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Preface

India is a unique nation on the world map because of its multi-religious and multicultural inhabitants. There is hardly any religious faith in the world that is not practiced or followed in India. This is evidenced by the nature and number of places of worship and pilgrimage in the form of temples, mosques, tombs, dargahs, gurudwaras, churches monasteries, stupas etc. This may be because of the different kings and rulers following different faiths that ruled India during different ages or periods. If all these are taken in a broader perspective, it laid the foundation of peaceful co-existence of different communities in this country. Though the history is replete with incidences and instances when communal riots and religious intolerance also raised its ugly head and lead to massive blood-shed, leading to loss of precious lives and property. All this seems paradoxical as the main purpose of religion is to unite people and help them realize the aim and purpose of human existence. The modern thinkers and saints are slowly moving away from staunch religious notions and advocating the concept of spirituality. It embraces all the practices that help mortals to unite with the supreme soul, of which, they are fragments. The prophets of different faiths have also stressed on spiritual way of life and have lead from the front to teach people. Being religious does not mean being spiritual as spirituality is a higher virtue. It's a stage of mind that can only be achieved by perseverance, tolerance, fellow feeling and by

recognizing the existence of supreme spirit in every creature. For following a true spiritual path, one need not follow rigid religious practices ordained in different faiths. Performing one's duties honestly, serving and helping the poor and needy and remembering God as the only creator, sustainer and destroyer of all existence can lead to spirituality. All this should be done by performing one's duties as householder rather than becoming an ascetic and renouncing the worldly responsibilities. A heart full of love, compassion and empathy takes one close to Almighty.

The present volume entitled "*Path to Spirituality*" is a compilation of scholarly articles contributed by acclaimed writers, wherein they have described the spiritual teachings of great gurus, seers and saints of the world. The readers can take lessons from these write-ups and can brighten up their spiritual lives. Every article is unique in its own way and describes the experiences of spiritual leaders representing different faiths. We sincerely hope that his book will cater to the needs of seekers and help them progress spiritually.

Such books are printed by All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar and distributed free of cost. Kindly donate generously for the work.

Dr. Rajesh Kumar

Principal,

D. A.V College, Amritsar

The Religion We Need

S. Jagadisan & T. V. Venkataraman

"Not religion, but religious dogma" leads to conflict, "Religion should graduate into spirituality." These two epigrammatic statements of President Abdul Kalam are worth pondering over. It has been said that more blood has been shed over the cause of religion than any other cause. This is confirmed by what is happening today. It is a paradox that religion is at once a cohesive and divisive force. If religion with its potential for good has turned into a destructive force, it is but a perversion of religion.

Religion in its deepest sense has laid the foundation of moral order. It has extended the bonds of human sympathy and underscored the values of humanity, charity in the sense of love and tolerance, faith in a transcendental divine order, respect for the sanctity of all forms of life and observance of the decencies of life. The inherent divinity of the human being, universal brotherhood, unity of all faiths, collective progress and peace are basic to all religions and form their core.

Erosion of values

All values advocated by religion are threatened by greed, violence, exploitation, competitive religion, consumerism, commercialization and such forces. It looks as if religion has become its own enemy. Every sphere of human activity from the individual and domestic to the international level is torn with chaos and conflict. "Parents have very little love for each other and in the home begins the disruption of the world" (Mother Teresa).

The spirit of scepticism generated by science has resulted in erosion of values. The world is broken into narrow domestic walls. Communities tend to be

imprisoned in their watertight compartments bearing the respective labels—religion, caste, race, nation, ideology etc. The phenomenal growth in knowledge is not matched by a commensurate growth in wisdom which lies in the cultivation of humanizing impulses. “We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom and power without conscience. We know more about war than about peace, more about killing than about living”. (General Omar S. Bradley).

We boast about our civilization. There is nothing civilized particularly in travelling by plane or living in air-conditioned comfort, speed, quantity, sophisticated lifestyle and bank balance. Human beings have been described as the elder brothers of the animals and the younger brothers of the gods. Civilisation fulfills itself when they are elevated from animality to spirituality. Religion and spirituality have their role in this transforming and regenerating process. Their role should be redefined and reformulated in the modern context.

Religion is awareness: it is wisdom and enlightenment. Bigotry, hatred, dogma, fanatical fury, intolerance and such negative elements are alien to it. “I was born not to share men’s hatred but their love” (*Antigone*: Sophocles). True religion is free from the trapping of superstition, dogma, ritual, quackery, magic and witchcraft. It is sensitive to social needs. Holiness, purity, charity, human equality, service to human beings, etc., are religiously universal and not the prerogative of any one faith.

Religion and spirituality should not be equated with otherworldliness or ascetic seclusion and escape from life’s realities. They are related to life here and now and provide the guidelines for the art of living.

One is most religious and spiritual when one is most human. A Russian peasant remarked at the conclusion of a lecture by Maxim Gorky on the marvels of science. **“We are taught to fly in the air like birds and swim in water like fish, but how to live on earth, we do not know.”**

Fellowship of Faiths

Religions are many, but religion is one. There is no relative superiority of one religion over another. One should go beyond denominational religion to understand religion. What the world needs is a fellowship of faith on a common march towards a common goal. *“Man must evolve for all human conflicts, a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”* These words of Martin Luther King sum up the essence of religion. The present cancerous growth of hatred and violence can be averted by the inculcation and assimilation of the spirit of religion—religion understood to mean “refinement”, “sweetness and light”, “the culture of the soul” and “the culture of tolerance”. The question is not, “why religion?” but “what kind of religion?”

(The Hindu, February 1, 2005)

So bleak is the picture (of the future of humanity and the environment)... that the bulldozer and not the atomic bomb may turn out to be the most destructive invention of the 20th century.

Philip Shabecoff

Chardi Kala Sarbat Da Bhala

Rajinder Singh Chadha

Sikhism is one of the youngest religions of world having come into existence only about five hundred years back. Even though within this comparatively short period, the Sikh religion has gone to many countries outside India, yet the world at large and even so many people of Asian countries are unaware about it and how does it differ from other world religions.

Many think it is a mixture of Hinduism and Islam, the two religions which were predominant in India at the time of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. But this is not so, of course no new religion comes into existence in a vacuum and some aspects of beliefs present in previous religions have to be kept in view. Sikhism claims to be an independent religion having a more national, scientific and progressive outlook.

At a time when Indian society was caste-ridden, men were considered high and low on account of their birth and not according to their deeds, the society was divided into countless watertight compartments, Sikhism emerged as a will of God. At that time, Guru Nanak, the first Guru of Sikhs condemned this caste system. *He aimed at creating a classless and casteless society in which all were equal, where one member did not exploit the other.*

In Guru Nanak's view, divine love was the criterion to judge whether a person was good or bad. The impact of Guru Nanak on the Society has been described by Bhai Gurdas—a great poet thus:

Wheresoever the Guru set his foot,
That spot becomes sanctified

Spots once sacred to the Siddhas

Do celebrate Nanak now

Every home is turned into a Dharamshala

And every day into a festival of praise to the divine

By manifesting the Eternal Name

The Guru redeemed all the four corners and all the nine realms of the earth

God's own witness has appeared in the kali age

Guru Nanak Dev never had formal education. Heavenly spirit in the state of Brahm consciousness does not have to learn from formal institutions of education. He travelled to the centres of religious pilgrimage. His dialogue with Pundits, Sadhus, Yogis, Mullahs, Peers and Kazis continued throughout his life. In all such encounters Guru Nanak told them that religion without its moorings till it joins the main life current of humanity and has socially and spiritually insinuated itself into them.

Guru Nanak Dev classified in Japji Sahib that the unfoldment of Knowledge, wisdom, and education is within you. Guru Nanak preached for meditation, earning livelihood by sincere means and hard work and sharing the earning with others (Kirt Karo, Naam Japo aur Vand Chhako).

He has given us the supreme message of establishing communion with God through meditation. He knew the use of music to reach the brahm consciousness through kirtan. In Sikhism, kirtan assumes special significance the dasam-dwar total enlightenment.

The foundation stone of Sikhism rests on the basic teaching of Guru Nanak.

- * Belief in one God
- * Attaining Salvation while pursuing ‘grahsati’
- * Purification of Soul through satsang
- * Righteous conduct
- * A casteless society
- * Equality and
- * Meditation

The second Guru, Guru Angad Dev ji developed the Gurmukhi Script. He also gave the institution of langar—free kitchen which further helped in promoting the spirit of equality amongst people (Pangat-Sangat).

Amritsar—The city of historic importance for Sikhs was established by Guru Ramdas.

The fifth Guru—Guru Arjan Dev constructed Hari Mandir Sahib in Amritsar. He gave the concept of secularism by requesting Mian Mir, a Muslim to lay the foundation stone of Hari Mandir Sahib. The Concept of ‘Kar-sewa’ and ‘Dasvand’ also came into existence, at that time when Hari Mandir Sahib was being constructed. This prevails even today—The Sikhs come forward enthusiastically for Kar-sewa and offer Dasvand for the needy and the construction of Gurudwaras, whenever a call for that is given.

Guru Har Gobind gave a new direction to Sikhs to defend their faith with arms. He introduced the concept of Sant Sipahi, the two swords of Guru Har Gobind Meeri-Peeri symbolised spiritual and temporal powers.

Guru Har Rai reinforced the concepts of Meeri-Peeri.

The atrocities of Aurangzeb were at its peak when

Guru Tegh Bahadur made a supreme sacrifice at Chandni Chowk in 1675. It was his son Guru Gobind Singh who established the Khalsa Panth—the order of the Pure on Baisakhi day in 1699. At the call of Guru, the Sikhs who came forward were from different castes and different parts of the country. This was a unique example of eradication of distinction between high and low, rich and poor, caste, colour and creed. The baptized ones became the members of the common brotherhood and were given the epithet of ‘Singh’ behind their name.

After this unique ceremony, Guru requested his Five Beloved ones to baptize him in the same manner as he had baptized them. After baptism he was similarly renamed as Gobind Singh. The Guru invested all powers in the collective leadership of his beloved Khalsa—‘The Panj Piare’. This is a unique example of Guru becoming the disciple in the history of the world.

The Khalsa were given the directive to observe the tenets and values of Sikhism. The Sikhs were also asked to wear 5 K’s.

Kesh—Unshorn and untrimmed hair,

Kangha the comb to clean hair.

Kara—The steel bangle as reminder of omnipresence of God.

Kachha—a symbol of Chastity.

Kirpan—a symbol of resistance to oppression and injustice.

Turban became a necessary part of dress to contain the hair.

Sikhism is one of the latest entries amongst world religions. Guru Nanak introduced a new spirit in his

disciples, which may be called the spirit of ‘Chardi Kala’ ever readiness. He said the source which inspires and enables man to face the problems of life is God. Whatever happens in this Universe comes about through God—His Hukum. A man must live a disciplined and austere life as advised by the Guru so as to earn his Grace. When man receives his Grace, he becomes free from ego, his character is strengthened and he becomes capable of great deeds.

If we look through the corridor of time we see that our Great Gurus have developed a value system for Sikh way of life. Their commandment and direction have been documented in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

“Sikhism is more relevant today when there is degradation in the society due to deteriorating value system. Today’s youth is like a rudderless ship drifting away from the path of righteousness. Schools today have a greater responsibility on moulding the character of today’s youth.”

The Indian Express August 23, 1999

Lifting Musical Appeal Of The Guru Granth Sahib

Pranav Khullar

The Adi Granth or the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs has a distinct literary flavour. Gobind Singh Mansukhani describes it as the “musicalisation of thought”. The compilation has rich literary underpinnings and each part has been set to music. Guru Arjan Dev—while enshrining the Guru Granth Sahib at Har-Mandir in 1604—put together verse that encapsulated the religious, mystical and philosophical currents of four centuries.

The Adi Granth contains compositions of sage-poets and mystics of different faiths. Authors include Kabir, Baba Farid, Namdev, Jaidev, Dhanna Bhagat and Ravidas. Guru Gobind Singh later consecrated the Holy Book as the eleventh and eternal Guru, a living testament to the sayings or bani of the Gurus... “Bani guru, guru hi bani, wich bani amrit sare”—“Holy verses are the living embodiment of the Guru and within this Word lies the nectar of the Guru’s thought”.

Arranged into 5,894 hymns, the Adi Granth is set to 31 ragas of the classical music tradition, described by Pearl S Buck as a “powerful appeal to the heart as much as the mind”. Music forms the basis of the classification of hymns into Ashtapadas (hymns of eight verses), Chhands (verses of six lines), Chaupadas (hymns of four verses) etc. The division of the Adi Granth according to ragas, the metre of the poem, the author and its ‘ghar’ in which the raga is to be sung, culminates in a ragamala.

Compositions called Bhatt bani or hymns of the bards are 11 in number, in the latter half of the Adi Granth. The Bhattas were ballad singers composing

martial poetry in the vernacular in a form called Swaiyya Chhand (verses of praise). Its narrative style describes war, exhorting warriors to action. Tracing their lineage to the ancient Saraswat Brahmins, they were themselves called Saraswat or learned ones, who saw all the gurus as personifying one. Light and articulated their poetry is in praise of the spiritual grandeur of Guru Nanak and other gurus. This articulation of the gurus as one Light is a basic tenet of the Sikh faith.

Its unique catholicity and prosody apart, the Guru Granth Sahib also engendered the Gurmukhi script, which Guru Angad Dev developed to reach out to the people in their vernacular dialect, refining and shaping it by use of 10 vowels. The development of the script and language was reflective of the casteless and creedless socio-economic vision of society that the Sikh Gurus envisioned. This vision also incorporated gender equality, rare in those times and at present still.

Guru Gobind Singh invested the title of the Guru to the Adi Granth at Nanded in 1708, after preparing a new edition and including some hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He said, "...let him who wishes to speak to the Guru, read and reflect on what the Granth says...". The Adi Granth is a powerful rendering of the oneness of God expressed in beautiful poetry and melodies. It is not an abstruse work of philosophy for the few; its musical appeal is universal. The Sikh Gurus established direct contact with the people, free of the trappings of rituals. Pilgrims from Pakistan and India celebrated the 400th anniversary of Guru Granth Sahib at Kartarpur in Pakistan in September 2004. That the Gurbani continues to inspire many across borders and beliefs, points to music being the language of love.

The Times of India, November 15, 2005

Guru Gobind Singh: A Soldier of the Spirit

Sadhu T. L. Vaswani

I regard Guru Gobind Singh as an immortal of history. Why? Money is dust: earth's honours are fleeting: knowledge is power. But yet a greater power is sacrifice.

Guru Gobind Singh's name is radiant in history: Why? He sacrificed his all in the struggle for freedom. His four sons were ordered to execution by Aurangzeb and died heroically. The Guru's mother could not save her children nor her husband and she sacrificed her life by suspending her breath. The Guru himself, returning from the last battle he had fought, with his wounds half-healed, took up his bow to fight again, when his blood burst out and with his last breath, he bowed to Guru Granth Sahib, saying:- "So doth the *Akala Purukha* ordain! The Song of *Naam* is the Master now!"

In the silence of the mountain he heard the Call—“Gobind! Great is India's agony. Life is given to be shared. Blessed are they who would offer God the noblest worship—which is sacrifice!”

Gobind leaves the silence and solitude of the mountain: Gobind comes down to the plains to serve the people. His life becomes an offering of sacrifice.

The Guru's life may be reviewed under these three aspects: (1) The Guru as a Poet; (2) The Guru as a Saint and (3) The Guru as an Organiser. The one central idea and aspiration of the Guru's triple life is summed up in one word: "Sacrifice".

Aurangzeb is the Emperor of India. Great is his power and he is strong in his resolve to convert the Hindu

nation to Islam. The Hindus tremble before the might of the Moghul emperor. But this one man, Gobind—young in years but strong in his faith in the *Akala Purkha*, the Deathless Spirit,—is fearless. The Guru says:

The Beloved hath sent me down!

I come singing His Name:

I go sowing the seed of the Eternal!

My refuge is in Him

Who is the Steel of the Blood of Centuries.

Who is the Heart of all the Ages!

To understand the inner purpose of the Guru's great struggle, it is necessary to understand the inner purpose of the long reign of the Moghul emperor, Aurangzeb. It was a despotic and disruptive reign: and chaos followed it as soon as Aurangzeb died. Some Muslims, it is true, worshipped him as a saint: they did not understand that his intolerance undid the work of Akbar, the Great. Aurangzeb failed to win India to Islam: he failed in his efforts to eradicate from India all religions except Islam. His "successes" were superficial. All Hindu temples were razed to the ground: all Hindu schools were closed: all public Hindu worship was prohibited. Aurangzeb did but succeed in running his dynasty and his country. His death-bed letters are his "confessions" and may still be read as a tragic commentary on the life and policy of a sovereign who failed because he was a fanatic. Aurangzeb wrote:-

"I know not who I am, where I shall go, or what will happen to this sinner full of sins. My years have gone by thoughtless. God has been in my heart but my darkened eyes have not recognized His Light. I have greatly sinned!"

