

Princely Preceptor: Guru Hargobind Sahib

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IN GURMAT PHILOSOPHY, a religious leader could be a model temporal authority (*miri*) who also represents spiritual authority (*Piri*). Guru Hargobind Sahib (1595-1644) girded up two swords, one representing spiritual and the other temporal. After martyrdom of his father Guru Arjun Dev in 1606, prepared himself for training Sikhs in the use of arms. In 1609, assisted by Baba Budha and Bhai Gurdas he started construction of the Akal Takht (Immortal Throne) in front of the Harmandir where congregations were addressed, disputes among the Sikhs settled and wrestling bouts arranged. Physical fitness of Sikhs was considered paramount to meet the need of the time. A fortress of Lohgarh was raised around Amritsar.

Chivalry by example:

The Hymns from Guru Granth Sahib were chanted by *Dhads* to instill the spirit of chivalry. When Jahangir was informed of the new upsurge among the Sikhs, he smelt revolt against his domain and, as a result, imprisoned Guru Hargobind in Gwalior fort. This unwarranted persecution enhanced the respect and esteem of the Guru. Even God fearing Muslims interceded for his release. Sufi Saint Mian Mir played a major role for release of Guruji. But Guru Hargobind declined to come out alone. All the other Hindu chieftains (52 in number), who were captive in the fort, were released with him. By this act, he was called "*Bandi Chhod*" (the deliverer). On his reaching Amritsar, the entire premises of the Harmandir were illuminated to commemorate his reception.

The cruel torture and martyrdom of Guru Arjun Devji impelled the youthful Guru to be prepared to face confrontation with the rulers. He asked Sikhs to offer good horses and weapons. He wore a plume, kept falcons to encourage Sikhs to sports. Hindus had fallen to such a degradation that they were forbidden to wear good clothes, could not use horses for riding, forbidden to tie turbans and could not put on good shoes. All the edicts were used to keep them in perpetual bondage. In order to generate martial spirit amongst the Sikhs, the Guru brought these changes.

But these changes in the House of Guru Nanak made some people skeptical, and they started wondering whether there was a deviation from the original path of Bhagti (spiritualism). At Sri Nagar (Gharwal), Samarth Ram Dass, who later became Guru of Maratha king Shivaji, met Guruji who had just returned from a hunting expedition. He expressed doubt that it did not behove the successor of Guru Nanak to indulge in such activities. The Guru clarified that "*Batan Faqiri, Zahir Amiri,*" weapons are for protection of helpless from ruthless rulers. Ram Dass was impressed and taught the same lesson to Shivaji. Guru Hargobind, after returning from the Kashmir, halted at Gujrat (Pb). where Pir Shah Daula welcomed him, but questioned Guruji thus: (1) *Aurat ki te faqiri ki?* (2) *Puttar ki, te Virag ki?* (3) *Daulat ki te tyag ki?* (4) *Hindu ki te Piri ki?*

Guruji explained: (1) Aurat Iman (2) Puttar Nishan (3) Daulat Guzran (4) Faqir na Hindu na Musalman.

As Dr. Mohd. Iqbal says: "*Jalal-e-Patshahi ho keh jamhoori tamasha ho, juda hoti syasat to reh jati hei changezi.*" *Miri*, if separated from *Dharma*, becomes tyranny. And to get rid of this, *Miri* and *Piri* bestowed by Guru Hargobind is the most effective remedy.

During the Indian struggle for independence, Gandhiji started fast unto death to achieve social equality among lower classes. At this Dr. Iqbal commented that his fast did not break the shackles of hate for Scheduled Castes (*Rishi ke fakon se na toota Brahman ka talism*).

Guru Nanak emphasized that empty rituals to establish *Dharma* without truthful living, are meaningless formalities. Such rituals become instrumental in creating cowards only. The Sixth Master tried to break this passivity by creating the philosophy of '*Miri*' and '*Piri*'. Guru Nanak had enunciated the principle of Truth to stem the onslaught of Babar's might and Guru Hargobind gave it a practical shape.

Sir Jadu Nath Sirkar has opined that '*Amritdhara*' of Guru Nanak was converted to military cantonment. In order that "*Amritdhara*' may flow freely, it was required to break big boulders from its way, which was not possible through *Bhagti* alone, as rulers of the time did not understand the importance of *Bhagti* movement. Thousands of Budh Bhikshoos of Nalanda were killed and many committed suicide by jumping into river instead of facing invader Bhakhtyar Khilji. Guru Hargobind planned to save *Dharma* of Kshatriyas by introducing temporal sword and prepared his Sikhs to uphold righteousness side by side. To compare Guru Hargobind's '*Miri*' with "military cantonments" was as erroneous as to compare jewel with coal.

