

# Essentials of Sikhism

## Sri Guru Granth Sahib The Eternal Guru

The Guru Granth Sahib (also known as the Adi Granth) is truly unique among the world's great scriptures. It is considered the Supreme Spiritual Authority and Head of the Sikh religion, rather than any living person. It is also the only scripture of its kind which not only contains the works of its own religious founders but also writings of people from other faiths. The living Guru of the Sikhs, the book is held in great reverence by Sikhs and treated with the utmost respect. Sikhism rejects idol worship, so the Guru Granth Sahib is not worshipped as an idol, but rather emphasis is placed on respect of the book for the writings which appear within. Guru Granth Sahib is a collection of devotional hymns and poetry which proclaims God, lays stress on meditation on the True Guru (God), and lays down moral and ethical rules for development of the soul, spiritual salvation and unity with God.

### History of the Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Arjun Dev the Fifth Sikh Guru compiled the original version of the Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru's older brother Prithi Chand as well as others had started passing off some of his own compositions as the hymns of the Gurus. Guru Arjun Dev realized that if this situation was allowed to continue it would be the undermining of the Sikh religion. The Sikhs needed an authentic compilation of the hymns of their Gurus. Thus Guru Amar Das started collection the original verses of all the Gurus. He sent trusted Sikhs such as Bhai Piara, Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha across the country in search of original manuscripts. Guru Arjun Dev made trips to Goindwal, Khadur and Kartarpur to visit the families of the previous Gurus. Guru Arjun Dev collected original manuscripts of the Gurus from Mohan (son of Guru Amar Das), Datu (son of Guru Angad) as well as Sri Chand (son of Guru Nanak).

Guru Arjun now pitched a tent by the side of Ramsar tank in Amritsar and started the arduous task of compiling the first edition of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Gurdas was entrusted as the Guru's scribe for the master copy. The monumental task was finally completed after a number of years. This original edition of the Guru Granth Sahib known at that time as Pothi Sahib was installed on a high pedestal within the Harmandir Sahib in August 1604. Guru Arjun Dev seated himself at a lower level and instructed all Sikhs to bow before it, not as an idol, but as the book of divine inspiration which instructed living men in the ways of God and dedicated secular life. The revered Baba Buddha was appointed the first Granthi (custodian) of the book.

Guru Arjun Dev dictated that unlike the Hindu scriptures, the Pothi Sahib could be open to reading by anyone of any caste, creed or sex. Guru Arjun Dev provided the following epilogue;

"Three things are there in the vessel; Truth, contentment and intellect. The ambrosial Name of God is added to it, The Name that is everybody's sustenance. He who absorbs and enjoys it shall be saved. One must not abandon this gift, It should ever remain dear to ones heart. The dark ocean of the world can be crossed by clinging to His feet. Nanak, it is He who is everywhere." (Mundawani) Pothi Sahib (known today as the Kartarpur Bir) was kept by the Sixth Master Guru Hargobind in his house. From here it was stolen by his grandson Dhir Mal who intended to use it to further his claims on the succession of the Guruship. Some thirty years later the followers of the Ninth Master, Guru Tegh Bahadur forcibly recovered it, but were instructed by the Guru to return it. They placed it in the shallow river bed of the Satluj River. From here Dhir Mal recovered it, miraculously it was undamaged. Throughout the eighteenth century it most likely remained with Dhir Mal's family, the Sodhis of Kartarpur, thus the name Kartarpur Bir (Bir means volume). The Holy Book next emerged from obscurity in 1849. In that year following the annexation of Punjab, the volume together with its golden stand were discovered by the British in the custody of the Lahore royal court. An application was received from Sodhi Sadhu Singh of Kartarpur and in 1850 the volume was returned to his family. The Kartarpur Bir is preserved to this day and installed monthly for worshippers.

An unauthorized edition of the Guru Granth Sahib known as the Banno Bir also exists. Guru Arjun Dev gave this copy of the Granth Sahib to Bhai Banno one of his disciples to take to Lahore for binding. Bhai Banno kept this volume and wrote in some verses of Sudras and Mirabai which it is believed had been rejected by the Guru as well as a few hymns allegedly to be by Guru Nanak at the end of his Granth. Guru Arjun Dev did not approve the Banno Bir. This copy is still in the possession of the descendants of Bhai Banno.

Dhir Mal even refused to return the Kartarpur Bir over to Guru Gobind Singh, The Tenth and Final Master. While at Talwandi Sabo (known as Damdama Sahib today) Guru Gobind Singh undertook to prepare a new edition of the Granth Sahib including in it all of the hymns appearing in the original edition as well as the hymns of his late father, the Ninth Master Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru dictated the entire Granth to his scribe Bhai Mani Singh. Out of his humility, Guru Gobind Singh who was a great and profuse writer and poet only included one of his hymns. The great task was fi-

nally completed in 1705. The Damdama Sahib Bir was then taken to Nanded where it was installed as desired by the Guru. Near the end of his life Guru Gobind Singh ended the line of personal Guruship by investing the Granth Sahib with the status of Eternal Guru and his official successor in 1708. Bhai Nandlal one of Guru Gobind Singh's disciples recorded the Guru's words as; "He who would wish to see the Guru, Let him come and see the Granth. He who would wish to speak to him, Let him read and reflect upon what says the Granth. He who would wish to hear his word, He should with all his heart read the Granth." (Rahitnama) In 1721 Mata Sundri the widow of Guru Gobind Singh instructed Bhai Mani Singh to go to Harmandir Sahib as the head Granthi along with the Sacred Volume. This Sacred Volume which was carried by the Sikhs before their troops on march was tragically lost in battle during the Second Sikh Holocaust - Wadda ghalughara on February 5th 1762. Fortunately since a number of copies had been made, this text has survived to today become the official authorized version of the Guru Granth Sahib.

