

THE MEANING OF SIKH BAPTISM



BHAI SAHIB RANDHIR SINGH'S PUNJABI WORK: Amrit Ki Hai

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English Translation dedicated to
BIBI DALER KAUR
Daughter of Bhai Randhir Singh
who has been a noble Elder Sister to me
all these years

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh (1878-1961 A.D.) was an intensely austere, practical and militant saint, who unlike most militant saints and revolutionaries was a deeply emotional poet-mystic, whose devotional raptures, witnessed by all his contemporaries in open Kirtan assemblies, when he was seen singing the hymns of Guru Granth for days and nights at a stretch, were governed by utter humility, compassion, charity, justice and fortitude. The immense energies of his active life, the inhuman brutalities he calmly and heroically suffered in the dark dungeons of prisons during British rule, from the age of 37 to 53, the tremendous demands he made upon himself, bring before us an unforgettable and dynamic saintly personality of our times.

He was born at Narangwal, a village thirteen miles from Ludhiana, on Sunday, 7th July, 1878. His father, Sardar Natha Singh a learned scholar of Punjabi, Urdu and Persian, was at first District Inspector of schools and after passing Law examinations rose to be High Court Judge in Nabha State. His mother, Punjab Kaur, was descendant of Bhai Bhagtu, who served the fifth, sixth and seventh Sikh Gurus. After matriculating, Bhai Randhir Singh, whose name before accepting baptism was, Basant Singh, studied from 1896-1898 in Government College Lahore, and from 1899- 1900 A.D. in F.C. College Lahore. He distinguished himself as an Urdu poet during college days.

It has been the central fact in the life of many saints and mystics that the awakening of the soul to their sense of destiny has always come as a response from an unsuspected stimulus, which opens the way for a deep and insatiable yearning for higher spiritual life, followed by a flooding Light of higher mystical experiences. In case of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh the stimulus came from a letter from his father urging him to regularly recite Guru Nanak's Japji (Morning Prayer), if he wanted to pass his B.A. final and Law examinations. He read and recited the Japji and other compositions of the Sikh Gurus with such intense devotion and perseverance, that in the absorbing inspiration of these prayers he nearly forgot the examinations.

He then spent two years as novice and fully prepared himself to accept the baptism of Guru Gobind Singh. He received baptism at a special function which was organized by leading Sikh organizations at Bakapur, near Phillaur (on G.T. Road) to baptize the Muslim family of Karim Bakhsh on 14th June 1903. Karim Bakhsh, after baptism came to be known as Sant Lakhbir Singh who devoted all his life to missionary work. Bhai Randhir Singh believed and emphasized throughout his life, that one must practise, what one learns from the scriptures and authentic traditions, because ideals and theories without being imbibed and practised are like a body without the Spirit. Throughout his life no suffering, no temptation and no other interest in life could divert him from his single-minded devotion to God and Truth.

Early in life he made-up his mind not to serve any government or secular institution which may obstruct his life of service to humanity and obedience to God. For this high ideal he had to tread the path of affliction, blame and endless suffering. His whole life reflects at every stage, his intimacy of devotion, his sincerity of purpose, his purity of love, and his unbending dedication to freedom, justice and dharma. From 1904 to 1912 he devoted all his time to religious reforms, establishing educational institutions, and inspiring young people with missionary zeal and noble ideals of faith and freedom.

Early during this period his father and friends tried to convince him that serving some social cause through government institution was serving humanity, and out of Filial piety and respect for his

father's wishes he reluctantly accepted a government post at Abbottabad in 1905. The beautiful surroundings of these hilly areas gave him solitude and peace he greatly needed for his intensive meditations. He wished to dive deep into the mystery of meditations as revealed by Sikh scriptures. So he searched for the mystic path in his prayers. "I did not know," he writes, in his Autobiography, "the different methods of contemplating the Divine Name. I had not learnt the various techniques of this spiritual practice from anyone. All I was anxious about was to have a glimpse of the Beloved. It was this burning passion to have a vision of His Light that impelled and roused my wavering thoughts and feelings to the sublime heights and set me on the straight Path to God." (Autobiography of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh)

Bhai Randhir Singh's prayers became worship and his worship was concentrating all his mind, thoughts and feeling on the message of the Hymns of Guru Granth. He did not seek the intercession of any saint or human being who had achieved something. Although after inner illumination he met eminent saints like Sant Attar Singh and Sant Baba Sham Singh of Amritsar whom he considered the most perfect and enlightened saints of his times. Alone with God and his Living Guru, Embodied in the Guru Granth, he contemplated His Name and reflected on His unseen Presence. Nature, in all its beauty, around Abbottabad Hills, filled his heart and soul with sublime feelings and spiritual perceptions which to him were the intimations of the Presence of God.

God warned Moses: "Thou canst not see my face, for man shall not see me and live." Guru Nanak's message in his Sacred Writings is, "A Sikh should accept death and never rest till he has seen the Face of God." Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was overwhelmed by the promise of this hope. Unmoved and undisturbed, he sat for forty-eight hours listening intently to the continuous reading of Guru Granth. His mind and soul were bathed in the ambrosia of the Word of God. His whole inner being was aglow with the beatitude of being deeply absorbed in the Celestial Music of the divine Word. Then on the night of Guru Nanak's birthday in year 1905, God revealed His Light to him in the Elected Silence of midnight meditation, which experience he describes in his Autobiography thus: "God was now resplendently revealed within my inner self. I tried to return my love for his boundless grace and beneficence through prayer, songs and supplication to the Beloved who was now manifest as Knowledge and Light in perfect revelation. I gave him the most sanctified place in my heart. I expected that He would come to my room from the Unknown and reveal Himself outside myself. I did not in the least expect that my strange Beloved, my Lord God with His unfathomable power, would miraculously appear within my own Self, and reveal Himself on the alter of my heart."

"Ah, blessed was all my search that night. I could see a sea of divine Light flooding within me and outside me in shimmering resplendence. I was able to endure the unendurable Light only by prayerful utterances of Gurbani (Sacred Hymns), which strengthened my mind and soul by seeking grace and strength. The more I was absorbed in it, the more wonderful and sublimely dazzling spiritual phenomenon were seen by my inner eyes (div drishti) which cannot be expressed in the language of our physical and earthly world. I could now see through the roof and the walls of the room in which I was sitting. Right through the sky I could see space beyond space, all crystal clear and bathed in purity. The whole of the universe was filled with Incomprehensible Light which was penetrating me and enfolding me. The music of His divine Presence filled my heart with blissful joy. I could see all this clearly and visibly in a wide awake condition." (Autobiography: p. 60-61)

After these mystical experiences he resigned his government job, but was persuaded by Sardar Harbans Singh Attari to work as superintendent of Khalsa College Amritsar but he gave up even

this job to do missionary work in a wider field. Dr. Dharam Anant Singh who later studied Greek and Sanskrit and distinguished himself as a learned scholar of Greek and Ancient Indian philosophy was a student of Khalsa College at this time and he has vividly portrayed the remarkable moral and spiritual influence of his personality in his Punjabi article entitled: "Divine Influence of a Perfectly Virtuous Sikh" (Khalsa Advocate, Amritsar). As the Chief Khalsa Diwan was virtually controlled by the British government, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh in association with Sant Attar Singh founded the Panch Khalsa Diwan at Damdama and was its first Secretary. When Bhai Sahib was involved in political activities of Ghadar Party, Babu Teja Singh became loyalist of British Raj, shifted the Diwan office to Bhasaur and used it to serve his own ends in such a manner that Bhai Sahib severed his connections with it even before he went to prison.

In January 1914 the British Indian government razed the wall of the historical shrine of Rakabganj at Delhi associated with the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in order to beautify the surroundings of the newly built Parliament House. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh spearheaded the agitation against the desecration of the holy shrine with such zeal and fervour that it sparked off a revolutionary passion throughout the Sikh community.

It was at this critical juncture that the Ghadarite emigrants from U.S.A. and Canada arrived to fight for freedom by giving a call to the people to prepare for an armed revolt. Bhai Randhir Singh was the only outstanding leader from Punjab who along with his sixty to seventy companions became active participant of the revolt. During this very period Mahatma Gandhi was supporting the British war efforts believing that "it was the duty of the Indian slaves to make the need of the British Masters an opportunity to seek more freedom." Dr. Annie Beasant vigorously condemned this attitude and supported active revolutionaries saying: "India is no longer a child in the nursery of the empire." She ridiculed all talk of reward for serving the British loyally saying, "India does not chaffer with the blood of her sons, and the proud tears of her daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right, as a Nation to justice among the people of the Empire".

An armed revolt organized by the Ghadar leaders and Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh failed. On May 9, 1915, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was arrested. His other companions Kartar Singh Sarabha had been arrested earlier. On March 30, 1916 Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was given life imprisonment. The judgement ran : "Of his guilt there can be no possible doubt whatever, and we cannot lose sight of the fact that it was his influence that brought several of the co-accused from an early period and conspired to wage war on several occasions as above indicated, and that he committed an act of war in going to Ferozepur in a warlike array to attack the arsenal there and we accordingly convict him under Section 12i A, 121, Indian Penal Code and sentence him to transportation for life and direct that his property liable to forfeiture be forfeited to the government."

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was 37 the day he was arrested. His ten year old daughter Bhagwant Kaur could not bear the separation of her dear father, and died within a month of his arrest and imprisonment at Ludhiana. His son Balbir Singh was hardly four year old and his second daughter Daler Kaur was just two. Both these surviving children were too young and too innocent to know the calamity and the excruciating suffering their young mother Smt. Kartar Kaur would have to face.

Bhai Sahib Balbir Singh retired as Executive Engineer and is now the Secretary of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh Trust. He has four sons: Sukhdarshan Singh (now in Canada); Bhagwant Singh (Engineer in the Army); Manjit Singh (Agricultural University); Kuldip Singh (Officer in Punjab and

Sindh Bank) and one daughter Hardip Kaur, married and now living in Southall, London. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's only surviving daughter, Bibi Daler Kaur was married to S. Mohinder Singh Tehsildar, has one son, Dr. Harinder Singh, Lecturer, Mathematics, Guru Nanak Dev University.

Bhai Sahib suffered harrowing tortures in Multan prison from April 1916 to June 1917, and for four years 1917-1921 in Hazaribagh prison in Bihar. He enjoyed some peace in Rajahmundry prison where he was kept in isolation but not tortured for a year in 1922, but his prison life in Nagpur prison (1923-1930) reads like a horror story where he was made the merciless victim of inhuman tortures. Six months before his release he was brought to Lahore where he was released on 4th October. On the eve of his release Bhagat Singh the great freedom fighter met him as an atheist but parted as a believer in God and a man of faith. Exactly six months and 20 days after this meeting Bhagat Singh suffered death sentence on the night of 23rd March 1931. According to an eye-witness account four hours before his death he continuously sat in prayers and recited all the prayer he found in a Sikh Prayer Book (Gutka).

In the Rajahmundry prison Bhai Sahib wrote some books which were published long after his release. On Guru Gobind Singh's birthday in the last year of his imprisonment in Nagpur (January 1930) he wrote 4000 lines of a mystical epic within seven days. He did not have paper or pen. He wrote all the 4000 lines on the margin of a book with a copying pencil. The manuscript is preserved as a relic. It was in Rajahmundry prison that this dialogue with Kartar Singh took place, which was recorded and published after their release.

After his release the Sikhs of U.S.A. and Canada sent Robes of Honour and a gold medallion for Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. Hukamnamas and robes of honour blessing his sacrifices for the Sikh Panth and the freedom movement were bestowed on him by all the 4 Takhts of the Sikhs. The Sikh community elected him as one of the Panj Pyaras (the Five Elect) for inaugurating the Kar-seva of Tarn Taran Sacred Tank, and to lay the foundation stones of the following historical and sacred places: Punja Sahib (Hasan Abdal) now in Pakistan; Shahidganj, Nankana Sahib (now in Pakistan); Akal Bunga (Patna Sahib); Kavi Darbar Asthan (Paonta Sahib).