Steadfast Faith:

Leaders of today, while inaugurating public institutes, break coconuts and start election campaigns from Ayodhya, while rising slogans of secularism. A true follower of *Dharma* can never be a zealot, he is never selfish. His only anchor is truthful living. He remains steadfast in his belief of morality. Such a person can never train guns at Akal Takht, nor does he defile the purity of Harmandir. He does not attack innocent devotees on the occasion of martyrdom day of Guru Arjun. A '*Dharmi*' does not demolish temples or mosques, to achieve ascendancy to rule. He believes in service and prayer (*Sewa* and *Simran*) and, to achieve this object, he never hesitates to suffer all sorts of tribulation. For him this principle is worth dying for, but not worth killing.

Guru Hargobind had to engage in defensive battle with Mukhlis Khan on 15.5.1626 on the eve of marriage of his daughter Bibi Veero. Mukhlis said to Guruji that it did not behove him to fight when he believed in '*Miri*' and '*Piri*'. The Master replied that all this was not to occupy territory but for self-respect. Second battle took place at Sri Hargobind Pur. In this battle Sword of *Miri* broke down but *Piri*'s sword was not unsheathed. He challenged Zafar Beg to engage in hand to hand fight and flung him with such force that the invader died on the spot. Third battle took place at Nathana in Malwa. In this battle as well, the commander was killed. Ungrateful Painsa Khan who was reared in Guru's darbar, attacked Guruji at Kartarpur. After giving him two chances, Guruji wounded him mortally. The Master asked him to

recite '*Kalma*' in his last moment to which he replied that benediction of his benefactor was his '*Kalma*'.

Mohsin Fani, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind wrote in '*Dabistân-e-Mazâhib*' that Hargobind kept smiling in the battle-field. Kale Khan made several attacks in the battle at Kartarpur, but he missed his aim every time, and Guruji killed him in the first attempt, saying:

"*Chuni nami zandan eh ast*" (You do not know how to wield a sword)

The Master had once advised the congregation that he will bestow Guruship to one who could recite Japji correctly and in complete devotion. This was another example of *Piri*. At Agra, where Guru Hargobind was staying, an humble grasscutter came in search of True King. An aide of Jahangir took him to the king to whom he made offering of 2 paisas, but Jahangir guided him to *Saccha Patshah*. He took back his offering and went straight to Guruji. Such was the devotion and affection of the humble man for Guruji.

Vitality:

Guru's heroism that manifested in his character was not a heroism that kills and plunders. Donning two swords, tying plume on his turban and riding on a charger were symbols of defiance of mighty power. He taught that his Sikhs should not suffer to live in passivity and humiliation. Faith was rejuvenated to live with honour.

When Baba Budha, the hoary headed saint, thought his sojourn on earth was coming to an end, he prayed to the Guru for his redemption. The Guru said that "You have already entered the realm of immortals". Babaji said that you are like a sun and I am but a small fire fly." Guruji placed his hand on the forehead of Baba Budha, after which he passed away. Thus, the great mystic who had participated in initiation of Five Gurus received benediction as a great iconoclast in the Sikh history.

Guru Hargobind was the first national military hero of the people of Punjab in six hundred years since the conquest of Punjab by invaders. Two swords symbolized temporal and spiritual power. One was to smite the oppressors and the other to protect the innocents.

Mohin Fani narrates the story of a Hindu, Pratap Mal, whose son was inclined to become a Muslim, thus: "If you want to get full freedom in dieting, you may become a Sikh of the Guru and then eat whatever you like". This was a shining example of Sikh way of life.

History tells us that excesses of royalty compel either the downtrodden to admit defeat or they change direction. It is not easy to stand erect before the despotic regime. People thought that, at tender age of 11 years, the Guru would not trouble the government. But such a thing did not happen. Young Guru Hargobind changed the course of history by converting his Sikhs into Saint Soldiers. Any new movement, new campaign or new decision demands price. Only then such people survive against the current. They have to forsake all comforts of life to pay the price to bring revolution. "*Jeo tou prem khelon ka chao, sir dhar tali gali meri aao.*" It was this movement which changed the direction of North-west Turks, Pathans and Mughal invaders, and ultimately, the movement succeeded. Many movements started solely for protection of *Dharma* disappeared from the soil of their origin. Kabir panthis are

one of them. But movement of *Miri* and *Piri* of Guru Hargobind added luster to the human history.

