

The Concept of Philanthropy in Gurbani

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IN GURBANI SERVICE MEANS volunteer work done humbly without the desire of some reward or appreciation in this or the next world. It is not always planned in advance. Sometimes opportunity to serve comes suddenly. For example, while going for a walk one finds a victim of an accident. Some persons ignore him and continue their walk. But a God fearing person, who has welfare of all in mind and is inclined to serve, will help the victim as far as he can without the desire of receiving anything in return and without telling others to get credit. Desire to serve is natural and motivation for service is a gift of God.

Service can be done in many ways like providing relief where needed, conducting community service, educating the poor, feeding the homeless etc. But it should be kept in mind that only those unable to work should be helped and those professional beggars should be ignored. Guru Amar Das says that a holy renouncer does not feed himself on other's alms and assumes different religious garbs to fill his body:

ਅਭਿਆਗਤ ਏਹਿ ਨ ਆਖੀਅਨਿ ਜਿ ਪਰ ਘਰਿ ਤੋਜਨੁ ਕਰੇਨਿ।।
ਉਦਰੈ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਆਪਣੇ ਬਹਲੇ ਭੇਖਿ ਕਰੇਨਿ।।

[SGGS: 949]

Guru Nanak says, "Don't touch the feet of such a man who calls himself a guru and a spiritual guide, but goes begging."

ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਸਦਾਏ ਮੰਗਣ ਜਾਇ।।ਤਾ ਕੈ ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਲਗੀਐ ਪਾਇ।।

[SGGS: 1245]

However, every kind of service has one or more of these three components: body, mind and money. In our daily talk we say-*Taan, Maan an Dhann*. Guru Arjun Dev has said: We should serve in many ways. Dedicate your soul, breath and your wealth.

ਅਨਿਕ ਭਾਂਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰੀਐ।।ਜੀਉ ਪ੍ਰਾਨ ਧਨੁ ਆਗੈ ਧਰੀਐ।।

[SGGS: 309]

Service done by body is physical work for performing selfless service. Devotion is service by mind. Natural urge to serve is important in selfless service. Guru Angad Dev says that anything done under pressure brings neither merit nor goodness:

ਬਧਾ ਚਟੀ ਜੋ ਭਰੇ ਨਾ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾ ਉਪਕਾਰੁ।।

[SGGS: 787]

Service requires money or material to help the needy persons. A *Gursikh* is required to set apart ten percent of his income for philanthropy. This is called *Daswandh*. In this age of materialism people do not follow this practice. Only honestly earned resources should be given in charity. Guru Nanak Dev says: If a thief robs a house and offers the stolen goods

to his ancestors, in the next world this is recognized and his ancestors are considered thieves.

ਜੇ ਮੋਹਾਕਾ ਘਰੁ ਮੁਹੈ ਘਰੁ ਮੁਹਿ ਪਿਤਰੀ ਦੇਇ।।
ਅਗੈ ਵਸਤੁ ਸਿਵਾਣੀਐ ਪਿਤਰੀ ਚੋਰ ਕਰੇਇ।।

[SGGS: 472]

Selfless service has many advantages. Guru Nanak says: he who eats what he earns by the sweat of his brow, and then gives something in charity, knows the path to God.

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥਹੁ ਦੇਇ।।ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਹੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ।।

[SGGS: 1245]

Guru Nanak advises us that selfless service takes us nearer to God and says:- If you do selfless service in this world, you will get a seat in the Lord's court.

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ।।ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ।।

[SGGS: 26]

Guru Arjun stresses the importance of selfless service and says that one who serves without desire for any reward attains the Lord.

ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਤ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਹਕਾਮੀ।। ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਹੋਤ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ।।

[SGGS: 286]

Guru Nanak says that no objectives are fulfilled without service. Service is the most excellent action.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਫਲੁ ਕਬਹੁ ਨ ਪਾਵਸਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਾਰੀ।।

[SGGS: 992]

The same point is stressed in the following line which states that all the human beings are created by God and no one obtains any reward without selfless service.

ਜੇਤੇ ਜੀਅ ਤੇਤੇ ਸਭਿ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਿਣੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਫਲੁ ਕਿਸੈ ਨਾਹੀ।।

[SGGS: 354]

Only service done sincerely is beneficial. In the next quotes, Guru Nanak Dev says that only those who practice truth while serving can obtain the fruit of their service and feel happy with the thought of giving.

ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਹਿ ਸੇਈ ਫਲੁ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਜਿਨ੍ਹੀ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਇਆ।।

[SGGS: 472]

ਸਤੀਆ ਮਨਿ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਦੇਣੈ ਕੈ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ।।

[SGGS: 465]

Ego and desire for appreciation or reward have no place in selfless service. One who has welfare of all in mind would not feel proud after performing some service. At some places names of donors are displayed to satisfy their ego. Guru Angad Dev has said that if one eliminates ones self-conceit and then performs service, one will be rewarded.

ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਇ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰੇ ਤਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਪਾਏ ਮਾਨੁ।।

[SGGS: 474]

Guru Ram Das has also said that calculated service is not service at all and what is done is not approved.

ਗਣਤੈ ਸੇਵ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਕੀਤਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਇ।।

[SGGS: 1249]

Guru Amar Das says that those who, love serving others, subdue their ego and perform selfless service, remain dead yet alive.

ਆਪੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨਿ ਜੀਵਤ ਮੁਏ ਰਹੰਨਿ।।

[SGGS: 233]

Guru Arjun says that one who is influenced by praise or blame is not doing selfless service.

ਮਾਨ ਅਭਿਮਾਨ ਮੰਧੇ ਸੋ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

[SGGS: 51]

Guru Arjun also writes that the Great Giver judges him to be a fool who brags about giving charities.

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਹੋਇ ਬਹੈ ਦਾਤਾਰੁ।। ਤਿਸੁ ਦੇਨਹਾਰੁ ਜਾਨੈ ਗਾਵਾਰੁ।।

[SGGS: 282]

Guru Amar Das has also condemned ego and has said that selfless service cannot be performed in egotism and the soul goes unfulfilled.

ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੇਵਾ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਤਾ ਮਨੁ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਾਇ।।

[SGGS: 560]

Gurbani also teaches us that service done with ego is not approved.

ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਸੇਵਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਏ।।

[SGGS: 1071]

Service performed by a proud person is not accepted and he is ruined in misery.

ਸੇਵਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਵਈ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਖਪਿ ਖਪਿ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰੁ।।

[SGGS: 1247]

Guru Teg Bahadur in the following quote condemns such persons and says that actions of those who, make pilgrimages to sacred shrines, observe fast and make donations to charity while still taking pride in their mind, are useless like the elephant that takes a bath and rolls in the dust.

ਤੀਰਥ ਬਰਤ ਅਰੁ ਦਾਨ ਕਰਿ ਮਨ ਮੈ ਧਰੈ ਗੁਮਾਨ।।

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਜਾਤ ਤਿਹ ਜਿਉ ਕੁੰਚਰ ਇਸਨਾਨ।।

[SGGS: 1428]

Some persons boast and slander others while performing service. According to Gurbani, their service is useless and fruitless.

ਪਰ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਨਹੀ ਛੂਟੀ ਨਿਫਲ ਭਈ ਸਭ ਸੇਵਾ ।।

[SGGS: 1253]

Guru Arjun says that some persons perform insignificant service, but expect a lot from God in return.

This is vanity.