Bhai Kartar Singh with whom this dialogue took place was different from Kartar Singh Sarabha the Hero of the First Lahore Conspiracy case. He was born in Naven Chand a village near Moga but left for Canada sometime in 1908-1910. When Baba Gurdit Singh's Ship Koma Gala Maru dropped anchor in Vancouver harbour, Bhai Kartar Singh was one of the very few Canadian Sikhs who knew good English and could contact and communicate with the Press and the Canadian sympathizers to help the patriots. He also confronted and took to task the Police Chief, Hopkins, who employed spies to create dissensions among the Sikhs and was instrumental even in killing a few patriots. Bhai Mewa Singh found this out, and while giving evidence in the court, he not only exposed Hopkin's misdeeds but also shot him dead in the court, and then revised to appeal for mercy or to defend himself. Bhai Kartar Singh was eye-witness to these events. Hopkins had already marked Bhai Kartar Singh as a very dangerous revolutionary. So he went underground and contacted the German government for arms aid for the Ghadar revolutionary movement. A German General was already bringing a ship load of arms to be delivered to the Ghadar revolutionaries when he came to know that Bhai Kartar Singh and other Ghadar leaders had been arrested. Bhai Kartar Singh had to suffer 20 years of rigorous imprisonment out of which he had the good fortune to live as a prison-mate of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh from 1917-1930. They first met at Hazaribagh and then were together in Rajahmundry and Nagpur prisons. It was in Rajahmundry prison this dialogue took place in the year 1922. Bhai Kartar Singh has recorded his experience and his role in the Revolutionary Movement in Canada in a book which unfortunately has not been published. The

translator of this booklet met Bhai Kartar Singh during his college days twice at Narangwal during summer vacation of the year 1940 and then twice in other places just before his sudden and unexpected death. He was a tall wiry person, with a calm but cynical face, and mentally very alert. He was a lively conversationalist and a man of extremely simple habits. It was only in his conversation his revolutionary zeal and passion flamed up into words. He was still quite rational and straight-forward in his outlook and had an incurable craze for medieval alchemy (preparing oxides from mercury etc.). Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh repeatedly warned him not to waste his time and energy on it, because amateurish attempts in alchemy lead to dangerous results. I read this booklet *Amrit Ki Hai* in manuscript form and when I expressed my boyish appreciation of it, he turned round and curtly remarked: "I have still not understood what Amrit really is." I was shocked to hear this from him because I began to reflect as to how it is possible for a youngman of 21 like me to understand it if he had not understood after so close association with Bhai Sahib and after reading the scripture so much. I requested him to explain how much he had understood it and how much and which part of it he had not understood. He assured me that he would do it when we met next time.

I became so impatient about this question that the next day when I was alone with Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh I asked him, "How is that Bhai Kartar Singh confesses that he has still not understood what Amrit is? What part of this subject is so mysterious that even he has not understood it so far?" Bhai Sahib had till then not written some of his other works on mysticism which he was persuaded by us to write later on. On hearing my question Bhai Sahib first burst into laughter and then became very serious about the matter. He said, "Bhai Kartar Singh had an intellectual interest in the subject and, he had hurriedly explained to him the basic things. But I told him repeatedly that the real understanding will come from meditations, contemplations and inner spiritual experiences resulting from it." He sadly pointed out that with the exception of Sant Attar Singh of Jodhpur none of his prison mates took the spiritual life with the seriousness they were expected to after release from prison. If Bhai Kartar Singh had spent half the time and energy of Simrin (divine contemplation) which he was wasting on study and experiments of alchemy, said Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, "He could have fully known what Amrit is. And yet Bhai Kartar Singh's interest in alchemy and homeopathy was with the sole motive of helping poor people in the villages by giving them simple medical aid. His motive still was charity and service."

This booklet is not a treatise on the subject under discussion, nor does it give complete information on all the points raised. It is a vast subject in itself. There are many things which the participants in the dialogue took for granted and there are many things they had already discussed earlier, and the questioner understood them but the reader does not understand them. It is a short dialogue which took place in a prison cell in the summer of 1922 between a rational minded inquirer and an illumined saint-scholar bringing out some of the hitherto unrecorded aspects of Sikh baptism and mysticism. They are unique because they come from the profound and authentic experience and knowledge of one of the greatest Sikh saints and mystics of our century. We sum up some of the fundamental ideas brought out in this booklet which have not only been authenticated with quotations from scriptures but have been subsequently elaborated in his books: *Charan Kamal Ke Mauj*, *Anhad Shabad Dasam Dwar* and *Amrit Kala*.

1. Mere intellectual knowledge of Sikh scriptures based purely on theology and grammar, though necessary is not quite helpful in contemplative understanding of the hymns of Guru Granth. Contemplative recitation of hymns and absorption of the mind in the spirit of the Word of God opens the portals of our inner consciousness and gives us experiential understanding of the moral and spiritual light of Sikhism.

2. Occult powers (Siddhis) are easily attained by normal religious practices and meditations in Sikhism, but to use these occult powers for getting cheap publicity or popularity or to overawe people and seek material gains is a type of earthly attachment (moha) which may degenerate into hedonism and materialism. It proves to be the greatest stumbling block and a persistent hindrance in moral as well as spiritual progress. Sikh saints and mystics shun it just as they would avoid the company of crafty men.

3. Our gross organs of sight or hearing are not only channels of knowledge. This also is proved by clairvoyance, telepathy and such well known phenomenon. Through the powers acquired in previous birth or by constant repetition of divine mantras, insignificant powers like mesmerism, hypnotism some time appears in life. These powers are also acquired by practising severe austerities. But Sikh mysticism rejects these as diversions from the true path of the love of God.

4. People who do not take their religion and spiritual life seriously remain complacent and self-satisfied in their moral and spiritual condition. They neither do such self-searching nor seek guidance from persons who achieved the highest spiritual states. Such people are religious with many ulterior motives. They remain ignorant of spiritual life and do not make much progress in their moral life also. Either they take religion and accept its broad principles just as lazy and dull-headed citizens accept civil laws or if they are at all serious about it they simply become fanatic without understanding the spirit of their religion, just to pose as orthodox religious people. Such people express their bigotry in the field of politics and religious culture only to poison the social atmosphere with bitterness.

5. Baptism in Sikhism is not mere ritual. It is a spiritual rebirth. Those who go in for baptism without inner preparations and discipline remain deprived of its spiritual impact in their body and mind. They may remain formally religious, but they remain ignorant and live in complete darkness about contemplative spiritual life and its blessings.

Many Sikhs go in for baptism not to become morally and spiritually better Sikhs but with some petty ulterior motive. Most of them accept baptism as a ritual with the sole motive of posing as very orthodox Sikhs and then exploiting innocent believers with their pretentious orthodoxy. Such false and pretentious orthodoxy has been made an instrument of exploitation in the administration of religious institutions and politics these days, on a massive scale. This is what Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh strongly resented and discouraged. This is what persuaded him from keeping away from the second phase of Akali Dal politics.

6. Sikh Baptismal Water is called Amrit (Nectar). The Hymns of Guru Granth are called Amrit. The name of God or the divine word (Shabad) is also called Amrit. The subtle mystical relation between these three is briefly explained in this booklet. There are detailed comments on this subject in his other books namely: Gurmat Nam Abhyas, Gurmat Lekh and Gurmat Bibek and Amrit Kala, all works of theology based exclusively on scriptures.

7. Such terms as rasa, charan kamal, Nada, sahaj, nijghar used frequently in the Guru Granth have acquired such vague popular meanings in our everyday language that it is taken for granted even by our Tikkakars (Interpreters of Scriptures) that the reader is supposed to know about them, and they conveniently skip over these mystical terms in their interpretations. As a result of this, Tikkas with very few exceptions are shockingly unspiritual and dry and they read like paraphrasing of student's text books. English translations based on such Tikkas by persons without religious

background and knowledge of mystic symbolism of Guru Granth are equally spiritless and lifeless, however correct they may be as literal translation.

8. "Every Sikh contemplative," says Bhai Sahib, "who meditates on God's Name deeply develops all his human senses of smell, hearing and sight to such a refined perfection that he can not only feel, see, hear the gross aspect of life and existence but also the subtle forms of life and powers, and these finer perceptions can develop to a highly refined and exalted state of inner power and perfection."

9. The last three chapters are a beautiful exposition of the aesthetics of Sikh mysticism. Bhai Sahib says, "The fragrance of the ambrosial Divine Name of God is so sweet and engrossing that its aroma is incomparable. It surpasses the fragrance of sweet smelling earthly objects like musk, sandalwood and other aromatic essences. All the foul smelling passions within the heart are changed to fragrant feelings in the soul of one who meditates in the Divine Name." This aesthetic aspect of Sikh mysticism nourished by the poetry and music of Guru Granth has been tragically ignored by Sikh and non-Sikh writers on Sikhism.

10. As this booklet is in the form of a dialogue, its language is much simpler than that used by Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh in his bigger books, which he has written in a scholastic style of mystical theology, using a large number of Persian, Braj and Punjabi words of mystical traditions having a veiled and symbolic meaning.

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was, as I knew him from close association with him for the last twenty-five years of his life, an intoxicated mystic bubbling with love and affection for everything good, virtuous and beautiful. It was a lovely sight to see him embracing and affectionately blessing every child, young and old persons who came to him, and even before those in agony had expressed their sorrows of anguish over their personal problems to him, tears rolled down his eyes in genuine sympathy. The doors of his house were open for everyone day and night. He demonstrated throughout his life and in all his actions the noblest achievements of perfect love and a devout submission to the Will of God. He exemplified the deepest possibilities of personal piety and devotion in Sikhism. Like those saints who derive their spiritual sustenance mainly from the scriptures, he was orthodox in his approach and his orthodoxy was a sustained self-disciplining to maintain the highest moral purity of the mind, heart and soul.

Plato said, "Such is our situation in the physical world that the things we see are only shadows, the realm of truth and reality lies beyond. So if we are to see Truth, our souls must be illumined by the light of Supreme Reality, which is the Sun of the Eternal world." (Republic Bk vii). Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's whole life was to transcend the affliction and suffering of the darkest hour of life in this world of strife and contradictions, and bask in the sunshine of Eternal Love and Truth. His tormentors perhaps acquired wealth, power and position for some time, but they all died in ignominy and shame, cursed and condemned by history and society.

"Among the saints," says the German scholar Rene Fulop Miller, "are the first proclaimers of humanitarian ideals, the first fighters for social justice, the first champions of the poor. They deemed all nations and races equal; their horizon was truly global; they were the first liberators of slaves. They established the sanctity of work and were the first to insist on its ethical status. They elevated woman to the rank of a partner of man, and assigned new importance to her functions in the social structure. They were the spiritual counsellors of humanity, the protagonists of intellectual freedom, the first educators and the founders of the first scientific institutes. Whether

we study history from a political or economic point of view, whether we consider the realm of culture or of science and technology everywhere we find that the saints have proclaimed and fought for the kind of culture which we are striving to preserve today. Aside from this, the lives of the saints hold a message of beauty and hope. All our cultural treasures, the eternal values and ideals of ethical progress, charity, love, justice our application of an, and the feeling we have for the grandeur of nature, are expression of a form of creative energy which is focused in, and emanates from the lives of the saints.”

During the last eighty years of our century, the impact of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's life and works has been deeply felt in the religious and political spheres of the Sikh world. The more seriously he is studied the better will be the understanding of the people about moral, mystical and cultural depths of Sikhism. The English Translations of his Autobiography has been greatly appreciated throughout India and abroad, the second revised Edition of which is appearing shortly.

The translation of this booklet was prepared in 1974, and when I was in England in 1975 some Missionary Societies claiming to be admirers of Bhai Sahib's writings expressed their desire to publish it, but it is a sad reflection on the so called Religious and Missionary Societies in U.K. that they waste tons of money in publishing cheap pamphlets, distorting the material presented by a serious writer and issue them as pamphlets of self-propaganda in which the name of every donor of a pound or two has to be printed. Living in such an advanced and civilized country they do not know what book printing really is, and what the requirements of a serious book and translation are which can really impress the civilized world.