“*Kuchh log theh jo wakat key sanchey mein dhal gaye, kuchh log theh jo wakat ke sanchey badal diye.*” (Some fade away with time, some change its course)

Guru Hargobind's “*Miri*” and “*Piri*” transformed his Sikhs and raised them to soaring spirit and buoyant mood (*Chardhi kala*) and to live a life of dignity.

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The Peerless Bhai Mardana

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BHAI MARDANA WAS THE CLOSEST associate and the first disciple of Guru Nanak. According to Manohar Das Mehrban, Mardana had been the companion of Guru Nanak since childhood. Both Bhai Mardana and Guru Nanak were born at Talwandi Rai Bhoi Ki, Bhai Mardana in 1459 CE and Guru Nanak in 1469 CE. Mardana's original name was Dana. Mardana was the name conferred on him by Guru Nanak. The name of Dana's father and mother were Bhai Badrew and Bibi Lakho. According to Bhai Kahan Singh, Mardana breathed his last in 1534 CE and Guru Nanak himself performed his last rites.

Badrew and Mardana called every morning at the houses of local residents and obtained alms, generally in kind. Both would sing to the accompaniment of the *rabab*, and, receiving alms, would move next door. According to Professor Satbir Singh:

“Nanak and Mardana first came into contact in 1480 CE at Talwandi, while, once lying under a tree, the sound of someone's playing on the *rabab* reached his (Guru Nanak) ears. He rose, approached the man playing on the *rabab*, and asked his name. He answered, ‘Sir, *Mirassi* (bard) people call me by the name Dana.’

Blessed Music:

Hearing this, Baba appreciated his fine playing on the *rabab* and his excellent understanding of *raags*. Baba asked Mardana to accompany him to play the *rabab* and sing the *sabad* with him, so that he would get the better of both the worlds. To this Dana replied, ‘We hardly make our both ends meet by singing *raags* before the rich. In case we follow you, our families would starve, we shall miss even our prayer (Namaz), and thus, we might stand condemned in both the worlds. How do you plan to liberate me?’

Guru Nanak said, ‘O Dana! You are ignorant. God protects and feeds us all. *Namaz* (prayer) and *roza* (fast) are benedictions bestowed by God. God's abode is the heart of the saints. At the final judgment, none shall come to the rescue.’ Guru Nanak further emphasised, ‘Dana, in case you now turn to be *Mardana* (brave) and play *rabab* along with singing the Word of God (*Sabad*), you will gain in both worlds.’

Dana, now transformed into Mardana set out with Guru Nanak to enlighten the people living in this world. Mardana played on the *rabab* and Guru Nanak sang the

sabad. Often Mardana would accompany the Guru in singing the divine Word. Thus, the *kirtan* originated among Sikhs.²

In the course of time, Guru Nanak left Talwandi, and went to Sultanpur Lodhi, where he has employed in the service of Daulat Khan Lodhi, the governor of Jalandhar Doab. Nanak, after some period of time, sent for Bhai Mardana from Talwandi. He came in response to Guru Nanak's call, and began to reside at Sultanpur with him.

After the divine experience at Sultanpur, the Guru decided to awaken the people to the reality by undertaking long and arduous journeys in the four directions. To begin with, he proceeded to the eastern part of the subcontinent, and also covered places in the south, including Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Wit & Wisdom:

All the time, during these travels, Mardana was with Guru Nanak. *Janamsakhis* are replete with anecdotes portraying the wit and wisdom of Mardana. Barring a few episodes which are either concocted or associated purposely with the fair name of Bhai Mardana, possibly to emphasise that he had the unique power of transforming brass into gold, all other stories touch the deepest chords of human heart, as also the root problems of the world which hamper human progress. Hunger, thirst, family problems, poverty, insecurity, etc., were some of the things, which often tormented Mardana, as much as any other human being, but he did not allow himself to succumb to them, and with sustained effort, reached the stage of identification with the Guru. At the end of the first itinerary, when Mardana reached Talwandi, his wife and children tried to stop him from going again with Nanak, but he did not agree. Now he was awakened. So, he again accompanied Guru Nanak on his journey to west Asia.

