

# Communication - The Spice to Relationships

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COMMUNICATION IS THE LIFELINE OF a relationship – whether it is between husband-wife, father-son, mother-daughter, mother-in-law-daughter-in-law, between two friends, between teacher-student, or even between two lovers. As water is to a plant, so is communication to a relationship! Without communication any relationship shall stagnate and stagnancy in anything, for that matter, breeds regression, discomfort, uneasiness, boredom and - death.

If regular communication exists between two persons, irrespective of the sexes, the relationship shall grow and mature beautifully, but one has to be extra watchful that the communication is frank, sincere, honest and arising from the depths of one's heart – to be precise, the communication has to be goaded by one's innermost feelings. Whatever arises from the heart's innermost recesses is always throbbing, alive and full of excitement.

The communications we exercise in our relationships, whether at work, play or at home gives a significant meaning to our mundane affairs with a sense of belonging, caring and contentment, increasing with each and every passing day. This ultimately leads to feelings of mutual respect, love and compassion.

On the contrary, if one enters into a relationship steered by the sole motive of gaining something, or exploiting the other person, one relates to, for personal gains, then the true nature of that relationship shall one day be exposed. With the passage of time, motive based relationships go sour, and unpleasantness develops with pangs of irritability and shying away from each other.

A relationship I would like to raise is between Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana. Several history books on Sikhism have mentioned Bhai Mardana as the companion of Guru Nanak on their divine sojourns to all the four corners of India as well as to the neighboring Asian territories. Their companionship is the perfect example of a true relationship which carried on till the last breath of Bhai Mardana who passed away in the fourth *udasi* of Guru Nanak, in distant Afghanistan, on the banks of the River Khuram, in 1420 A.D. With the passing away of Bhai Mardana, Guru Nanak's travels thus came to an end, and he settled at Kartarpur in 1421 A.D. Total trust, devotion and love which Bhai Mardana had for Guru Nanak, coupled with communication, must have been the edifice upon which their relationship existed stoically. Isn't it a known fact that for any relationship to blossom, trust, devotion, love and communication are the four pillars upon which it is based? Without these supports the relationship breaks down like sand castles which crumble by the unfurling waves!

If any example of a *Guru-Chela* relationship has to be cited, then what better illustration than that of Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana! Yes, Bhai Mardana was the first *chela* or disciple, learner, or Sikh of Guru Nanak. With total trust, total devotion and total loyalty ignited by true love did Bhai Mardana serve Guru Nanak – Sikh history speaks thus! Whatever compositions Guru Nanak uttered to the tunes of Bhai Mardana's *rebab* fell first and foremost upon Bhai Mardana's ears. Had Bhai Mardana survived Guru Nanak, maybe history could have taken a different course.

Yet we Sikhs have totally obliterated the existence of Bhai Mardana – how short-sighted and selfish can we be – is it because he was a Muslim? For three centuries we have been celebrating *Gurpurabs* with much gusto and enthusiasm, but never a thought has arisen in us to pay a tribute to Bhai Mardana. By celebrating one day in his memory in the recently launched Nanakshahi Calendar would have been the most appropriate to start with!

Sikhs today have the **great privilege of the Word or Baani or Shabad** as the embodiment of an eternal Guru. A Guru is a Guru because of the immense capability of showing the seekers the True Path of spirituality due to the knowledge, or *gyan*, existing or attained by the said Guru which is communicated or transmitted to them through the language commonly understood by them. The Holy Granth contains the spiritual messages of divine revelations actually experienced by not only Guru Nanak but also by 35 spiritually attained personalities from different cultures, sects and religious backgrounds of India for the sole cause that each (and all) of them spoke of the Truth, the Truth and nothing but the Truth! **Sikhs bow (or do *matha tekna*) to the Holy Granth not as an idol of worship but out of respect to the Truth or *satya* eternally written and preserved for generations to come, whether Sikhs or non-Sikhs!**

Daily **communication** with our *Shabad Guru* is essential to nurture into a meaningful relationship – that of *Guru* and *chela*. By just adorning a corner of our homes with the Holy Granth and covering it with silken, richly embroidered *roomalas* or scarves and doing a routine *matha tekna* in front of it daily in the morning before stepping out of our homes, or daily visiting the local Gurdwara for this purpose shall demote the Holy Granth into the status of an idol – the very edifice of Hinduism which Guru Nanak repudiated so strikingly in several of his compositions in the Holy Guru Granth.

To become a *chela*, and to walk the spiritual path, a Sikh by birth shall have to enter into an intimate relationship with the *Shabad Guru*. Without this intimacy, a Sikh can never be called a Sikh! In simple parlance, a Sikh is one who has a direct intimate relationship with the *Shabad Guru*, eliminating the need of the Sikh clergy to undertake such tasks which are our own prerogative. But we have unfortunately, developed the illusory short-cut route banking upon the power of the currency. Uncover the *roomalas* graciously, open the Holy Granth respectfully, and immerse into its divine writings - just like a diver delves into the depths of the ocean floor and discovers many multifaceted treasures of underwater aqua nature – on a regular daily basis, and unearth the *khazana*, or treasure, of living experienced by 35 Enlightened Ones, to guide us on the uncertain journey of life on earth and transform our lives into a happier and blissful one. The only pre-condition is that we shall have to actually walk the path as recorded in the *Granth*, actually experiencing the realities of life, or else our attempts shall only remain as lip-service and the heart-to-heart communion shall not take place. The year 2004 is coinciding with the 400 years completion of the installation of Guru Granth Sahib at Harmandir Sahib. Sikhs all over the world are on the threshold of celebrating this occasion with much gusto and fervor. What exactly are we going to celebrate? Celebration comes only after intimacy has developed! Have we developed the intimacy with our Guru?

One can walk the path - provided one communicates with the Guru! One can communicate with the Guru provided what is written in the Holy Granth is understood

and received by us receptively! One can understand what the Guru says provided we do ***Shabad vichaar***. We can do *shabad vichaar* provided we are sincerely willing to sit alone (besides being in *sangat* or congregation) with our Guru to contemplate on our lifestyle with what our Guru says and measuring or self-analyzing our states with the 1430 page yardsticks the Guru Granth contains. **A note of caution** – understanding is essential to a certain limit so as not to become *pundits* or scholars but to get the realization that such an understanding is only a pre-requisite for the sole motive of realizing the truth which is hidden in each and every one of us as an unsprouted seed and as spoke Guru Arjun Dev, “*Gobind Milan ki eh teri bariya...*” Each and every human being has the dormant potentiality of this *Gobind Milan*, provided one’s futile outwardly search ends, as in the case of *teeraths* or pilgrimages to holy places; and the inwardly search commences onto the innermost feelings spurred by the on-going non-stop thought processes which does not require any repression or duel but simply to be observed passively and *sehaj subhai* or naturally on its own to let it subside – based on the theory that whatever rises has to subside. Nothing can hold on for long if we do not lend support to it.

Change is the mantra of life. Daily changes take place whether it be in climatic conditions, nature’s growth or even in the living styles of humans. There is nothing wrong in adapting oneself to such changes as the evolving environment demands from us which is in fact progressiveness. Sikhs are ever supposed to be in *Charhdi Kala* – being always progressive and ever optimistic with a view to living life’s every beautiful but uncertain moment which God bestows upon us in full awareness, consciously and in totality.

**Are we willing to change our attitudes from treating, ritualistically as an idol, our *roomala*-covered Sri Guru Granth Sahib into developing an intimate relationship, that of *Guru-chela*, with our *Shabad Guru*?** □