

Japji – The way of Divine

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“JAP” MEANS TO REPEAT, AND *Ji* means soul. The repetition of *Japji* gives you a consistent projection and allows you to access your own infinite source of inspiration and depth. *Japji* is one of the five daily prayers of the Sikhs. It was written by Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, who with his companion, Mardana, traveled on foot over thousand of miles teaching people through song and inspiration to live exalted and simple lives.

Stated very clearly, “Guru Nanak spoke *Japji* as a way to guide and enlighten other human beings about the reality of the Divine within Creation. *Japji* is a teacher for any one seeking truth. The sound current of *Japji* and the meaning of its words, when meditated upon with openness and love, awakens a soul to its density. Step by step, *Japji* gives you the comprehensive power to know yourself as you are and be with God’s Creation in a spirit of joyful surrender.”

In the Sikh scriptures called the *Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, the written words are known as the Shabd Guru. The Sikhs see the Shabd Guru not just as a collection of uplifting, inspiring words written by enlightened saints, but as the living Guru itself. It is taught that those who wrote the words of the *Siri Guru Granth Sahib* transcended individual identity and ego, and their words came from an exalted state of things unlimited. And when people read, sing, chant, or listen to these words, they connect with their excellence. There is no external personality to confront in the process. There is only a relationship with the infinite. The Shabad Guru is a powerful technology universally available to anyone in any walk of life to uplift and transform oneself and others.

The power of *Japji* comes from the combination of its sounds, or *naad*. Sounds have profound effects on the psyche, and when they are arranged in the science of *naad*, they have very specific transformative power. Yogi Bhanan has taught that by reciting different stanzas – or – *pauris* – of *Japji* eleven times a day, one can access very specific effects. Reciting the Mool Mantra, for example, gives an experience of the depth of your soul and can change your destiny to prosperity. Similarly it is said that the total knowledge of God and ecstasy are contained in the first *pauri*. Recitation of this *pauri* eleven times a day will lift you from the deepest depression, insecurity, nightmares, and loss. Meditation on each of the remaining 38 verses offers equally unique, rich, and powerful pathways of healing, self-discovery, and revelation. With the complete recitation of *Japji*, it is said that every problem can be solved and dissolved.

The structure of *Japji* is beautifully technical and precise. There are 40 *pauris*. The word *pauri* means ‘step’, as on a staircase. It is taught that *Japji* starts from God and comes to Earth. There are five elements or *tattvas*, of which all matter is composed – earth, air, fire, water, and ether. Additionally, there are eight *chakras*, including the aura. Mathematically, five times eight equals forty – the number of

pauris in Japji. When you take the first 'step' of reciting the Mool Mantra, this is associated with the eighth *chakra* at the frequency of ether. As you continue to recite Japji, you work progressively through the *chakras* and the *tattvas* until you end at the 40th step with the first *chakra* at the frequency of Earth. In this way, reading the entire Japji completely adjusts "all the elements in all of the *chakras* and your subtle and physical bodies."



The strange story of a Gurdwara

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THE MORNING ALARM, AT 4 O'CLOCK, rang. It was Jasjot's turn today. Commonly known as '*susti*' by the closest around him, he, in his University hostel room, was wrapped in his most lovable '*rajaee*' with all the corners tucked under his body. Still he took less than a second to slap the small button on the head of the clock and made it silent. This happened every Friday morning, the day of Jasjot's turn. But his love and determination towards his duty were unquestionable, given he came out of this dormant stage from his cocoon.

Suddenly there was a knock on his door. It was Prabhpal. He had returned from the campus gurdwara after finding it closed. Jasjot was supposed to open it today and do the *seva* and the *parkash*. It was a gurdwara of its own kind in the whole world. There was no *granthi*, no *ragi*, no *sevadaar*, and yes, no *pradhaan* and no secretary. In fact everyone was the *granthi*, the *ragi*, the *sevadaar*, the *pradhaan* and the secretary.

Indeed this was the small gurdwara in the campus of Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar. The story of its installation is also very interesting and inspiring. It is said that the University, in late 1980's, constructed a "septagon" which was supposed to house the student center. In the center of the building there was a septagonal shaped hall which could be reached by going down few steps. And this hall was surrounded by rooms with glass walls facing the center. A kitchen housed in the north-east of the building. Later the law faculty started holding its classes there.

There was a general disappointment among the students that there was no gurdwara in the University named after Guru Nanak Sahib. And when they saw this small building in the middle of the campus being constructed, the idea of the perfect place for the gurdwara struck their mind. Though it was a perfect building for the gurdwara, at that time of heightened tension in Punjab, making such a demand was not less than a challenge. And as it was expected, the University administration outrageously rejected the students' demand for the establishment of the gurdwara in the campus.

But that era of heightened tension in Punjab also meant excessive determination among the Sikh youth to struggle for their just cause. And this desire of having a gurdwara brought no exception to their determination. In the middle of a night in April 1986 some students took the *saroop* of Guru Granth Sahib and did the *parkash* in the building. This incident was followed by some arrests by the police, but finally the

much awaited dream came true. The *parkash* was done, the *nishan sahib* was erected, the kitchen started running and thus the gurdwara was established inside the Guru Nanak Dev University campus under the spirit of '*Deg Teg Fateh*'!

But this didn't lead to the thawing of relations between pro-gurdwara student activists and the university administration. For ten years there was no official recognition to the gurdwara by the administration. Even the university shied from mentioning this building on its published official maps.

No support from the administration meant students using their own *dasvandh* for running the gurdwara. First they constructed a small podium in the center hall where Guru Granth Sahib was installed. The hall and the rooms were carpeted. The two rooms, one on the left and the other on the right, were reserved for the *sangat*. A library was made in the room behind the podium. In one small room the place for *sukhasan* was made and another small room was reserved for gurdwara's management.

And now, every year on 26th February, the students celebrate the foundation day of the gurdwara on a big scale. All the *seva*, ranging from making *langar* for thousands to doing the *keertan* is managed by the students. On this day professional *ragis*, *dhadis* and *katha-vachaks* also join the celebrations.

This gurdwara has become a source of inspiration for many. And what better place it could be than in the University campus where thousands of students come every year to attain knowledge (*gyan*).

The gurdwara has served as a *gurmat* school where many students have learnt to do *keertan*, *ardaas*, take *vaak*, do *parkash*, perform *sukhasan* and prepare *karah parshaad* from each other. In the absence of a *granthi* the gurdwara takes the credit of being one of the few places of worship where men and women stand shoulder to shoulder in performing any kind of *seva*. It also serves an example of harmony, selflessness and team-work, where the students volunteer to do *seva*, which they take from the senior students and in turn pass, what they have learnt, to the newcomers. Every year new students come to the University, some of them, like Jasjot and Prabhpal, get involved in the *seva*; and thus a holy continuity is maintained.

