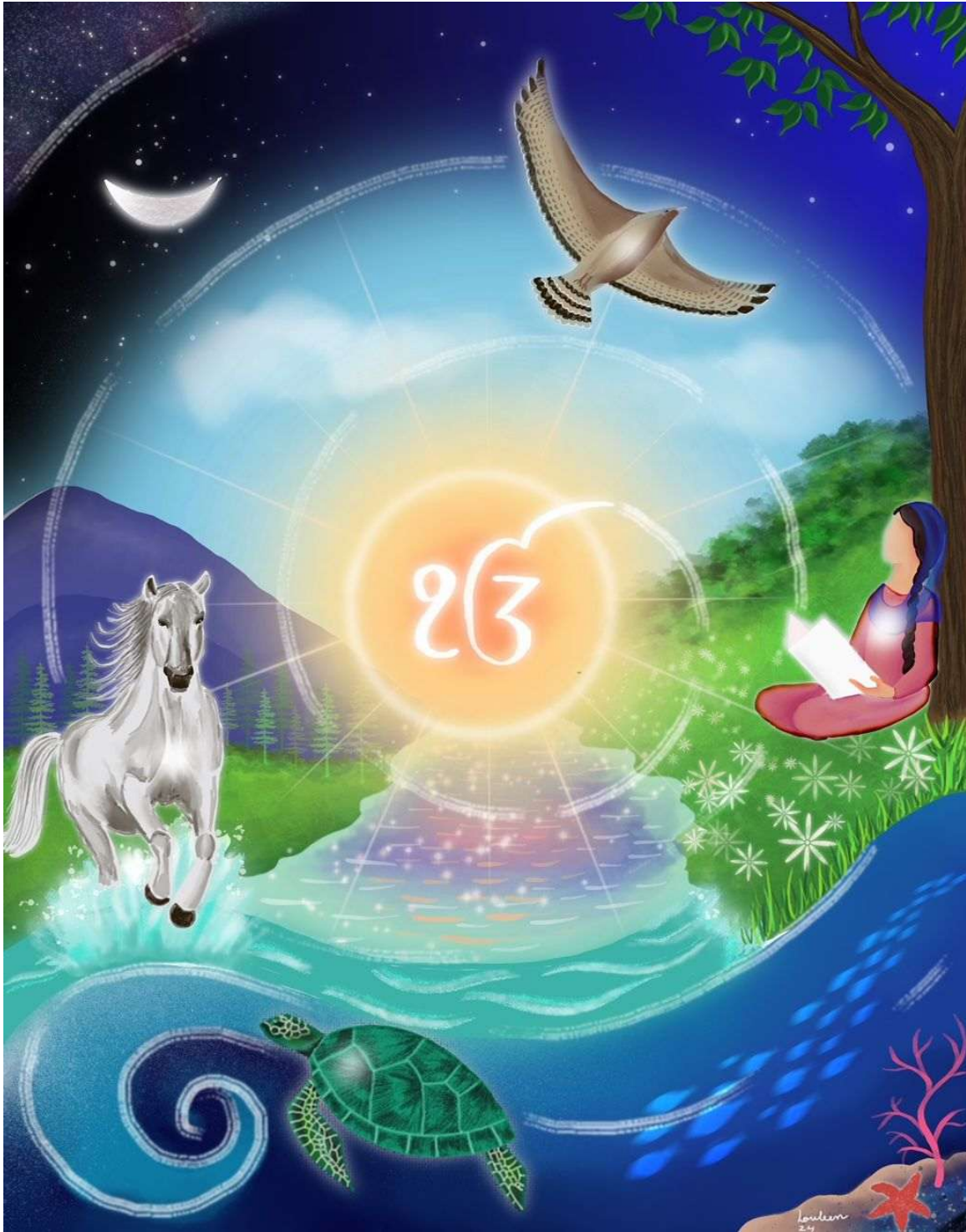
Key Lesson:

By understanding and accepting the Creator’s *Hukam*, we can live with greater peace, harmony, and purpose. Whether at school, at home, or in our personal life, aligning with Virtues leads to a life of fulfillment and joy.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Hukamee hukam chalaey raah. Nanak vigsey vepervaah.* (SGGS: 2)
2. *Hukamee hovan jee hukam milai vaddiaaiee.*
Hukamee utam neech hukam likh dhukh sukh paie'eeh.
Eikanaa hukamee bakhasees ik hukamee sadhaa bhavaie'eeh. (SGGS: 1)
3. *Beeje bikh ma(n)gai a(n)mrit vekhahu eh niaau ||2||* (SGGS: 474)
4. *Bhaai vich pavan vahai sadhavaau. Bhaai vich chaleh lakh dhareeaau.*
Bhaai vich agan kaddai vegaar. Bhaai vich dharatee dhabee bhaar.
Bhaai vich i(n)dh firai sir bhaar. Bhaai vich raajaa dharam dhuaar.
Bhaai vich sooraj bhai vich cha(n)dh. Koh karoRee chalat na a(n)t.
Bhaai vich sidh budh sur naath. Bhaai vich aaddaane aakaas.
Bhaai vich jodh mahaabal soor. Bhaai vich aaveh jaaveh poor.
Sagaliaa bhau likhiaa sir lekh. Nanak nirabhau nira(n)kaar sach ek. (SGGS: 464)
5. *Hukamee hovan aakaar hukam na kahiaa jaiee.* (SGGS: 1)
6. *Kiv sachiaaraa hoieeai kiv kooRai tuTai paal.*

- Hukam rajaiee chalanaa naanak likhkaa naal. 1. (SGGS: 1)*
7. *Hukamai andhar sabh ko baahar hukam na koi. Nanak hukamai jae bujhai ta haumai kahai na koi. 2 (SGGS: 1)*
8. *Joe tis bhaavai soiee karasee hukam na karanaa jaiee.*
So paatisaahu saahaa paatisaahib naanak rahan rajaiee. 27. (SGGS: 6)
9. *Kahau Nanak jin hukam pachhaataa. Prabh sahib kaa tin bhedh jaataa. 5.9. (SGGS: 885)*
10. *Sachaa teraa hukam sachaa furamaan.*
Sachaa teraa karam sachaa neesaan. (SGGS: 463)
11. *Hukam ma(n)niaai hovai paravaan taa khasamai kaa mahal paisee. (SGGS: 471)*
12. *Prabh milnaai kee eh neesaanee. Mun iko sachaa hukam pachhaanee. (SGGS: 106)*
13. *Jab lag hukam na boojhataa tab 20eel au dhukheaaa. Gur mil hukam pachhaaniaa tab hee te sukheaaa. 3. (SGGS: 400)*
14. *Hukam ma(n)niaai hovai paravaan taa khasamai kaa mahal paisee. Khasamai bhaavai So kare manahu chi(n)dhiaa so fal paisee. Taa dharageh paidhaa jaisee. (SGGS: 471)*



Live in Harmony with *Hukam*

5. Internalizing Divine Virtues (*Simran*)

1. What is *Naam Simran*?

- *Naam Simran* is not just chanting or repeating words. It means thinking deeply about the good qualities (Virtues) of the Creator, like kindness, honesty, and fearlessness, and making them part of our lives.
- The goal is to connect with the Creator by understanding and practicing these virtues in our daily lives.

2. Key Lessons from Gurbani:

- The mind should focus on understanding and living the Creator's Virtues.
- Talking about, reading, and discussing these virtues are ways of practicing *Naam Simran*, but they must lead to action in life.
- Spirituality is not about rituals like chanting or spinning rosaries but about improving the mind and heart.

3. Practical Message:

- True spirituality comes from learning, understanding, and applying virtues in everyday actions.

Composers of Gurbani (i.e., the Gurus and Bhagats and others) lived the Virtues and have prescribed these Virtues as the foundation of *Sikhi* spirituality. In Gurmat, *Naam Simran* refers to a spiritual process that begins with remembering and contemplating the Creator's virtues/attributes. The aim of such remembrance and contemplation is to make Virtues a part and parcel of our lives (*Mun meh Simran kareya*). It begins with the remembrance of the virtues and ends with becoming a virtue and thus becoming virtuous yourself. The process of becoming is called *Naam Simran* (literally, virtue contemplation). The outcome is the realization of the Creator within. The following verse of SGGS makes it clear.

A migratory bird which flies out long distances in search of food leaves its young behind. Despite the distance, separation and the continually arduous task of finding food, it constantly thinks of its offsprings. (SGGS: 10) ⁽¹⁾

***Simran* is Contemplating:**

The aim of *Sikhi* spirituality is 'realization' ('*Jup*') of the Creator within us. The spiritual equivalent of remembering is contemplation. *Sikhi* spirituality places primary importance on always contemplating on the Creator within. The following verse of SGGS makes it clear.

Of all spiritual deeds, contemplating the Creator with the aim of realizing Him within us is of the highest order. (SGGS: 263) ⁽²⁾

It is important to understand *what* to remember or contemplate (*Simar*). Gurbani makes it clear that it is Divine Virtues (*Naam*). We have discussed it in detail in the chapter on “*Naam*.” The following verse of Gurbani makes it clear.

Contemplate and internalize the virtues of the Creator, O mind. Let the loving messages of the Shabad reside within. (SGGS: 803) ⁽³⁾

Contemplate with the Mind:

The term *Simar muna* emphasizes that remembrance and contemplation is to be done by the mind. Talking about the Creator, listening to someone talk about His Virtues, reading about them, and discussing them are all acts of *Simran*. [Interestingly, contrary to the common practice of closing the eyes when doing *simran*, all these acts can be done with eyes open and lights on.]

The following verse of SGGS clarifies where one should place one’s *dhyaan* or focus while performing *Simran*.

Naam are the virtues of the Creator, and these virtues are found within the listening and understanding of the messages (dhun) of Gurbani. (SGGS: 296) ⁽⁴⁾

The essence of *Sikhi* spirituality is for the Sikh to be Creator-like. The likeness is specifically in terms of virtues and attributes. For example, if the Creator is *Nirbhau*, then fearlessness is a Divine Virtue. The aim of the Sikh is to be fearless. The following verse of Gurbani makes it clear.

By contemplating Fearlessness, all my fears have vanished; I have become fearless. (SGGS: 293) ⁽⁵⁾

Chanting is *Not* Simran:

Generally, *Simran* is misunderstood as chanting, which is repetitious utterance of a word, a *mantar* or a particular *shabad* (with or without a rosary or counter). Chanting has no spiritual value in Gurbani, as is clear from the following verse in SGGS.

A person might speak as if they have millions of tongues and repeat God's name countless times. But to truly understand and connect with the Creator, one must grow their conscience and spirituality gradually. When others hear about this spiritual growth, some may try to copy it without understanding. Nanak says, "I feel the Creator's grace within me, but those who imitate without true understanding lack real connection." (SGGS: 7) ⁽⁶⁾

Guru Nanak explains that the way to become one with and realize the Creator requires the elevation of one’s mind and conscience, rung by rung, up a ladder. Upon hearing the narrative of the elevated spirituality, even the pretentious get a desire to imitate it. The realization of the Creator within is through the grace of enlightenment. Pretentious ways are not a pathway to the realization of the Creator’s Virtues.

The Gurbani position on chanting is that it gives **no** spiritual benefits at all. The following verses in SGGS explain this.

Everyone goes around chanting Ram, but Ram (the Creator) is not attainable by doing this. (SGGS: 555) ⁽⁷⁾

Everyone utters Ram, but Ram (the Creator) is not attained by uttering. (SGGS: 491) ⁽⁸⁾

Bhai Gurdas Ji has shared a beautiful analogy of sugar, to explain that by saying sugar one does not get the taste of sugar, which is only experienced by actually eating it:

Simply saying words like "sugar," "fire," or "doctor" cannot bring sweetness, warmth, or healing. Similarly, saying "money" won't bring wealth, nor will it mention that "sandalwood" spread its fragrance, or repeating "moon" create moonlight. In the same way, merely listening to holy teaching doesn't lead to a divine life. True transformation comes from practicing these teachings in daily life. Enlightenment is achieved by living according to the messages of the Shabad. (Kabit Bhai Gurdas Ji) ⁽⁹⁾

Also,

Repeating words like "sugar" or "lamp" doesn't create sweetness or light. Similarly, repeating "knowledge" or "Naam" doesn't bring true understanding or spiritual connection. True realization comes only by internalizing Virtues and sincerely connecting with the teachings of the True Guru. (Kabit Bhai Gurdas Ji) ⁽¹⁰⁾

The above quotes of Bhai Gurdas are exposition of Guru Nanak's words:

I internalize His Hukam by accepting it reverentially, internalizing it, and instilling love for the Hukam in my mind. (SGGS: 2) ⁽¹¹⁾

There is a beautiful example in SGGS in the form of a conversation between Bhagats Namdev and Trilochan. Bhagat Trilochan came to visit Bhagat Namdev, and he saw Bhagat Namdev was engaged in his trade of calico printing. Bhagat Trilochan was aghast as he was expecting Bhagat Namdev to be engaged in meditation with his eyes closed. Here is the conversation as captured by Bhagat Kabir:

The conversation between Trilochan and Namdev conveys a simple yet profound message: Trilochan questions Namdev, suggesting that he is too absorbed in worldly affairs instead of seeking the Divine. Namdev responds by explaining his approach to spirituality, saying that one can engage in daily work with one's hands and feet while keeping the mind focused on the Creator.

*In essence: **Live in the world, fulfill your responsibilities, but always keep your heart and mind connected to the Divine.***

(SGGS: 1375) ⁽¹²⁾

Now let us see what happens if we **fail** to realize the Creator within. Guru Ji says:

O foolish mind, your failure to realize the one Creator within has led you to become devoid of virtues. (SGGS: 12) ⁽¹³⁾

Similarly, Gurbani criticizes rosary spinning as a pretentious show of one's piety. Since the vice of ego drives rosary spinning, it has no spiritual value. See the following verses in SGGS.

Adorning religious attire, symbols, and the rosary, reading scriptures instead of worship is worthless, given that in doing so one discards Virtues and is engrossed in worldly matters. There is no bliss without devotion to the Shabad Guru. (SGGS: 832) ⁽¹⁴⁾

Spinning the rosary and expecting a treasure of Divinity, no one reaches the spiritual destination this way. (SGGS: 888) ⁽¹⁵⁾

Wearing religious symbols and carrying a rosary in hand, people treat the Creator as a toy. (SGGS: 1158) ⁽¹⁶⁾

Simran is Gurbani-centered:

Just as *Sikhi* is a Gurbani-centered spiritual journey, *Simran* too is Gurbani-centered, at the mental level—for *simran* is done in and by the mind. Gurbani is the very soul of *Sikhi* spirituality.

Bani encapsulates all spiritual outcomes. Everything that is Sikhi is within Gurbani. Sikhi does not leave out anything that is spiritual. (SGGS: 982) ⁽¹⁷⁾

Practical Example

It was a sunny morning at Guru Nanak High School, and Amrit was seated in his usual spot under the big oak tree with his best friend Jasmeet. A thoughtful student with an innate curiosity about spirituality, Amrit often found himself pondering deep questions. Jasmeet, practical and ambitious, usually teased him for "thinking too much," but today she was curious.

"What's on your mind, Amrit?" Jasmeet asked, flipping through her biology textbook.

"Simran," Amrit replied thoughtfully. "Grandfather Surinder was explaining it last night—how it's not just about chanting but about embodying virtues."

Jasmeet raised an eyebrow. "Sounds complicated. Why does it matter?"

Before Amrit could answer, the school bell rang. The conversation was left unfinished as they headed to class.

At home that evening, Amrit sat cross-legged on the living room floor while his mischievous younger sister, Gurleen, crafted a collage for her art project. Their grandfather, Surinder, sat nearby, sipping tea.

"Dadaji," Amrit began, "you mentioned Simran yesterday. Can you explain it again? Jasmeet thinks it's just about chanting."

Surinder smiled warmly. "Ah, Simran is much more than that, my son. It starts with remembering the Creator's virtues—like kindness, fearlessness, and humility—but it doesn't stop there. The goal is to embody those virtues and live them every day."

"But Dadaji," Gurleen interjected, holding up her glittery collage, "how do you do that while living your life? I mean, I can't imagine being kind while someone's being mean to me!"

Surinder chuckled. "That's a fair question, Gurleen. Let me tell you a story from the Guru Granth Sahib. Bhagat Namdev was once criticized for working on his trade instead of meditating. But he explained that while his hands were busy, his mind was focused on the Creator and His virtues. That's the essence of Simran—living with mindfulness and a connection to the divine, no matter what you're doing."

The next day at school, Amrit decided to share this wisdom with Jasmeet. They were working on a group project in the library when Amrit said, "You know, *Simran* isn't just for monks or priests. It's about being mindful of virtues while living your life. Like how you always push yourself to succeed—if you add compassion and patience to that, you're practicing Simran too."

Jasmeet paused, considering his words. "So, it's not about chanting endlessly or being super religious?"

"Exactly," Amrit said. "Grandfather says that merely chanting without internalizing virtues is like saying the word 'sugar' and expecting sweetness. Simran is about growing spiritually and becoming a better version of yourself."

That evening at dinner, Amrit shared what he had learned with his family. Gurleen, inspired, promised to be more creative with kindness in her art projects. Jasmeet, too, seemed to take the lesson to heart, showing more patience with his classmates the next day.

Surinder watched them all with a knowing smile. He was proud to see the seeds of virtues taking root in his grandchildren, just as the Gurus intended.

As Amrit went to bed that night, he felt a deep sense of peace. Simran wasn't about doing something extraordinary; it was about living an ordinary life with extraordinary mindfulness and virtues. And in that realization, he felt closer to the Creator within.

Gurus emphasize that spirituality and inculcation of virtues are a function of the mind. The mind must understand, believe, and accept the verses of Gurbani. Only then can a person conduct oneself as Gurbani teaches, and 'become' the virtues. Mindless uttering of *Shabads* or repetitious chanting with the tongue is NOT *Simran*.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Uoodde uoodd aavai sai kosaa tis paachhai bachare chhariaa ||
Tinn kavan khalaavai kavan chugaavai man meh simaran kariaa ||3||* (SGGS: 10)
2. *Prabh kaa simran sabh te uoochaa.* (SGGS: 263)
3. *Simar manaa raam naam chitaare.
Bas rahe hiradhai gur charan piaare. ||1|| Rahaau ||* (SGGS: 803)
4. *Gunn gobi(n)dh naam dhun baanee.* (SGGS: 296)
5. *Nirabhau Jupai sagal bhau miTai.* (SGGS: 293)
6. *Eik dhoo jeebhau lakh hoh lakh hoveh lakh vees.
Lakh lakh geRaa aakhe'eeh ek naam jagadhees.
Aet raeh pat pavaReeaa chaReeaa hoi ikees.
Sunn galaa aakaas kee keeTaa aaiee rees.
Nanak nadharee paieeaa kooRee kooRai Thees. 32.* (SGGS: 7)
7. *Ram ram karataa sabh jag firai ram na paiaa jai.* (SGGS: 555)
(Note: Here, Ram refers to the Creator and His Virtues, not the Hindu god Ram.)
8. *Ram Ram sabh ko kahai kahiaai ram na hoi ||* (SGGS: 491)
(Note: Here, Ram refers to the Creator and His Virtues, not the Hindu god Ram.)
9. *Khaa(n)dd Khaa(n)dd kahai jhabaa na savaiaadh meeTho aavai agan agan kahai
seet na binaas hai. Baidh baidh kahai rog miTat na kaaha(n)oo ko dhrab dhrab kahai
kouoo dhrabeh na bilaas hai. Cha(n)ghan cha(n)ghan kahat pragaTai na subaas baas
cha(n)dh cha(n)dh kahai ujiaaro na pragaas hai. Taise gayaan gosaT karat na rahat
paavai karanee pradhan bhaan udhat akaas hai ||437|| (Kabit Bhai Gurdas Ji)*
10. *Jaise khaa(n)dd khaa(n)dd kahai mukh nahee meeThaa hoi jab lag jeebh savaiaadh
khaa(n)dd nahee khaieeaa. Jaise raat a(n)dheree mai dheepak dheepak kahai timar na
jaiee jab lag na jaraieeaa. Jaise gayaan gayaan kahai gayaan hoo(n) na hot kachh jab
lag gur gayaan a(n)tar na paieeaa. Taise gur dhayaan kahai gur dhayaan ha(n)oo na
paavat jab lag gur dharas jai na samaieeaa. ||542|| (Kabit Bhai Gurdas Ji)*
11. *Gaaveeaa suneeaa mun rakheaa bhaau. Dhukh parahar sukh ghar lai jai.* (SGGS: 2)
Gaveay – Lit. = Sing; sp. Accept. Suneay – Lit. = Listen, sp. Take in, adopt,
internalize. Munn – Mind. Rakheay – instill. Bhao – Love.
12. *Naamaa maiaa mohiaa kahai tilochan meet.
Kaahe chheepahu chhailai raam na laavahu cheet .212.
Naamaa kahai tilochanaa mukh te raam sa(n)m(h)aal.
Haath paau kar kaam sabh cheet nira(n)jan naal .213.* (SGGS: 1375)
13. *Mun ek na chetas mooR manaa. Har bisarat tere gun galiaa. 1. Rahaau.* (SGGS: 12)
(Mun – within the mind. Ek – the One Creator. Na – negate. Chetas – lit. remember, sp.
Internalize, realize. Moor manaa – foolish mind. Har bisarat – by discarding the
omnipresent Creator. Tayrey – you (mind). Gunn – divine virtues. Galiaa – dissipate,
devoid.)
14. *Dhotee uoojal tilak gal maalaa. A(n)tar karodh paReh naaT saalaa.
Naam visaar maiaa madh peea. Bin gur bhagat naahee sukh theeaa. ||4||* (SGGS: 832)
15. *Maalaa ferai ma(n)gai bibhoot. Eeh bidh koi na taro meet.* (SGGS: 888)
16. *Maathe tilak hath maalaa baanaa(n). Logan ram khilaunaa jaanaa(n). 1.* (SGGS: 1158)
17. *Baane guroo guroo hai baanee vich baanee a(n)mrit saare. ||* (SGGS: 982)



Gaaveeaaai suneeaaai mun rakheeeaaai bhaau. Dhukh parahar sukh ghar lai jai. (SGGS: 2)
I internalize His *Hukam* by accepting it reverentially, internalizing it, and instilling love
for the *Hukam* in my mind.