#### Guru Granth Sahib: Authors & Contributors

The writings of the Gurus appears chronologically. Each of the Gurus signed their hymns as Nanak. Their compositions are identified by the numerals at the beginning of each hymn, ie. Mahalla 1 is Guru Nanak, Mahalla 2 is Guru Angad and so on. These are then followed by those of other saints (Bhagtas) and other contributors. The 5,867 hymns found in the Guru Granth Sahib broken down by author are:

#### The Gurus:

- Guru Nanak: 947 hymns
- Guru Angad: 63 hymns
- Guru Amar Das: 869 hymns
- Guru Ram Das: 638 hymns
- Guru Arjun Dev: 2,312 hymns
- Guru Tegh Bahadur: 115 hymns
- Guru Gobind Singh: 1 hymn

#### The Bhagatas: Saints of various faiths

Kabir: 534 hymns

Kabir (1398 to 1495) was born to a Brahmin mother and raised by a muslim step mother. Kabir was a proponent of the Bhakti movement. He lived as a householder, abhorred the caste system and religious rituals. He was a saintly apostle of peace, love and unity and a great poet. Kabir believed in inward purity, and was respected by both Hindus and Muslims.

Sheikh Farid: 123 hymns

Sheikh Farid (1175 to 1265) was a muslim Sufi saint of great piety. He is considered the father of Punjabi poetry. He was greatly loved for his kindness and humanity. He stressed living a simple yet purposeful life concentrating on One God.

Namdev: 62 hymns

Namdev (1270 to 1350) was a celebrated saint from Maharashtra who travelled extensively across the country. He lived in Punjab for a number of years.

Ravidas: 40 hymns

A contemporary of Kabir and a disciple of Ramanand, Ravidas represents the culmination of the Bhakti Movement. He came from a low caste cobbler family but had many disciples because of his spirituality. He stressed a life of simplicity and piety.

Trilochan: 5 hymns

A contemporary of Kabir and a celebrated saint of the Vaish caste. He believed in One God and condemned superficial rituals and stressed the holiness of the heart.

Beni: 3 hymns

Probably a contemporary of Namdev, not much is known about him. He was unperturbed by poverty and enjoyed a life of solitude enriched by his spiritual pursuits. He was a great scholar as is evident from his writings.

Sheikh Bhikan: 2 hymns

A muslim Sufi scholar saint Sheikh Bhikan died in the early part of Akbar's reign. He was one of the most learned men of his time. He believed that only God's name can heal a diseased mind and body.

Dhanna: 4 hymns

Dhanna was a Jat from Rajasthan who was born in 1415. He lived most of his life as an idol worshipper but in later years became a worshipper of One God and renounced all superstitious practices.

Jaidev: 2 hymns

Jaidev was a renowned poet laureate in the royal court of king Lakshman Sen of Bengal. His famous work of poetry Gita Govinda is well known for its poetic beauty and musical richness.

Paramanand: 1 hymn

Born in Maharashtra, little is known about Paramanand's life. It is believed that he lived in Maharashtra and was a devotee of Krishna. He later became a proponent of One God.

Pipa: 1 hymn

Born in 1425, Pipa was the king of the princely state of Gagaraungarh. He abdicated his throne, travelled extensively and became a disciple of Ramanand. He lived a life of extreme austerity and humility.

Ramanand: 1 hymn

Ramanand, a Brahmin was born in 1359 in Madras. He is regarded as the pioneer of the Bhakti movement in northern India. A Vaishnava in his early life, he became a worshipper of brahm and condemned the caste system. Kabir was the most renowned amongst his disciples.

Sadhna: 1 hymn

A butcher by profession, Sadhana was born in Sind. His piety and meditation of God elevated him to saintly

status. He was condemned by Brahmins and on a false charge was arrested and buried alive.

Sain: 1 hymn

Sain was a barber of the royal court of Raja Ram, king of Rewa. He was a follower of Ramanand and Kabir.

Surdas: 2 hymns

Surdas was a Brahmin born in 1529. He was learned in Sanskrit and Persian and studied music and poetry. He was appointed a governor by emperor Akbar, but was later imprisoned for dereliction of duty. Towards the end of his life, he became a hermit and lived among holy men.

The Bhattas: 123 hymns

The Bhattas were a group of musicians who lived in the sixteenth century. All of them were scholars, poets and singers. Scholars differ on the exact number of contributors to the Granth Sahib, anywhere from eight to seventeen.

Sikhs:

Mardana: 3 hymns

Mardana was a rabab (rebeck) player who spent most of his life as a disciple and musician of Guru Nanak. Born a Muslim, Mardana was a childhood friend of Guru Nanak and accompanied him on all his great travels.

Satta & Balwand: 8 hymns

Satta was a rebeck player who served Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Gur Ram Das and Guru Arjun Dev. Along with his fellow musician Balwand they jointly composed a ballad which appears in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Sunder: 6 hymns

Baba Sunder (1560-1610) was the great grandson of Guru Amar Das. His composition called Sadd (Calling) was written at the request of Guru Arjun Dev after the death of Guru Ram Das.

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#### Guru Granth Sahib: Arrangement & Layout

The majority of the language of the Guru Granth Sahib is the Punjabi dialect prevalent at that time, some hymns are also found in Persian, medieval Prakrit Hindi and Marathi, Sanskrit as well as Arabic. All of these hymns are written in the standard Punjabi script known as Gurmukhi, popularized by the Second Master; Guru Angad. The Guru Granth Sahib is exactly 1430 pages in length. Each page contains in bold print 18 or 19 lines dependent on the page size.

The hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib have been laid out in a very scientific and well planned manner devised by Guru Arjun Dev. The hymns have been arranged according to the melody (Raga) in which they are meant to be sung. Secondly they are arranged on the nature or the metre of the poems themselves. Next they are arranged by author and finally on the clef or key deemed

appropriate to them. Divided into 33 sections. The first section contains the epic Japji poem by Guru Nanak, which is not meant to be sung. The final section is a collection of assorted verses including the Slokas and the Swayyas of Bhattas (a group of musicians). The remaining 31 sections are the Ragas: (1) Sri Rag, (2) Majh, (3) Gauri, (4) Asa, (5) Gujari, (6) Devgandhari, (7) Bihagra, (8) Wadhans, (9) Sorath, (10) Dhanasari, (11) Jaitsari, (12) Todi, (13) Bairari, (14) Tilang, (15) Suhi, (16) Bilawal, (17) Gaund, (18) Ramkali, (19) Nat, (20) Maligaura, (21) Maru, (22) Tukhari, (23) Kedara, (24) Bhairo, (25) Basant, (26) Sarang, (27) Malar, (28) Kanara, (29) Kalian, (30) Prabhati and (31) Jaijwanti. The Ragas are further divided into the nature of the metre: (1) Chaupadas: an average of four verses each, (2) Ashtpadis: an average of eight verses each, (3) Special long poems, (4) Chhants: six line verses, (5) Special short poems, (6) Vars: consisting of two or more paragraphs (Sloks) followed by a concluding stanza (Pauri) and (7) Poems of Bhagatas (various saints).

The Order of the Guru Granth Sahib:

Daily Prayers:

Japji (Morning); Page 1 to 8

Sodar (Evening); Page 8 to 10

So Purkh (Evening); Page 10 to 12

Sohila (Bed Time); Page 12 to 13

Main Body:

Musical hymns; Page 14 to 1,353

Slokas Sahskriti; Page 1,353 to 1,360

Gatha; Page 1,360 to 1,361

Phanhas; Page 1,361 to 1,363

Chaubolas; Page 1,363 to 1,364

Concluding Portion:

Shlokas of Kabir; Page 1,364 to 1,377

Shlokas of Sheikh Farid; Page 1,377 to 1,384

Swayyas; Page 1,385 to 1,409

Shlokas of the Gurus; Page 1,410 to 1,426

Shlokas of Guru Tegh Bahadur; Page 1,426 to 1,429

Mundavani; Page 1,429

Rag Mala; Page 1,429 to 1,430

Translations of Selected Sikh Scriptures

The Japji hymn by Guru Nanak is considered to be the key to the Guru Granth Sahib and an epitome of the Sikh doctrine. It appears as the first poem in the Guru Granth Sahib and is repeated by Sikhs in their morning prayers, as well as when preparing Amrit for the Khalsa baptism ceremony. Japji lays stress on the brotherhood of man and remembrance of God as the key to salvation.

A concise history of the Sikhs, Ardas is used as the common prayer. It is recited whenever starting or ending any reading of the Guru Granth Sahib or any other important task. The first part of it appears as a prologue to Chandi Di Var written by Guru Gobind Singh invoking blessings of God and the Gurus. The remainder of the

bulk was incorporated by the great Sikh scholar Bhai Mani Singh. Further additions have been added over time taking into account major events affecting Sikhs.

Part of the daily prayers prescribed for Sikhs, the poem Tav-Prasad Savaiye by Guru Gobind Singh is usually read after Japji and Jap in the mornings. In it Guru Gobind Singh expounds the uselessness of rituals and blind faith without sincere worship of God. It is found in the Dasam Granth, the collection of the writings of Guru Gobind Singh.

During the Sikh marriage ceremony called Anand Karaj, the Lawan is read from the Guru Granth Sahib. There are four main stanzas to this poem written by Guru Ram Das. In unison with the reading of each of the four stanzas, the bride and groom complete a circle around the Guru Granth Sahib.

Known as the Letter of Victory, Zafarnama was written in Persian by Guru Gobind Singh as a letter of defiance and delivered to the tyrant Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707. It was composed by the Guru after the battle of Chamkaur where many Sikhs including the Gurus two eldest sons laid down their lives against overwhelming odds. It is important to Sikhs because it contains the doctrine of the use of force being justifiable if all other peaceful means have failed.

## Japji by Guru Nanak

God is only One. His name is True. He is the Creator, He is without fear. He is inimical to none. He never dies. He is beyond births and deaths. He is self illuminated. He is realized by the kindness of the True Guru. Repeat His Name.

He was True in the beginning. He was True when the ages commenced and has ever been True. He is also True now. Nanak says that He will certainly be True in the future.

Mortals cannot comprehend God by pondering over Him for thousands of times. Mortals may remain silent and absorbed in the meditation of God and His love, yet peace of mind will not be achieved. Yearning of hungry mortals will never end by keeping fasts, or by collecting loads of worldly riches. Mortal may possess thousands of clever thoughts or the biggest wisdom, yet not even one wise thought will accompany him to the next world. How can the mortal become True? How can the barrier of falsehood be smashed? Nanak replies that this can be achieved by obeying the pre-ordained Command and Will of God recorded for the man. (1)

By God's Command, which cannot be defined, bodies are formed. By God's Command lives are infused and honour is gained. By His Command the mortals are made high or low and they suffer pain or get joy in accordance with His written Command. Some get boons through His Command, while others always wander in transmigration by His Order. Everyone and everything is controlled by His Command, which none can escape. Nanak says that if the mortal were to realize the Lord's Command, they would never entertain egotism. (2)

