

SHRI GURU NANAK DEV'S JAPJI

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

The other books by the author, Dr. G.S. Chauhan are:

1. *Guru Arjan Dev's Sukhmani Sahib*
2. *Bani of Bhagats*
3. *The Gospel of the Sikh Gurus*
4. *Rahras & Kirtan Sohila*
5. *Nitnem*
6. *Sri Guru Nanak Dev—Life, Travels and Teachings*

All these books are being distributed free of cost among the general public by All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.

SHRI GURU NANAK DEV'S JAPJI

DR. G.S. CHAUHAN



Publisher :

Dr. Inderjit Kaur
President

All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.)
Amritsar

**SHRI GURU NANAK DEV'S
JAPJI**

Translation by

Dr. G.S. Chauhan

B-202, Shri Ganesh Apartments
Plot No. 12-B. Sector 7 Dwarka
New Delhi-110075 Tel- 011-25086357

© **Author**

February : 2013

Publisher :

Dr. Inderjit Kaur

President

All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.)
Amritsar

Printed at:

Printwell

146, Industrial Focal Point, Amritsar

MESSAGE OF THE MESSIAH



A messiah is one who relieves pains and sufferings of mankind. But Bhagat Puran Singh was more than that. He not only assuaged the agonies of the sick but also preached the gospel of Sanctity of life in all its forms. He rang the bell of alarm about the degradation of nature at the time while the world was yet oblivious of this aspect. He regarded this lush green planet as a shrine as Guru Nanak sayeth:

ਤਿਸ ਵਿਚ ਧਰਤੀ ਥਾਪ ਰਖੀ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ॥

(Therein, the earth was placed as a shrine)

Bhagat Ji took the denudation of the forests and plundering of the natural resources as acts of great sin and sacrilege.

In my view, the protection of the great shrine is the new religion of today propounded by Bhagat Puran Singh. I as his insignificant disciple, beseech every saner being to break asunder the narrow bonds of race, community or nationality and come to the fold of this New Religion wherein lies the practice of SARBAT KA BHALA (Well-being of all).

Inderjit Kaur (Dr.)

All India Pingalwara Sociery (Regd.)Amritsar



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

58
094713 Fax: 294586
234586
58



All India Pingulwara Charitable Society (Regd.) Amr
A CHARITABLE HOME FOR INSANE, AGED, INCURABLY SICK AND DESTITUDES

FOUNDER:
BHAGAT PURAN SINGH *

HEAD OFFICE : AMRITSAR (PUNJAB) INDIA
"Brethren ! He who serves the sick, verily he serves me."--SUDDHA

Ref. No. 566/a

REVIEW.

Dated.....199

I have received translated 'Japji Sahib' in English with commentary. It is a sparkling piece of Gurbani text so intelligently translated according to the sense of actual words of Gurbani that one can hardly find any lapse in the superb effort.

Dr. G.S. Chohan has carried out a thorough study of the most important prayer of the Sikhism. Main aim has been to present a book on Japji which would help the persons not familiar with Punjabi to understand the philosophy of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

It is a commendable effort and it is hoped that every reader of this book will reap the richest harvest of Guru Nanak's communion with God.

Dr. Inderjit Keur.

Inderjit Keur
India

* The distinguished social servant who, under the auspices of Sikh shrines, served the suffering mankind for 70 long years and remained engaged in spreading awareness against environmental pollution and other ecological dangers.

PREFACE

The story, of how this book came about is very interesting. In 1991, I visited Sri Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) Amritsar, I also called on Bhagat Puran Singh, founder President, Pingalwara Amritsar. As his Prasad (blessings), he gave me some books published by Pingalwara Association. These included a commentary on Japji Sahib by Giani Narain Singh, in Punjabi language. I liked this book so much that, I collected more copies, and distributed it among friends. Since most of my friends are non-Punjabi speaking, I was keen to obtain the English version of this book. I was happy to discover that such a book was available with commentary in English but original text in Punjabi. I collected some copies and gave them to my friends. Mr. T.K. Dutta, a world renowned cancer specialist based in U.S.A. a very evolved soul is running an association of like minded persons interested in spiritual studies. I gave him one copy of this English commentary. He was so pleased, he completed reading the book during journey back to U.S.A. from India, made a summary and circulated to his friends on E-Mail. He is very much interested in Naam Sankirtan, so he was keen to sing Gurbani. But since he could not read Punjabi, he had to wait till his next trip to India and obtain Japji in Devnagri script.

This gave me an idea as to how many people settled in foreign lands would be yearning for spiritual messages of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and his successors. After studying various commentaries on sacred Gurbani, which apart from others, included (1) Santhya (commentary) Sri Guru Granth Sahib by Padam Bhushan Bhai Sahib Dr. Vir Singh (2) Ik Onkar, Satnam (Nanak Bani) by Osho. (3) Panj Granthi commentary by Pandit Narain Singh Ji Gyani of Lahore. (4) Japji translation by Prof. Sahib Singh. (5) Tapes of commentary on Japji by Swami

Swaroopanada of Chinmaya Mission. I had for quite some time been toying with the idea of myself writing a commentary on Japji bringing out a definite scheme in the arrangement of stanzas so as to take the devotee from the stage of a seeker to that of a knower of Truth.

The time of writing this arrived when my wife and I were invited by my son-in-law Mr. Subhash Sircar posted in Hongkong to spend the summer of 1999 with him. His flat at North Point was right over the sea overlooking the Hongkong bay and the hills of the New Territories. The environment was so pleasant and peaceful and the hospitality of my daughter and son-in-law so warm that I could devote all the time to writing and reading. With the grace of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the work of writing commentary with translation in English and the original script in Gurmukhi, Devnagri and Roman proceeded smoothly. Long hours at work were not tiring and the most appropriate words came to my mind when needed. As soon as the book on Japji was complete, I got the inspiration to write a similar book on Sukhmani Sahib, the composition of Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, This was a bigger job, but by Guru's grace this was also accomplished. All this could not have been possible, but for grace of the Guru, encouragement of my family members and support of my learned friends. My gratitude to all of them.