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6. Singing Gurbani Verses (*Keertan*)

- **Guru Nanak's Teaching Method:** Guru Nanak used music and poetry to share spiritual lessons. He believed music made it easier for people to understand, remember, imbibe, and live by virtues.
- **Importance of *Keertan*:** Singing hymns (*keertan*) in specific musical styles helped people internalize messages about virtues, like humility, love, and contentment.
- **Practical Impact:** Guru Nanak emphasized practicing virtues in daily life, not just listening. Music became a tool for spiritual growth, transforming people's lives by reducing vices and promoting virtues.

Guru Nanak knew that to reach into the hearts and minds of the common people who were his primary audience, his spirituality would have to be in a language they understood and in a mode of communication that would quickly get their attention. So, he wrote his *bani* in the Punjabi language and composed it in lyrics that one can sing melodiously in musical *raags* to the assembled congregation (*sangat*). The message of *Gurbani* that he conveyed to his listeners spoke eloquently of the Divine attributes and virtues that Guru Ji wanted his followers (Sikhs) to imbibe (i.e., inculcate, or develop) and follow in their daily lives.

Importance of singing Gurbani verses:

Guru Ji thus used the singing (*keertan*) of *Gurbani* verses (*shabads*) as a way of helping his followers listen to, absorb, and remember the verses of *Shabad* Guru. The utilization of music and the musical mode (*raags*) and singing of *shabads* enabled Guru Ji to transform congregants by encouraging them to easily understand and remember the messages of *Gurbani*.

In this way, not only did Guru Ji himself experience the enlightenment of divine qualities, but he passionately shared his spiritual insights with others to impact the lives of all those he met during his lifetime. He also knew that this approach would inspire his followers to adopt, live by, and ultimately ‘realize’ the Divine qualities that he himself had experienced.

Power of Music:

Because Guru Ji had realized the power of music to uplift and transform the soul, before embarking on his missionary journeys he asked Bhai Mardana to be his companion on his long travels so that jointly they could share the Divine message. During interactions with the common folk, Guru Ji used to sing praises of the Creator, and Mardana would play the *rabab*, a string instrument. Guru Ji adored music and knew that it had the power to transform lives by lifting our moods and impacting on us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Earlier, people had used music primarily for entertainment, but Guru Ji employed music for spiritual upliftment by singing praises of the Creator to bring His Virtues to our attention.

Through his *bani*, which he himself set to musical *raags*, Guru Ji has shared his words of supplication on how to perceive the Creator within:

Please bless me with such understanding that I may perceive Your Divine qualities. (SGGS: 795) ⁽¹⁾

We can see the humility in Guru Ji from the above words. Guru Ji tells us about the efficacy of singing *Gurbani* verses in the following words:

Through the Creator's realization, our conscience inculcates divine qualities. (SGGS: 143) ⁽²⁾

Guru Ji so passionately believed in this method of communication that he considered himself a '*dhaaddhee*' or minstrel commissioned to sing Virtues. Guru Ji used this word six times in writing about his own spiritual journey. Just to get a flavor of Guru Ji's thought process, let us look at this verse from SGGS:

I was a minstrel, out of work, when the Creator took me into His service. (SGGS: 150) ⁽³⁾

Guru Nanak sang *Shabads* himself:

Guru Ji employed the musical method effectively to transform the vice-filled life of anyone who sought to understand the divine messages in the *Shabad*. We can imagine Guru Ji singing the following *shabad* to Sajjan, to the accompaniment of Mardana's *rabab*. It will mesmerize the listener and deeply pierce one's heart. One can feel that those words are directed at him personally.

Outward appearance can be deceiving; true character is revealed through actions. Good clothes cannot hide inner flaws. A clear conscience is a faithful guide, leading senses to align with virtue. (SGGS: 729) ⁽⁴⁾

Guru Nanak spent about 24 years of his life covering 28,000 KM on four missionary tours spanning many countries and visiting prominent places of various faiths. After the fourth long journey, Guru Ji settled in Kartarpur, now in Pakistan. There he gave practical shape to his vision of how to realize the Divine qualities. The methodology adopted by Guru Ji was singing *Gurbani* verses about the virtues of the Creator and explaining *Gurbani* messages through discourses (*katha*) to the assembled congregation (*sangat*).

Guru Ji conveyed the spiritual meanings of the *Shabads* through music, and through it he spiritually uplifted the lives of the masses from mundane to the divine. Guru Ji has extolled the virtue of internalizing Virtues in these words:

Vices cannot even touch the conscience of anyone who realizes the Creator's Virtues within. (SGGS: 867) ⁽⁵⁾

Guru Arjan Ji has further elaborated this message in these words:

*Let go of vices and embrace the Creator's qualities. Experience the Creator fully and embody the *Shabad*'s message. (SGGS: 1075) ⁽⁶⁾*

Internalize the Message:

Guru Ji said that one must *internalize* the message of the *Shabad* Guru, not just listen to Gurbani. When one does this while invoking all the senses, it enables one to transform the inner being or conscience, and through it receive the Divine grace that enables one to inculcate Virtues. Then, singing and listening to Gurbani does not remain a mere musical performance, but it imbues virtues in the conscience of the seeker of divinity. Guru Ji has said:

I internalize His Hukam by accepting, internalizing, and instilling love for the Hukam in my mind. By internalizing the Hukam, spiritual agony dissipates, and spiritual bliss comes to reside in my mind. (SGGS: 2) ⁽⁷⁾

Guru Ji emphasized the need to internalize the Creator's qualities in these words:

So, internalize the Creator's qualities, by whose Grace everlasting bliss prevails. (SGGS: 595) ⁽⁸⁾

Even in such a situation, I would internalize Your qualities, and it would not diminish my longing to inculcate Divine qualities. (SGGS: 142) ⁽⁹⁾

Guru Nanak's successor Gurus espoused the same philosophy. Let us explore this further through their words. Guru Angad says:

Hunger for divine qualities is relieved when one realizes the qualities of the Creator. (SGGS: 147) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Gurbani says that we try to stuff ourselves with material possessions in hopes of finding happiness, but still the hunger or our desires do not subside. Gurbani invites us to explore the alternative spiritual path of *Sikhi* in these words:

Come, O beloved Sikhs of the Shabad Guru, and internalize the qualities of the Creator. (SGGS: 920) ⁽¹¹⁾

The significant benefits of internalizing, following, and becoming the Virtues are many, as explained in various verses in SGGS:

1. **Vices do not come closer:** Internalizing the qualities of the Creator, vices shall not even come near you. (SGGS: 190) ⁽¹²⁾ And, By internalizing His qualities, one can get rid of the vices. (SGGS: 1297) ⁽¹³⁾
2. **The mind becomes pure when it removes the vice of ego:** By being amazed by the Virtues, the mind gets rid of vices and ego departs from within. (SGGS: 515) ⁽¹⁴⁾ And, Internalizing the qualities of the Creator removes the filth of vices. The all-consuming poison of ego goes away. (SGGS: 289) ⁽¹⁵⁾
3. **Become fearless and enjoy eternal bliss, peace, and poise:** Nanak has become fearless, and enjoys eternal bliss, by internalizing the Creator's qualities. (SGGS: 675) ⁽¹⁶⁾

4. **Become content:** O Creator of the Universe! by internalizing your qualities, my mind becomes content. (SGGS: 40) ⁽¹⁷⁾
5. **Become enlightened:** Internalizing the Creator's qualities enlightens a person. (SGGS: 901) ⁽¹⁸⁾
6. **Lead a virtuous life devoid of vices:** By internalizing the qualities of the Creator, one leads a virtuous life devoid of vices. (SGGS: 867) ⁽¹⁹⁾

In conclusion, internalizing the messages of the *Shabad* Guru connects us with the Creator within, and helps us emerge from cycles of vices. Also, it is not surprising that SGGS is written in poetry under titles of musical scales (*raags*). *Gurbani* is arranged in SGGS according to 31 *raags* instead of topics or subject matter; and the singing (*keertan*) of *Gurbani* set to music enables the attentive listener to absorb its uplifting message.

Note: Generally, *Ragees* do not follow Gurmat rules while singing the *Shabads*. *Gurbani* was composed mostly in *raags* (musical measures). The Fifth Nanak compiled SGGS according to the various *raags*. Still, most of the *Ragees* do not recite *Shabads* in *raags*. Their explanation is that the public will not understand it. Interestingly, the present-day public is more educated than the people during the Gurus' period. Also, *Ragees* do not sing the *Rahao* verse as the *sthaee* (refrain) even though it contains the gist (central message) of the *Shabad*. The *Ragees'* explanation is that the verse (*tuk*) they are using as *sthaee* suits better for the occasion. In doing so, they fail to emphasize the central message of *Shabad*. Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) on its website has laid down rules for reciting *bani* i.e., *Rahao as sthaee*.

Spiritual Benefits:

1. *Humility:* Singing about the Creator fosters humility and gratitude.
2. *Dropping Ego:* Reflecting on virtues helps remove ego and vices.
3. *Contentment:* Understanding and practicing these teachings lead to peace and satisfaction.

Practical Example

Amrit walked through the bustling hallway of his high school, his mind still lingering on the *keertan* session he had attended the previous evening with his grandfather, Surinder. The rhythmic melody of the *shabads*, accompanied by the *rabab*, had left a deep impression on him. It wasn't just music—it was an experience that had stirred his soul.

At home later that day, Amrit found Gurleen humming a tune while painting a colorful poster. Her creativity always amazed him. "What are you making, Gurleen?" he asked, sitting beside her.

"It's for art class," Gurleen replied, adding swirls of color. "I've been thinking about the *shabads* Grandpa talked about. They're like paintings but with words and music."

Amrit smiled. "That is an effective way to think about it. Did you know Guru Nanak Ji used music to share his messages? He believed music was not just entertainment; it was a way to uplift people and teach them about virtues.

Surinder entered the room just then, holding a cup of tea. “That’s right, Amrit. Music helps us connect with our inner self and the Creator,” he said. “Do you remember how Guru Nanak Ji traveled with Bhai Mardana, singing praises of the Creator? Those melodies weren’t just beautiful; they were transformative.”

The next day at school, Amrit shared his thoughts with Jasmeet during lunch. “You know, Jasmeet, it’s amazing how Guru Nanak Ji used *keertan* to teach people about humility, contentment, and overcoming ego.”

Jasmeet, always practical, raised an eyebrow. “That sounds nice, but how does that help in real life? I mean, life’s about getting things done, right?”

Amrit leaned forward, choosing his words carefully. “Think about it this way: when we focus on the Creator’s qualities, like kindness and humility, we’re less distracted by our ego or jealousy. It clears our mind and helps us make better decisions. It’s not just about spirituality; it’s about being the best version of ourselves.”

Intrigued but skeptical, Jasmeet agreed to visit Amrit’s house that evening to learn more. When he arrived, Surinder welcomed him warmly. The family gathered as Amrit played a recording of a *Shabad*, its soothing melody filling the room.

“This is more than music,” Surinder explained. “Guru Nanak Ji believed that by internalizing the message of Gurbani, we transform ourselves. Singing and listening to these divine words helps us embrace virtues like compassion, courage, and humility.”

Gurleen chimed in, her mischievous grin lighting up the room. “Even I felt it, Jasmeet! It’s like the music tells you a secret about how to be happy.”

Jasmeet nodded thoughtfully. “I understand. It’s about using the music to focus on something greater than us”.

Amrit smiled, sensing a shift in his friend’s perspective. “Exactly. When we let these teachings guide us, we can handle life’s challenges with more grace and clarity.”

By the end of the evening, Jasmeet had not only enjoyed the *keertan* but also felt a newfound appreciation for its deeper purpose. The teachings of Guru Nanak Ji, shared through music and *keertan*, had subtly woven their way into his thoughts.

As Amrit and Jasmeet walked to the door, Surinder’s words echoed in their minds: “Remember, true transformation begins when we internalize the virtues of the Creator. Through music, we can find harmony within ourselves.”

Key Lesson:

Guru Nanak's teachings highlight that singing Gurbani verses (*Keertan*) and internalizing (i.e., developing and following) the messages of *Shabad* Guru can

inspire us to live better lives. By practicing such virtues as humility, love, and mindfulness, etc., and by reducing vices such as ego, greed, etc., we can create a more joyful and meaningful environment everywhere for ourselves and others.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Taerae gunn gaavaa dheh bujhaiee.* (SGGS: 795)
Note: The literal meaning of the word *gaavaa* (or *gavan*) is to sing. However, the concern of Gurbani is the subject matter of the verses, and not the process of singing. The subject matter and content of this verse is how one recognizes the Hukam. Here **the spiritual message of *gaavaa* is “perceive the Creator’s Virtues or Hukam.”**
2. *Sifatee ga(n)dd pavai dharabaar.* 2. (SGGS: 143)
3. *Hau dhaaddhee vekaar kaarai laiaa.* (SGGS: 150)
4. *Ujjal kaihaa chilakanaa ghoTim kaalaRee mus. Dhotiaa jooTh na uttarai jae sau dhovaa tis.* 1. *Sajjan seiee naal mai chaladhiaa naal chala(n)ni(h).* *Jithai lekhaa ma(n)geeaai tithai khaRe dhisa(n)n.1. Rahaau.* (SGGS: 729)
5. *Joe jan karai keeratan gopaal. Tis kau poh na sakai jamakaal.* (SGGS: 867)
6. *Kaljug maieh keeratan paradhaanaa. Gurmukh Jupeeaai lai dhiaanaa.* (SGGS: 1075)
7. *Gaveeai suniyae mun rakheeai bhao. Dhuk parhar sukh lai jaaai.* (SGGS: 2)
8. *Bhee saalaahihau saachaa soi. Jaa kee nadhar sadhaa sukh hoai. Rahaau.* (SGGS: 595)
9. *Bhee too(n)hai saalaahanaa aakhan lahai na chaau.* 1. (SGGS: 142)
10. *Nanak bhukhaa taa rajai jaa gunn kaeh gunee samai.* 2 (SGGS: 147)
11. *Aavahu sikh satguru kae piaariho gaavahu sachee baanee.* (SGGS: 920)
12. *Hur keeratan sunai hur keeratan gaavai. Tis jan dhookh nikaT nahee aavai.* 2. (SGGS: 190)
13. *Jus gaavat paap lahaan.* (SGGS: 1297)
14. *Vaahu vaahu karatiaa mun niramal hovai haumai vichahu jai.* (SGGS: 515)
15. *Gunn gaavat taeree utaras maill. Binas jai haumai bikh phaill.* (SGGS: 289)
16. *Nirabhau bhe sadhaa sukh maane nanak har gun gai.* 2.17 (SGGS: 675)
17. *Maere gobi(n)dhaa gunn gaavaa tirapat mun hoi.* (SGGS: 40)
18. *Gunn gaavat hovat paragaas.* (SGGS: 901)
19. *Hur gun gaavat tareeaai sa(n)saar.* (SGGS: 867)



Taerae gunn gaavaa dheh bujhaiee. (SGGS: 795)

Please bless me with such understanding that I may perceive Your Divine qualities.

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7. Aligning with Gurbani Messages (*Sangat*)

- Gurbani emphasizes the need for our senses to act in harmony with and in the company (*Sangat*) of a conscience imbued with divine Virtues.
- Bhagat Kabir Ji's analogy of sandalwood and bamboo highlights how an egotistic person does not become spiritual just by sitting in proximity to a virtuous person.

Aligning with Gurbani messages (*Sangat*) is key:

The messages of the *Shabad* Guru (Gurbani) are for everyone, and we need to align ourselves (or live in accordance with) these messages. One of the basic concepts of *Sikhi* spirituality is that the Creator resides within us, in everyone's conscience, but to make this happen we must make a deliberate effort to inculcate and internalize the virtues within our mind and conscience. Gurbani says that all five senses (i.e., sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) that help us connect with the external world (through our eyes, ears, skin, nose, and tongue) must be brought under control of the conscience so that they act in accordance with the Divine message of the *Shabad*. Only then would we be able to act, and finally 'become,' Virtues, as explained at length in SGGS.

First and foremost, the messages of Gurbani must be fully internalized. This does not happen without deliberate effort. There are many well-known instances in Sikh history of this lack of internalization and its unavoidable consequences. For example, Sri Chand, Lakhmi Das, Prithi Chand, and Dhirmal lived in the household of Gurus, yet they turned out to be spiritually unenlightened about the basic teachings of *Sikhi* because they themselves did not accept nor act upon the messages of Gurbani.

Physical proximity is not Enough:

Being in the presence (*sangat*) of enlightened people is helpful, but it does not automatically help us in becoming spiritual. It is the imbibing of messages of *Shabad* Guru within us that is important and necessary. Though this can be facilitated by our participating as a member of the *Sangat* in a Gurdwara, it is essential that we ourselves make the conscious effort to internalize the Gurbani messages and ensure that all our five senses function in accordance with the messages of Gurbani.

