

# Grammar of life

*By Bhagwan Singh*



Guru Nanak was gifted with a reflective vision and a distinct aptitude for pious living. He fully grasped popular, often conflicting creeds and practices of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and other less known faiths. Having gained complete knowledge of the *Koran*, the Hindu *Shastras* and the Buddhist philosophy, he went through extensive meditation, which helped him to develop clarity of vision. This was crystalized during his concentration in seclusion on the banks of *Wayeen* river, where he spent several days, including some time under water. There he evolved a clear concept of the Lord Almighty, which became the core of his philosophy. His vision of the Almighty forms the opening lines of the *Jap ji*, his most important writing. The Creator has been described by him as under:

**Ik Omkaar satnaam kartaa purakh nirbhao nirvair**

**Akaal moorat ajoonee saibh/ng gurparsaad. (1)**

*(God is One, Truth is His Name, He is the Creator; Fearless, without Enmity, the Immortal, Self-illuminated and is Obtainable by the Grace of Guru.)*

**Jap. Aad sach jugaad sach hai bhee sach**

**Nanak hosee bhee sach. (1)**

*(Chant and Meditate. True in the Primal beginning. True through all ages. True here and now. Nanak says, He shall ever be true.)*

Guru Nanak asserted that the unfailing faith in God is the everlasting touchstone of life. Traveling through the country and much beyond, on foot, he visited almost all the important centers of learning to spread his message and mission. The hub of his composite vision was made up of truth, compassion and love for fellow beings. During the years of wandering, Guru Nanak propounded his spiritual vision in the form of *Gurbani* as part of his replies to the questions raised by the people he met.

His vision in poetic form was sung by him and thus, more *Shabads* of *Gurbani* (hymns) were created and preserved by his chosen followers, *Mardana*. His own compositions as well as those of his successors and some other saints were arranged in *Guru Granth Sahib* by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru. *Guru Granth Sahib* has, therefore, become an ocean of spiritual wisdom and worldly knowledge.

Guru Nanak saved his devotees from the accumulated errors of the age and gave them the 'Word', the true pure thought for devotion and excellence of conduct as their primary duty. Both the 'Word' and the code of conduct are closely enunciated in the collected wisdom in *Guru Granth Sahib*. He very carefully, let his personal style of dissemination of the direct transcript of the Words of God, which he gave to his successors to be conveyed to his followers. Guru Nanak made his mission applicable to all the people of all times and places. As for himself, he projected his person as a humble messenger of the Almighty, with Truth and Universal Brotherhood as his doctrine. He preached monotheism, with one God who is kind

to his children. He had evolved a clear concept of a just society, with all its intricate relationships. The composite vision of his hymns as well as the hymns of others in *Guru Granth Sahib*, therefore, provide a complete guide for living a truthful life. One has to follow the deeper meanings of the Words of *Guru Granth Sahib* and translate these meanings in one's own life. In this way Guru Nanak's vision as well as that of *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is on the same lines, constitutes a Grammar of Truthful Life for the seekers of true path in this highly confused and complicated world.

Guru Nanak had collected some of the hymns of the selected contemporary saints, who followed the path of devotion and realized the Divine within. Among the *Bhagats*, whose writings appear in *Guru Granth Sahib* include Ramanand, who was a Brahmin; Sheikh Farid and Bhikhan were Muslims; Ravidas a cobbler; Namdev a washerman; Bhagat Kabir a weaver and Pipa was a Raja of Gungraogarh. But one thing common among them was that they all had realized the Divine Reality. Guru Nanak had passed on the writings collected by him along with his own writings to his successor, Guru Angad. The latter in turn added some of his own compositions and passed the entire writings to Guru Amar Dass. In this way, Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru arranged all the compositions in the form of a *Granth* which is now called *Guru Granth Sahib*.

*Gurbani* has clearly laid down that *Guru Granth Sahib* is the only true guide for the seekers, The only Grammar of Truthful Life:

**Je sau chanda uggeveh, Suraj charreh hazaar,**

**Eite chaanan hondiyen, Gur bin ghor andhaar. (462)**

*(If there are hundreds of Moons and thousands of Suns, Even with that much light, one will grope in darkness, Without the leading light of the Guru.)*

## Sufferings of Humanity

Like Lord Buddha before him, Guru Nanak was deeply concerned about the sufferings of humanity. As an answer to the enigma of universal suffering, the Guru propounded that every human being can improve his intrinsic worth and quality of life by realizing the presence of the Almighty.

