### THE PRINCIPLES of GURU NANAK

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### INTRODUCTION

THE PRINCIPLES OF GURU NANAK DEV JI

This booklet speaks to the Principles of Guru Nanak Dev ji, how he traveled and taught them and how those principles are still relevant in today's world - possibly even more relevant.

In today's world, where we are surrounded by a technical maze, it's important to remember our humanity, to remember to counter divisiveness with our knowledge of Oneness, to remember that diversity was never an issue for Guru Sahib ji because he embraced it fully.

Every one of his teachings is as valuable today as it was 550 years ago.

#### INFUSING the WORLD with GURU Ji's WISDOM



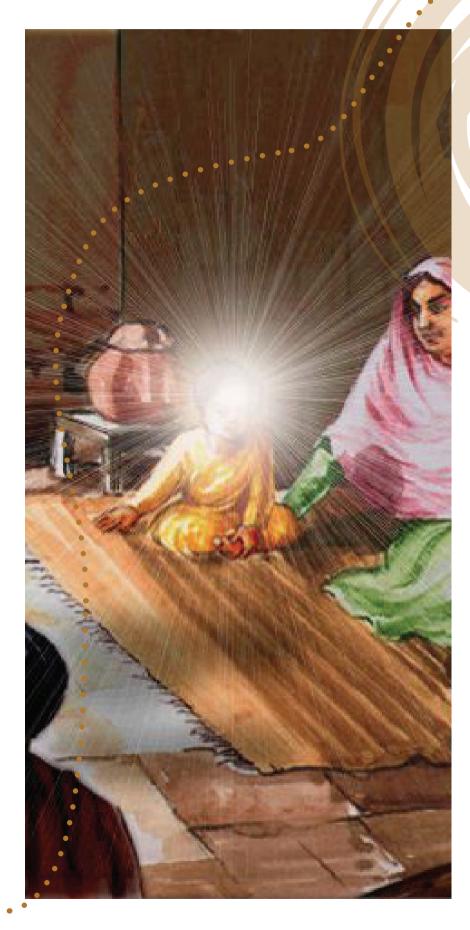
#### **GURU NANAK DEV JI**

Guru Nanak Dev Ji (Gurmukhi: ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ), the founder and first Guru of Sikhism, was born in the year 1469, in the village Talwandi which is located in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. The village, now known as Nankana Sahib, is situated near the city of Lahore in present day Pakistan.

From an early age, it was evident that Guru Nanak ji was an extraordinary child, distinguished by his divine grace. Blessed with a deeply contemplative mind and rational thinking, young Nanak ji would often astound his elders and teachers with the sublimity of his knowledge, particularly on divine matters. Growing up, he refused to partake in traditional religious rituals, and often spoke out against several prevalent societal practices such as the Caste System, idolatry, and the worship of demi-Gods. By the age of 16, Guru Nanak Dev ji had mastered multiple religious texts and languages including Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindi, and was writing what many believed were divinely inspired compositions.

In the year 1487, Guru Nanak Dev ji was married to Mata Sulakhni ji,

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GURU JI TAUGHT PEOPLE THAT THE 'ONE' GOD DWELLS IN EVERY ONE OF HIS CREATIONS, AND THAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS CAN HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO GOD WITHOUT THE NEED OF ANY RITUALS OR PRIESTS.

and they had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. The family, accompanied by Bhai Mardana, a Muslim childhood friend of Guru Nanak Dev ji, then moved to the town of Sultanpur Lodh. Here, Guru Nanak ji worked during the days, but during the early mornings and late nights, he meditated and sang hymns accompanied by Bhai Mardana on the rabab (a stringed instrument). During one of those early mornings while bathing in "Vain Nadi," Guru Nanak ji heard God's call to dedicate himself completely to the service of humanity. Stating that he had been taken to the God's court and given a divine mission, Guru Nanak ji then began the next stage of his life, to preach his unique doctrine (Sikhi) to the entire world.