The following verses from SGGS help explain how Gurbani uses the term *Sangat*, meaning that our senses should be in alignment with (or in 'sangat of') the messages of *Shabad* Guru:

Grant me the blessing of Virtues, O Virtuous Friend and Guru. Your guidance is my constant companion on the path of righteousness. My greatest blessings come through devotion and longing for virtues. I found fulfillment when my mind and senses embraced the wisdom of the enlightened Guru. Life without virtues feels empty, and time devoted to vices was wasted, lacking true purpose. My spiritual journey began when I sought realization through the Creator-Connecting Guru. This sacred connection has given me the essence of Virtues, leading me to enlightenment. (SGGS: 10) ⁽¹⁾

The spiritual journey is complete when one realizes the Omnipresent Creator through the Shabad. Our ancestors achieved this through their connection with Shabad. By listening to and speaking of Shabad, one attains inner realization and awareness of the Creator. This realization fulfills the spiritual path. (SGGS: 919) ⁽²⁾

Our Senses should be in tune with Gurbani messages:

The mind controls and directs all our senses. It is important for the mind to stay in tune with the virtues internalized within the conscience. Gurbani says that the senses should be aware of their Virtues-driven mission. Examples of verses in SGGS that refer specifically to our physical senses are given below:

- *O Mind! You seek the essence of joy intensely in matters other than spiritual, you thus remain unfulfilled. (SGGS: 921) ⁽³⁾*
- *O Senses in my body, your existence in this world is the result of the Creator having gifted you with life. (SGGS: 921) ⁽⁴⁾*
- *"O my senses, throughout your lifetime, you have been involved in countless activities. Yet, you have failed to recognize the Creator who gave your life. The Guru's teachings brought Divine realization into my mind, guiding me to align my senses with the Creator's will. My senses found harmony with my mind only when they focused on the Guru's message that connects to the Creator." (SGGS: 922) ⁽⁵⁾*
- *O my eyes, the Creator blessed you with the gift of sight—see Him in all things. Recognize the Creator in everything you behold, for this is a true blessing. The entire creation is the Creator's form, and through this awareness, you will come to see it as such. Through the Guru's grace, I have realized that all I see is the One Omnipresent Creator, and nothing exists apart from Him. My once-ignorant eyes have been enlightened by embracing the Guru's Creator-Connecting message. (SGGS: 922) ⁽⁶⁾*
- *O ears, you are gifted with the sense of hearing. Among all senses, use this gift to hear the Creator in every sound. Through this hearing, my conscience awakens, and my mind becomes immersed in the Creator's essence. The Creator's vastness and energy are beyond hearing and narration. Listen to the blissful Virtues, fulfilling your purpose, O ears. The Creator gave you the sense of hearing for a purpose. (SGGS: 922) ⁽⁷⁾*

By doing this, all senses align with the virtues within the conscience, wherein the Creator resides. The senses then act as required in accordance with the divine purpose for which they were created by the Creator. In the *sangat* of Virtues, spiritual upliftment takes place. Guru Ji says:

In the company of elevated conscience, the mind gets uplifted. All senses imbibe Virtues and discard vices. (SGGS: 413) ⁽⁸⁾

Humility can help:

Bhagat Kabir Ji has explained in SGGS that it is not possible for one to get the quality of humility when one is filled with ego. One's senses must get spiritually aligned with divine Virtues within the conscience. (These verses need to be understood metaphorically, not literally).

The shrubs around sandalwood are better than the tall and mighty bamboo tree. Because the vegetation that resides in the vicinity of the sandalwood becomes fragrant too. The fragrance of humility is preferred to the hollowness of one's mighty ego. Because humility breeds the same virtue (humility) in those who are in the company of the humble. (SGGS: 1365) ⁽⁹⁾

Kabir ji also makes it clear that one does not get spiritually aligned with another person's spirituality (inculcated divine virtues), just by being in someone's physical company (or 'sangāt', as commonly understood).

The bamboo tree may be great because of its height. But even if it resides close to sandalwood, the mighty bamboo does not become fragrant. The egoistic being remains engrossed in self-stature, lest one descend to such lows. Because even if in the proximate company of the humble, the egoistic remains unaffected. (SGGS: 1365) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Sangāt in a Gurdwara:

Sangāt is one of the many misunderstood concepts in *Sikhi*. It is commonly considered sufficient to physically sit, usually in a Gurdwara, in the company of other people irrespective of their spiritual state of mind. If they are visibly reciting Gurbani and are preferably dressed in proper religious attire, it is wrongly presumed that this external behavior and appearance by itself automatically enhances the spirituality of others.

This observation does not imply that one should not join the congregation in the Gurdwara. However, the objective of participating as a member of the *sangāt* should be to seek solutions to our own obstacles on the spiritual path. No magical transformation takes place merely by sitting in the company of someone else who possesses Divine Virtues. Other concepts/practices which are not consistent with Gurmat are discussed in the last chapter.

Key Concepts:

1. **The Creator Within:** *Sikhi* spirituality teaches that the Creator resides within every individual's conscience. To connect with the divine, we must make a deliberate effort to internalize and practice virtues in our daily lives.
2. **Role of Senses:** Our five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) play a crucial role in how we experience the world. These senses should be guided by divine principles to align our actions with spiritual teachings.
3. **True Sangāt:** *Sangāt* (company) means aligning your mind and actions with the divine message, not just being physically present in a group or congregation. Though attending

Gurdwara is beneficial, true spiritual growth comes from consciously applying the teachings of Gurbani in life.

4. **Importance of Internal Effort:** Even if someone is near spiritual individuals, they may not grow spiritually unless they internalize and practice the virtues themselves. Historical examples in Sikh history illustrate this point vividly.

Practical Examples

The Fragrance of Virtue

Amrit adjusted his glasses as he flipped through the pages of his ethics textbook. It was lunch break at school, and his best friend, Jasmeet, leaned over with a smirk.

“Still stuck in books. Come on, Amrit, we are teenagers! Let us do something exciting!” said Jasmeet, tapping impatiently on the table.

Amrit smiled, unfazed. “It’s not about being stuck. I was reading something about how true growth is not just about learning facts—it’s about becoming a better person, like Guru Nanak’s teachings.”

Jasmeet rolled his eyes. “Ah, your spiritual talks again. But seriously, how does any of that help us with real-life problems? I mean, do you really think sitting in the Gurdwara can solve anything?”

Amrit leaned back thoughtfully. “Not just sitting there, Jasmeet. It is about how we act afterward. Grandpa always says that true Sangat is when we align our actions and thoughts with the virtues, which we learn from Gurbani.”

An Unexpected Reminder

Later that evening at home, Amrit found his younger sister, Gurleen, painting a chaotic but colorful mural in the backyard. She grinned mischievously as she added a splash of purple.

“Amrit Veerji, do you think this looks like the Creator’s world?” she asked, her eyes twinkling with creativity.

Amrit chuckled. “It is beautiful, Gurleen. But remember, the Creator isn’t just out there. Grandpa says the Creator lives in all of us, in our conscience.”

Gurleen tilted her head. “So... does that mean we’re all connected?”

“Exactly. It is why we should treat others kindly and stay humble. Just like the sandalwood tree that makes even the shrubs around it smell sweet,” Amrit explained.

Their grandfather, Surinder, joined them just then, his walking stick tapping gently on the ground. “Ah, you have remembered the sandalwood story! Good. Now tell me, children, what does it teach us?”

Amrit responded eagerly, “That humility is the fragrance we should spread, Dadaji. Even if someone is close to greatness, like the bamboo tree near sandalwood, they won’t change unless they make the effort themselves.”

Surinder nodded. “Yes, and that is the essence of true Sangat. It’s not just sitting with others who seem spiritual. It is about practicing those virtues yourself.”

A Lesson at School

The next day, during a class project, Amrit and Jasmeet were assigned to work with a group of classmates who often struggled with teamwork. As the discussions became heated, Jasmeet grew frustrated. “This is hopeless! They are not listening to anyone.”

Amrit calmly intervened. “Let us take a different approach. Instead of reacting, let’s guide the conversation with patience and kindness. Remember, we can only inspire change if we practice it ourselves.”

Jasmeet sighed but followed Amrit’s lead. To everyone’s surprise, the group eventually found common ground and completed the project smoothly.

Later, Jasmeet admitted, “Okay, fine. Your spiritual stuff has some merit after all. You were like the sandalwood tree, making the rest of us better.”

Amrit laughed. “It is not about being better, Jasmeet. It is about trying to align our actions with what is right. That is what Grandpa calls living with virtues.”

A Lesson at Home

That evening, as Amrit reflected on the day, Gurleen skipped into his room, holding her painting. “Look, Veerji! I added a sandalwood tree. It is like what Dadaji said—spreading goodness everywhere.”

Amrit smiled. “Perfect, Gurleen. Remember, the real fragrance comes from how we live, at school, at home, and wherever we go.”

And as the siblings shared a laugh, Amrit realized that true spirituality was not confined to rituals or appearances. It was in every small effort to embody kindness, patience, and humility, turning everyday moments into steps toward a meaningful life.

Key Lesson:

True spiritual growth comes from aligning your thoughts, actions, and senses with Gurbani messages and imbibing spiritual values and virtues in our mind and conscience, not merely from being in the physical presence of ‘spiritual’ people. Practice these teachings at school, home, and wherever you go to lead a meaningful and virtuous life.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in the chapter are as follows:

1. *Har jan ke vadd bhaag vaddere jin har har saradhaa har piaas.
Har har naam milai tirapataaseh mil sangat gun paragaas. ||2||
Jin har har har ras naam na paiaa te bhaagaheen jam paas. ||
Jo satigur saran sangat nahee aae dhirag jeeve dhirag jeevaas. ||3||
Jin har jan satigur sangat paiee tin dhur masatak likhiaa likhaas.
Dhan dha(n)n satsangat jit har ras paiaa mil jan naanak naam paragaas. |4|4| (SGGS: 10)*
2. *Pavit hoe se janaa jinee har dhiaaiaa.
Har dhiaaiaa pavit hoe gurmukh jinee dhiaaiaa.
Pavit maataa pitaa kuTa(n)b sahit siau pavit sangat sabaieeaa.
Kahadhe pavit sundhe pavit se pavit jinee munn vasaiaa.
Kahai nanak se pavit jinee gurmukh har har dhiaaiaa ||17|| (SGGS: 919)*
3. *Eah rasana too un ras raach rahee teree piaas na jai. (SGGS: 921)
Note: Rasna literally means one who can experience the essence. Spiritually, it means the mind.*
4. *Eah sareeraa meriaa hur tum meh jot rakhee taa too jag meh aaiaa. (SGGS: 921)
Note: Sareera literally means physical body. Spiritually, it means all the senses.*
5. *Eah sareeraa meriaa is jug meh aai kai kiaa tudh karam kamaiaa.
Ki karam kamaiaa tudh sareeraa jaa too jag meh aaiaa.
Jin hur teraa rachan rachiaa so hur mun na vasaiaa.
Gur parsahdee hur mu(n)n vasiaa poorab likhiaa paiaa.
Kahai nanak eh sareer paravaan hoaa jin satgur siau chit laiaa. ||35|| (SGGS: 922)*
6. *Eah netrahu meraiho hur tum meh jot dharee hur bin avar na dhekhahu koiee.
Hur bin avar na dhekhahu koiee nadharee hur nihaaliaa.
Eh vis sansaar tum dhekhadhe eh hur kaa roop hai hur roop nadharee aaiaa.
Gur parasaadhee bujhiaa jaa vekhaa hur ik hai hur bin avar na koiee.
Kahai nanak eh netr andh se satgur miliaai dhib dhirasaT hoiee. ||36|| (SGGS: 922)*
7. *Eah sravanahu meriho saachai sunanai no paThaae.
Saachai sunanai no paThaae sareer laae sunahu sat baanee.
Jitt sunee mun tun hariaa hoaa rasanaa ras samaanee.
Sach alakh viddaanee taa kee gatt kahee na jaae.
Kahai nanak a(n)mirat naam sunahu pavitr hovahu saachai sunanai no paThaae ||37||
(SGGS: 922)*
8. *Uotam sangat uotam hovai. Gunn kau dhaavai avagan dhovai. (SGGS: 413)*
9. *Kabir cha(n)dhan kaa biravaa bhalaa beRi(h)o ddaak palaas. ||
Oi bhee cha(n)dhan hoi rahe base ju cha(n)dhan paas. ||11|| (SGGS: 1365) ⁽⁹⁾*
10. *Kabir baa(n)s baddaiee booddiaa iau mat ddoobahu koi. ||
Cha(n)dhan kai nikaTe basai baa(n)s suga(n)dh na hoi. ||12|| (SGGS: 1365)*



In accordance with Gurbani, our 5 senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) should be aligned with (or in '*sangat* of') the messages of the *Shabad* Guru.

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8. Living in the Present (*Vertman Vich Rehna*)

The chapter emphasizes the importance of living in the present moment. It teaches us not to dwell on the past or worry excessively about the future, as this distracts us from leading a meaningful and happy life. The past is over, and the future is unknown, we only have the present. As the name implies, use it as a gift.

Physical Death vs Spiritual Death:

An overarching message of SGGS is to live in the present moment. Gurbani asks us to live a life free of vices and lies, and to internalize, follow, realize and finally become the divine Virtues, thereby attaining a state of bliss (*anand*) in this life itself. SGGS is not overtly concerned with physical death. The human body will perish one day, but when this will happen is unknown. So, live a spiritual life aligned with Virtues. Why worry about the unavoidable physical death all the time.

O Beloved mind, Listen! The time to realize the Creator is Here and Now. Divinity must be acquired and lived now while there is life and breath in me. (SGGS: 20) ⁽¹⁾

Physical life is constituted from the basic five elements. Everything that has its origin in these five elements eventually returns to that original form. (SGGS: 1427) ⁽²⁾

The focus of *Gurbani* is spiritual life brought about by virtues. It also says that spiritual death is brought about by human vices. This happens here and now, in the present life itself. **Hence, Gurbani asks us to focus on living in the present.**

How can I obtain life, how can I become spiritually alive without realizing the Divine. Physical death unavoidably happens, but spiritual death happens to me when I am devoid of that realization. When that realization does not remain steadfast within me, I suffer spiritual death. (SGGS: 1207) ⁽³⁾

Focus on Living the Present Life:

On the concept of living in the present moment, Guru Nanak has shared his thoughts in these words:

We are human beings whose survival depends on our breath, as when we cannot breathe, we are dead. We do not know how much remaining time (breaths) we have left. Therefore, instead of worrying about the future, inculcate the Virtues while living in the present moment. (SGGS: 660) ⁽⁴⁾

Guru Ji reminds us to focus on every moment because the number of remaining moments (breaths) are always unknown to everyone. Thus, we should always focus only on important and essential matters instead of focusing on wishes, desires and other superfluous stuff, such as what others think or say. When this becomes our life's approach, we experience tremendous contentment

in our lives, because our life's needs and desires start shrinking drastically. Living in the past can make us depressed because it is unchangeable, while similarly worrying about the future can make us anxious and stressed. We need to keep Guru Ji's advice in mind and always strive to inculcate virtues in our life. Guru Ji says:

With each breath (moment), one constantly lives in a state of spiritual bliss; not a single moment passes in vain. (SGGS: 556) ⁽⁵⁾

The same Gurbani concept has been explained by Bhai Gurdas in these words:

He who always lives in the present and never ignores contemporary situations, simultaneously accepts whatever is likely to happen. Everything happens by the Laws of nature (Hukam) and is gratefully accepted by him. (Bhai Gurdas Vaar 18.21) ⁽⁶⁾

Do not Dwell in the Past:

Guru Ji reminds us to live in the present and not to dwell in the past, which is gone, becoming history; nor to worry about the future, which has yet to unfold. In short, Guru Ji wants us to not become a victim of the wandering nature of the mind, but instead live in the moment, in the NOW. The human mind, by its very nature refuses to be still, and is always looking for ways to wander around in the past or into the future. One may learn from experiences in the past but should not get stuck in the past. The human body was designed to move around, but the mind must be made to focus on, and live in alignment with, divine virtues. Kabir Ji noticed the mind's tendency of flight, and has expressed it in these words:

The mind has become a bird; it soars and flies in all directions. (SGGS: 1369) ⁽⁷⁾

Gurbani has also compared the wandering nature of the human mind to animalistic tendencies, which have been described in these words:

Those who ignore the wisdom of the Shabad (Divine Virtues) will fall into a lower, animalistic mindset—driven by desires, greed, arrogance, fear, and other base instincts. Trapped in this state, the mind will continue cycling between virtues and vices, experiencing spiritual rise and fall. (SGGS: 832) ⁽⁸⁾

Whenever the wandering mind takes a flight into the 'lower' (or 'animalistic', vice-filled) mindset, a seeker of spirituality reminds the mind to come back to listen to the conscience. The SGGS says:

O my dear beloved stranger mind stops wandering outwards, please align with the virtues within your conscience and be at peace! (SGGS: 451) ⁽⁹⁾

Do not get Attached to the Perishable:

It was for this very reason that Guru Ji advised us not to get attached to anything that has a limited life span or to vices, as they will only lead to regret and disappointment at the end.

Everything that has been created obeys the “Laws of Impermanence.” Nothing lasts forever, and everything is constantly changing and decaying. Guru Ji’s advice is to rise above, and not get emotionally attached to, the perishable:

Don’t carry affection for the just fleeting or perishable. (SGGS: 21) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Guru Ji’s advice to use the available time wisely is expressed in these words:

Pay attention! Oh, Beloved Mind! Now is the time to realize the Creator. If you have vigor of youth and life breath, dedicate this body’s five senses to inculcating virtues. Without virtues, the body is useless; the senses untethered to the unenlightened conscience will crumble into a pile of dust. (SGGS: 20) ⁽¹¹⁾

Gurbani also says:

One’s fears of fluctuating between vices and virtues are eliminated, and one obtains the honored state of eternal bliss. The Creator bestows this state of bliss upon that mortal upon whom He showers His Mercy. (SGGS: 556) ⁽¹²⁾

Gratitude makes us eligible for the Creator’s Grace:

There is thus a precondition attached to the potential achievement of the state of bliss; and that precondition is the Creator’s mercy or grace. However, the Creator’s grace cannot be purchased or bartered. It can only be obtained when one lives in accordance with the universal laws of nature, i.e., the Creator’s Divine *Hukam*.

Guru Ji has advised us to become enterprising, work hard, develop skills to listen to a conscience imbued with virtues, and apply those virtues in life. By doing this, we live a life of thankfulness and thus become deserving of His grace. Guru Ji has asked us to make these our life principles. He says:

Make the effort to live a life inculcating Virtues, and you shall live a spiritual life; practicing it, you shall enjoy bliss. Inculcating Virtues, you shall become Virtues. By doing this, your anxiety will vanish. (SGGS: 522) ⁽¹³⁾

One should strive to live in the present. Focusing on the here and now allows one to be fully engaged in life. Please also note that SGGS does mention terms associated with the supposed past- and future lives (terms such as the afterlife, 8.4 million life forms, reincarnation, heaven & hell, salvation, dargah, Dharam Raj, Jum & Chitragupta, etc.). Though SGGS mentions these terms, it completely discards those prevailing concepts by redefining them and giving them new Gurbani-based meanings.

Note: Discussions on these topics are outside the scope of the present book.

Practical Example

Amrit adjusted his glasses and stared out the classroom window. His mind drifted far from the algebra equations on the board. He was lost in thought about an upcoming math competition and how he had fumbled a similar one last year. Beside him, Jasmeet nudged him, whispering, “Amrit, focus! We need to ace this test.”

Amrit smiled weakly but couldn’t shake off his wandering thoughts. At lunch, he shared his worries with Jasmeet. “I keep thinking about last year’s mistakes, Jasmeet. What if I mess up again?”

Jasmeet, practical as ever, replied, “Well, stop thinking about it! Just practice harder.”

That evening, back home, Amrit was still preoccupied. His younger sister Gurleen noticed his unusual silence. “What’s up, brother?” she asked, setting down her paintbrush. “You’re quieter than usual, and I need your help picking colors for my project!”

Amrit sighed, “It’s nothing, Gurleen. Just worried about the competition.”

Before Gurleen could reply, their grandfather, Surinder, entered the room. “Ah, Amrit,” he said, settling into his chair. “You look troubled. Tell me, what’s on your mind?”

Amrit hesitated but eventually spilled out everything: his worries about the past, his fears of failing again, and how he couldn’t focus.

Surinder listened carefully, then spoke with a gentle smile. “Let me share something from Guru Nanak’s teachings. The Guru said, ‘We don’t know how many breaths we have left, so instead of worrying about what has passed or what may come, focus on the present moment.’”

Amrit tilted his head, curious. “But how, Dadaji? My mind keeps wandering.”

Surinder chuckled. “Our minds are like birds, always flying in different directions. But just as a bird needs a nest to rest, your mind needs focus to find peace. Start with small steps: when you study, think only about what’s in front of you. When you’re with family, truly be with them.”

Gurleen, ever the creative spirit, chimed in. “Like when I paint, I just think about my brush strokes and colors, not about whether my painting will win a prize.”

“Exactly,” Surinder said, nodding approvingly. “And remember, life is like your paint: always changing, never permanent. Instead of clinging to what was or what it could be, enjoy the act of living now.”

Amrit thought deeply about his grandfather’s words that night. The next day, he walked into school feeling lighter. He focused on the test without letting past mistakes haunt him. During lunch, Jasmeet noticed the change. “You’re unusually calm. What happened?” “Dadaji’s advice,” Amrit replied. “He reminded me to focus on the moment instead of worrying about the past or future. It’s helping.”

Jasmeet smiled. “Maybe I could use some of that wisdom, too. I’ve been stressing about college applications nonstop.”