Since the Almighty is all pervading, He resides everywhere, in human beings, in animals and plants and even in non-living objects. As the Creator resides in every human being, "He can be realized by the grace of the *Guru*, through meditation on His Divine name." In other words, every person has the capacity to realize the Lord by reciting His Divine Name every moment. The process of coming close to the Almighty, he said, is by repeated recitation, the *Simran* of His Divine Name.

In order to make it easy and natural for a seeker to remember Him, the Guru gave to the seekers the Divine Naam, *Wahguru*,

meaning Glory be to God. Divine Naam is to be recited repeatedly in the early hours of dawn, three hours before sunrise, for a reasonable time.

#### **Amrit velaa sach naa-o vadi-aa-ee veechaar. (2)**

*(Meditate on His Holy Naam and reflect over His Greatness in the ambrosial hours of the morn.)*

The recitation of His Divine Name, the *Guru* said, will cleanse the inner self of the seeker because it is in the clean body, mind and spirit that the Lord resides. The recitation of His Divine Name, therefore, emerges as the kernel of *Guru's* spiritual vision. Through repeated recitation of His Name, *Waheguru*, the essence of the Creator stays in the seeker's mind unconsciously all through the day while he is engaged in his normal daily routine as a householder. The *Guru* says:

#### **Sabdai kaa niberhaa sunn too audhoo bin naavai jog naa ho-ee.**

**Naamey raatey an-din maatey naamey te sukh ho-ee.**

**Naamey hee te sabh pargat hovai naamey sojhee paa-ee.**

**Bin naavai bhekh kareh bahutere sachei aap khu-aa-ee. (946)**

*(This is the essence of the Shabad - listen, you hermits and Yogis. Without the Name, there is no Yoga. Those who are attuned to the Name, remain intoxicated night and day; through the Name, they find peace. Through the Name, everything is revealed; through the Name, understanding is obtained. Without the Name, people wear all sorts of religious robes; the True Lord Himself has confused them.)*

Normally a human being is born with all the animal instincts and lives like a human animal. Even after education, culture and sophistication he retains the essence of a human animal. Under the influence of a baser instinct the animal emerges in a human being and his animal like action puts the respectable human being in an unimaginably embarrassing situation.

Human beings, the *Guru* felt, are those distinguished living creatures who can make appropriate spiritual effort to improve their lives. The *Guru* reminds us that now is the time for a human being to shed his bond with the low animal life and get close to God to attain smooth perpetual life of an angel:

#### **Bha-ee paraapat maanukh dehuree-aa.**

**Gobind milan kee ih teree baree-aa. (12)**

*(This human body has been given to you. It is your chance to meet the Lord of the Universe, i.e., to realize the One, who sustains the universe.)*

Although the practice of reciting Divine Name has prevailed among the followers of several faiths, the concept of Divine Name as propounded by *Guru Nanak* has some specific facets of deeper significance. Consequently the seeker takes considerable time to realize the true hidden meanings of this concept. For instance the *Guru* desires that the Divine Name must be recited by the seeker in the company of *Saadh Sangat*,

the congregation of the like minded pious persons converging on the *Gurdwara*:

#### **Titt jaa-ai bahau satsangtee jitthai har kaa har naam bilo-ee-ai.**

**Sehj-ai hee har naam leiho har tatt naa kho-ee-ai. (587)**

*(Go, and sit in the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, where the Name of the Lord is churning.)*

*In peace and equipoise, contemplate the Lord's Name, Don't lose the essence of the Lord.)*

### **Naam, the Remedy**

The *Guru* reminds us that Divine Name, remembering the Almighty every moment of our lives and being immersed in His Divine Word, is the remedy for all our ills:

#### **Sarab rog ka aukhad Naam (274)**

*(His Divine Name is the remedy for all our ills.)*

How does the Divine Name act as a medicine? The *Guru* explains in *Jap ji*:

**Pani dhote utras kheh**

**Moot pleeti kappar hoe, deh saboon layeh oh dhoye.**

**Bharee-ai matt paapan ke sang**

**Oh dhope Naavai ke rang. (4)**

*(Water can cleanse hands soiled by dust. Clothes soiled by urine and muck can be cleaned by soap. The mind muddled by ill deeds and unboly thoughts, Can be cleansed by Divine Name.)*

With continual recitation of Divine Name we realize Him and get close to Him. This feeling of closeness to the great power ensures an increase in an individual's control over his mind leading to censor over his speech and action. Common unhealthy thoughts, feelings and impulses generated by habit or by the influence of unhealthy company or by the negative baggage from previous lives, are automatically held back, suppressed and ultimately destroyed and eliminated.