Human beings want to be happy and all of our actions are directed towards this object. In our heart of hearts, we feel there is some want, and we desire to fulfil this want in many ways. Some accumulate wealth, property, beget children, acquire physical, financial, political or spiritual powers. All these efforts, though give some short lived happiness but in the long run, either these create further desires or simply unhappiness when these powers are lost. All the worldly beings are thus engaged in the continuous process of acquisitions, losses, short lived happiness followed by unhappiness through millenniums of successive lives i.e. births, and deaths. Throughout the ages, the divine souls have been engaged in finding and propagating

permanent solution of this problem of unhappiness. They have given definite solutions and guidelines for the benefit of worldly humanity. Japji is one such guideline given by Sri Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru of the Sikhs.

There is uniqueness in the teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and his nine successors. For so long the 'Divine Knowledge' contained in Vedas and other holy books was in Sanskrit language in difficult terminology, it was confined to a very small minority and completely beyond the reach and understanding of the common man. Even Brahmins who were supposed to explain this were mostly ignorant of the Truth. Under these circumstances, Guru Nanak Dev decided to use common spoken language in his teachings so as to benefit the common man. Instead of sitting in an ashram or math, he himself went around the world to spread the 'Good Word.' The teachings of the Gurus is therefore the ancient Vedic Knowledge or 'Brahm Gyan' in simple and clear language and has universal application irrespective of caste, creed, country or time. It is Eternal.

In the beginning, before creation of the universe, God was in His un-manifest aspect with all His powers. When He wanted to create the world and universe, He created 'maya' or His creative power. This maya has veiling and illusive powers i.e. it makes things appear as they are not i.e. the things actually existing, not being seen as if existing. This veiling and illusive power of maya has created all the problems for the human beings. It is because of this illusive and veiling power of maya that human beings get deluded with and are not able to recognize God's existence in His creation. They (the humans) take the world as permanent and their own body as Atma. As a result, they go on being born again and again in different incarnations.

The manifest aspect of God in the creation is part of God's play. God is present in all of His creation in the form of "Atma" which is called "Jiva Atma" and is part and parcel of His Totality or "Parma Atma". The Atma inside the human beings is the

controlling, guiding and illuminating power. When a person dies, it is the body which dies because the Atma has withdrawn its illuminating power. Atma is eternal. The body goes on reincarnation till, it, by Guru's grace, is able to merge in "Parma Atma." That is the end of the journey. All the holy books, "Sages" and "Prophets" are only giving the guidelines for achieving the "journey's end" i.e. meeting of "Jiva Atma" and "Param Atma" after all the "Karma" is exhausted. The Jiva or the human being has to work on this guideline himself and achieve salvation with God's grace.

Progress on the spiritual path is a very interesting phenomenon. One must have adequate aspiration to make a start. Once one makes a start, takes one step, God comes 10 steps towards him. Depending upon the intensity of One's aspiration and sincerity of purpose, guru's grace descends upon him and God may manifest in the human form of a Guru or adopt any other form like guiding from inside the heart to lead him to his destination. Spiritual university is very systematic, once one masters one stage, material for mastering the next stage is automatically made available.

Another opinion is that God's grace comes to us first, that creates aspiration. Then if we use our discrimination and follow upon the spiritual path, our success is assured. Since God is always kind, all merciful and is interested in our achievement of the goal, it can be taken for granted that God's grace is always with us and delay is for our decision and aspiration only.

Spiritual path leads us through many stages. First and the most important is charting the route i.e. adopting the correct procedures. Then comes collecting of correct information about the path i.e. listening or "suniye". This includes reading and understanding of scriptures, association with the saints, repetition of Name and singing of His praise. Simultaneously, the process of our purification will start. For accelerating this, one has to adopt correct speech, correct actions, earn honest livelihood, steer clear of the pitfalls as pointed out by the Guru, and share the earnings with the needy. Slowly, one develops

love for all of God's creation; kindness, love, mercy etc. All divine qualities also follow.

After collection of route charts and other information from holy books, saints and other sources, the actual journey starts. Here the "Sadhna" or spiritual activity becomes more intense. Repetition of Name, meditation and service to humanity increase gradually. This stage is described by Guru Nanak Dev as "manne" or "manna" in Sanskrit which means acceptance or putting into action.

Simultaneously with our own progress, we have to be cautious of the mistakes likely to be made on the path. Guru Nanak Dev has very kindly cautioned against these pitfalls. Maya is an important adversary which has to be won over.

Although all the spiritual paths lead to the same goal i.e. "self realization", but with passage of time, the unimportant details or customs assume more importance than the final goal of the path. These details tend to misguide the followers of the path and lead them astray. Guru Nanak Dev has given numerous such examples relating to all the prevalent religions at that time and has recorded discussions with Yogis and other religious leaders where important issues were sorted out.

The path described by Guru Nanak Dev is not philosophical or shrouded in mystery. It is a practical path, meant for worldly people i.e. householders and is harmonious mixture of Karma Yoga, Raj Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Gyan Yoga i.e. life of action; eight fold path yoga of Patanjali, life of devotion and knowledge respectively. He has finally described in the last stage how one should receive nectar of Divine bliss in this body itself after necessary cleansing and preparations to make it fit to receive such a precious gift.

It will not be out of place to say something about compilation of Japji. There are number of views expressed by various learned scholars. The most acceptable view is that Japji was not composed in one sitting. Guru Nanak Dev went all over the world, in the west to Mecca, in the east to Assam, Tibet,

in the South upto Sri Lanka and in the West to Somnath & Dwarka, etc. He had numerous discussions with the heads of various sects and religions. All these discussions were recorded in his compositions which were carefully preserved by him.