The great Guru invoked the "Hidden Life" as the

"Great Fire" and its "secret", he declared was "sacrifice". "Hold it in your soul," he said to the Khalsa Brotherhood that he built for the service of India, the service of Man. "As long as this flame of sacrifice," he said to them, "burns un-flickering in you, you are the real kings, of human hearts, true "sons of the Khalsa", In a song, which stirs me to the soul whenever I read it, the great Guru said:

Man is One!

God is One!

Love is One!

One with the Light that shines within:

One with Truth:

One with Love!

All else is passing,

In unsteady, fleeting!

He lives who loves!

Love flowed out of the great Guru to all,—not to Hindus alone but also to Muslims. For he saw, as the great seers and masters have ever seen, that "we are all the fruits of One tree and the leaves of One branch".

Being a "helpmate" to all, Guru Gobind Singh became a "sanctuary" to all. How pilgrims came to him from different parts and received his blessing at Anandpur! Revering him as their "Guru", they regarded him as "their way to Heaven".

(The Sikh Review, January 2002)

Faith & Qurbani : Spirit of Eid

Andalib Akhter

EID-UL-ZUHA is the second most important festival of Muslims across the world. Today's celebration comes almost two months after Eid-ul-Fitr, the culmination of the holy month of Ramadan. The spirit of Eid-ul-Zuha is incorporated in Hajj, the pilgrimage to Makkah. The underlying flavour is the spirit of sacrifice or *qurbani*, commemorating Abraham's great act of faith many centuries ago.

Eid-ul-Zuha, also known as Eide-Qurban is a time for Muslims to learn the value of self-denial by making a sacrifice of something loving to God. Apart from the congregational prayers and other festivities, the essential feature of the festival is *qurbani*, the offering of sacrifice of a prescribed animal. The spirit of sacrifice is exalted as a noble quality. Once Prophet Abraham had a dream in which God asked him to sacrifice his beloved son Ismael. Persistence of the dream convinced him that it wasn't just a dream but an allusion from the Infinite. He narrated the dream to his son who readily concurred. When the father and son reached the appointed place of sacrifice, the son suggested to his father to cover his eyes so that his love does not distract him from obeying the Lord. The moment Abraham pulled out his knife, the son was miraculously substituted with a lamb.

Allah was most benevolent; He rescued Abraham's son and was pleased with Abraham's and Ismael's sincere devotion and absolute surrender to the will of their Creator. The day this happened has been held sacred. Every year the Hajjis retrace the steps of Abraham and Ismael in the valley of Mina and offer a sacrifice of animals in His Love. Similarly the faithfuls all over the world do this practice

of sacrifice, according to their means, in true resignation to the will of their Creator and to pay tribute to Abraham who lived up to the true meaning of 'Surrender to Allah'.

Though other religions too contain the provision for offering of sacrifice in one form or the other, the Islamic concept of sacrifice is a little different. The Divine Being is Allah, the merciful; there is no concept of appeasing an offended deity; neither does Allah take delight in flesh or blood. "It is not their meat, nor their blood that reaches Allah: it is your piety, *taqwa* that reaches Him. He has thus made them (animals) subject to you that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you". (Qur'an 22.37).

For Muslims the qurbani is a definite act of worship and it is one of the honoured institutions of Islam. This is an expression of thanks for the benefits provided by Allah. It is also a commemoration of the supreme sacrifice offered by Ismael and is an expression of determination to sacrifice, if need be, his life when called upon to do so for the sake of motives more precious than his own existence.

Another important objective of qurbani is to feed the poor and needy with meat of the animals sacrificed. One-third of the meat of the sacrificed animal is distributed among the poor and needy; one-third is to be given to relatives and the remaining one-third is to be used by the person who made the qurbani. For some poor people this festival is perhaps the only occasion then they eat mutton or goat meat. The skins of the animal sacrificed are given to schools (madrassas) where orphans and destitutes study. This, apart from Zakat or Islamic charity, helps the management of madrassas to meet their expenses.

Qurbani is *wajib* or a 'must' for every Muslim who is an adult and who is mentally sound, who is not

journeying and who owns and possesses property to the prescribed extent called *nisab*, provided such property has remained in his ownership uninterruptedly for a full period of 12 months and is free from encumbrances of any kind. In case of silver the nisab is 612.32 grams and for gold it is 87.48 grams or its value at prevalent rate or its equivalent in other valuable goods. It is desirable to offer the qurbani on the Eid-ul-Zuha after the congregational prayers and not before; but if one can not offer qurbani on that day he may do it on the second or third day of the festival. Ultimately the basic objective of qurbani is to invoke the spirit of self-sacrifice shown by Prophet Abraham and to submit oneself to the will of Allah.

The Times of, India 23/2/2002

SACRED SPACE

Today is Eid-ul-Zuha

He Said : ‘I will go to my Lord ! He will surely guide me ! O my Lord ! Grant me a righteous (son)!’ So we gave him the good news of a boy ready to suffer and forbear. Then, when (the son) reached (the age of) serious work with him, He said : ‘O my son! I see in a vision that I offer thee in sacrifice: Now see what is thy view !’ (the son) Said: ‘O my Father ! Do as thou art commanded: Thou will find me, if God so wills one practicing patience and constancy!’ So when they had both submitted their wills (to God) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice), we called out to him, ‘O Abraham! Thou bast already fulfilled thy vision’—thus indeed do we reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial—and we ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice-

Sura 37;99-106.

The Prophet’s Message Of Patience And Tolerance

Saniyasnain Khan

In his quest for peace, the Prophet strove to convince people that all men and women—wherever they lived and however different they seemed from one another in colour, culture and language—were in fact each other’s brothers and sisters. His message was crucial, for a proper relationship of love and respect can be established only if human beings regard one another in this light. To inculcate such feelings, the Prophet would say to his followers: “You are all Adam’s offsprings and Adam was made of clay.”

In the same vein, the Prophet exhorted his followers: “*A true believer is one with whom others feel secure, one who returns love for hatred.*” He used to teach believers that anyone who would return love only when love was given belonged on a lower ethical plane. The true believer never reasons that it is only if people treat him well that he will treat them well in return. He is accustomed, rather, to doing good to those who mistreat him; he refrains from harming those who do him injury. The Prophet himself set the example: all his recorded words and actions reveal him as a man of great gentleness, good humour and common sense, whose love embraced both humans and animals.

Despite his position as leader, the Prophet never believed himself to be greater or better than other people. He never made others feel small, unwanted or embarrassed. He urged his followers to behave kindly and humbly, releasing slaves whenever possible and giving in charity, especially to very poor people, orphans and prisoners without any thought of reward.

He would tell people that “every religion has some

special characteristic, that of Islam being modesty”. In the absence of such a virtue, no community can enjoy lasting peace. The prophet’s own modesty, coupled with great strength of character is illustrated by the well known story of an old Meccan woman who hated the Prophet. Every morning when the Prophet passed by her house, she would empty a basket of rubbish on his head. He never once remonstrated with her. One day, when the Prophet passed by, no rubbish fell on his head. Going upstairs to inquire after the old woman’s health, he found her ill in bed. On seeing the Prophet, she began to weep: “I ill-treated you and now you came to ask after my health !” The patience and tolerance that the Prophet evinced in refusing to be provoked—preferring to show kindness and magnanimity to one who had wished him ill—is worthy of emulation.

In setting such an example, the Prophet’s aim was to fashion souls which were God-oriented, which found God so great that every other concern paled into insignificance. He wanted everyone to have such boundless peace of mind that nothing could disturb them. Such balanced individuals would never become a prey to negative reaction; they would be able to turn everything in this world, whether material or spiritual, into food for more profound thought, rather than into a pretext for rash and vengeful action. The essence of this philosophy is expressed in the Prophet’s sayings:

*“Nine things the Lord has commanded me;
Fear of God in private and in public;
Justness, whether in anger or in calmness;
Moderation in both poverty and affluence;
That I should join hands with those who break
away from me;*

*And give to those who deprive me;
And forgive those who wrong me;
And that my silence should be meditation;
And my words remembrance of God;
And my vision keen observation.”*

Through the first 13 years of his prophethood, Mohammed preached in Mecca; but it was in the face of bitter opposition from the Meccans. When it became impossible for him to stay there, he left for Medina. Wars were waged against him, but he showed his antagonists that the power of peace was far greater than that of war. The peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah is a clear example of this, when the Prophet agreed to every demand his antagonists made—on the sole assurance that peace would subsequently prevail.

His life’s experience ranged from penury to prosperity, from defeat to success, yet whatever the degree of well-being or hardship, he did not abandon the path of moderation. To the end of his days, he remained a patient and grateful servant of God, trusting in the inner perfectibility of humankind as he bore his message of peace and tolerance.

The Times of India 6 July, 1998

The Guru Awakens & Heals the Mind

Swami Chahanya Keerti

India celebrates Ashadh Purnima, the full moon of July as Guru Purnima. It is the day when all disciples come together to express their gratitude towards their Gurus. This is something uniquely Indian.

It is unlike a student-teacher relationship, which is very formal. A teacher imparts knowledge to students and gets paid for it. A guru does not merely impart knowledge to his disciples; he shares his being and illumination with them. The disciples learn the deeper meaning of life by living in Guru's presence. The Guru does not have to teach with his words; he guides with his own life. Hence a teacher does not command the same love and respect that a guru does. Teachers often complain that their students are not as respectful to them as they should be. Respect cannot be forcibly demanded—it arises naturally.

When a teacher evolves into a Guru, he commands natural respect not just respect but love and devotion too. The disciple becomes so devoted to the Guru that he can sacrifice his life for him, though a true Guru never expects any sacrifice. The Guru shares his Being, his love and light with his disciples unconditionally. Osho says: “The very concept of guru is Eastern; the word cannot even be rightly translated. When we translate it as ‘master’ much of its meaning is lost, because a master means a teacher—the guru is not a teacher. In the western consciousness nothing like the guru ever existed. That phenomenon is eastern...it is something basically eastern. It has to be understood”.

Describing the role of the guru, Osho says: “The role of the guru is to give you a glimpse of the real—not a teaching but an awakening. The guru is not a teacher: the guru is an awakener”. He has not to give you doctrines. If he gives you doctrines, he is a philosopher. If he talks about the world as illusory and argues and proves that the world is illusory, if he discusses, debates, if he intellectually gives you a doctrine, he is not a guru, he is not a master. He may be a teacher, a teacher of a particular doctrine but he is not a master, not a guru.

Something about the meaning of the word, Guru ‘*Gu*’ means darkness and ‘*ru*’ means dispeller, one who dispels your darkness is your guru. The first basic requirement of living with guru is meditation. Meditation is not a few deep breathing exercises; it is a way of life. Meditation is the medicine for all the social sicknesses that people suffer from. That’s why these two words—meditation and medicine have the same root: *medi*. The guru gives the medicines of meditation to his disciples and makes them healthy.

Talking about health, Osho explains that Sanskrit word for healthy is ‘*swastha*’. ‘*Swa*’ means self and ‘*stha*’ means rooted. You become healthy when you become rooted in yourself. You are sick when you lose connection with yourself, your own being. Meditation reconnects you with your self and makes you healthy. That’s why it can be called a medicine. Meditation is the panacea for all the inner ailments. It is the art of living, a really healthy life. Buddha calls himself a *Vaidya*. Guru Nanak says the same. All the enlightened ones of the East do not call themselves as philosophers but physicians. They are

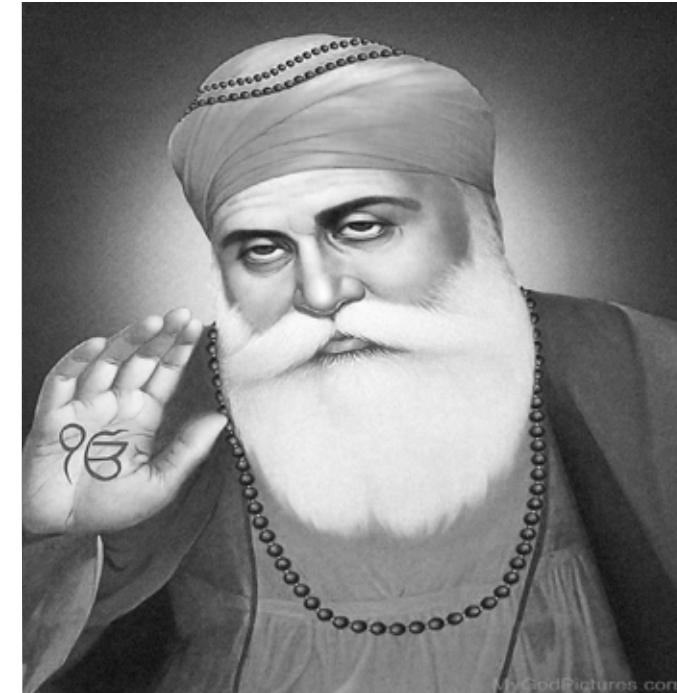
not ordinary doctors. They are the physicians of the inner dimension. They cure the sickness of the mind. Buddha says: “Don’t ask me any silly question of philosophy, I am not a philosopher. Tell me about your real sickness and I will give you the cure. Let me uproot your sickness.”

Basically, a man of enlightenment makes our vision brighter by removing dust from our eyes. He teaches us the methods of cleaning the mirror of our mind and leading our life with clarity. Meditation is nothing else but clarity. Meditation is a way of living a life in total awareness. It is not that we pray or meditate a few minutes in the day and then continue living life unconsciously in the regular mechanical manner. No, Meditation is moment-to-moment awareness. It remains there all the time. Meditation is an intelligent response to the moment.

The Times of India, 5 July 2001

Peace for Punjab NANAK’S VIBRANT LEGACY

BLITZ November 7, 1992



Guru Nanak’s birthday falls on Nov. 10, RADHAKRISHNA RAO recounts the life and teachings of this revolutionary social reformer, whose vibrant message is so relevant today, not just in Punjab but throughout the nation.

The continuing human tragedy in Punjab and repeated incidents of violence should not extinguish hopes for peace. It must be recalled that the founder seer and master mystic of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, appeared on the Indian scene at a most critical juncture of its history. For the hordes of suffering humanity, he revealed that the path of joy and salvation lay not in precepts but in personal

sacrifices.

As a humanist par excellence, he spelt out that there should not be any racial and religious discrimination because all men, regardless of race and creed, are equal and should live a life of absolute brotherhood.

As a luminous messenger of love and brotherhood, he strove to demolish which was divisive between man and man—differences of caste, creed and convention. He taught the oneness of God and brotherhood of man to a society crippled by incessant interne-cine quarrels. Though Nanak's primary mission was to extricate the ignorant masses from the morass of spiritual stagnation, for which he prescribed Nama Marg—path of contemplation—he never overlooked the social and economic aspects of life.

The social philosophy preached by Nanak, which has become a part and parcel of Sikh ethos, has withstood the test of time and has engendered in the votaries of Sikhism a healthy and virile attitude of hard work and service to society.

Nanak severely lashed out at the exploitation and suppression of the weaker and downtrodden sections of the society by the people of upper class. He identified himself with the under-privileged strata of society. The following utterance of Nanak is an eloquent testimony to his solicitude for the uplift of suppressed masses:

"I am with lowest of the low, what have I to do with the great?"

God's eye of mercy falls on those who take care of the lowly".

Dr. Wazir Singh says: "His role as a revolutionary social reformer was notable not only for the widest

republican spirit he desired to inculcate in his disciples, but also for his advocacy of the downtrodden, the workers, and toilers and womenfolk."

The friction produced by Hinduism and Islam worked marvellously in Nanak. Endowed with a heart broad enough to embrace both Hindus and Muslims, Nanak zealously strove to reconcile these two warring communities in a common worship of the one Supreme Being. He laid emphasis on the supremacy of truth.

The practical spiritualist that he was, he fervently realized that our people could not be resurrected until they were freed from the tentacles of religious dogma and artificial ritualism.

Nanak outlined the necessity of acquiring divine knowledge. According to him: "He who is true, is contented, who is kind to everyone and is devoid of greed and hatred, is not bigoted, has no evil desires, has controlled his self, knows right from wrong and has placed himself physically as well as spiritually at the disposal of good and who has cultivated the habit of truthfulness. Such a balanced man has become Guru's disciple."

GOD can be obtained, he said, through the path of intense devotion, self-restraint and self enquiry. He said that only a society inspired by a spirit of fearlessness can contain the wicked ambitions of the exploiting forces. Hence, he asked men to cultivate the virtue of fearlessness in their character and placed before them the invigorating concept of *Nirbhya*—fearlessness, which is also the source of righteousness.

It was this bold concept of *Nirbhya* that inspired the Khalsa to withstand all sorts of privations and persecutions

in their crusade against some tyrannical Moghul rulers. Dr. M. P. Kohli says: “In Guru Gobind, Nanak’s spirituality reached its pinnacle of glory and in him also appears the result of the great transformation of the society, so eagerly sought by Guru Nanak.”

Guru Nanak was perhaps the first saint-reformer of medieval India who embarked upon the idea of inculcating in his people, a spirit of fraternity and brotherhood, which forms the bedrock of the truly socialistic society.

