

Preface

How could it be that actually the helper is being healed while helping others? How could it be that the mere act of helping others profoundly heals the physical and mental ailments of the helper? This is an intriguing phenomenon that does not make sense on the basis of the cause-and-effect relationship. It does not make sense on the basis of religion either as an atheist benefits the same.

A conference was held in New York to ask similar questions in 1988. Many scientists participated. All of them agreed that there was in deed a significant phenomenon of the helper being healed so that it was reasonable to make a hypothesis. However, they felt that there was probably no one single hypothesis to explain the intriguing relationship.

Now that the basis for the healing effect of altruism cannot be understood by physical sciences, a spiritual mechanism may be hypothesized. Further, because the Guru Granth gives altruism a spiritual endorsement, its benefit may be constructed through the spiritual science.

Our first hypothesis is that altruism is a basic motivation of human species and its execution is gratifying, and the gratification is always healing. That is why the humanoids are urged from within to be altruists.

Secondly, altruism is intimately related to the eternal desire to be in peace, and to the yearning for connecting to the Cosmic Soul. The author of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Arjan, cites these urges as:

ਜੀਅ ਜੰਤ ਸਭਿ ਸੁਖਿ ਬਸੇ ਸਭ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਲੋਚ ॥

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਤ ਚਿਤਵਤੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ॥

(SGGS: M-5, p. 815)

Jee-a jant sabh such basay sabh kai man loch.

Par-upkaar nit chitvatay naahee kachh poch.

All beings and creatures may dwell in the pain free state; the minds of all yearn for this aspiration. Then they continually think and plan of altruism and helping others. They harbor no ill will towards anyone.

Bhai Gurdas further describes the innate urge as very intense and it is satisfied through altruism.

ਤਪਦਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਠੰਢੇ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਵਿਹਾਣੀ ।

ਅਗਨਿ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਤਪਤਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਠੰਡਾ ਹੋਵੇ ਬਿਲਮੁ ਨ ਆਣੀ ।

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 28. Pauri 13)

A seeker gets fired up with an urge about altruism but then is chilled down by indulging in the altruistic actions. The altruistic activity extinguishes the fire and the heart cools down immediately after.

Bhai Gurdas went as far as saying that the occupation of altruism is the most satisfying occupation; this is a conclusion reached after acquiring education on all specialties:

ਚਉਦਹ ਵਿਦਿਆ ਸੋਧਿ ਕੈ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੁ ਅਚਾਰ ਸੁਖਾਣਾ ।

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 25. Pauri 13)

After acquiring fourteen educational skills, I found the occupation of altruism as the best and the most satisfying.

Our next hypothesis is that altruism is a type of meditation; from it you derive all benefits of a true meditation. We find support for the meditation hypothesis in the Sikh scripture:

ਏਹਾ ਭਗਤਿ ਸਚੇ ਸਿਉ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

(SGGS: M3, P. 506.)

The meditation is to connect the mind with the Truth; without serving others one cannot be a meditating devotee:

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਉ ਸਿਮਰਹਿ ਸੇ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ॥

(SGGS: M5, p. 263.)

Those who meditate upon the Eternal One are altruists.

ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਤ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨਿਤ ਤਿਸੁ ਰਸਨਾ ਕਾ ਮੋਲੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹੀ ॥

(SGGS: M5, p. 824.)

Those who sing the Glorious Praises of the Sustaining ONE while engaged in the acts of altruism, their words of praises are priceless.

Since *Gurmat* (the path of the Guru) is about active meditation, the meditation means many sequential steps, such as getting ready, getting in the mood, and finally engaging in the experience of one's cosmic self in the Absolute Divinity. What this requires is actually letting go of distractions, stress, and pain. It also means to give up hatred, duality, and above all, ego from the depth of one's mind. It means, rising about the animalistic instincts and reaching the Cosmic Consciousness. All of these can be seen being achieved during the practice of altruism. If so, then no one can deny that these creeds will not lead to peace of mind and physical health.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib tells us that altruism goes hand in hand with reduction in the ego of the self. Without reduction in ego, altruistic behavior cannot be sustained. Guru Ram Das says:

ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਸੇਵਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਏ ॥

ਜਨਮਿ ਮਰੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਏ ॥

(SGGS: M4, p.1070)

One who serves in egotism is not accepted or approved. Such a person is born, only to die again, and come and go in reincarnation.

Further, Guru Arjan says that those who engage in service, their ego are destroyed:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੇ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਤਾਪੁ ॥

(SGGS: M5, 45.)

People can perform the service ordained by the True Guru only when their illness of egotism has been eradicated.

Bhai Gurdas explains this aspect of the Guru's teachings by saying:

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਂਵਦਾ ਉਨਿ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ।

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 9, Pauri 20.)

Those who practice altruism lose the sense of their pseudo self, meaning that they develop their sacred creative self:

ਕਟਿ ਵਿਕਾਰ ਹਜਾਰ ਲਖ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸਦਾ ਹਜੁਰਾ ।

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 40, Pauri 1.)

By eliminating thousands of bad habits, an altruist lives in the presence of the Divine.

ਗੁਰਮਖਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਸਕਾਰਥਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸਹਜਿ ਸੁਭਾਈ ।

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar: 16, Pauri 4.)

The Guru-oriented people are fulfilled in their life by practicing altruism and thus maintaining the life of equipoise.

Altruism remained a strong drive among the Sikhs throughout the ages because it helped them to achieve what they want from life. Others may be attracted to Sikhism for the benefits they observed Sikhs deriving from their practice of altruism.

ਧਾਵਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾ ਨੋ ਖੋਜਿ ਲਹੰਦੇ ।

ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਪੰਥਿ ਨ ਧਾਵਨੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਵਿਚ ਉਦਾਸੁ ਰਹੰਦੇ ।

(Gurdas, Bhai, Vaar 6, Pauri 13.)

People seek opportunity for altruism and locate

those seekers engaged in similar pursuits. They do not run after the paths that create duality or hatred. Rather, they remain untouched by the illusions of *Maya*.