At the end of all these journeys, he settled at Kartarpur on the banks of river Ravi now in Pakistan. Here, he directed his most trusted disciple, Bhai Lehna, who later became his successor, second Guru as Guru Angad Dev, to go through all his compositions and formulate "Jap" i.e. a morning prayer for his disciples. Guru Angad Dev, collected thirty eight stanzas and arranged them in a very interesting order so that the whole composition becomes a poem dealing with one question which is faced by every one in his life i.e. "How to break the wall of false-hood (maya)? And how to achieve Truth?"

Before the first stanza, there is "Mool Mantra" or basic underlying mantra or concept in which Guru Nanak Dev describes God whose praise is sung in whole of "Guru Granth Sahib". This is followed by a sloka which explains, what is Truth? At the end of 38 stanzas, there is another sloka which is the composition of Guru Angad Dev. This sloka gives the gist of Japji.

The name of this composition is "Jap" which means, remembrance, devotion and meditation. This is very appropriate name as this composition deals with an extremely pertinent question in human life "How to break the wall of falsehood", "maya". i.e. how to remove the obstruction of maya which prevents us from finally being absorbed in the Almighty. The answer given by him in the next line of 1st Stanza is "by following the Will of God which has been written for us by him." This in turn is achieved by constant remembrance of His name, devotion and meditation i.e. Jap, ji is added as a mark of respect. Thus, the name Japji or Jap Ji.

The full text deals with different stages in the progress of the adventurer from the first stage when one becomes aware of one's separation from God and after passing through various

stages of purification, remembrance, singing of praise, meditation, realization of His presence in all of His creation and achieve final absorption. In the last sloka, Guru Ji has assured that such a pilgrim on this path not only obtains his own salvation and is accepted by Him with his bright shining face, but also carries many with him to the same goal. This is precisely, the reason that all religions lay so much stress on the association with saints. If one associates with saints, there is every possibility that they will take him across the ocean of maya to merge with God and attain salvation. Three things are essential for any spiritual aspirant; (1) deep aspiration, (2) constant remembrance of His Name and (3) association with saints.

This book is primarily aimed at those devotees of Guru Nanak Dev who are living outside Punjab and are not fully conversant with Punjabi language and script. Those who live in various states in India, might know Devnagri or Hindi script. I have therefore given the original Gurbani text in Gurmukhi, Devnagri and also in Roman. This will serve those devotees also who are living abroad for generations and have lost contact with either Gurmukhi or Devnagri scripts. They can read the original and the translation in English and understand word meanings as well. I am sure this book will fill the need felt by expatriate devotees of Guru Nanak Dev to a great extent. If somebody has a suggestion for improvement in the format or the contents, I shall be extremely grateful to receive such a suggestion.

In Punjabi grammar, the meaning of a word changes with the matras which is very difficult almost impossible to express in English. In Punjabi, there are 35 letters and a dozen matras whereas in Roman script, there are only 26 letters. This difficulty can be sorted out by seeking guidance of another devotee who knows Gurmukhi or Devnagri script for correct pronunciation or by listening to the audio or video tape of Jap Ji. I am also trying to put this book on internet.

I pray that Guru Nanak Dev may bless the reader with deep understanding of the true meanings and significance of Jap Ji

and thus bless with His grace to transform his life into that of a true devotee, who may thus cross the ocean of bondage of maya and seek liberation.

In the end, I am thankful to my youngest daughter Mrs. Meenakshi and eldest son in law WG.CDR. P.J. Singh for their assistance in going through the proofs and suggestions for improvement.

Dhan Dhan Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Dr. Gurmeet Singh Chauhan

*B-202, Shri Ganesh Appartments,
Plot No. 12-B, Sector 7, Dwarka
New Delhi-110075, Tele. 011-25086357*



SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS WHICH MUST BE UNDERSTOOD BEFORE STUDY OF GURBANI

UNIVERSALITY OF GURU'S TEACHINGS

1. The Sikh Gurus, are exalted beings or prophets who have come to this world to save human beings from self destructive activities and lead them to liberation or 'Moksha' or 'Mukti'. They have an universal approach. Their teachings are for all ages i.e. past, present and future. The logic is simple. Since the Creator is eternal and of the whole universe, teachings about Him i.e. 'Braham Gyan" or "Divine knowledge" have naturally to be universal and eternal. This is the most important aspect which must be borne in mind by devotees.

Unfortunately, like the human tendency to adulterate all sorts of things with a view to achieve selfish benefits, almost in all schools of thought and religious beliefs, some interested parties for personal, political or so called patriotic reasons have tried to patronize the exalted beings, and thus impose limits on their universal status. For correct appreciation of Guru's teaching, one must rise above any such attempts.

2. In Sukhmani and Jap Ji, Gurus have not taught any particular religion or belief. They have stressed on universal values. Gurus have taught a seeker of spirituality to follow his own belief but follow the same in correct perspective. In "Sukhmani", Guru Arjan Dev has addressed these (i) who are very particular about purity and non-touching of impure beings and things, (ii) Vaishnavas (iii) Bhagauties (iv) Brahmins & Priests (v) Rama's devotees (vi) Yogis etc., the common beliefs prevalent at that time. He never asked them to convert to be his followers.