“Come over tonight,” Amrit offered. “Dadaji always has a story or two to share.”

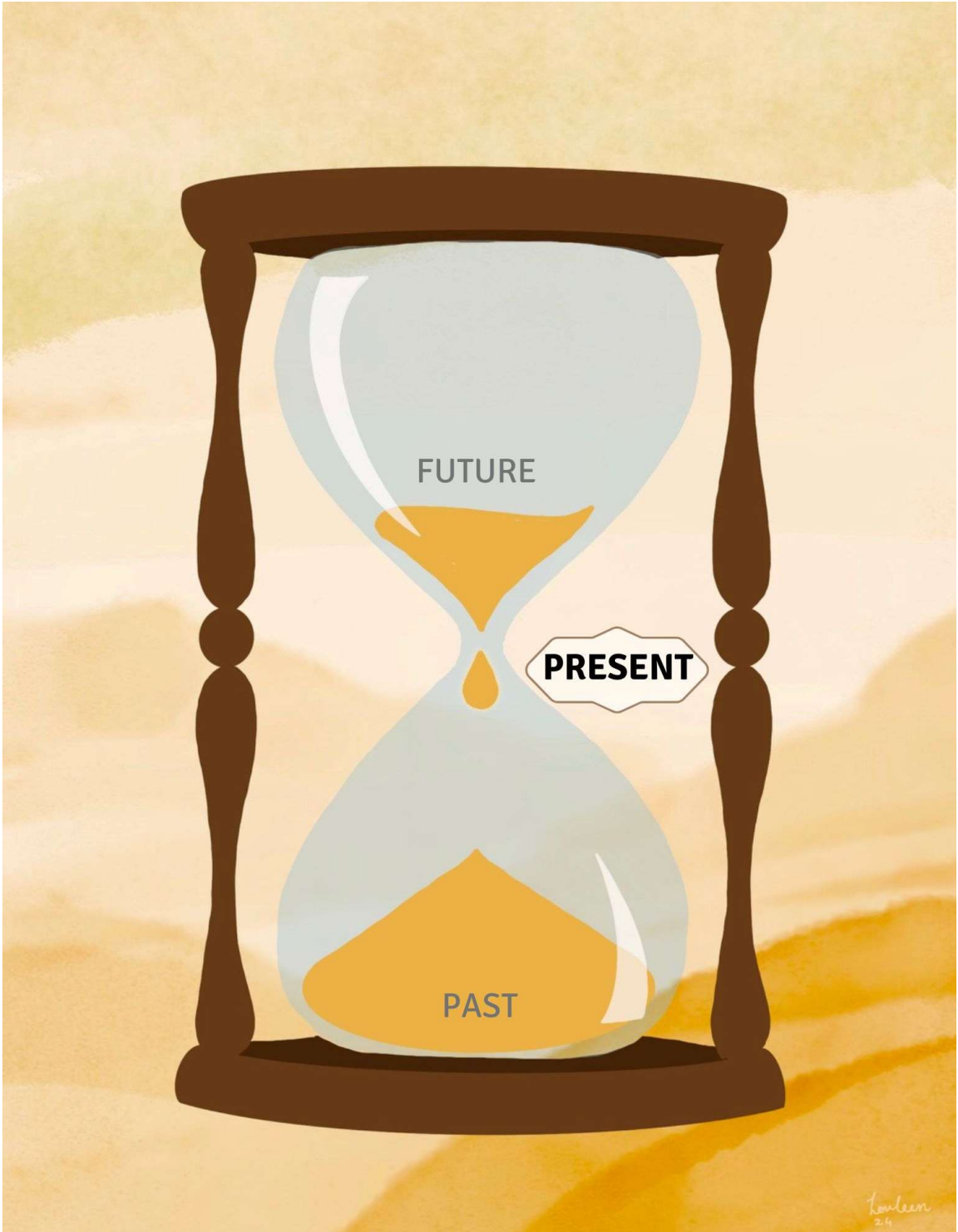
That evening, as Surinder shared more teachings about living in the present, both Amrit and Jasmeet felt a sense of peace and clarity. Amrit realized that life wasn’t about avoiding challenges but about facing them one moment at a time—with gratitude, effort, and focus.

Key Lesson:

Living in the present moment makes life more fulfilling. By focusing on what’s important right now and letting go of unnecessary worries, we can lead happier and more meaningful lives.

Transliterations of the Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Sun mun mitr piaariaa mil velaa hai eh. ||
Jab lag joban saas hai tab lag ih tan dheh. ||* (SGGS: 20)
2. *Paanch tat ko tun rachio jaanahu chatur sujaan. Jeh tae upajio naanakaa leen taeh mai
maan. 11.* (SGGS: 1427)
3. *Kiau jeevan preetam bin maaiee. Jaa ke bichhurat hoat mritakaa gireh meh rahan na
paaiee. 1. Rahaau.* (SGGS: 1207)
4. *Hum aadhamee haa(n) ik dhamee muhalat muhat na jaanaa. Nanak binavai tisai sarevahu
jaa ke jee paraanaa. 1.* (SGGS: 660)
5. *Dum dum sadhaa samaaladhaa dum na birathaa jai.* (SGGS: 556)
6. *Varatamaan vich varatadhaa hovanahaar soiee paravaanaa. Kaaran Karta jo karai sir
dhar mu(n)n karai sukaraanaa.* (Bhai Gurdas Vaar 18.21)
7. *Kabir mun pa(n)khee bhio udd udd dheh dhis jai.* (SGGS: 1369)
8. *Sookar suan gardabh manjara. Pasu mlech neech chandala. Gur tay moh fayray tin joan
bhvaeay. Bandhan bandhiya aiyeay jaeay.* (SGGS: 832)
9. *Mere mun paradhesee ve piaare aau ghare.* (SGGS: 451)
10. *Tis siau neh na keejiee jo dheesai chalanahaar.* (SGGS: 21)
11. *Sunn mun mitr piaariaa mil velaa hai ehh. Jab lug joban saas hai tab lag ih tan dheh. Bin
gunn kaam na aaviee ddeh dderee tan kheh ||1||* (SGGS: 20)
12. *Janam maran kaa bhau giaa jeevan padhavee paai. Nanak ih maratabaa tis no dhei jis
no kirapaa kare rajai. 2.* (SGGS: 556)
13. *Udham karedhiaa jeeau too(n) kamaavadhiaa sukh bhu(n)ch. Dhiaaidhiaa too(n) prabhoo
mil nanak utaree chi(n)t. 1.* (SGGS: 522)



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9. Ego (*Haumai*)

Ego is the belief that "I am the most important." It makes us focus only on ourselves, wanting attention, being right all the time, and never accepting mistakes. This attitude can create problems in relationships, learning, and personal growth.

Ego gives rise to other Vices:

Ego is a vice that one must overcome in order to be spiritual. It is a root vice which gives rise to other vices, such as anger, lust, attachment, greed, etc. Please note that, in contrast, all other chapters in this section are about **virtues** that one must inculcate to make progress on the spiritual journey.

The chapter on Divine Command (*Hukam*) explains that the entire creation has emanated from the Creator. Hence, for an important vice like ego, one needs to understand several aspects: What is it; How does it emanate; What does it do; How does it hinder one's spiritual path; and how can one get rid of it? Some answers to these questions are given below.

As commonly understood, a few of the external tell-tale signs of a person with ego are: It is all about me. I am the center of attention. I cannot be wrong or can do no wrong. No criticism please. Ever ready to take credit for any success/good work and blame others for failure. Complete blindness to personal flaws. Comparing self with others. Absence of gratitude.

Ego hinders Spiritual Journey:

It is important to note that instead of focusing on the external signs and symptoms of ego, Gurbani explains how the vice of ego affects our **internal** spiritual journey in many ways. In *Asa Di Vaar*, Pauri # 7, SGGS says:

Ego blinds me on my path to realization, leading me astray. I was born with the chance to know the Creator but risk dying still trapped in ego. It shapes my journey, making me seek yet deny the Divine. My thoughts dwell on virtues and vices, yet ego blocks true understanding. It distorts joy and sorrow, fuels illusions, and keeps me unaware of liberation's value. Trapped in delusion, I sustain my spirituality through ego, but true awakening comes when I recognize its effects. Only by embodying Virtues can I realize the Creator. (SGGS: 466-467) ⁽¹⁾

The Gurbani verse quoted above explains how ego becomes a major roadblock in one's pathway to realization of the Creator within. Through this verse, one can easily understand that ego is the most critical of all the obstacles in inculcating Virtues within our mind and conscience.

Continuing in the second *Salok* of the same *Pauri*, Gurbani explains the origin of ego, what happens if one continues with this affliction, and how to get rid of it. The explanation is as follows:

Ego perpetuates itself through actions rooted in it, trapping me in cycles of negativity. Its origin lies within my mind, and so does its remedy. Ego is a mental affliction, cured through the grace of the Guru, which comes from understanding and embodying the wisdom of Shabad. Listen, seekers (says Nanak), this is the path to overcoming ego. (SGGS: 467) ⁽²⁾

How to get rid of Ego:

In the last two lines above, Guru Ji has explained how to overcome ego. Guru Nanak has also explained how one can get rid of the ego in the following verse:

Upon realizing the Creator within, even the thought that I exist outside His Hukam ceases to exist. (SGGS: 1) ⁽³⁾

There are numerous verses in SGGS dealing with the issue of ego. Just a couple of them are as follows:

My unrealized state has deprived me of Divine bliss; my ego causes relentless pain within. (SGGS: 13) ⁽⁴⁾

In egotism, all actions are performed with their count being kept (in hopes of rewards). In this accounting, there is no peace. Under the influence of ego, one stays engulfed in vices and stays immersed in vices. (SGGS: 36) ⁽⁵⁾

A person with an ego always lives with anxiety; and with anxiety one cannot experience a state of bliss. Being egotistic, one performs selfish deeds and cannot be blissful.

Ego is not to be confused with self-confidence (which, if justified, is good to have). However, often our actions for gaining accolades inflate the ego, creating a desire for a repeat action in anticipation of its cascading effect. Gurbani has compared the actions performed under the influence of ego as those which inflict deeper wounds such as:

My unrealized state has deprived me of Divine bliss; my ego causes relentless pain within. The spiritual journey thus undertaken is agonizing; my vices cause me to bear the foremost punishment of spiritual death. (SGGS: 13) ⁽⁶⁾

Everyone has an Ego:

Guru Ji says that the entire mankind is affected by ego:

All my senses are afflicted by the disease of egotism. Consequently, they suffer the terrible pains of oscillating between vices and virtues. (SGGS: 735) ⁽⁷⁾

Benefits of keeping Ego in check:

Kabir Ji shared his personal experience for dealing with ego in these words:

Entrusting my entire self to you O Creator, I have become Yours, nothing remains that is mine. Once duality between what is of the self and what is not is eliminated, all I see is just You O Creator! (SGGS: 1375) ⁽⁸⁾

The above verse by Kabir Ji eloquently describes the benefits of managing the ego and how this helped him in realizing the Creator. The ego is put on a leash with the realization of the Creator who is the sustainer and the destroyer of all His creation. This viewpoint opens up a new realization and way of looking at self, others, and the world. It is a re-appraisal and consequential reset of the relationship of the self with the rest of humanity. It is a realization that all of creation runs according to the Divine laws (*Hukam*) of the Creator. The very realization of this aspect of the world's reality starts the process of ego depletion. Only when ego is completely depleted, one realizes the Creator:

When one gets rid of one's ego, one merges with the Creator. (SGGS: 750) ⁽⁹⁾

The **virtue of Humility** discussed in the next chapter provides a way of overcoming the **vice of Ego**.

Why is Ego a Problem?

- **Spiritual Impact:** Ego stops us from understanding deeper truths about life and connecting with others meaningfully. It's like a fog that blocks the light.
- **Emotional Impact:** People with big egos often feel anxious or upset because they're always comparing themselves to others or seeking praise.
- **Practical Impact:** Ego can make us blind to our own flaws, thus preventing us from improving.

Practical Examples

The Fog of Ego

Amrit sat on his bed, the sunlight streaming through the curtains onto the open pages of his journal. He was deep in thought, scribbling notes for his school essay on self-awareness. His younger sister Gurleen, a whirlwind of mischief, barged into the room, holding up a sketch she had just drawn.

"Look, Amrit! It's you!" Gurleen exclaimed, giggling. The caricature was exaggerated, with Amrit's head larger than the rest of his body, and a speech bubble that said, "I know everything!"

Amrit sighed. "Very funny, Gurleen."

At dinner, their grandfather, Surinder, watched the siblings' playful banter with a knowing smile. "Amrit, I overheard your essay topic. It reminds me of something Guru Nanak taught us about ego."

Amrit leaned forward, curious. "What's that, Grandpa?"

Surinder stroked his beard thoughtfully and said, "Ego is like a fog. It blinds us, not to the world around us, but to the truth within ourselves. It makes us think, 'I am the best,' or 'I must always be right.' When we let ego guide us, we lose sight of the Creator's presence in everything and everyone."

The School Debate

The next day, Amrit and his best friend Jasmeet were preparing for a school debate. Jasmeet, ambitious as always, was determined to win. "We need to crush the opposing team," he declared. "No room for mistakes!"

Amrit hesitated. "Jasmeet, maybe we should focus on presenting our points clearly and learning from the experience. Winning isn't everything."

Jasmeet rolled his eyes. "That's easy for you to say. But if we lose, people will think we're not good enough."

Later that evening, Amrit shared the conversation with Surinder. His grandfather nodded. "You see, Jasmeet is caught in the cycle of ego. He's seeking validation from others, and that's a slippery slope. True confidence comes from knowing you did your best, not from what others think."

A Lesson in Humility

At home, Gurleen was busy working on a school project. Her creativity often led to amazing results, but this time, she was struggling. "Nothing looks right!" she wailed, crumpling yet another sheet of paper.

Amrit sat beside her. "Maybe you're focusing too much on perfection. Grandpa says ego isn't just about thinking you're the best—it's also about being afraid of failure."

Gurleen blinked at him. "You mean... I'm letting my ego stop me from trying?"
"Exactly," Amrit said. "It's okay to make mistakes. That's how we grow."

The Revelation

That weekend, Surinder gathered the family for their usual storytelling session. "Ego can creep into all parts of life," he said. "At school, it might make you compare yourself to others. At home, it might stop you from apologizing. But remember what Kabir Ji said: when we let go of ego, we see the Creator in everything."

Amrit thought about his debate with Jasmeet, while Gurleen reflected on her art project. Surinder continued, "Humility is the key. When we accept that we're part of a greater whole, we stop being blinded by ego's fog and start seeing clearly."

The Change

On Monday, Jasmeet apologized to Amrit for his impatience. "I realized I was being too focused on winning," he admitted. "Thanks for reminding me that it's the journey that matters."

Gurleen proudly showed her finished project, imperfections and all, while Amrit wrote a heartfelt conclusion to his essay: "Ego is the fog that separates us from truth, but humility is the light that clears the way."

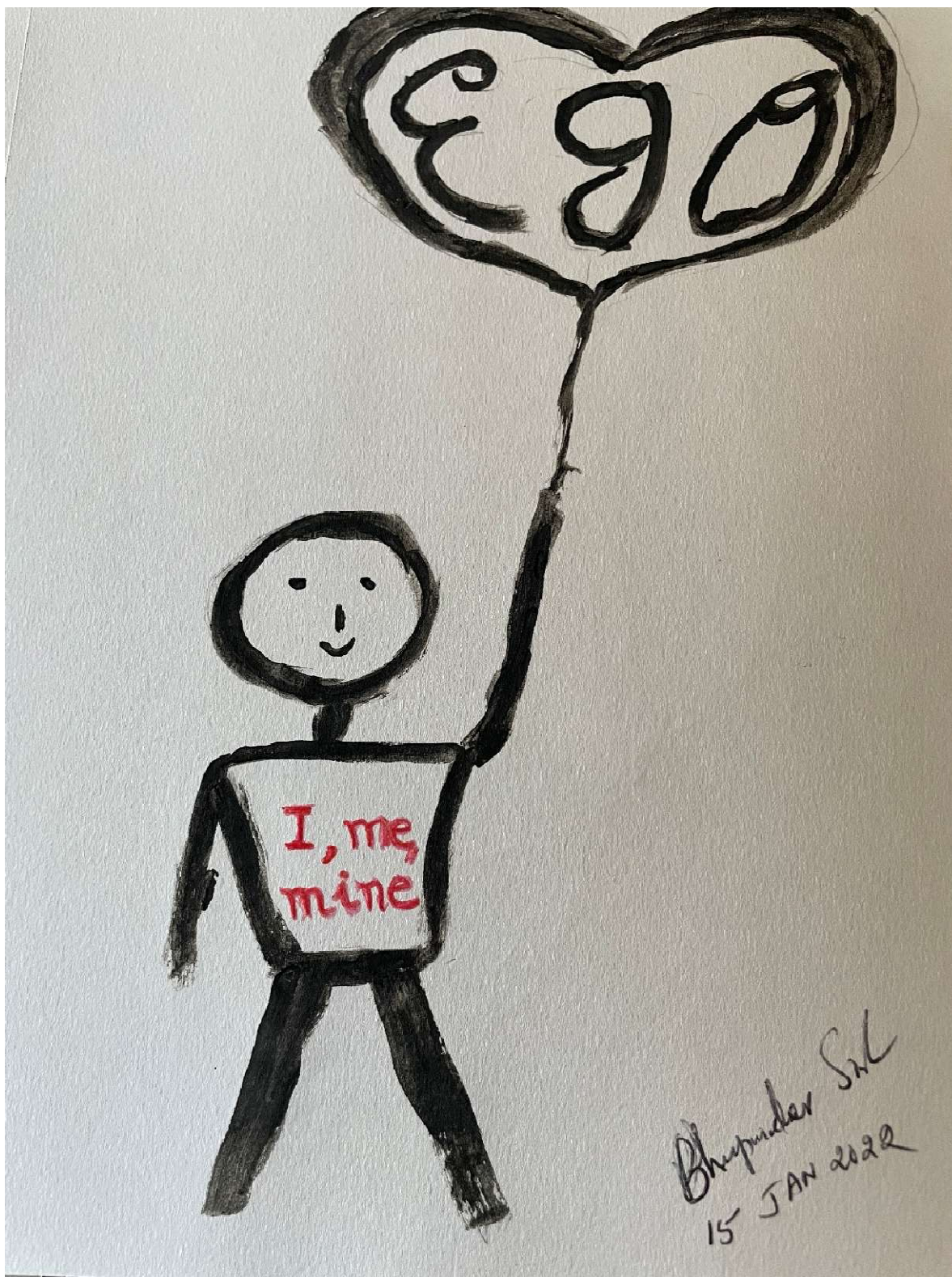
The siblings and their grandfather continued to share lessons from Guru Nanak's teachings, inspiring those around them to live with humility and gratitude. Amrit and Jasmeet's debate team didn't win first place, but they learned something far more valuable: the joy of connection and self-growth.

Key Lesson:

Ego can be roadblock in school, at home, and in personal growth. By being humble, grateful, and reflective, you can keep your ego in check and live a happier, more successful life.

