

# ‘Vairag’ in the Bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji@ A Passionate Longing for Divine Love

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@The 331<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Martyrdom of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur was observed on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006. It is almost admitted by various scholars that the central theme of the bani of Guru Tegh Bahadur is *Vairag*. But none of the scholar has defined the definition of *Vairag* in the light of Gurbani.

In the term of Indian religions, *Vairag* is almost synonymous with total devotion or renunciation of the world. In Divine Love, royal princes Gopi Chand and Bharthari Hari practiced *Vairag*, abandoned their thrones, gave up all pursuits of pleasure and wealth and renounced the worldly life. Similarly, the followers of *Ramanand* are also not householders, remain halfnaked and wander from place to place and live on begging. In fact, *Vairag* is embraced for a higher pursuit, which is the complete devotion to the Supreme Being. The concept of *Vairag* differs, to some extent, from one religion to another element, but the basic is the renunciation of worldly life for intensive devotion/bhakti.

The meaning of *Vairag* is a compound, the first component ‘Vai’ means ‘without’ or sans, and the second part ‘rag’ meaning ‘love’, harmony, enchantment, attraction, etc., as such, the term has been translated as dispassion, detachment, non-attachment and it has been interpreted as turning away from the worldly pursuits having no attachments for the worldly pleasures of wealth and power.

But in the light of Gurbani, (the spirit of which can be understood rightly only if a view of the entire *bani* of the Guru Granth Sahib, as well as the course of the Sikh history is taken. The term *Vairag* does not mean renunciation of the householder life, nor its purpose is merely *bhakti*, or formal devotion to the Supreme Being.

**In Gurmat, *Vairag* is an attitude of mind and not a ritualist act. It is a way of life, worldly life which rules out any contempt for the reality of life, worldly objects or surroundings. It is not pessimistic or escapist, in essence, rather it is dynamic, radical and revolutionary.**

The concept of *Vairag* has been summed up in *Siddha Goshth* during the discussions with the Siddha Yogis who deserted homes and families to lead celibate lives. The central point in the composition ‘Siddha Goshth’ is that man should live in the world as detached as the lotus lives in the water, or a duck swims across a stream without allowing its wings getting wet:

ਜੇਸੇ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਕਮਲੁ ਨਿਰਾਲਮੁ ਮੁਰਗਾਈ ਨੈ ਸਾਣੇ ॥ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਾਣੇ ॥ ਰਹਿ ਇਕਾਤਿ  
ਏਕੋ ਮਨਿ ਵਸਿਆ ਆਸਾ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰਾਸੇ ॥ ਅਗਮੁ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਦੇਖਿ ਦਿਖਾਏ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਾ ਕਾ ਦਾਸੇ ॥

[SGGS:938]

That man should so live with all the worldly objects that he can transcend them and not be soiled.

A Brahmgyani (self realized person), according to Guru Arjun’s Sukhmani Sahib is the one who lives unattached, unaffected by the worldliness, and not the one who has renounced the world and the life of house holder. The *jiwanmukta* (redeemed in own life-time) of his conception is also one who is unaffected by the worldly surroundings and circumstances:

ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥ ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਭੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥ [SGGS:633]

The central theme of Guru Tegh Bahadur’s bani is the Gurmat idealism. It is the *Vairag* of

living pure amidst the impurities, it is living unsoiled amidst the impurities of worldliness, it is a *Vairag* of self transcendent, *the Vairag of Self-denial and Self-sacrifice for the good of all.*

**Vairag from the things of senses:**

According to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* attachment may be considered in three relations: (1) attachment to the things of senses; (2) objects of affection, and (3) the fruits of action. Guru ji points out that the excessive use of sensual impulses acts like poison that ultimately kills the love of God in man and thus fails to realize the truth. One who has renounced the poison of worldliness and turned indifferent to it:

ਜਿਹਿ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਸਗਲੀ ਤਜੀ ਲੀਓ ਭੇਖ ਬੈਰਾਗ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਤਿਹ ਨਰ ਮਾਥੈ ਭਾਗੁ ॥

[SGGS:1427]

Guru ji exhorts man to renounce illusions, i.e. maya:

ਜਿਹਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਤਜੀ ਸਭ ਤੇ ਭਇਓ ਉਦਾਸੁ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਨਿਵਾਸੁ ॥

[SGGS:1427]

Man's attachment to physical body is unavoidable, yet it is perishable. Guru says, 'O' my friend, this fine frame of yours may perish instantaneously, Saith Nanak, that man alone is the true winner who has devoted himself to God.