3. The principles enunciated in teachings do not belong to any sect and are universally taught by all exalted beings i.e.
- (a) Accept the Will of the Lord as sweet.
 - (b) Seek the company of saints. It is purifying i.e. removes our sins and provides guidance for future course of action. Swami Ramdas of Kanhagad (Kerala) says that the company of saints removes sins of a devotee like a wood worm, which enters wood through a small hole and eats the wood from inside making it hollow without any outward sign. Thus effects of company of saints are deep but not obvious immediately.
 - (c) See every being and object as manifestation of the Lord, the Creator.
 - (d) Remember His Name and sing His praise.
- (4) Gurus have not used any particular name for the Creator in their compositions. To emphasise universality of approach, they have used all names for God as used at that time like Rama, Krishna, Gopal, Gobind, Bhagwant, Hari, Thakur, Allah, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, etc. Name really does not matter so long as it refers to Him. One should remember the Name in such a way that it should immediately bring out any of the countless qualities of Him in ones' mind. One sage has explained this very interestingly. He says, since God is in everything and everywhere, there is no harm in remembering Him by the name of any of His creations. But, if one remembers Him by an inanimate object like chair and table, the person will have vision of chair and table in his mind. Any deep meditation on such an object will only lead to a blank. It is, therefore, advisable to remember Him by His qualities.
- Not to create any confusion of Name, I have therefore used the word "Lord" for Him in the book.
- (5) Most people think, some places are more sacred and to visit or to bathe at those places brings liberation. Some

others think that a certain dress code or way of life is a must for spiritual progress and liberation.

Gurus have very clearly explained with examples that no place, way of life or garb is necessary. All places are His, all beings are His, all times are His. Therefore, there is nothing like auspicious or in-auspicious time or being.

(6) *Scheme of Composition:*

(a) Since the original script used is Gurmukhi, a specific grammar and rules for poetry have been deployed. The same word changes in meaning with use of different "Matras" like ਭਉ is fear, ਭਾਉ is love, usage also changes, While writing the same in English or Roman script, such fineries are lost. If one is reading the roman script, there is likelihood of confusion. Therefore, it is safest to follow the Gurmukhi script (if possible) and the translation as given in the book.

(b) Guru has repeated certain words twice or thrice. This is to stress the importance of the subject. There is another method used in Guru's composition to lay stress on a point. This is writing the word, "rahau" "ਰਹਾਉ" which means "Stop and ponder" at the end of the couplet. In Sukhmani, this word has been used only once after a couplet introduced between first and second stanza of first Astpadi. In line 10 of stanza 3 of Japji, Guru Nanak Dev has repeated "kath" and 'kote' twice since he wanted to stress on very large number who describe Him. Similarly, in a large number of groups of stanzas like 8 to 11; 12 to 15; 16 to 19 etc., the last lines are repeated with a view to stress on the point.

(c) The whole composition of "Sukhmani" is divided into 24 "Ashtpadis" or "A group of eight stanzas". Each stanza is having 10 lines. Before each asthpadi, it's gist is given in a couplet in the form of sloka.

It is very interesting to note the development of subject and conclusion technique adopted by the Gurus. It is obvious

both in Japji and Sukhmani. In each stanza, first the subject is fully discussed, thrashed, arguments both, for and against are given, more often in question form to raise the discriminating power of the devotee. Then suddenly, the answer or conclusion is given in the last two lines. The advantage of this technique is that the devotee knows fully well why the conclusion or "word of wisdom" in the last two lines is valid and has universal application.

The devotee may recall famous two lines of first stanza of Japji which contain a question and answer.

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥
ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਏ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ॥
ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ ॥੧॥

Kiv sachiara hoie, Kiv kure tute pal.
Hukam rajai chalna, Nanak likhia nal. (1)

The question has been raised by Guru "How to be truthful? How the curtain or wall of falsehood can be broken?"

Then, Guru himself answers, follow the Will of the Lord which has been ordained for us in the beginning. This advice is repeated again and again and is one of the cardinal principles of Guru's teaching.

Both in Japji and Sukhmani, Gurus have developed the subject very systematically so as to provide full course of instruction for a spiritual seeker from beginning to the stage of full absorption in the Lord i.e. Self realization.

(7) *"Sutra" style of composition:*

The instructions given by the Gurus in Gurbani are very brief and contain only the gist of the matter. This is the normal tradition in all compositions of holy scriptures. These compositions are, therefore, called "Sutras" or thread of a necklace. Naturally, when some advice is given to a devotee, first gist is given in poetry which is objective for universal teaching and is recorded. Any doubts and clarifications or

discussions are not recorded because these are subjective. Japji is written in this tradition and is, therefore, very difficult to understand.

(8) *From Known to Unknown:*

Another aspect which must be understood is that Gurbani is trying to teach us about God, Who is the Creator of the universe, un-manifest-ਨਿਰਗੁਣ, omni-potent-ਸਰਬ ਕਲਾ ਸਮਰਥ, omni-present-ਸਰਬ ਵਿਆਪਕ, omniscient-ਸਰਬ ਗਿਆਨੀ and infinite-ਅਸੀਮ etc. All these things are beyond human comprehension as these are beyond the range of our senses of perception. Any instruction on such a subject is therefore extremely difficult.

Guru Nanak Dev has applied the technique of showing something known and then pointed towards unknown so that the devotee is in a position to see the unknown with very little effort on his own part. An example will illustrate this better. On a bright sunny day, the moon is not normally visible but it is there in the sky. When a teacher wants to show it to a student, he draws his attention to a particular tree, then leads him to its trunk, branch, the tip of the branch and then lets the student follow his vision to the moon in the sky beyond the tree. The unknown moon is now known to the student.

The same technique has been used by the Guru in Japji. The devotee is first told in first stanza to follow His Will, then repetition of the Lord's Name, association with the saints, listening of Name and praise, accepting His Will, using discrimination while exploring the mysteries of His creation, doing duty towards his worldly relations and responsibilities etc. and then the devotee is told that the Lord's Grace will descend on Him (Karam Khand of 37th stanza) and he will be revealed the un-manifest aspect of the Lord.

This is called "moon-branch technique" in spiritual philosophy. Thus, we should not get discouraged that since the Lord is beyond human senses, mind and intellect, we cannot perceive Him while in this body. Rest assured, Guru Nanak Dev,

is a teacher par excellence and shall surely lead you to Him in this life itself, but follow his advice with all sincerity and dedication.