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh Trust had to give priority to the publication of the out of print Punjabi books, and although the English Translation of Bhai Sahib's Autobiography became the rallying point of the Trust and the Publishing House under it, readers have had to wait for the publication of this booklet and the second edition of the Autobiography of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh for nearly seven years. If finances of the Publishers and the time and energy permit the present translator to undertake more translations of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's writings, he is likely to take up the translation of one or two more books which would be of interest to the western needs.

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CHAPTER 1 - THE AGONY OF THE SEEKER

This discussion between the author, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh and his prison companion in the Indian Freedom Movement, Bhai Kartar Singh, took place in the Rajahmundry Jail in Andhra State of India. One day Bhai Kartar Singh was reciting the Sukhmani, on hearing which Bhai Randhir Singh remarked, "There is devotion and eager thirst, but how sad that there is no aesthetic and spiritual flavour (Rasa) in this recitation." These words created a disturbing agony in the mind of Bhai Kartar Singh. He began to reflect seriously over his spiritual short-coming, and he wanted to know what aesthetic and spiritual flavour (Rasa) actually was? It led to a brief but thought provoking discussion with Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh about Sikh Baptism and aesthetic experiences of Sikh mysticism. The Introductory remarks in this chapter are Bhai Kartar Singh's reactions in his own words and recorded by him. The views of Bhai Randhir Singh are expressed in subsequent chapters in the context of the questions raised by Bhai Kartar Singh —Translator.

Bhai Kartar Singh's Reactions to Bhai Randhir Singh's Comments

"There is love, spiritual thirst but how sad there is no spiritual flavour Rasa." On hearing these words of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, that there is no Rasa (aesthetic flavour) in my recitation, I came out of my state of emotional religious sentiments, and seriously reflected on the whole of my past from the time of my taking baptism upto this disarming remark of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, which became an unsolved riddle for me. He had made the remarks but not explained it. Many questions disturbed my mind. How is that no sermon from any missionary or teacher had ever enlightened me about Amrit-rasa (spiritual flavour of the divine Nectar) administered by Sikh Baptism? How is that I had not acquired it even after taking baptism according to Sikh rites?

The reader may not understand how deeply I felt the pain of these remarks; "there is no Rasa (aesthetic and spiritual flavour)." The first disturbing question was, why I alone of all the prisoners reciting the hymns felt the poignancy of these remarks. In life, I had faced great suffering, misfortunes, but never had I felt so agonized and pained as by these words of chance remarks of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. If anyone could look into my heart with a clairvoyant vision he could see nothing else except the deeply bleeding wounds created by these words. From every pore of my body one could hear the cry, "How is it that, after sixteen years of reading the scriptures, meeting holy people and contemplating the Divine Name, I have achieved nothing? Am I still in the same spiritual state in which I started my religious quest sixteen years earlier? I recited the scriptures, lived in the company of godly men, contemplated His Name, performed various types of services, and yet how sad it was to be told that nothing has been accepted at His Door. All the spiritual seeds I sowed did not seem to bear any fruit. Who else besides me could feel the agony of what I felt:

*The heart that suffers alone knows
The poignant pain of inward agony
How can others know?
The sorrow of inner pain and suffering
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Bilawal, p. 835)*

I do not think my companions paid any serious attention to these chance remarks of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. Probably they did not hear them. If they did hear words, they ignored them and remained silent. These words pierced my heart like an arrow and it was the consolation and knowledge imparted by divine men that could give a healing touch to these wounds. And now

even this door appeared to be closed, because I came to know of this shortcoming in a very odd place in the world - the prison. I pinned great hope on the Guru and His Grace that some day I would be released, but I was undergoing life imprisonment, and to get released from prison while living appeared beyond expectation. There was only one way out. The saintly Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh who had pointed out this malady should be requested to heal it.

I knew Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's temperament and attitudes intimately because I had lived close to him in prison for seven years. He would not talk so openly about spiritual matters and mystical experiences as I wished. He might, I thought, get annoyed, if I asked him some pertinent questions. But then I reflected over his remarks and felt, that he having divined my short-coming might even now explain to me how to remove it. So I would like to say a few words about him, before the reader goes through the actual discussion, recorded later on.

It is difficult for me to say anything about Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's earlier spiritual achievements, because I knew him intimately only for the last six or seven years. When I was transferred first to his prison (Hazaribagh, Bihar) there were about forty Sikh Freedom fighters with him. During the seven years of life as political prisoner I frequently got an opportunity to be locked up in the cell next to him. The prisoners had to talk to one another from within their cells at the top of their voice. But Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh and those locked near him spent their days in solitude and prayed under his spell. Everyone close to him was asked to rise up early at 2 A.M. and those who had memorized various prayers from the Adi Guru Granth recited them by turn. The recitation was loud enough to be heard in the whole Block of prison cells. Very little time was given to rest. The recitations and the meditations stopped when the prisoners had to take their bath. During recitation, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh remained silent and deeply absorbed in meditation. He would not indulge in discursive discussions about spiritual matters. So I feared that he might get annoyed if I asked him some pertinent questions. If anyone talked just for the sake of talking, he remained silent.

We did very little work in the prison. The prison officers just wanted us to avoid any confrontation with them. They feared us considerably. The jail Superintendent inspected the prison hurriedly in the morning. We were supposed to clean about 20 pounds of wheat every day. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh remained silent all day, deeply absorbed in meditation. The prisoners locked close to his cell were asked to maintain peace and silence. We knew he did not like being disturbed. So absolute silence was maintained around his prison cell. When we talked we did so in whispers.

We who lived with him in prison had considerable evidence of his great spiritual powers but these are things which I hesitate to discuss openly. He generally recited the first two lines of the prayer which was to be recited, and the man whose duty it was to recite got the hint that he must start it. And he immediately began to recite the particular prayer. Thus prayers were recited from 2 A.M. to about 7 A.M, when the bell rang for morning bath and meals. He tactfully guided those who recited with incorrect pronunciation. Where they erred, he either tactfully asked them to read again from the Gutka (Short Prayer Book) or he would himself recite the lines with correct pronunciation.

He expressed his views about the divine Name and the recitation of Hymns rather curtly. If anyone asked which composition of the Sacred Scriptures should be memorized, he said, "Anyone you like, and as much as you can with concentrated attention. If you stop reciting, contemplate the Name of God, then after contemplation again recite the Prayers. The human mind is as restless as a

monkey. It has to be tied to a post and kept revolving around a fixed point like an ox around a Persian wheel."

Although the Scriptures, which are mostly in the Punjabi language, were generally understood by most people, he avoided getting into linguistic discussion. To those who asked for the meaning of some hymns he would say, "Brother, I do not know the meaning of those hymns, but if you have understood them please explain them to me. I am not a certified preacher (Gyani). I have not studied the Sacred Scriptures in school and college. How comes it, that you are so worried about interpretations? Are you taking up a preacher's profession? Recite the Scriptures and contemplate the divine Name and the inner meaning will unfold itself."

*Man is born as a human being,
To read and hear the divine Word.
(Guru Arjan, Sarang, p. 1219)*

*The Sacred Writings of the Gurus and the Perfect Saints will liberate the mind and soul of mankind
from ignorance and darkness.
Know the Sacred Hymns of the Guru,
to the Truth and the ultimate Truth,
God Himself inspires the Guru, O disciples,
to utter these sacred Words.
(Guru Ram Das, Var Gaudi, p. 308)*

"While praying and meditating," continued Bhai Randhir Singh, "I have never stopped to think why and the wherefore of the Prayers and Scriptures. The Sacred Hymns are self-revealing. The very words of the Guru are for us an embodiment of Truth."

*I sing the Word recorded in Scriptures as Embodiment of the Guru's spirit
I consider not any other writing as the spiritually inspired Word.
(Guru Nanak, Basant, p. 1171)*

"When you come to interpretations, you will find that different people interpret differently. It will become difficult for you to decide which is right and which is wrong. It will lead you to doubt and scepticism. It is also difficult to decide the historical context of every hymn as is generally done."

*The great Apostles deliver a sermon to a particular person,
But it is a universal message to the whole world.
(Guru Amar Das, Sorath, p. 647)*

The second question which was usually raised before Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was "What is the Guru-mantram of the Sikhs?" Bhai Randhir Singh's reply generally was: "It is the divine Word which only the Panj Pyaras (Five Beloved Ones) are entitled to impart to one who comes for initiation through baptism". The eminent Congress leader Sri Venkata Kundu (Congress leader Sri Venkata Kundu was a well known patriot of Andhra Pradesh) generally tried to persuade him to give him Guru-mantram for meditation, but he frankly told him that no individual Sikh can do it. He shall have to accept baptism and baptism is given to those who prepare themselves for it and deserve it, and not to anyone for the asking. He was against breaking this tradition. When he was asked the method of contemplating God's Name, he said contemplate God with every breath:

*I string every breath I breathe,
with the divine Name of God.
The breath that passes
without His Name on my lips,
is a breath wasted in evil thoughts.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Nat, p. 981)*

"The Sikh Gurus command us to remember God with every breath. Whether awake or asleep, sitting or walking, weeping or laughing, remember His Name with every breath. People may laugh at you or mock at you for repeating the Name of God mechanically but disregard them. In the prison you are much better off because no such person can reach you."

Five of us including Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh had been transferred to this prison from Bihar State. Four Freedom Fighters were brought from the Exile-prison of Andaman Island. We were all imprisoned in one block. The recitation of the Hymns continued as before. One evening when the evening Prayer (Rahiras) had been recited I started reciting the Sukhamani (a Devotional Prayer of Guru Arjan which takes about an hour to be recited). As I was very ill I could not continue the recitation. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh asked another person to recite it. After the prayer, Bhai Sahib came to me and enquired about my health and parted after saying, "I hope you will be well tomorrow morning and will be able to recite the Sukhmani."

All night I suffered from high temperature. Restlessness, in a state of semi-consciousness troubled me considerably and at times I started mumbling prayers. When it was dawn and time for prayer I washed my hands and feet and wrapping myself in a blanket I sat for prayers. On one side of Bhai Randhir Singh's cell was Nihang Singh and on the other side was my cell. After the recitation of Japji, Nihang Singh recited Asa-ki-Var at the pitch of his voice. Everyone could hear him. After his recitation was over, Bhai Sahib recited the first Shaloka of the Sukhmani which was an indication that I should start reciting the Sukhmani. I was suffering from fever, headache but I knew that Bhai Randhir Singh's call was meaningful. I knew that from his clairvoyant power he could clearly study my physical and mental condition and we had tested this many times. I took courage, and even though my health did not permit it, I started reciting Sukhmani with concentrated attention and in a high pitched voice. My body started sweating as I went on reciting and the ache disappeared. The fever came down and soon I forgot everything about it. The recitation went on for about two and a half hours. After the recitation I felt that I still had a little fever, but no headache. Contemplation and prayers filled my mind with peace and bliss. It is only when the morning prayers were over that Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh remarked, "There is devotion and eager thirst, but how sad that there is no aesthetic and spiritual flavour (Rasa) in this recitation." Never in the last six or seven years had he ever made any comments while the prayers were still being recited. This was against his nature and temperament. Now that he had pointed out my major weakness I felt that I must ask him how to cure it. At that time I remained silent, but I made-up my mind that as soon as I got time I will meet Bhai Randhir Singh alone and get my doubts cleared about it.

As I was ill I remained in my cell, while Nihang Singh went to prepare breakfast for us. After an hour or so, Nihang Singh brought hot tea for me. He greeted me and said in his usual hilarious mood, "Wake up Sire, take your tea, hot and plenty. Why are you frightened of this jackal—this cowardly fever. Be brave and drive it away. It has come to give you a little message and nothing else. It is as timid as a jackal. Frighten it and it will run away. Recite your prayers and God's Name, and lo, the fever will go."