Langar or community kitchen instituted by Nanak, where irrespective of caste or creed one can partake food with equal right, heralded a new era of social equality in Punjab. This revolutionary concept of community living, which Nanak thought can contribute to understanding and goodwill among people, is all the more relevant today, faced as we are with the stupendous task of disentangling the nation from the bonds of parochial passions, narrow fanaticism and disastrous communal thinking.

The Guru urged his followers not only to work hard and honestly but also to *share* the earnings of their labour with others so that weaker sections of the society would be able to tide over its hardships.

Decrying selfish greed, he warned men against unbridled indulgence in material comforts and luxury. By using Punjabi for the dissemination of his teachings, Nanak not only enriched the spiritual lives of the masses but also the much neglected Punjabi, which would have died of sheer disuse.

The teachings of Nanak are simple and pithy. He made use of such common idioms and expressions that even an illiterate can grasp the full significance of them.

The devotional hymns of Nanak, pulsating as they are with aesthetic sublimity, came as a whiff of spiritual solace to society, suffering under the yokes of hypocritical mercenary priests.

Nanak lashed out at the prevailing social corruption, moral degradation and religious hypocrisy. As a ruthless crusader against social degeneration, he sought to reform society through personal examples rather than through precepts. Thus Nanak stands out as a social reformer par excellence, a greater synthesizer, a spiritual visionary and a moral crusader.

Though more than five centuries have lapsed since Nanak attained final beatitude, the vibrant message of Nanak has all the potential to bring peace and tranquility to Punjab—the holyland of five rivers.

Sikh Thought

Guru Nanak says that one only wonders as to when this Creation happened. Man wonders about the time when God must have brought about the Creation, but no one knows the time of Creation. “The pandits cannot find out the time of Creation, otherwise they would have noted it in the Puraanas. Quzis also cannot find out the time of Creation, otherwise it would have been written in the Quran. Yogis cannot find out the day or date of Creation. He (God) alone knows when he created the Universe.”

*Vell na paayia pandiat ji hovai lekh puraan,
Vakhat na paayeo qaadiaa ji likhan lekh kuran,
Thit vaar na jogi jaanai, rut maah naa koee,
Jaa kartaa sirthi kau saaje aape jaanai soee.*

(Japuji-4)

Guru Nanak Dev's 'Contemporary' Philosophy

Inder Raj Ahluwalia

While the western world was being influenced by philosophers like Martin Luther; John Knox and John Wesley in the 15th century, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism-the world's youngest religion was quietly preaching a gospel in the Indian subcontinent that was new, unique and inspiring.

Amazingly, much of what Guru Nanak said is totally relevant to contemporary society. Today, the world is acknowledging his wisdom, sagacity and gospel, as not being merely divine but also performing the function of a beacon, a guiding light. One can now measure how effectively his words and actions have shaped thinking and viewpoints of many people and how important they are in today's turbulent global situation.

Born in 1469, an era of invasions, violence and unrest, Guru Nanak was not only an apostle who propagated dharma and belief in one God, but was also among the greatest philosophers of the modern era. He reached the heights of spiritual enlightenment rarely experienced at any age and his teachings have paralleled those of any other school of liberal philosophy.

While Christopher Columbus was voyaging the seas, Guru Nanak took extensive land journeys within India and abroad, spreading his universal messages. He travelled with a purpose to contribute towards creating a better world.

Guru Nanak's inherent nature of not accepting what was told and taught, at face value, led him to evolve as an original spiritual thinker. He believed in listening, understanding and acquiring firsthand knowledge before forming his own opinion. He listened to people of all faiths and cultures. He read extensively about Hinduism,

Islam and Buddhism, for instance.

The best illustration of the Guru's philosophy is through his three fundamental principles: 'Kirt Karni' or working for a living; 'Naam Japna', remembering God; and 'Vand Chakna', sharing one's possessions with the needy. These were the corner stones of Guru Nanak's teachings, the guiding principles of Sikhs. He said to believe in one God; do selfless service; share and care with the needy; earn an honest living; shed all inequalities and be compassionate.

Guru Nanak addressed issues that impacted contemporary society. He challenged the caste system; endorsed gender equity and became a pioneer in championing the cause of women's liberation. He promoted education for all by introducing the Gurmukhi script, the Adi Granth, which became accessible to everyone. He believed that integrity, respect and trust between different communities would lead to dignity for all people.

His greatest contribution was the teaching of the 'Science of the Word' (Naam), which forms the subject matter of the Adi Granth, composed and compiled by Sikh Gurus. Naam by communion with the word (Shabad) shall be attained by personal realisation of God and salvation.

Guru Nanak earned everyone's love and respect. When he passed on, flowers from both Hindus and Muslims were placed over his body. Kartarpur, where he breathed his last, is a site immortalised by a tomb built over the Muslims' Flowers and a temple built over the Hindus's flowers.

Today, Guru Nanak's teachings are a way of life for millions and are acknowledged as being highly relevant to contemporary society. Guru Nanak is also referred to as 'Baba Nanak' or 'Nanak Shah'. The currency of the Empire of The Sikhs established by Maharaja Ranjit Singh was 'Nanakshahi'. (Today is Guru Nanak Jayanti).

The Times of India, 14, 2016

Guru Nanak's Melody Of Universal Spirituality

M N Kundu

An experience of Alakh Niranjana, the Absolute and cosmic harmony in creation, as an expression of a single eternal Spirit shaped the non-sectarian precepts and mystic ideals of Guru Nanak—who revealed the secret of spiritual communion in beholding all in One and One in all. His spiritual melody is expressed in the Japji and Gurbani where he says that to enable us to experience oneness we have to place right living and right deeds above bookish creeds and religious rituals. The way to God is the way of sacrifice, the way of self-effacing love for God in all and abandoning all delimiting sense of divisiveness.

Nanak Dev stood for spirituality beyond religious rituals and humanism beyond manmade factionalism. When the priests of Baghdad asked him about his sect he said, “I belong to no sect and adore but one God. I see him in the earth below and in the heavens above and in all directions”. He added that greatness of God becomes invisible due to pride of man and vanity of knowledge. When the priests of Haridwar asked him about his caste he said, “My caste is that of wood and fire and I came from a town from where come both day and night.”

When the true spirit of religion got shrouded by external ritualism and utmost divisiveness, Nanak Dev appeared with his humble, experiential, non-sectarian spiritual wisdom for unification of humanity beyond caste, creed and religion. He said, “I have searched through the vedas and books of Islam and they are dull; speechless in the presence of the mystery of the Infinite.”

Guru Nanak Said, “No one is Hindu and no one is Muslim—these are our names for the masks—behind the mask search for light within.” He spread the religion of

compassion and as such his emphasis is not on scriptures, ceremonials or rituals but on life and living, on love for God and right action. His all-time dear companion Mardana was a Muslim. He said, “He is true to his faith who loveth God and man seeing all, abideth in God.”

Nanak Dev noticed the deep tragedy of the world caught in the mire of materialism, factionalism and hence, suffering and pain. He found solutions in rising above these to attain God through service, love and Omkara.

He prescribed meditation on the word of God with eightfold exercise or sadhana: purity of body and mind, silence, concentration of mind realization of the meaning of mantra, patience and contentment, faith, satsang or association with pure and holy ones, and living the mantra in daily life. Without meditation, merely doing good deeds with ego are spiritually fruitless. The disciple, whose mind and heart are focused on God, is Gurmukh progressing on the path to God. Those whose mind is entangled in material prosperity and enjoyment of the world are Manmukhi, and this leads them to suffering and pain. Without a boat, there is no way to navigate the ocean and the eternal advice of the guru is the boat which takes us across.

Nanak Dev travelled far and wide to spread the message of true spirituality suited to entire humanity. The keynote of his universal melody is that selfish ego is the root cause of sin and suffering and the remedy lies in renouncing self with humble service, sharing proceeds of efforts and sustaining self-effacing love for God. (November 25 is Guru Nanak Jayanti.)

(Times of India, 25-11-2015)

The Noble Tradition of Langar

Kabul Singh

This comment is provoked by Miss Heather Michaud's letter purported to have been written to Bhai Ranjit Singh ji, *Jathedar* of *Sri Akal Takht*, Amritsar on the issue of serving *Langar* in North American Gurdwaras. It appears that the practice of serving the *langar* on long tables and chairs has been going on for a long time and it is only now that the *Jathedar* has raised objection to this practice and insisted on serving the *langar* to the *sangat* sitting on the floor in a *pangat*. It is evident from her letter that a vigorous debate has started on this issue in the *sangat* in the North American Gurdwaras. She has contended that this has created a political divide which detracts the *Sangat* from the real purpose of coming to the Gurdwaras.

Before I dilate on the noble tradition of *langar*, I would like to make it clear that I hold no belief for the *Jathedars* of our *Takhts*. The views are strictly my own and would perhaps not have been needed, had certain basic issues not been raised which are relevant to the observation and sustenance of Sikh tenets as inherited by tradition.

It is stated in Miss Michaud's letter that the decision to sit on tables and chairs was made democratically and for so long no one has disputed this practice. The term *democratic* essentially means a political process and any decision taken accordingly is a political decision and not religious. Since the *Jathedar* has opined that *langar* should be taken by sitting on the floor at all Gurdwaras irrespective of their geographical locations, it does not make it a political issue. He has rightly highlighted the deviation from a traditional religious practice and no debate should have ensued on this score. The issue which

has stirred up the Sikh community in North America is essentially a religious one and needs to be addressed to as such.

Regarding her second point, that of having *langar* while sitting on the floor, is not a practice but a tradition, we first need to understand the objectives which necessitated instituting the practice of *langar* by Guru Angad Dev ji. The purpose, evidently, was and remains:

- a. To imbibe oneness among various members of the society.
- b. To serve the poorest of the poor by feeding them.
- c. To give dignity to the poor/lower castes by sitting with the rich/upper castes.
- d. To make the affluent section of the society realize the basic needs of existence, by serving the simplest food that is affordable by the poor.

It is interesting to know how far we have travelled since the times of the Gurus. A few Sikhs have traversed the path to wealth and riches and happen to live in the comfort of Western nations, adapted to the way of life as prevailing in these countries. While they are entitled to all the comforts thus attained, it gives them absolutely no right to redefine the religion-cultural ethos of the community at large. The *langar* was instituted for the objectives stated above, which stand relevant even today and are integral to all religious practices followed by the Sikhs.

Addressing her third point in the letter, that some Sikhs have expressed their unwillingness to come to Gurdwaras if tables and chairs are removed from the *langar*, it is indeed strange that having studied quite a lot about the Sikh religions, she should've spoken on behalf of such people. Is the reason for coming to a place of worship simply another outlet for a social gathering on a holiday or it is to seek spiritual peace, as in this case,

through the rendition of the *Gurbani* and *Kirtan*? If the former is the aim then such people, I am afraid, have set their priorities wrong and the Gurdwaras would be better off without their presence.

Seen in its proper perspective, a Gurdwara is not a place for demonstrative materialism. It is a place where people surrender their ego and submit to the command of the Almighty. Learning humility, spirit of sacrifice and service to the society at large, are paramount objectives of coming to a Gurdwara.

The above mentioned friends in the *sangat* as described by Miss Michaud, seem to be more interested in displaying their material status, than in coming to Gurdwaras for seeking spiritual solace. Sitting on the floor for langar seems to hurt their materialistic egos, which of course, is very unfortunate.

To achieve this objective, the institution of *langar*, serves a great purpose; *Aage pangat pachhe sangat* was ordained by Guru Amar Dass, to make the devotees submit to the divine order, by partaking of the *langar* and then meeting the Guru. The meaning of *pangat* is not literal as she seems to interpret. It means mental cohesion of the partakers in the *langar*. I must also state, in all humility, that *Guru ka langar* and community kitchen, as most people want to describe it in the English language, have no commonality between them. *Guru ka langar* is divine and the community kitchen, is merely a social/cultural practice. If the North American Sikhs want a community kitchen on holidays, they are welcome to do so and nobody should have any dispute on this being served on tables, chairs or in whatsoever manner they seem fit. Needless to say, this cannot and should not be described *Guru ka langar*.

Learning about religion by going to Gurdwaras is a welcome objective. How can one contend that by

negating the very first lesson of religion, one can learn about it? Chairs and tables won't teach one the basics of religion any more or less. Sitting in the *langar* will definitely give one the first lessons in humility.

It is no consolation to this writer that the North Americans have no wish to move chairs in the presence of their Guru in the Darbar Sahib. Perhaps, this is also a few years away and a *democratic decision* may give effect to this also, in due course of time.

Miss Michaud has mentioned that, after the passing away of the Tenth Guru, authority was vested in the Guru Granth and the Guru Panth. Panthic Authority is vested in the *Panj Piaras* or the five beloved ones and *Sri Akal Takht* is the torch bearer on such matters. All decisions are to be taken by the *Panj Piaras* at the *Akal Takht* after giving due consideration to the views expressed by various *Panthic* bodies all over the world. Any other method will lead to multiple practices, resulting in chaos which is not at all desirable.

Referring to the statement that our Gurus were not backwards and would not have insisted on removing the tables and chairs from the *langar* had they been alive today. The assertion is purely hypothetical. The established traditions remain the hallmark of all religious practices the world over. We should not lend our wishful thoughts to impede their observations under any circumstances. This is not to suggest that the practice of *langar*, as practised in the Indian Gurudwaras, is in accordance with the Sikh tenets. In fact a lot of introspection and rethinking is called for here to revert the tradition.

I suggest that the debate on the *langar* issue should end as desired by Miss Michaud. In fact, it should never have started had somebody not decided to introduce tables and chairs in the *langar* in the first place. It is not too late to restore order and respect for a noble tradition.

Nam Japna is the key to peace

Onkar Singh

In these troubled times of a global war on terrorism and widespread destruction of life and property, the key to peace is *Nam Japna* or recitation of the Divine name by the hapless mortal, thereby invoking God's mercy to curb the beastly propensity of man and stop blood-letting.

Guru Nanak, one of the great sages the world has produced, who laid the broad tenets of the Sikh Faith, incessantly preached *Nam Japna* (absorption in God's Divine name) or meditation on the one and only God. By constant remembrance of God with a pure heart and living a righteous life, one can attain *Mukti* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death) and attain happiness in this world, proclaimed Nanak. He preached early rising, bathing and meditating on the Divine name which he described as the biggest magical word, the real *jantar* (amulet) and *tantar* (charm). He said :

*Those who love Him
In their hearts
And have His name
Ever on their lips,
Those who workshop
Him but seek no gain
To them come birth
And death peacefully
Like birds at dusk
Settling on trees
To roost for the night
Some joyous, some sorrowing,
All lost in themselves;
When dawns the day
And gone is the night*

*They look up at
The sky and resume their flight.
So does man fulfil his destiny.*

A divine poet-philosopher, the hymns Guru Nanak sang, set to prescribed *ragas*, in praise of the Lord, the oneness of God, universal love and brotherhood, truthful living and equality of mankind are deeply moving the praise and love of God that emerges from his celestial hymn, *Japji sahib*, a morning prayer silently recited by the Sikhs, is itself a contemplation of truth and worship of God. Its preamble, which delineates the concept of one and the only God and is the *Mool Mantra* of Sikhism, says:

*There is but one God,
the Supreme Creator,
Without fear and hate,
Immortal, unborn, self-existent.
You shall worship Him
with His Grace.
At the beginning of time,
The true one was,
In the course of time,
the true one is,
O Nanak for ever the true
one shall be.*

For Guru Nanak, God is the synonym of "Ek-Onkara". Onkar is a Sanskrit word. Ek-Onkara is the transcendental Lord of all creation who, according to Nanak, "existed before the creation and who alone will survive the creation." *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy Sikh scripture, begins with "Ik Onkar". "Ik" or "One" is written as "I", the figure meaning "Ik", the symbol of the unity of God and His universe.

Nanak was so immersed in the continual

Meditation on God that he rapturously repeated the name of the Formless Creator. Just one hymn below shows his immeasurable faith in *Nam Japna*:

I live when I repeat the Name
I die when
I forget it.
It is difficult to utter
The true name....
How can He be forgotten,
my mother?
God is true, His name is true.
In O her hymn. He says:
Day and night repeat
the name O mortal
That thine impurities
may be washed away.

The teachings and hymns of Guru Nanak were imparted to his nine holy successors, the Sikh Gurus, to whom he transferred his own light. They shared the same light and preached the same truths revealed by Guru Nanak. Their message was the same: *Nam Japna*, fervent faith in the one and only God and a full acceptance of life with its truly ethical practice.

The supreme object of human life, they all preached as revealed by Guru Nanak, is meditation on and worship of God and utterance of His name. Only by remembering and loving God and His name could the Supreme Truth and peace be realized. Although God's limits and powers are unfathomable, meditation is not fruitless. As a matter of fact, it is through sincere and devoted worship that a man gains the highest status even in this world. "He who possesses the biggest treasure of *Nam*, is the king of kings," says Guru Nanak. The mortal upto whom God showers His grace, comes to realise that the real object of human life is to attain union with him.

"Having received the gift of human life, one must devote oneself to God's praise," say Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru. "Remember God, this is thy business, thy obligation. Part thy-self from illusion and take thy refuge in the Lord. False as the world's comforts; false are its luxuries. Thou hast not praised God's glory. Thy life is being unavailingly wasted. Cherish Him in thy heart as the fish cherished water".