(9) *God Hood is Man's Original Nature:*

In this context, we must understand one more thing. God-hood is man's original nature just as health is our original physical state. When a disease overpowers our body, we lose our original health. We go to a doctor who cures the disease. The doctor can only do this much. He cannot restore health. We have to do it our-selves by proper diet, exercise, mental and physical hygiene.

Same is the case with spirituality. Our original nature is God-hood. The spiritual disease which has deprived us of God-hood is ignorance. Gurbani gives us the knowledge or path to combat ignorance. Once the spiritual disease of ignorance is cured, our natural state of God-hood will be restored in this life itself.

(10) Another important aspect is that the teachings of the Gurus should not be reduced to mere allegiance to the traditions or personalities, because all intelligent people, particularly the youth, detest rigidity and un-intelligent activity. We should take a lead from Guru Nanak Dev who has allotted so many stanzas to discrimination in Japji. We should therefore avoid dogmas, delve deep and understand Gurbani's pristine glory and thus make our independent assessment objectively. There is a lot of experimentation involved in holy science. Therefore, precision and objectivity is very essential.

Gurbani teaches us a very practical way of life, totally compatible with our worldly existence. Therefore, there is no need to take "sanyas" or retire into forests or mountain caves. The way the Gurus have taught is that one should be a ruler among rulers, family man in the domestic life, saint among the saints and an ascetic among the ascetics. What a harmonious way of life!

May Lord bless the reader with full understanding of the Gurbani and strength to walk on this difficult path with full confidence. Make a start and follow the instructions. Success is guaranteed by Him.

A companion volume on "Sukhmani" is also ready and will be available shortly.



SIGNIFICANCE OF "WAHEGURU"

In Japji, Guru Nanak Dev has laid great stress on continuous remembrance of His Name. Now the question arises which Name should be repeated? Since Lord is beyond human senses, mind and intellect, it is impossible to fix a name for Him. The sages have said that all names are His names. One chooses the name as per one's temperament. As an example, our sages have given thousand Names to the Lord in "Vishnu Sahasranama" which explain His qualities.

Some people remember Him as their mother, some as father, some as beloved, some as brother, some as master, and some as guru. Father, mother, brother, master and beloved are equally effective, but these are all connected with body consciousness i.e. our present human form which is not eternal but only temporary.

The real object of God giving us human body is to enable us to work for our liberation and finally unite with Him. This is only possible with the grace of a guru who takes us from (gu) darkness, ignorance to (ru) light or knowledge. The relation of a teacher or guru and disciple is, therefore, most appropriate for attainment of our final object of human life. Hence, Guru Nanak Dev has selected the relation between him and the Lord as that of a disciple and a guru or teacher.

The followers of Guru Nanak Dev are called "Sikhs" for the same reason. The word "Sikh" is the Punjabi version of Sanskrit "Shishya" which means a student. The Sikhs are, therefore, the students of the Almighty Lord who is the Guru, learning as to how they can dispel their ignorance and achieve the Divine knowledge or light. Guru Nanak Dev in the Mool Mantra has described God as Guru in "Gur Prasad". In "Sukhmani Sahib", Guru Arjan Dev in the sloka before the first

ashtpadi has addressed the Lord as "Aadi gur" , "Jugadi gur", "Satguru" and "Sri Gurdev".

The meanings of Waheguru is as under:

ਵਾਹ-ਕਾਹ-wah

It is an expression of exclamation on seeing something great and magnificent.

ਹੇ-ਵੇ-He

An address to Him.

ਗੁਰੂ-ਗੁਰੂ-Guru

One who takes from darkness to light.

Thus, "Waheguru" is repeated by the Sikhs at the time of initiation into "Khalsa" and is repeated by the initiates in meditation and is used as an address for the God. Once one remembers Him as guru, He is bound to take that person across the ocean of maya and bestow His Grace and Divine knowledge or Holy Science.

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru gave the greeting slogan of "Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh." i.e. "Khalsa belongs to Waheguru and victory be His." Thus, His Names as "Waheguru" is very appropriate, pious and sanctified and can be repeated without seeking blessing from another human being. This name is already sanctified.

ਮੁਹੌਂ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰ ॥

Guru Nanak Dev in the 3rd and 4th lines of 4th stanza has asked as to what should be said so that the Lord shall love us on hearing that? Guru Nanak Dev in line No. 5 has answered his own question that one should at the morning ambrosial hour repeat His Name and think of great qualities of the Lord.

To do this, we must wake up before sun rise and sit in most comfortable position with back straight and vertical (i.e. head and back in one line) with eyes slightly open and repeat "Waheguru". In case of sickness or physical problem, any

posture like lying down is also alright. But, there is a danger of falling asleep. No special asan or posture is mandatory. Observing your breath for a few minutes will help concentration. Best would to repeat "Wahe" while inhaling and 'guru' while exhaling. In this way, repetition will be synchronised with breath and thoughts will also not arise. As the mind tends to drift and thoughts arise, do not chase the thoughts or feel guilty. As soon as you become aware of a distraction, start repeating "Mool Mantra" with full understanding of its meanings. When the concentration is restored, revert back to "Waheguru". Fighting the mind is a great battle, mind is like a monkey. It jumps from one thought to another. Slowly, stability will come and in case of difficulty, do not forget, we can always approach our Guru, the Lord for His help which is certain to arrive. Keep on the practice of repetition of "Waheguru" whenever time is available i.e. when our mind is not fully involved in some job. Slowly, repetition will become automatic. This is "ajapa jap". With this, as soon as you become free, Name will start automatically. One word of caution here, as soon as "ajapa jap" starts, make sure your mind is in it and repetition should not be allowed to become mechanical. Lord's Name will purify your body, mind and intellect. You will start experiencing dispassion and accepting His Will. Changes will be gradual but positive as explained by Guru Nanak Dev in Japji in a very systematic way. While meditating, maintain a benign watch over your mind like a grandfather keeps watch on his playing grand children, both strict and benign.

May Lord Bless Your Effort.