For the next 30 years, accompanied by Bhai Mardana, Guru Nanak Dev ji undertook four major spiritual journeys, running across India, South Asia, Tibet and Arabia, covering about 30,000 kilometers. Guru ji taught people that the 'One' God dwells in every one of his creations, and that all human beings can have direct access to God without the need of any rituals or priests. Setting up a

unique spiritual, social and political platform based on equality and fraternal love, Guru Nanak Dev ji attacked the citadel of the Hindu Caste System, and condemned the theocracy of Mughal rulers. He described the dangers of egotism, falsehood, and hypocrisy, and called upon the people to engage in worship through the "Naam." He rejected the path of renunciation (Tyaga), emphasizing a householder's life based on honest conduct, selfless service (Sewa), and constant devotion and remembrance of God's name. Guru Nanak Dev ji promoted the equality of all mankind and upheld the causes of the downtrodden and the poor, laying special emphasis to assert the equality of women.

In the year 1539, knowing that the end was drawing near, Guru Ji, after having tested his own two sons and some followers over the years, installed Bhai Lehna ji (Guru Angad Dev Ji) as the Second Nanak, and after a few days passed into Sachkhand.

Guru Nanak Dev ji's writings, in the form of 974 spiritual hymns comprising the Japji Sahib, Asa di Var, Bara Mah, Sidh Gosht and



ALL THE SIKH GURUS AFTER GURU NANAK DEV JI CONTINUED TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS NANAK WHILE PENNING DOWN THEIR SACRED WRITINGS.



Dakhni Onkar were incorporated in the scripture Guru Granth Sahib by the fifth Guru Arjan Dev ji. All the Sikh Gurus after Guru Nanak Dev ji continued to identify themselves as Nanak while penning down their sacred writings. Thus, Sikhs believe that all the Gurus possessed the same divine light and further strengthened the same doctrine as was propagated by Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

(edited from Source Sikhiwiki.org (https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Guru\_Nanak)



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#### **ONENESS & DIVERSITY**

Guru Nanak Dev ji started Japji Sahib with "Ik Ongkar." It is the first and most profound principle of all his teachings, and central to Sikhi. There is but one God. Ik Onkar (96). All creation comes from one Divine source, and humanity is one and equal before God. There is one universal creator, all existence - humans, nature, and the universe - comes from that creator, and we are all divine beings, completely interconnected because of this.

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"There is one God, and His name is Truth. He is the Creator, without fear, without hate, timeless and self-existent, known through the Guru's grace." Japji Sahib

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ikOankaar sat naam karataa purakh nirabhau niravair akaal moorat ajoonee saibha(n) gur

prasaadh ||

॥ ਜਪੁ ॥

|| jap ||

ਆਦਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦਿ ਸਚੁ ॥

aadh sach jugaadh sach ||

ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ॥੧॥

hai bhee sach naanak hosee bhee sach ||1||

#### THE DIVINE EXISTS IN ALL SYSTEMS OF BELIEF — NO MATTER HOW THEY WORSHIPED, IK ONKAR.

In his day, Guru Nanak Dev ji traveled extensively through India, South Asia, Tibet and Arabia, and Oneness was at the core of what he taught and shared with anyone he encountered. He engaged regularly with Hindus, Muslims, Jains, people of different social classes (castes) and different cultures. The aim was not to convert people, but to remind them that the divine exists in all systems of belief - no matter how they worshiped, Ik Onkar. No matter who they ate with, lk Onkar. No matter where they lived or what occupations they held, lk Onkar.

As he traveled, Guru Nanak Dev ji always recognized and celebrated the diversity of human experience, yet he always emphasized the unity of all creation. Diversity in religion, culture, language, or traditions was a given. Guru Nanak Dev ji saw it as a reflection of Ik Ongkar's infinite creation.

#### He advocated for a world where differences are respected, but the underlying unity of all beings is acknowledged.

Guru Nanak Dev ji challenged caste divisions and empty rituals. He advocated that all people are equal before the divine. And he taught everyone - saints, sages, poor people, rich people, everyone he met - that the path to the divine is not through external practices, but through the internal realization of Oneness within.