ਗਰਬੁ ਕਰਤੁ ਹੈ ਦੇਹ ਕੇ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਛਿਨ ਮੈ ਮੀਤ ॥ ਜਿਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਕਹਿਓ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਹਿ ਜਗੁ ਜੀਤਿ ॥

[SGGS:1428]

Repeatedly, the Guru has called the things of senses, and worldly things as transient, and said, listen man, grasp firmly the truth: this whole universe is as a dream.

ਮਨ ਕਹਾ ਬਿਸਾਰਿਓ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ ਤਨੁ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਜਮ ਸਿਉ ਪਰੈ ਕਾਮੁ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਇਹੁ ਜਗੁ ਧੂਏ ਕਾ ਪਹਾਰ ॥

ਤੇ ਸਾਚਾ ਮਾਨਿਆ ਕਿਹ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ॥੧॥ ਧਨੁ ਦਾਰਾ ਸੰਪਤਿ ਗੋਹ ॥ ਕਛੁ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ ਚਾਲੈ ਸਮਝ ਲੇਹ ॥੨॥ ਇਕ ਭਗਤਿ ਨਾਰਾਇਨ ਹੋਇ ਸੰਗਿ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਜੁ ਤਿਹ ਏਕ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

[SGGS:1186-87]

The hymn makes one ponder. The Guru knows the nature of man and marvels at it. My devotee friends, behold, such is this creation of God. Man considers himself immortal, which is very strange and beyond words.

ਸਾਧੋ ਰਚਨਾ ਰਾਮ ਬਨਾਈ ॥ ਇਕਿ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਇਕ ਅਸਥਿਰੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਅਚਰਜੁ ਲਖਿਓ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਮੋਹ ਬਸਿ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਹਰਿ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਬਿਸਰਾਈ ॥ ਝੂਠਾ ਤਨੁ ਸਾਚਾ ਕਰਿ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਜਿਉ ਸੁਪਨਾ ਰੈਨਾਈ ॥

[SGGS:219]

**Vairag from worldly objects of affection:**

Guru ji has drawn attention to the sad fact that all the nearest relations are self-seekers; they are after their own comfort and they push 'him' out of doors and leave him alone as soon as his life departs. All the usages of life last while life lasts.

ਜਗਤ ਮੈ ਝੂਠੀ ਦੇਖੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ॥ ਅਪਨੇ ਹੀ ਸੁਖ ਸਿਉ ਸਭ ਲਾਗੇ ਕਿਆ ਦਾਰਾ ਕਿਆ ਮੀਤ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਮੇਰਉ ਮੇਰਉ ਸਭੈ ਕਹਤ ਹੈ ਹਿਤ ਸਿਉ ਬਾਧਿਓ ਚੀਤ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ ਕਾਲਿ ਸੰਗੀ ਨਹ ਕੋਊ ਇਹ ਅਚਰਜ ਹੈ ਗੀਤਿ ॥੧॥ ਮਨ ਮੂਰਖ ਅਜਹੂ ਨਹ ਸਮਝਤ ਸਿਖ ਦੈ ਹਾਰਿਓ ਨੀਤ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਉਜਲੁ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਰੈ ਜਉ ਗਾਵੈ ਪੁਭ ਕੇ ਗੀਤ ॥ [SGGS:536]

Love of worldly relations and friends is false and hollow.

ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਜੀਵਤ ਕੇ ਬਿਵਹਾਰ ॥ ਮਾਤ ਪਿਤਾ ਭਾਈ ਸੁਤ ਬੰਧਪ ਅਰੁ ਫੁਨਿ ਗ੍ਰਿਹ ਕੀ ਨਾਰਿ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਤਨ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਾਨ ਹੋਤ ਜਬ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਟੇਰਤ ਪ੍ਰੇਤਿ ਪੁਕਾਰਿ ॥ ਆਧਿ ਘਰੀ ਕੋਊ ਨਹਿ ਰਾਖੈ ਘਰ ਤੇ ਦੇਤ ਨਿਕਾਰਿ ॥੧॥ ਮ੍ਰਿਗ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਜਿਉ ਜਗ ਰਚਨਾ ਯਹ ਦੇਖਹੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਜੁ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਤ ਜਾ ਤੇ ਹੋਤ ਉਧਾਰ ॥ [SGGS:536]

Man, in the end, is cheated and betrayed by his wealth, woman and status. Believe

the word of Nanak, none of the these shall abide with you!

