

Nature as a source of education in Gurbani

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In the order of creation, Sikhism places God first. The Absolute True One created Himself. The second thing He created was Nature in which He installed Himself to view the play of creation. In the unlimited vernal expanse of nature, He is unfolding His beauties and making them bloom eternally. In Gurbani, vernal God and His vernal manifestations of the world have been praised thus:

"Verily, O Nanak, the Perfect is making His beauties
blossom in the form of His creation enjoying them"¹

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"Thou art the Tree, thou that Branches,
Thou art the Blossoms, too.
Thou art the subtle, Thou the Apparent
Thou the Ocean, the Form and the Bubble
Without tree, I see not an other, O dear"²

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"verily God Himself is eternal spring,
and all His manifestation is His Garden"³

In Gurbani nature has been called 'Qudrat,' Abode, Shrine, Temple, Home, Play, Workshop, Playground, Garden and divine manifestation of God. Nature is regarded as 'sacred school of education' and field of creative action. It is the wonderful book of His revelations. God speaks to man through nature. He, the Formless, One has His abode in nature:

"He who has created the world in which
He abides immanent
That Lord may be recognized through nature

Seated in nature, God watches with delight
What He has created⁴

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"In nature we see the Lord
In Nature we hear His speech
Nature inspires devotional reveries
In nature is the essence of joy and peace"⁵

The Gurus are great lovers and devotees of nature. They call it as *Sargun* or manifest God. They feel God's presence and association in it, and receive His inspiration and loving spiritual touch from it. They regard it as their spiritual mother and spend most of their time in its edifying comradeship.

Guru Nanak has painted the beauties of nature with the consummate skill of an artist in *Japji*, *Asa-di-var*, *Onkar* and *Sidhgoshti*. This beautiful song from '*Arti*' stands in good comparison with mystic poetry of modern times:

"In the disc of the sky
The sun and moon shine as lamps,
The galaxy of stars twinkle like pearls,
All zephyr is incense the winds are fanning
All the woods are bright with flowers,
Oh, saviour of the world,
Thine *arati* (adoration) is wonderful indeed!"⁶

Nature influences our body, mind and soul. Nature moulds our personality. In natural environment communion between God and man takes place easily. It inspires devotional reveries in man. That is why the mystic poets sing the influence of changing seasons on the longing soul eager to meet the Lord. Maha Devi Verma, the modern mystic Hindi poetess has beautifully described how communion between God and Soul takes place in the lap of nature. The Gurus have also described the beauty of the twelve months and its effect on the longing soul:

"Lowering clouds have ever spread the heavens

it raineth pleasantly and love comforteth
my soul and body."⁷

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"In Assu and Kartik, the cool season,
I thirst for God and make preparations to meet Him"⁸

Our ancient rishis were fully conscious of the great powers of nature, that is why they worshipped natural powers in the form of gods and goddesses. According to Guru Gobind Singh nature is the very manifestation of God and the special powers of nature are called gods and goddesses.⁹ Guru Nanak has also emphasized the worship of these natural gods in *Japji* :

"Air is the Guru, Water is the father,
Great earth is the mother and
Days and nights are nurses male and female;
Surely all the children of the world are,
Playing the sport of life under their supervision."¹⁰

The Gurus regard nature as sacred school of education and field of creative action. Guru Nanak has given a exquisite description of this educational power of nature in the four stanzas, 16, 17, 18, 19 of *Japji*. In the 16th stanza, Guru Nanak says that the nature is unlimited in its expanse. Its power of sustenance is Dharma of God. It consists of limitless energies and beauties. In the next stanza he says that all power of meditation, love, worship, austerity, divine wisdom, charity, sacrifice are being inspired by nature and they are leading human being towards God realization.¹¹

In the 18th stanza, Guru Nanak says that all negative forces of folly, ignorance, theft, unlawful livelihood, cruel government, slaughter, sin, crime, are fall outs of creation of God's nature and they are necessary for the evaluation of opposites in the world. In the next stanza, he says that there are elements of education in nature and they are responsible for the enlightenment of life. From the Immanent Indwelling spirit in nature have emerged books of wisdom, history, science and divine knowledge. It is through the grasp of these educational elements in nature that we get the following advantages:

"That we evolve name and its praise in life,
That we get hold of wisdom, music and art of life,

That we use the language of writing and speaking,
And that we express our pre-ordained destiny
Of life in noble deeds"¹²

At the end of each stanza, the Guru says that God's nature is wonderful in its wisdom and enlightenment. It is expression of God's will and name. Formless God resides in it. So nature must be appreciated continuously to make the individual and collective life happy and blissful.

But the most wonderful song of Guru Nanak about nature is given in *Asa-di-Var*. In this song, three most important features are worthy of notice. First, the nature is the very life and self of God and, second, that it is all life (*sara akar*) all love (*sarb piar*) and all wisdom (*sarb vichar*).

"Through nature we see, through nature we hear,
From nature comes fear and from nature true happiness
The Vedas, the Puranas, the western scriptures,
And all thinking is the gift of nature
From nature evolve the ideas of good and bad,
And from nature the ideas of honour and dishonour."¹³



References

1. M I, Japji, SGGS: 6
2. M V, Rag Majh, SGGS:102
3. M III, Rag Basant, SGGS:1177
4. M I, Rag Vadhans, SGGS: 581
5. M I, Asa-di-Var, SGGS: 464
6. M I, Rag Dhanasari, Arti, SGGS: 13
7. M I, Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. I, P. 139
8. M I, Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. III, P. 409.

9. Guru Gobind Singh, Chandi-di-Var, Dasam Granth P. 440.
10. M I, Japji, SGGS: 8
11. M I, Japji, SGGS: 4
12. M I, Japji, SGGS: 4
13. M I, Asa-di-Var, SGGS:464.