



Sewa

Baba Iqbal Singh highlights the path of spirituality

**“If I can stop a heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.
If I can ease one life of the aching, Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin Unto the nest again,
I shall not live in vain.” - Emily Dickinson**

Sewa (selfless service) simply implies service without consideration, expectation of reward or anticipation of the result of service:

Satgur ki sewa gaakhree Sirr deejay aap gavaaye (27)

(It is very difficult to serve the True Guru. Surrender your ego; give up your selfishness.)

Man is the most superior of the animal species blessed with the power of intellect and the responsibility to guide its destiny. Selfless service plays a significant role for the seeker, who wishes to tread on the path of spirituality. Most religions of the world propagate service to humanity as a means to achieve the final objective of realization of the divine. *Gurbani* lays stress on suppressing vices by selfless service and thereby following the divine path to merge with the Lord:

Satt santokh kar bhaa-o tosa harnaam se-i

Manhau chhod vikaar sacchaa sacch de-i (422)

(Those who practice truth, contentment and love, obtain the supplies of the Lord's name.)

So banish corruption from your mind and the True One will grant you truth.)

Gurbani further emphasizes that all forms of austerity, denouncing the world and residing in forests, caves and mountains and torturing the human body are no match to the service of the Lord, which is supreme, by way of kindness, contentment and truthful living:

Satt santokh dayaa kamaav-ei eh karnee saar (51)

(Practice truth, contentment and kindness; this is the essence of life.)

Through selfless service, humility and love, the mind is purified and the ego is decimated, paving way for its merging with the divine. According to *Sikhi*, there are three types of services that are central to the attainment of *Atam-pad* (divine grace). These are, service by wealth, body and mind (*Dbann, Tann, Mann*). The service by wealth brings renunciation to the mind and the attraction of materialism lessens. The individual starts becoming detached to the external material world and focuses on the divine, entering the state of *Vairaag* (detachment). The next is the service by body, which enables man to transcend the joys and sorrows of the body, making an effort towards suppressing the ego and focusing on dedication on the Divine Name. The highest service is that of the mind {to make the *Atma* (conscious) a follower of the *Shabad Guru*}. Through this the individual surrenders his identity towards becoming one with the Lord.

Service by wealth involves sharing the fruits of selfless hard work. In other words, share *Daswandh* (at least one tenth of your honest earnings) and dedicate it to the *Guru* for the benefit of the needy and underprivileged. This is a pre-requisite to follow the path of *Sikhi* leading to the Divine:

Service by the body means working with hands and feet for the welfare of mankind. For instance, cleaning and dusting the shoes of the *Saadh Sangat*, washing utensils, cooking and serving *Langar*; taking care of the sick and the needy, providing a helping hand in the construction of religious places or facilities for the society and other deeds performed physically.

Bin sewa dhrig hath pe-ir hor nehfal karni. (Bhai Gurdas)

(If one does not render divine service, his hands and feet are worthless. So also the deeds performed with them.)

Service of the mind is to distract the mind from vices of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego and to unite the mind with *Shabad Guru* present within and to accept the Lord's Will gracefully.

Sev keetee santokh-ee jinee sacho sach dhiaa-i-aa

Oanee mand-ei pe-ir naa rakhio kar sukrit dharam kamaa-i-aa. (466)

(Those who serve are content. They meditate on the Truest of the True. They do not place their feet in sin, but perform good deeds and live righteously.)

By rendering selfless service of wealth, body and mind and meditating on the divine name, one attains the spiritual grace of merging with the divine.

All the spiritually self-enlightened men of the world have achieved union with God only through the service of the body, mind and wealth. The epitome of selfless service to humanity, the great Bhai Lehna attained such heights of selfless service that from an ordinary village trader, he became the second Nanak, before whom even Guru Nanak circumambulated five times and bowed his head. Whereas, during his *Udasis* (four phases of Guru Nanak's spiritual travels) spanning 25 years, Guru Nanak did not bow his head before anyone. The power of selfless service and imbibing the preaching of the Guru was so great that the *Guru* (reflection of the Formless) says before an ordinary humble man, “I am not bowing to your physical body, but before that divine flame of the Formless Almighty that has marked its presence within you.” Likewise, the remaining Gurus became Guru Nanak by serving their Guru and learning their preaching and by surrendering their mind, body and wealth to the *Guru*.

Bhai Kanhaiya is a shining example of selfless service to humanity with no distinction of nationality, caste or creed. Aptly known as the 'fore-runner of the modern Red Cross', his universal message of compassion and kindness to all have few parallels in history.



The philosophy of Bhai Kanhaiya's universal message of compassion and kindness, as enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib* continues to be as relevant today as it was three centuries ago and will continue to be relevant for all times to come:

**Bisr gayee sab taat prayee Jab te saadh sangat mohe payee
Naa ko bairree nahee biganaa Sagal sang hum kau ban aayee (1299)**

(I have completely forgotten the jealousy of others since I found the company of holy persons. No one is my foe and no one is alien, I get along with everyone.)