ਸੁਖ ਮੈ ਬਹੁ ਸੰਗੀ ਭਏ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਭਜੁ ਮਨਾ ਅੰਤਿ ਸਹਾਈ ਹੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:1428]

Man wins many companions in prosperity but, in adversity, they all leave him. Many profess to be man's companion in his prosperity but ultimately God alone is man's constant companion.

ਸੰਗ ਸਖਾ ਸਭਿ ਤਜਿ ਗਏ ਕੋਊ ਨ ਨਿਬਹਿਓ ਸਾਥਿ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਬਿਪਤਿ ਮੈ ਟੇਕ ਏਕ ਰਖੁਨਾਥ ॥

[SGGS:1429]

Friends and companions have departed. None has remained loyal.

### **Vairag from the fruits of actions:**

Even good men pin their hope on rituals and pious acts, but this is Guru's verdict: He who observes ritual bathing, fasting and charity is filled with arrogance.

All his pious acts. Saith Nanak are of as little worth as an elephant's bath.

ਤੀਰਥ ਬਰਤ ਅਰੁ ਦਾਨ ਕਰਿ ਮਨ ਮੈ ਧਰੈ ਗੁਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਜਾਤ ਤਿਹ ਜਿਉ ਕੁੰਚਰ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ॥

[SGGS:1428]

The Guru announces profoundly that all ritual practices are completely sterile:

Nothing without devotion to the lord is productive for the release of the man.

Know this to be the truth. One without devotion to the Lord has wasted his human carnation.

ਜਾ ਮੈ ਭਜਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੋ ਨਾਹੀ ॥ ਤਿਹ ਨਰ ਜਨਮੁ ਅਕਾਰਥੁ ਖੋਇਆ ਯਹ ਰਾਖਹੁ ਮਨ ਮਾਹੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਤੀਰਥ ਕਰੈ ਬੁਝ ਫੁਨਿ ਰਾਖੇ  
ਨਹ ਮਨੁਆ ਬਸਿ ਜਾ ਕੋ ॥ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਧਰਮੁ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੁਮ ਮਾਨਹੁ ਸਾਚੁ ਕਹਤ ਮੈ ਯਾ ਕਉ ॥੧॥ ਜੈਸੇ ਪਾਹਨੁ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਖਿਓ ਭੇਦੈ ਨਾਹਿ  
ਤਿਹਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥ ਤੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਤੁਮ ਤਾਹਿ ਪਛਾਨਹੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਹੀਨ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ॥੨॥ ਕਲ ਮੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨਾਮ ਤੇ ਪਾਵਤ ਗੁਰੁ ਯਹ ਭੇਦੁ ਬਤਾਵੈ ॥ ਕਹੁ  
ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋਈ ਨਰੁ ਗੁਰੂਆ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵੈ ॥

[SGGS:831]

All the traditional paths followed for liberation are futile.

To live without devotion to the Lord is to be full of sorrow.

Illusion lifts not except through devotion.

ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਭਗਤਿ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਹਸਾ ਨਹ ਚੁਕੈ ਗੁਰੁ ਇਹੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਬਤਾਵੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਕਹਾ ਭਇਓ ਤੀਰਥ ਬੁਝ  
ਕੀਏ ਰਾਮ ਸਰਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਆਵੈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਵੈ ॥ ਭਗਤਿ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਹਸਾ ਨਹ ਚੁਕੈ ਗੁਰੁ ਇਹੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਬਤਾਵੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
ਕਹਾ ਭਇਓ ਤੀਰਥ ਬੁਝ ਕੀਏ ਰਾਮ ਸਰਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਆਵੈ ॥

[SGGS:830]

With all attachments crossed over, true realization dawns. man must surrender to the Lord, seeking His grace. This alone saves him.