Who has power to sing and define God's Power? Who can sing and describe the marks of grace of God? Who can sing the virtues and excellences of God? Who can sing and describe the most difficult knowledge of God? Who can sing God, who forms the body, and then reduces it to dust? Who can sing God, who takes away life and again infuses it? Who can sing God, who seems to be far away? Who can sing God, who sees all just face to face? There is no dearth of persons who give discourses about God. Millions of describes give millions of discourses about God. God the Giver, constantly gives His gifts and recipients become tired of receiving the same. Throughout all the ages all have been eating provisions. God causes others to follow the path, chalked out under His command. Nanak says that God, Who is carefree, is always merry. (3)

God as well as His Name is True and those who repeat His Name with sincere affection, are true. People beg in prayers that He may bestow gifts on them, and God fulfills this according to their devotion. What should be offered to God so that His Court may be seen? What language should be uttered by the mouth, so that

He may bestow His love on us after hearing it? One must utter the True Name in the early ambrosial morning and must ponder over His Greatness. Mortals obtain a human body as a result of good deeds but he reaches the gate of salvation with God's kind grace. Nanak says that one must realize that True God is all by Himself. (4)

Pure God, unaffected by mammon, is all by Himself. God has not been and cannot be created or established by anyone. Those who serve God, obtain honour. Nanak advises, sing God's praises, Who is the treasure of excellences. Sing the praises of God and keep love for Him in the heart. Then you will obtain joy in your mind and throw away your pain. Guru's words are Divine, which infuse the knowledge of God, and by following the Guru's words, God, pervading everywhere, is realized. Guru is Shiva, Vishnu, Shiva's consort Parvati, Vishnu's consort Lakshmi and Brahma's consort Saraswati. If I were to know God, I cannot narrate Him, because He cannot be described in words. Guru has made clear one thing to me; There is only One Giver for all the beings, Whom I must not forget. (5)

When God likes me, then this act of His Grace is just like my taking bath at a place of pilgrimage, because bathing is useless, unless one pleases God. What do all the created beings, whom I behold, gain and get in the absence of good deeds? One will find in his mind gems, jewels and rubies, if he were to act upon and listen to the instructions of the Guru. Guru has made clear one thing to me; There is only One Giver for all the beings, Whom I must not forget. (6)

If the age of the mortal were to become equal to four ages and were to increase still further by ten times; If the mortal were to become known in the nine continents and all were to obey and follow him; If he were to acquire good name, praise and fame in the world; What then? In spite of all this no one would care for such a person, if he does not obtain God's grace. He would be treated as an ignominious and insignificant worm amongst worms and will be held as a sinner, even the sinful person will condemn him. Nanak says that God confers virtues on the non-virtuous and more virtues on the pious. There is none who can show any goodness to God. (7)

Mortal becomes a perfect saint, a religious guide, a spiritual leader, and a great yogi, by hearing the Name of God Reality of earth and bull supporting it and of heaven becomes known by hearing the Name of God. Knowledge of the world, continents and nether regions is gained by the mortal by hearing the Name of God. Death cannot touch and come near the mortal by hearing the Name of God. Nanak says that saints always remain blissful. Diseases and sins are destroyed by hearing the Name of God. (8)

The status and power of Shiva, god of death, of

Brahma, god of creation and of Indra, god of rain, are obtained by hearing the Name of God. Even a sinner begins uttering praises of God, after listening to the Name of God. By hearing the Name of God, the method of realizing Him and the secrets of human body, become known. Knowledge of the four religious books, the six schools of philosophy and the twenty four ceremonial treatises is attained by hearing the Name of God. Nanak says that saints always remain blissful. Diseases and sins are destroyed by hearing the Name of God. (9)

Truthfulness, contentment and divine knowledge are obtained by hearing the Name of God. Spiritual benefit of the bath at sixty eight holy places is obtained by hearing the Name of God. One gets honours by hearing and reading again and again the Name of God. One is absorbed in the meditation of God easily by hearing the Name. Nanak says that true saints always remain blissful. Diseases and sins are destroyed by hearing the Name of God. (10)

One dives deep into the ocean of virtues by hearing the Name of God. Mortal becomes a scholar, a spiritual guide and an emperor by hearing the Name of God. The blind sees the way by hearing the Name of God. Unfathomable Lord becomes fathomable by hearing the Name of God. Nanak says that the true saints always remain blissful. Diseases and sins are destroyed by hearing the Name of God. (11)

State of mind of the devotee who obeys the Lord cannot be described. One trying to describe it, will have to repent afterwards. There is neither the paper and pen nor the writer, Who can sit and describe the state of the devotee, who obeys God. Such is the Pure Name of God un-affected by maya. One obeying God, realizes the bliss, given by such obedience in his mind. (12)

By obeying God, consciousness, divine knowledge and understanding are acquired. Knowledge of all the spheres is acquired by obeying God. The believer in God does not get blows of death on his face. One who obeys God will not be caught by the god of death. Such is the Pure Name of God. One obeying God, realizes the bliss, given by such obedience in his mind. (13)

One who obeys God, will face no hindrances in his way. One who obeys God, goes to the next world with honour and fame. One who obeys God, is not misled and does not practice worldly rites and rituals. One who obeys God, loves Truth. Such is the Pure Name of God. One obeying God, realizes the bliss given by such obedience in his mind. (14)

One who obeys God, reaches the door of salvation. One who obeys God, reforms his family members. One who obeys God, swims across the world ocean and causes true disciples of the Guru to do so. One who obeys God, never has an occasion to beg from others. Such is the Pure name of God. One who obeys God, realizes the

bliss, given by such obedience in his mind. (15)

