

# The Five *Khands* in Japji

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Sardar Baldev Singh (USA) in his article 'Five *Khands* in Japji', [*The Sikh Review*, August, 2006] avers: "The *five khands* represent five different aspects of God-consciousness (Cosmic-consciousness), not five different stages of spiritual development, in an ascending order as described in earlier interpretations. Similarly,, '*Panch*' in *Dharam Khand* means five categories of people divided by the (Hindu) caste system..... And 'jor' (ਜੋਰ) in *Karam Khand* means union/bringing together, not power." In addition, the author also maintains that *Saram Khand* is the realm of Endeavour/Transformation into a Gurmukh. An humble attempt is made in this article to discuss the views of the learned author.

**God Consciousness:** The ultimate divine aim of human life, according to Guru Nanak, is to become a *Sachiara* (stanza 1 of Japji) – God filled, God inspired, God incarnate with all the godly qualities, like truthfulness, compassion, contentment and nobility. The question whether the Five *Khands* are five different aspects of God consciousness (Cosmos consciousness), or five different stages of spiritual development, has to be viewed mainly in the light of the divine purpose of human life. To become a *Sachiara* is, firstly, a matter of God's grace and, secondly, by going through the discipline of spiritual life by dwelling on the Name of God. Guru Nanak in his stanza XXXVI, which significantly is one stanza ahead of the Five *Khands*' description, has said that a devotee has to ascend the ladder step by step in the path that leads to the mansion of the Master: "ਏਤੁ ਰਾਹਿ ਪਤਿ ਪਵੜੀਆ ਚੜੀਐ ਹੋਇ ਇਕੀਸ ॥"

These are the steps for the spiritual development of the subconscious mind, along with the other faculties, like intellect and intelligence. This is the flight - an evolutionary ascent where the Immanent God is seen everywhere and felt in everything. The attainment of Reality is a progressive process of mounting a spiritual mode of living that is attained through His grace. The steps in the ladder are the Five *Khands*.

The *Khands* (parts) are not independent or distinct realms but are telescoped into each other and overlapping. To stress this dependence, Guru Nanak makes mention of *Dharam Khand* while describing *Gyan Khand* (stanza XXXV) and again does the same in mentioning *Gyan Khand* in *Saram Khand* (stanza XXXVI). *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand* are dealt within one stanza only (XXXVII).

The domain of all the five *Khands* extends from the temporal to the spiritual world. The whole *Dharam Khand*, and part of *Gyan Khand* which deals with visible objects, like land, water, days and nights, seers like Krishna, Sidhas, Buddha, falls in the temporal world. *Gyan Khand*'s part, which mentions Brahmas, Indras and gods absorbed in high consciousness, i.e. the awakened souls and the other three *Khands*, falls in the sphere of the spiritual world. Had the *Khands* been aspects of Cosmic consciousness, all of them would have fallen in the spiritual world.

**From the above, it is clear that the Five *Khands* are different stages of spiritual development in an ascending order.**

**Saram Khand:** *Saram* as a Persian word means endeavour, effort modestly. In stanza XVIII, Guru Nanak has made use of this Persian version when he asks a Yogi to make effort as his begging bowl – "ਸਰਮੁ ਪਤੁ ਝੋਲੀ" In Sanskrit this word (Sharman) means beauty. In stanza XXXIV describing *Saram Khand*, Guru Nanak makes it abundantly clear that the realm of *Saram Khand* expresses itself in beauty (of spirit). There the moulding of human faculties is extremely beautiful. There consciousness, intellect, mind and intelligence is

moulded. There is also fashioned consciousness of gods and sidhas.