The following points are the pre-requisite for *Sewa*:

Serve selflessly

We should serve humanity selflessly, without any consideration, with complete dedication, with an open mind and see the Divine in all. Then only can we attain Lord:



Sewa karat ho-ei nihkaami Tis kao ho-at praapat suamee. (286)

(One who performs selfless service, without desire for reward attains to the Lord.)

Treat all equally

To serve the entire mankind equally without discrimination; render help and assistance to everybody without prejudice and make no distinction between friend and foe.

Serve with compassion and love

We should treat even our fallen enemies (when they do not have their swords drawn) with respect, compassion, humility and love.

The five weapons

Use the five weapons to destroy the five internal thieves or the vices i.e., *Kaam* (lust), *Krodh* (anger), *Lobb* (greed), *Moh* (attachment) and *Abankaar* (ego). The five weapons are deep level of compassion (*Dayaa/Karuna*), complete compliance to truth (*Sat*), inner contentment (*Santokh*), overflowing humility (*Nimrata*) and total love (*Pyaar*).

Share with others

To share one's wealth with the needy and reduce their suffering and pain. Remember the three pillars of Sikhism - *Naam Japo*; *Kirat Karo* and *Wand Chhako*.

Sewa

To carry out whatever *Sewa* that we are able to and help make life comfortable for anyone who is hurt, in pain, is suffering or otherwise. This is an important aspect of Sikhism's two-pronged dedication to God i.e., *Simran* and *Sewa*.

The central theme of *Bhagwad Gita* is to serve humanity without attachment or ego. Lord Krishna says, "Your duty is only to work and not look for the fruits thereof." A *Karma Yogi* should be absolutely free from greed, attachment, lust, anger and ego. Only then he can render useful selfless service. The path of *Karma Yoga* eventually leads to attainment of the Divine. The whole essence of *Bhagwad Gita* has been very aptly summed up by Guru Arjan Dev in *Sukhmani Sahib*:

Karam karat hove neh karam Tis baisno kaa nirmal dharam

Kaahu phal kee ichhaa nahee banchhe Kewal bhagat kirtan sang raache (274)

(Performing good deeds, he does not seek rewards. Spotlessly pure is the religion of such a devoted seeker of truth; he has no desire for the fruits of his labors. He is absorbed in devotional worship and the singing of Kirtan, the songs of the Lord's Glory.)

Be good, do good and after performing good deeds, one should pray to the Almighty that he has not done anything, You have got it done by him. This is the essence of the teachings of all scriptures and prophets of the world.

Those, who want inner bliss are very few. All crave for worldly happiness, but no one knows where he can get it. All search for it in wealth and material possessions. *Maaya* (illusion) never allows people to taste the bliss of the inner life i.e., the *Atma* (soul). Deluded by its power, man thinks that there is no transcendental realm, that there is nothing beyond the senses. 'Eat, drink and be merry' has become the motto of life for a vast majority. The path to the realm of God is open only to those, who have been endowed with Divine Grace.

Selfless service requires personal action by the individual, a desire to pack up and start. It is easy to give away excess money, used equipment, and used clothing. It is more difficult to give off our time and personal presence to help others.

Bhagat Puran Singh is one of the most prominent Sikh personalities of the last century embodying the religion of selfless service. He dedicated his entire adulthood to the selfless service of terminal and mentally ill patients, who in most cases had been abandoned by their families and society at large. He dedicated his life for providing a ray of hope for these desperate patients. His life is a story of great personal sacrifice; a dogged determination against huge problems; a passion for selfless service; complete faith and surrender to



the powerful Almighty and unending love for the suffering beings of the world.

He remained an avid collector throughout his life and collected 'human pebbles' from the streets and housed them in Pingalwara. He collected funds, in dribbles rather than droves, to run it. He collected all the purposeful articles from the newspapers and magazines on economy, environment, public health, population, etc., got booklets of these published and distributed them free of cost. The front page of newspapers never interested him. It was amazing to see how his eyes went straight to reports and write-ups dealing with human problems and welfare. He lived all his life for others and packed 72 hours of activity in a normal day.

Mother Teresa, the angel of mercy, is another glorious example of selfless service. A European lady by birth, she chose the slums of Kolkata to serve the homeless and unwanted people of society. By serving the poor, she served God. She had, in her own words, a mission to care: "The hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared in the society - people that appear to be burden to society and are shunned by everyone." She devoted her entire life to such people. She set up the 'Mission of Charity' with just 13 members. Today it has more than 4,000 nuns running orphanages and destitute homes worldwide, caring for refugees, the blind, disabled, aged, alcoholics, the poor and homeless and victims of floods and natural disasters. The Mother concludes:

"If you cannot feed a hundred people, then just feed one"

In her early days at a press conference, a reporter asked Mother Teresa, "What will you achieve serving a few people, when there are millions uncared for? Your work is like a drop in the ocean." She humbly replied, "I agree my work is like a drop in the ocean, but is it also not true that the ocean will be one drop more with my work?" The mother appears to be telling the society:

Nirdaya naheen jyt ujaala boodat boodai sarab janjaala (903)

(You have no compassion; the Lord's light does not shine in you. You are drowned, drowned in worldly entanglements.)