In keeping with the spiritual message of Guru Nanak, the founder of their Faith, the devout Sikhs remember God daily, particularly in the wee hours of the morning, to glorify God, the all pervading Creator of the universe. They recite the Gurus' *Bani* (sacred hymns). They call it *Nam Simran* or recitation of the Divine Name. It implies contemplation on the wonders of the Lord's creation and constant reflection on His attributes of truth, beauty, perfection and compassion. This continues process of communion with God, stills the wanderings of the mind which becomes tranquil and peaceful. By *Nam*, evil thoughts are banished, sins erased and impurities of one's heart removed. In this state of higher consciousness, one realizes the Divine presence.

The Sikhs recite "Waheguru" (The Wonderous God) or "Satnam" (God is True) to invoke the supreme reality.

God, according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, responds to loving devotion. Man earns the Lord's grace and compassion. One need not go out anywhere seeking Him. "*He resides within you as fragrance resides in the flower or reflection in the mirror.*"

Since God responds to loving devotion, the most we can do is trust that our prayers for ending human suffering made with a pure heart will not go unanswered and that, by His grace, an era of peace and harmony will be ushered in.

Master of Silence

K Hari Warriar

I have not made any effort to build an organization. The emphasis is on spreading the knowledge: everything else gets taken care of by itself. I am there—giving direction, smiling and wishing well for everyone. It has taken the shape on its own and gets managed by itself.

On spirituality

Anything good need not necessarily be spiritual. For example, even to do a fitness regime, there is a tendency to procrastinate. The usual tendency of the mind is to postpone doing the good things and immediately do the bad things. If you postpone doing the good things they will never happen. The effort you need to put in is to stop procrastinating and have a balanced life. Always lead a balanced life between the spiritual and material.

It is not sufficient to do just hard work, it need to be smart work—merely doing hard work and being proud of it, will not take you far, you need to know what to do and do it properly.

On what to seek

Sincere enquiry about yourself will give you the experience that you are nobody and further take you to the experience that you are everybody. So you don't need to have a belief system in order to gain an experience.

Keep aside all your faith and belief and sincerely go deep inside in meditation, experience starts happening. And with experience if you read the scriptures, they mean a lot and confirm your own experience.

Sometimes consciousness assumes whatever

form or name they are fond of and then a higher state of consciousness comes along. This is called *yoga maya*. The goal should be to go beyond a name and form to our true nature, which is Satchitananda.

On teachers

Let's understand that good or bad are all relative. That's why the first principle in the Art of Living is "opposite values are complimentary". There is nothing absolutely good or absolutely bad. Milk is good but in certain conditions it is bad. Similarly, poison is bad but many times it saves life. All the lifesaving drugs are branded poisonous, so good or bad are all relative terms. Through discriminative awareness you have to know the truth.

On Scriptures and Sanskrit

Spiritual knowledge is present in the scriptures of the world. The essence has to be taken without building concrete walls. There is a difference in being religious and being spiritual.

Sanskrit, being the most ancient language, definitely has a huge wealth of wisdom from which the whole of humanity can benefit. However, wisdom is present in every language. Learning a language is not primary but secondary.

On mass awareness

Nature always maintains a balance. Whenever negative forces become too strong, it creates strong positive forces to counter them. Self-effort is definitely needed on the path of spiritual knowledge. Self-effort along with grace would help in reaching God, so assume you have the Guru's grace and put in your self-effort.

Of course, knowledge cannot be taught to the masses without a proper instructor. Otherwise we would have taught the whole course through books and television. We need a well-trained teacher for this. That is why in the Art of Living, I lay so much importance on the Teacher Training Programme, wherein the teacher takes good care of the student till the student becomes strong.

The teacher-student relationship is very sacred and is very strong. In our courses the teacher teaches the students for six days until the students become strong and can carry on, on their own. Till that time the guidance of the teacher is very important.

There are spiritual people everywhere in India, every village in India has a leader who has a spiritual bent of mind.

The Hindustan Times, June 27, 2003

Four Easy Steps To Meditation

Swami Nikhilananda

The first steps in meditation is being mindful of what we are doing. Learn to meditate while performing action, with a sense of seva and an awareness of being an instrument in the hands of a higher power. *Any action giving a feeling of joy and a sense of performing duty is meditation.* It is not necessary to go to Haridwar or Rishikesh to meditate, or even sit at one place for meditation. With such an attitude, even when a person fights for his country, he is in meditation. Observe great singers, dancers and artists; when they perform, they tune themselves becoming instruments in the hands of the Lord, free of any ego or pride. This state of joy is meditation in action.

The next step in meditation is at the level of feeling; to experience love for God and for all His creatures. Meera Bai and Tulsidas were in a constant state of meditation, because they loved and saw God in everything around them. *When we express deep feelings of love and respect towards anyone we love and revere, in thought, word or action, we are in meditation.*

Sage Narada once saw a Gopi sitting alone, in it's thought. She was yearning to be with her beloved Krishna. The sage asked if she had studied the scriptures and learnt how to reach the Lord, or whether she had gone through the different stages of meditation to attain the ultimate state of oneness with Him. The Gopi innocently said that she only knew that she was in love with Krishna and whenever and wherever she thought of her Lord, she found herself with Him. Through devotion and love alone she experienced ultimate bliss.

Meditation is feeling compassion, friendship, humility and love for the One principle pervading all

beings and objects of the world. When Jesus Christ was being crucified he cried: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. In that state of forgiveness, Jesus was in meditation.

We experience meditation in understanding the true nature of the Universe, through the intellect or buddhi. The philosophy of division sees differences, creates hatred, violence, misery and agitation in the mind. This cannot give us peace and quietude. The Vedanta philosophy of Oneness views the whole cosmos and everything in it is as pervaded with Ishwara. Through touching, seeing, smelling, hearing and tasting we commune with God alone. See the whole Universe as one family—Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam. In this understanding of Oneness, we are in a state of meditation.

The highest state of meditation is at the level of just being. To reach that state of meditation, we do not have to do anything, because being is meditation. That is why we are called human being. In this state we identify with the core or divinity in us—the Principle of Consciousness and Bliss. A person in this state of joy is in a state of meditation by just being aware of the present moment. Learn from the past, plan for the future but live in the present, aware of your real Self.

For peace, happiness, fulfillment, practice meditation in action, feeling, understanding and just being. To achieve the best, perform action with complete awareness and mindfulness, combined with a sense of service. Consider yourself an instrument in the hands of a higher power. *Love is divine; love is giving, not demanding.* We do not fall in love: we rise in love with God. Realise your oneness with all living beings, nature and the cosmos. Succeed in the practice of meditation and experience the joy and bliss of being.

The Times of India, December 29, 2002

Most Of Us Messed Up Inside

V. K. Kapoor

More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.

We pray because we have needs and desires. We all have to live and play with the genetic cards dealt to us. Many a time there is no precedent to follow, no rule to consult, no guidance from any quarter. Most of us are messed up inside. Desires remain dark, central and obsessive to our lives. We grope and experiment with ideas, governed by intuitive hunches and inspired by the unconscious.

The desire to pray is a deep inner longing of the human being. Prayer is our medium to reach a higher power centre, to commune with the invisible being, the creator of all things. Prayer is not a refuge of weaklings or a childish petition for material things only. Prayer is an innate internal and personal activity for the fullest growth of our personality. Only in prayer do we achieve the complete and harmonious synchronization of body, mind and spirit that gives the human body an unshakable inner strength.

Human beings are engineered for religious faith. Our genetic blueprint has made faith in the Infinite. Absolute is a part of our nature. Research has shown that those who pray and visit a temple or a church or a Gurdwara have lower blood pressure than those who do not. Those who are religious and socially involved have a 14-fold advantage over those who are isolated or lack faith. Prayer operates along the same bio-chemical pathways as does the relaxation response. Prayer affects ‘epinephrine’ or ‘stress hormones’ leading to a relaxed heart rate, respiration and other benefits. The act of focusing the

mind on a single sound or an image brings about a set of physiological changes which are the opposite of ‘flight’ or ‘fight’ response. Prayer builds our inner environment and sharpens our intuitive discriminative faculty that enables us to decide which of the two lines of reasoning is right.

Prayer creates a climate for growth. This energy is self-initiated and feeds upon itself. You get into a state of synergy. This is the state in which the whole is more than the sum of the parts. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible source of power that controls the universe. We get a part of this power apportioned to our needs. We seek to augment our finite energy by addressing ourselves to the infinite source of all energy. By prayer we build more internal security and we become more self-directed.

For prayer keep a secret chamber of silence within yourself. While praying, do not let moods, trails, battle or disharmony enter this chamber. Keep out all hatred, revenge and desires. This is the chamber of stillness and calm. Prayer awakens you to the miracle of existence. Silence and prayer are the elements in which great things fashion themselves. Prayer brings about a consciousness which transcends science, a development spurred by our rendezvous with mortality. Prayer bridges the gulf between the awards of a logical mind and the perceptions of an intuitive soul. It brings harmony between two universally conflicting elements emotion and reason.

Amazing things happen when we pray. It establishes internal controls which begin to give us spontaneously the responses we desire and need. The super conscious law of success is put into operation through man’s prayer and by his understanding of the Lord’s omnipotence. Do not stop your conscious efforts or rely wholly on your own natural abilities, but pray for divine aid in all you do. The

runways of the mind are cleared for the smoothest take-off and landing of our project. A mind at poise is the sure instrument for material success, the smooth and straight runway for spiritual take-off. Prayer builds strength within against the stresses of life.

Immense power has always been part of the formless world. You cannot broadcast with a broken microphone, so you cannot send prayers through a mental microphone that has been disturbed by restlessness. By deep calmness, repair your mind’s microphone and increase the receptivity of your intuition. Then you will be able to broadcast to Him effectively. If God does not respond to our prayer, it is because we are not earnest. We offer Him dry imitation prayer, which is no way to claim His attention. Cleanse your mind of all negation, such as fear, worry and anger. He knows whether your heart and mind are dry of devotion and whether your thoughts are darting wildly anywhere.

Make prayer a regular part of your life and it will change things that need changing. The biblical injunction to ‘pray without ceasing’ refers to a continuous, earnest, never-let-up form of prayer. It is another way of emphasising the immense power of prayer. Continuous, in-depth praying is required to develop power in prayer. Trouble and anxiety drive us to prayer and prayer drives away trouble and anxiety.

Prayer is the mightiest power on earth. Prayer’s power has been proven many times. Abraham Lincoln said: “I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for the day”.

An eminent physician once remarked: “Prayer is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician I

have seen men, after all therapy has failed, lifted out of disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the so-called 'laws of nature'. The occasions on which prayer has done this have been described as miracles”.

It is not necessary to explain things to God. For knows our needs before we speak and is more ready to give than we are to ask. Storm by nature is transient. Stillness triumphs over the heated Prayer stamps with indelible mark out actions and demeanor. A tranquility of bearing, a facial and bodily repose are observed in those whose inner lives are enriched by prayer.

When in prayer you clasp your hands, God opens His.

*Kashtian sab ki kinare pe pahunch jaati hai,
Nakhuda jin ka nahin hota, unka khuda hota hai*

(The writer is a senior IPS officer of Haryana).

The Tribune, May 31, 2001.

All That Glitters Is Not Gold

Hari P. Vaswani

Sadhu T. L. Vaswani belonged to Sindh province. He was in reality a Sadhu, a symbol of humility and he preached love among the different sects of society. Once he went to Hyderabad and he started “Sakhi Satsang” in Bhai Issardas Temple in city. The whole of Hyderabad resounded with music at the mystical hour of five in the morning as a band played to announce the opening of Sakhi Satsang. There must have been rejoicings in heaven too and celestial music must have been played by angels and seraphs. It was a sight for the gods to see when Vaswaniji, seated on a low wooden seat, kindled the sacred haven fire in the spacious room, which was filled to capacity by women and girls. All electric lights were put off: only a single dim light was kept burning. Was this not symbolic? The Sakhi Satsang, like this single solitary light, would keep shedding its light in the midst of the darkness in which the world lay enveloped.

Vaswaniji breathed out a soul-stirring prayer on this important occasion. The prayer was even as a song of Longing,—Longing to meet the Lord of Love, yearning to behold the face of the Hidden one.

“Long have I been separated from Thee, Beloved? Day and night have I drawn strains from the *sitar* of this heart? Keep not thyself concealed any longer, but come to me, Beloved, that I may speak to Thee” he prayed and continued:

“The world is dark, desolate and dreary without Thee, Beloved. I wander far and wide in search of Thee. I stumble in the dark. Listen to my cry of longing. Forgive my fathomless faults. Keep not thyself concealed from me but come to me, beloved, that I may speak to Thee!”

After offering this prayer Vaswani ji recited Sanskrit slokas from the Gita and then gave a touching discourse.

The sisters present in the satsang were greatly impressed by Vaswaniji's discourses which had a freshness and fragrance of the spring breeze. Their number kept increasing day by day.

The fellowship meetings were held every morning at six. The number of girls went on growing. Many girls were naturally hesitant to come to satsang at the lonely hour of the early morning. So they came in groups, singing devotional songs, till they reached the centre. Their songs, too, bade slumbering souls to wake up from sleep. To the group Vaswaniji gave the name "Hari Saina". The word Hari is one of the names of God while Saina means group or band. The quiet narrow lanes and streets of Hyderabad now resounded with the songs of girls as they came to the satsang from various quarters.

Vaswaniji had several problems to face. People, whose sleep was being disturbed at this early hour, resented. They met Vaswaniji and requested him to put a stop to such fellowship meetings. Vaswaniji had a heart-to-heart talk with them and explained to them the real purpose of life. "Life is meant not for gathering worldly wealth but the riches of the spirit. This spiritual treasure alone will we take with ourselves to there where we will one day return," he said.

Vaswaniji's words went home to the hearts of the discontented people who had come in a deputation. But they had another difficulty to face. "Sir!" they said, "Who will supply us morning tea if our wives attend satsang?" Vaswaniji smiled at these words and remarked: "Let the wedded ones stay at home and let only those that have no responsibilities join in the satsang."

Vaswaniji then took leave of the brothers in the spirit of humility, so characteristic of him. "Forgive me for my errors of omission and commission and fail not to bless this servant," he said to them. The last words touched their hearts and their noble instincts were aroused. They had indeed, been spending the precious days of life in amassing worldly wealth and had, no doubt, given no thought to hoarding the wealth of the spirit. They, who had gone to change, returned changed themselves, nay transformed. Thenceforth they never objected to their wives, sisters and daughters attending early morning worship and even went so far as to encourage them.

Vaswaniji, like all great teachers, sought to teach this group through parables. One of the parables he once related is as follow:-

"Africa is a land of black people called Negroes. Africans were once a wild and uncivilized race. The heat of Africa is oppressive. Africa is, however known for its diamond mines.

"The diamond is dim when it is taken out of the mine, uncut and unhewn. The diamond dealer labours hard and removes all dirt, polishes and hews the diamond till the multi-faced diamond grows in luster.

"To the wild Africans any cheap glittering sparking stone was more precious than a costly diamond. An Englishman, taking advantage of their ignorance, took glass beads with himself to the people of Africa who were easily led away by outer glitter and glamour.

The Englishman went to the bazar and displayed his glass beads. An African, desirous of purchasing them, went up to him and said 'I have naught else to offer but this piece of stone for your glass beads. Accept this stone and give me beads instead. The Englishman readily accepted the stone, which was in fact a precious diamond and parted

with his cheap glass beads. He made huge profit by selling the precious diamond.

“My daughters! Our plight is even as that of this African. We too foolishly barter the diamond of rare price for false glittering glass beads. We part with the precious diamond of the Name Divine and indulge in worldly pleasures and ravel in foolish delights. Long have you delighted in glass beads? The great God now beckons you to the satsang and bids you to accept the priceless Diamond. ‘Come unto me’ says the Master. Won’t you, children, give up the idle glamour of glass beads and go in for the Diamond of rare price?”

Those assembled realized that they had so far ill-spent their lives. They resolved to make good use of the time at their disposal, to chant the Name Divine and acquire the Pearl of rare price.

—From the book A Saint of modern India (volume 11)

Look For The Mandir That’s Within You

Satya Vedant

One morning a poor man approached a priest standing at the door of his temple and asked him permission to enter. The priest said: “My Friend, what would you do in a temple? So long as your mind is impure or restless, what good will it do getting in?” In times past, the priest would have been very curt. But times had changed and so he too, had changed his tone. However, his heart had not changed. He still managed to keep those he considered undesirable out. So he continued: “How will the likes of you understand God? Go and purify your mind first.”

The innocent man immediately withdrew from the temple precincts. The priest heaved a sigh of relief. He thought he had effectively gotten rid of the man as he would never attain peace of mind so easily and so would never come back again.

A year passed and one day the priest saw the same man walking-down the street in front of the temple. He looked totally different. He radiated a divine glory. The priest thought he was going to try to come into the temple again and the idea upset him greatly. But his fears were groundless. The man continued walking down the street without so much as a glance towards the temple. The priest could not contain himself. He ran after him and asked: “Where have you been? I have not seen you around here for quite some time.”