Guru Nanak and Mardana sailed for Saudi Arabia along with other *hajjis*. After visiting Mecca and Medina, they reached Baghdad, the capital of the Caliph of Islam. As usual, they stayed outside the town near a graveyard. Nanak's visit to Baghdad is recorded in the *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas:

"Baba went to Baghdad, and put up outside the city. The immortal on the roadside, Nanak began to sing hymns in praise of God, and Mardana played a symphonic strain on his *rabab*. Although people could not understand the language of the hymns, yet the melodious voice and the emotion with which the hymns were being sung, produced a soothing effect on their minds."

Guru Nanak passed the last two decades of his life at Kartarpur. Mardana also came to settle at this place. His wife and two sons, Shahzada and Raizada, also joined him.

In 1534 CE, Mardana fell ill. He grew increasingly weak, and there was little hope of recovery. Visualising the approaching end of Mardana, Guru Nanak asked if his body after death may be let into water like Brahmins, or it may be cremated like Khatris, or it may be thrown to the wind like one of the Parsis, or it may be buried like that of a Muslim. Mardana answered:

"Well, Baba! You are talking of the body. By the grace of your teachings, I have entirely forgotten about it. Now, I regard my soul as the sole guardian of my body."

Again Guru Nanak said:

“Do you wish to be made famous by having a suitable tomb constructed in your memory?”

Mardana replied:

“When my soul has been separated from its bodily tomb why shut it up in a stone sepulchre.”

Baba stepped forward, took Mardana in his embrace and declared:

“Mardana, you have realised the Infinite.”

The following morning, a watch before day-break, Mardana passed away. Mardana was a master *rabab* player. He improved the old form of the instrument by fixing four to six strings to a hollow base so as to produce a deep and mellow resonance.

Mardana probably composed verses also, two *sloks* in the name of Mardana are included in the Adi Granth in *Bihagre ki Var*. In the first *slok*, Bhai Mardana calls the modern age a vessel filled with the wine of sensual desires.

“With egotism acting as the server, the mind uses anger as the cup, fills it with the wine of emotional attachment and drinks it. When one keeps the company of falsehood and greed, the result is total ruin.” [SGGS: 553]

Mardana goes on to say that one should “make the distillery of one’s good deeds, using Truth as molasses and thus make the real Wine.” [SGGS: 553]

In the second *slok*, Mardana compares the body with a vessel of conceit, and the wine with desires of all kinds, acting as our buddies in drinking. He calls the fabled messenger of death, the server of this wine. But he suggests that one should make spiritual wisdom out of the molasses, praise of *Waheguru* the bread, and Fear of God the meat.

Bhai Mardana observes that if the human body is made the vessel and self-realisation the wine, then the nectar of immortality streams forth.

“Only with the men-of-God as company, and Lord’s love as the cup filled with this nectar of immortality can corruption be banished.”

[SGGS:553]

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Khalsa: The Vital Force for Human Race

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THE KHALSA IS A DIVINE INSTITUTION created by the all-powerful Creator for the benefit of all the world. Through its vitalizing, life-affirming discipline and straightforward philosophy, Khalsa is blessed with inspiration and love for one and all. With its boundless love and inspiration, it is able to face up to, and to contend with, the worst adversity and still come out smiling. That is the Khalsa way.

Almost 305 years ago, Khalsa was created by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Those were dangerous times. People’s religious freedoms were trampled on. Hundreds of temples were destroyed by India’s bigoted Mughal emperor. Cruel fanaticism was the order of the day. People were divided by religion and caste.

Then, on Khalsa Day in 1699, the great Master selected five worthy followers out of thousands of his disciples. The Guru gave them an ennobling code of conduct and divine appearance. The Guru's Five Beloveds swore to maintain unshorn hair, naturally long, like the sages of ages past, to renounce the momentary bliss of ordinary intoxicants, and to be ever ready to defend the defenceless, even at the cost of their lives.

Within a few years, the oppressive Mughal power, once the mightiest empire on earth, was toppled to the ground and a fearless Khalsa sat briefly on the Mughal throne. Next came a series of invasions of ruthless tribal plunderers, who came to pillage, kill and steal. Within a hundred years of its creation, Khalsa had rallied forces and stanching the flow of wealth and captives out of India to the slave markets and palaces of the invaders in distant Khorasan.