Transliterations of the Gurbani verses used in the chapter are as follows:

1. *Hau vich aaiaa hau vich giaa. Hau vich ja(n)miaa hau vich muua. Hau vich dhitaau hau vich liaa. Hau vich khaTiaa hau vich giaa. Hau vich sachiaar kooRiaar. Hau vich paapu(n)n veechaar. Hau vich narak surag avatar. Hau vich hasai hau vich rovai. Hau vich bhareeaaai hau vich dhovai. Hau vich jaatee jinasee khovai. Hau vich moorakh hau vich siaanaa. Mokh mukat kee saar na jaanaa. Hau vich maiiaa hau vich chhaiaa. Haumai kar kar ja(n)t upaiaa. Haumai boojhai taa dhar soojhai. Gyan vihoonaa kath kath loojhai. Nanak hukamee likheaaai lekh. Jehaa vekkeh tehaa vekh. (SGGS: 466-467)*
2. *Haumai ehaa jaat hai haumai karam kamaeh. Haumai eiee ba(n)dhanaa fir fir jonee paeh. Haumai kithahu uoopajai kit sanjam ieh jai. Haumai eho hukam hai piaai kirat firaeh. Haumai dheeragh rog hai dhaaroo bhee is maeh. Kirpaa kare je aapanee taa gur kaa sabadh kamaeh. Nanak kahai sunahu janahu it sa(n)jam dhukh jaeh. ||2|| (SGGS: 467)*
3. *Nanak hukmai je bujhai ta haumai kahai na koi ||2|| (SGGS: 1)*
4. *Saakat har ras saadh na jaaniaa tin a(n)tar haumai ka(n)ddaa he || (SGGS: 13)*
5. *Haumai sabhaa ganat hai ganatai nau sukh naeh. Bikh kee kaar kamaavanee bikh hee maeh samaeh. (SGGS: 36)*
6. *Saakat hur ras saadh na jaaniaa tin a(n)tar haumai ka(n)ddaa hae. Jiau jiau chaleh chubhai dhukh paaveh jamakaal saheh sir dda(n)ddaa hae. (SGGS: 13)*
7. *Haumai rog sabh jagat biaapiaa tin kau janam maran dhukh bhaaree. (SGGS: 735)*
8. *Kabir too(n) too(n) karataa tu hooaa mujh meh rahaa na hoo(n). Jub aapaa par kaa miT giaa jat dhekhau tat tu. 204. (SGGS: 1375)*
9. *Haumai jaiee taa ka(n)t samaiee. || (SGGS: 750)*



10. Humility (*Nimarta*)

Humility is about seeing everyone as equals and not thinking you're better than others. It means respecting others' opinions, sharing your talents, and appreciating the good things in life without bragging. Humility helps us overcome pride and ego, making us kinder and more understanding.

Key Lessons:

- Humility transforms pride into kindness and understanding.
- It helps you achieve inner calm and build meaningful relationships.
- It allows you to learn and grow, appreciating the beauty of life and others' contributions.

According to the messages of SGGS, **the virtue of humility is an antidote to the vice of ego**. Different scriptures and philosophical writings define and discuss humility in different ways. Still, all agree that humility significantly augments one's spiritual journey. So, what is meant by the term 'humility'?

Humility is the attitude in which conflicts between opinions are not exploited; and when humility becomes our true nature, we see others as equals. Unfortunately, what we often experience today is the opposite. People are constantly seeking to 'show off' their intelligence, wealth, wisdom, power, and position to impress upon others and to prevail upon them. Whenever they see an opportunity, they are not bothered at all when they trample on the rights of others or when they resort to manipulation or outright extortion solely for their own personal gain.

Humility overcomes Ego:

SGGS says clearly how humility helps to overcome ego. Without humility, one cannot make spiritual progress towards realizing virtues and achieving contentment:

- *Now that I realize life is short, I should live wisely. And now that I have understood that the Creator is realized through humility; I have diminished my ego. (SGGS: 1378) ⁽¹⁾*
- *Because I have transformed my vices into virtues, the wrath of my anger's stress does not bear down on my mind. Consequently, my body and my senses are no longer inflicted with mental stress; they remain content. (SGGS: 1382) ⁽²⁾*
- *Acting normal (i.e. being humble) despite possessing wisdom, and sharing with others overlooking the self's needs, truly makes one a seeker of divinity. (SGGS: 1384) ⁽³⁾*
- *The Creator is hidden within life, like sugar mixed with sand. The proud (like an elephant) cannot find Him, but the humble (like an ant) can. Kabir says his Guru taught him that humility is the key to realizing the Divine. (SGGS: 1377) ⁽⁴⁾*

Does humility imply that any attempts by others to infringe upon one's personal rights are to be taken lying down? No, it does not. Rather, we need to treat others as equals, considering their

needs and rights on an equal footing as our own rights. This is not a ‘putting down’ of the self; instead, it is essentially an absence of a desire to diminish others. This state of mind is the result of a clear understanding of equality of all mankind.

Humility can be Nurtured:

How then can humility be nurtured? It can only be done within our mind by recognizing our own insignificance before the vast powers of the omnipotent Creator. Humility is the result of one’s recognition of the vastness, variety, and complexity of the Creation in its entirety. This humility arises out of admiration born from the awareness of the beauty of His creation and the intelligence of the Creator. It is a realization and admission of the limitations of one’s own capabilities.

Furthermore, in our daily lives, this attitude of humility can lead to a deeper level of understanding that respects and acknowledges others’ points of view. Humility is not cowardice or a sign of passivity or a lack of self-confidence or ignorance of one’s own talents; instead, it is deference to the talent of others. In addition, humility gratefully recognizes the blessings of the Creator for everything, including all our prized possessions and our very existence. Guru Ji has described the Creator, the Cause of all that is, and all that we have or are, this way:

You are the all-powerful Cause of causes; whatever You do, comes to be. (SGGS: 585) ⁽⁵⁾

The relevance of humility is also in the fact that a person with animalistic tendencies can be transformed by this virtue into a person with angelic tendencies. Humility allows a person to be open to new ideas and be receptive to others’ opinions. This enables a humble person to change themselves. On the other hand, the vice of pride fills a person with arrogance and hubris, and does not let one acquire the virtue of humility:

More and more, he continually yearns for more (gripped by pride and attachment); but unless he is destined to receive, how can he obtain it? (SGGS: 715) ⁽⁶⁾

Guru Ji has also provided his guidance with these profound words:

The one who practices humility in his/her heart and mind is liberated from vices and makes progress on the spiritual journey towards bliss. (SGGS: 278) ⁽⁷⁾

Humility leads to Spiritual Bliss:

SGGS thus tells us how the attitude of humility works as an antidote to pride and ego. If a person is not under the influence of the maladies of ego – like power, beauty, wealth, property, etc. – it makes one more truly human. Guru Ji tells us that when ego is removed, the highest spiritual status is achieved.

When humility is practiced, it can also lead to a state of spiritual bliss. This is the true capability of humility. Where there was earlier a feeling of emptiness and scarcity within oneself, now there is feeling of abundance. As Guru Ji says:

By the blessings of the Shabad Guru, my conscience gets enlightened. Whatever I ask for to continue my path of spirituality, I receive. (SGGS: 404) ⁽⁸⁾

Guru Ji has also shared other benefits of humility in this life. He says:
Spiritual equipoise of an unperturbed mind is the fruit of humility. (SGGS: 235) ⁽⁹⁾

Of course, humility is not completely absent from human beings. It is already present within us, along with its anti-thesis, ego and pride. Therefore, the inborn but nascent seed of humility must be cultivated within us and carefully nurtured to grow. Just as a wild rose has thorns along with flowers, likewise we all possess humility – a rose-like quality—along with ego – a thorn-like quality. But when the wild rose is nurtured through the breeding process, we see that the size of the flower and its beauty and fragrance are enhanced and the stems become longer, while the thorns are subdued, making the flowering rose less prickly.

Guru Nanak has advised us about the development of humility by getting rid of vices and deliberately internalizing virtues in our mind and conscience in these words:

By lovingly internalizing and becoming Divine virtues, I cleanse my mind of vices within and acquire virtues within my conscience. (SGGS: 4) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Guru Arjan says in SGGS that we should get rid of intellectual one-upmanship from our mind. He says:

So, renounce the intellectual cleverness of your mind, and internalize the virtues. (SGGS: 814) ⁽¹¹⁾

Without virtues, the progress on the path of spiritual evolution cannot take place, as Guru Nanak has advised:

Spirituality does not materialize without internalizing Virtues. (SGGS: 4) ⁽¹²⁾

Humility helps us ‘Realize’ the Creator:

SGGS says that the Creator is the reservoir of Virtues; and accepting and understanding this can become a starting point for our realization of the Creator—that is, for beginning our internal spiritual journey of inculcating and becoming His Virtues. Our relationship with the Creator enables us to start with humility on our journey towards spiritual enlightenment.

Guru Ji’s messages in SGGS informs us of the greatness, benevolence, infinite capability, and intelligence of the Creator who made all the Creation and is sustaining it continuously. It is again Guru Ji’s teachings that make us realize that our own strength, capability, faculties, and intelligence are very limited. Thus, Guru Ji’s words serve as a life-long coach or compass and guide us on a new Sikhi pathway for living a virtuous life. What happens then is shared by Guru Ji as:

And then, the virtues come to dwell in the mind. (SGGS:1173) ⁽¹³⁾

Guru Ji says that we have come into this world to achieve one goal, to become virtuous. When virtues come and abide in the mind, the purpose of life is achieved. When humility becomes a part of our nature, we can ultimately experience a state of total bliss. Being in a state of bliss is an innate human desire, and humility is a pre-requisite for experiencing it.

Practical Examples

"The Power of Humility"

Scene 1: The School Debate

Amrit stood near the lockers, reading over his notes for the upcoming debate. His best friend, Jasmeet, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Ready to crush it?" Jasmeet asked, his confidence beaming. "I've got the perfect arguments to show everyone we're the smartest team in class."

Amrit smiled gently. "Winning is great, Jasmeet, but I think our goal should also be to respect the other team's points and learn from them."

Jasmeet raised an eyebrow. "Learn from them? We're here to win!"

The debate began, and while Jasmeet passionately presented their arguments, Amrit focused on acknowledging the other team's perspective. During a heated moment, Amrit said, "That's an excellent point, and I see where you're coming from. Here's another angle to consider." His thoughtful response earned the respect of the judges and his classmates.

Afterward, their teacher praised Amrit for his humility. "It's not just about being right," she said, "but about building understanding. That's a true mark of wisdom."

Scene 2: A Lesson at Home

Back home, Amrit found his grandfather, Surinder, sitting in the garden with a cup of tea. His younger sister, Gurleen, was sprawled on the grass, doodling in her sketchbook.

"Grandpa," Amrit began, "today, I realized something during the debate. Humility isn't about thinking less of yourself, it's about thinking of others, too."

Surinder nodded, his eyes twinkling. "Exactly, beta. Guru Nanak taught us that humility is the antidote to ego. It helps us see everyone as equals and opens the door to spiritual growth."

Gurleen looked up from her sketch. "But how can I be humble when I make the best art in class?" she teased.

Surinder chuckled. "Being humble doesn't mean hiding your talents. It means sharing them with love and respecting others' gifts, too."

He continued, "Let me share a line from Guru Granth Sahib: *'The Creator is like sugar mixed with sand; even an elephant cannot separate it. To taste its sweetness, you must become as small as an ant.'* This teaches us that only through humility can we truly appreciate life's blessings."

Scene 3: Gurleen's Surprise

The next day, Gurleen presented a drawing to her class, but instead of claiming all the credit, she said, "My grandfather taught me to see art as a gift. I'm grateful for this talent, but I'd also like to thank my classmates who inspire me every day."

Her teacher smiled. "Gurleen, that's a beautiful way to think. Humility not only makes us better individuals but also strengthens our relationships with others."

Scene 4: Jasmeet's Realization

Later, Jasmeet visited Amrit. "You were right, Amrit," he admitted. "In the debate, I was so focused on winning, I missed the chance to learn from others."

Amrit smiled. "It's okay, Jasmeet. Humility takes practice, but it makes life richer. It's about seeing the beauty in others' ideas and letting go of pride."

Conclusion

That evening, as the family gathered, Surinder shared a final thought. "Humility transforms pride into kindness. It brings peace, strengthens relationships, and allows us to grow. When you nurture humility, you'll find life's greatest treasure: inner bliss."

Amrit, Gurleen, and even Jasmeet left with hearts full of inspiration, ready to make humility a part of their lives.

Key Lesson:

This story shows how humility, taught through spiritual wisdom and daily experiences, can positively impact young minds, both in school and at home.

Transliterations of the Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Farida je jaanaa til thoRaRe sanmmal buk bharee.*
Jae jaanaa sahu nandhra taa(n) thoRaa maan karee. ||4|| (SGGS: 1378)
2. *Farida burre dhaa bhalaa kar gusaa mun na haddai.*
Daehee rog na lagiee palai sabh kichh pai. ||78|| (SGGS: 1382)
3. *Mutt hodhee hoi iaanaa. Taan hodhe hoi nitaanaa. ||*
Anahodhe aap va(n)ddaae, Ko aaisaa bhagat sadhaae. ||128|| (SGGS: 1384)
4. *Har hai khaa(n)dd ret meh bikharee haathee chunee na jai ||*
Keh kabir gur bhalee bujhaiee keeTee hoi kai khai ||238|| (SGGS: 1377)
5. *Tu karaN kaaraN samarath hai too karahi su theeaa. (SGGS: 585)*
6. *Ghanno ghanno ghanno sadh loRai bin lahannay kaittai paaio ray. (SGGS: 715)*

7. *Kar kirapaa jis kai hiradhai gareebhee basaavai.*
Nanak eehee mukath aagai sukh paavai. 1. (SGGS: 278)
8. *Gur parasaadh maerai mun vasiaa joe maago so paavo rae. (SGGS: 404)*
9. *Sehaj suhaelaa fal masakeenee.*
Satgur apunai moh dhaan dheenee. ||1|| ||1|| Rahao. (SGGS: 235)
10. *Suniaa munniaa mun keethaa bhaao. Antharagath teerath mul naao. (SGGS: 4)*
11. *Mun kee muth thiaageeai suneeai upadaesh. 1. (SGGS: 814)*
12. *Vinh gun keethae bhagat n hoe. (SGGS: 4)*
13. *Har jeeau aap vasai mun aai. 4. (SGGS:1173)*



Ego and Humility are present in each one of us. Whichever of the two is nurtured, will grow. To cultivate Humility, it must be nurtured.

11. Gratitude (*Shukrana*)

What It Means, and Why it is Important:

Gratitude is about being thankful for everything you have in life. It means recognizing that many things we enjoy—our life, health, food, family, and even nature - are gifts that we didn't create ourselves. This chapter explains that feeling grateful can make us more positive, happier, and more connected to the world around us.

The Creator keeps all Ecosystems in Balance:

It took billions of years to get to the point where we are in the universe. We constantly see new plant and animal life flourishing, and changes in the human domain taking shape. At the same time old lives perish. We may celebrate new life and feel sad when the old ones die, but that is how the ecosystem keeps the balance. Unless we are filled with gratitude for how Creation keeps balance, we will destroy the ecosystems.

When we think through it, we realize that we are not the controller of our life. This brings about a radical transformation in us. Pondering this issue, we can realize that even the date, time, place of birth, or even who our parents were going to be, was not determined by us. Even the question of when life will end or how it will end is a mystery as well. There is a Source – the 'Creator' – who has set this entire universe in motion. The same Source has put something like a battery in us which keeps us alive and running through life. The Source even kept us alive in the close confines of a mother's womb.

We should be Grateful that the Creator resides in His Creation:

This is a very significant yet basic realization. Gurbani tells us that the Creator resides in His Creation. This understanding can lead to the development of a new relationship with the self. When we get up from bed in the morning, the first thing we can do is think of the Source that enables us to get up and then touch the floor with our feet. Let us allow this thought to cross our mind: today I can do this because of that life-source in me. In this way, Gurbani teaches us how to realize the Creator within. I salute this source which enables me to be on my feet and take this very step, which I am undertaking now. I can live life with Divine help and offer the Source my sincere thanks. In addition, I am thankful that I have a complete and functional body, for each of these parts and the whole body is priceless and cannot be replaced or purchased in the marketplace. Guru Ji has told us to be thankful for all that we have and for the nourishment that we receive, in these words:

Let us all be thankful and appreciate Him, from whom we receive our nourishment.
(SGGS: 474) ⁽¹⁾

By His Grace, I have a healthy, beautiful body; I shall attune myself to that Creator.
(SGGS: 270) ⁽²⁾

In the above verse from *Sukhmani Sahib, Ashtpadi 6*, the Source has been referred to as Ram, meaning the Creator. In this *Ashtpadi* there are quite a few lines which start with "Jih

parsaad,” meaning “By His Grace.” Guru Ji has pointed out that all elements of our sustenance are provided by the grace of the Creator, for which we all should be thankful. This would be a departure from our present tendency to seek and to hoard material things and then ask for more. Guru Ji has described this trait in an earlier *Ashtpadi* in these words:

One gets numerous things for sustenance but remains upset when he/she does not get the one thing that is missing. If the Creator-connecting (Shabad) Guru does not bless us with one thing that is missing and we lose everything we have received, then what should one do? One should be ever grateful for the Creator's blessings. (SGGS: 268) ⁽³⁾

The Creator is the Provider of Everything:

Guru Nanak in his 25th stanza of *Jup bani* explains that the Creator is the provider of everything, and one should always be grateful for His blessings. The verses are as follows:

The Creator's blessings are abundant and sustain me throughout life. In them, I find complete contentment, needing nothing else. These blessings give me the courage to overcome countless vices and remain steadfast against them. Once consumed by desire, I now find freedom through these divine gifts. This liberation itself is a blessing, and I owe my transformation solely to the Creator's grace. Recognizing this truth, my mind and senses honor these gifts and reject ignorance. As Nanak proclaimed, those blessed by the Creator attain the highest spiritual state. (SGGS: 5) ⁽⁴⁾

Guru Ji is asking us to bring gratitude (*shukrana*) into our life, to appreciate His bountiful gifts and make it daily practice. As this practice becomes a habit, we can be guided by this verse from SGGS to further expand and reinforce the thought process:

O senses within my body, your existence in this world is the result of the Creator having gifted you with life. (SGGS: 921) ⁽⁵⁾

Practice Gratitude Every day and Everywhere:

This gratitude is not something to be practiced only on a particular day, like Thanksgiving Day. Guru Ji is asking us to develop this virtuous attitude like our ‘second nature’ or personality trait. Let us take the first step in developing our understanding of gratitude by first recognizing its importance. Then, as we start bonding with the Source of everything we have through deliberate actions and practice, we will realize that this Source is with us all the time. In fact, we will never feel lonely again.

The first building block of this relationship with the Creator (*Akal Purakh*) is the feeling of thankfulness or gratitude. We are thankful for the wonderful world that He has created, this life, plants, air, and water etc., to sustain life. Thankfulness is truly the only offering that we can make in return for all that the Source has Created and given to us. A beautiful aspect of this connection with the Creator (and His Virtues), is that all it takes is awareness and an attitude of gratitude (*shukrana*) on our part. Gurbani explains that we cannot command the Creator; we can only be grateful for His benevolence.

No one can issue commands to the Creator; we can only be grateful for His blessings.
(SGGS: 474) ⁽⁶⁾

This *shukrana* can be felt at any place, and at any time. Gratitude can be expressed in any words and in any language – Punjabi, Hindi, English, or any other. It can also be expressed by our actions. We can accept that everyone is created equal and be compassionate towards others and help them in every situation as much as we can. And we can consume every resource we need without destroying the Creator-given natural ecosystems that sustain us and everything around us.

Practical Examples:

Amrit's Journey of Gratitude

Amrit sat beneath the sprawling banyan tree in the schoolyard, sketching swirls in the corner of his notebook. The sound of students laughing and talking nearby faded as his thoughts wandered. His mind buzzed with questions about life, purpose, and the invisible forces that seemed to shape everything around him.

“Hey, philosopher, what are you thinking about now?” Jasmeet’s voice broke through his thoughts. Amrit’s best friend plopped down next to him on the bench, his backpack half-zipped and spilling books.

Amrit grinned. “Just wondering... don’t you ever think about how we’re alive, and how everything around us works? Like, why are we here? Who decided this?”

Jasmeet raised an eyebrow. “Seriously, Amrit? I barely have time to think about finishing my math homework, let alone cosmic questions.” He stuffed a book back into his bag and added, “But I guess it’s kind of cool if you think about it. I mean, we’re here, right?”

Amrit nodded thoughtfully. “Exactly. And isn’t that amazing? We don’t even know how long we’ll be here. Life feels like... like a gift, but we forget that sometimes.”

“Maybe because life also gives us boring homework,” Jasmeet quipped, pulling out a sandwich from his bag. “I’m more focused on surviving the day than being amazed by it.”

That evening, back at home, the aroma of freshly baked parathas filled the kitchen. Amrit’s younger sister, Gurleen, was seated at the table, her hands and face smeared with paint as she worked on a colorful poster for her art project. “Look, Amrit!” she exclaimed, holding up a vibrant drawing of flowers and stars. “Isn’t it beautiful?”

Amrit smiled. “It is. What’s it for?”

“Our school is having a poster contest on nature. I’m making mine about how amazing trees are! Did you know they give us oxygen? And fruit! And shade!”

“That’s true,” Amrit said, sitting beside her. “Have you ever thought about how much we take trees—and everything else—for granted?”