Acts of altruism reveal the hidden tranquility. People who search for tranquility elsewhere are a bit lost. Tranquility is *within* but hidden under the pressures of materialistic life. We insist on searching for it outside only in ignorance. Altruism opens the inner door so that the tranquility can enter into our life; then our lives manifest an Inner Light out of a previously hidden Vision. If we serve, we cannot hate; we connect to Creative Soul, *Karta Purukh*, within. Experiencing Divine is a purpose for all, for people and for self.

The spiritual quest in altruism involves the renunciation of hatred and the surrender of the ego, self. Mind is reoriented. Mind cannot be subdued, only reoriented. God cannot be ordered or bribed; we depend on grace obtained through serving God's creation. Altruism is one way to achieve all of those. This may be the ultimate mechanism underlying all of the benefits we receive by helping others.

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Healing Power of Altruism'

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ABSTRACT

Sri Guru Granth Sahib sanctioned altruism as a religious practice and promoted it as a living skill among its followers. Those who followed benefited their body and soul. Its impact on Sikh society is evident from the observations that many Sikhs today shape their adult life around finding opportunities to help people without distinction of gender, race, social ranks, or religious orientation or nationality. They volunteer to work in community kitchens, give their time and money to serve the sick and disabled, serve as volunteers in organization as Pingalwara, Nishkam, and Peace Corps, Bhai Kanhaiya Brigade, Blood and Organ Donors' organizations, shelters for battered woman or orphans and serving as Big Brothers and Big Sisters to unfortunates. They build homes for homeless and worship their deity as the Shelter for Homeless and the Helper of Disadvantaged. Following these practices, these individuals are seen to recognize and attest to who frequently they first experience sensations of pleasure and well-being, and then physically healed of their own ailments such as cancer, heart diseases and, sometimes, degenerative diseases as arthritis, and diabetes. Spiritually they feel connected to the Creator, elated and realized. Although the basis for the healing effect of altruism is not known, some mechanisms can be hypothesized. Since Guru Granth Sahib gave altruism a religious sanction, its benefit may be construed through spiritual science. Altruism can be considered a type of meditation. Since Gurmat (the path of the Guru) is about active meditation, this means getting ready,

getting in the mood, and getting connected. What this involves is actually letting go of distractions, stress and pain. It also means to give up hatred, duality and above all ego from the deep of one's mind. It means, rising above the animalistic instincts and reaching the Cosmic Consciousness. All of this can be seen being achieved during the practice of altruism. No one can deny that these tenets will not lead to health and unity.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Guru Granth Sahib place emphasis on altruist behaviours among its followers. This is one behavior that is parent in pluralistic society, and there is no impediment to its practice particularly in the pluralistic society. It uses interfaith language and promotes cooperation between people and faith. This essay is to examine altruism in this light and in the light of its impact on promoting closer relationships as well as the dialogues between ethnic as well as interfaith people. All of the religions of the world support altruism.

There is an intriguing phenomenon that helping others can profoundly affect the physical and mental health of all helpers irrespective of the religious allegiance of the helpers of those helped. It seems to have almost magical effects that are something beyond what is immediately apparent on the basis of the cause and effect relationship. Another portent aspect of altruism is that, besides the needy being serviced, the tremendous effects of the helpers turn out to be very attractive to a variety of citizens and temperaments. As a result, to helping others becomes a popular and very satisfying pastime. Its attraction is so powerful and persistent that there are numerous volunteers and volunteer organizations that are engaged in efforts to

make life better for other people.

Religious Endorsement

Sri Guru Granth Sahib considered altruism so essential for a faithful that it bestowed religious authority on this type of behavior. Guru Arjan went so far as to describe God in terms of an altruist entity.

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸਰਬ ਸਧਾਰੀ ਸਫਲ ਦਰਸਨ ਸਹਜਇਆ ॥

(SGGS, M-5, p.533.)

The Lord is altruist, generous and benevolent, the beautifier of all, the embodiment of peace; the Blessed Vision of His Darshan is so rewarding !

He further described altruism as a form of meditation.

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਬਹੁ ਗੁਣੀਆ ਮੁਖਿ ਸੰਤ ਭਗਤ ਹਰਿ ਦੀਜੈ ॥

(SGGS, M-4, p.1326)

The altruists do good deeds for others and communicate the Lord's many Glorious Virtues. Kindly bless me to meet these Saints, these devotees of the Lord.

Sikh theologian of the highest repute who was a scribe to Guru Arjan in composing the Sri Guru Granth Sahib described the altruist as the exalted one.

ਸੇਵਕੁ ਦਰਗਹ ਸੁਰਖ ਰੂ ਵੇਮੁਖੁ ਮੁਹੁ ਕਾਲਾ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੩੫ ਪ: ੧)

One who serves and helps others is exalted in the Lord's court; the others who turn away from God by no serving are disgraced.

ਹਉ ਤਿਸ ਦੈ ਚਉ ਖੰਨੀਐ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਕਰੈ ਰੰਗ ਮਾਣੈ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੨ ਪ: ੫)

I am sacrifice to the one who take pleasure in life of altruism.

Thus, in Sikhism altruism is a religiously sanctioned practice that is promoted with similar religious fervour.

Sign of Religiousness

While describing the people of faith, the Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, considered altruism an important pre-requisite. Further, this is one of those characters that he desired to popularize. For example, Bhai Gurdas described Sikhs of the times in terms of their commitment to rubbing the habit of altruism to others. Bhai Gurdas immortalized those Sikhs who excelled themselves in the practice of altruism by specifically naming many of them in his writings. Let me give you couple of examples.

ਲਖੂ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਟੋਲੀਆ ਭਾਈ ਲਧਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੧, ਪ: ੨੫)

Bhai Lakhoo and Bhai Ladha are two silk traders in town who lead the life of an altruist.

ਸੀਗਾਰੂ ਜੈਤਾ ਭਲਾ ਸੁਰਬੀਰ ਮਨਿ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੧, ਪ: ੨੮)

Bhai Singaroo and Bhai Jaitha are brave Sikhs who have altruism in their heart.