Saints are supreme and are approved by God. Saints gain honour in the Court of God. God's saints look beautiful in God's Court. Saints concentrate their minds on the Guru alone. One may reflect on God and describe Him as much as possible; Yet the doings of God cannot be counted. The mythical bull representing piety is the outcome of the compassion of God. God's compassion holds the earth at its position with patience. One will be called true if he realizes this and, If he can know as to how much weight is placed on the supposed bull. Beyond this earth, there are many more and more earth's. What power bears their load from underneath, not the supposed bull, but God's Laws. There is the ever flowing pen of God. It inscribed various kinds, colours and names of all the things. Even if some know how to write this account then, What big volume of writings it would be? How much power and fascinating beauty of God is? How grand is god's Gift? Who can assess its extent? God's One Word created the world's expansion. And thousands of rivers began to flow. What power can describe God or His schemes? I cannot even once be a sacrifice to You, my God! Whatever pleases God, is a good undertaking. Lord, the Formless, ever exists without any fear. (16)

Ways of Meditation on God and of those, who meditate upon Him with devotion, are countless. Ways of worshipping God are countless and those, who practice penance, are countless. Scriptures are countless and those who can recite Vedas extempore are countless. Yogis who in their minds have no attachment for the world are countless. True devotees, who reflect over the excellences and knowledge of God are countless. Pious mortals and those who distribute charities are countless. Countless are the warriors, who bear the brunt on their face. Saints, who remain silent and meditate continuously on God with devotion are countless. What power can describe God or His schemes? I cannot even once be a sacrifice to You. Whatever pleases God, is a good undertaking. God the formless, ever exists without any fear. (17)

Countless are foolish persons and those who are completely blind spiritually. Countless are thieves and sinful usurpers of others property. Countless leave this world after establishing their kingdoms by force. Countless are cut-throats who commit murders. Countless are sinners who commit sins. Countless are liars, who practice falsehood and suffer transmigration. Countless sinners are filthy and speak filth. Countless are the slanderers who carry loads of sins on their heads. Humble Nanak submits to God and says, I cannot even once be a sacrifice to you. Whatever pleases God, is a good undertaking. God, the Formless, ever exists without any danger. (18)

God's Name and abodes are countless. Inaccessible

and inscrutable are God's Realms. Even to say they are countless, is to carry loads of sins on ones head. God's Name and praises are uttered through words. God's virtues and knowledge are sung through words. The divine hymns are uttered and recorded in letters. the destiny of a mortal, written on his forehead is declared in letters. God, Who writes the destinies, has no such letters written on His forehead. Mortals obtain that which is ordained by God. Whatever has been created by God, is His own manifestation. There is no place without God's Name. What power can describe God and His schemes? I cannot even once be a sacrifice to God. Whatever pleases God, is a good undertaking. God the formless ever exists without any fear. (19)

If hands, feet and body are covered with dust, Their dust is washed with water. When clothes are soiled with urine, These are washed with soap. When mind becomes polluted with sins, It is washed by colouring it with Name. Dubbing men by mere words of mouth, does not make men virtuous or sinful. Often repeated actions are engraved on the heart and will be read in God's court. Whatever one sows, he reaps. Nanak says, man takes birth and dies by God's order. (20)

Pilgrimage, penance, compassion and charity, Give honour, if any, as insignificant as sesame. By faithfully hearing, believing and loving the Name of God, Salvation is obtained and this amounts to taking bath in the true shrine, existing with ones self. Lord is the owner of all virtues, but I have no virtue. Without obtaining virtuous qualities, God's devotional service is not possible. I salute God, who is Himself worldly wealth and is real Brahma and I utter His praises. God is True and Beautiful and all joy resides perpetually within His mind. What was the time, the moment, the lunar day, the week day, What was the season and the month, when the world was created? Had the Puranas referred to this, the Pandits would have discovered the time. Nor do the Qazis, who write and read the Koran, know the time. Neither Yogis nor anyone else knows the lunar day, weekday, season and month. The Creator, Who creates the world, alone knows this time. How to express, to please, to describe and to know God? Nanak says that all give discourses about God and each one thinks himself to be wiser than the other. Grand is the Master, His Name and glory, and what He does, must happen. Nanak says that if someone thinks himself to be powerful to do things, or thinks himself to be the knower of God, he will not be honoured in the next world. (21)

There are nether worlds and more nether worlds below them and there are thousands of skies over them. The Vedas pronounce one conclusion that people are tired of searching the limits and boundaries of God. The saints, the eighteen Puranas and four religious books of Jews, Christian and Muslims conclude that God is lim-

itless. If there be any account of God, then alone the mortal can write the same; but His account does not finish and the mortal himself dies while writing the account. Nanak says that one should call Him great, and God Himself knows His ownself. (22)

Praisers please God, yet they do not get enough understanding to realize His greatness. It is like streams and rivers, falling into the ocean, and not knowing its limits. Kings and emperors owning properties, wealth, oceans and mountains, Are not equal even to an ant, who in its mind never forgets God. (23)

Countless are the praises as well as the praisers of God. Countless are the works and gifts of God. God's Power of hearing and seeing is limitless. Limits of the motive in God's mind are unknown. Limits of the creation, created by God, are unknown. Limits of this or the other end of God, are unknown. Many persons weep and yearn to find His limits. But these are not to be found. No one can know God's limits. The more we describe, the more is yet to be found. God is great and His seat is high. God's Name is the highest of the high. If one were to be as big and high as God, Only then he would know the high God. God alone knows, how great He is. Nanak says that merciful God showers gifts by His kind look. (24)