Similarly damaging impact of one's negative genes from our previous generations can be suppressed and eliminated in the same way, by the recitation of Divine Name. *Guru Nanak's* belief is based on a full merger of one's consciousness with the Almighty. A seeker, however, is required to live the normal life of a householder. He is to have a home, wife, children and a profession to earn an honest living like all other persons in society and set apart *Daswandh* (one tenth of one's righteous earnings) for the spiritual benefit of society.

*Guru* has, in fact, provided for us a full-fledged Grammar of Life so that we do not err in day to day life. We derive a correct path for our living from *Guru Granth Sahib* and also from the lives of the *Gurus*.

Thus the *Guru* guides us on a path which is disease free, pain free and free from mental tension.

## Code of Conduct

The *Guru* has also laid down for us a detailed Code of Conduct to be followed. Guru Nanak's spiritual vision of human conduct is anchored not only on high ethical values, but also on ever improving personal behavior. He believed that the fabric of society had been woven around *Dharma* (righteousness). As observed by the *Guru* in stanza 34 of *Jap ji*, the World is the place to practice *Dharma*. Further the *Guru* said that *Dharma* born of *Dayaa* or *Karuna* (compassion), has tied up the social fabric in the spiritual network of contentment, thereby providing harmony and order to society. In stanza 6 of *Jap ji*, the *Guru* has said that no positive attainment is possible without righteousness. The seeker is gifted with gems like truth, contentment and contemplation:

### **Matt vich ratan jawahar maanak Je ik gur kee Sikh sunee. (2)**

*(Within the mind are gems, jewels and rubies, if you listen to the Guru's Teachings, even once.)*

During his lifetime, Guru Nanak meticulously upheld the supremacy of good personal conduct. For instance, when his family wanted him to wear the traditional thread around his neck he asserted:

### **Daya kapaah santokh soot jatt gandhee satt vatt.**

#### **Eiho jane-oo jee-a kaa ha-ee ta paandei ghatt. (471)**

*(Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot and truth the twist.*

*This is the sacred thread of the soul; if you have it, then go ahead and put it on me.)*

Obviously the *Guru* clarified that if a person practiced compassion, contentment, continence and truth in his life, he lives a meaningful life.

Similarly, when his father wanted him to do farming, the *Guru* said:

### **Mann haalee kirsaaanee karnee saram pani tann khet.**

#### **Naam beej santokh suhaagaa rakh gareebes ves. (595)**

*(Make your mind the farmer, good deeds the farm, modesty the water, and your body the field. Let the Lord's Name be the seed, contentment the plough, and your humble dress the fence.)*

In the concluding stanza of *Jap ji*, Guru Nanak has laid down conditions of personal ethics for the realization of *Shabad*. These are Chastity and self-discipline; Patience and self-mastering; intuitive wisdom and understanding; divine knowledge and realization; fear of God; austerity; devotion and love of God. With these qualities of personal conduct, one can

proceed for the Prayer of the Holy 'Word'. Upon such a person the Almighty casts his gracious glance and showers happiness

In the context of personal conduct the *Guru* has stressed the subjugation and elimination of ego, which the *Guru* ordains is the source of many evils:

### **Ha-umai deeragh rog hai. (466)**

*(Ego is a chronic disease.)*

The *Guru* has reminded us that love of one's body, riches and women are all manifestations of one's ego. He tells the seeker not to slander God-conscious persons, nor for that matter any one, as also not to provoke others. The egocentric, the *Guru* adds, is blind and ignorant and in the shadow of the smoke of ego vanishes.

By way of conclusion, it may be stated that the seeker would be ensured a bright face and respect where ever he goes if he engages himself in *Naam Simran* to remain healthy in mind, body and soul and also follows Guru's Code of Conduct. The *Guru* further reminds the seeker that being involved in the continued *Naam Simran* and staying in the realm of spirituality, he will attain the spectacular refinement of soul, which gives the seeker a distinctive glow on his face, '*te mukh ujale*', as concluded by the *Guru* in *Jap ji*.

Guru Nanak has emphasized that only human beings have been given the capability of finding a way to escape the recurring process of birth and rebirth and get out of the never ending cycle of eighty four lakh births and deaths. He is for saving the seeker from the hands of *Yama*, who punishes him because of his misdeeds during his life time on this earth. The seeker begs the *Guru* to save him from this punishment.