Other prisoners also came to get their tea. He distributed it to everyone and gave me a mug full of it. He told me that Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh had asked him to give me good hot tea, and so he poured more and more of it. "Do not worry", he said, "Your illness will disappear. I will send for the Chief Medical Officer. Today we are having rice pudding for lunch, which you will enjoy." I had to drink more tea than I wanted to. Such were Nihang Singh's persuasive words. Then I went to bed for sometime. My body sweated and the fever seemed to disappear. However, I felt a little tired and exhausted. My mind was still brooding over Bhai Randhir Singh's words of comment on my recitation. After brooding over it for an hour, I made-up my mind to ask Bhai Sahib the following questions:

- (1) Can every baptized Sikh achieve the amrit-rasa (the ambrosial spiritual flavour)?
- (2) Why have I remained devoid of amrit-rasa? What is my real shortcoming?
- (3) How did he come to know that I lack this?
- (4) What should I do not to achieve it?

At 12 noon the workshop closed down. Ordinary prisoners had to go to their cells, but we were free to move about because we had to cook our food. We were free to move in the courtyard. The second reason of our being left free was that our cells had special locks and the routine of taking the keys from the office and depositing them again was very complicating. So we enjoyed considerable freedom, with some sentry posted on us. With the exception of those prisoners working in the workshop no other prisoner was supposed to talk to us. As we were considered very dangerous political prisoners no other political prisoner was allowed to talk to us. The Prison Officials and the Guards were also afraid to talk to us.

We took our lunch and were leaving the courtyard for a little rest in our cells. After resting for about half an hour we woke up. I was brooding over all that had happened. So I went to Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. Everyone was either resting or busy reading some book. I reverently greeted Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. He was sitting deeply absorbed in Samadhi. He opened his eyes and said, "So you will not leave me alone. You have been disturbing me with your thoughts and questioning in your mind. If you cannot sleep go and recite the prayers. Have you nothing else to do except talk to me. Now that you are so intimate with me, you feel free to come and talk to me as you like. How happy would I have been if there were locks outside my cell. Now that you have come, ask what you wish to ask."

CHAPTER 2 - SIDDHIS: OCCULT POWERS

Kartar Singh: Bhai Sahib! I came quietly fearing that you may not be disturbed, and greeted you softly in a whispering voice, and yet you feel disturbed.

Author: You think that only loud voice and speech can disturb me. Do you not believe that besides these outer senses of sight and hearing there is an inner intuition which can hear, see and feel things much better. You have spoken about them from your own knowledge and experience.

Kartar Singh: I have seen many phenomenon in sleep and waking state, but I do not have the potency to use these powers. I do not possess siddhis. This morning your comments on my recitation upset me greatly. I feel deeply hurt and I hope you will do something to heal the wounds, because no earthly physician can heal it.

Author: Thank God that He has graciously made you feel that besides outward physical and mental powers, there are within you spiritual and divine powers also. If the Guru has not bestowed these powers on you it is for your own benefit. You do not yet deserve to have them. These divine powers are given to those who possess them and yet live humbly as human beings. They never misuse them. They are given to people who are tolerant, forgiving and helpful to others. People lacking these virtues get trapped in these occult powers and face misery and trouble. They cannot reap the fruit of true contemplation.

*No one can achieve God,
By egoistic will power of any Yoga,
so many having exhausted themselves Practising egoistic ally yoga asanas,
Donning the robes of some ascetic school,
They wander about searching,
Something other than God and they suffer.
The occult powers which they seek,
And for which they strive are low cravings.
Wherever there is such a craving,
There, the Name of God will not reside.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Var Vadhans, p. 593)*

*The occult powers and the powers to perform miracle,
are unspiritual activities and tendencies.
(Japji, Paudi 6)*

In Sikhism, siddhis and use of occult powers are types of attachments which must be discarded. People who indulge in them are so egoistically absorbed in them that the Name of God does not reside in their hearts. A devout and enlightened Sikh would never get involved in them.

*The siddhas learn many asanas,
Their mind lustily craves for occult powers,
To perform miracles and acquire treasures.
They never acquire peace, contentment and satisfaction. Peace and satisfaction are attained
By meeting the sages and contemplating the Name of God.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Bilawal Asht., p. 835)*

*Though thou art adept in siddhis,
Endowed with occult powers,
And powers to acquire wealth;
Though thou can change thy shape,
And at will can be seen and become unseen;
Though men revere and adore thee.
Even so, Man, beware lest thou forget,
And remember not the Name of God.
(Guru Nanak, Sri Rag, p. 14)*

Consider one farmer who reaps some crops even before they are ripe, and either sells the unripe crops or feeds them to the animals. Consider another farmer who lets them become ripe and reaps a rich harvest and uses the grain wisely. Those who acquire siddhis and use them before they are morally and spiritually mature are like the first farmer. Such people never come to the profounder experiences of contemplation of the divine Name, nor can they attain peace and contentment.

CHAPTER 3 - WHAT IS RASA: AESTHETIC FLAVOUR

Author: It is clear from the scriptural quotations given in the previous chapter from the Siddha-Gosht that it is dangerous to fall into the trap of so called yogic occult powers. Once you became a victim of siddhis (occult powers), you can neither achieve the flavour of contemplating the Name {Nam-rasa) nor can you concentrate on His Name. What do you mean by saying that I have inflicted a deep wound in your heart? I have done nothing of the sort. Tell me about the purpose of your present visit.

Kartar Singh: Call is whatever you like. For me the weapon with which you struck me was sharper than the sword, and more pointed and piercing than an arrow, and that is why the wound is deep and painful. Your remarks this morning, on my recitation were subtler and sharper than any weapon. When I was reciting the Sukhmani you said, "There is devotion and eager thirst, but how sad that there is no aesthetic flavour (rasa) in your recitation." I am so seriously disturbed by the last two words of your remarks that I can neither concentrate nor recite my prayers.

Author: I was greatly impressed by your recitations, its enthusiasm and devotion, but out of pity for your spiritual state, these words slipped out of my lips. I have been noticing this shortcoming for the last six or seven years. In the last prison, we did not get any opportunity to talk to each other. When we did talk among our friends, our companions kept us busy talking about random subjects. The Gurus have said:

*If you give your virtues to a person,
Who knows not their true value?
You will thereby throw them away cheaply.*

(Adi Guru Cranth, Guru Amar Das, Maru Var: Shalok Guru Nanak, p. 1086)

If the mysteries of inner life are revealed to people who do not deserve to know them they are wasted. Then how to judge who deserves and who does not deserve:

*The Name of God,
His divine Music, are precious treasures,
Which God keeps with the saints.
He who accepts the Word of God
As Truth and nothing but the Truth
To him these treasures are revealed.
(Guru Ram Das, Kalyan, Asht., p. 1326)*

So, now, you know what should be the qualities of a person who deserves spiritual knowledge. I have listened to the story of your past life. You got baptized for some selfish interest and not to lead a spiritual life but for some ulterior motive. By seeking the association of religious men you have learnt something about contemplation and meditation of His Name. But you have not acquired that Amrit rasa, that ambrosial flavour of divine life. Whatever spiritual efforts you made, for that you tried to get a material reward. You always prayed for material goods and material needs. You never prayed for the Light of divine Name, for faith, for self-less service. You always prayed for worldly happiness. While I do not blame you for it, your fate was perhaps such. Every evening we pray to God in Rahiras (Evening Prayer) for the Light of His Name: In this hymn the mystery of aesthetic rasa is revealed.

*O Apostle of God, True Guru, Embodiment of Truth,
I make before thee, O Enlightener, but one supplication.
We that are low and insignificant worms,
Seek refuge in Thee, O True Guru.
Mercifully inspire me with the Light of True Name.*

*My Friend, my divine Guru,
Kindle in me the Light of His Name.
The Name of God is my life-breath,
The praise of the Lord is my creed and faith. Refrain.*

*Blessed and fortunate are the seers of God,
Who have faith in the Lord and are athirst for Him.
The gift of divine Name slakes their thirst.
In the company of the saints their virtues shine forth.*

*Unfortunate and victims of death are they,
Who have not acquired the divine flavour (rasa) of His Name.
Cursed and blasphemous is the life of those,
Who have not sought the company of the True Guru.
Accursed be the hopes set on living.*

*Blessed from birth are those,
Who have taken refuge
In the holy company of the True Guru.
Hail, all hail to the holy congregation.
In whose association is acquired,
The sweet savour of His Presence.
In the company of His Apostle O Nanak,
The Light of His Name is revealed.
(Rahiras: Guru Ram Das: Rag Gujri)*

In these words of the Evening prayer there is no word which cannot be easily understood. But have you ever seriously reflected over them?

Kartar Singh: I did reflect over these hymns but did not realize that I had not attained the blissful flavour of the hymns. I thought the contemplation of the Name was the divine flavour. So I contemplated the Name day and night as best as I could. For a year or two I was in a state of self-intoxication. My companions thought that something is wrong with my health. I considered myself a contemplative. And now I learn from you that I have not even tasted the flavour of divine inspiration.

Author: Why do you always talk and brood about the past what use is it? Why not tread the right path so that you may be blessed with the nectar of divine inspiration? Why cry for mere flavour? You will be blessed with inner peace, inner fragrance and illumination, if you still walk on the right path.

Kartar Singh: I wanted to ask you what rasa (aesthetic joy) is and now you talk of inner tranquillity, fragrance and what not. Do all these things exist? You now say, one should drink ambrosial nectar

with every breath. I saw before coming to this prison how the Sikh baptism was conducted but the ceremony is called taking the Amrita (Nectar) or Sikh baptism. It is however beyond my comprehension how Amrita (Elixir) can be taken with every breath.

Author: It is clear from the events of your earlier life, why you remained deprived of the Amrit rasa (aesthetic flavour of Elixir). The first mistake you made was to go for baptism without preparing yourself for it. You got baptized just because other people were getting baptized. Either you become baptized to please other people or just for some other ulterior motive, like posing as an orthodox Sikh in society. The real Amrit (grace of baptism) is achieved thus:

*He alone knows what the essence of Amrita is
Who knows what it is worth.
(Guru Nanak, Maru, p. 993)*

You did not know what the real value of the grace of baptism was. How could you ever know what Amrit-rasa is?

The frog resides near the lotus and knows not its fragrance; the bamboo is found close to the sandalwood and remains devoid of its sweet smell; the crane lives near the swan, but cannot detect the pearls as the swan can. The philosopher's stone is found among rocks which are ignorant of its value; and Elixir is generally found near poison. The deer knows not the musk within its own navel, the snake is ignorant of the jewel in its head; the bee near the honey, and a barren woman living near a husband yield no result. The owl gains nothing from the sun, and barley suffers under rain. What are food and clothing to an ailing man? So also the Guru's wisdom does not sprout in a heart which is like clay and barren soil. Separation from God prevents the seeds from sprouting (Bhai Gurdas, Kabit Swayyas No. 299).

There is no need to worry now. You took Amrit (baptism) only in imitation of other Sikhs or for ulterior motives, without preparing yourself for it. Even then your baptism has born fruit. The Guru has fulfilled many of your desires. You have developed devotion, detachment and deep longing for higher spiritual values. If you preserve in the contemplation of His Name, it is possible that the seeds that have been sown in your, barren heart may sprout after the rain of His grace has fallen on them. The plant may develop yielding fruits. I do not blame you alone. Even those who baptized you without seeing and probing whether you deserve it or not, are also to be blamed. They should have tested you, prepared your mind and soul before putting into it the seeds of spiritual life.

Kartar Singh: Do you mean to say that the Panj Pyaras (the Five who Baptize) made a mistake. Guru Gobind Singh himself accepted baptism from the Panj Pyaras (the Five Elect ones). People who go and seek baptism are not supposed to question those who baptize. The five are generally selected by the Congregation. I do not doubt that they did not baptize me properly.