Bhai Gurdas must have anticipated Bhagat Puran Singh when he said:

ਪਾਰਸ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਤ ਨ ਅਸਟ ਧਾਤੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੈ ।

ਬਾਵਨ ਚੰਦਨ ਬੋਹਿੰਦਾ ਅਫਲ ਸਫਲੁ ਨ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਉਰ ਧਾਰੈ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੪੦, ਪ: ੨)

The altruist person undertakes altruistic actions and brings metamorphosis of other to do the same without regards to their kind, caste, or social rank. This Sikh is like a philosopher's stone that makes gold out of all the eight metals (alloys). This adherent is also like a Sandal wood tree that makes all trees fragrant without regards to their fruitlessness and fruitfulness.

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸੁਫਲ ਫਲਿ ਵਟ ਵਗਾਇ ਸਿਰਠਿ ਵਰਸਾਣੀ ।

ਚੰਦਨ ਵਾਸੁ ਵਣਾਸਪਤਿ ਚੰਦਨੁ ਹੋਇ ਵਾਸੁ ਮਹਿਕਾਣੀ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੨, ਪ: ੧੩)

An altruist is a wining trait that nourishes the whole world. This individual is like sandalwood that lives among the vegetation to import fragrance to the whole forest.

In a background where Guru Gobind Singh was in war with the rulers to protect the people of faith, a Sikh Bhai Kanhaiya attended the troops of the enemy. He gave water to the injured, which revived their strength. Some of them began to fight again. Sikh soldiers became furious, brought Bhai Kanhaiya before the Guru and complained of his action that they considered counterproductive to their efforts in the battle field. "What were you doing, and way," asked the Guru. "I was giving water to the wounded because I saw your face in them". The Guru replied, "Then you should also give them ointment to heal their wounds. You were practicing what you were coached in the house of the Guru". In love of altruism, is their any room for hatred or duality? It was under the tutelage of the Guru that Bhai Kanhaiya subsequently founded a volunteer corps for altruism. This volunteer corps till to date is engaged in doing good to others and trains new volunteering recruits to do the same.

Bhai Gurdas considered altruism as the identity for a God's devotee. He wrote:

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਸਰਚਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਨੀਸਾਣੀਐ । (ਵਾਰ ੧੪ ਪ: ੨)

The devoted person is identified through their altruism in service to humankind.

Bhai Gurdas was actually paraphrasing what Guru Ram Das, the fourth in succession of Guru Nanak, had

described earlier in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

ਸਾਧੂ ਸਾਧ ਸਰਨਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਰਸੁ ਕਾਢਿ ਕਢੀਜੈ ॥
ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਬੋਲਹਿ ਬਹੁ ਗੁਣੀਆ ਮੁਖਿ ਸੰਤ ਭਗਤ ਹਰਿ ਦੀਜੈ ॥

SGGS, M-4, p.1326.

I have sought the Sanctuary of the Saadh Sangat, the society of the Holy where I have founded the Sublime Essence of the Lord. The adherent of this society do good deeds for others, and speak of the Lord's many Glorious Virtues; kindly bless me to belong to the company of these Saints, these devotees of the Lord.

Increasing numbers seek opportunity to help others

Sri Guru Granth Sahib sanctioned altruism as a religious practice and promoted it as a living skill among its followers. Those who followed benefited their body and soul. Its impact on Sikh society is evident from the observations that many Sikhs today shape their adult life around finding opportunities to help people without distinction of gender, race, social ranks, religious orientation, or nationality, Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas testifies to this fact by saying.

ਫੜਿ ਕਢੈ ਮਰੁਜੀਵੜਾ ਪਰ ਕਾਰਜ ਨੋ ਆਪੁ ਫੜਾਵੈ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੫, ਪ: ੧੫)

There are people who give up their own needs and comforts for the cause of others, and in the process, they are healed themselves.

We have numerous examples to quote. Among Sikhs most famous contemporary examples are, Bhagat Puran Singh, Bhagwant Singh Dalawari, Dr. Inderjit Kaur and many others. Among other religions, Mother Teresa is a prime example. Sikh theologians and historians recorded numerous such individuals. Bhagat Puran Singh lived a life of altruism and touched others in a way that they too

began to engage in service to others.



The *Sikhee* experiences must be subject to verifiable research and demonstration in today's world. Granted that most of the *Gurmat* beliefs fall in the invisible realities, there are many whose benefits can be clearly and beneficially demonstrated. Some examples include (listed alphabetically): Altruism, Charity, Compliance with impact of technology on spiritual growth, Compassion, Creativity, Earning truthful living, Environmental concerns, Fanaticism

considers as a tool of evil, Forgiveness, Freedom from animosity, Freedom from fear, Freedom from lust and greed, Gratitude, Humility, Intellect, Meditation, Love, Prayer, Spiritual purpose of life, Scope of divinity in life, Sharing, Thanksgiving, Truthfulness in living and Worship. Undoubtedly the practicing Sikhs will add many more to the global living.

Bhagat Puran Singh excelled in practicing many of the above Sikhee beliefs. However, he left many others behind in his altruistic practices. This way, Bhagat Puran Singh was in fore front in defining Sikhee to others.

Bhagat ji' is praised by many people for many different reasons, but what had been his foremost distinguishing factor throughout life was his thankless work of seva without any desire of recognition or reward. Rather, he shunned people who came to him to provide any public relations.

Promoting Altruism as Act of Faith

Bhagat Puran Singh nourished the Sikh Act of Faith that to him was his deeds of altruism. With Sikhs, all deeds of altruism are acts of faith and altruism has been a Sikh's defining characteristic since its formative days. The altruistic acts include, helping others, serving the needy, taking care of those who need care, treating the sick, standing for justice, and the selfless public service.

The eternal mentor of the Sikhs, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, considered altruism so essential for a faithful that it bestowed religious authority on these deeds.

The Sikh theologian of highest repute, Bhai Gurdas reported the Guru's injunction on incorporating altruism in its infrastructure in these words.

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ਸਿਖ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਾਏ ।

(*Bhai Gurdas, Var 9, Pauri 17.*)

Guru founded congregations of the seekers and made, them institutions where Sikhs were engaged in serving others.