Lord protect thou my honour; my heart filled with Yama's terror have I sought Thy shelter.

ਹਰਿ ਜੂ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੇਹੁ ਪਤਿ ਮੇਰੀ ॥ ਜਮ ਕੋ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ ਭਇਓ ਉਰ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਰਨਿ ਗਹੀ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਿਧਿ ਤੇਰੀ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਮਹਾ ਪਤਿਤ  
ਮੁਗਧ ਲੋਭੀ ਫੁਨਿ ਕਰਤ ਪਾਪ ਅਥ ਹਾਰਾ ॥ ਭੈ ਮਰਥੇ ਕੋ ਬਿਸਰਤ ਨਾਹਿਨ ਤਿਹ ਚਿਤਾ ਤਨੁ ਜਾਰਾ ॥੧॥ ਕੀਏ ਉਪਾਵ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕੇ ਕਾਰਨਿ  
ਦਹ ਦਿਸਿ ਕਉ ਉਠਿ ਧਾਇਆ ॥ ਘਟ ਹੀ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਬਸੈ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਤਾਕੋ ਮਰਮੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥੨॥

[SGGS:703]

New realization comes with *Vairag*. Truth is then driven home.

Youth is past, old age has finally overcome one's body.

ਤਰਨਾਪੇ ਇਉ ਹੀ ਗਇਓ ਲੀਓ ਜਰਾ ਤਨੁ ਜੀਤਿ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਜੁ ਹਰਿ ਮਨਾ ਅਉਧ ਜਾਤੁ ਹੈ ਬੀਤਿ ॥

[SGGS:1426]

God commands the highest value over anything else:



Saith Nanak, all is in your hand, Lord.

ਬਲੁ ਹੋਆ ਬੰਧਨ ਛੁਟੇ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੋਤ ਉਪਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਹਾਥ ਮੈ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਹੋਤ ਸਹਾਇ ॥

[SGGS:1429]

Liberation is the antithesis of bondage, as strength is that of weakness. Guru Tegh Bahadur stands for the strength and liberation; the degeneration that had come with rule by that foreigners evaporates and freedom brings spiritual liberation.

Indeed Guru Nanak had similarly deplored the religious, cultural and political degradation in the Kali age:

'Atharban' is the Veda, and the name of Lord has become Allah. The Turks and Pathans have become rulers and their blue wear has become the fashion.

ਕਲਿ ਮਹਿ ਬੇਦੁ ਅਥਰਬਣੁ ਹੂਆ ਨਾਉ ਖੁਦਾਈ ਅਲਹੁ ਭਇਆ ॥ ਨੀਲ ਬਸਤੁ ਲੇ ਕਪੜੇ ਪਹਿਰੇ ਤੁਰਕ ਪਠਾਣੀ ਅਮਲੁ ਕੀਆ

॥ [SGGS:470]

Guru ji declared that a wise devotee not afraid of anyone, and does not overawe any one:

One who overawes none, nor does yield to anyone in fear, Saith Nanak listen, my mind, to my words. Proclaim such a one to be truly enlightened.

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੁ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥

[SGGS:1427]

Guru Tegh Bahadur wanted his companions and the general masses of India to develop fearlessness in order to strike against the oppressive political, social and religious hegemony.

Such godly Patriots should be prepared to sacrifice their relations, possessions and themselves, and that courage could come from the inner spiritual strength only.

Guru asserts:

Man may only worry over what can be averted.

Saith Nanak, on this path of life – Nothing is lasting, all is evanescent.

ਚਿਤਾ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕੀਜੀਐ ਜੋ ਅਨਹੋਨੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਇਹੁ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:1429]

All that is created, must one day perish. Saith Nanak, leave alone all these entanglement, devote thyself to God.

ਰਾਮੁ ਗਇਓ ਰਾਵਨੁ ਗਇਓ ਜਾ ਕਉ ਬਹੁ ਪਰਵਾਰੁ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਕਛੁ ਨਹੀ ਸੁਪਨੇ ਜਿਉ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥

[SGGS:1429]

Guru Tegh Bahadurji throughout guided the people of Indian subcontinent in the direction of liberty, freedom, dignity and self-respect. Indeed that was the motivation behind his *Vairag* and *Bhakti*. In sum his *Vairag* meant the courage to sacrifice. He offered himself in sacrifice for the sake of *dharma* and freedom of faith.