Gurleen scrunched up her nose. “Take them for granted? I don’t get it.”

Before Amrit could explain, their grandfather, Surinder, entered the kitchen, humming a hymn under his breath. He carried a basket of mangoes and set them on the counter. “What’s this about trees and taking things for granted?” he asked with a knowing smile.

Amrit leaned forward. “Dadaji, I was telling Gurleen that we don’t always think about how everything around us is a gift. Like, we didn’t choose to be alive, or to have this family, or even to have trees and food. It just... happened.”

Surinder’s eyes twinkled with approval, “You’re beginning to understand something very important, Amrit. Life is a gift, one given to us by the Creator. Guru Nanak taught us to live with gratitude, to recognize the beauty in everything—even the smallest things. Did you know,” he said, turning to Gurleen, “that every breath you take is a blessing?”

Gurleen’s eyes widened. “Even breathing?”

“Yes, even that,” Surinder replied. “And when we’re thankful for these blessings, we feel closer to the Creator and the world around us.”

Gurleen grinned. “Then I’m thankful for paint and mangoes!”

Surinder chuckled. “That’s a good start.”

The next day, Amrit couldn’t stop thinking about his conversation with his grandfather. At school, he decided to bring it up again with Jasmeet during lunch.

“Do you ever feel like we focus too much on what we don’t have, instead of what we do?” Amrit asked, biting into his roll.

“Like what?” Jasmeet asked, mid-bite of his sandwich.

“Well, think about it. We complain about school, homework, or what we didn’t get for our birthday. But how often do we stop to appreciate that we have food, a place to sleep, or people who care about us?”

Jasmeet paused. “You’ve been spending way too much time with your grandfather. But... okay, maybe you have a point. I mean, I guess this sandwich is better than no sandwich.”

Amrit laughed. “Exactly! Gratitude is about seeing what’s already there and realizing it’s enough.”

Jasmeet raised his sandwich. “Here’s to gratitude. Thanks, sandwich!”

That evening, after finishing his homework, Amrit sat on the rooftop of his house, looking up at the stars. Gurleen joined him, carrying her poster. “I added more colors,” she said proudly. “And a sun!”

“It’s beautiful,” Amrit said. “You know, Dadaji was right. When you look at things with gratitude, you feel connected to them. Like those stars, they’ve been there for millions of years, and we get to see them every night. Isn’t that amazing?”

Gurleen nodded, her mischievous grin softening into something thoughtful. “Maybe I’ll add stars to my poster, too.”

Before bed, Amrit wrote in his journal:

Today, I’m thankful for the stars, for Gurleen’s art, for Dadaji’s wisdom, and for Jasmeet trying gratitude in his own way. Life is full of so many gifts, big and small.

He placed the journal on his bedside table and turned off the light. For the first time in a long while, he felt a deep sense of peace. Gratitude had become his guided way to see the world not as a list of things to achieve but as a treasure chest already overflowing with blessings.

And quietly, Amrit’s newfound gratitude began to ripple outward. Jasmeet started saying thank-you more often, Gurleen’s posters became messages of appreciation for nature, and even Surinder felt a renewed joy, seeing his grandson embody the teachings of Guru Nanak. Together, they learned that gratitude wasn’t just an action, it was a way of living, one that brought light to their home, their school, and their hearts.

Key Lesson:

Gratitude isn’t about one day of saying “thank you”—it’s a way of living that can bring more peace and happiness to your life.

Transliterations of the Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Jis dhaa dhita khaavanaa tis kaheeaai saabaas.* (SGGS: 474)
2. *Jih parsaad aarog kanchan dhaehee. Liv laavau tis ram sanaehee.* (SGGS: 270)
3. *Dhas basatoo le paachhai Paavai. Ek basat kaaran bikhoT gavaavai. Ek bhee na dhe dhas bhee hir lei. Tau mooRaa kahu kahaa karei. Jis Thaakur siau naahee chaaraa. Taa kau keejai sadh namasakaaraa.* (SGGS: 268)
4. *Bahutaa karam likhiaa naa jai. Vaddaa dhaataa til na tamai. Ketae mangeh jodh apaar. Ketiaa ganat nahee veechaar. Ketae khap tuTeh vekaar. Ketae lai lai mukar paeh. Ketae moorakh khaahee khaeh. Ketiaa dhookh bhookh sadh maar. Ehh bhe dhaat teree dhaataar. Bandh khalaasee bhaanai hoi. Horr aakh na sakai koi. Jae ko khaik aakhan pai. Ohh jaanai jeteaa muh khai. Aapae jaanai aape dhe. Aakheh s bh keiee kei. Jis no bakhase sifat saalaeh. Nanak paatisaahae paatisaahu. ||25||* (SGGS: 5)
5. *Eae sareeraa maeriaa hur tum meh jyot rakhee taa too jag meh aaeiaa.* (SGGS: 921)
6. *Nanak hukam na chaliee naal khasam chalai aradhaas. ||22||* (SGGS: 474)



Cultivate the Attitude of Gratitude

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. 12. Contentment (*Sahaj*)

- Contentment (*sahaj*, *santokh*) is a calm and peaceful state of mind where we are free from stress and worries. It's like being completely relaxed and balanced, no matter what happens around us.
- Without *Sahaj*, we feel stressed, overly attached to things, and swing between extreme emotions – like being super happy when we win and really upset when we lose.
- *Sahaj* helps us stay balanced and happy regardless of what life throws at us.

Spiritual Enlightenment brings *Sahaj*:

In Gurbani the word *Sahaj* refers to a state of being that is not afflicted by vices. It is a state of mind which is beyond easy description or explanation. It is akin to the original state of mind at the time of birth, which we seemingly lost immediately after birth. So, everyone's quest is for the *Sahaj* state of mind – meaning 'equipoise' (or equilibrium, or balance). Gurbani mentions this quest in these words:

Everyone in the world longs to be in equipoise; but without the enlightenment of the Shabad Guru, no one can achieve this state of mind. (SGGS: 68) ⁽¹⁾

What is the consequence of the absence of *Sahaj*? Guru Ji says we are spiritually unenlightened, as if blinded by our mindless pursuit of vices and material gain:

Without equipoise, everyone is spiritually unenlightened as everyone has emotional attachment to the material world. (SGGS: 68) ⁽²⁾

Sahaj can be simply understood as the natural state of mind, i.e., of being completely relaxed and stress-free. Guru Ji has not just explained to us what *Sahaj* or equipoise (i.e., inner/spiritual equilibrium or balance) is, but also what its absence is. Gurbani says that the absence of *Sahaj* results in our getting attached to the material world and its possessions. That attachment causes the mind to swing from one extreme to the other like a pendulum – from expectations of fulfillment of all our desires to the other extreme of concerns about what would happen if this did not happen.

If we have only experienced stress and worries in life, how can we assign proper value to *Sahaj*? It is for this reason that Guru Ji has declared in these words that those who have experienced *Sahaj* are very rare:

Only a few know Sahaj. When the mind centers its consciousness on the message of the Shabad Guru, it knows intuitively and realizes the Creator. (SGGS: 439) ⁽³⁾

Accepting the Creator's *Hukam* facilitates *Sahaj*:

The divine virtue of *Sahaj* is acquired when one is in harmony with the universal laws of nature and the Creator's *Hukam*. The entire natural world works on this underlying principle. Let's look at a tree. When the fall season arrives, the tree sheds all its leaves, the lush green tree looks so barren. But it waits patiently, and then winter follows. It becomes almost dormant, but it waits patiently in *Sahaj*. Then when spring arrives it blossoms beautifully. The hardships that it endured during the harsh seasons did not impair its ability to blossom. Everything else in nature also works by the same principle. It all works at its own pace as per the natural system designed for it.

But humans tend to rush things as we succumb to our human desires and vices. In so doing, we are mentally not in *Sahaj*. When we attain the state of *Sahaj*, we acquire a divine virtue which allows us to see the world differently than ordinary human beings caught up in following their own desires. When faced with the challenges of life, those in a state of equipoise or *Sahaj* know that the outcome will be determined by the universal laws of nature and the Creator's *Hukam*, according to which we reap the natural consequences of our own actions. They see the world in this light:

The Creator has revealed this wondrous show of the world, wherever I look, I see Him. Whatever is happening is happening in its natural course according to His Hukam, which I cannot alter. Instead, I try to inculcate Divine Virtues. (SGGS: 437) ⁽⁴⁾

Accept the Creator's *Hukam* even in Adversity:

The state of mind of the seeker of spirituality is that everything is happening according to the Creator's *Hukam* and the universal laws of nature. There is no way I can impose my will over these laws. For example, if I am feeling hungry, it is because my body needs some nourishment. Instead of focusing on the feeling of hunger, my focus should be on getting something to eat.

Life often throws at us unexpected challenges. For example, suddenly, we could be hit with some incurable disease. Or today we are wealthy and tomorrow we may find ourselves completely bankrupt. Even our family situation with spouses, children, relatives and friends can alter at any moment. We cannot control our lives, our environment or our relationships with those around us, but we can try to make a commitment to respond to every situation with equipoise (i.e., mental equilibrium, or inner 'spiritual' balance or calmness). This will instill *Sahaj* in us. No wonder Guru Arjan says:

I have seated myself in the mental state of Sahaj - equipoise. (SGGS: 370) ⁽⁵⁾

When one has made their abode in the mental state of *Sahaj* or equipoise, no one can be evicted from this abode. Now, let us try to explore the lines of Kabir Ji's *shabad* about *Sahaj* to get a fuller perspective.

In the state of intuitive balance (Sahaj), one transcends suffering and experiences profound peace. This state is immeasurable, limitless, and beyond material happiness or mental distinctions. Free from cravings and restlessness, it is guided by the wisdom of the Shabad

Guru, revealing the Divine within. In this harmony, the senses align with the conscience, resting in Sahaj. (SGGS: 333) ⁽⁶⁾

When there are no negative thoughts or worries, there is no stress, the mind stays completely calm. The roller coaster ride of life produces high and low moments in us all the time. We get agitated when misery strikes us; alternatively, success or achievements produce euphoria in us. Guru ji wants us to embrace a new lifestyle unaffected by the ups and downs related to events in life. Kabir Ji expresses his experience of *Sahaj* growing within him in these words:

In the profound emptiness of stressful thoughts and worries, the delicate tree of Sahaj is growing within; it soaks up the water of desires from the ground. (SGGS: 970) ⁽⁷⁾

***Sahaj* helps avoid Spiritual Death of the Conscience:**

This strong conviction in the benefits of the state of *Sahaj* (equipoise, balance, calmness) is powerful enough to make our worries and concerns vanish. This was the mental state of the writers of Gurbani. The fear of physical death did not make them change their convictions or to seek compromise. They were only concerned with the spiritual death of the conscience. We can see that the experience of *Sahaj* (equipoise) is unlike other experiences. Gurbani mentions that it has no equal, because it has no boundaries. It is born out of conviction that everything is happening by Creator's *Hukam*, i.e., His Command and the universal laws of nature, so there is no need to worry. Consequently, all the stress, tensions, concerns, and worrisome issues disappear from our mind. The SGGS says:

By inculcating the messages of the Shabad Guru, wisdom grows, desire emanating from ego dies, and Sahaj (equipoise, intuitive peace) wells up. (SGGS: 65) ⁽⁸⁾

When *Sahaj* arises within us, the events of the external world do not affect our internal balance. Glorious worldly success, accolades, ridicule or excruciating suffering cannot alter one's state of mind. Mental well-being is not dependent on the crutches of external happenings or circumstances. Once one has found an inner connection with the Creator that is more fulfilling, it fuels inner strength.

The Messages of the *Shabad* help achieve *Sahaj*:

So, how can one realize the state of *Sahaj*? Gurbani provides spiritual guidance on how to react during challenging situations. Let us look at it:

The Shabad is clear and free of doubt, bringing peace to the mind. It instills faith that everything unfolds according to the Creator's Hukam, encouraging gratitude and acceptance. (SGGS: 853) ⁽⁹⁾

The characteristics of someone in a state of inner mental peace and spiritual calmness have been described in SGGS in these words:

With the spiritual messages of the Shabad, the conscience is in intuitive peace and equipoise; and the mind is in a state of joyous bliss. (SGGS: 1414) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Key Lesson:

We have explored in this chapter the concept of *Sahaj* (equipoise, inner equilibrium, or spiritual balance and calmness) by relying solely on Gurbani. We saw how everyone's innate search is for *Sahaj*. But only through the message of the *Shabad* Guru does one know how to achieve it. Then we realized that *Sahaj* can only be obtained when the wandering nature of the mind is brought under control by understanding and following the spiritually enlightening messages of Gurbani.

Rare is the one who knows the medicine to conquer the mind. The mind is conquered through the Shabad; the mind gets enlightened. (SGGS: 665) ⁽¹¹⁾

Practical Examples

The Gift of Equipoise

Amrit was an introspective high schooler with a penchant for understanding deeper truths. One morning at the breakfast table, he noticed his younger sister Gurleen hastily crafting a paper sculpture from yesterday's leftover newspapers. Her creativity was boundless, but today her antics seemed more chaotic than usual. Their grandfather, Surinder, watched with a gentle smile as Amrit tried to focus on a school project about life's challenges.

"What's troubling you, beta?" Surinder asked, sensing Amrit's frustration.

Amrit sighed. "I've been overwhelmed with schoolwork. It feels like every time I finish one thing, something else comes up. I keep swinging between stress and trying to stay calm."

Surinder nodded. "Have I ever told you about *Sahaj*? It's a state of being that Gurbani speaks of, where one's mind remains in balance despite life's ups and downs."

As Gurleen listened, curiosity lighting up her mischievous face, Surinder continued, "Think of a tree. In winter, it stands bare and dormant, patiently waiting for spring. It doesn't rush or despair; it simply trusts the process. That's the essence of *Sahaj*, staying calm, no matter the season."

Later that day at school, Amrit shared the lesson with his best friend, Jasmeet, as they prepared for a debate competition. Jasmeet was growing impatient with Amrit's calm demeanor. "How can you not stress about this?" he exclaimed. "We're totally unprepared, and the competition is tomorrow!"

Amrit recalled his grandfather's words. "Worrying won't help us, Jasmeet. Let's focus on one argument at a time. Like a tree in winter, we'll prepare steadily, trusting we'll be ready by spring—tomorrow."

Jasmeet grumbled but followed his lead. By the end of the day, they had crafted a solid debate strategy, and Jasmeet admitted, "You're right. Panicking wasn't helping. Maybe this *Sahaj* thing has some merit."

At home that evening, Gurleen burst into Amrit's room. "Amrit! Look at my sculpture!" She thrust a delicate paper bird into his hands. "I messed up so many times, but I kept trying. It's not perfect, but I think it's beautiful."

Amrit smiled. "That's the spirit of Sahaj, Gurleen. Staying steady, even when things don't go as planned."

Their grandfather overheard and entered the room, pride shining in his eyes. "You're learning to apply Sahaj to life's small moments, and that's where it starts. Whether it's an argument, a paper bird, or a tough school project, when we find peace within, the world outside feels less daunting."

As the family gathered for dinner, Surinder added a final thought. "Life is like Gurleen's paper bird—fragile, imperfect, but beautiful when shaped with patience and calm. That's the gift of Sahaj."

Amrit reflected on his grandfather's wisdom, realizing that Sahaj wasn't just a lofty concept but a practical guide to navigating life's challenges. He resolved to carry its lessons forward, in school and at home, finding peace in every season.

Key Lesson:

By applying Sahaj to these everyday situations, one can develop resilience, inner peace, and the ability to handle life's challenges with grace and balance.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Sahajai no sabh lochadhee bin gur paiaa na jai.* (SGGS: 68)
2. *Bin sahajai sabh a(n)dh hai maiaa moh gubaar.* (SGGS: 68)
3. *Koiee sahaj jaanai har pachhaanai satiguroo jin chetiaa.* (SGGS: 439)
4. *Aadh purakh ik chalat dhikhaiaa jeh dhekhaa teh soiee.*
Nanak har kee bhagat na chhoddau sahaje hoi su hoiee. 2 (SGGS: 437)
5. *Sahaj gufaa meh aasan baadhiaa.* (SGGS: 370)
6. *Teh paavas sindh dhoop nahee chhaheea teh utapat paralau naahee. Jeevan mrit na dhukh sukh biaapai sunn samaadh dhouoo teh naahee. 1. Sahaj kee akath katha hai niraaree. Tul nahee chaddai jai na mukaatee halukee lagai na bhaaree. 1. Rahaau. Aradh uradh dhouoo teh naahee raat dhinas teh naahee. Jal nahee pavan paavak fun naahee satigur tahaa samaahee. 2. Agam agochar rahai nirantar gur kirapaa te laheeaai. Kahu Kabir bal jaau gur apune satasangat mil raheeaai. 3.4.48.* (SGGS: 333)
7. *Sahaj sunn ik biravaa upajiaa dharatee jalahar sokhiaa.* (SGGS: 970)
8. *Satigur seviaai sahaj uoopajai haumai tirasanaa maar.* (SGGS: 65)
9. *Gurmukh sansaa mool na hoviee chintaa vichahu jai.*
Joe kichh hoi su sahaje hoi kahanaa kichhoo na jai. (SGGS: 853)
10. *Gurmukh antar sahaj hai man chaRiaa dhasavai aakaas.* (SGGS: 1414)
11. *Eih mun marai daaroo jaanai koi. Mun sabadh marai boojhai jan soi. 1.* (SGGS: 665)



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13. Service (*Sewa*)

Key Messages:

Selflessness: Service should not be for personal gain, fame, or recognition. If it is done for these reasons, it only feeds our ego, which goes against the purpose of *sewa*.

Spiritual Growth: Service (*sewa*) helps us grow spiritually by fostering qualities like humility and empathy. It aligns our actions with divine teachings.

Ego Elimination: The goal of *sewa* is to reduce self-centeredness and focus on serving others with pure intentions.

The meaning of Service (*Sewa*) according to *Shabad* Guru:

We have currently developed a very unusual concept of service (*sewa*) solely based on our misplaced notions, disregarding the concept of service (*Sewa*) as espoused in *Gurbani*. To start with we must remember that in Sikhi spirituality, *Shabad* is the Guru. There is no concept of a physical body we can call ‘Guru’. Therefore, the service (*sewa*) of the *Shabad* Guru can only mean understanding and following the messages of the *Shabad*. Let us look at the following verses in SGGS to get an idea of what is meant by *Sewa* in *Gurbani*.

My devotion to my Omnipresent sustainer and Creator within is in realizing Divine Virtues. The Shabad Guru's blessings have brought about such enlightenment. Multitudes of my vices get eliminated in such devotional service of the Creator within. (SGGS: 683) ⁽¹⁾

Service in the name of the Creator-connecting Shabad Guru is acceptable when done in sincerity. (SGGS: 552) ⁽²⁾

Sewa has been further explained in *Gurbani* as:

Undertaking the deed of controlling my ego and enlightening myself with the message within the Shabad is the service of the Guru. (SGGS: 223) ⁽³⁾

True *Sewa* leads to Spiritual Enlightenment:

Since the Guru is *Shabad*, the *sewa* performed according to the messages of the *Shabad* Guru helps us make progress towards spiritual enlightenment. To rid our minds of the darkness of un-enlightenment and inner ignorance that is based on our ego, and replacing it with the enlightenment of the *Shabad*, is the true *sewa* of the Guru. In other words, ***sewa* of the Guru is to inculcate the messages of the *Shabad* Guru within ourselves and to act accordingly.** *Gurbani* says:

Spiritual enlightenment through the Shabad Guru comes by the Creator's grace. Letting go of ego fosters Virtues, while indulging in vices hinders spiritual growth. True progress requires embracing these virtues through the Guru's teachings. Without devotion, one wavers between good and bad. Clinging to vices blocks fulfillment, but living by the Shabad Guru transforms one into an embodiment of Virtues. (SGGS: 144) ⁽⁴⁾

Un-enlightened people may imitate others but cannot internalize Divine Virtues. For those who are enlightened by the Guru's message, their devotion helps them on the spiritual path. (SGGS: 28) ⁽⁵⁾

Genuine Devotion to the Messages of *Shabad* Guru is essential:

Sometimes our devotion to the message of the *Shabad* Guru appears to be altruistic, but the reality could be very different. Guru Ji has made purity of heart a prerequisite for genuine devotion to the messages of Gurbani. The following verses explain that this devotion, though rare, can be inculcated by subduing the ego and internalizing and realizing Virtues, thereby connecting spiritually with the Creator within and enlightening our mind and conscience with the messages of *Shabad* Guru (*Gurbani*):

Those who are in the devotion of the Creator-connecting Shabad Guru's message are rare in the world. (SGGS: 26) ⁽⁶⁾

They subdue their ego and realize the Divine Virtues.