Bhagat Puran Singh used to ask his visitors to seek God by pleasing and propitiating the indwelling One Spirit. To serve God tangibly is to serve the Divine in all the living and moving temples of Divine. To just praise and glorify Divine in flowery terms is a hollow form of a prayer.

ਰੋਜਾ ਧਰੈ ਨਿਵਾਜ ਗੁਜਾਰੈ ਕਲਮਾ ਭਿਸਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਸਤਰਿ ਕਾਬਾ ਘਟ ਹੀ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਜੇ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਨੈ ਕੋਈ ॥੨॥

Bhagat Kabir, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, P. 480

Keeping your fasts, reciting your prayers, and reading the holy verses of the Islamic creed, shall not take you to paradise. The Temple of Mecca is hidden with in human mind, if you only knew it.

Thus, Bhagat ji's mission may be seen also to reform our institutions as he saw them drifting away from their real missions. Altruistic traditions within a Gurdwara's infra-structure is at least as good a worship as the formal worship of the divine guru performed. Is not the institution of our gurus known as *nithaavia di thaan, ni-otian di ot, nigatian di gat*.

We visit our religious places to worship and to meditate. Altruism is a type of meditation.

ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਤ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨਿਤ ਤਿਸੁ ਰਸਨਾ ਕਾ ਮੇਲੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
(*Sri Guru Granth Sahib, M5, p. 824*)

Those who sing the Glorious Praises of the Sustaining ONE while engaged in the acts of altruism, their words of praise are priceless.

Bhagat Puran Singh espoused serving the sick and the disabled as his life mission because he felt that it will lead his life to the Guru-Oriented. He remembered his Guru's teaching that Sri Guru Granth Sahib reiterated infinitum to serving God who dwells in every heart, heart of a needy and heart of a hungry. These hearts are embodiments of the Divine. To discover God in those hearts was a Sikh tenant to him.

The God we worship dwells in all beings. Worshipping God in all beings with reverence and devotion as well as same-sightedness is a religious act in our traditions that Bhagat Puran Singh nourished. Therefore, a Sikh place of worship is there to worship and provide facilities where food should be given to the hungry, clothes to the naked, medicine to the sick and stick to the blind.

He often felt that he need not go anywhere to seek God. His God was within all the inmates of his

Pingalwara. His Gods were present all around him. Why not worship them first? Why go offer gold at the temples? This is the very gist of the Practical Sikhism propounded by Bhagat Puran Singh. The successful practice of this salutary doctrine of humanistic Sikhism will result in our own liberation as well as do good to others-or, shall we say, the God of those whom we regard as others but who are in the last analysis, our very self indeed in different forms?

ਸੇਵਕ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਭਾਉ ਕਰਿ ਲਾਗਾ ਸਾਉ ਪਰਾਣੀ ॥

(*Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 566*)

Those who serve with love get attached to God.

If you cannot love and serve that which you see (with your physical eyes), Bhagat ji said to me, in fact, how can you love and serve that which you cannot hold with in your arms. The only God to worship is to serve the human soul in the human body. If I cannot worship in that, no other temple will be of any advantage, he once said.

The moment I have realized God sitting in the temple of every human body, the moment I stand in reverence before every human being and see God in him or her, that moment I am free from bondage, everything that binds vanishes, and I am free.

ਦਰਿ ਵਾਜਹਿ ਅਨਹਤ ਵਾਜੇ ਰਾਮ ॥ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਹਰਿ ਗੋਬਿੰਦੁ ਗਾਜੇ ਰਾਮ ॥

In each and every heart, the Lord, the Lord of the Universe, sings. At the Lords Door, the unstruck melody resounds.

(*Guru Arjan Dev, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 578*)

ਮੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਲਗੇ ਗੁਰ ਮੀਠਾ ॥

ਖੁਲਿਓ ਕਰਮੁ ਭਇਓ ਪਰਗਾਸਾ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਛੀਠਾ ॥

The Word of the Guru Shabad now, tastes sweet to

my mind. My Karma has been activated, and I began to see the Divine Radiance of the Lord, Har, Har, Manifest in each and every heart.

(Guru Arjan Dev, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1212)

Defeating Ego and Attaining Quiescence of Mind

Bhagat Puran was always seen in a content mood. I sincerely believe that it was account of vibrations of goodwill that emanated from those he served. There is a lot of evidence that altruistic deeds lead to a spiritual awakening. Specifically, it gives the gift of contentment, blissful feelings, replacement of ego by humility, and simply the awe of divine presence. The Guru Granth gave altruism a spiritual endorsement for these very reasons.

Bhagat Puran Singh began to serve at Gurdwara Dera Sahib at the age of 20. There he learnt and recited Gurbani, but also led the hungry and took care of the handicapped. He washed clothes of the handicapped, brought medicine to them from the hospital and fed those who could not feed themselves. At 26 he told his dying mother, that he would not marry, and devote full time to serve the crippled and sick orphan baby he adopted. The baby was without proper limbs and would need care for rest of his life. Instead of showing stress, Bhagat ji was quoted to say, “It gave me immense pleasure to learn that Guru had selected me to serve in his project to taking care of someone not owned by anyone else.” There, he was true to his Guru’s verse.

ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ॥੪॥੩॥

In the places where the lowly and discarded are cared for, there resides the Blessings of your Grace.

(Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 15)

Bhagat ji elected his spiritual quest in altruism as it required the surrender of hatred and the sacrifice of the ego self. Altruism reorients human mind. Mind cannot be subdued, only reoriented. God cannot be ordered or bribed; we depend on grace gained through serving God’s creation. Altruism is one way to achieve all of those. This may be the ultimate mechanism underlying all of the benefits we receive by helping others.

Thus, Bhagat Puran Singh was considered a bright luminary of the Sikh Identity. His outside deeds were commendable, but more commendable were his inner motivation that was so effective to draw others towards the Guru’s teaching of doing good. His deeds would shine for posterity for their inner commitment.

ਜਿਨ੍ ਪਟੁ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਗੁਦੜੁ ਤੇ ਭਲੇ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ॥

Those who have silk on the inside and rags on the outside, are the esteemed ones in this world.

(Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p. 473)

To Bhagat Puran Singh, it was his deeds in this world that insured his place in the divine court.

ਵਿਚਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥

ਤਾ ਦਰਗਹ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਪਾਈਐ ॥

In the midst of this world, undertake altruistic deeds, and you shall be given a place of honor in the Court of God.

(Guru Nanak, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.26)

Guru Arjan described the Sikh Community as:

ਅਉਗਣ ਸਭਿ ਮਿਟਾਇ ਕੈ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੁ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

(SGGS, M-5, p.218.)

They wash off their demerits, and get engaged in altruistic pursuits.

Guru Ram Das complemented those who are engaged in

altruistic pursuits by saying:

ਓਇ ਪੁਰਖ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਧੰਨਿ ਜਨ ਹਹਿ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਕਰਹਿ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਿਆ ॥

(SGGS, M-4, p. 311.)

Blessed are that mortal beings, who share the Teachings with others and engages in altruistic services of doing good to others.

Bhai Gurdas Described those Sikhs who follow the good deeds of serving others.

ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਅਵੇਸੁ ਕਰਿ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਿ ਅਚਾਰਿ ਲੁਭਾਇਆ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੧, ਪ: ੪)

They take to heart Guru's teachings and choose the laudable occupation of volunteering to serve others.

People While Helping Others Experience Reduction In Their Own Ailments.

Intriguing phenomenon

Altruism is one field where we can test the validity of the Guru's teachings in actual life. We may use the world at large to serve as a laboratory for experiments on human behaviour to reveal phenomenon about human nature that would never come out in an experimental laboratory. We can review thousands of case histories, which will show that helping others profoundly affects health of the helper. It even extends to nations. One can read research in several nations and showed how people involved with others were likely to be healthier than those who led isolated lives. All of these data are scientifically verifiable.

Organizations engaged in efforts to make life better for other people

Other than those Sikhs and Sikh organizations mentioned in this paper, there are numerous national

and international organizations engaged in promoting and in practicing altruism. Let us take some examples Nancy Jameson, director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Programme reported a USA study in 1976 demonstrating that a large number of people over sixty were volunteering in hospitals, clinics, schools, and other service programmes and institutions. It helped the institutions being served a great deal. However, it was more significant to find that in 98 per cent of these facilities the physical and mental health of the volunteers who helped there had improved considerably. Similarly, in the town of Woodsfield, Ohio; in New York City: in Los Angeles; and in several other cities, a worker by the name of Peggy was reported to work with volunteers. She also conducted an in-depth phone interviews with helpers in every region of the USA. Her findings showed also that there were numerous volunteers working in those places and there existed a vast potential for the food of both the individuals being engaged in serving and the world we live in.

People involved with others were healthier than those who led isolated lives

There are many testimonials from the volunteer administrators in various areas in USA who supervised volunteers and then wrote or spoke not only of their own experience but also of a larger picture.

Belva Green, Allen County Cancer Society in Fort Wayne, Indiana, said: "We see it daily. We have several hundred volunteers who perform a great variety of services willingly and cheerfully. They seem to live longer and fuller lives than the folks occupied only with inner concerns.

Dick Bullock, a community educator in Carthage, Missouri commented: "Once volunteers feel the 'life enrichment' of helping, they get 'hooked'.

Yvonne C. Oakley, Chairman of volunteers, American Red Cross Pompano, California commented of her own experience: "The relationship of altruism to health should be apparent to all thinking people."

Basic Human Motivation

Guru Arjan testified about the relation between altruism and basic human motivation as:

ਜੀਅ ਜੰਤ ਸਭਿ ਸੁਖਿ ਬਸੇ ਸਭ ਕੈ ਮਨਿ ਲੋਚ ॥
ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਤ ਚਿਤਵਤੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਛੁ ਪੋਚ ॥

(SGGS, M-5, p. 815)

All beings and creature may dwell in peace: the minds of all yearn for this aspiration. They continually think of altruism and helping others. They harbor no ill will towards anyone. Bhai Gurdas describes the human body as worthless and even disgusting, if it is not engaged in altruism. To him all others actions are fruitless.

ਵਿਣੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਧ੍ਰਿਗੁ ਹਥ ਪੈਰ ਹੋਰ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਕਰਣੀ ।
(ਵਾਰ ੨੭, ਪ: ੧੦)

Without being engaged in service to others these hands and feet are disdainful as any other activity is without any merit.

Bhai Gurdas was actually echoing the thoughts of his mentor, Guru Arjan who said:

ਮਿਥਿਆ ਤਨ ਨਹੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰਾ ॥

(SGGS, M-5, p. 269.)

Worthless is the body that does not do good deeds to others.

Bhai Gurdas went as far as saying that he

considered the occupation of an altruism as the most satisfying one after completing all of the educations that could be obtained.

Characteristics of Benefits of Helping Others

Helping others signifies many characteristics of the person engaged in these behaviours. They are healthy, peaceful and free of anxiety. They are in a state of blissful euphoria. Guru Arjan places them in the company of those with God Consciousness. He said:

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਉਮਾਹਾ ॥

(SGGS, M-5, p. 273.)

The God-conscious people delight in doing good deeds to others.

The most important feature of satisfaction is feeling of elation and experiencing good health. An American popular Journal, Better Homes and Gardens published a small item on the research in the February 1988 issue calling for readers to write any health improvement they felt they had received from helping others. There were near 250 responders who reported experiencing a rush of physical pleasure and well-being, increased energy, warmth and actual relief from aches and pains from doing good to others. Another popular American Journal in the field of psychology, Psychology Today, received 3296 surveys returned by volunteering organizations. Nearly half of those were reported giving illustrations of the psychological benefits from doing good deeds to others. The psychological benefits reported were like these: felt in control of myself and my body; better runner; stronger physically feeling of nothing could conquer me; feel so good inside that it makes you explode with energy. The sleep time doubled

of insomniacs; those suffering from depression or panic attack felt like they were on anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medication during their altruistic engagements.

From the published literature one can reconstruct many stages of the psychological benefits. The effects may start with feeling of a physical high or a rush of good feeling similar to a feeling one get following a sharp reduction in stress. They may be described as is usual with the release of the body's natural painkillers, the endorphins. They are followed by a longer-lasting period of improved emotional well-being, and finally ecstasy of meditation, spiritual high or experiencing the divinity. There are many testimonies available to these effects from prominent people.