Sewa and *Simran* are the two wheels of a chariot leading to the spiritual goal of merging with the divine. In fact, they play a complimentary role, *Sewa* leading to *Simran* and *Simran* leading to *Sewa*. Through *Sewa*, the seeker experiences humility, gratitude, love and compassion. *Simran* (remembering God) makes the mind pure. It helps man to imbibe God-like qualities and traits. Love for God is love for humanity. The seeker with the love for humanity engages in service to humanity. There are many pitfalls on the path of *Sewa* if not done selflessly. Pride, name and fame negate the fruits of *Sewa*.

Sewa is that hard currency, which is recognized in the abode of the Lord. The magic of *Sewa* cannot be explained but experienced. All three forms of *Sewa* - *Dbann*, *Tann* and

Mann - enable Man to transcend the joys and sorrows of the body, turn successful in decimating the ego so that the individual surrenders his identity towards becoming one with the Lord, which is Man's goal of life, as enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib*:

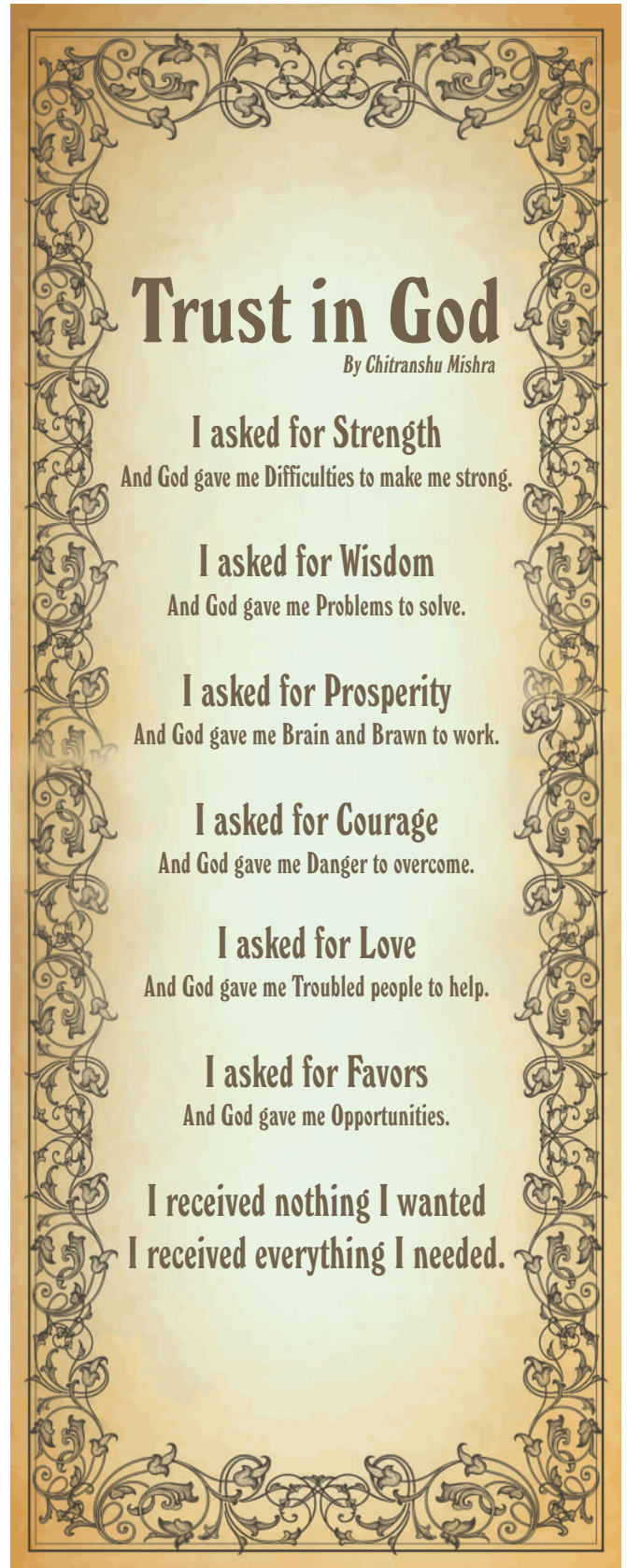
Bha-ee paraapat maanukh dehuree-aa.

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.)



Truthful living becomes the nature mode of one who lives in the awareness of being one with the One. The individual self undergoes a process of expansion that subsumes all categories. All signs, names, labels, that define one's isolated, personal, individual identity, have no more relevance. All the values associated with the Cosmic begin to reverbrate in such a one. Beyond intellectual grasp, beyond sensuous perception, beyond any defining modules, beyond all classificatory species of subgroups, one begins to shimmer with the quintessential and core values that encompass one and all. This the only way one can know the unknowable.



Trust in God

By Chitranshu Mishra

I asked for Strength

And God gave me Difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for Wisdom

And God gave me Problems to solve.

I asked for Prosperity

And God gave me Brain and Brawn to work.

I asked for Courage

And God gave me Danger to overcome.

I asked for Love

And God gave me Troubled people to help.

I asked for Favors

And God gave me Opportunities.

**I received nothing I wanted
I received everything I needed.**