For a time, (1799-1849) Khalsa ruled a kingdom extending from Tibet in the North to the borders of Afghanistan in what is now Pakistan and India. Generals of Napoleon's Grand Armée, Russians and Americans, Germans and English, served the Khalsa with distinction. There was freedom of worship and justice for all.

Twenty years after the expanding British empire had defeated the Khalsa nation in two closely fought wars, Khalsa was again on the rise as the backbone of the movement to regain India's independence. With boycotts and protests, poetry and martyrs, Khalsa and other patriots forced the British to quit India.

Sikhs have carried the Khalsa legacy with them to countries around the world. As a universal tradition, it knows no boundaries and respects all faiths. The Khalsa turban and free kitchen (*Langar*), the spirit of hospitality and social activism are known from Melbourne to Bangkok, from Sao Paolo to New York, and from Oslo to Nairobi.

Khalsa spirit lives on, as it must, in many forms, new and innovative. Times have changed and the Khalsa has changed along with it. Where once knowing how to ply a sword and shield were essential to a Khalsa, today it is more important to know how to read a newspaper and critically evaluate current events. Our horizons are wider now; our opportunities for action many and diverse. With our Guru at our side, there is much we can do. Great is our calling. Great is the blessing of this life.

Creating the Khalsa Vision:

It is up to each of us now to take the Khalsa vision, the glorious heritage and future promise of Khalsa, and see what we can creatively accomplish. As Khalsa, we simply cannot afford to be irrelevant to the pressing needs of our times. Here is a plan for getting started on a fruitful course of activism:

1. **Identify situations you might imagine Guru Gobind Singh would have an interest in correcting.** Injustice, War, Oppression, Despair – all cry out for someone's caring attention.
2. **Don't be complacent.** Find out what you can do and do it.
3. **Follow current events critically.** Read more than one newspaper. Get contrasting opinions and make up your own mind about the truth of the situation.
4. **Talk with the people you know about issues of right and wrong in the world** – and what can be done locally to change for the better.

5. **Phone, write or visit your elected representatives to let them know your concerns.** Let them know that how they deal with these issues will determine your vote in the next election.
6. **Shop strategically.** Look for labels that indicate goods have not been produced in exploitative situations. Buy “fair trade” coffee. Buy clothes that have not been made in slave-like sweat shop conditions. Boycott companies and countries involved in unjust and exploitative practices.
7. **Contact the media.** Call radio phone-in shows. Write letters to the editors of local papers. Letting the media know how you feel about issues is important, even if they don’t air or print your particular communication.
8. **Organize with friends to take on a particular concern you share, it may be local or international.** Take advantage of the wealth of information we have today. Information is power. Learn from the efforts of others. Join an organization already existing, like Amnesty International. The recent growth of citizen-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to deal with social and environmental problems is one of the most positive political developments of our time. They allow direct participation and keep governments on their toes.

Remember, you were born to contribute to this world. Do your *Nitname* (*Simran* and *Paatth*). Grow your spirit. Wear your Guru’s *Baanaa* (Uniform). Make yourself identifiable as a Khalsa or a Sikh. Do something really good for the world. Show you care, that you are dedicated to the elimination of tyrants and the support of the good, like your Father, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This is the fruitful life, the thrilling, joyful life. This is the life of Khalsa.

Khalsa Akal Purkh kee Fauj, Pargatio Khalsa Parmaatam kee Mauj.
 Khalsa is the commissioned force of the Eternal Being.
 Khalsa came into being at the Lord’s pleasure.

Khalsa mayro dharam ar karam. Khalsa mero bhed nij marm.
 Khalsa mayro sat(i)guroo pooraa. Khalsa mero sajjan sooraa.
 Khalsa is my duty and action.
 Khalsa is my inner secret.
 Khalsa is my True Guru.
 Khalsa is my friend and hero.

Simran, Seva, Baanee, Baanaa.

**Meditation and Service, the Master’s Word and a Masterful Appearance:
 These are the characteristics of Khalsa.**

Vidiaa veechaaree, taa(n) paroupkaaree.

Those who are learned, dedicate themselves to the good of all.

Nanak Naam, charrdee kalaa, terae bhaanae sarbatt daa bhallaa.

In Nanak’s Name, may we be blessed with indomitable spirit.