The simple man laughed and said: “My friend thank, you. I followed your advice. For the past year, I have been trying to attain peace of mind so that I might come to the temple. But last night God himself appeared in my dream and said: “Why do you want to go to the temple? To see me? Let me tell you, I have been trying to get in myself for the past ten years. If the priest hasn’t let

me in, he'll never allow you to enter?"

Osho often pointed out that *no church or temple built by man can be greater than man. And man-made churches and temples are so small and insignificant there isn't enough room for God! A temple built by someone whose mind is not a temple itself is of no use.*

One who has never experienced God within will never find Him outside. God makes his first appearance to a man within the man himself. And that first appearance is total. There is no outer way to reach the totality; the inner is the only route. *One's self is the closest thing to God; instead of searching for him far and wide, one has to discover him within. If a man cannot find something so close, how can he expect to find anything that is far away?* All along, sages have told us God is not experienced in the temples; God is experienced within.

Teachers like Osho have maintained that there is a real temple of God but it cannot be built from bricks and mortar. A temple built of stone can be Hindu, Christian, Jain or Buddhist but it cannot belong to God. Something that is the private property of a particular organization cannot belong to God as well. God cannot be confined in a temple God is omnipresent. He is whole, total. God's temple can only be the temple of consciousness. It is not in the sky or on earth. *It is in the soul itself. And it does not have to be built. God's temple is already there. It needs only to be unveiled.*

Love is both a temple and a sacred scripture. "The man who has had a smattering of love's language," says Kabir, "Is a scholar." Nothing remains to be learned if one has learned to love. Mastery of love implies mastery of all learning. He who hasn't learned the art of loving is ignorant of everything. *No knowledge, no sensation, no experience is superior to love.*

The Times of India, February 19, 2003

Discipline Opens Up A Whole New World

Gurumayi Chidvilasananda

How can the mind learn to perceive its own source, the light of Consciousness or Chitprakasa? By learning to keep its energies centred. This is possible with discipline.

Krishna describes the necessity of discipline when he says to Arjuna: "The yogi should constantly discipline himself remaining in solitude, alone with mind and body well restrained having no desires and without avarice".

In yoga, the world discipline has nothing to do with the rigours of boarding school or military life; it means to purify thought, speech and action.

Baba Muktananda placed great importance on spending time alone: "One should abandon all thoughts and practise watching what is happening within."

This is not just a matter of distancing yourself from people, building and professional obligations. You must make space in the region of the mind. The mind consists of your psychic instruments: the intellect, subconscious mind, ego and conscious mind. When you make space beyond all your mental activity, you discover the company of a deeper silence within.

Krishna began with discipline; then he asked Arjuna to remain in solitude. He added the word 'alone'. Being alone means separating yourself from the things that keep you from being with God. In this aloneness, kaivalya, there is no loneliness.

'Having no desires' is the next teaching in this verse—becoming free from the clutches of sense objects, from the desires of the senses. When desires are not under your control, they drive you into a ditch. A yogi, therefore,

must develop the power to say ‘no’ to unwanted desires. A yogi is free from avarice. When you look at history, it is clear that greed is the cause of downfall of empires. Avarice is like a disease invading the body.

For the fulfillment of yoga, to become free from desires, one-pointedness is vital, ekagra manas. A stable mind is a tranquil mind. A scattered mind can never gather enough momentum to progress on the path of discipline. When you focus the mind on something, whatever it may be, you absorb its qualities. In a very real way, you take it into yourself.

At the same time, you infuse it with your own bhav. Devotion to God is much more than a feeling. Through your devotion, God comes alive for you. Through your devotion, you also invite the one you worship into your body and mind, into your life. The formless takes on a form that you can relate to.

Krishna says: “Whenever the unsteady mind, moving to and from, wanders away, the yogi should restrain it and control it in the Self with *niyama*, regularity.” In the *Yogasutras*, Patanjali lists the *niyamas* as cleanliness, contentment, austerity, regular recitation of scriptural texts and the surrender of one’s limited will to God.

Contentment, austerity, chanting mantras and *samarpana* or surrender to God, help liberate the mind and receive God’s grace. Constantly remember how much grace there is in your *sadhana*. It’s like going for a walk and having the wind at your back. When that happens, it’s as though when you are walking, the wind is behind you, supporting you.

The Times of India 22, 2007

Bridge to God’s Word

Jesus is the culmination of the Jewish consciousness. All prophets of Jews that had preceded Jesus were preparing the ground for him to come. That’s what John, the Baptist was saying to the people. ‘I am nothing compared to the person for whom I am preparing the way. I am just sweeper. I am simply cleaning the path for him to come. The one higher than me is going to come.’ John the Baptist and the other prophets were simply preparing the way for this ultimate culmination, for this peak, this Everest. And then the Everest comes and something goes wrong. What goes wrong? The other peaks start feeling small.

They have all helped. Just think: Everest cannot stand alone if the other peaks of the Himalayas disappear; Everest cannot stand alone. It needs the whole Himalaya to support it, to be there. It cannot rise so high alone no peak can rise so high alone. It will need the support of thousands of other peaks smaller, bigger and all kinds. But once the peak has come up, the other peaks start feeling hurt. Their egos ache; it is very painful. And they *have* supported it—this is the paradox—they have supported the happening of this peak! It could not have happened without them and now that it has happened, they are feeling very low, depressed. If all the peaks of the Himalayas were to conspire against Everest, it would be very logical. If they crucified Everest, it would be very logical.

That’s what happened to Jesus. Once he was there, the Jews, the rabbis, the religious leaders and the priests started feeling very offended. His very presence was offensive; not that he offended anybody, not that he hurt anybody. How could he hurt?—but his very presence, that Everest-like height, that plenitude, that height—and everybody looked low and small.

Now Everest cannot do anything about it. It is not arrogant, it is not egoistic, but it is high that is certainly

so. And every other peak is hurt, feels pained and wants to take revenge. Hence Jesus was crucified. So was Buddha rejected—thrown out of this country completely. He has become a foreigner in his own land.

And this has been so down the ages, this is so still. And it seems this is going to remain so forever because man is, after all, man. In his sleep, in his egoistic attitudes, this is how he functions.

Jesus' Beatitudes are God's songs through him. Remember, he is just a medium. He is not the author of these Gospels, he is just a messenger. He is simply giving you that which he is receiving.

Now, let us go into these Beatitudes.

*And seeing the multitudes,
he went up into a mountain:
and when he was set, his
disciples came unto him...*

I would like you to go into each word very silently, very sympathetically.

And seeing the multitudes...

The crowd, the mass

He went up into a mountain...

These are ways of saying certain psychological things. The multitude is the lowest state of consciousness—the mass, the crowd. It is dense darkness. It is very dark there and very deep sleep. When you move in the multitude, if you want to connect and relate with the multitude, you have to come to their level. That is why whenever you go into a crowd, you feel a little bit lost. You start feeling a little bit suffocated. That feeling of suffocation is not only physical—it is not just that people are around you, no. The suffocation is more psychological, because when you are with people who are very low in their consciousness, you cannot remain an Everest; they pull you down. Whenever you go to the masses you lose something. Hence the need arises for aloneness, for meditation. And in Jesus' life you

will find that many times he moves in the multitude—his work was there, that was his field—but again and again, after a few months, he goes to the mountains; he goes away from the multitude and the crowd and the crowd mind, to be with God.

When you are alone you are with God. You can be with God only when you are absolutely alone. And when you are with God you start flying in the sky. The very presence of God takes you up and up. And the presence of the crowd takes you down and down. Only with God can you fly into the sky, can you have wings. With the crowds, your wings are cut. What to say about wings? Even your hands, your legs are cut. You become a cripple, because they are all cripples. You become paralyzed, because *they* are all paralyzed. And they will never forgive you if you don't live according to them when you are with them.

If you want to work with them, if you want to help them, you will have to move in their world, according to them. And this is tiring and this is very exhausting.

*And seeing the multitudes,
He went up into a mountain...*

He was staying in a village doing his magical work of transforming people—blind people were given eyes and deaf people were given ears and those who could not walk, who could not grow were made whole and those who had become dead and dull, they were again rejuvenated, revitalized. But this whole work...and many more people were coming and a great crowd was surrounding him...he became exhausted, he became tired. Hence the need to go up into a mountain.

Going out is going down, going in is going up. In the inner world, up and in mean the same; out and down mean the same. When you have to relate with people you have to go out and when you have to relate with people who are very low in consciousness you have to bend low. That is very tiring.

Jesus, Buddha or Mahavir all move to the mountains. They go into a lonely place just to regain their height, just to regain their purity, just to regain their own state, just to spread their limbs again, just to be themselves and just to be with God. With God, they start soaring high. With God, you become a seagull, you start soaring high. There is no limit to it. Again you are vital, again you are full of God, again you are like a cloud full of rainwater and you would like to shower. You come back to the multitude where people are thirsty.

People ask me what I go on doing in my room alone. That is my mountain. That is where I can soar high. I need not think about you. I need not commune with you. I need not function through the body and through the mind. I can forget the body, I can forget the mind. I can forget you, I can forget all.

In that moment of utter forgetfulness of all, one is. And that is-ness is immense. That is-ness has a splendour to it. Freshness it is, vitality it is, because it is the very source of life.

But once you are full of that life, you have to share. So every morning I am back with you, every evening I am back with you. I go on from my mountain to the multitude continuously.

Going to a mountain does not mean really going to a mountain, it simply means going to inner height. Whether Jesus went to a real mountain or not is irrelevant; it has nothing to do with the Gospel. He may have gone to the mountain, because it was almost impossible in those days to live the way I live. It was impossible.

When you are talking to the multitudes first, they are very indifferent to what you are saying—you have to shout unnecessarily. Second: if they are not indifferent, then they are against-antagonistic, always afraid and protecting their ideas, always resisting, arguing. That is unnecessary work. And these things that I am talking about or Jesus was talking about are not things that can be

argued. No proofs are possible, only trust. If you can trust me, these things can be explained to you. But trust has to be a very basic thing to it. If you don't trust me, there is no way to prove anything. Then it is simply a waste of my time and your time.

To talk to disciples is a different thing. To talk to disciples means that the other side is receptive—not only receptive but immensely welcoming. You are welcome, the other side wants you to come in and the other side wants to become a host to whatsoever you are saying. The doors are open, the windows are open for you to become a breeze, or sunlight and enter into their beings. They are not afraid, they are not defending, they are not arguing; they are ready to go with you wholeheartedly to any unknown dimension.

To talk to disciples is not a kind of discussion or debate—it is a dialogue. It is as much a dialogue as it is when two lovers talk to each other. The disciple is in love with the Master, the Master is in love with the disciple. There is deep love flowing. That love becomes the bridge and then great truths can be explained, conveyed, almost materialized.

The Master flies with God, the disciple flies with the Master. The disciple cannot see God yet, but he can see the Master and through the Master he can feel God. That's why the Master becomes almost a God to the disciple. He is by and by, the closer the disciple comes to the Master, the more and more he will see that the Master is empty or a mirror in which God is reflected. Sooner or later, he himself will become an empty, a mirror and will be able to help others.

He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Below Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This is one of the most fundamental statements ever made. Many other Beatitudes will follow, but nothing compares with this.

Power of Faith And Positive Thought

Promila Shankar

Of the three activities of thought, word and deed, perhaps thought is the most potent and powerful force, for it is the precursor of the other two. The battle is first fought and won in the mind, says industrialist Rahul Bajaj. Success is achieved twice, once in the mind and the second time in the real world. Visualising your goals and success is an important skill for any successful leader, says Azim Premji.

No matter, in whole mind, thought occurs; its laser-like energy seeks a target. Thought as a potent force is well recognized since ages; that's why we give so much importance to invocation, seeking divine blessings before embarking on any project. Why is it that we exhort youngsters to take the aashirwad of elders? We know that positive thinking is a strong force that can be harnessed for the welfare and success of all.

The importance of prayer has been emphasized by all our religious leaders. What is prayer but a thought repeated with fervour? It is a heartfelt thought. Ramakrishna Parmhansa said: If you want anything from the bottom of your heart, rest assured, my mother will answer your prayers, if you will only wait. Prayers send powerful vibrations into the cosmos and create a magnetic field to attract the objects of our prayers. There are innumerable cases where mass prayers have worked miracles. There are a number of books including the Chicken Soup for the Soul series which relate such true incidents. Recently, Discovery channel had featured the case of a girl who was in coma for a month. She seemed to be on the verge of death. Doctors and relatives wondered if the life-support systems should be disconnected. They decided not to lose hope. Mass prayers were offered at her school for her well-being. It was nothing less than a miracle, when the

girl finally recovered, Prayers release the energy within us to achieve what we want.

We talk of the power of positive thinking as a stress buster, metta bhavna, for good health. Happy thoughts release hormones which work for our well-being and negative thoughts release hormones which make us ill. We exhort our children to think big and dream big. We tell them to hitch their wagon to a star. We tell them to keep their goals in mind. What is determination but the capacity to think the same thought again and again till we achieve what we want?

Thoughts not only have potency for the person thinking the thoughts but also, they have the power to influence people at whom they are directed. Ancient mythology is replete with stories of blessings and curses that became real. Reiki, for instance, is the art of self-healing, even distance healing.

The violent can be made calm by exuding thoughts of love and compassion. Buddha calmed the mad elephant Nalagiri and the robber Angulimala through thoughts of loving kindness. We often say that a person is known by the company he keeps. A sensitive mind easily absorbs the vibrations emanating from the thoughts of the people it associates with. Visits to holy places are considered good because the good thoughts of the holy people gathered there and the ensuing vibrations definitely affect one in a positive fashion. Plants, trees, animals all respond to thoughts. Deep thought has the ability to extract knowledge and information from the higher dimensional knowledge space. The Vedas and Upanishads are said to have been revealed to deep thinkers.

The world is but a thought of God and we are what we think. Our thoughts are unrestricted. They are absolutely free, free to travel and free to influence us-for better or for worse. Let's recognize this fact and harness positive thoughts for our well-being and betterment.

The Times of India, December 31, 2004

Loving God in Practice

Baba Virsa Singh

When we erect an elaborate religious building, it simply increases the burden on people and diverts resources from the alleviation of poverty. Instead, if we take barren land and develop it, sow crops there, we can use that income to decrease poverty and help the poor to rise. Those who love God should always be thinking of what problems exist in their particular areas and spend their time working to alleviate those problems.

As Guru Amar Das prayed, “O God, the whole world is on fire.” People are suffering in sorrow and oppression; the environment is suffering. The Guru prayed, *“Please bless and relieve the suffering of the entire creation. From whatever path people approach you, please bless them.”*

I have full faith that if those who preach the word of God would all get involved and begin to work productively again—rather than just sitting idle and taking money for themselves and for big buildings in God’s name—we would be able to overcome many difficulties.

We should all work hard and serve humanity but keep ourselves out of the picture. We should constantly thank God as the only Doer: “Dear Lord, this work I have done is all your work. I have done nothing. This is all your grace.” To love God is not to sit idle and say, “O God, you are responsible for everything”. Rather we should work incredibly hard to overcome the difficulties in the world. We should meet every adversity and then pray, “Dear lord, this service and this success are all due to your grace. I have done nothing.”

As one meditates, one becomes aware of everyone’s needs and is always concerned for their well-being. One cares for the poor who work all day but still cannot meet their basic needs. Guru Amar Das has said, “Worry about others.” One continually prays, “Please God Give them

food, give them clothing, please make their life easier. And in addition to their physical sustenance, please give them spiritual sustenance, too.”

(The Hindustan Times, April 20, 2006)

Scientific studies have shown that meditation can be of great help in empowering the nervous system, and in slowing down the ageing process. Since majority of diseases are psychosomatic in origin, meditation, by removing mental tensions and conflicts restores health and harmony to the system. The deep state of rest that one gets during meditation is better than many hours of sleep. As one moves from the circumference to the centre of one’s being, the mind rises to a state of transcendental consciousness, and becomes calm and balanced. It is then without fear, hatred, anger or negative feeling. During meditation, there is decrease in oxygen consumption, cardiac output and breath-rate, resulting in a revitalized organism. Increase in electrical activity of the brain stimulates the cranial nerves, sharpens cognitive ability, and expands awareness. Humanity is facing an existential crisis today as the higher values of life are being ignored. People are losing touch with their real self; they are catering to the needs of the body, but not of the mind and the soul. The inner man is being starved of sublime thoughts which can uplift the spirit. This has resulted in a negative approach to life, leading to selfishness, hatred, violence and crime in society. Meditation helps one to reintegrate and revitalise the self. The drop becomes the ocean. In words of Osho : “The word meditation and the word medicine come from the same root. Medicine cures your body, Meditation cures your being; it is the inner medicine.”

Dr. Satish K Kapoor

Love God, Love His Creation

Paramahansa Yogananda

Love is ecstasy, bliss... a feeling where the beloved is the ultimate...when we limit our love to a person, it becomes binding; may be selfish or even suffocating. However love can be selfless, a never-ending and flowing emotion...it can touch the very core of your existence because ultimately love is the root emotion which literally holds our universe together.