God's large number of bounties cannot be recorded. He is the great Giver and has no avarice whatsoever. Number of men and warriors beg at the door of the Infinite God. Those who beg and ponder over God are many and beyond counting. Many are consumed to extinction in their wickedness. Many obtain gifts again and again, yet do not admit this. Many fools go on enjoying gifts continuously. Many suffer privation and pain and are continuously punished. Even these are God's gifts because the sinner is warned to become virtuous. By God's will, freedom from bondage is achieved. None has any say in this. If any fool tries to give a different version, He knows that he will receive many blows on his face. God Himself know everything and He Himself gives everything. Only a few acknowledge this. He, upon whom God showers the gift of His praises, Become king of kings, says Nanak. (25)

Virtues and the trade of the God are priceless. Worshipers of God and His treasure are priceless. Priceless are those who come to God and those who purchase and take divine goods from Him. Priceless in their love for God and the union with Him. Priceless are the Divine Laws and His Court. Priceless are His scales and weights. Priceless are His gifts and marks of approval. Priceless is His mercy and Command. None can assess value of God, who is invaluable. By continuously remembering God, one remains absorbed in Him. Reciters of Vedas and Puranas, remember and speak of God. The literate persons repeat God's Name and deliver dis-

courses about Him. Brahmas and Indras remember and speak of God. Milkmaids and Krishna remember and speak of God. Shiva and persons of miracles remember and speak of God. Budhas, created by God, remember and speak of Him. Demons and the gods remember and speak of God. Demi-gods, men, silent persons and God's servants, remember and speak of Him. Many give God's description and make attempts to describe Him. many have been describing God again and again and then they leave this world. If God were to create as many more as already created, Even then they cannot describe even His few virtues. God becomes as great as He likes. Nanak says that God Himself knows His greatness. If some praetor claims that he can describe God, Then declare him to be the greatest fool of all fools. (26)

What is the gate and what is the mansion, where God sits and takes care of all? Innumerable musical instruments of different kind are played there by many singers. Many minstrels sing praises of God in various measures and their consorts. Water, wind, fire and the god of justice sing the praises of God at His door. Angels, who record the mortals deeds and know how to write these, and on the basis of whose recorded accounts, the god of justice will administer heavenly justice, also sing God's praises. Shiva, Brahma and the fair goddesses, adorned by God sing the songs of God. Indra, sitting on his throne with deities, sings the praises of God at His gate. Persons, claiming to have miraculous powers, and saints sing praises of God in their meditation. Continents, true and calm saints and the fearless warriors, sing Gods praises. Scholars, readers of Vedas of all ages and seven supreme sages, sing the praises of God. Fascinating she-seraphs who captivate hearts in paradise, sing the praises of God in this world and the nether regions. Invaluable objects created by God as well as the sixty eight places of pilgrimage, sing His praises. Great mighty warriors, divine heroes and four sources of creation sing God's praises. the continents, worlds and solar system, established by God, sing His glories. God's saints steeped in the Name, the home of Nectar, who are pleasing to God, sing his praises. Nanak says that many more, who cannot be recollected in the mind, sing God's praises. God, His Name and glory are always True. God, Who created the creation, exists and will exist forever, and will not depart when the creation disappears. God, Who crated maya, has by various ways, crated the creation of different colours and kinds. After creating the creation, God in His grandeur, behold His works. God does whatever pleases Him, and no one can give any order to Him. Nanak says that one should live subject to His will, who is the King of kings. (27)

Wear the earring of contentment, make modesty your begging bowl and wallet and smear yourself with God's meditation, treating it as ashes; Wear the fear of death

as your coat made of patches, make chastity, like that of a virgin, your path to achieve union and faith in God as your staff. Join the brotherhood of the universe and treat this as the highest sect of yogis and by conquering your mind, conquer the world. I salute God again and again. God is primal and pure with unknown beginning, Who cannot be destroyed, and Who remains same in all the ages. (28)

Make Divine Knowledge your food and mercy your steward; and listen to the Heavenly music that exists in the heart. God Himself is supreme, who has snuffed all; and riches and miracles are useless relishes, not real achievements. The world's ways are regulated by union and separation and the mortal gets his share according to his destiny. I salute God again and again. God is primal and pure with unknown beginning. Who cannot be destroyed, and Who remains same in all the ages. (29)

Unique God designed and plan and created maya and after creating the creation, appointed three approved disciples. One of these is Brahma, who creates the world; the other is Vishnu, who sustains it; and the third is Shiva, whose disposition is to destroy; but, God causes them to act in the way, He likes and orders. The most wonderful thing is that God sees them; but they cannot see Him. I salute God again and again. God is primal and pure with unknown beginning, who cannot be destroyed, and Who remains same in all the ages. (30)

God has His seat and His storehouses in all the worlds. Whatever is stored, was put only once for all, enough for ever. After creating the creation, God is beholding it. Nanak says that the works of the True God are true. I salute God again and again. God is primal and pure with unknown beginning, who cannot be destroyed, and Who remains same in all the ages. (31)

Instead of one tongue, may I possess thousands of tongues, which may increase to twenty thousand tongues; Then may I repeat God's Name, thousands and thousands of times, with each of the thousands of tongues. The way to meet God, the Bridegroom, is to ascend the ladders to God's palace step by step and then achieve union with God. By hearing of the heavenly things even the worms would like to emulate. Nanak says that God is obtained by His kindness and the boasting of the false is false. (32)

It is now within man's power to speak, or to keep quiet. The man has no power to beg or to give. The man has no power to live or to die. It is not within his power to acquire kingdom and riches, which cause disturbance in the mind. It is not within man's power to find the method of freedom from the world's bondage. God, in Whose hands the power is, exercises the same; and beholds it. Nanak says that none can become good or bad because of his own strength. (33)