**Let us acknowledge the goodness of Your Will and apply ourselves
 unsparingly to the good of all.**

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Back to the Future: Need To Revive The Practice Of Sehaj Paath

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GURU GOBIND SINGH HAS ordained: “the Khalsa is my other self; in him I live and have my being”. In other words, the Guru is essentially a Sikh and the Sikh who practices the Guru’s word is potentially one with the Guru. The Sikh congregation has immense sanctity owing to the conviction that the spirit of the Guru lives and moves among them. The *Sadh-Sangat* instituted by Guru Nanak Dev Ji was, in due course, given the status of Guru Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. This congregation or the *Panth* has been regarded as an embodiment of the Guru. Hence, what a wonderful philosophy Sikhism has – *Guru Panth* in the presence of Guru Granth is our Guru. That is why the five *pyaras* (beloved ones) in the presence of Guru Granth are empowered to baptize the Sikhs into the Khalsa fold. Presence, of course, here means not only physical presence but also the spirit and actions of these mortals must be as ordained in *gurbani*.

Sava Lakh: Presence of Guru with the *Panth* is of great significance. Principal Teja Singh has beautifully stated that a single Sikh, a mere believer, is only one; but the equation changes when he takes Guru Gobind Singh into his embrace. He becomes equal to ‘one lakh and a quarter’, in the Sikh parlance. This change occurs not only in his physical fitness, but also in his mental and spiritual outlook. His nature is so reinforced in every way that although hundreds may fall round him, he will resist to the last and never give way. Wherever he stands, he will stand as ‘a garrison of the Lord of Hosts’, a host in himself – a host of one lakh and a quarter.

But, at present, it has become a cause of grave alarm that *Guru Panth* is drifting away from *Guru Granth*. What to talk of teachings or spirit of the Guru, the *Panth* today is not able to recite the *gurbani* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Earlier, a child whenever, he/she is mature enough to read *gurbani* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he/she was initiated into a ceremony, sometimes also known as *gurcharni lagna*. But today not only our children or youth, but also even the elders do not recite *gurbani* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Not many people do their *Sehaj Paath* regularly. Earlier, going to gurdwaras meant that one will bow before the Guru, read out the *hukamnama* and will read out a few pages as per his/her personal *Sehaj Paath*. But now, going to gurdwaras just means bowing before Sri Guru Granth Sahib and coming back. Guru Ji ordained us to recite *bani* (*paath karna*) but we have started hiring persons on payment to recite *bani* (*paath karana*). *Paath karna* and *paath karana* i.e. this extra *karna* has led the *Guru Panth* astray from *Guru Granth*.

Communion: Now that we are celebrating the 400th year of the first installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, there is an imperative need to revive this age-old convention of Sikh community, that all of us must start our own individual *Sehaj Paath*. Along with daily *Nitnem* of five *banies*, recitation of a few pages from Sri Guru Granth Sahib or *sanchies* should also be emphasized. This is not a new movement. The Panthic Sikh Rehat Maryada also states as under:

- Every Sikh, man, woman, boy or girl, should learn Gurmukhi to be able to read Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

- It is desirable that every Sikh should carry on a continuous reading of the Guru Granth and complete a full reading in one or two months or over a longer period. (Chapter VII, Article VIII)

It is really astonishing that despite such clear instruction in the Maryada why this fundamental practice has been forgotten by the community. Once a Gursikh asked another, "Have you ever had a *darshan* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib?"

"What do you mean? I daily go to Gurdwara", was the immediate reply. The Gursikh asked again, "But my question is have you ever had a *darshan* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib?"

"I recite five *bani*s daily, sometimes I also take *Hukumnama* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib", he answered confidently. But the Gursikh repeated his question more firmly. The bewildered man gave up and said, "I am not able to get the import of your words".

The Gursikh said, "Have ever recited the *bani* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib right from the beginning to the end. True *darshan* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not only bowing daily or listening to *Hukumnama* only. Each one of us must recite a few pages from the holy *bani* daily and complete our *Sehaj Paath* in a few months. This is the real *darshan* of the Guru".