Author: I do not question the ability and spiritual authority of the Panj Pyaras. The question of choosing those who are morally and spiritually competent is a difficult one. Sometimes that does not happen. I have already explained that even in ordinary farming the seeds cannot sprout in barren land or clayish earth. Seeds do not grow even in improperly tilled soil. When seeds are sown out of season and not sufficiently deep they die. There are many saintly Sikhs in the Sikh community. Baptism conducted by them yields good results. But now a days there are so called preachers (pracharaks) whose sole aim is to please rich people. They do not lead the life of

contemplation of divine name. It is Panj Pyaras (Five who Baptize) selected from such people that yield poor result. How can they inspire a devotee with what they themselves do not believe and practice? They give formal instructions about guru-mantra but cannot give spiritual inspiration of the divine Name. Even those who go for baptism do so with some other motive than entering spiritual and meditative life. Those who baptize are generally devoid of spiritual insight and are therefore incapable of testing those who come for baptism. Many clever preachers thus go on baptizing people indiscriminately for the sake of money and popularity. Guru Gobind Singh baptized only those who were prepared to sacrifice their life and possessions for the Guru's cause, but now a day's people like to get baptized by politicians who are utterly devoid of spirituality. Those who lead a meditative life avoid using their spiritual powers and gifts and prefer living in solitude.

This is the reason why educated people run after hypocritical saints and impostor gurus, for peace and solace. Some of these impostor gurus and hypocritical saints go to the extent of distorting interpretations of certain hymns of Sikh scriptures and explain them away to suit their own tastes and motives. Our so called preachers do not even have fundamental knowledge of Sikhism.

So now come to the point. It is no use entering devious discussion and raising one question after another. Express all your doubts and questions once for all I will try to explain them all to you.

CHAPTER 4 - DEFINITION OF AMRITA: NECTAR OF LIFE

Kartar Singh: Please explain to me:

- (1) What is Amrit: Nectar of Life in Sikhism?
- (2) How is it obtained through baptism?
- (3) From where can one acquire Amrita?
- (4) How does one feel when tasting and drinking Amrita and what are its spiritual attributes?

Author: In the whole world history people have given many names to Amrita. In English it is called Nectar and in Persian they call it Abe-hyat. In Sikhism it is called Amrit. Amrit is that which brings the dead to life, and makes human beings immortal. These are also the attributes of Amrit in Sikhism. Seekers of many faiths have sought ways and means of becoming immortal, but the path shown by Guru Nanak based on moral and spiritual discipline to achieve Amrita is at once simple, convincing and ennobling. Everyone can put the Sikh ideas to practice. You do not have to perform any penance or self-mortification. You do not have to go to the forests or mountain caves. You can stay within the society as a householder and become spiritually immortal by taking Amrit. In the Kaliyuga - the age of moral and spiritual darkness, spiritual sovereignty of Guru Nanak is an accepted fact by the spiritually enlightened.

*Guru Nanak's advent in his world
was to liberate the world.
(Bhai Gurdas Var, Var 1, pauri 23)*

*Greatest of all prophets is Guru Nanak
who has illumined me.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Suhi, p. 750)*

The first three successors of Guru Nanak, (1469-1539) namely, Guru Angad (1539-1552 A.D.), Guru Amar Das (1552- 1574), Guru Ram Das (1574-1581) had to face considerable physical suffering at the hands of the opponents and rivals for guruship. They remained unconcerned about the oppressive behaviour of the opponents, but they carried on the dispensation of Amrit through baptism. Guru Arjan's brother sought the support of the Mughal rulers of Lahore to harass him and created many difficulties for him. Jahangir tortured Guru Arjan (1563-1606) to death and thus tried to put an end to Guru Arjan's dispensation of the Amrit, through dissemination of Sikh faith. Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) suffered imprisonment. He fought four battles with the Mughal rulers. There was also a vigorous struggle and campaign by the impostor gurus (Minas and Dhirmalias) to replace the true Guru, but they did not succeed. When Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) was declared the true successor by Guru Hari Krishan (1656-1664) and was found at Bakala, 22 impostor gurus and fake Sodhis set themselves as rival gurus. The Sikhs selected the true one because the real amrit (Nectar) of baptism and true divine inspiration comes from the true Guru. At Bakala, where all impostor gurus were put to test by the disciples, Guru Tegh Bahadur was accepted as the only true Guru. All other pretenders were rejected by the Sikh Sangat.

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) changed the whole pattern of dispensation of Amrit and unlike all other prophets; he authorized every five accomplished and authentic Sikhs to give Amrit through baptism. The struggle for guruship by ambitious individuals ended once for all. All Sikh and non-Sikh historians have unanimously reported how the first five Sikhs authorized to baptize according

to the New Order of the Khalsa were selected. It is also recorded that Guru Gobind Singh gave such importance to the new dispensation that he asked them to give this baptism to him also. Thus Guru Gobind Singh did what perhaps no prophet or Apostle of God had done. He thus instituted the collective leadership of the Khalsa Elect as his successors. Some non-Sikh chroniclers were also eye-witness to this.

From Guru Nanak to the middle of the life of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh Gurus initiated disciples according to the rites of charan-pahul amrit. In this ceremony the Gurus personally prepared the baptismal water with the sanctifying touch of his lotus feet. Guru Gobind Singh changed only the formal rites of preparation of Amrit from the initiation by the living Gurus personally to initiation by the Five Elect Khalsa. The basic principle of Amrit remained the same. It is scientific in the sense mesmerism and other such phenomenon are scientific on a different plane. There is hardly any better form of imparting Amrit (the immortalizing Nectar).

Kartar Singh: I have not as yet clearly understood how Guru Gobind Singh's baptism of the double-edged sword is the same Amrit as that of the earlier Charan-pahul ceremony? How and why was the technique changed? What do you mean by saying it is scientific?

Author: I have already made it clear in my answer to the last question that only the formal methods of imparting Amrit changed. Instead of the Guru personally initiating the novice, the five Enlightened Elect, the Khalsa, who stand the test of living strictly according to the Code of Sikhism initiated the novices. This was done to save the Sikh community from the impostor gurus. There was to be no human guru after Guru Gobind Singh. The new baptism was in letter and spirit the same. You have certain scientific principles governing the laws of nature behind electricity and mesmerism. Similar principles are there in these ceremonies and the Baptismal Water seen from the purely mental and spiritual planes.

Kartar Singh: Do you mean to say that the technique of electricity and mesmerism were used during the period of Guru Gobind Singh. I have travelled in Canada and U.S.A. I have seen many shows depicting the powers of mesmerism and electricity (before 1914) but I have not seen any of these powers being used by the Sikhs who have been baptized according to Khalsa baptism rites. Mesmerism has its own techniques of acquiring inner power and sometimes one who practices mesmerism fails to achieve what he wishes to achieve. With the power he acquires, he can influence only a certain type of people and not everyone. Electricity with all its wires, plugs and bulbs can give light and if anything goes wrong anywhere the bulb will not give light.

(Discussion continued in Chapter 5)

CHAPTER 5 - THE METHOD OF IMPARTING KHALSA BAPTISM

Author: You, Bhai Kartar Singh, are a baptized Sikh. You have joined the Panj Pyaras: Five Elect, to baptize others. Yet, how sad it is that you have not understood the spiritual mystery of baptism. For Khalsa baptism the following things are essential:

1. For administering the Amrit (Sikh baptism) you require five Sikhs who are competent to administer the baptism by having lived according to the Khalsa Code of Conduct. Besides these five, there should be one Granthi (Reader of the Guru Granth) to preside over the ceremony by reading from the Guru Granth at appropriate moments (before and after the ceremony). All these six persons should be contemplative of divine Name, well versed in Gurbani, and they should be regular in their prayers. None of them should have committed any act transgressing the Khalsa Code of Conduct. They must not only be morally sound but also physically complete.
2. Although the Sikh Sangat elects the Panj Pyaras, but still they are asked to tell the truth about their inner life on oath of secrecy. Those who have committed any moral offence are not permitted by the Sikh Code of Conduct are rejected and replaced. If there is a minor transgression he is given some corrective punishment, and prayer is said seeking forgiveness for him. (Punishment is generally in the form of obligatory duties for a fixed period in the form of public service or special prayers to be recited daily for a certain period). This is like testing the wires, plugs and the sources of electric power.
3. Then those who seek baptism are put to test. Only sincere seekers competent to live according to the Khalsa Code are accepted. The rest are asked to continue as novice till their preparations are complete. This is like testing the bulbs. Just as useless bulbs are rejected, so also those who are not fit for baptism are rejected. Just as one accepted only those bulbs which can receive electricity, so also the Five Elect (Panj Pyaras) select only those people for baptism who are mentally and spiritually prepared for it.
4. Then all those selected for baptism stand before the Holy Guru Granth, behind the Panj Pyaras. They are told by the Jathedar (leader) of the Panj Pyaras the Cardinal beliefs of the Khalsa Code of Conduct. They are also warned about the difficulties of the path and the ordeals they might have to face. They take an oath from them that they would be prepared to sacrifice their life for their Faith and for righteousness.

*If you yearn to play the game of Love with me,
Carry your head on your palm in humble dedication.
Then enter the path of my faith
If on this path you wish to tread
Hesitate not to sacrifice your head.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Shloka Vadhik, p. 1412)*

Those who commit themselves to this spirit of dedication are given baptism. Those who hesitate to do so are rejected. They are considered unfit for baptism and are turned out. They should either prepare themselves as novices for a longer period or give up the idea.

5. According to the unwritten laws laid down for the ceremony, an iron bowl, a double-edged sword, sugar-pellets (Patashas) are brought for the ceremony.

6. Even before the ceremony starts the Panj Pyaras come after taking bath and washing their hair. They wear clean clothes and if possible ceremonial robes and swords. The novices also come prepared similarly with five Symbols and clean clothes. The Invocation Prayer (Ardasa) is first offered by the Panj Pyaras seeking grace and forgiveness for all, praying that they all should courageously tread the Path of dharma and keep away from the life of evil and sin. Then they sit concentrating their mind on the divine Presence of God. The sweet pellets (patashas) are then poured into the iron bowl filled with water, and then sitting around it in Vir-asana: an archer's pose, the Panj Pyaras hold the bowl with both their hands. It is through this contact that they impart their magnetism to the bowl of baptismal water.

7. The Panj Pyaras recite the five morning prayers (Japji, Jap, Anand Sahib, the Swaiyas and Kabiobach Benti Chaupai of Guru Gobind Singh), one each by turn, clockwise.

He who recites the prayers, holds the double-edged sword in his hands and moves it in baptismal water in slow grinding motion. From the hearts of the Panj Pyaras divine power sheds its light through their eyes of the baptismal water, and their magnetic touch and recitation of the Sacred Hymns impart certain mesmeric divine powers to water. There is also a spiritual communication between all the Five Pyaras through this communion. In the presence of Guru Granth the spiritual and mystic power of the Panj Pyaras manifests itself as the collective divine power of Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, embodied in the Guru Granth.

When the recitations of the five prayers are over, the Panj Pyaras lift the bowl and then say the invocational Prayer (Ardasa). After the Ardasa, the Panj Pyaras offer the baptismal water to every novice and impart to him the Guru-mantram. According to their spiritual competence and sincerity in devotion and faith, they receive the grace and illumination in this spiritual rebirth.

Kartar Singh: You have said something about mesmeric powers, but I have not understood it clearly.

Author: Those who are accepting Amrit (baptism) should keep their eyes open. Baptismal water is sprinkled in their eyes. The Panj Pyaras cast their divine spell through inner power. The novice keeps his eyes open till all the five have sprinkled Amrit (baptismal water) in the eyes. With each sprinkling of Amrit, the Name of God is imparted and recited loudly. If the novice receives the Amrit and the Name with eyes and ears open he feels transfigured by the mesmeric powers of the divine Name of the Panj Pyaras. He forgets his body and becomes unconscious of physical joys and sorrows. The mind is absorbed in the Name of God. Some pass into ecstasy as soon as they receive the Guru-mantram and become unconscious of their body. Some are deeply absorbed in the contemplation of His Name. Now I think, I should answer the first question: How do we define Amrit (Nectar) in Gurmat: Sikh philosophy? I have already explained how this Amrit (Nectar) is formally acquired by a Sikh. People all over the world have different views about Amrit (Ambrosia) but it should be made clear what it means in the Guru Granth Sahib.