□

## Importance of 'sewa' in Sikhism

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The wellknown axiom: *ivc duinAw syv kmwelAY ] qw drgh bYsxu pwelAY ]* means: If we serve the people in this world, we get a place of honour at God's portal.

*Sewa*, (services) *Simran* (meditation) and *Samarpan* (dedication) are the three pillars of Sikh faith. Of these, *Sewa* is the most valuable one because it benefits the needy recipients

and it also has a soothing effect on the performer. It purifies the mind, comforts the heart and helps in developing humility. It generates a feeling that we are a part of the global society. Also Sewa is amply rewarded by the Lord. Those who are unable to do any physical Sewa but donate money for the cause are equally rewarded. Guru Nanak says those who earn their livelihood by hard work and donate some thing out of it are the people who have understood the correct way to salvation.

Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyih ]nwnk rwhu pCwxih syie ]

One who consumes what he earns through honest labour, and gives something out of it in charity, says Nanak, knows the true way of life.

Those who live on ill begotten wealth are not the ones who will be blessed by the Lord. Sikh religion expects every one to earn his bread by honest and hard work and to donate a tenth part.

According to Gurus' precepts, *Sewa* is the most important activity for the spiritual uplift and inviting blessings of the Supreme God. Gurus have described social service as the noble deed.

Charity leads to the shedding of swollen ego and *Samarpan* - dedication - of mind before the Will of God. *Sewa* can be done by serving food, or items of common need to the needy people, providing education to the children and the adults and also by providing medical facilities to the sick and the suffering humanity. The Guru gives utmost importance to *Sewa* in all its forms. The Third Guru established the system of *Langar* so that nobody remains hungry. The Gurus started the system of *Langar* because in those days people used to come to meet him from far and near. Taking the same food together, in a *pangat*, creates the feeling of brotherhood and equality and removes the evil of casteism.

In today's context providing medical facilities to the sick and the needy is the most sought after *Sewa* because many patients remain untreated on account of high cost of medical treatment. Now-a-days nobody remains hungry but many people do remain untreated and suffer agony for want of money for treatment. Being associated with charitable dispensaries and pharmaceutical trade and profession I have personally seen the patients not purchasing the medicines prescribed to them by the doctors, in spite of seriousness of the disease, for want of money.

The Guru gives utmost importance to serving the sick. Wherever they went they served the sick and at many places they established *Dawakhana*s for providing medical treatment to the sick.

The tradition of serving the sick was started by Guru Nanak himself. Guru Nanak once visited a town and saw a small hut which was bolted from inside. On enquiries in the town he was told that this hut was built in an isolated place outside the town for a resident who was suffering from leprosy. Scared by the disease nobody used to visit the hut. On the same day, Guru Nanak went to the hut and knocked at the door. The occupant without opening the door told him that he was suffering from leprosy, therefore he could not allow anybody to come close to him as the disease was contagious. Guru Nanak told him that he had come to reduce his agony and nothing will happen to him; thereafter he opened the door. Guru Nanak, with his own hands gave him a bath, prepared food for him and served it to him and cleaned his bed, thereby impressing on the world that sick need love, sympathy and care. Thereafter people started visiting the hut. It is said that, in due course, the patient got cured of his disease.

The third Guru, Guru Amar Das had set up a *Dwakhana* at Goindwal Sahib complex where large number of patients from far and near used to come to get treatment and get rid of their ailments. The room is preserved till date.

When Guru Arjun Dev founded the city of Taran Taran he also established a big Leprosy Home and a Medical Centre for the stay of leprosy patients and treatment of all kinds of patients.