Note: In case of mental stress, sickness, pain or severe discomfort, practice observing breath and repetition of "Waheguru" as explained above. In a few minutes, you will notice that pain, discomfort and troubled mind are put at ease and sleep or peace is induced which gives relief. In this way, Lord's Name works for physical as well as spiritual purification.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RECITING JAPJI

Japji is the first composition in the holy Granth Sahib and is the most instructive composition by the first Guru, Guru Nanak Dev. This is recited in the morning hours. Since this composition is a complete course in spiritual adventure for human beings, it must be recited with full understanding of its meaning and deep love for the Lord and concentration of mind. This is called "Hazoori ka path" i.e. recitation in the presence of the Lord.

The full significance of reciting Japji can be understood from the following anecdote. Once, Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru was sitting in his court. He asked for a volunteer who would recite Japji. One Sikh got up and requested for this honour. The Guru gave him a decent seat and the recitation started. The sixth was fully absorbed in the recitation with no other thought in his mind. Guru Ji was extremely impressed. He thought that a Sikh who can recite Japji with such a devotion and concentration, actually deserves to be Guru. So he started vacating his throne slowly and vacated half of it. When the Sikh was midway through the recitation, all of a sudden, a thought came to his mind. He started thinking about a thorough-bred horse in the Guru's stable and desired that Guru should give him this horse in reward for recitation of Japji. As soon as this thought arose in Sikh's mind, Guru Hargobind re-occupied his throne fully.

When the recitation was over, the Guru thanked the Sikh and awarded him the horse desired by him. Then, he explained his action of vacating his throne and then re-occupying it suddenly. The Guru exhorted the Sikhs to recite Gurbani with deep love for the Lord, devotion and full concentration. The reward for this can be beyond your imagination.

WHAT IS LIBERATION (MUKTI) AND FROM WHAT?

All religious scriptures and holy persons talk about "Mukti" or liberation and most of us must also be praying to the Lord for it. But, how many of us exactly know as to what is liberation and what is the bondage from which we want liberation. Mukti or liberation literally means release from some type of bondage. So the question arises, what is the nature of this bondage from which we are wanting to be released? Only if we find an answer to this question, our efforts and energies will be spent effectively. Let us, therefore, try to understand this bondage.

Bondage is what imposes limitations on the freedom of a person to perform various activities like physical, mental, emotional and spiritual as per his free will. The scriptures point out that a person is bound who has (i) identification with his body, (ii) attachment to worldly objects, (iii) "doership" in actions and (iv) sense of reality in this world. It is also said that such a person is always unhappy. Let us now study these four aspects in detail.

- (i) **Identification with the body:** A person who is shackled by the thought "I am the body" is a bound person. He introduces himself only with reference to the body and, it's relations. He may not directly say he is the body, but will say, he is so and so, son of so and so etc. This identification with the body makes him suffer. If he loses his hair or teeth or any other part or organ of his body, he feels very sad and suffers. Thus, his entire life is devoted to the service of the body. All material prosperity is centred around the body. Progress and standard of living is measured in terms of comforts available. Greatness is in the wealth one has acquired and licentiousness is

considered freedom. A bound person ignores the supreme being and respects only material prosperity. His belief in the Lord is limited to his prayers for fulfillment of his desires. He does not seek the company of saints. On the other hand he may criticize spiritual persons.

- (ii) **Attachment to sense of objects:** One who is attached to his possessions and pleasures is "bound". On account of his false belief that objects would give him joy, he becomes dependent on objects. Desires, attachment and slavery to objects is mainly due to our strong identification with our body. Thus, unless our attachment to body is not removed, freedom from attachment to objects cannot be gained. We may fool ourselves into thinking that we are not attached to pleasures, even while enjoying, on account of our firm belief that these pleasures will last for ever. We shall realize our dependence or "bondage" only when we lose such pleasures.
- (iii) **Notion of "doership" in action:** The identification with the body, senses and mind makes one feel that he is the doer of all actions performed by these equipments. When one assumes the "doership", one naturally becomes the enjoyer of the fruit of such actions. Thus, one becomes a "karta" and "bhogta". While enjoying the result of actions, new desires arise and old desires become stronger. These desires prompt for more actions, results, actions etc. Thus, the vicious cycle binds the person to his body more strongly. His "bondage" is thus strengthened.
- (iv) **Notion of reality in the world:** Because of the belief that the world is real, its objects, joys and sorrows also appear to be real. If we realise that the world is an illusion, its joys and sorrows also would be seen as unreal. Then we would not form strong likes and dislikes for objects or suffer dejections and disappointments on losing them. The fire on the movie screen does not make us rush with a fire extinguisher, because we know that it is unreal fire. Sorrow itself is a bondage.

Sorrow is the symptom of our ignorance, which is the root cause of bondage.

PREPARATION FOR MUKTI OR LIBERATION :

It may be that due to our past actions, grace of the Lord or the teacher or forced "satsanga", the ignorant person realises his miserable state of bondage and seeks to free himself. This is the start of his spiritual journey. This can happen only when a person realises that even after gaining prestige in the world, enjoying wealth and pleasures, he has not experienced happiness. At this stage one is called "mumukshu" or desirous of liberation.

When this desire for liberation becomes intense, he starts striving to reach his goal or destination and adopts suitable means i.e. "sadhna". He becomes a "sadhaka" or an aspirant. As we have seen earlier, bonded person is firmly convinced that he is the "doer" of actions and the world is for his enjoyment. His desires prompt him into actions for fulfilment of his goals. He takes the good results as his own achievement and therefore considers that it is his privilege to enjoy them.

But, on the other hand, a "sadhaka" considers himself to be a servant of the Lord. Since a servant does not have will or wish of his own, separate from that of his Master, he carries out Master's commands unquestioningly, unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly, with full faith, enthusiasm and desire to please his Master. He knows that since it is his Master's work, it will be accomplished with Master's knowledge, strength and grace. He is, therefore, free from likes, dislikes, anxieties and fears. This is what Guru Nanak Dev has explained in the last line of the first stanza of Japji.