"He who drinks Amrit (Nectar) becomes immortal" (Guru Arjan, Sukhmani Asht. 12:8, p. 289). Says Nanak, "There is but One Amrit. Nothing else can be Amrit" (Guru Angad, Var Sarang, p. 1238). The first quotation convinces us that whoever drinks Amrit becomes immortal. The second quotation makes it clear that there is only One Amrit in Essence. Nothing besides it is Amrit. The third quotation: "The word of God is the only Amrit" (Guru Amar Das, Var Sorath, p. 644) makes it clear that in the religious and mystical field, the Word of God alone is the Amrit in Essence and Substance.

"The Name of God is the Amrit. It is the panacea of all ills" (Guru Amar Das, Var Bihagada, p. 554). "The Hymns of the divine Master are Amrit brimming with the flavour of nectar (Guru Arjan, Var Ramkali, p. 963) and in it the Name of God is Amrit drinking which all thirst is slaked"(Guru Ram Das, Var Malar, p. 1283). "Remembering and repeating the Name of God one drinks Amrit and nectar fills the heart" (Guru Ram Das, Var Kanada, p. 1314). The name of God is Amrit and one can contemplate the Name only under the love and inspiration of the true Guru" (Guru Ram Das. Var Kanada, p. 1316). "The ambrosial Name of God is the treasure of life. Join in the communion of drinking it O Brother" (Guru Arjan, Var Gaudi, p. 318). "O my darling soul, the Name of God is Amrit and one acquires it from the Guru's Path" (Guru Ram Das, Var Bihagada, p 538).

Kartar Singh: Where does Amrit really dwell, and through what kind of devotion can it be found?

Author: Listen with concentrated attention to what the scriptures say in answer to these questions: "Says Nanak, Amrit dwells within your own heart and mind, but it is revealed by the true Guru. They alone drink it with intoxicating joy, who have been blessed by the Primal Being" (Guru Angad, Var Sarang, p. 1238). "Within the heart resides the Amrit rasa (ambrosial drink); one enjoys it when one sings the Name of God and meditates on it with aesthetic contemplation (ras bicara). Those who by the Guru's grace have experiences and known the Amrit they drink it and become immortal, thus achieving the door of liberation" (Guru Ram Das, Var Sarang, p. 1199).

"Nine are the doors (aperture of the body) insipid are the joys of these sense doors. At the tenth door of super consciousness one experiences the tasting of Amrit (Elixir)" (Guru Ram Das, Asht, p. 1323). "Infinite and precious is the Name of God. It is the one supreme treasure. All happiness, peace and bliss says Guru Nanak, can be acquired only from the true Guru"(Guru Arjan, Dhanasari, p. 672). "Drink and enjoy this Amrit within your mind" (Guru Arjan, Var Gujari, p. 523). "Wonderful and Inexpressible are its tastes and experiences. They cannot be described" (Guru Arjan, Suhi, p. 742). "Within your own being is a brimming fountain of Amrit. You can know how it tastes and what its significance is only if one drinks it" (Guru Amar Das, Var Marti, p. 1092).

"The Name of God is the Amrit and the Treasure of all treasures. You will find it within your body" (Guru Arjan, Sukhmani, Gaudi, p. 293). "The true Guru has given me God's Name as the Amrita. It lights the path in the life and death" (Guru Arjan, Sri Rag, p. 49). "The true Name of God is the fruit of immortality. Through the inspiration of the Guru, one takes it to one's fill and achieves peace and enlightenment" (Guru Nanak, Var Majh, p. 150). "God has placed the Amrita within the very centre of man's being, but only few God-illuminated souls drink it" (Guru Amar Das, Var Ramkali, p. 951). "God's Name as Amrita is the real inner treasure which one acquires only from the true Guru" (Guru Arjan, Var Ramkali, p. 961). "Within one's own heart is the hidden spring of Amrit. Those who search for it outside their own self suffer greatly in wilderness" (Guru Nanak, Sorath, p. 598).

It is clear from all these quotations from Gurbani that the ambrosial Name of God is acquired from within one's own Self. But it can be achieved only by the grace of the true prophet (Satguru). It cannot be acquired from any shop of false prophet at any price. The true Lord is the custodian of this immortalizing treasure. From the true Guru and by God's grace can it be attained. We quote from the scriptures again:

*"So precious is the Name of God,
It cannot be bought for any price.
It cannot be acquired from any shop.*

*Perfect it is in its value which never becomes less or is reduced.
(Guru Nanak, Var Mam, p. 1087)*

*The precious Water for which
you have come to the world,
Can be acquired only from the Guru
(Guru Nanak, Sorath, p. 598)*

*The Name of God is the Amrit:
The remembrance of His Name pleases God.
On achieving spiritual communion with the Guru You can drink Amrit to your satisfaction.
(Guru Ram Das, Majh, p. 95)*

*My mind, live in obedience to God's Will.
You will then dwell in Your inner Mansion.
You will attain peace and Presence of God.
(Guru Amar Das, Sri Rag, p. 37)*

*Truth is the Amrit (Ambrosia);
Speak and utter the Ambrosial word.
You can acquire this Amrit,
from the perfect Apostle of God.
(Guru Ram Das, Majh, p. 96)*

*The ambrosial Name of God is ever the source of peace and happiness.
By the grace and wisdom of the Guru It dwells in the heart and the mind.
(Guru Nanak, Majh Asht., p. 109)*

*Men and gods, seers and ascetics all seek the Elixir of immortality.
This Amrita can be acquired
only from the true Apostle.
The true Apostle showed compassion and grace,
and gave Elixir to the true seeker.
(Guru Amar Das, Ramkali Anand, p. 918)*

*The seekers and the adept,
all seek the Name and Presence of God.
They have exhausted their efforts
by concentration and meditations.
Without the true Enlightener
No one can attain His Presence,
On meeting the Guru, true communion with God is achieved.
(Guru Amar Das, Var Sorath, p. 650)*

*Who has ever crossed the Ocean of life,
Without contemplating His Name?
Without the grace of the Guru
how can one reach the shore of safety.
(Guru Arjan, Bhairon, p. 1140)*

*How can one acquire divine knowledge
without being initiated into mystical experiences.
How can one achieve perfect contemplation
Without seeing His Light
Without reverence all talk of religion is evil
These, O Nanak, are reflections on the Door to His Presence.
(Guru Arjan, Bhairon, p. 1140)*

*The treasure of glorification of the Most High
is a gift of God's grace.
He whom He graciously gives
tastes it and disseminates it
One cannot achieve it
without the grace of the true Lord;
Many have exhausted themselves in vain efforts.
(Guru Ram Das, Var Bihagara, p. 548)*

It is quite clear from the quotations given above that the true ambrosial Name cannot be acquired from anyone except the true Apostle of God, and without attaining this divine gift, illumination and liberation is not possible. Siddhas, Yogis, ascetics, monks have tried hard to attain illumination but without the grace of the true prophet it cannot be attained. Guru Granth is the Embodiment of the Spirit of the Gurus. The Eternal Light and Presence of Guru Nanak is described thus in the Sikh scriptures:

*Greatest of all is the true Guru Nanak
Who has been my Saviour in the dark age.
(Guru Arjan. Soohi, p. 750)*

*Nanak is my Guru
My Guru is the true Guru,
I have achieved the Presence of the true Guru.
(Guru Ram Das, Kanada, p. 1310)*

*Nanak is my Guru,
He is the perfect Guru
meeting whom I contemplate His Name.
(Guru Ram Das, Ramkali, p. 882)*

*In the Kaliyuga Guru Nanak has liberated mankind.
He has imparted the true Name to his disciples.
Guru Nanak has come to the world
to liberate mankind.
(Bhai Gurdas, Var 1, Pauri 23)*

*Guru Nanak is the very image
of the Supreme Being, the Perfect Lord.
(Var 13, Pauri 25)*

*Guru Nanak Dev, the true Guru
was made the perfect prophet by God Himself.
(Var 20, Pauri 1)*

*The true Guru Nanak is the true Sovereign
He is Fearless and infinite in Spirit,
He is the world teacher and the perfect image of God
visible to the naked eye of the adept.
(Var 24, Pauri 3)*

*Guru Nanak, the true Guru,
is the Guru of all Gurus.
(Var 3, Pauri 12)*

CHAPTER 6 - WHAT IS AMRITA: AESTHETIC FLAVOUR OF DIVINE AMBROSIA

Kartar Singh: It is quite clear from earlier discussion that God's Name is the Amrit: Elixir, and only Perfect Apostles can reveal the light of the mystic Name of God. It has also been made clear that the Guru Granth is the Embodiment of the Spirit of the ten Gurus. But I have still not got a satisfactory answer to my first question: "What do you really mean by rasa: aesthetic flavour?"

Author: I have not coined any new word. You know many types of rasas (flavour or juices), there is the rasa (juice) of sugar cane, rasa of grapes, honey. These are sweet rasas, or flavours.

Kartar Singh: Do you feel or experience similar sweet rasa by reciting the Sikh scriptures?

Author: You have had school education and have travelled abroad in Canada and U.S.A. but now you are asking questions as if you are quite ignorant about everything and have never enjoyed any rasa of divine power by reading and reciting Gurbani (Guru's Hymns). Have you not seen abroad the invisible power of electricity, gas, working behind factories, engines, telephones, gramophones and wireless communications?

Kartar Singh: I have seen factories run by power produced by electricity and gas, but gas and electricity are scientifically produced by scientific and chemical process.

Author: You do not see fire within the wood, stone or coal yet when you rub the two pieces of wood or stones, fire is ignited from within. Thus the inner fire is brought out of these things by a process and discipline. In the same way, our human body, mind and soul are so constituted that the Amrit rasa lies hidden within us in a dormant form, but it can be acquired and known through the moral and spiritual discipline of Gurmat (Wisdom of the Gurus). Even while you are leading a normal earthly life, you can know, feel and experience the sweetness, the peace and fragrance in your human consciousness. This is what the Guru Granth says: "Listen O Sakhi, you will not know the taste of divine experience as long as the mind is not devoted to the Word of God (Shabad)" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Var Vadhans, p.590). "Those who have experienced divine flavour (Hari rasa) forget all other rasas (flavours and tasty juices). After drinking the Elixir of the Name of God they are gratified and their desires and appetites disappear" (Guru Amar Das, Var Marti, p.1088). "Those who have tasted and experienced the inspiration of divine Wisdom, have relished and known its flavour. Without experiential knowledge of divine Wisdom man wanders in delusion" (Guru Amar Das, Sri Rag, p.33).

"It is just like a dumb person tasting the supreme Elixir, who, when asked its taste, cannot express himself" (Namdev, Sorath, p.657). "I am enchanted by this sublime Experience. The Merciful Lord pervades all. On drinking the Elixir of His Priceless name I feel like a dumb person who only smiles to express his joy" (Guru Arjan, Sarang, p.1205). All these quotations from Gurbani (Sikh scriptures) make it clear that one cannot know the flavour of divine experience by merely learning and studying Gurbani as long as he does not contemplate the Name of God deeply and profoundly. The Name of God does not reside in the heart as long as one does not sincerely serve the Lord. Those who have tasted and experienced the flavour of spiritual life know perceptive flavour of this experience. He feels like a dumb person relishing delicious sweets but unable to express himself. "I have tasted all delicious things. There is nothing so savoury and sweet as the aesthetic joy of the Name of God" (Guru Arjan, Majh, p.100).