Data from people who while helping others experience powerful and persistent sensations of pleasure and well-being while involved in helping AIDS patients, homeless families, shut-ins, crime victims, runaway youths and patients in giant urban hospitals. Ma who works with AIDS patients in Florida told me many such stories personally.

Judy Weintraub, former secretary of a committee of UNO organizations concerned with crime prevention, which met regularly at the United Nations, suffered from multiple sclerosis. She reported diminution of the effects of the disease when she began to help other people. She reported an increase in her own strength and in muscular control during her voluntary work.

There was a recovering alcoholic who was volunteered to work on a telephone hot line 3hr/day at the local office of Alcoholics Anonymous. Though she never met any of the people she helped, the effect on her

personal well-being was dramatic. "I would come home and tell my husband I was euphoric from this phone work", she said. "It was like taking a drug. And believe me, I knew what a drug high was. Except this one lasted far longer."

David Krisar—A member of the Board of Trustees of the Institute for the Advancement of Health at 83 was a very altruist as well as a philanthropist. He strongly believed that helping others kept his health and spirits good. To let other benefit from his experience he gave grants to support research on this.

Case of Longevity

Among many physical benefit of helping others is included significant improvement in human longevity of the individuals practicing altruism. All of the known helpers of others are reported to live longer than their counterparts in every society. They include those living in the contemporary time as mentioned elsewhere in the paper and those who lived in the past but their life span and life habits could be traced accurately.

There are ample examples to show that the individuals who were engaged in the service of the sick and helpless lived far longer than the average life span of population around them. Sikh history is replete with such examples. Bhai Kanhaiya who spent 28 years in serving the wounded and the sick three centuries ago lived to be 70 when life expectancy at his times was only half that, His successors who continued the succession of Bhai Kanhaiya tradition of serving others and who committed their lives to service of the sick and wounded lived to be 70 (Sewa Ram, 1928), 158 (Bhalla Ram, 1879), 71 (Jagta, 1811), 70 (Hazuri, 1836), 76 (Sahai

Ram, 1844), 85 (Ralaya Ram, 1870), 73 (Lakshmi Dass, 1908), 79 (Gulab Singh, 1950), 81 (Asa Singh, 1974). They possessed no genetic continuity to explain longer life. Rather they were volunteers from the community who committed their lives to serve the sick themselves first and then recruited others to do the same. All of them defied the recorded longevity norms of the time for over three centuries. Longevity is determined by many factors, freedom from disease and stress are two such factors. They were certainly reported to live calm and tranquil lives. In modern times, Bhagat Puran Singh of Amritsar is another example. While serving the crippled and diseased, Bhagat lived among the sick and infected, but lived to be over 80 himself without any death causing organism affecting his own life. Those who worked him described him healthy, content and cheerful.

Treatments Integrating Altruism are more effective

More recently, it is being established that medical treatments that integrate altruism are more effective. This approach is now being considered to make a part and parcel of the patient management in North America. Certainly, there are numerous examples of this being practiced in India and other third World countries. There is a record of Guru Hargobind using this approach in his time when he ran a regular clinic for the sick. Let me cite some examples from the modern medicine as it is a practiced in the West today.

Dr. Dean Ornish is physician famous for his program to reverse the heart disease. Thousands in North America are using his Program for Reversing Heart Disease. He reported interesting findings. He observed a decline in the feelings of hostility by practicing altruism

which in turn helps to reverse cholesterol build up in the arteries of the helpers.

Dr. Herbert Benson is a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School who treats patients at the New England Deaconess Hospital. On account of his intriguing experience with altruism, now he regularly prescribes an explicit program of volunteering as a vital step in achieving good health. He often prescribes altruism along with the modern medicine that he practices. His results are very encouraging. For example, a woman patient in her mid-sixties was suffering with severe angina pains, which had incapacitated her. She could never relax until she was prescribed to do volunteer work. She began to teach others to relax as her own treatment. Though she continued to take her angina pills, the pain and incapacitation that she had previously suffered, despite the medication, gradually vanished.

Some time ago, Reader's Digest, an American popular magazine circulated worldwide reprinted an article published earlier in American Health. This article illustrated many stories of people who benefitted themselves by helping others.

Conclusion

Sri Guru Granth Sahib taught us centuries ago that altruism is very healthy for the body and the mind of people who practice it regularly. It is now being shown conclusively that altruism benefits individuals who practice it and certainly those being helped. Thus, this one act is such that it benefits our whole society. It is also true that once people become involved in healthy helping acts, the strong benefits they experience motivate them to help others all the more. Their empathy for others

and even for strangers grows, and their health improves. Further, unlike research into the health benefits of such other activities as exercise, the new knowledge about helping others holds the power to affect not only the health of the individual but also the health of our entire tension-ridden society.

Although the phenomenon is true basis for this happening is now known. A conference was held in New York to ask the similar questions in 1988. Many scientists participated. All of these scientists observed that there was in deed a significant phenomenon being observed, so that it was “reasonable to advance the hypothesis” that altruistic behaviours enhance the helper’s health. They felt that there was probably no one single mechanism to explain this relationship. As followers of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, we may speculate what may be happening here mechanistically.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib tells us that altruism goes hand in hand with reduction in the ego of the self. Without reduction in ego altruistic behavior cannot be sustained. Guru Ram Das says,

**ਵਿਚਿ ਹਉਮੈ ਸੇਵਾ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਪਾਏ ॥
ਜਨਮਿ ਮਰੈ ਫਿਰਿ ਆਵੈ ਜਾਏ ॥**

(SGGS, M-4, p. 1070)

One who serves in egotism is not accepted or approved. Such a person is born, only to die again, and come and go in reincarnation.

Further, Guru Arjan says that those who engage in service, their ego is destroyed.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੋ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਸੁ ਬਿਨਸੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਤਾਪੁ ॥

(SGGS, M-5 p. 45.)

People can perform the service ordained by the

True Guru only when their illness of egotism has been eradicated.

Bhai Gurdas further explains this aspect of the Guru’s teachings.

ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਂਵਦਾ ਉਨਿ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੯, ਪ: ੨੦)

Those who practice altruism lose the sense of their pseudo self, meaning that develop their sacred creative self.

ਕਟਿ ਵਿਕਾਰ ਹਜਾਰ ਲਖ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸਦਾ ਹਜੁਰਾ।

(ਵਾਰ ੪੦, ਪ: ੧)

By eliminating thousands of bad habits, an altruist lives in the presence of the Divine.

ਤਪਦਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨੋ ਠੰਢੇ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਵਿਹਾਣੀ ।

ਅਗਨਿ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਤਪਤਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਠੰਢਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਬਿਲਮੁ ਨ ਆਣੀ ।

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਿਖੀ ਦੀ ਏਹੁ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ । *(ਵਾਰ ੨੮, ਪ: ੧੩)*

A Sikh gets energized about altruism but then is chilled down by indulging in the altruistic actions. The altruistic activity extinguishes the fire and the heart cools down in no time. This is the identifying mark of a Sikh.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਸਕਾਰਥਾ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰੀ ਸਹਜਿ ਸੁਭਾਈ ।

(ਵਾਰ ੧੬, ਪ: ੪)

The Guru oriented people are fulfilled in their life by practicing altruism and thus maintaining the life of equipoise.

Since Gurmat (the path of the Guru) is about active meditation, this means getting ready, getting in the mood, and then engaging in the experience of one’s cosmic self in Divinity. What this involves is actually giving up stress, hatred, and letting go of the pain. This reveals the hidden tranquility. People search for tranquility, but

the search is a bit misleading. Tranquility is within but hidden under the pressures of materialistic life style. We insist on searching for outside. Altruism opens the inner door so that the tranquility can take birth in our life; our lives manifest an Inner Light from a Hidden Vision. If we serve, we cannot hate and connect to the Creative Soul, *Karta Purakh*, within. Experiencing Divine is a purpose for all, for people and for self. The spiritual quest turns out to involve the surrender of hatred—the sacrifice of the ego self—rather than any conquest of mind. Mind cannot be conquered, only reoriented. God cannot be ordered or bribed; we depend on grace through serving God's creation. Altruism is one way to achieve all of those. This may be ultimate mechanism underlying all of the benefits we receive by helping others. As says Bhai Gurdas about altruism and those who practice it.

ਯਾਵਨ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਨੇ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਾ ਨੇ ਖੋਜਿ ਲਹੰਦੇ ।
ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਪੰਥਿ ਨ ਯਾਵਨੀ ਮਾਇਆ ਵਿਚਿ ਉਦਾਸੁ ਰਹੰਦੇ ।

people seek opportunity for altruism and local those seekers engaged similar pursuits. They do not permit running after the paths that create duality of hatred. Rather, they reside within the illusions of Maya still remaining untouched by it.

(ਵਾਰ : ੬ ਪ: ੧੩)

The Healing Power of Altruism

Richard L. Curwin

For at-risk students, opportunities to help others may provide a way to break the devastating cycle of failure—to substitute caring for anger and replace low self-esteem with feelings of worth.

Bill, a 4th grader in a rural community, was surly, fought constantly, and did little schoolwork. The best way to describe his home life was toxic: an alcoholic mother, a father in jail, few friends. Bill had already started drinking heavily in times of stress.

In an unusual experiment, Bill's principal, school counselor, and teachers assigned him the task of helping a wheelchair-bound 1st grader on and off the bus every day and being the child's protector. The only stipulation was that if Bill got into a fight, he couldn't help the 1st grader for the remainder of the day.

Bill took his assignment seriously, watching over the younger child like a mother might watch her baby. The children became friends, and one day when the younger student was ill, a teacher saw a tear coming out of Bill's eye. Bill did not become a model student. He still fought on occasion and struggled academically. But his attitude changed significantly. Someone was depending on him, and he felt needed and important.

For students with poor academic achievement, classrooms are a breeding ground for feelings of inadequacy and worthlessness. At-risk students are continually confronted with failure and told they are worthless. Many schools try to compensate by offering special programs to increase self-esteem. However, even the best activities do not significantly influence

children who continually receive negative messages about themselves. Children are acutely aware of where they stand in the school community and how teachers and other students perceive them. Thus, a “Catch-22” is created. Students will rarely be successful in school without hopeful attitudes, but they need to be successful before they can feel optimistic.

One way to break this cycle is to actualize the basic human need to be altruistic. Two decades of declining altruism in our culture show how powerful this need is, and what happens when it is ignored.

Feeling Good About Doing Good

When we help at-risk students, we inadvertently give them the message that they are in an inferior position. Reversing this role builds pride. Students feel good when they see themselves as genuinely useful. Helping others is therapeutic. No smiley faces, silly marbles, or point systems are necessary. Altruism is an antidote to cynicism, encouraging those who “couldn't care less, ” to begin to “care more.”

To understand the power of helping others, ask yourself which enhances your self-concept more: Someone you love says “I need you,” or someone you love says “You need me.”

My son David illustrated this phenomenon when he was a sophomore in high school. I was asked to help a group of teachers work through a serious school problem. When one of the key teachers canceled an hour before the meeting because her baby-sitter couldn't make it, David saved the day by volunteering to take care of her 4-year-old at the school site.

When David and I arrived, the child was cranky

and wouldn't leave his mother's side. Several teachers tried to distract him by making things with his Legos. Intuitively, David sat beside the boy and asked what the Legos were. The child said, “You build things with them.” David asked the child to show him how to build something. For the duration of the meeting, the youngster taught David how to make things with Legos. Why did the child resist learning about Legos, but eagerly teach about them? Because as a teacher, he was competent, important—and in control. The same phenomenon applies to at-risk children.

The Quiet Power of Compassion

Trthur Gordon

Not long ago I attended a memorial service for a leading businessman. In a subdued atmosphere of mourning, various friends paid him tribute. Finally, a young Negro got up. The other speakers had been assured and eloquent, but this one, obviously under great emotional stress, could barely speak.