In today's world with the advent of mass transportation, the possibility to move and migrate through the world has made modern humans much more transient. People from everywhere can be found in other countries around the world. Guru Nanak Dev ji's principle of Oneness is even more profoundly relevant today, where divisions are prevalent based not only on religion, but also on race, ethnicity and nationality; and these divisions can often lead to conflict.

Today, Oneness means recognizing the divinity in people of all faiths. Understanding Oneness means we don't tolerate the hierarchical systems of yore; we don't marginalize people because of their gender, their religion, or any other attribute or choice they make, lk Onkar. Practicing Oneness means we don't accept discrimination on any basis. Why would we judge, discriminate against anything or anyone, lk Onkar.



#### AS SIKHS IN THE MODERN WORLD TODAY, PRACTICING ONENESS UNDERSCORES MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, RACIAL JUSTICE, AND EQUALITY.



As Sikhs in the modern world today, practicing Oneness underscores movements for social justice, racial justice, and equality. Guru Nanak Dev ji's teaching of Oneness gives us the tools and response to modern day fragmentation. He taught us that all life is interconnected. When we truly embody this biggest and most important of Guru Sahib ji's teachings, and recognize that we are all interconnected, we can work together as individuals and societies to create a more compassionate, tolerant, and just way of living for everyone.

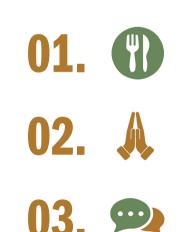


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### REFLECTIONS ON ONENESS

What does Oneness mean to you? How do you feel connected to others and the world around you?

Guru Nanak Dev ji didn't teach about Oneness as a philosophical idea; as he traveled he demonstrated Oneness as a radical call to action. **If there** was one action you could take this week to embrace that call to action, what would it be?



or background

Share a meal with someone of a different culture

Go to a temple or church with someone of another religion

Have a conversation with someone from a different background and practice listening.

Reflect on your experience. Do you feel that being present with others has helped you understand Guru Nanak Dev ji's principle of Oneness?



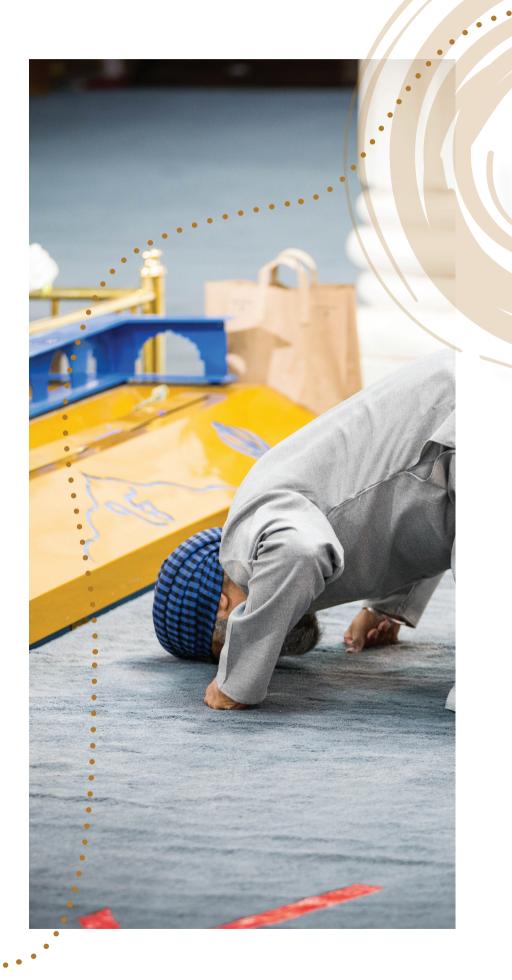
#### HUMILITY

As he traveled and taught, Guru Nanak Dev ji shared many lessons on humility. He saw humility as the way to overcome ego, which he said was the root of many human problems such as pride, greed, and selfishness. To live a spiritual life, to live a harmonious life, we have to cultivate humility; we open our hearts to Waheguru and we learn to be more receptive to seva.

ਨੀਚਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ਨੀਚੀ ਹੂ ਅਤਿ ਨੀਚੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤਿਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਾਥਿ ਵਡਿਆ ਸਿਉ ਕਿਆ ਰੀਸ ॥ Nanak seeks the company of the lowest of the low class, the very lowest of the low. Why should he try to compete with the great? ਜਿਥੈ ਨੀਚ ਸਮਾਲੀਅਨਿ ਤਿਥੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ॥੪॥ ੩॥

In that place where the lowly are cared for-there, the Blessings of Your Glance of Grace rain down. ||4||3||

Guru Nanak Dev ji shared in many ways, in many examples and in many stories, that when we put ourselves above others, we have forgotten the core principle of humility. We are all humans trying to experience Ik Onkar - how can we do this when we are separating ourselves, counting our riches, our abilities, or our possessions to prove we are better than someone





#### GURU NANAK DEV JI'S OWN LIFE EXEMPLIFIED HUMILITY EXPLICITLY. HE REJECTED TITLES, WEALTH AND POWER, EVEN WHEN HE WAS REVERED AS A SPIRITUAL LEADER.

else, instead of recognizing that all of those things - riches, abilities and possessions are really Waheguru's, and not ours at all.

Guru Nanak Dev ji confronted the egos of many on his travels, showing again and again that none is better than the other, and that truly the only goal is to meditate on the Nam to know God, and to serve others, recognizing that we are all one. He would not stand for belittling. When men belittled women, he asked them - what is greater than the ability to bring forth life? Only women have that ability. When he saw that a poor family was jeered at because they did not have the food to feed him and those who traveled with them. he told them to invite everyone, and the town was astonished to see that their food supply was endless and that everyone was fed.

Guru Nanak Dev ji's own life exemplified humility explicitly. He rejected titles, wealth and power, even when he was revered as a spiritual leader. He constantly advocated for those who followed him to practice selfless service and he encouraged others to live as simply and humbly as he did. More deeply, he rejected empty ritual, hierarchical structures, and materialism. Instead he lived and taught his deep understanding of the value of humility.

Whether he was interacting with townsfolk or kings, Guru Nanak always saw everyone as equal in the eyes of Waheguru.

In today's world, it is seen as normal to celebrate individualism and self-promotion. Young children and teens are lured into this by a world of social media where they pit themselves against undefined "leaders," while simply seeking acceptance.

The powerful lessons of humility are as relevant today as they were in Guru Nanak's time, perhaps even more now. Today it is just as easy to get side-tracked by ambition, competition, and ego, and in so many more ways - not just in our families, gurdwaras and communities, but also on this giant world wide web comprised of millions of strangers who must have a opinions, who have given themselves the job of deciding if we are good and worthy, when it is the farthest thing from the truth.

Humility serves as a grounding force. Ego is outside trying to prove ourselves to others. Humility, in stark contrast, is where we make ourselves worthy of God.



#### WHERE EGO CREATES FRICTION IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS, HUMILITY HELPS US CREATE STRONGER AND MORE HONEST CONNECTIONS.



Where ego creates friction in our relationships, humility helps us create stronger and more honest connections. We are able to consider the collective good over our individual pride. Recognizing the dignity of all helps us dismantle ugly systems of oppression and dehumanization for the sake of control or power. The model for leadership today has to embrace empathy and selflessness, a willingness to be humble rather than to seek power for one's personal "success." Humility helps us connect, rather than create barriers that are built on ego. Humility reminds us to live in harmony with the Divine and with all creation.



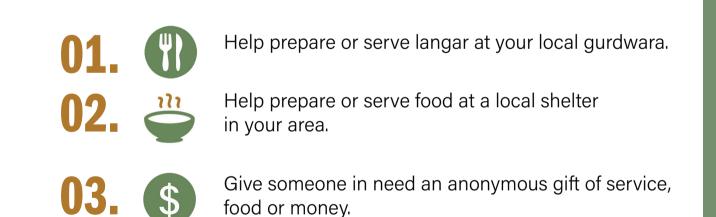
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### REFLECTIONS ON HUMILITY

What does humility mean to you? How does it shape how you serve others? Are you able to do seva selflessly, without a need for recognition?