God created nights, seasons, lunar days, and week-days. God created wind, water, fire and nether lands. In between these, god established the earth as the home for His worship and to practice truth. God created living beings of various colours and habits; And of different and limitless names. They are judged by their deeds and actions in God's court; God and His court are true. There the accepted saints sit and look graceful. They bear the mark of grace of the merciful Master. The good and evil will be judged there. Nanak says that these facts will become known in that court. (34)

The above narration is of the realm of truth and of the religious duties. Now is narrated working of the realm of knowledge. There are many winds, waters, fires and Krishnas and Shivas. There are many Brahmas, fashioning forms of various colours, beauties and clothes. They are numbers of earth's and mountains for doing various deeds; and there are innumerable saints like Dharus, who gave sermons. There are innumerable Sidhas, Budhas, Naths, great yogis and forms of goddesses. There are innumerable gods, demons, silent saints, jewels and oceans. There are innumerable sources of production, innumerable languages, and innumerable dynasties of kings. Nanak says that there is no end to God's bounds and there are innumerable men of Divine Knowledge absorbed in His meditation, and countless servants of God. (35)

The Light of God's knowledge brightly shines in the domain of knowledge. The Heavenly music is played there, from which flows millions of joys and amusements. The language of those reaching the realm of spiritual happiness is beautiful. Unique forms, having no parallel whatsoever in beauty, are finished there. What is happening in that sphere, cannot be depicted. He who tries to describe the same, will have to repent subsequently. The inner consciousness, the intellect, the soul and the wisdom are all fashioned again in that realm. The genius of pious persons and men of miracles is fashioned afresh. (36)

Language of those, who enter the realm of grace, possess spiritual power and effect. None else resides there except the approved ones. There are powerful warriors and heroes. Might of the all pervading God is contained to the brim within such residents. Such residents are fully absorbed in the praises of God. Their beauty cannot be narrated. They never die and can never be defrauded; Because God's Name resides within their hearts. The saints of all worlds live there. They are full of heavenly Bliss, as God abides in their hearts. In the Region of Truth, resides the Formless God. By His merciful glance, God, while beholding the creation, makes them happy. There are continents, worlds, solar systems in that realm. One who attempts to describe them, should know that these are limitless. There are



creation after creations and universes after universes. They function according to the command of God. God gets joy by thinking of and beholding His creation. Nanak says that to describe the realm of Truth is as difficult as eating iron. (37)

Make continence your furnace and patience your goldsmith. Make understanding your anvil and Divine Knowledge your tools. Make God's fear your bellows and the practice of penance as the fire. Treat the Love for God as the pot, extract and pour the Nectar of the Name of God in it. And then the Divine Words are minted in the True mint. This is the daily program of those, upon whom God casts His gracious glance. Nanak says that God with His merciful look, showers happiness on them. (38)

Air is the guru; Water, the father; and Earth the great mother. Day and night are two male and female nurses in whose lap the entire world plays. Good and bad actions will be narrated before the God of Justice. Some will be called in, and others will be pushed away by God in accordance with their actions. Those who have meditated on God's Name, will leave this world after putting toil in the right direction. They will go with brilliant faces; and many more will be emancipated along with them.

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### **Ardas: Common Prayer of the Sikhs**

God is One. All victory is of the Wondrous Guru (God).

May the respected sword (God in the form of the Destroyer of evil doers) help us!

Ode of the respected sword recited by the Tenth Guru.

First remember the sword (God in the form of Destroyer of evil doers); then remember and meditate upon Guru Nanak.

Then remember and meditate upon Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das: May they help us!

Remember and meditate upon respected Guru Har Krishan, by having the sight of whom, all pains vanish.

Remember and meditate upon Guru Tegh Bahadur; and then nine sources of wealth will come hastening to your home.

Oh Respected Gurus! kindly help us everywhere.

May the kind, the respected Tenth Guru Gobind Singh assist us everywhere.

Think and meditate upon the divine light of the Ten Kings contained in the respected Guru Granth Sahib and turn your thoughts to the divine teachings of and get pleasure by the sight of Guru Granth Sahib; Utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

Think of the deeds of the Five Beloved Ones, of the four sons (of Guru Gobind Singh); of the Forty Martyrs; of the brave Sikhs of indomitable determination; of the devotees steeped in the colour of the Name; of those who were absorbed in the Name; of those who remembered the Name and shared their food in companionship; of those who started free kitchens; of those who wielded their swords (for preserving truth); of those who overlooked others shortcomings; All the aforesaid were pure and truly devoted ones; Utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

Think of and remember the unique service rendered by those brave Sikh men as well as women, who sacrificed their heads but did not surrender their Sikh Religion; Who got themselves cut to pieces from each of the joints of the body; Who got their scalps removed; Who were tied and rotated on the wheels and broken into pieces; Who were cut by saws; Who were flayed alive; Who sacrificed themselves to upkeep the dignity of the Gurdwaras; Who did not abandon their Sikh faith; Who kept their Sikh Religion and saved their long hair till their last breath; Utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

Turn your thoughts to the five seats of Sikh Religion and all the Gurdwaras; utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

First the entire respected Khalsa make this supplication that may they meditate on Your Name; and may all pleasures and comforts come through such meditation.

Wherever respected Khalsa is present, give Your protection and grace; May the free kitchen and sword never fail; Maintain the honour of your devotees; Confer victory upon the Sikh people; May the respected sword always come to our assistance; May the Khalsa always get honours; Utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

Kindly confer upon the Sikhs the gift of Sikhism, the gift of long hair, the gift of observing Sikh laws, the gift of divine knowledge, the gift of firm faith, the gift of belief and the biggest gift of Name and of having bath in the respected Tank of Nectar.

O God! May the choirs, the mansion and the banners exist forever; may the truth ever triumph; utter Wahe Guru (Wondrous God)!