*The ambrosial name of God
is the sweetest, purest truth in the world.
(Guru Amar Das, Malar, p. 1259)*

*The Name of God is sweet Elixir;
O saints of God, just taste and see it.
Through the Guru's inspired Wisdom
became a seeker of this sweet Nectar.
I am no more mindful of insipid and evil taste.
(Guru Ram Das, Bilawal, p. 800)*

*The ambrosial Name of God is ever sweet;
Through the Guru's Word it is attained.
(Guru Amar Das, Sorath, p. 604)*

*The ambrosial Name is ever sweet,
Through the Guru's Word, it is relished.
(Guru Amar Das, Vadhans, p. 559)*

*All the flavours and savours I have known
were all insipid and tasteless in the end,
On meeting the true Apostle of God,
I tasted the Amrit rasa
It is the sweetest and most luscious ambrosia.
(Guru Ram Das, Gaudi Purabi, p. 169)*

*All things we taste turn out to be bitter;
Only the true Name of God is ever sweet.
The devotees of God have known its taste,
and the saints have enjoyed and relished it from experience.
(Guru Arjan, Var Gaudi, p. 321)*

Kartar Singh: I have read all these quotations from Guru Granth but I did not understand their inner meaning of Amrit rasa, and whether it is really sweet. Nor has any Sikh or saint explained to me so well that the Amrit rasa (divine flavour) is really sweet.

Author: Gurbani is very clear about it. It mentions all sweet things and then says that the Elixir of the Name of God is sweeter than all these things.

*I have tasted sweet and dry fruits.
But Your ambrosial Name alone is sweet.
(Guru Nanak, Gaudi Cheti, p. 155)*

*Refined and native sugar is sweet,
Cow-buffalo's milk is sweet;
Molasses, honey and sugar cakes are sweet,
But the love of God O Farid,
is the sweetest of all things sweet.
(Shaloka Shaikh Farid, p. 1379)*

Kartar Singh: Bhai Sahib Ji, all this discussion Sheikh Farid has now made clear to me that the Amrit rasa, the luscious nectar of His Name is sweet. But I can be convinced only if I can experience it and taste it or see it. Please reveal to me all the qualities of Amrit rasa and the technique of achieving it, so that I may also make an effort to achieve it.

Author: (looking at Kartar Singh) Yes indeed, I have answered two out of the following four of your questions:

1. "Can Amrit rasa be achieved by every Sikh who accepts baptism?"
2. "Why have I remained deprived of Amrit rasa? What do I lack?"
3. "How did you come to know from my very recitation of Gurbani that I lacked rasa?"
4. "What are the meditations and contemplative practices (sadhanas) necessary for achieving Amrit rasa?"

Having answered the first two questions, I would now like to answer the other two. Bhai Gurdas gives the best answer to these questions in his Quatrains (Kabit Swaiyas):

The pilgrim and the seeker enquire about the right path to reach the place of the Beloved, but tread not that path and moves not in the right direction. How can he ever reach the native Land of the Beloved?

He asks a physician the treatment of maladies, but neither takes medicines nor refrains from taking what he is forbidden to eat or drink. How can the ailment of such a person disappear? How can such a person ever know what is spiritual health and peace?

A bride studies and learns how to become a devoted, dutiful wife but indulges in sinful acts of disloyal and depraved wife with promiscuous intentions at heart. How does she expect her husband or lover to respect and love her or call her dotingly to his bed?

Merely by singing religious songs aloud or hearing scriptures formally, or closing one's eyes in pretentious meditations, no one can ever attain the state of spiritual enlightenment. As long as a person does not enshrine the sermons and the Word of the true Apostles of God in his heart, and after grasping it inwardly he does not live a profoundly deep life of contemplation and meditation, one cannot attain the supreme state of Enlightenment (param pada - Bhai Gurdas, Kabit Swaiyas, verse 439).

The seeker who goes on seeking and searching his path to truth ultimately reaches it. He who becomes lazy and falters or puts off the search ceases to be a seeker and remains in wilderness. If the bride goes to the lover's bed for union and enjoyment of love at night, she shall enjoy love and be happy, but if she misses the opportunity she will repent when the day breaks, and thereafter live in separation.

If the Chatrik (hawk cuckoo) opens its mouth to receive the rain drops when it is raining, it feels satisfied and its thirst is slaked. If it remains silent and ignores the opportunity it cries in agony for raindrops when the rain stops.

A Sikh is one who on receiving the divine wisdom from the Guru lives according to it. But if he is insincere and only pretentious in his devotion he shall ultimately repent (Bhai Gurdas, Kabit Swaiyas, verse 440). The first quatrain of Bhai Gurdas is very illuminating. It states that a Sikh

should seek cure of all his mental and spiritual ailments from the perfect Guru by first receiving his inspired teachings as the medicine, and then using that medicine, taking precaution that he does not indulge in things forbidden. It means that on this path, living according to the moral principles of the faith is very essential. Like a loyal wife his commitment should be to God and the perfect apostle and he should not wander like a rootless woman after false gurus and pirs (religious teachers) or misleading cults of pretentious holymen. Let him like a faithful and loyal wife live within the orbit of his Beloved's love, and his own inner world of true devotion and worship of God.

Whatever interpretation one may give to these quatrains in the context of Sikh religion, it means that a Sikh should ceaselessly continue his search by contemplating the Name of God, and seek spiritual solace and enlightenment in Gurbani. Unless he lives a life of intense meditations he cannot attain a supreme state of Enlightenment. The second quatrain suggests that immediately after entering the path of Sikhism through formal initiation, one should seriously and consciously lead a meditative life and never be slothful, inert and morally irresponsible in his religious and spiritual duties. Whoever takes Sikhism seriously and treads the path with devotion, to him will the Amrit rasa; aesthetic spiritual bliss, be revealed within himself. He will reach the stage of supreme perfection in which state he feels, he is immortal.

Kartar Singh: I still do not know, how my questions are satisfactorily answered.

Author: The answer to the first question is that only those Sikhs who achieve Amrit rasa (divine nectar), after being initiated into the Sikh discipline and techniques of meditations in a formal way, receive the Guru-mantram from Panj Pyaras in baptism and then live according to the moral and spiritual code of Sikhism, leading an intensely contemplative life of ceaselessly meditation on the Name of God. The answer to the second question is that you no doubt entered the path of Sikhism in this formal way but then you ceased to be a true seeker. Your search ended in wilderness. How could you reach the realm of the Beloved Lord ? You did not even make an effort to reach the stage of achieving Amrit rasa.

The answer to the fourth question is that you should understand what is said in Bhai Gurdas's Quatrains, quoted in the foregoing pages and sincerely take up the spiritual effort in the right direction. In the third question you ask : "How did I come to know that you had not tasted and achieved Amrit rasa? This is quite a simple thing. For any Sikh who is a serious contemplative of the Name of God, this is not difficult. Every Sikh contemplative who meditates on His Name and Gurbani deeply and profoundly develops all his human senses of smell, hearing, sight and movements to such refined perfection that he can not only feel, smell, see and hear the gross aspects of life and existence but also the subtle and finer forms of unseen life and powers; and these finer perceptions can be developed to a highly refined and exalted state of inner power and perfection. Just as our mental energy spreads all over the body, so also these finer spiritual Powers spread throughout the inner being of man to such an extent that each hair on his body's pore becomes an inner radio and television station. He can see, perceive, feel and visualize even distant happenings and other people's emotions and feelings through the very pores of his body. No outsider is required to work this inner machinery. It automatically works from within through the Creator's divine mechanism.

Kartar Singh: I now understand that if a person is properly initiated into the Spirit of Sikhism he can then attain Amrit rasa ambrosial bliss. We are nowadays living in the most harrowing circumstances as political prisoners here. God alone knows when we shall be freed and get an

opportunity to accept baptism formally and then be initiated into the spirit of Sikhism to achieve Amrit rasa (ambrosia).

Author: Amrit rasa: divine nectar, is not a gross element which I or anyone can take out of his pocket and put it into your mouth. As long as you are in prison contemplate the Name of God, recite Gurbani, pray to the Guru that you may enjoy Amrit rasa. It is possible that God may graciously bestow on you Amrit rasa. It is just possible that even while you are in prison you can attain Amrit rasa from Gurbani Sacred Hymns, by contemplating and reciting it. Listen to the assurance given by the Guru Granth in this direction.

*The Sacred Hymns (Bani) are embodiment of the Guru,
The Guru's spirit is manifest in Bani (Sacred Hymns)
There is amrit in the whole Gurbani (Sacred Hymns)
Let the sincere devotee obey what Gurbani teaches
The Guru will positively liberate such a one.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Nat, p. 982)*

*In the Word is it the Spirit of the true Guru.
The true Guru reveals Himself in the word.
The Guru through the Word reveals the path of liberation
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Kanara, p. 1310)*

*There is only one sanctuary,
There is only One Lord God,
The egoists wander in wilderness
and achieve not access to the Inner Castle of the Lord.
If the seeker moves towards the inner Castle of divine refuge,
Contemplating His Name and ever remembering Him,
God at once reveals Himself and meets the devotee without delay
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Bilawal, p. 836)*

*Through the Guru's inspired Wisdom.
sweet becomes remembrance of His Name,
and sweet becomes a devotee's utterances.
The Vani (Bani): Hymns of the true Guru is the Spirit of the supreme Being.
Turn your heart on the spirit of Gurbani (Sacred Hymns).
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Kanara Asht., p. 1308)*

*As I listen to the Sacred Hymns: Gurbani my mind and soul are entranced.
The mind is intoxicated with bliss
and has found rest in the Interior Castle of Self (Nijghar) In the Interior Castle one hears unstruck
Music And the ambrosial bliss flows like unceasing stream
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Kanada Asht., p. 1308)*

You recite these hymns everyday in the daily prayers and recitations of Gurbani here in prison. Now I hope you have grasped their inner meaning and significance.

CHAPTER 7 - INSPIRED INITIATION INTO DIVINE NAME

Author: Remember one thing. Even if you acquire the aesthetic bliss of repeating the Name of God in meditation, you must get baptism when you are released from prison, so that you receive spiritual initiation into Divine Name. Without baptism and initiation into His Name which unveils the mystery of contemplation, you will not be able to acquire that spiritual state in which you effortlessly go on uttering the Name of God with every breath, which is an essential part of Sikh meditations.

*Every breath I breathe I string with the remembrance of His Name;
Every breath which passes without His Name is a breath wasted in evil thought.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Nat Asht, p. 981)*

*Remembering Him with every breath
under divine discipline and control
one acquires spiritual power
And then one continuously repeats His Name
in perfect freedom effortlessly.
By the grace of the Guru
Egoism is dispelled
and the mind is absorbed in the Word.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Kanada, p. 1310)*

In the Sikh scripture there is reference to the one Divine Name of Sikh Faith as Gurmat Nam: (the Name according to the Guru's Wisdom); Gurshabad (the Word of the Guru given in initiation as a mantram); Gur-mantram (the mantram of the Guru). We must bear in mind that the scriptures also say:

*By merely singing hymns
or closing one's eye in contemplation
one does not achieve God
so long as one does not
practise the Guru's teachings
(Bhai Gurdas, Kabit Swaiyas, p. 439)*

*This spiritual merchandise is acquired
only from one Emporium, that of the Perfect Guru
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Var Majh, p. 146)*

*The true Guru has the keys
of the lock of human consciousness.
The mind is the house
and the body is the roof;
Says Nanak, without the true Guru
The mystery of the mind cannot be unlocked.
No one else has the keys
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Angad, Var Sarang, p. 1237)*

The Word of God

can be instilled in the heart by God's Apostle,

none else can reveal His Light.

If a jewel falls into the hands of a blind man he goes from door to door trying to sell it.

(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Var Sarang, p. 1249)

When one meets the true Guru in spirit,

He graciously instills His Name in the disciple's heart

(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Var Ramkali, p. 950)

Says Nanak, without the true Guru the divine Name is not achieved.

Even if one desires it a hundred times.