Again, Guru Nanak Dev ji's actions always spoke even louder than his words. There are countless stories where he refused prestige and remained true to this principle.

Can you find a way to serve someone without expecting anything in return this week?



Reflect on your experience. Were you able to offer your service in the highest sense of selflessness? Humility strengthens relationships by breaking down walls of judgment and pride. When we stop putting ourselves above or below others, we create space for genuine connection and understanding. Were you able to provide a service without judging others? Do you feel that this experience has helped you understand Guru Nanak Dev ji's principle of humility?



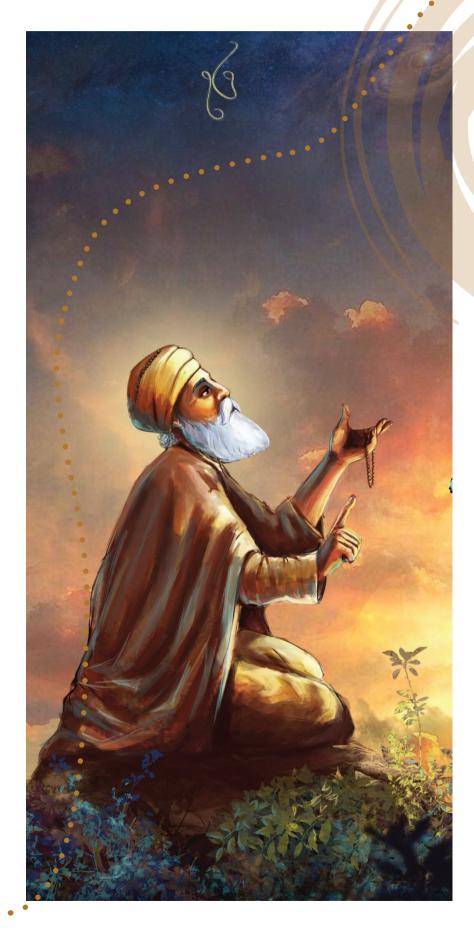
#### **COMPASSION**

Compassion, or "Daya," is at the heart of Guru Nanak Dev ji's teachings. He understood innately that by recognizing lk Onkar, empathy and kindness would surely follow. If we recognize lk Onkar, we recognize that anything we say or do to others, we are doing to ourselves. If we are all one, how can we hate and kill? If we are all one, how can we not respond to the hunger or pain of another human?

For Guru Nanak Dev ji, compassion was an action, not an idea. He taught that compassion was our moral obligation. We have an obligation to one another to help alleviate suffering. Compassion is mandatory action for spiritual and social harmony - for everyone of us. Guru Nanak considered compassion to be a divine quality and a guiding principle for our conduct.

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥੧॥

No one now is my enemy, nor is anyone a stranger to me and I am the friend of all. Guru Granth Sahib, 1299



#### WHEN WE RECOGNIZE IK ONKAR, THAT THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS IS OUR OWN SUFFERING, AND THEN ACT DIFFERENTLY, WE ARE LIVING IN COMPASSION.

He taught us that when we live with compassion, the boundaries of enmity and division dissolve. We begin to see all beings as connected and worthy of care and empathy.

Compassion in action was how Guru Nanak Dev ji lived his life. He was deeply concerned with social justice. He spoke out against the exploitation of the poor, caste discrimination, and the marginalization of women. Wherever he went, he was known for his acts of kindness and charity, and there are many examples of how he provided food for the hungry or advocated for those whose society was considered less worthy.

Guru Nanak even rejected his family's own business ventures. There is a famous story about how he used money his father gave him to feed the hungry, instead of making a profitable deal that his father had expected him to make. As with all his actions, he was teaching, and in this case he was teaching that Sacha Sauda, the true trade, is compassion over material gain.