With tears streaming down his face, he told the gathering that when he was an office boy, the industrialist had noticed him, encouraged him, and paid for his education. "For a long time," the young man said, "I was no good to him or anyone else. I just failed and kept on failing. But he never lost faith in me. And he never let me give up."

Anyone could support a success, he added, but only a rare and wonderful person could continue to have faith in a failure. Now that person was gone, and he had lost his best friend. When his voice faltered to a halt, people everywhere were weeping, not only for the leader who was gone but for the unashamed sorrow of the follower. When the service ended, I had the conviction that somehow a tiny part of each one of us had been changed for the better.

Later, I spoke of this to a psychiatrist friend, who had also been there, "Yes," he said thoughtfully, "that's what compassion can do. It's the most healing of all human emotions. If we'd just let it, it could transform the world."

The truth is, this quality of compassion the word means "suffering with"—has been transforming the world. It was the force that abolished slavery and put an end to child labour. It was the power that sent Albert

Schweitzer to Africa. Without it there would be no welfare state, no RSPCA, no Red Cross or organizations like The Samaritans. But the most remarkable thing about it is what it can do for someone who feels it deeply.

This is so even for the person who feels it suddenly and momentarily. Years ago, with two other students, I visited Spain. In Malaga we stayed in a *pension* that was comfortable enough but strangely sombre. The owner had little to say; his wife, a tall, tragic-looking woman, always wore black and never smiled. The friendly maid told us that the *senora* had been a concert pianist, but that two years ago her only child had died. She hadn't touched the enormous grand piano in the *pension* living-room since.

One afternoon we three boys visited a wine cellar, where the affable proprietor urged us to sample various vintages. We were not at all reluctant, and sang and danced our way home. Back at the house, full of thoughtless gaiety, one of my friends sat down at the piano, flung back the lid and began to play, very badly, while we accompanied him at the tops of our voices.

Suddenly the owner rushed in to the room, pleading, "No, you mustn't!" At the same instant the *senora* herself appeared, dark tragic eyes fixed on us. The music died, and for an endless moment all of us were frozen with dismay and embarrassment. Then she saw how miserable we were. She smiled, and great warmth and beauty came into her face. She walked to the piano, sat down and began playing magnificent, soaring music that filled the whole house, driving the grief and the shadows away. And young though I was, I knew that she was free. Free because she had felt pity for us, and the warmth of compassion had melted

the ice in her heart.

Look round and you can see this healing force at work in all sorts of situations. One day last summer, out walking in the country with my children, I came to an isolated cottage. Behind a fence a white-haired woman was working in her garden. When we stopped to admire her flowers, she told us that she lived there all alone. My city-bred youngsters regarded her with wonder. “Don’t you ever get lonely?” asked one. “Oh,” she said, “if that feeling comes on in the summer, I take a bunch of flowers to someone who can’t get out. And if it’s winter, I go out and feed the birds.” An act of compassion was her instinctive antidote for loneliness.

Where does it come from, this capacity to share another’s grief or feel another’s pain? I remember once asking a wise clergyman about that most famous of all compassion stories, the parable of the Good Samaritan. What made the Samaritan respond when the other travellers who saw that crumpled figure on the road to Jericho simply passed by on the other side?

“I think,” The clergyman replied, “that there were three things that made him the way he was. The first was empathy, the projection of one’s own consciousness into another being. When the Samaritan saw the bandits’ victim lying there, he didn’t merely observe him, he became a part of him. This identification was so strong you might almost say that when he went to help the man, he was helping part of himself.

“The second was courage. The ones who ‘passed by on the other side’ were afraid–afraid of anything strange or challenging, afraid of getting involved. The Samaritan had the courage to push those fears aside, to translate caring into action.

“The third thing I’m sure he had been the *habit* of helping. This was no isolated incident in the Samaritan’s life. Through the years he had trained himself to respond affirmatively to other people’s needs. How? In the same way that any us can, not so much by heroic sacrifice as by the endless repetition of small efforts, by going the extra step occasionally, by trying to help someone in trouble, and by taking affair share of community responsibilities when you can manage it.

“These things may not seem to add up to much. But one day you may discover that, to an astonishing degree, self has been pushed off its lonely throne and, almost without knowing it, you will have become a Samaritan yourself.”

Empathy courage, the habit of helping: qualities latent in all of us that add up to the deep tenderness we call compassion. If only we’d work harder at developing and strengthening it. Because without this quiet power there would be little hope for tomorrow.

–*Readers’ Digest June 1973.*

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2. Dr. (Bhai) Harbans Lal, Ph.D. D. Lit. (hons.), President Academy of Guru Granth Studies USA, Professor Emeritus, Department Pharmacology, University of North Texas Health Sciences Centre at Fort Worth and Department of Guru Nanak Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
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3. SGGS—And Guru Granth Sahib, 1983 (reprint). Publisher: Shriomani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar (M—Mahala, i.e. succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the house of Nanak, P=Page of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. English translations are not transliteration but a commentary of the central message. For Kabits of Bhai Gurdas, see Bhai Gurdas, In: Onkar Singh, Kabit Sawayye Bhai Gurdas, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1993. For Vaaran of Bhai Gurdas, see Vaaran Bhai Gurdas, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee, Amritsar taken from Gurbani CD.
4. Bhai Ladha actually asked the Guru to let him take the punishment instead of Guru's bards who were being disgraced in the congregation for being disrespectful to the holy congregation.
5. Healing Power of Altruism published by All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.) Amritsar, March 2013.

PINGALWARA DIARY

(UPTO AUGUST, 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 1764 Patients

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 amputee cases and calipers to paraplegic ,hemiplegic or polio affected people. 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 and at Sangrur 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 Sharifpura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156	ORBCINBBASR
2.	INLAND ACCOUNT No. All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01562010003720	Oriental Bank of Commerce Sharifpura Amritsar	ORBC 0100156
3.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	10978255668	State Bank of India Town Hall, Amritsar	SBIN0000609	SBINHHBB274
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	PUNBINBBAHB
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.	00011000096048	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 Bnk Ltd. Ghanta Ghar, Golden Temple, Asr	HDFC0001313	HDFCINBB
11.	All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.	01010100015572	Bank of Baroda, Town Hall, Amritsar	BARBOAMRITS	BARBINBBAMR