As for the world, instead of it being a reality, he sees it as a beautiful painting or poetry of the Lord, a unique masterpiece of the Lord. When we encounter the nature at it's best, our mind is uplifted, quiet, rested and free from negative emotions. When we see the entire world as His beautiful poetry, we will have love for all, will to serve all and there shall be

joy in all our actions. The ignorant person knows himself a 'doer'. A Self-realised person knows himself a 'non-doer' and an aspirant is a bridge between the two. He has an attitude of being an instrument of the Lord. He knows that the Lord Himself is the 'doer' or 'mahakarta', this is the gist of 'Karma Yoga'. With practice of karma yoga, aspirant's mind is purified and gradually becomes subtle. This is the reason why the Gurus have stressed so much on "sewa" or community service. He is no more satisfied with his 'sadhana' and seeks to know the Truth himself. This makes him 'the seeker of knowledge' or a 'Jigyasu'.

As seeker of knowledge, he starts constantly inquiring
(i) Who am I? Am I a bundle of flesh and bones wrapped in skin? Am I a 'jiva' who has travelled from body to body from times immemorial? What will be left of me if all my worldly relations are removed?

From where have I come? Am I the product of the seeds of my parents? Am I born from food and will merge back into food? Where does the feeling of "I" come from?

What is this world? Is it real or an illusion? What is its cause? Is it inert or sentient? Why was it created? Is it for my pleasure, for His pleasure or without purpose ? How was it created, simultaneously or in sequence ? Why this infinite variety in this world ?

(iv) Who is this God that people worship ? Is He an idol, in an idol or an idolised idea ? Where does He stay - in heaven, in all beings or everywhere ? Is He formless or with form ? Is He with or without attributes ? If He is the Lord of all, then why do people suffer ? What is His relation with me ? How can I know Him ?

(v) What is the purpose of my life ? Am I born to suffer or is it for achieving a higher goal ? What is it that I seek through all the transactions and relations in this world ? Will this seeking ever end ?

With all these questions troubling his mind, the seeker realises that he cannot find answers to these questions by mere logic or through scriptures. Having been endowed with virtues like discrimination, dispassion, self control and strong aspiration etc., he approaches a teacher for instructions in the Divine Knowledge.

Who can be a better teacher than Guru Nanak Dev and his nine successors. All their teachings are faithfully preserved in the holy Guru Granth Sahib. It is the good luck of humanity that Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru compiled the teachings of his predecessors, his own and so many saints of various faiths and states in India. Japji is the first composition of this holy Guru Granth Sahib and contains answers to all the questions given above. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru has said that the holy Granth Sahib is the Guru incarnate. Any body who inquires with a pure mind will find answers to his questions in the holy verses of this book.

Starting from the question in para (iv) above, Guru Nanak Dev has described the nature of the Lord in Mool Mantra in the very beginning of Japji Sahib. He states that the Lord is only One, un-manifest as well as manifest, Eternal, His Name is also Eternal.

He is the Creator, Maintainer, Sustainer and Destroyer of the universe. He is the Atma in all beings. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is beyond time, space and causality (karma). He is fearless and devoid of enmity. He does not take birth in various life forms. He created Himself and is illuminated by His own light. No other light illuminates Him. He cannot be known by our senses. He makes Himself known only with His Grace.

As for the other questions, the answers are given in stanzas from 16 onward in Japji Sahib while dealing with discrimination by Guru Nanak Dev and in Sukhmani Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev. It will be too much to deal with all questions here but some teachings which would cover most of the questions are given.

Having studied Japji Sahib and Sukhmani Sahib with deep devotion and pure mind, a sadhaka is blessed with Divine Knowledge described briefly as below:

- (a) All that is seen or can be perceived with our senses, is everchanging, illusory and perishing, is not the Truth or Self because the Truth or Self alone is the Seer, of the nature of pure Consciousness. Neither is the Self seen nor It is bound.
- (b) Atma or the Self is Eternal and is the Illuminator of the entire world. It alone is the supreme support of the world. With the understanding of the real and un-real, the 'sadhaka' becomes the Seer of the Absolute Truth.
- (c) The Self is that Reality which is the sub-stratum of the world. Everything else is mere appearance. For the Seer of Absolute Truth, what can be cause for fear ? He is of the nature of Bliss and one with Reality.
- (d) An ignorant person is for ever attached to sense objects while a man of discrimination is dispassionate towards them. The most wonderful thing is that the knower of Truth is now dispassionate towards dispassion itself.
- (e) When the 'sadhaka' is one with the Lord or Reality, there is no duality, dispassion or passion, 'I' or 'mine' etc. Then everything and everywhere it is the Lord only, nothing else.

Having known the Truth, with the Grace of Guru, the 'sadhaka' now abides in this Truth for ever. This Knower of the Truth is free from fear, action (karma), gain or loss and is truly liberated even while in the body. He has fully realised that he is not the body and the old identities or bondages are completely lost. The 'sadhaka' is now ever enlightened, free from all bondage and known as 'Jiwan Mukta'.



BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF SRI GURU NANAK DEV (1469-1539 A.D.)

Guru Nanak Dev was born in 1469 A.D. at Rai Bhoi's Talwandi village now known as Nankana Sahib (In Pakistan). There is a dispute about the exact date. Some scholars say it was 15th April whereas most agree on full moon day of Kartik month as per Bikrami calendar which falls a fortnight after Diwali in October/ November.

His father, Baba Kalu Ji was a revenue official (patwari) of the local ruler. He had one sister Bebe Nanki Ji, who was five years older to him. She was married to Bhai Jai Ram Ji who was a senior official with Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi of Sultanpur Lodhi (Near Jalandhar in Punjab state of India). Bebe Nanki Ji and Guru Nanak Dev were very fond of each other.