(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Shalok Vadhik, p. 1416)

These references from the scriptures reveal that the ambrosial Name of God is acquired only through the true Apostle. It is only from this highest divine sources of inspiration, that genuine enlightenment can be attained.

Kartar Singh: People generally ask, "What is the use of repeating the Name of God? If one has to attain mukti (liberation), what is the earthly use of such mukti (liberation) ? Namdev rightly says :

If you give liberation after death O Lord

What will such a mukti be worth?

(Adi Guru Granth, Bhagat Namdev, Malar, p. 1292)

Author: Perhaps you also think that having not attained any happiness in this earthly life, why should we waste our energy striving and hoping for happiness in the next world.

Kartar Singh: No Sir, you know my views very well. Some of our companions in the prison raise such questions.

Author: It is not probable that most of these people come to these conclusions because they find themselves as spiritless and empty in mind and soul after baptism as they were before being baptized. They give the impression that initiation into Sikhism through Amrit ceremony brings no change in them. Such questions were raised during the life time of Bhai Gurdas and his answer was:

By repeating sugar, sugar, sugar;

the tongue cannot taste sweetness;

By repeating fire, fire, fire,

the cold will not disappear,

By repeating physician, physician, physician,

your disease will not be cured,

By repeating money, money, money,

one cannot enjoy wealth,

By repeating sandalwood, sandalwood, sandalwood,

one does not enjoy its fragrance.

By uttering moon, moon, moon,

one does not enjoy moonlight.

*So by mere intellectual discussion and debate
one does not enjoy the living experience of His Name.
It is moral and spiritual actions that are supreme,
which lead to revelation of his Light in human consciousness
(Bhai Gurdas, Kabit Swaiyas 437)*

It is clear from these references from the scriptures that one cannot achieve anything by mere theoretical knowledge and discussion till he lives according to the moral and spiritual code of conduct prescribed for such a living, and after doing so, one leads a life of real contemplation of His Name. Bhai Gurdas has not only made it clear that mere talk and discussion leads to no experience but he has also indirectly told us that sweetness, fragrance, light, health (mental and spiritual) can be acquired by contemplating the Name of God according to scriptural instructions and tradition. Only by practical living and disciplined practice of religious life can the sun of divine wisdom dawn, which dispels all darkness. One is convinced from experience that all these aesthetic qualities can be acquired by the contemplation of His Name. Mere talk and intellectual knowledge of the techniques of meditation are of no avail. Practical life of contemplation is what matters. There are special sadhanas and Vidhis: techniques of contemplating the divine Name. It is not something that can be accomplished by mere imagination. Many people ignorant of the techniques of reciting and contemplating the Name of God consider it a useless exercise.

In the foregoing Kabit (Quatrain) Bhai Gurdas has made a challenging assertion that the six aesthetic virtues of sweetness, fragrance, inner peace, moral and spiritual health and Light can be acquired by the correct and inspired contemplation of Divine Name. We must also bear in mind

*Everyone outwardly utters the Name of God.
But one cannot attain God
by such insipid repetition of His Name.
If by the grace of God and Guru
the divine name resides in the heart
then contemplation of the divine word is fruitful
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Gujri, p. 491)*

Kartar Singh: Well sir, why should not man acquire these joys of sweetness, fragrance, peace, health and light through wealth and material means, if one can buy them? Why should he wander about in search of them through spiritual exercises and contemplation?

Author: The joys, bliss, health and peace that ensues from material means are neither lasting nor so exalting and illuminating. The bliss and joy of material goods cannot stand any comparison with the peace and joys of spiritual life and exercises.

CHAPTER 8 - TRANQUILITY AND PEACE OF AMRITA (DIVINE NECTAR)

The sweetness of Amrita (Elixir, Nectar) which has been discussed in the foregoing chapter is unique in the sense that the tongue alone does not enjoy it. Besides the tongue and the mouth which has a spiritual taste of it, its flavour and aesthetic essence is experienced in every pore of our body. One experiences its dulcitude within the heart and soul. Within the inner self one enjoys the sweet delight and fragrant redolence which surpasses the joy of sugar, honey, milk and delicious fruits. But it is different from the sweetness of these objects in the fact that the more a man tastes it the more he relishes and enjoys it. The sweetness of material objects can be enjoyed only to a certain extent. After taking a certain quantity of sugar and sweets one gets fed up, and if he takes more, he is liable to fall ill; but he who meditates His Name and yearns for more and more contemplation of His Name, he feels fresh in his zealous appetite and never gets tired. He finds that it removes sickness and maladies, and makes man feel immortal. He who drinks the nectar of His Name hungers not for any material goods thereafter.

*Water the 'neem' tree with Elixir,
It will remain bitter,
Recite the charms and feed the snake with milk,
It will not abandon its poison,
Self-centred persons are impervious to divine wisdom,
like a stone placed in water.
When a little Elixir is mixed with poison,
The result is poisonous mixture.
In the company of man of God, O Nanak,
All poison of human hearts is destroyed.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Rag Sarang, p. 1244)*

*Place the gourd in nectar
It will not loose its bitterness.
(Bhai Gurdas, Var 31, Pauri 15)*

It is clear from these quotations that the delicious enervating drinks like milk and other things which are generally called Amrita in Indian languages cannot impart their sweetness and delicious taste to the bitterness of a poisonous snake or that of a bitter fruit, but the Amrita, of the Guru's Word is able to remove the poison and bitterness of the heart. Leave aside human beings; the ambrosial touch of Guru Nanak was able to make sweet the bitter soap nuts near Gorakhmata in Uttar Pradesh. The soap nuts from these trees are still sweet. The divine Name imparts not only sweetness but also gives peace and tranquillity to the mind and soul.

*The divine Name imparted joy,
My heart now enjoys peace and tranquillity.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Asa, p. 424)*

*On Contemplating His Name within the heart,
Lasting joy and happiness is achieved.
There is peace and tranquillity within
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Var Gujri, p. 511)*

*The flames of desires are extinguished,
It is peaceful and calm within.
The perfect Guru has cut the knot of illusion.
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Maru Sohle, p. 1078)*

*Peace reigns in my heart,
The mind and body are calm and composed,
The fear of birth and death is dispelled
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Maru, p. 1080)*

*Neither sandalwood, nor the moon,
Nor even the cold winter season
Can remove the heat of desires and passions;
There is peace and calm within
Only if one contemplates God's Name
(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Jaitsri Var, p. 709)*

If we continue to eat sweet things and take cold drinks we soon get fed up of them. If we apply soothing sandal-paste and other tranquilizing oils and scents, the burning flames of our hearts are never cooled. The bitter cold of snowy mountains cannot calm and extinguish the burning flames of a sinful heart. But the calmness and peace created by the contemplation of the divine Name cannot be disturbed by outward heat. Bidhi Chand, the eminent saintly warrior disciple of Guru Arjan remained undisturbed even near a burning oven. Bhai Dayal Das was thrown into a boiling cauldron and Bhai Mati Das was sawn alive by the orders of Aurangzeb. These great Sikh saints suffered martyrdom with the utmost calm endurance. That is why the peace and tranquillity attained from contemplation of God is considered to be of a higher order than the sweetness and tranquillity acquired by material means. There is one more outstanding feature of this peace attained by contemplation. It not only makes you immune against worldly heat but even against cold in the cold season.

CHAPTER 9 - THE FRAGRANCE OF AN ENLIGHTENED SOUL

The fragrance of the ambrosial divine Name of God is so sweet and engrossing that its aroma is incomparable. It surpasses the fragrance of sweet smelling earthly objects like musk, sandalwood and other aromatic essences. All the foul smelling passions within the heart are changed to fragrant feelings in the soul of one who meditates on the divine Name. It however does not mean that he who contemplates the divine Name loses all sense of discrimination between sweet and foul smell. His powers are like those of other human beings, but contemplation of the divine Name fills his whole being with such spiritual aroma that no foul smell can reach his inner senses. "My spirit is absorbed in His Name; it is fragrant with aromatic smell and can see through inner perceptions all the ten directions of world existence (the whole living world and space around)" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Rag Nat, p. 981). "Like a deer, man wanders in the wilderness attracted by enchanting fragrance, not knowing that the aromatic sweet smell comes from the musk within the body" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Rag Nat, p. 982). "The inner being of Thy servant, Nanak, has been made fragrant and blessed indeed is my life" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Rag Asa, p. 448).

CHAPTER 10 - UNVEILING THE LIGHT OF HIS PRESENCE

After intense meditation the seeker is blessed by inner illumination of the transcendent Light in his heart and soul. This state of divine Enlightenment is achieved by very few people through sustained discipline inspired by meditation and the grace of God. —Translator.

"By contemplating the divine Name, there is, within the seeker's heart, revelation of transcendent Light, more resplendent than the Light of a million suns, and it dispels all darkness of doubt and delusion" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Jaitsri, p. 700). "Nanak, now peace and spontaneous joy and happiness reigns and the Light of a million suns shine visibly in my heart" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Todi, p. 717). "Neither is an enlightened seeker victim of rebirth, nor of death and doom. Through the word of the Guru, the lotus of the heart is abloom and illumined" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Gauri, p. 224). "The lotus-heart has blossomed and is illumined when the light of the soul is blended with the transcendent Light" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Ram Das, Shloka Vadhik, p. 1423). "Through the Word of the Guru, the lotus-heart has been illumined with the divine Light and evil propensities of egoism have been dispelled" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Amar Das, Prabhati, p. 1334). "His Light has been revealed within the heart; in my mind there is perpetual peace and joy of having achieved the Presence of the true Guru" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Dhanasari, p. 671).

These quotations from Gurbani (Sacred Hymns of Guru Granth) makes it clear that on meeting the Guru, the seeker is initiated into the Divine Word, contemplating which divine Light is revealed within the heart and soul of the devotee. This Light is experienced to be far more illuminating than the Light of a thousand suns. Our own sun, in the face of this resplendent Light appears to be something less than a firefly. Whoever is blessed with the revelations of this Light of God finds his own inner vision : (divya drishti), able to see everything on earth. He can even have a glimpse into the abode of gods, heaven and hell. The illumined inner eyes can see even the smallest creature like an ant. The spiritual divine powers acquired over nature through contemplation and meditations serve much better and higher purpose than the instruments of scientific discoveries like radio, X-rays, telephone, wireless can ever do. A still greater benefit that is acquired is that the Light of divine Name has immense healing powers over physical and mental diseases. It is able to destroy all maladies of the body and the soul.

The divine Name is the Elixir of life. The true Name (Satnam) initiated into the human world by God, is the divine Name that is to be contemplated. It is acquired in a disciplined manner through the mystic initiation of the Panj Pyaras (the Five of Initiate) when a novice accepts Sikh baptism. The formal Sikh baptism acts as a medium of this divine inspiration, like the processing base of bleaching, used for dyeing cloth. Just as unbleached and unprocessed cloth cannot be dyed properly, so the unbaptized soul unworthy of receiving divine inspiration remains spiritually unawakened by the formal baptism or initiation of the Name of God to him. Says Guru Nanak, "Without a processing base, an unbleached cloth cannot be dyed. Let the soul be placed in the vat of reverence, and let the body be bleached with modesty and utter humility" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Asa Ki Var, p. 468).

On being baptized, the whole being of the disciple is inspired and spiritually disciplined for higher mystic life, and it is only after intense and sustained meditations on the true Name of God, carried on in a life of devotional worship can the soul be dyed in divine colour. Sayeth Nanak, "He who, in intense love of God (Bhakti), contemplates and repeats the Name is free from the stain of

falsehood" (Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak, Asa Ki Var, p. 468). It is meditation on the Name, through faith and sincere devotion, that the seeker can attain happiness and peace in this life and the life beyond death.

Happiness in this world

Blessed and joyous in the world beyond.

Sayeth Nanak, the Lord God

Unites the seeker with Himself?

(Adi Guru Granth, Guru Arjan, Gauri, p. 292)