In today's world, that is still true. We have social, economic and environmental challenges that would all benefit from more compassion and less desire for the attainment of riches. Of course, we all need to survive, have families, and support our communities, but when greed rules, we only suffer. We have to prioritize the welfare of our planet and our fellow humans over greed.

Further, compassion leads us to recognize equality and inequality, to learn what is fair and what isn't, so that we can act from a place of compassion in our own interactions with others, with our communities, and with communities around the world. When we are willing to recognize Ik Onkar, that the suffering of others is our own suffering, and then act differently, we are living in compassion.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's principle of Daya, compassion, teaches us to be kind to ourselves and others, to heal and to foster healthy, supportive communities for all. Compassion is how we connect to the Divine by our seva for others and it is found in small daily acts and large-scale humanitarian efforts. Guru Nanak's timeless lesson is vital in our efforts to create a more just and caring world. It all starts with each of us individually.



## REFLECTIONS ON COMPASSION

Reflect on how compassion could make a difference in your life and the lives of those around you.

Can you remember a specific moment of compassion that had a profound experience in your life? What was it?

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's raags in the Siri Guru Granth Sahib remind us to cultivate compassion not just for those we love, but for all beings, and to recognize that every person carries their own struggles and pain - even when we don't know or see it.

Offer to help someone who is struggling. This could be as simple as listening to them.

Offer to take care of something for someone, who doesn't have as much free time as you. I.e. watch a friend's kids for an hour, so they can take a nap; fill up the tank of someone's car who finds it difficult to do; make a dish of food and deliver it to someone who needs it.

Guru Nanak Dev ji encouraged everyone to approach all others with empathy and kindness. Through his own actions of compassion, he was able to create bonds that were deep, trusting and resilient.

Reflect on how small acts of compassion can change you. How does compassion influence your relationships? Can you see how compassion is the foundation of strong, loving relationships?

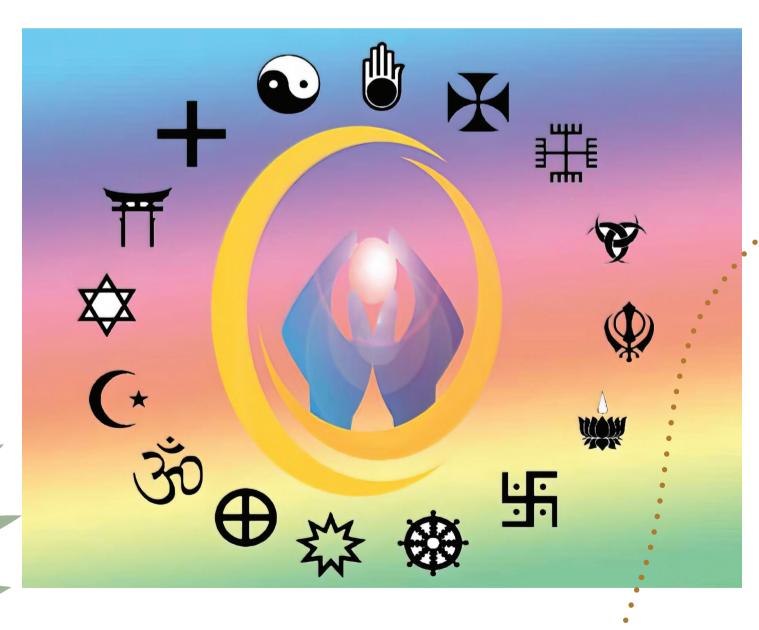


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#### UNIVERSALITY

Guru Nanak Dev ji taught about universality whenever he was teaching. We already saw that he asserted Ik Onkar, there is but one God, and that God was not confined to one religion, race, caste, or gender. Regardless of what religion people belonged to, he believed that the same Divine light shone from every being. He didn't care about backgrounds, and he didn't believe there was any criteria that made people inferior or superior.

Everyone - no matter where they came from, what they did, or who they were - had the same access to the Divine as the next. Guru Nanak was adamant that no one person is more privileged in this respect than anyone else. Every person deserves respect and dignity.