May the minds of all the Sikhs remain humble and their wisdom exalted; O God! You are the protector of wisdom.

O Immortal God, the constant Helper of His Sikhs, kindly confer the gift of visiting, maintaining, controlling and worshipping, without any restrictions, the Gurdwara of Nanakana Sahib Ji, othe Gurdwaras, and Gurus Mansions of which the Khalsa has been deprived.

O True Father, Wahe Guru! you are the honour of the meek, the Power of the helpless ones, the shelter of the shelterless, we humbly make prayer in your presence. We have offered prayers as contained in (substitute the occasion or prayer made here). Kindly pardon our errors and shortcomings in reciting the above Gurbani.

Kindly fulfill the objects of all. Kindly cause us to meet those true devotees by meeting whom, we may remember and meditate upon Your Name. O God! through the True Guru Nanak, may Your Name be exalted, and may all prosper according to Your will.

The Khalsa belongs to God; all victory is the victory of God.

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## Tav-Prasad Savaiye by Guru Gobind Singh

Scrupulous Jains and hosts of Siddhs, ascetic yogis - I have seen them all. Warriors and demons, gods who drink amrit, devout believers in a multitude of doctrines. All these have I witnessed as I traveled the world, yet never a true follower of the Lord. Without the love and grace of God their devotion is trivial, worthless, lost. (1)

Mighty elephants in gorgeous array, magnificently decked with gold; Thousands of horses nimbler than deer, their speed even swifter than the wind; Though their masters be powerful emperors, potentates before whom countless bow. In the end such greatness crumbles to nothing as barefoot they go on their way. (2)

They march victorious across the world, beating their drums in triumph. Their splendid elephants vibrantly trumpeting, their legion of thoroughbreds proudly neighing. Kings of the past, of the present, the future, their numbers beyond comprehending, Neglectful of worship, unmindful of God, they go to their ultimate home. (3)

Pious bathing and acts of charity, disciplined lives and endless rites; Searching the scriptures, Hindu and Muslim; scanning the earth and the heavens above; Men who abstain from all food or from sex - ascetics unnumbered I have seen and I know. That though they be kings all their deeds are in vain if their lives have no place for the praises of God. (4)

Seasoned troops in coats of mail, fearsome warriors with the strength to kill; Fiercely proud they stand their ground, steadfast in courage though mountains take flight; Assailing their enemies, crushing their foes, humbling the pride of their elephant hosts; They too must finally rise and depart, deprived of the grace of the Lord. (5)

Boundless in courage and matchless in strength, men who unflinching will parry a sword; Despoiling a country, slaying its people, its elephant armies brought down to the dust; Forts destroyed by the might of their arms, the world subdued by the fear of their threats; Yet all are humbled by the Creator's power, beggars all in the presence of the Lord. (6)

Deities and demons, the divine, the uncouth, repeating God's Name in the future as the past. All the creatures of the earth and sea resigned to his will in instant obedience; Praise for their virtue resounds afar, their evil deeds erased. The devout go forth with joy in the world as their enemies cry in helpless rage. (7)

Masters of men, commanders of elephants, powerful rulers who bstride the world; Endlessly bathing, prodigious in charity, sitting bedecked as their marriages are made. All is futile, for even the gods, however exalted, must end in death. Only the humble who touch God's feet shall finally sunder the cycle of rebirth. (8)

What benefit comes from endless meditation, from sitting like cranes with both eyes closed? One may piously bathe in all seven oceans and yet lose everything

here and hereafter. Some spend their lives deep in the jungle, wasting their years in useless endeavor. Let all pay heed for I speak the truth: only they who love God can find him. (9)

Some worship stones, borne on their heads; some hang lingams from their necks. Some claim that God dwells in the south, whilst other bow to the West. Some worship idols, foolishly ignorant; others put trust in the tombs of the dead. All are astray, seduced by false ritual; none knows the secret of God. (10)

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## Lawan by Guru Ram Das

The first time round is the time for toil, for work in the world as the Lord may decree; The Word of the Guru the text which we follow, confirming our faith and destroying our sin. Be firm in believing and ponder God's Name, as prescribed by the scriptures of old. Give to the Guru devout adoration, renouncing all evil and wrong.

Blessed is she who adores the Lord's Name, for its praises bring radiant bliss. Nanak declares that the first of our rounds marks the start of our marriage with God. The second time round is the time for our meeting, the meeting which comes with our only True Lord. Fear is dispelled and our spirits are cleansed from the filth of our self-centered pride. The fear we retain is our fear of the Lord as we sing to his praise and perceive him in all; The Master is present in all his creation, his being pervading whatever we see. Within and without he is ever our comrade; come join with his faithful and sing his praise. The mystical music resounds in our hearts as we follow the second round.

The third time round is the time for detachment, for freeing our minds from all worldly desire. Blessed is she who unites with the faithful, for thus she is brought to her Lord. She who finds God will sing hymns to his glory, the words which she utters inspired by her Lord. Blessed is she who is found with the faithful, who utters the words of ineffable truth. God's Name shall resound in the depths of her spirit, the Name we repeat if our fate so decrees. The third round progresses, God rises within us, and cleanses our minds from all pride and desire. Our spirits find peace as the fourth round commences, for God comes to dwell in our hearts and minds. By the grace of the Guru we know he is present, his sweetness pervading our bodies and souls. This sweetness flows forth from the love which God nurtures for all who are rapt in this infinite bliss. Desires they have treasured find precious reward at the sound of his glorious Name. The bride who is chosen to marry her Lord knows that wonderful Name as it surges within. Nanak declares that the fourth of our rounds brings our ultimate union with God. (Suhi Chhant, Guru Granth Sahib)

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The End

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