In 1597 a deadly epidemic of smallpox gripped the city of Lahore and the city was littered with human corpses unattended and uncremated. Rulers of the day were unable to cope with the situation. Guru Arjun Dev, along with his wife Mata Ganga ji and one and a half year old son (Guru) Hargobind Sahib, camped in Lahore for months. With the help of Sangat of Lahore He treated the patients, served food to them and gave them clothes. He personally carried the dead bodies lying in the streets on his shoulders and cremated them. As there was scarcity of water for the common people he also constructed a well in Dabbi Bazar, Lahore, to provide drinking water to the public. His only son (Guru) Har Gobind Sahib was only one and a half year old, but it did not deter him from going to Lahore and serving the people. In fact Guru Hargobind did fall sick and suffered from smallpox, but with God's grace he survived.

The seventh Guru, Guru Har Rai had opened a modern *Dwakhana* at Kiratpur Sahib where free treatment was given to all patients irrespective of caste, creed or social status. Costly and rare medicines prepared from real pearls were also used there. It is interesting to know that, once, prince Dara Shikoh, son of Emperor Shahjahan fell ill and did not get any relief from the treatment given by the royal

*Hakims* of Delhi, he received treatment in the Guru ji's *Dwakhana* and was completely cured.

The eighth Guru, Guru Harkishan sacrificed his life while treating the patients of cholera and smallpox in Delhi in the year 1664. He was staying where Bangla Sahib Gurdwara stands today and was cremated at the site of Gurdwara Bala Ji Sahib on the banks of River Yamuna in Delhi.

Guru Gobind Singh instructed Bhai Kanhaya ji, who was engaged in serving drinking water to the injured soldiers of Khalsa army in the battlefield, to also apply ointment on the wounds of all the injured soldiers, including the 'enemy' soldiers, who were wounded in the battles in addition to serving water to them.

It is heartening to note that In line with the teachings of the Gurus, many Gurdwaras are running dispensaries in their complexes for the treatment of the sick, where almost free treatment is provided to all irrespective of caste, creed or religion. All class of people, including the well-to-do who can afford to get treatment from private doctors through the clinics because they get quick relief from their illness with the blessings of the Gurus.

The motivation to render sewa comes with the grace of God. Blessed are those who get a chance to serve the poor and the needy. Guru Arjun Dev also prays to God to emancipate him through the service of the people. He says;

kir ikrpw moih Twkur dyvw  
nwnku auDrY jn kl syvw [

[SGGS: 1338]

Show Your mercy on me Splendid Lord, so that Nanak  
be liberated through the service of the people.

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## **Bhai Gurdas as a Historian**

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bhai gurdas ji (b. 1551, d. 1636 ad), honoured in the Sikh history and folklore, is best known as the scribe to Guru Arjun Dev Ji during the compilation of Adi (Sri Guru) Granth Sahib. Bhai Sahib was a man of wide learning especially in ancient texts and philosophy. Currently, his writings are available in three language:

(i) 40 Vârân in Punjabi, (ii) 675 Kabitt Savaiyyé, in Braj, and (iii) 6 slokas in Sanskrit. Mainly the Vârân, the most contemporary and authentic sources of information relating to the lives of the Sikh Gurus. Bhai Sahib himself was contemporary of the Third upto Sixth Sikh Gurus, he had cordial relations with all of them. The first Vâr of Bhai Gurdas gives important and valuable accounts about Guru Nanak's life and odyssey - *Udassies* (travels). He gives other important facts/information, like:

- (a) Guru Nanak's visit to Mecca and Baghdad has been mentioned for the first time.
- (b) In the 11th Var are given the names of various devotees who had been nearest to Gurus.
- (c) In the context of the Sikh religion, theology/philosophy, the different *vars* deal with different subjects or concepts, like definition of *Sikhi*, *Gurmukh*, *seva*, etc.
- (d) Vars give an also other important facts - development of Sikhism, problems, - evolution of institutions, importance of Sikhism, etc. Besides, *Vars* are the first interpretation of *Gurbani*.

Bhai Sahib's works available are: (a) Varan Bhai Gurdas Ji, (ed.) Dr. Gursharn Kaur Jaggi, Panjabi University, Patiala. 1999; (Eng. tr. also available) 9b) Varan Bhai Gurdas: text, transliteration and translation (2 vols.) Dr. Jodh Singh, vision and Venture, Patiala, 1998. *Kabit Sawayye* Bhai Gurdas, (ed.) Onkar Singh, Punjab i University, Patiala. 1993. For Sanskrit slok - suraj, Prakash Bhai Santokh Singh, (ed.) Bhai Vir Singh, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar.

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