ਸਰਮ ਖੰਡ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਰੂਪੁ ॥ ਤਿਥੈ ਘਾੜਤਿ ਘੜੀਐ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਅਨੂਪੁ ॥

In the above verse, stress is on beauty - extreme beauty and moulding of human faculties, which is a spiritual and enlightening process. Entry to *Saram Khand* which falls within the domain of spiritual world is restricted to recognized saints, or *Panches*, who have found an honourable place – “ਤਿਥੈ ਸੋਹਨਿ ਪੰਚ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥” and have expressed bliss springing from unstruck musical instruments and unlimited joy – “ਤਿਥੈ ਨਾਦ ਬਿਨੋਦ ਕੋਡ ਅਨੰਦੁ ॥” Human effort of the blessed *Panches* in the state of Grace ceases in the realms of *Dharam* and *Gyan Khands* as they enter *Saram Khand* for further spiritual development or moulding into beautiful beings. *Saram Khand* is essentially a realm of spiritual Beauty and Enlightenment.

**Panch:** The definition of a Panch is described in stanzas XVI and XXXIV of the Japji as under:- The *Panches* (saints) are approved by the Lord and accepted by the people as their leaders. They are honoured in the Lord’s court. And they look worthy in the court of the rulers. Their mind is fixed on one God (i.e. they seek guidance from Him). “The *Panches* are respected and honoured in His Court and they receive the marks of His graciousness and recognition. The *Panches* have reached this state of spiritual height “By hearing and meditating on His Name and loving Him with all their hearts” – “ਸੁਣਿਆ ਮੇਨਿਆ ਮਨਿ ਕੀਤਾ ਭਾਉ ॥” They serve the people as true guides because God, the Supreme Guide, is seated within their souls. Bringing in “the equality and oneness of the people”, under the Hindu caste system, into the spiritual field is out of context. Further, there are four castes, and not five, as mentioned in the article. Gurbani makes it clear:

ਖੜੀ ਬਾਹਮਣ ਸੂਦ ਵੈਸ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਹੁ ਵਰਨਾ ਕਉ ਸਾਝਾ ॥

(SGGS Page 747)

**Jor:** ‘*Jor*’ is a Persian word (*zor*) which means power, strength, force, might. ‘*Jor*’ as a Punjabi word is sometimes used in *Gurbani* in place of word ‘*Jorh*’ (ਜੋੜ) which means union, joint, junction, connection. ‘*Jor*’ has been used three times in Japji in stanzas XVIII – narrating innumerable ignorant and wicked persons like despots who rule by force - “ਅਸਿਖ ਅਮਰ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਹਿ ਜੋਰ ॥” XXXIII - portraying powerless human beings who cannot achieve anything by force like salvation – “ਜੋਰੁ ਨ ਜੁਗਤੀ ਛੁਟੈ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥” and XXXVI of *Karam Khand* where it has been used in the sense of power, strength and force. The translation of its first four verses reads:

”The realm of Grace is distinguished by might:

There dwell powerful beings, of God’s delight.

They are heroes, imbued with God’s pure burning flame;

They bathe in His light, and they dwell in his name.”

[Translation by Swami Rama]

*Karam Khand* is characterised by power and it is a domain of mighty warriors and heroes who draw their spiritual power from the Lord of all Power. This word thus applies to power, and not to Union/Bringing together. In the encyclopaedia “*Mahan Kosh*” (Page 537) Bhai Kahn Singh in three separate entries has stated that ‘*Jor*’ also means power. Bhai Vir Singh, eminent saint scholar and Prof. Sahib Singh, amongs many others, have translated this word of *Karam Khand* as power.

**Conclusion:** To become a ‘*Sachiaara*’, i.e. God Incarnate, is an evolutionary ascent that is gradually mounted by going through a series of spiritual modes of life. These modes of life are known as the Five *Khands*. These *Khands* are fully integrated and are not different aspects of God consciousness. Entry into the domain of the *Khands* is a matter of God’s

grace and mercy. *Saram Khand* is essentially a realm of spiritual Beauty/Enlightenment. The import of terms used in Gurbani is connected with the theme and context of the message that the Gurus convey to humanity. The word '*Panch*' and '*Jor*' used in the *Khands* pertain to spiritual human beings, i.e. the saints/ *Panches*, and to spiritual power that is suffused in the heroes and saints of God's Pleasure.

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