Mother Teresa has said, “Love is a fruit, in season at all times and within reach of every hand. Any one may gather it and no limit is set. Everyone can reach this love through meditation, the spirit of prayer and sacrifice, by an intense interior life. Do not think that love, in order to be genuine has to be extra-ordinary. What we need is to love without getting tired. How does a lamp burn? Through the continuous input of small drops of oil. What are these drops of oil in our lamps? They are the small things of daily life: *faithfulness, small words of kindness, a thought for others and our way of being silent, of looking, of speaking and of acting.* He is not out there; He is in you. Keeps your lamp burning and you will recognize Him.”

People are critical of the very existence of God. They say, if He is there, why then is there so much suffering? Why doesn't He love us? Is there a mother or a father who doesn't love his children? It simply cannot be. *God gave us parents as an extension of his unconditional love.* However naughty a child might be, the mother will still love him and if he apologizes and goes back to the mother—will the mother not hug him? Why then is God any different? If He created us in His image then is there any possibility that he cannot love us? Aren't we his Children?

Perhaps the doubt of love lies not at His end but at our end. I know of people who have managed to reverse their lives by just being with God-loving Him, acting as an extension of his will, being his channel and his instrument.

We have been created in order to love and to be loved. In order for us to be able to love, we need to have faith because faith is love in action and love in action is service.

All we have to do is to transcend personal love until it becomes love for every being. We should never suffocate the love we feel for a person rather we should love him so much that our entire being becomes love itself and this love then transcends into divine love which will then flow through us into everybody.

Paramahansa Yogananda expresses this in beautiful words: “God gave you a family so that you may learn how to love others and then give that kind of love to all.” So we can all start right in our own homes.

Bhakti or love for the Lord is a blessing. He is the one who floods this world with the nectar of pure divine love. He sets the highest, rare and blazing examples of this love Himself. Bhakti is love for the sake of love. Bhakti is a sacred, higher emotion with sublime sentiments that unite the *bhakta* with the Lord.

Rabindranath Tagore has said, “He who loves finds the door open.” God loves us out of His Infinite Bounty and His Heart's Door is always open. So why shouldn't we love him for the sake of pure love? Also how can we love anybody without loving Him after all he is the source of all the love that is within us.

Don't look for Him outside, he is within you. You will experience His presence when you look tenderly at

your child and he smiles. You will see Him in his smile. You will experience His presence in the look that a person gives you when you have helped him in his hour of need. He is there all around you and you will experience Him in all the joy that you get by doing small things with love and compassion. In loving someone you will experience His presence. You will experience the grace and love and you will be so overwhelmed with presence.

As you feel the love within you, you will feel your inside melting, you will experience joy, bliss which will not only fill you up from inside but also your entire body, you might experience a tingling sensation which will not fade away. It is an experience of ecstasy.

Says Hector S Ramos, Assistant master of the World Pranic Healing Foundation, Philippines:

Divine love is a state of consciousness produced after the soul has evolved to a certain degree. It is like blooming of a flower. It happens naturally and cannot be forced. *Heart is the function of Divine love...it enables the soul to become aware of the needs of others and emotions of kindness, love, mercy, sweetness, tenderness become prominent. It is from the heart centre that the soul is able to learn the lessons of relationships.*

“After the heart develops, the crown blooms. When the crown centre develops, the soul becomes aware of certain experiences that may describe Divine love—feeling of melting, everything is melting into sweetness—everything...every human being, any form of life animate, inanimate is part of one whole thing. They are all inside one thing...this brings a feeling of sameness, unity, oneness... with this comes the realization that behind every outer appearance there is One that contains everything.”

“Mentally it manifests’ as clarity—the soul simply knows the nature of things; emotionally it brings an intense

feeling of joy and happiness, joy that is not dependent on any outer circumstances.”

When we can experience this love, it will infuse joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries, anxieties, fears, mental torments and tribulations will entirely vanish. Union with God is the ultimate law of being. The highest truth is absoluteness when the soul rises above through different states of consciousness until it attains absolute perfection and becomes identical with God. This is the culmination of all spiritual aspiration and the ultimate love.

The path of Bhakti is said to be the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of human inclinations. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating his human instincts. It is not direct assertion of God, but a progressive realization of Him.

As somebody once said: *“Love is man’s reality. Devotion is man’s divinity and Surrender is man’s immortality.”*

Be in communion with the Lord...you will become one with the Lord. What more can you ask for, what more do you need?

The Hindustan Times, 17 October, 2003

Love Is Nothing But God, You And Me

Siddhi Srivastav

Love is euphoric, ecstatic, over-whelming joy. Why doesn't a newborn baby cry while in the mother's womb? Why does it start crying the moment it comes into this materialistic world?

A mother's womb for a baby is nothing less than a temple for there is only love.....of the mother. Love is euphoric, ecstatic, overwhelming joy. Enjoying life in such a sweet atmosphere, the baby feels safe in her mother's womb. Why then should not a place like this be called a temple? No one but God resides in a temple. Thus a newborn is regarded as God incarnate. When born it is separated from the spiritual and holy world of freedom and so cries to express sorrow on arrival in a world of falsehood.

God has gifted every baby with the virtue of being loved and being lovable. It's we who tend to lose and make others too lose this precious gift. The innocence of a baby fills everybody's heart with happiness. Love does not expect. God loves us the most and does not expect anything from us. It is up to us whether or not to offer prayers to God.

God's love is boundless and immeasurable. We pray to God because we are grateful. We have the power to understand His Creation. Why do we think then that God also gives us sorrows? We tend to forget God in times of happiness. That does not mean that God wants us to pray to Him; it is to learn again how to love because praying is loving, a part of loving mankind. We do not show kindness to others once we get happiness. Service is the best way to

love God.

Kindness and courage are different dimensions of love. Kindness is the virtue of being compassionate and merciful towards others. Every living being is an image of God. It's also important to love ourselves and the life given to us by God. The spirit of God within us is called the soul.

Problems come and go. Joys and sorrows are like day and night. But if a person keeps awake all night just to see the sun rise, he can never see it because when the sun rises he will fall asleep. Joy or sorrows...we must welcome every emotion that God wants us to experience, with courage.

Anything that brings us closer to God is love. The great classical dancers of our country worship God through their dance. A farmer worships God by toiling in his field, which is his first love. Similarly, in other professions worship God by performing their duty sincerely and honestly. There are many who are atheists but if they perform the duties assigned to them by God, their noble deeds bring them closer to Him and a person close to God is a loving person A loving person is a happy person. So it fills their life with happiness and prosperity. This is one way of bringing ourselves closer to God.

All her life Meerabai loved Krishna, she worshipped him. She did not bother what the world would say. She just wished to be close to God, she just wished to be close to love. *True love brings us close to God and subsequently we become an image of love and finally an image of God in the true sense. Thus, God is love. You, too can become love.*

The Times of India, June 26, 2007

Reaching Out to God With Fear or Love

Mahmood Farooqui

There has historically been a 'dichotomy' within Islam, between perceiving God as an austere judge, a common strain in Semitic religions and perceiving Him as a loving, merciful figure who demands devotion purely through love. From these two extreme ideals emerged the two ways of relating to God, *Shariat* and *tariqat*.

The shariat enjoins Muslims to fear God's wrath, follow His rules and accumulate merit to escape perdition. The tariqat, also sometimes called the Sufi way, aspires to communion with God through love and devotion.

Among Sufi saints, the highest praise is reserved for Rabia, the unique one. Attar describes her thus: "That woman who lost herself in union with the Divine, that one accepted by men as a second spotless/Mary-Rabia al Adawaiyya, may God have mercy upon her. If anyone were to say, Why have you made mention of her in the class of men, I should say God does not look upon the outward forms".

Rabia al Adawaiyya or Rabia the pure, Basri was born in a poor Arab family and was orphaned and sold into slavery when very young. How she was set free and how she became a Sufi is unclear but stories of her austerity, piety, immaculate life and the feats and legends associated with her have made her one of the most iconic representatives of an 'alternate Islam'.

She was among those who proposed the doctrine of disinterested love to God, a concept unfamiliar to many of her fellow Muslims. There is love that seeks a reward, there is love that only seeks to love the object. Ordinary worshippers fear God, she said, whereas the mystic loves

him. She was once found seated before the Qur'an with fire in one hand and water in the other with the intention of lighting a fire in Paradise and to pour water on Hell so that both veils of hope and of fear may completely disappear.

The ways to God are as many as there are creatures and believers. Rabia declared in reply to people's objection to her keeping a dog. "Until that dog enters heaven I would not set foot there", she said. As for Satan, she dismissed the concern by saying my love for God leaves me no room for hating Satan.

Once, Rabia was to visit the Kaba and in response to her entreaty God moved the Kaba to where she was. When the saint, Ibrahim b Adham, arrived after a 14 year odyssey on foot through the deserts, he was bewildered to find the Kaba missing and at last beseeched Rabia to explain it. She said, "You spent 14 years of the passage in ritual prayer (Namaz) but I in personal supplication (Niyaz)".

On her unmarried status, Rabia said, "My existence is for him and I am altogether his. I am in the shadow of his command. The marriage contract must be asked for from him, nor from me". She even expressed the same sentiment about God's Apostle, Muhammad. When asked what her love for the prophet of God was like she replied. "Verily I love him greatly, but love of the creator has turned me aside from love of his creatures".

Rabia took the concept of selfless and universal role to unprecedented heights. That she was also its apotheosis in conduct and action makes her one of the greatest spiritual figures of all time. Her beliefs are equally universal. Does not Radha, at one stage, completely submerged in her love for Krishana, ends up expressing her pining for Krishna by exclaiming "Radha, Radha?"

Divinity is Attained With Unconditional Love

Shri Nimishananda

All of us are aware of our bodies. Whether we are young or old, slim or plump, tall or short, we feel a sense of belonging to our body and identity ourselves with it. Likewise, though we cannot see our mind, we are constantly aware of it through our thoughts. Sometimes our thoughts are good. At other times they are either natural or negative.

Negative thoughts and emotions shatter peace of mind and cloud our judgement. Then our words and actions become negative as well and we end up hurting people around us. On the other hand, all of us frequently do helpful things. These are good actions but the intentions behind them may not always be selfless. For instance, we may give alms to a beggar simply to get rid of him and stop him from pestering us. We may donate charity to create a good impression or gain publicity. We may help somebody hoping for a favour from him later. So we must carefully examine the attitude with which we give.

Doing good is not enough, being good is far more important. We need to share our talents, time of wealth with others expecting nothing in return. The scriptures tell us that nobility is the doorway to Divinity. Selfishness, negative thoughts, emotions and actions take us away from Divinity. Selflessness, noble thoughts and emotions take us closer to Divinity.

Emotions help us to feel divinity. The greatest emotion is love. Today love is only pertaining to family, friends and acquaintances around us. It filters down according to the proximity of our relationships.

To feel divinity, our love should go beyond

relationships. We should extend our love to everybody. Today we have alienated divinity from us because our love does not reach everybody. Even the kind of love we are used to is all about “expectations”. For example, if we are showing love to someone today and that person doesn’t reciprocate as expected by us then we start hating that very person whom we liked moments ago. So even the emotion called love fails here. The very base of divinity is love. So we clearly fail to feel divinity.

The experience of divinity for wise people is that they had no separate relationship with another human being in their minds. All human beings were only an extension of the Creator. Wise men showered unconditional love not only on human beings but also on all other living beings. That was how ahimsa was established. Love one and all. We then not only feel divinity, we can also establish it in our hearts and learn to pay universally.

Usually even our prayers are self-centred. We present a list of desires to God and ask him to grant them. Sages ask to rise above ourselves and pray for the people around us and for the welfare of the world. When we engage in this kind of selfless prayer regularly, it purifies us and helps to establish us in a state of nobility. When we are established in a state of nobility, we draw close to divinity. As we draw closer to divinity it wells up from the soul and overflows. We are enveloped in peace, bliss and contentment. We have finally tapped the divine core within. When each and every pore in our body is oozing with divinity, it becomes a mantle to encircle the world and peace reigns supreme.

The Times of India, 10, 2006

Mother as a Form of Divine Love

Swami Deshikatmananda

The mother aspect of God is glorified in the Hindu scriptures. In the *Sapta Sati* or hymns to the mother, her divinity is acknowledged. In the Hindu tradition, the names of *Pancha Ratnas* or the five jewels are remembered by the married women. They are Sita, Savitri, Damayanti, Mandodhari and Tara. These women were known as *Pativrata Siromani* or women whose penance was for the sake of their husbands. Chastity has the power to make the woman *Tejo Maya* or one who emits an aura of light.

In other religions, the mother aspect of God is not accepted, let alone worshipped. But in the Hindu tradition, the mother aspect of God as Durga, Kali or Vaishnavi are accepted and worshipped to attain *mukti* or liberation from worldly desires. The divine manifestation of the mother may be worshipped as an idol in the form of clay or metal.

Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated to the whole world that the divine mother can be realized by worshipping even a stone image with the longing of a devoted heart. He worshipped the stone image of the Goddess Kali with a heart full of love and had a powerful vision of her. He was able to experience the presence of the divine mother everywhere and in all beings. He worshipped his own wife Sri Saradamani Devi as the symbol of the divine mother and as an expression of divine love.

When the divine love expresses itself through a woman, she becomes a universal mother. For her, there is no distinction of caste, creed, religion or nationality. All the barriers are broken and her love captures the hearts of all. Sri Sarada Devi's love was such. She, as the eldest daughter had to shoulder a great responsibility of

her family. She was a tremendous support to her mother Shyama Sundari Devi. She did the humblest of chores, without the slightest *Ahankar* or ego, even after she had started to be venerated by thousands of followers as Holy Mother.

When Sri Ramakrishna married her, she was 5 years of age. By the time she became a young woman, he had already taken *sanyasa*. She then became a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi showered her love for everyone, whether a Muslim, a Christian or an untouchable. Divinity and humanity were deeply ingrained in her nature. Wonder-struck at her character, Brahmachari Rashbihari once asked her: "Are you the mother of all?" "Yes", she replied. "Even of these lower creatures?" pressed the inquirer, to which she replied in the affirmative again.

A *brahmachari* once saw a Muslim of dark appearance, emaciated body, ragged clothes and with a sorrowful expression, tottering into the mother's compound. With an endearing voice mother called out to him, "Amzad, my son come in". He then started narrating about his suffering to the mother. In the evening, the brahmachari noticed that the man's face was lit up with a happy smile and he was altogether a changed person. He had bathed and rubbed oil over his rough skin: then he had a full meal and walked home, blessed as he was by mother's divine grace.

There are innumerable such incidents in mother's life which are an eye opener, for the modern women. Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi is a role model for modern woman as a good daughter, sister, chaste wife, active worker and as a mother of all. Her wisdom was unique. As a *Sangha Jantri* or the mother of the Ramakrishna Mission, she had to solve many vital problems of the organization even

when Swami Vivekananda was spreading the message of *Vedanta* or non-dualism. Her opinion was final and accepted by all.

According to the philosophy of Vedanta, the world is non-dualistic in nature. This means that everything in the world is pervaded with *brahman* or the supreme consciousness. Vedanta puts forward the view that this universe is full of *ananda* or bliss of the supreme being or God and life on earth is the unfolding of this spirituality in every being. Vedanta, in other words, contains the essence of the *Vedas*.

Holy Mother said once, “But one thing I tell you- if you want peace, my daughter, don’t find fault with the others but find fault rather with yourself. Learn to make the whole world your own. Nobody is a stranger, my dear; the world is yours”.

(The Times of India, January 5, 2002)

Desireless way to Divine Reality

Tejambra

It is easy to say that we are religious while we might be full of desires. We might be slave to our passions, whims and fancies. We may say that, this or that is allowed. But a religion that does not prohibit indulgence in desires is no religion. If we are serious in our quest for self-realisation and communion with God, we have to empty ourselves of all desires and become absolutely desireless. The desire for God is sattvic desire. This will not bind us to the world and will help us attain perfection in our *Sadhana*.

Desires can never be satiated or cooled by enjoyment or indulgence. As a fire blazes more where it is fed ghee and wood, so does desire grow when fed on objects of enjoyment. If all the foods, precious metals, lands and assets, animals and beautiful women were to pass into the possession of a man deluded by desire, they would fail to give him satisfaction.

Desire which is born of the quality of rajas is man’s enemy. Rajasic ways of living and rajasic food ignite the desire for money, women, sex, fame, property and all related sins. Bad thoughts such as anger and hatred emanate from unfulfilled desires. An angry man commits all sorts of sins He does not realize what he is doing. All evil actions and evil qualities emerge from anger.

When desire gets hold of a man, it hides the knowledge of his true nature from him. Desire shrouds wisdom, just as smoke shrouds fire. Man becomes egoistic. He gets deluded. He becomes a slave of passion and gets miseries of all kinds.

Desire is born out of ignorance. It arises from a sense of imperfection or the limitation of identifying ourselves with the finite body, mind and ego. Desires are the

seat from which sprout ceaseless births. As is your desire, so is your will, as is your will so are your acts. He who is desireless has an absolutely free will. He is not bound by acts or *Karmas*, a desireless person is above the law of *Karma*. *Kamina* (lust), *Kanchana* (gold) and *Kirti* (fame) are the three obstacles to God-realisation.