The grace of the Guru's enlightenment provides me with the realization of the Creator within. (SGGS: 1020) ⁽⁷⁾

Such devotion to the Creator-connecting Shabad Guru's message is fruitful and rewarding, and Virtues are internalized in the mind. (SGGS:314) ⁽⁸⁾

The seeker of spirituality internalizes the message of the Creator. (SGGS: 285) ⁽⁹⁾

Let us turn through the pages of history and see why Bhai Lehna Ji came to visit Guru Nanak. Bhai Lehna was impressed with Guru Nanak's spirituality and desired to be like Guru Nanak, not in physical appearance but in the way Guru Ji had realized the Creator within. Bhai Lehna stayed with Guru Ji for a few years and thoroughly understood and internalized Guru Ji's spiritual messages, as expressed in his (i.e., Guru Nanak's) *Bani* and demonstrated in how he acted upon these messages in his daily life. By the time Guru Nanak's end on this earth was near, there was no difference between the spirituality of Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna Ji. Guru Nanak recognized this, and appointed Bhai Lehna Ji as the next Guru (as Guru Angad) to continue to spread the message of spirituality to all of humanity. The process continued up to the Tenth Nanak – Guru Gobind Singh.

By rendering service by the Creator's *Hukam* (see the relevant chapter), one can become worthy of receiving the Creator's grace. Gurbani explains this as follows:

Deeds of service get performed by the seeker abiding within the Creator's divine Hukam. The Creator's grace is obtained upon abiding with and accepting His Hukam. (SGGS: 471) ⁽¹⁰⁾

Selfless Sewa Promotes Humility:

Self-less service (true *sewa*) produces humility, but when service is not selfless, it means that we have failed to grasp how the service is to be done. How many times have we seen the so-called ‘shining lights’ of philanthropy become so wrapped up in their efforts of projecting their own image of being good and responsible citizens – when in fact their service did not bring any positive spiritual change. Thus, in their effort to serve the less fortunate ones, they have themselves only boosted their ego. It is because of this big gap between our understandings of the true meaning of service (*sewa*) as understood through the messages of *Shabad* Guru in SGGS, and what we do and why that prevents us from reaping any spiritual benefits from it.

If our main objective is promoting our own name and fame, then we do not understand what true service is. We are only nurturing our ego and doing dis-service in the name of service. The objective of service is to obliterate the ego, but if by our efforts we have created an opposite effect then we have failed miserably. The goal of the seeker of spirituality should only be to realize the Creator within. By doing so, we can seek and obtain the grace of the Creator. We cannot procure spirituality at any worldly price or in exchange for any material thing. In other words, there is no price tag for Virtues, for they are priceless.

Many Forms of Sewa:

In our daily lives, one can perform service (*sewa*) in any form. For example, if one has enough financial resources, one can help others who are less fortunate. Or one can sponsor a scholarship to help needy students pursue education at any level. If someone is physically weak, we can help the other person by helping with any chore the person needs. If someone is hungry or thirsty, helping them by providing food is the way to go. If one is able and has any specific talent, helping the other person learn that talent would be the best service that one can provide. In other words, if one looks closely, one can always find a way to be of service to others.

As explained above, according to Gurbani there is no greater service than genuine selfless service (*sewa*). However, what happens most of the time is that we get carried away with whatever we are doing, and we get accolades in society, and we start believing that we are doing a yeoman’s service. This conviction makes us believe that true service is that which has approval of society; but this is not how Gurbani explains the meaning of true *sewa*. Our misguided belief makes us forget the original objective of why we should be undertaking the *sewa*.

In fact, many a time we initiate a service project and get so emotionally attached to it that in our mind we become convinced that without us or even ‘me’ alone, this project would not ever get done. It is because of this emotional attachment to the self – that is, because of our ego – that we go astray from Gurbani’s messages about what genuine *sewa* really should be, and in doing so we fail to derive any spiritual benefit from our efforts.

Practical Examples

Act 1: The School Project

Amrit, a thoughtful high school senior, stood by the notice board at school, reading about a service project: organizing a food drive for the local community. His best friend Jasmeet joined him, glancing at the flyer.

“Let’s do this, Jasmeet!” Amrit said enthusiastically.

Jasmeet, known for his practicality, shrugged. “Sure, but let’s make it big. We could gain recognition—it’ll look great on our college applications.”

Amrit paused. “Guru Nanak’s teachings say true service isn’t about recognition. It’s about selflessness.”

Jasmeet rolled his eyes. “And you think no one should know? What’s the point if it doesn’t help us in the long run?”

Amrit smiled. “Let’s ask Grandpa tonight. He always knows how to balance practicality with spirituality.”

Act 2: Lessons at Home

That evening, at the dinner table, Amrit shared the day’s events. Gurleen, his mischievous younger sister, tried to balance a spoon on her nose while listening.

Surinder chuckled at her antics before turning serious. “Amrit, Guru Nanak taught us that true *sewa* isn’t about fame or accolades. It’s about serving with a pure heart and connecting to the Divine within us.”

“But Grandpa,” Jasmeet interrupted, “isn’t recognition part of the modern world? Don’t we need it to make a difference?”

Surinder nodded thoughtfully. “Recognition isn’t inherently wrong, Jasmeet, but if it feeds the ego, it strays from the path of true service. When Bhai Lehna Ji served Guru Nanak, he wasn’t seeking titles. His devotion made him one with Guru Nanak’s spirituality.”

“Does it mean we shouldn’t enjoy doing good?” Gurleen piped up.

“Not at all,” Surinder smiled. “But the joy should come from helping, not from others’ praise. True *sewa* involves humility and aligning our actions with the Creator’s will.

Act 3: The Food Drive

The next day, Amrit and Jasmeet rallied their classmates to organize the food drive. Gurleen contributed by designing colorful posters and sneaking cookies into donation boxes “for extra smiles.”

As the food drive gained momentum, Jasmeet noticed how Amrit avoided taking credit. Instead, he encouraged others to lead and acknowledged their efforts.

“Why aren’t you letting people know it was your idea?” he asked him during a break.

“Because it’s not about me,” Amrit replied. “The focus should be on helping others. If I make it about myself, I risk losing the essence of true *sewa*.”

Jasmeet sighed but couldn’t help feeling inspired.

Act 4: The Surprise Lesson

When the food drive ended, Amrit and his family hosted dinner to celebrate its success. Surinder shared stories from Sikh history, highlighting examples of humility in service.

Jasmeet, reflecting on the experience, admitted, “You were right, Amrit. Focusing on helping, not recognition, made this meaningful.”

“That’s the beauty of true *sewa*,” Amrit said. “It transforms us, while helping the world around us.”

Gurleen added with a grin, “And don’t forget, cookies help, too!”

Everyone laughed, but Surinder concluded with a reminder. “Remember, my children, genuine service isn’t just about grand acts. It’s about daily kindness and fighting our ego. That’s the path to real spiritual growth.”

Key Lesson:

Through their *Shabad*-based spiritual journey, the siblings and their friends learned that *sewa* is not about fame or accolades but about selfless acts that connect us to the Divine. True service transforms the heart, humbles the ego, and inspires others to join the path of compassion and humility.

Transliterations of Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Bandhanaa har bandhanaa gun gaavahu gopaal rai. Rahaau. Vaddai bhaag bheTe gurdevaa. KoT paraadh miTe har sewa. ||1||* (SGGS: 683)
2. *Satgur kee sewa safal hai je ko kare chit lai.* (SGGS: 552)
3. *Gur kee sewa sabadh veechaar. Haumai maare karanee saar. ||7||* (SGGS: 223)
4. *Poorae gur kee kaar karam kamaaeai. Gurmattee aap gavaae naam dhiaaeai. Dhoojee kaarai lag janam gavaaeai. Vin naavai sabh vis paijhai khaaeai. Sachaa shabad saalaahi sach samaaeai. Vin satgur saevae naahee sukh nivaas fir fir aeaeai. Dhuneaa khotee raas koorh kamaaeai. Nanak sach kharaa saalaahi pat sio jaeai. 14.* (SGGS: 144) ⁽⁴⁾
5. *Dhaekhaa dhaekhee sabh karae munmukh boojh na paae. Jin gurmukh hirdhaa sudh hai saev pae tin thhaae.* (SGGS: 28)
6. *Satgur saevan aapanaa tae viralae sansaar. Houmai mamtaa maar kai har raakhiaa ur dhhaar.* (SGGS: 26) ⁽⁶⁾
7. *Mehar karae taa khasam dhhiaae.* (SGGS: 1020) ⁽⁷⁾
8. *Saa sevaa keetee safal hai jit satigur kaa mun munne.* (SGGS:314)
9. *Thakur kaa sewak aagiakaaree.* (SGGS: 285)
10. *So sevak sevaa kare jis no hukam manaisee. || Hukam ma(n)niaai hovai paravaan taa khasamai kaa mahal paisee. ||* (SGGS: 471)



Gur kee sewa sabadh veechaar. Haumai maare karanee saar. ||7|| (SGGS: 223)
Undertaking the deed of controlling my ego and enlightening myself with the message within the *Shabad* is the service (*sewa*) of the Guru.

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14. Some *Sikhi* Practices

Sikhi spirituality —i.e., the spiritual teachings of *Shabad* Guru—is about living a life based on virtues such as honesty, humility, compassion, and equality. It discourages rituals and superstitions and focuses on understanding and practicing the teachings of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS).

As explained throughout this book, “Sikhi spirituality” is the term applied to the spiritual messages of *Shabad* Guru first introduced by Guru Nanak over 550 years ago, and how the messages in SGGS are expected to be practiced. As explained in previous chapters of this book, *Sikhi* guides us on how to inculcate Divine Virtues, such as compassion, selflessness, humility, honesty, gratitude, contentment, justice, equality, etc. Gurbani also makes it clear that rituals and superstitions provide no benefits to the seekers of spirituality.

The messages of *Sikhi* spirituality have not changed at all since Gurbani was first composed by the Gurus. Unfortunately, however, the circumstances under which *Sikhi* spirituality could be practiced changed dramatically with the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 CE. Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions stayed under the control of *Udasis* and *Nirmlas* for over two centuries. Members of these groups did not believe in or practice authentic *Sikhi* spirituality. Instead, the Nirmlas sought to intentionally introduce Brahminical concepts and practices—that the Sikh Gurus has explicitly rejected—into *Sikhi*. This sad situation continued till 1925 CE when the idols of Hindu gods were finally removed from the *Parkarma* of even the *Darbaar Sahib* in Amritsar.

It is important to note also that most of the “traditional” Sikh literature (including specifically the *Sakhees*) was written during this period of encroachment of Brahmanical (Hindu) concepts into *Sikhi* spirituality. Much of this literature, and many of the practices they encouraged or gave rise to, are not consistent with Sikh philosophy. Despite this obvious fact, many of these anti-Sikh ideas and practices continue to be practiced and promoted by most of the *deras* of various self-appointed ‘Sants’ and ‘Babas’ in India and abroad. Some examples of the misguided and corrupted anti-*Sikhi* practices that continue even now, especially in our Gurdwaras, are briefly discussed below. What we need to do instead—in order to follow the messages of Gurbani, i.e., to think, speak, and act in accordance with the messages in SGGS—is also briefly covered below.

AKHAND PAATH

Do’s: Every seeker of divinity should read SGGS with full concentration, paying attention to the core spiritual messages of the verses of Gurbani and the context in which these are written. As noted in previous chapters, Gurbani is meant for reading, listening, and understanding the divine messages of *Shabad* Guru contained within the verses in SGGS. We are then expected to accept, believe, and practice the teachings of SGGS in our daily lives to make them our habit, so that we may finally ‘realize’ and become the Virtues as per the messages of *Gurbani*. The following verses of SGGS make these points clear.

- *The purpose of Gurbani is to enlighten the mind of the reader in the pursuit of our spiritual endeavors in our spiritual life. (SGGS: 67) ⁽¹⁾*
- *One must consistently read Gurbani by oneself to realize its omnipresence within. (SGGS: 1238) ⁽²⁾*
- *One must apply one's mind (Aklee Parrh kay – application of one's intellect and thought faculties while reading) and focus while reading (Bujheea – understand and know the message), to bring them to life within one's life (Akalee Keechay Daan). (SGGS: 1245) ⁽³⁾*
- *The ultimate objective of it all is to BECOME the messages of Gurbani. (SGGS: 1245) ⁽⁴⁾*

Don'ts: Unfortunately, instead of understanding Gurbani ourselves and following its messages in our own lives, Sikhs have accepted the ritualistic practice of 'Akhand Path' as conceived and handed to the Sikh panth by the clergy (*Granthis* and *Pathees*). *Pathees* are the professionals who make a living out of *Akhand Path*, taking two-hour turns reading it at 30 pages per hour and completing the 1430 pages in 48 hours. The contracting family pays a fixed amount of money for the service. This is contrary to *Gurbani*, which says that such a practice of 'contracting' to others our spiritual efforts, is not acceptable in *Sikhi* spirituality. In fact, *Gurbani* goes even further in rejecting such a practice. The following verse in SGGS says that those who take money and offer their spirituality to others are devoid of any spirituality in the first place.

Squandered are the spiritual lives of those who sell (make a living out of it) Divinity. Their own spiritual lives are barren, in disarray and devastated, what can those with emptiness offer to others. (SGGS: 1245) ⁽⁵⁾

NAAM SIMRAN

Do's: It has been explained in Chapters 3 and 4 that by *Naam* is meant the Divine Virtues and His *Hukam*. *Simran* has been explained in Chapter 5 as the contemplation of the messages of *Shabad* Guru with a goal of internalizing Virtues. Therefore, it is a must for a seeker of divinity to contemplate on Virtues to progress on the path of spirituality. It is possible to contemplate Virtues only if the seeker understands the spirituality of the *Shabad* Guru.

Don'ts: It should be clear that instead of seeking to understand, follow, and realize the Virtues, the ritualistic practice of Chanting as practiced by many Sikhs and in Gurdwaras cannot help in progressing on the spiritual path.

The ritual of *Naam Simran* through Chanting was introduced into *Sikhi* after 1716 by those who controlled the Gurdwaras and were neither proper Sikhs nor practiced authentic *Sikhi* spirituality. They wrongly defined *Jup* as 'repetitious utterance'. (See Appendix 1 for details). They also introduced the word *Mantar*, as in *Mool Mantar*. *Mantar* is defined (in *Yogic* terms) as the word, phrase or verse that is to be chanted or uttered repeatedly.

Chanting has become so ingrained in our beliefs that we often see our clergy (and even lay people) walking around with rosaries in an open and intended display of their piety. The process of rosary spinning has been critiqued in *Gurbani* because it is a pretentious show of one's piety and is driven by ego.

Completely contrary to the ritualistic practice of Chanting, *Naam Simran* according to Gurbani is meant to be a deeply spiritual and contemplative process to be undertaken by ourselves, in our own mind. The following verses make clear the importance of *Naam Simran* of *Gurbani* messages, which are the very soul and essence of Sikhi.

The Creator is also within Gurbani, and there is none like Him. (SGGS: 515) ⁽⁶⁾

The mantar of elevated spiritual beings is bani that is internalized within their minds. Upon deep searching within, Nanak found the internal peace and bliss in the Virtues. (SGGS: 1028) ⁽⁷⁾

LANGAR

Do's: Guru Nanak fed those who could not afford food, irrespective of their caste or creed. He knew that the homeless or shelter-less would go hungry for another night. Succeeding Gurus institutionalized the practice of serving *langar* to the needy. Our Gurus did not ask anyone about their religion or nationality. An essential element of the Langar is sitting together irrespective of caste or social status. There is an historic example. Guru Amardas ji instructed Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, to partake the *langar* by sitting in the *pangat* before having an audience with Guru Ji.

Don'ts: We have twisted the concept of *langar* to mean the meals that we ourselves partake in the Gurdwara at the end of *keertan* and *katha*. Very few Gurdwaras have in place a *sewa*-based activity that reaches out to the needy. We have re-defined *langar* as “feeding the well fed” while pretending to serve humanity. Mostly, it has become an activity to feed those who got hungry by the end of the program in Gurdwara.

A variety of dishes are prepared in the present day *langar* based on the status and position of the one who has sponsored the *langar*. In doing so we have reduced the *langar* hall to a restaurant where the *sangat* members sit together comfortably to have these dishes.

It is a common sight that those who were well fed to begin with take a large quantity of *langar* home. Otherwise, a large quantity is dumped as waste. This is a complete misconception and distortion of what Langar was originally meant to be.

BARSI/ VAREENA

Do's: It is natural to remember loved ones (parents, siblings, friends, etc. with whom we had close association) once they have left this world. We remember them often, specifically the good times we had together. The emotions get stronger when the actual date of their death approaches a year later (*barsi* or *vareena*). On these occasions, we want to be with people with whom we have a common bond and with those who knew the deceased person. We resort to some religious or ritualistic activities to calm our thoughts and emotions.

Don'ts: It is a 4,000-year-old concept as per the Hindu religious text, specifically *Garrud Puran*, that the deceased person's soul lingers for a year before moving to the next phase of afterlife. A religious ceremony was created with an illusion of helping the soul move forward to face the

outcome of one's deeds to be reborn in one of the 8.4 million life forms. Gurbani rejects this notion. Guru Arjan asks a very logical question in the following verse.

When the entirety of species was created for the first time, created in its original form for the first time, what judgement or what criteria of deeds was used to decide which soul takes what form? (SGGS: 748) ⁽⁸⁾

Religious performance on the death anniversary to benefit the deceased is not consistent with the teachings of the SGGS.

SANGRAND

Do's: One should strive to read, understand, and follow the spiritually enlightening messages of the *Shabad* Guru every day while at home or by going to a Gurdwara. Those who cannot go to Gurdwara every day do so at least once a month. They may choose to do so on the first of the Gregorian calendar (commonly used) or the first day of the Indian calendar (in use for thousands of years). The first day of the Indian calendar is also known as *Sangrand*. But it is more important to follow the spiritual messages of Gurbani in day-to-day life to make progress on the spiritual journey throughout this life.

Don'ts: In Sikhi, there is no concept of auspicious time or moment. Since the Creator has always existed and is everywhere, every moment is equally auspicious. Gurbani explains this as follows:

- *If one keeps on debating when to be in devotion of the Creator within, then when will one be in devotion? In other words, it is always a good time to be in devotion. (SGGS: 35) ⁽⁹⁾*
- *O my mind, my dear friend, the present moment is the right time to inculcate Divine Virtues. (SGGS: 20) ⁽¹⁰⁾*
- *That moment is blessed when the mind is imbued in the Virtues of the Creator within. (SGGS: 103) ⁽¹¹⁾*
- *If one does not utilize a moment for imbuing oneself in the devotion of the Creator within, then one reaps the result of one's inaction— a wasted moment. (SGGS: 303) ⁽¹²⁾*

In the Indian calendar, a particular position of the Earth relative to the Sun and the Moon was labeled as the first day of the month, i.e., *Sangrand*. It was done just a few thousand years ago when the calendar was created. However, such occurrences have been happening for billions of years when these planets came into existence. There is no religious aspect to it. Priests assigned a religious connotation to *Sangrand* to extract money from the innocent people.

RUMALEY DI SEWA

Do's: SGGS is sacrosanct for Sikhs and is most revered. One must cover the SGGS with clean clothes to protect the Scripture from dust and elements. The covering cloth can be replaced with a new one when necessary. There need not be a special occasion or day to do so. There is no religious or spiritual aspect to it.

Don'ts: It has become customary to offer a new *Rumala* to the SGGS upon completion of *Akhand Path* (a ritualistic reading by paid hires) or on special occasions (birthdays, marriage anniversaries, etc.). Offering a couple of yards of cloth (though expensive) and expecting material

things (good house, a new car, good health, etc.) in return from the *Shabad* Guru is illogical. Blessings of the *Shabad* Guru is the enlightenment gained from the messages of the *Shabad* through our own efforts.