How many of us have had this wonderful *darshan* till date? Blessed are those who keep on doing their *Sehaj Paath* regularly one after the other. To begin with, each one of us must dedicate one *sehaj paath* to commemorate the 400th year of first installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Motivation: To my mind, *Sehaj Paath* is the cure-all for all our ills. One who is regularly doing *Sehaj Paath*, will not fall to apostasy and will be saved from drugs as well. Such a person shall not fall in the trap of so called 'saints' and 'deras' which have mushroomed all over the state. Anyone reciting *Sehaj Paath* will not only listen to a lecture from the Guru on different aspects of life, rather the *gurbani* is so cosmic that many a time we also get the answer to our doubts/problems; the Guru shows the way to come out of miseries. Sometimes, it is felt that the particular *shabad* being read has been written for me only. It absolutely suits my state of mind.

However, there are few misunderstandings about *Sehaj Paath* in our society. Let us clear them one by one:

Sehaj Paath from different 'birs'? *Sehaj Paath* can be completed from any 'bir' of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, different 'birs', even from different 'sanchies'(two parts), 'Shabdaraths'(four parts), 'darpan'(ten parts). *Gurbani* is same everywhere. The only question is that one should recite with understanding.

Time for *Sehaj Paath*: One can do *Sehaj Paath* at any time, once, twice, thrice or even more times a day. Keep on noting the progress in a notebook. One can recite a line twice or more. Again the imperative need is to understand what the Guru Ji is saying.

Status of 'sanchies', 'shabdaraths': 'Sanchies', 'shabdaraths' are published to make the *Sehaj Paath* easier. Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandak Committee (SGPC), and Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) have published these

pothies. There is no harm in putting bookmarks or reference marks in these. However, one need not take *Hukumnama* from *pothies* as the status of the Guru is given only to the *bir* in one binding in Gurmukhi script.

But reverence for *pothies* must be maintained. These should be covered in *roomalas* and placed at respectable places in the home just like '*gutkas*'. It is better to use wooden rahels which open like X and hold the *pothi* in the upper part. One can sit easily on bed, or on floor, for recitation of the *Sehaj Paath*.

Here are some initiatives undertaken to rejuvenate the practice of *Sehaj Paath*. An appeal was issued in this regard by the author Dr Brij Pal Singh, Retired Professor of Economics, LBS Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, and Editor-in-Chief "Akal Journal of Spirituality", Patiala, Punjab. This was circulated through email all over the globe. The response was positive. S. Gurmit Singh from Australia replied, "I and my wife have started doing *Sehaj Paath*". Mandeep Singh from USA wrote, "I will definitely start working on my *Sehaj Paath* soon". I.J. Singh, New York stated, "Thank you very much for your message and a thoughtful agenda for this important occasion. I will certainly do what I can to fulfill it and to promote it." Many gurudwara managements in Australia have passed a resolution appealing to the sangat to start their *Sehaj Paaths*.

Pledge & Promise: In order to bring youth closer to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Ludhiana, has initiated a *Sehaj Paath* Competition. Some of the rules are: Students from class III to post graduation (age not more than 25 years) belonging to any religion, caste, colour or creed can participate. All will have to recite a few pages from Sri Guru Granth Sahib daily and complete the *Sehaj Paath* before September 1, 2004. *Paath* can be done on Sri Guru Granth Sahib *bir* or *sanchies*, *shabdarth*, etc. All participants will note down a few lines, that appeal to them, or they understand and like to read again and again, in a separate notebook. Each participant will fill up an admission form, and he/she will be given *Sehaj Paath Diary* to note down the daily progress of the *paath*. It contains tables to record date, page number and the hint of the next line to start *paath* next time. Participants will inform once in a month about their progress, on phone no. 98146-12004, or to their respective zones.

After the completion of *Sehaj Paath* they will submit their diaries to Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle. These participants will be called for a demonstration in which they shall recite *hukamnama* or a few *shabads* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. All participants will get attractive participation prizes, and winners will be awarded special prizes. Any one can order for the *Sehaj paath* Diary from Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle, Model Town Extension, Ludhiana-141002. It is encouraging to note the organization has already enrolled more than three thousand students who have started recitation of *sehaj paath* daily.

Many slogans are being used to promote this message through banners, handbills, danglers, wall writings, etc. Some of these are quoted here:

- Our body is also Harimandir. Have the *parkash* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in our hearts.
- Make *Sehaj Paath* a habit.
- "Rasmi" paath or "Rasmayee" *paath*? Choice is yours. Do *paath* yourself.

- Let us also do *Nitnem of Sehaj Paath*.
- *Akhand Paath/ Sehaj Paath*: Let us do ourselves.
- Daily recite and contemplate: *Sehaj Paath*.
- *Paath karna or karana? Choice is yours*.



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