An unfulfilled desires turn into anger or hatred, which are the main enemies of spirituality. The best way is to reduce your wants and desires. You can easily root out desire with *viveka* and *vairagya* i.e discrimination and dispassion.

The world is carried in the torrent of desire. In its eddies there is no soil of safety. Wisdom alone is a solid raft and meditation a firm foothold.

So long as man has not thrown from him the load of worldly desires which he carried with him, he cannot be at peace with himself. So, let us live happily without desires among those who are given to covetousness. In the midst of men full of desires, let us dwell empty of them.

Desire is the profoundest root of all evil. It is from desire that the world of life and sorrow has arisen. Like burning coals, our desires are full of suffering, full of torment. No living being possessed by desire can escape sorrow. Those who have understanding of the truth, have a hatred for desire. The fruit of coveting and desire ripens into sorrow. It is pleasant at first but soon it burns the person, as a torch burns the hand of the fool who does not cast it from him in time.

The indriyas or senses bring man in contact with external object and desires created. But the senses are not all. If the mind cooperates with the indriyas, only then the mischiefs wrought. The mind is more powerful than the indriyas. But more powerful than the mind is reason even if the mind brings a message into the mental factory by

its association with the indriyas, pure reason can reject it. Behind reason is the self, who is the director and who is superior to reason. Desire is of a highly complex and comprehensible nature. Therefore it is difficult to be eradicated or conquered. But with the help of reason all desires can eventually be destroyed.

By practising discrimination and dispassion and regular meditation, one can slowly and steadily annihilate all desires and achieve *virvikalpa Samadhi*, A super conscious state where there is no modification of the mind or *tripti*. One will have God realization.

And with the shedding of desires, the idea of man's identifying himself with his finite body, mind or ego also drops. He becomes *Videha*. Then he has the true knowledge of the *atman* or 'self' which brings immortality and supreme peace. Man attains the timeless state of perfect and eternal bliss.

The Tribune, January 24, 2002

Harm No One !

Holy, holy, holy, is every creature!

Touch ye these children of the Lord

With reverence and love !

Harm them not ! But serve them

in deep humility !

T.L. Vaswani

The Bhagwad Gita As A Scientific Handbook

Jaya Row

The Bhagwad Gita is a scientific handbook that takes you from spiritual infancy to heights of perfection. It resonates with everyone, because of its mind-stretching quality. If you think that to be assertive is the way to go, the Gita speaks of softness. If non-action seems to be the option, The Gita prescribes action. If grasping will help you acquire more of the world, it counsels you to let go-lose it, to gain it.

The Gita's first lesson is on importance of the intellect. You have two gifts-choice of action and intellect. Choice is a given. Intellect has to be developed. Nobody understands the importance of the intellect and the need to strengthen it. Hence people are making choices with a weak intellect. The mind is the seat of emotion, impulse, like and dislike. Intellect discriminates, judges, discerns, weighs the pros and cons and arrives at a decision. Mind is irrational, intellect is rational. The purpose of life is to make the mind work for you and not against you. A mind not governed by the intellect is dangerous. It distracts, tricks and misleads you. The Gita helps you use your existing intellect and gives knowledge to fortify it.

The Gita bestows serenity, tranquility and contentment. When the mind is calm, the intellect is sharp and you achieve success effortlessly. Across the world people are in varying degrees of agitation. The cause is unbridled desires. Ride on desire and you will be agitated. Rise above desire and you will be content. Shift from the attitude of grabbing to that of giving, sharing and contributing; from profiteering to offering. And you will be showered with prosperity. Grab and you lose; give and you gain. Think of yourself only and you will be discontent.

Focus on others, you will be happy.

The Gita speaks of excellence—in the world and beyond. It inspires you with a higher ideal. Move from mere physical delights to emotional motivation, intellectual stimulation and the highest—the lure of the Infinite. With the higher ideal you tap into your potential, become creative and energetic, and transform from an ordinary mortal to an extraordinary immortal. The world does not need more brilliant or talented people. It needs ordinary people with extra ordinary motivation. Chapter 3 of the Gita gives the ingredients of perfect action that help you gain the world and take you to the Transcendental.

The Gita extols the virtue of oneness-Vasudhaiva kutumbakam, the entire universe is one. Just as the one ray of white light refracts into seven distinct and different colours when passed through a prism, The one Brahmand is seen as the pluralistic, diverse world when seen through the prism of the body, mind and intellect. You are strongly entrenched in feelings of otherness. You imagine adversaries where there are benefactors. You see opponents, not partners. You create a hell for yourself. When you see yourself in others, you revel in their victory. Then you never encounter failure. Drudgery becomes revelry and you gain power. The sixth chapter of the Gita gives oneness as the test of spiritual development. Spiritual growth is not measured by the number of scriptures mastered or pilgrimages undertaken. It is measured by the extent of oneness you experience and live.

The Gita offers many more valuable principles of life that you can use to achieve success and happiness in the world. And it takes you to enlightenment.

Times of India, 20-11-2015

Vedanta is Science of Life and Action

Swami Parthasarathy

Vedanta is a systematic and formulated knowledge of life and living. It reveals your real Self. It explains your true nature and your relationship with the world. You are essentially divine no matter what you appear to be—a sinner or a saint. Divinity is the core of your personality. With this knowledge you can live a life of perfect harmony, peace and bliss.

The goal of all religions is one and the same. In Latin, *re* means back, again; *ligare* means to bind, to unite. Etymologically religion means that which binds one back to the origin. The Sanskrit word yoga is derived from its root yuj, which means “to join, to unite”. So all religious practices known as different yogas are directed to this union to one’s real Self. So also does Vedanta help you regain your original being. Furthermore, Vedanta excels in its scientific exposition. It expounds the truth systematically and logically. Its truth is its authority. It belongs to one and all without distinction of caste, creed, colour, community or country. Vedanta has therefore a universal appeal to all the lovers of truth.

Vedanta trains you to think for your-self. It helps you to analyse, investigate and realise the essence of life. Thus through individual study, reflection and judgment generations after generations experienced the fundamental truth of life. Later on, some enthusiastic spiritual workers brought out their own abridged versions of truth. These were well meant but only feeble readings of the original truth. People began to follow their teachings blindly. Consequently they lost their independent reflection and judgment. Spiritual education was no longer liberal. It turned servile. People relied more on the opinion of others.

They stuck to authorities. In the holy name of religion fanatic superstitions and parasitic ideas infested the entire mankind. This is short, is the sad state of the world today. In such a state how can there be peace and happiness?

The root cause of suffering in the world is that man does not look within. He does not exercise his own judgment. He relies on outside forces to do his thinking. He functions predominantly on blind faith and mechanical rituals. This is spiritual suicide. The role of Vedanta is to pull man out of his infatuation to personalities and educate him on the eternities.

The present religious systems are governed by maxims and mandates. The rigidity of precepts and preceptors saps the vitality of religion. The intelligentsia, particularly the youth all over the world detest rigidity. Young men and women ought not to be dictated by doctrines and dogmas. Whatever is forced is never forceful. “Dos” and “dont’s” are not designed for human beings. What man needs is knowledge, love and service. Not static precepts, binding principles and mechanical rules. The higher values of religion have to be presented systematically and scientifically to the modern intellects. The science and philosophy of Vedanta is the answer to the requirements of mankind. The process may be slow but sure.

You need to make an independent assessment of truth without relying on authorities. George Bernard Shaw once remarked that the most intelligent person he met in his life was his tailor! When asked why he thought so he promptly answered, “Because he is the only one who takes fresh measurements every time I go to him”. Vedanta is an experimental science. It is like chemistry.

You cannot know unless you support your theoretical knowledge with corresponding practical experiments.

Similarly, you cannot know Vedanta unless you verify your intellectual understanding with its practical application in life. You will have to try out the philosophical truths in your day-to-day living. As and when you work them out practically you gain the true knowledge of Vedanta.

You do not have to retire to the forests to put Vedanta into practice. No doubt this knowledge sprung originally from the deep recesses of the Himalayan ranges. The Rishis (Indian sages) had to retire to the jungles to pursue their studies and experiments peacefully. Any scientist would require to isolate himself in order to master the science that he pursues. But practitioners of Vedanta, having acquired this knowledge, are obliged to work in their respective fields of activity and translate their theoretical ideas into practice living. History reveals that preachers of Vedanta were actually engaged in worldly affairs. They were not recluses, not ascetics, but men of action working in a spirit of renunciation.

The Times of India, June 18, 2001

Attachment and aversion are the root cause of Karma... Karma is the root cause of birth and death, and these are said to be the source of misery. None can escape the effect of past Karma.

Mahavira

Building Character With Remembrance of God

M P K Kutty

There are times in a devout's life when God answers before he calls but then there are also occasions when God seems to stand after and deliverance seems delayed. Wait on Him every morning before attending to the day's work. Matthew Henry, an authority on scriptures, says waiting on God means living a life of desire towards Him, delighting in Him, depending on Him and remaining faithful to Him.

For beginning the day with God, for spending all walking hours with Him and then closing the day with Him, Henry makes several suggestions on the lines of Brother Lawrence, who "practised the presence of God".

Worldly people boast about themselves and exult in the multitude of their riches. The godly man dwells in God and has confidence that whatever he meets with in this world, he has reason to hope in His providence and provision.

Remembrance of God cleanses our conscience. Our mind is fed by the truth of God and our imagination, by His beauty. And our heart is open to His love and our will, to His purpose. All these must remain so for the rest of the time when we attend to our daily business or interact with fellow beings. Even when our hands are working, our hearts may be waiting on Him by a habitual regard for Him and with a desire to glorify Him.

Whether we are toiling or resting, waiting upon God lightens the toil and sweetens the comfort of our repose. When our affairs prosper and we are possessed of success and plenty, we yet need His presence to guard us against

all temptations. In prosperity and adversity we must not be moved. Blessed are those who discover the goodness of God in their youth and learn to wait on Him and when we get old with our infirmities we will find more reason to depend on Him and more time to serve Him through intercession and prayer.

Each day brings with it new cares and burdens. Let these burdens be cast upon the Lord believing that His providence extends to all your affairs, to all events. Your time is in His hands and all your ways at His disposal. Believe His promise to work out all things to your good.

The more we discern the vanity and emptiness of the world and all our enjoyments in it and their utter insufficiency to make us happy, the closer we shall be to God.

If you bring up children to love God and fellow beings, engendering in them a cooperative spirit instead of the worldly competitive spirit, they will grow up to be a blessing.

Character is the product of daily, hourly actions and words and thoughts; daily forgiveness, unselfishness, kindness, sympathies, charities, sacrifices for the good of others, struggles against temptation, submissiveness under trial. These little acts in keeping with scriptural instructions, practised daily mark one as distinct from others who follow their instincts and desires unrestrained by the spirit. This again constitutes daily victory over the temporal and progress towards perfection.

The Times of India, April 27, 2006

Prophet of Peace And Compassion

Zeeshan Ahmed

The Holy Prophet of Islam, Hazrat Muhammad Mustafa, peace be upon him, was born on the 12th day of the month of Rabi ul' Awwal. His birthday is celebrated by followers of Islam, worldwide, across continents and cultures.

The Prophet's illustrious life provides to us lessons of the highest order. The Holy Qur'an emphasises this point for all Muslims when it titles the Holy Prophet as Uswatul Hasanah, the best or most ideal model for us to emulate. Indeed, in these turbulent times for Muslims, particularly, it will do well to return to the basic roots of the teachings of the Holy Prophet.

The following story illustrates the inclusive nature of the Prophet's philosophy. It is the story of an old woman whose heart turned towards the Holy Prophet only because he treated her in a loving and forgiving manner. The woman disliked the Prophet and she expressed her feelings by throwing garbage on him and would litter his path every day. The Holy Prophet was patient and calm.

One day, the woman fell ill and was unable to carry on with what had become a daily routine. The Prophet enquired about her absence and when he got to know she was unwell, he went to meet her.

On seeing the Prophet, the woman remarked that he had come to take revenge on her when she was sick and vulnerable, unable to defend herself. The Prophet politely indicated that he had come over to enquire about her health and not to extract revenge.

These words of the Prophet had a miraculous effect on the woman who then accepted Islam and the prophet-hood of the Prophet.

In this manner, several incidents are narrated of how the Holy Prophet won over the hearts of his followers. Throughout his life, he set high standards of character and behaviour. The Holy Qur'an reminds us of this when it says, "Had you been severe and harsh-hearted, the people would have turned away from you" (The Family of Imran).

Whenever people came to visit the holy Prophet, despite their enmity and harsh words, they were treated with respect and the Prophet won them over with understanding and love.

The Holy Prophet set new standards in the rules of warfare. He was the first to prohibit, during a battle, the killing of women and children and the cutting of trees. Prisoners of war were treated fairly. Bodies of the slain after a war were protected from mutilation and handed over with respect to their kin.

All these had the effect of establishing the Holy Prophet as a compassionate administrator whose purpose in life was not to end life, but to raise its quality—not just in material terms but more importantly, in spiritual terms.

Prophet Muhammad is the last in the chain of prophets and messengers from Allah, says the Qur'an (Ahzab, verse 40). By using the term Nabi or Prophet, it is clear that Allah will send no more Rasuls or messengers. While all messengers shared the responsibility of prophethood, not all prophets were messengers.

The high moral standards and strength of character of the prophet are evident in the way he lived life. The high standards set by Prophet Muhammad are worthy of emulation. As the ideal human being, Prophet Muhammad took pains to express the importance of compassion, love, understanding and peace.

The Times of India, April 22, 2005

Who is Good Friend?

Joseph Oommen

Every religion has its own avowed devotees and faithful. But there are rarely 'good friends' among them, those who can keep their word, are dependable and can do what is necessary when in need, for each other. Our society is in dire need of trustworthy friends, who can go beyond mere lip service of compassion and end up doing good deeds.

Everybody is familiar with the biblical story of the Good Samaritan, who unlike two passersby including a priest, took care of a wounded traveller and ensured his full recovery.

The priest and the Levite went by their creeds and laws and they feared touching a man who was presumed dead, lest they had to go through a purification process for seven days. But the Samaritan, performed the good deed of taking care of the injured man. He paid whatever he had to the innkeeper and offered to pay more on his return if more expenses were incurred. Even the innkeeper, believed in the word of the 'Good Samaritan'. He was credible, trust worthy, compassionate and a good neighbour.

Anyone who is in need is our neighbour. Compassion, must be seen in deeds. No show of devotion or practice of faith, however theologically sound they are can be considered spiritual unless our attitude to our fellowmen are based on good neighbourliness. Every person will be judged not by the creed which they followed but how they lived their lives. It is not the religiosity or correct behavior that makes a good man but it is the spirit of love and compassion.

Anyone can be a, true friend and a good neighbour as long as we hold respect for the jobs given to us. We have to carry out all tasks dutifully but not to just please our superiors. The secret of any good workmanship is to do all work for God.

A selfish man says 'what is mine is mine' and a Robber says 'what is thine is mine.' But anyone, who can say 'what is mine is thine', is the true devotee or a man of faith.

The Hindustan Times, September 22, 2004

God Bless the Nation with Peace and Prosperity

A. P. J Abdul Kalam

Conscience is the light of the soul that burns within the chambers of our psychological heart. It raises its voice in protest whenever anything is thought of or done contrary to righteousness. Conscience is form of truth that has been transferred through our genetic stock in the form of knowledge of our own acts and feelings as right or wrong. It threatens, promises, rewards and registers. Conscience is an unbiased witness. If conscience stings once, it is an admonition, if twice, it is a condemnation. Why have we become deaf to its voice, insensitive to its pricks, Callous to its criticism?

The answer is corruption. Corruption is an assault on consciousness. The corrupt pretend that everything is all right. Do they not have the idea of the law of action and reaction? Have they forgotten how impressions of the subconscious mind and their force work? If you take bribes, your thoughts and actions are registered in the subconscious mind. Will you not be carrying forward your dishonesty to your next generations, causing them great suffering? It is a painful reality that corruption has become a way of life, affecting all aspects of living—personal and social. It is not merely pecuniary corruption but other forms of corruption such as female foeticide as well that is cause for great concern.

If you perform wrong actions and sinful deeds and treat them lightly today, you will not hesitate to commit serious crimes tomorrow. If you allow one sin to enter and dwell in your conscience, you pave the way for the entry of a thousand sins. Your conscience will become blunt and lose its sensitivity. The habit of performing evil deeds

will pervade the body like the poison of a scorpion.

I would like to share with you the experience of D M Sinha, a retired civil servant now settled in Meerut, in promoting spiritual values in society. Sinha has designed a model for individuals, their families and their dear ones. The model nurtures a spiritual mindset out of which arises ethical conduct. In this model, love and affection are combined with spiritual knowledge in transforming the individual, families and other people coming in contact with the group. The Sinha household emphasizes two parameters. First, repetition and chanting the name of God as a regular practice and daily study of scriptures by family members collectively. Sinha also promotes joint family system. These two tasks enrich and empower human life for working with dedication as an agent of God for attainment of perfection at home, in the work place and in society. He also says that the thumb rule for practical ethics is: desist from doing to others what you would not like to be done to you.