At the age of seven, when Guru Nanak Dev was sent to the traditional school in the temple, he refused to study and in return gave instruction to his teacher as to what type of education should be taught. Same happened with the Muslim teacher in the mosque. So Guru Nanak Dev went on helping his father to look after fields and grazing cattle. He was all the time engaged in remembrance of God and so many miracles are attributed to him in his young age.

He was very open minded and secular in nature. When the Nawab asked that if he believes in one God, he should come and pray with them in the mosque (offer namaz). Guru Ji agreed. When the prayer started, he kept quiet. The Muslim priest complained that since in heart of heart, he did not like Muslim prayer, he kept quiet and did not follow them in namaz. Guru Ji explained that since the Nawab was engaged in the thought of his newly acquired Arab horse and the Maulvi (Muslim priest) was all the time worried about his mare who

had recently delivered a baby, and that both were not actually attending to the prayer, he could not follow them in prayer. Both the Nawab and the Maulvi accepted this as facts, and became disciples of Guru Nanak Dev.

He got married at the age of eighteen and had two sons, Baba Sri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das.

In addition to supervision of farming of his father's land, Guru Nanak Dev was also doing some business as per his father's instructions. When he was 34 years old, there was famine in the land. His father gave him twenty rupees with instructions to do some profitable business. Guru Nanak Dev, on his way to the town saw some saints who were hungry for many days. So he purchased food and fed those saints. When he returned home, his father was very angry. He decided to send him to Sultanpur Lodhi, to his brother-in-law with the hope that he might become a worldly man there. Guru Nanak Dev went to Sultanpur Lodhi and was made incharge of the Nawab's granary. Even in those days, there was corruption in the government departments. With Guru Ji's good and honest dealings, every body was happy. He was constantly absorbed in the Supreme Power with remembrance. So, many times, when weighing grains, he reached the number thirteen which is called "Tera" (also means "yours") he used to continue weighing and putting grain in the customer's bag and repeating "Tera-Tera". Some people, who were jealous of his popularity, complained to the Nawab. The Nawab ordered an audit of the granary, but it was found that there was no shortage but Guru Ji was to receive some money instead. After this incident, he decided that he should leave the job and go to various places to spread God's message. Everybody including the Nawab tried to persuade him to change his plans and continue with his duty but Guru Ji finally left on his first journey in 1507 A.D.

The first sojourn was eight years long. He first came to Talwandi, met his parents and apprised them of his plans of long journey. He covered Lahore, Hardwar, Ayodhya, Nanak Mata (In U.P. hills), Gorakhpur, Assam, Puri, along east coast

of India to Rameshwaram, Sri Lanka, from there he went on the west coast of India to Somnath, Dwarka, along Narmada river to Onkareshwar, Bikaner, Pushkar Lake, Delhi, Panipat, Kurukshetra and back to Sultanpur Lodhi to meet his sister. After this, he established a new village known as Kartarpur on the banks of Ravi river and brought his parents to this place. He stayed there for two years.

In 1517 A.D. he set out once again towards hills in the north Utter Pradesh i.e. Utrakhand where Yogis were living. He pushed further onto Tibet, Sumer mountain, Assam, back to western Punjab, Sialkot, Jammu, Kashmir and back to Kartarpur. This journey was mainly connected with the discussions with Yogis of various sects.

The third sojourn was three years long (1518 to 1521). This covered Pak Pattan (seat of Baba Farid) where he had discussions with 11th successor of Baba Farid and collected Baba Farid's compositions. He continued in the Western direction through Iran, Iraq to Mecca in Saudi Arabia. When in Mecca, he was lying with his feet towards Kaaba. When the head priest of the mosque told him that he was having his feet towards God, Guruji asked him to put his feet where God was not. So the priest got hold of Guru Ji's feet and started rotating but noticed that in whichever direction he was placing Guru Ji's feet, Kaaba was moving in the same direction. Thus, he was convinced of Guru Ji's divinity and there was a lot of exchange on spiritual issues between them.

From Mecca, he came to Baghdad, Kabul, Peshawar, Punj a Sahib (Hasan Abdal then) and Aimanabad where he met Babar (First Mughal emperor) who had at that time invaded India. Guru Ji was taken prisoner alongwith others and was asked to grind wheat with a grinding stone. When the Guru started his meditation, the grinding stone was rotating by itself. When Babar saw this miracle, he apologised for his mis-behaviour. He offered the best quality wine to Guru Ji to drink. But, Guru Ji explained that this wine's intoxication would go away soon but he is intoxicated with God's Name which remains day and night

and never goes away. One should, therefore, be intoxicated with God's Name only. From there, Guru Ji came back to Kartarpur on the banks of Ravi and settled down there.

In his last period of 18 years at Kartarpur i.e. 1521 A.D. to 1539 A.D. he composed a lot of Gurbani like ballads in Malhar Majh, Asa Raga, Japji, (Dakhni) Oankar, Baramaha (12 months i.e. every stanza starting with name of the months as per Indian Calendar) in Tukhari raga, Sidh Gosht (discussion with Sidhas). It was at this time that he met one young boy named Budha who became famous saint later on, known as Baba Budha. Baba Budha performed coronation of five successors of Guru Nanak Dev, i.e. Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Hargobind Sahib. Baba Budha was responsible for construction on one side of the holy tank at Golden Temple Amritsar and is known for giving boon of children to the childless couples.

Baba Lehna came to Guru Nanak Dev in 1532 and became his most trusted disciple. He developed a new script known as Gurmukhi script which is used for writing all Sikh scriptures, earlier Persian was used. Guru Nanak Dev changed his name from Lehna to Angad Dev and finally made him his successor in 1539 to continue the work.

Guru Nanak Dev left his physical body on 7th Sept. 1539 A.D. and was absorbed in the Supreme at the age of 70 years, 4 months and 22 days.