#### OUR ACTIONS SHOULD ALWAYS CONSIDER THE GREATER GOOD, AND OUR COMPASSION, HUMILITY, AND KINDNESS MUST EXTEND TO ALL LIVING BEINGS.

He taught the principle of universality —sarbat da bhala, or the well-being of all. He emphasized that we are all part of a larger whole, interconnected regardless of race, religion, caste, or creed. This universality reflects the oneness of humanity, as we are all children of the same Creator. Guru Nanak's teachings remind us that our actions should always consider the greater good, and our compassion, humility, and kindness must extend to all living beings.

Guru Nanak Dev ji was, himself, the embodiment of this universal message. No matter where he traveled, he engaged with people of all faiths. His effort was not to convert or condemn anyone for what they believed; instead he accented the similarities, the common values and the truths of all religions and spiritual traditions. Just like in the story of the Jasmine milk, he added fragrance and value, without displacing or disturbing anyone. Guru Nanak's efforts were to enhance and enrich the spiritual lives of people - and he did this without attempting to disrupt anyone's existing beliefs.

There are many famous encounters between Guru Nanak Dev ji and Muslim saints, Hindu pundits, and yogis, and he always sought to share his belief in the universality between them all. He emphasized that their spirituality transcended all else.

ਜਿਉ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸਿਆ ਮਾਟੀ ਕੁੰਭੇਉ॥ ਆਪ ਹੀ ਕਰਤਾ ਬੀਠੁਲੁ Just as the pitcher is made from clay, everything is made from the Beloved Divine Creator Himself. ||2||

In today's world, recognizing this is perhaps even more important than ever. There are too many divisions based on religion, ethnicity and nationality and they lead to conflict, violence, even full scale wars.

As Sikhs, we are the arbiters of Guru Nanak's truth that no religion holds a monopoly on the truth. There must be mutual respect and dialogue between religious communities, in order to promote peace and harmony. We can help a fighting world remember that thinking globally and rising above national, racial, and cultural boundaries is the highest seva.

Guru Nanak Dev ji taught us to honor the principle of universality so that we can break down false barriers, so we can honor the dignity and divinity of every being. Guru Nanak gave us his vision of a world united by spiritual values, and this is still a powerful lesson in how to rise above and help change divisions in our modern world.



## **REFLECTIONS ON UNIVERSALITY**

Our lives are often an intricate network of larger communities - home, work, Gurdwara, and so many more. Think of the many communities you are a part of in your own life.

Guru Nanak Dev ji considered universality a call to action for social justice.

This week what can you do to advocate for those who are disadvantaged in some way or even the environment; how can you help create a more equitable and just society for everyone?



Take action on a social justice issue (sign petitions, make a donation, or actively volunteer)



Do one thing to strengthen your relationship with someone from a different background (take a walk together, share stories, listen to them)

Whether it's environmental responsibility or supporting global human rights, practicing universality means recognizing our role in the well-being of the entire planet. How does it make you feel to take an active role in the issues of equity and social justice?

#### ਦਇਆ ਦਿਗੰਬਰੁ, ਦੇਹ ਬੀਚਾਰੀ ॥ ਆਪਿ ਮਰੈ, ਅਵਰਾ ਨਹ ਮਾਰੀ ॥३॥

Through compassion, the naked hermit reflects upon his inner self. He slays his ownself, instead of slaying others. ||3|| Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 356



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WHEN WE MEDITATE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF GURU NANAK DEV JI, WE FIND THAT HE GAVE US EVERYTHING FOR A BEAUTIFUL LIFE, A BEAUTIFUL WORLD, AND A BEAUTIFUL CONNECTION WITH GOD.

MAY YOU BE BLESSED EVERY DAY TO REMEMBER GURUJI'S WISE TEACHINGS, AND TO MEDITATE ON IK ONKAR AND THE PRINCIPLES OF ONENESS, DIVERSITY, HUMILITY, AND UNIVERSALITY.

WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA, WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH!