Every religion has a central component spirituality that is driven by compassion and love. Rationality and logic are intrinsic to science and spirituality. A spiritual experience is the goal of a deeply religious person whereas a major discovery or an invention is the goal of a scientific mind. If both the aspects are unified, amalgamated in our own patterns, we can transcend to that level of thinking, in which unity is a cohesive aspect. For this environment the two major components, science and spirituality have to interact.

The Times of India, 17 May, 2006

The Source Is Still With Us, Say Science And Religion

Mani Bhaumik

Science and technology have improved our lives by giving us material abundance. But science has also provided us with weapons of mass destruction. We need spirituality, more than ever, to generate a feeling of cosmic kinship for the survival of our species, as much as it has always been essential for an abiding personal happiness.

Spiritual traditions have been based on the oneness of creation. Can science today, in some manner, attest to our belief in the One Source at the hub of all spiritual heritage? Amazingly, the same scientific method that once compelled us to question the existence of God is now, by way of new physics and cosmology, developing evidence that Indeed tend to support our age-old belief in the One Source, a higher power behind all creation. We find remarkable support that the oneness of all spiritual traditions is the same oneness that science is now pointing to.

If the knowledge that everything in this universe comes from one single source, takes root in our consciousness, can you see the profound impact it would have? Doesn't this mean that humanity is of each other? It really shouldn't make any difference whether you are black, white, brown or yellow, whether you are a Christian, Jew, Muslim or a Hindu. Yet we see these differences are causing gruesome conflict in the world today. We desperately need the feeling of cosmic kinship that results from the realization that everything comes from one single source.

Just like the God of religion did not leave the universe after creating it, science shows us that the source is still with us. The Star War movies made the phrase

popular: "May the force is with you". In light of the discoveries of modern science, we can say that the source is always with us. It is up to us to get in touch with the source and give our mind an laser-like focus to realize our full potential.

Fortunately, the human brain has evolved to a point where our consciousness facilitates experiencing our oneness with the source, a higher power behind everything that people call God. This experience of oneness appears to have inspired the founders who started the great spiritual orders or religions of the world. Now we can observe the brain scans of people who are in the state of consciousness when they experience the oneness and find that there is a distinct, repeatable brain pattern involved with the experience.

To those who experience the oneness, it is as real as any other experience when they are in their most alert state. When we take into account the fact that the same consciousness also enables us to infer empirically that everything comes from one source, then it stands to reason that there exists the one source in reality that the brain is allowing us to experience.

Wonderful things can happen when we are in tune with the source within us. There is plenty of scientific evidence to prove that our consciousness can heal our body. Stress is the biggest killer in our society today. It causes disease and leads to disease. But if we are in tune with ourselves, we are in tune with nature and in tune with the one source of everything, then our stress dissolves and we instinctively know the right thing to do. We feel blissfully happy and see ourselves as whole and one with the universe.

The writer, a scientist, lives in LA. He is author of Cod name God.

The Times of India, July 21, 2006

The Close Relationship Between Science & Religion

Arup Mitra

Science explains a phenomenon in a logical framework while religion recommends certain guidelines without going into the details of why they need to be followed. The main difference in the approach lies in the fact that science is meant for those who are mentally ready for an explanation while religion addresses the general public. Both are concerned with welfare of society, but the difference lies in the fact that science tries to experiment with methods and outcomes, both, while religion aims at a set of outcomes for which the method is fixed. For the latter, the outcome is more important than explaining why the specificities are to be followed. Thus those used to logical explanations may find the path of religion a bit authoritarian though in actuality it is not so.

Since the main responsibility of religion is to create disciplined life it cautions about the adverse outcomes, if deviations are too many. The approach is seen to be creating fear in the human mind though actually it is only a warning—like a mother tries to tell her naughty child when he is up to mischief.

Let us take the example of environmental degradation. Science would tell us exactly which particular human action is involved and in what way it would result in harmful living conditions. Religion, on the other hand, would not go into the details of these steps; rather, it would highlight the consequences in their most adverse forms. For example, lessons on cleanliness are imparted through parables so that people are fearful of taking recourse to vulgarities. Besides, religion's domain

is very wide-in one go, it addresses innumerable aspects of life, aiming at providing stability to the entire issue of a balanced existence. Naturally, it does not have the space and time to go into the nitty-gritty. Only experienced teachers, gurus, can provide you with the link through intuition, perspective and contemplation.

Realization of that link is a state of mind where everything looks crystal clear—the entire complex, causal structure reduces to a simple proposition.

Religion and philosophy are like two sides of the same coin. One emerges from observations and other from the analysis of those observations. On the other hand, science and philosophy share a close domain. Philosophy provides support to define a clear-cut objective and route to scientific enquiry. It enables the abstract to take a more tangible shape by providing inputs to form the right kind of hypothesis in the course of enquiry.

The human mind can never sit idle. It believes in acquisition, whether of material wealth or knowledge. In the case of an average person, the tendency to accumulate material wealth is commonly observed. On the other hand, those in search of higher realities also need religion to get the moral strength to stick to their pursuits. Else, there can be a vacuum, momentarily though, and such crises can do more damage than what greed can actually cause. Hence, knowledge is of great importance in religion and in life. Only a disciplined mind can realize the symbiosis between science and philosophy. And religion is nothing but the core of discipline.

The Times of India, 27-8-2015

All Religions Must meet to Create A Global Society

Politics and religion should be mixed in a right way so that the best things of all religions influence politics, said Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi, here today. He was chairing a round table on the centenary celebration of world's parliament of religions in 1993 being held at Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan.

He said that in India which is a religious country, religion is misused in politics.

During the medieval ages, the black-clad clergyman holding the cross was supposed to have the final word for everything. In the 20th century the white clad scientist holding a computer was supposed to have the final word on everything from economy and politics, he said.

However today the scene has changed, as the scientific and technological progress have shown to have limitation and their role was confined to find comforts of life, but were clearly not the final word on the world and unable to answer metaphysical questions about meaning of life.

There has been tremendous resurgence of all kinds of religions everywhere and atheism, communism and liberal secularism being on the wane.

He said there were two kinds of powers, economic, political, cultural power and the other power was that of prayer, meditation, the power of man rooted in God who will not fear anybody. Unfortunately, we have not learnt how to relate one power to the other, he added.

He had great fear of a world ruled by Bishops, Mullahs or Gurus.

The centenary celebrations would be more effective

in Delhi and Bangalore than in Chicago because even the first world's parliament of religions in 1893 was more of a concession at a meet where USA was demonstrating its Science and Technology in connection with celebration of event of Columbus's setting foot in America.

Dr. Karan Singh, said that there was major challenge today to create a global consciousness for the global society into which we have moved. Religion could play an important role in this direction.

He said 70 years indoctrination by the avidly atheistic communist society was not able to erase religion in the Soviet Union which today is witnessing upsurge of religion.

All religions were the varied manifestation of the same divine inspiration and interfaith dialogue was not meant to prove one religion as superior to other but find out the highest common factor among the religions, he added.

Reverend Marcus Bray brook, Chairman, International Interfaith Co-ordinating Committee, said that all religions today are concerned in having good relations with other religions and have felt the necessity of understanding each other and have bilateral relations.

He said people had concern to bring up their children in their own faith but wanted them to have respect for all other religions. There was also growing intellectual dialogue, interest in mysticism and prayer meeting and service of those in need, he added.

Chairman Minorities Commission SMH Burney warned that with growing industrial and scientific progress and broadening of outlook there is a relapsing of people into revivalism and fundamentalism and following of past rituals.

In Asia, people were taking to religion as something

esoteric.

He said the getting together to great religions like Islam and Hinduism had given rise to mystic traditions of Sufism and bhakti. Today vested interests were creating wall between man and man and there was a need to fight this tendency in the true spirit of bhakti, Sufism and mysticism.

He urged for the involvement of youth in the broader understanding of the relationship between different religions.

Former speaker G.S. Dhillon said that interfaith movement had created a platform for better understanding among different religions.

Dr. John Taylor, Secretary General of World Conference for Religion and Peace said that the challenge for 1993 was to look self critically why religion had failed and how we can learn to live together in the future with faith and commitment. Prof. B.R. Nanda, former director Nehru Memorial Museum, said that inter faith was a daily programme with Mahatma Gandhi with his daily morning- evening all-religion prayer meetings.

The Hindustan Times, October 11, 1991

PINGALWARA DIARY

(UPTO APRIL, 2017)

Services rendered by Pingalwara Institution for the service of the suffering humanity are:-

1. Homes for the Homeless

There are 1764 patients in different branches of Pingalwara now a days:-

(a) Head Office, Mata Mehtab Kaur Ward, Bhai Piara Singh Ward	374 Patients
(e) Manawala Complex	854 Patients
(b) Pandori Warraich Branch, Amritsar	82 Patients
(c) Jalandhar Branch	39 Patients
(d) Sangrur Branch	228 Patients
(f) Chandigarh (Palsora) Branch	94 Patients
(g) Goindwal Branch	<u>93 Patients</u>
	Total <u>1764 Patients</u>

2. Treatment facilities

(a) **Dispensary & Laboratory:-** Pingalwara has a dispensary and a laboratory for the treatment of patients. It has an annual expenditure of about Rs.90 lakhs. Medicines are also distributed free of cost to the poor and needy people.

(b) **Medical Care Staff:-** Experienced medical staff like Nurses, Pharmacists and Laboratory Technicians are available for the care of the Pingalwara residents.

(c) **Blood-Donation Camps:-** A Blood Donation Camp is organized on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary every year. The blood is used for Pingalwara residents and road accident victims.

- (d) **Ambulances:-** Ambulances with basic Medical aid are available for victims of road accidents on G.T. Road, round the clock and provide facilities for taking Pingalwara patients to the hospital.
- (e) **Artificial Limb Centre:-** There is an Artificial Limb Centre at Manawala Complex, dedicated to the memory of Bhagat Ji which provides free of cost Artificial Limbs to Polio-affected and amputee cases. 8137 needy people have benefitted till April 2016.
- (f) **Physiotherapy Centre:-** A Physiotherapy Centre equipped with State-of-the-art equipment is functioning in the Manawala Complex since June 2005. On an average 80 patients are treated everyday.
- (g) **Operation Theatres:-** There is a well equipped Operation Theatre in Bhai Piara Singh Ward Amritsar for general surgery and A Micro Surgery Operation Theatre in Manawala Complex where Cochlear Implants and major operations are carried out.
- (h) **Dental, Eye, Ear & Ultrasound Centres:-** These Centres have been set up to provide these services to Pingalwara residents, sewadars and their families.

3. Education

Pingalwara Society is running five Educational Institutions for the poor and needy children.

- (a) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Manawala Complex:-** This school provides free education to 723 students from the poor and deprived sections of the society. They are provided with free books and

uniforms. Children being brought up by Pingalwara Society are also studying in this school.

- (b) **Bhagat Puran Singh Adarsh School, Buttar Kalan (Qadian):-** This school is dedicated to the sweet memory of Bhagatji. 452 students are getting free education under the able guidance of well qualified teachers. The school also provides financial help to students who have finished their school studies and are aspiring for higher studies.
- (c) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Manawala Complex:-** This school is providing Special Education to 205 Special children.
- (d) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for the Deaf:-** Bhagat Puran Singh School for Deaf Children is functional at the Manawala Complex since May 2005. The school is equipped with state-of-the-art training aid and has 150 children on its rolls.
- (e) **Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education, Chandigarh (Palsora):-** This school caters to the needs of Special adults of the branch.
- (f) **Vocational Centre:-** This Centre is providing free training in embroidery, stitching, craft work, making washing powder, candle making, painting, etc. Young girls from the villages of surroundings areas are the main beneficiaries.
- (g) **Computer Training:-** Computers are available in all the schools for academic and vocational training.
- (h) **Hostel facilities:-** There are separate hostels for boys and girls in Manawala Complex. Many girls are

pursuing higher studies in different colleges.

4. **Rehabilitation**

(a) **Marriages:-** After being educated, boys and girls at Pingalwara are married to suitable partners. 40 girls and 4 boys have been married off till date.

5. **Environment Related Activities**

(a) **Tree Plantation:-** Bhagat Puran Singh Ji was deeply concerned about the degradation of the environment. A vigorous campaign of tree plantation is started every year on Bhagat Ji's Death Anniversary. Each year 15,000 to 22,000 trees are planted in various schools, colleges, hospitals, cremation grounds and other public places. These include Amaltas, Kachnar, Behra, Champa, Arjun, Sukhchain, Chandni, Zetropa, Kari-patta were distributed to different institutions.

(b) **Nursery:-** Pingalwara has its own Nursery where saplings of various plants and trees are prepared. Every year, the aim of nursery is to grow more than 54 different kinds of saplings every year.

6. **Social Improvement Related Activities**

(a) **Awareness:-** Pingalwara has played an important role in spreading awareness about the evils in the society. This has been done by printing literature on religious, social and environmental issues at the Puran Printing Press Amritsar and is being distributed free of cost. It has an annual expenditure of printing and publicity is about 1 crores 50 lakhs rupees.

(b) **Puran Printing Press:-** The Printing Press has been updated with an Offset Press.

(c) **Museum and Documentaries:-** A Museum, and a number of documentaries have been prepared on Pingalwara activities as well as on zero budget natural farming. The C.D.s are freely available from Pingalwara.

A feature film produced by Pingalwara Society Amritsar EH JANAM TUMHARE LEKHE (Punjabi) on Rev. Bhagat Puran Singh Ji, founder Pingalwara and his struggle not only for selfless services of wounded humanity but for Environment Crisis also, will prove a beacon for the generations yet to come after us.

7. **Help to the victims of Natural Calamities**

Pingalwara makes an effort to provide succour to the victims of natural calamities like floods, earthquakes and famines. Aid was sent for the earth-quake victims in Iran, Tsunami disaster victims, Leh landslide and flood affected areas.

8. **Cremation of unclaimed dead-bodies**

Pingalwara cremates unclaimed dead bodies with full honour.

9. **Dairy Farm**

120 cows and buffalos at Manawala Complex provide fresh milk to the Pingalwara residents.

10. **Old Age Homes**

Old age homes at Sangrur and Manawala Complex of Pingalwara caters to the needs of elderly people.

11. **Projects Completed and Under Construction**

Since 1997 ambitious projects of Sangrur, Palsora at Chandigarh and Manawala Complex have been completed. In the year 2009 new buildings—

Administrative Block, Puran Printing Press, Deaf School, T.B. Ward at Manawala Complex and at Head Office and a New Administrative Block have also been completed.

In the year 2013, a new modern Bhagat Puran Singh School for Special Education in Manawala Complex of Pingalwara and a new Block for Pingalwara patients in Pandori Warraich Branch is under construction and is fast coming up.

Other Details:

- a) All India Pingalwara Charitable Society is a Registered Society, registered by Registrar of Companies vide letter No. 130 of 1956-1957 as amended vide No. A-28/4540 dated 07-07-1998.
- b) All donations to Pingalwara are exempted under Section 80 G of Income Tax-II Amritsar letter No. CIT-II/ASR/ITO (Tech.)/2011-12/4730 dated 11/12 January, 2012.
- c) PAN Number of the All India Pingalwara Charitable Society is AAATA 2237R
- d) FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) 1976 Registration No. of Pingalwara is 115210002

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa

Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh

Dr. Inderjit Kaur,
President,

All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.),
Tehsilpura, G.T. Road, Amritsar. (Punjab).

Details of Banks For Sending Donation Through Online Cheque/Draft, Cheque & Bank Drafts may be sent in favour of : All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar. PAN No. AAATA2237R					
S. No.	Name of Account	A/C No.	Name of the Bank	IFS Code for Inland Remittance	Swift Code for Foreign Inland Remittance
1.	FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTORS All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01562010002890	Oriental Bank of Commerce Sharipura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156	ORBCINBBASR
2.	INLAND ACCOUNT No. All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01562010003720	Oriental Bank of Commerce Sharipura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156
3.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	10978255668	State Bank of India Town Hall, Amritsar	SBIN0000609	SBINHHB274
4.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	630510100026147	Bank of India City Centre, Amritsar	BKID0006305	BKIDINBBASR
5.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	0018002100097336	Punjab National Bank Hall Bazar, Amritsar	PUNB0001800	PUNBINBBABH
6.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	006601012522	ICICI Bank Ltd., Lawrence Road, Amritsar.	ICIC0000066	ICICINBBFEX
7.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01151000246510	HDFC Bank Ltd., Mall Road, ASR.	HDFC0000115	HDFCINBB
8.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	000110000096048	Punjab & Sind Bank Hall Bazar, Amritsar	PSIB000A001	PSIBINBB017
9.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	685010100009799	Axis Bank Ltd. City Centre Amritsar.	UTIB0000685	AXISINBB179
10.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	13131000082013	HDFC Bnak Ltd. Ghanita Ghar. Golden Temple, Asr	HDFC0001313	HDFCINBB
11.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01010100015572	Bank of Baroda, Town Hall, Amritsar	BARBOAMRITS	BARBINBBAMR