SEPARATE GURDWARAS

Do's: When Sikhs move to a new place, they seek a gathering spot to spiritually connect with the *Shabad* Guru. Intuitively, they establish a Gurdwara for this purpose. Gradually, the community grows. To keep up with the need for larger accommodation or when the *Sangat* is scattered over a large area, there is a need for another Gurdwara. It is not too difficult for the community to establish a Gurdwara as there is a deep sense of *Sewa*, both physical and monetary, in the community. A Gurdwara also signifies the Gurus' ideal of brotherhood of humanity and equality in every aspect of life.

Don'ts: Establishing a Gurdwara based on so-called caste or any other criteria (e.g., a specific sub-caste) is against the basic tenets of *Sikhi* spirituality. The name of the Gurdwara, and the constitution or bylaws or practices of the Gurdwara should never discriminate against any group or sub-group of society or give an appearance of discrimination.

SIKH - A LIFE-LONG SPIRITUAL SEEKER

Do's: Sikh is a student for his/her entire life who constantly strives to progress on the path of *Sikhi* spirituality. The *Shabad* Guru's message transforms the state of mind from human vices to Virtues.

Through the Shabad Guru's messages, one can endure pain and pleasure alike. (SGGS: 131)
(13)

This kind of spiritual education is not provided in any academic curriculum. Educational institutes with their structured education can make us experts in a chosen field who is valued, respected and an authority figure, but becoming spiritual with Virtues is not imparted in this way. It is for this reason that *Shabad* Guru extols us to get the education from the SGGS in these words:

Internalize the Shabad Guru's messages, without which you are ignorant, unlettered. Without devotion the worldly educated are engulfed in vices. (SGGS: 288) (14)

Thus, the role and function of the *Shabad* Guru becomes crystal clear. Academic education does not teach us how to control human vices. The Guru's education changes that direction by reining in the vices and helping internalize virtues. The result is that ego is not puffed up and humility and other virtues are inculcated.

By imbibing the teachings of Guru's thought process, the merciful Creator grants His Grace and helps one to get rid of vices. (SGGS: 465) (15)

And where is *Shabad* Guru's education imparted? The SGGS says:

By letting the message imbibe in the mind, one becomes devoid of vices. (SGGS: 730) (16)

Following the spiritual messages of *Shabad* Guru is called “*Sikhi*.” The Sikh, a student of *Shabad* Guru for life, is constantly learning from Gurbani and getting better. S/He is striving to achieve the goal of becoming a Creator-realized being (*gurmukh* or *sachiaara*) during this human life. One obtains the Virtues from the Guru:

The Creator connecting Guru blesses the devotee with Virtues. (SGGS: 286) ⁽¹⁷⁾

Don’ts: A Sikh as a committed student of *Sikhi* and does not do any acts which are not endorsed by *Shabad* Guru’s spiritual messages. The Sikh follows the following dictum:

Whatever is the message of the Shabad Guru, one accepts that as good. The message of the Omnipresent Creator in Gurbani is unambiguous and in the best interest of the seeker of spirituality. (SGGS: 667) ⁽¹⁸⁾

Sikhi spirituality means that one is always trying to make progress on the path of inner spirituality in accordance with the enlightening messages of *Shabad* Guru in SGGS.

Practical Examples

At School: A Misstep and a Lesson

It was a busy morning at school, and Amrit was in a rush to complete his history project. In the cafeteria, Jasmeet was furiously texting on his phone, trying to manage the group project deadline.

“Jasmeet, you seem stressed,” Amrit said.

“I don’t understand why people can’t pull their weight in a group,” he muttered. “I ended up doing everything myself.”

Amrit paused. “Guru Nanak taught us to work together selflessly, like in Langar. If you’re always doing everything alone, it defeats the spirit of community.”

Jasmeet sighed. “I guess. But what’s the point of trying when people don’t listen?”

“Change starts with us,” Amrit said. “If we approach situations with patience and humility, it can inspire others to do the same.”

Later, during lunch, Amrit overheard some students discussing a local Gurdwara event. One of them boasted about hiring professionals for an Akhand Path and offering expensive *Rumalas* to the Guru Granth Sahib.

Amrit couldn’t stay silent. “That’s not what Guru Nanak’s teachings are about. The true purpose of Gurbani is to read and understand it, not to pay others to do it for us or seek material gains from rituals.”

One of the students looked puzzled. “But isn’t that what Sikhs do at Gurdwaras?”

Amrit shook his head. “It’s a misconception. Gurbani teaches us to reflect, internalize virtues, and make them part of our lives. Blind rituals don’t bring us closer to the truth.”

Jasmeet nudged him. “You’re like a walking encyclopedia of Sikhi,” she teased, but her smile hinted at newfound respect.

At Home: Grandpa’s Wisdom

Back home, Amrit found his younger sister, Gurleen, watching a cartoon about space. She turned to him, wide-eyed. “Did you know people believe the stars decide our future?”

Amrit chuckled. “That’s superstition, Gurleen. Guru Nanak taught us that every moment is equally auspicious. It’s our actions, not the position of stars, which shape our lives.”

Their grandfather, Surinder, joined them with a knowing smile. “Exactly, Amrit. Gurbani says that waiting for the ‘right time’ to act is futile. Every moment is an opportunity to embrace virtues and improve us”.

Gurleen looked thoughtful. “So, it’s like using each day to be kind or creative?”

Surinder nodded. “Yes, and that’s true for remembering loved ones too. We can honor their memory by living the good values they taught us, not through rituals that claim to help their souls move forward.”

Amrit added, “Like planting a tree or donating to charity in their name. It’s more meaningful and aligns with Guru Nanak’s teachings.”

The Weekend: A Visit to the Gurdwara

On Sunday, the family visited the local Gurdwara. During the Langar preparation, Amrit noticed a group of people taking large portions of food home. He whispered to his grandfather, “Isn’t Langar meant to feed those in need?”

Surinder sighed. “Yes, but over time, the true purpose of Langar has been distorted. It’s not a free meal for the well-fed; it’s supposed to be a service to those who genuinely need help. That’s why we must focus on serving the needy, not turning Langar into a social event.”

Later, Amrit joined a discussion about establishing separate Gurdwaras based on caste or community. He spoke passionately. “Guru Nanak taught us about equality. Dividing Gurdwaras contradicts that principle. We should create inclusive spaces that bring people together.”

The Sangat listened, nodding in agreement and the tentative plan of a separate Gurdwara was shelved.

Back at School: Inspiring Others

The next day, Amrit shared his experiences with Jasmeet. “You know, Guru Nanak’s teachings aren’t just for Gurdwaras. They’re practical lessons for life.”

Jasmeet thought for a moment. “Like being fair and compassionate, even in group projects?”

“Exactly,” Amrit said. “Or using every day to reflect on how we can improve. Sikhi isn’t about waiting for special occasions; it’s a lifelong journey of becoming better.”

Jasmeet smiled. “Maybe I’ll start by being more patient with our group. And hey, maybe you can teach me more about this Sikhi stuff.”

Amrit grinned. “I’d love to.”

Key Lessons:

1. **Understanding Gurbani:** Like Amrit, students should focus on reading and understanding the teachings of Gurbani themselves rather than relying on rituals or hiring others to do it.
2. **True Purpose of Langar:** Langar is meant to serve the needy, not as a social event or to feed the well-fed.
3. **Equality in Gurdwaras:** Dividing places of worship based on caste or community goes against Guru Nanak’s teachings of unity.
4. **Avoiding Superstitions:** Every moment is auspicious; it’s our actions, not stars or rituals, which shape our lives.
5. **Honoring Loved Ones:** Remember loved ones by practicing their values or engaging in meaningful actions, not through superstitious rituals.
6. **Inculcating Divine Virtues:** Reflect on values like humility, kindness, and honesty in everyday actions, whether at school or home.

Through Amrit’s journey, students can learn how to integrate Guru Nanak’s teachings into their daily lives, making them more thoughtful, compassionate, and purposeful individuals.

Transliterations of the Gurbani verses used in this chapter are as follows:

1. *Gurbaanee is jag meh chaanan karam vasai man aae ||I||* (SGGS: 67)
2. *Gurbaanee sadh ucharai har ma(n)n vasaiaa ||* (SGGS: 1238)
3. *Akalee parrh kay bujheeaai akalee keechay daan.* (SGGS: 1245)
4. *Satigur kee baanee sat saroop hai gurbaanee baneeaai.* (SGGS: 304)
Dhirag tinaa kaa jeeviaa jay likh likh vecheh naau.
5. *Khetee jin kee ujaRai khalavaaRe kiaa thaau.* (SGGS: 1245)
6. *Vaahu vaahu baanee nirankaar hai tis jevadd avar na koi.* (SGGS: 515)
Baanee mantr mahaa purakhan kee maneh utaaran maa(n)n kau.
7. *Khoj lahio nanak sukh thaanaa(n) har naamaa bisraam kau. 2.1.20.* (SGGS: 1028)
Jab kachh na seeo tab kiaa karataa kavan karam kar aaiaa ||
8. *Apanaa khel aap kar dhekhai Thaakur rachan rachaiaa ||I||* (SGGS: 748)
9. *Je velaa vakhat veechaareeaai taa kit velaa bhagat hoi ||* (SGGS: 35)
10. *Sun man mitr piaariaa mil velaa hai eh ||* (SGGS: 20)
11. *Dha(n)nu su velaa jit har gaavat sunanaa aae te paravaanaa jeeau ||I||* (SGGS: 103)
12. *Fer oh velaa os hath na aavai oh aapanaa beejiaa aape khaavai ||* (SGGS: 303)
13. *Gurmukh upadhes dhukh sukh sam sahataa.* (SGGS: 131)

14. *Gur kee mut too(n) leh iaane. Bhagat binaa bahu ddoobe siaane.* (SGGS: 288)
15. *Sikhi sikhiaa gur veechaar. Nadharee karam laghaae paar.* (SGGS: 465)
16. *Guru dhuaarai hoi sojhee paisee. Aet dhuaarai dhoi hachhaa hoisee.* (SGGS: 730)
Note: Guru is the Shabad, the message of the Shabad. The door to let the message in is the mind.
17. *Satigur sikh kau naam dhan dhei.* (SGGS: 286)
18. *Joe gur kahai soiee bhal maanahu har har kathaa niraalee. 1. Rahaau.* (SGGS: 667)

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Glossary

Every *shabad* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) seeks to enlighten us to transform ourselves in this life itself. None of the *shabads* seeks to provide instructions for attaining physical well-being or material wealth.

Gurbani does use vocabulary from daily life to convey its spirituality. To help the reader understand the primary messages of Gurbani, in this book the spiritual meanings (Sp.) of Gurbani verses are provided instead of their literal translation. This glossary will help in reading and understanding the book in its intended Gurbani perspective.

<i>Aap</i>	Depending on the context it could be the Creator or the self
<i>Ageiy</i>	Moving forward, progress, future, goal, destination
<i>Anand</i>	Spiritual bliss, spiritual joy and contentment
<i>Avgunn</i>	Human vices, example – lust, greed, anger, attachment, pride/ego etc.
<i>Dargah, dibaani</i>	The ‘Divine Court’ of judgement within us, in our conscience
<i>Dharamraye</i>	Lit. (Vedic) King of spirituality who judges the departed soul in the supposed afterlife; Sp. Conscience
<i>Dojuk</i>	Lit. Hell; Sp. Human vices
<i>Gunn</i>	Divine attributes, divine Virtues, virtues
<i>Gur Parsad</i>	Enlightenment of the Guru’s messages
<i>Gurmat</i>	Sikhi spirituality, the messages of Gurbani or the <i>Shabad</i> Guru
<i>Gurmukh</i>	With <i>Sihari</i> is not a noun. It is a verb which means from within the Guru’s “mind”; Guru’s messages; Guru-message driven spirituality; spirituality of the <i>Shabad</i> Guru
<i>Guru</i>	The messages of the <i>Shabad</i> Guru (<i>Gurbani</i>)
<i>Gyan</i>	Divine enlightenment, spiritual enlightenment from the messages of Gurbani, spiritual understanding
<i>Hukam</i>	The Creator’s Command, the Laws of Nature for the external world, and the divine virtues for inner spirituality
<i>Hukmee</i>	The Creator, <i>Akal Purakh</i> , whose Divine Commands (<i>Hukam</i>) operates within all of His Creation
<i>Jan</i>	Seeker of spirituality
<i>Janam</i>	Spiritual life
<i>Joni</i>	Lit. Life form: Sp. Negative mind sets
<i>Jum</i>	Lit. soldiers of physical death; Sp. our Vices as agents of spiritual death
<i>Jup</i>	Realization (of the Divine Virtues); becoming the virtues by internalizing and following the messages of <i>Gurbani</i>
<i>Karta Purakh</i>	The Creator, the Divine Being, the Supreme Reality
<i>Kirpa</i>	The Creator’s Grace (attained through realization of the Creator within, i.e., by realizing the virtues)
<i>Manmukh</i>	Devoid of the spirituality of the <i>Shabad</i> Guru
<i>Maran</i>	Spiritual death
<i>Mukti</i>	Liberation from spiritual death due to our vices or animalistic mindsets

<i>Munn</i>	Mind, conscience
<i>Murakh</i>	Lit. stupid; Sp. Unenlightened state
<i>Nao, Naam</i>	The Creator, Divine Virtues, Divine <i>Hukam</i> (the Creator's Command). It depends on the context of the verse. The Literal translation is "Name"
<i>Poorab</i>	Past period of life (within this human life itself)
<i>Sach</i>	Lit. truth; Sp. The Creator, <i>Akal Purakh</i>
<i>Sachiara</i>	A Creator-realized being, connected to the Creator within (by living by the Creator's Command (<i>Hukam</i>) within our mind and conscience)
<i>Sant</i>	Seekers of spirituality (with no ' <i>aunkar</i> ' at the end makes it singular)
<i>Sant(u)</i>	The Creator, (with ' <i>aunkar</i> ' at the end makes it singular)
<i>Sat</i>	Accepting the Creator's primary attribute that He Exists, the virtue of living according to the messages of <i>Shabad</i> Guru
<i>Satgur</i>	The eternal Guru. The message of the <i>Shabad</i> Guru, that connects us with the Creator within
<i>Sewa</i>	Service, actions that are in harmony with Virtues and the messages of the <i>Shabad</i> Guru
<i>Shabad Guru</i>	The Creator-connecting messages of Gurbani; the basis of <i>Sikhi</i> spirituality
<i>Vices</i>	Focus of SGGS is primarily five vices – Lust, anger, greed, attachment, and ego.
<i>Virtues</i>	Humility, contentment, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, patience, etc.

***Jup* is not Chanting.**

Jup (ਜੁਪੁ) is the very first composition in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) composed by Guru Nanak.

A Sikh child is expected to start learning and reading a few *paurris* of *Jup banee* from an early age. As the child grows up s/he learns more *paurris*. A Sikh is expected to recite at least the *Jup banee* every day in the morning. One advantage of reciting it every day is that it gets memorized. Then, one does not need a Gutka etc. to recite the banee. However, one should always be aware that just reading the banee is merely a small step towards spirituality. The goal should be to understand the messages of every banee in SGGS and implement them in one's life.

Jup banee is considered the foundational Banee of *Sikhi* spirituality. That is, the entire SGGS is an expansion of the basic concepts mentioned in *Jup*. The word “*Jup*” is the title of the first composition, just as there are other compositions in SGGS with their own titles.

Jup appears with an *aungkar* to the letter ੜ in this banee. That makes it a singular noun. It is not a verb. Therefore, it cannot be interpreted as an action verb that indicates that we should repetitively and mindlessly ‘chant’ the entire *Jup banee* or any of its verses.

Since *Jup banee* lists fundamental principles of Guru Nanak's *Sikhi* spirituality, one needs to understand what these principles are. Just repeating the principles cannot benefit anyone. A Sikh should strive to understand the basic principles of *Sikhi* spirituality. This requires that we try to understand, follow, and internalize the messages of Gurbani so that we may become capable of actually implementing all these principles in one's daily life

SGGS makes the meaning of *Jup* clear in the following verse:

ਜਪਿ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ॥

Jup mun merey Govind kee banee|| (SGGS: 192)

It is the mind who must do the task of Jup, i.e. to realize the message within the banee.

In other words, this Gurbani verse explains that “*Jup*” means “To Realize.” It also means that the *Jup banee* is not just for chanting. The entire *Jup banee* helps us ‘to realize’ the divine messages contained in SGGS. This enables a Sikh to improve oneself spiritually. We need to utilize the entire *Jup banee* as a ‘road map’ to help us ‘to realize’ the Creator within—which means that we then ‘realize’ His Virtues and *Hukam* (Commands) within our mind and conscience. For this to happen, we have to inculcate, follow, and finally ‘become’ the virtues, as has been clearly explained in the *Jup banee* and in the SGGS as a whole.

The main message is that instead of just chanting the *Jup* or any other banee, one needs to understand the inner messages of the banee through contemplation. Only then would we be able to accept, believe, and then put these messages of *Sikhi* spirituality into practice.

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- Various YouTube videos of Prof. Darshan Singh Khalsa, GGS Academy, Canada.
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- Various YouTube videos of Bhai Sarabjit Singh Dhunda, India.

Suggested Questions

Chapter 1 - Introduction to *Sikhi* Spirituality

Q1: As per Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), what is Guru Nanak's understanding of the Creator?

Q2: Why is Guru Nanak's understanding of the Creator important for *Sikhi* spirituality?

Chapter 2 - Explanation of Some Basic Terms

Q1: Why is it necessary to have a good understanding of some 'basic terms' (as used in SGGS)?

Q2: What is the importance of the terms "Divine Virtues" and 'virtues' as used in this book?

Chapter 3 - Divine Virtues (*Naam*)

Q1: What does *Naam* refer to, and why does SGGS use so many names for the Creator?

Q2: Why are *Naam* and *Hukam* important concepts in *Sikhi*? Explain with examples.

Chapter 4 - Divine Command (*Hukam*)

Q1: What does *Hukam* mean for: (a) the natural world, and (b) for humans?

Q2: Why is it important for us to understand and follow the Creator's *Hukam* in our lives?

Chapter 5 - Internalizing Divine Virtues (*Naam Simran*)

Q1: As per SGGS, what is meant by *Simran*, and how should we do *Simran* in our daily life?

Q2: Why is the chanting of any word or phrase from SGGS not acceptable in *Sikhi* spirituality?

Chapter 6 - Singing of Gurbani Verses (*Keertan*)

Q1: Why is the singing of divine verses from SGGS (*Keertan*) encouraged in *Sikhi* spirituality?

Q2: How can *Keertan* benefit us, and what do we need to do to get these benefits?

Chapter 7 – Aligning with Gurbani Messages (*Sangat*)

Q1: How can we align our mind and senses with the "*sangat*" of Gurbani messages?

Q2: Why is it not enough to simply participate in the congregation (*Sangat*) at a gurdwara?

Chapter 8 - Living in the Present (*Vertman Vich Rehna*)

Q1: Why does Gurbani ask us to "live in the present", and what are its benefits?

Q2: What do we need to do to internalize virtues and control human vices?

Chapter 9 - Ego (*Haumai*)

Q1: Why is ego considered a major vice, and what harmful effects does it have?

Q2: What are the benefits of keeping ego in check, and how can we do this?

Chapter 10 – Humility (*Nimarta*)

Q1: Why is humility a virtue, and how does it benefit us on our spiritual journey?

Q2: How can we develop humility, and how would this change how we relate to others?

Chapter 11 – Gratitude (*Shukrana*)

Q1: Why, and for what, do we need to have an attitude of gratitude?

Q2: How can we express our gratitude in daily life, and what happens if we don't?

Chapter 12 – Contentment (*Sahaj*)

Q1: What is meant by *Sahaj* (as explained in SGGS), and why is it so difficult to achieve?

Q2: How does our acceptance of *Hukam* help achieve a state of contentment (*Sahaj*)?

Chapter 13 – Service (*Sewa*)

Q1: What is meant by *sewa* (as explained in SGGS), and what are its benefits for us?

Q2: In what ways can we do *sewa* in our daily lives, and what should we *not* do?

Chapter 14 - Some *Sikhi* Practices

Q1: Why and how have any two ritualistic practices been wrongly accepted into Sikhi?

Q2: How should we discard any two of the misguided Sikhi practices, and how would this help us?

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