

# BRAIN WASHING

Washing Off Society's Superficial Values





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## PREFACE

**W**HAT IS BRAINWASHING? Brainwashing is the indoctrination of views and values on others without giving them an opportunity to question or critically analyze those views. Through mass influence, society brainwashes humans to follow superficial values, which ultimately bring suffering, instead of fulfillment and peace. Superficial or empty values are those values which have a deceptive attraction or allure; they have a false look of truth or genuineness. This book motivates people to question the righteousness and necessity of these values which they blindly accept without any investigation. Questioning the genuineness of these values, and reflecting on them with a view to critically investigate them, the reader deprograms himself, and thus washes off the effects of the indoctrination by society.

Humans are creatures of central significance. We occupy the highest position in creation because we have the capacity to become self-aware, and we are bestowed with the unique capacity to reflect and introspect. Until we find the truth about our existence, we will lead empty lives and feel unfulfilled. This truth is realized only by those rare ones who fully utilize their unique capacity of reflection and introspection to determine the true nature of the things of this world.

Those who fail to make use of these capacities remain engrossed and indulged in trivial matters and thus lose the priceless gift of human life.

Except for some rare ones who are extremely reflective and introspective, we all act under external influences, just like machines; we are attracted towards certain things and repulsed by others. Like a robot we are not even aware of what we are doing. Over a period of time these external influences are internalized to such an extent that they become compulsions. The consequence of this internalization of external influences is that we start liking certain things and disliking others without knowing why. If we were asked why we like a certain thing and dislike another, we are not able to give any reason. Often, we reply, "I just like it!" or "I just don't like it." All these likes and dislikes are perceived as desires, wishes, hopes, and sometimes even needs; upon reflection however, they are found to be totally unnecessary.

We may say that our likes and dislikes are unquestioned or uninvestigated attitudes. While we like certain objects, persons, concepts, and situations, we dislike others. Our feelings and emotions are in favour of some objects, persons, concepts, and situations, and averse to others. But, we do not know why. Thus, our attitudes are our irrational mental position with regards to certain objects, facts, persons, or states. In fact, attitudes, prejudicial or favourable, are nothing but indoctrinated beliefs. An attitude is nothing but an organismic state of readiness to respond in a characteristic way to a stimulus, be it a person, object, idea, situation, race, or religion. Attitudes are formed from the very childhood, as a result of indoctrination by the family and society in which the child grows.

Indoctrination is the unquestioned acceptance of a system of thought from teachers, preachers, family, and society as a whole. This uncritical acceptance is the root cause of our getting brainwashed by the influences of society. Brainwashing takes place from our very childhood as a result of indoctrination by society. Because the child is not in a position to critically analyze or question the values being forced on him or her through mass influence by society, he or she gets

brainwashed. Such is the effect of the brainwashing done by society that it causes the child to pass his whole life in a state of hypnotic sleep, pursuing the superficial values of the world:

*Bhram maih so-ee sagal jagat dhandh andh. Ko-oo jaagai har jan (S.G.G.S. p. 380).*

*The whole world is asleep in doubt; it is blinded by worldly entanglements. How rare is that humble servant of the Lord who is awake and aware.*

As a result of pursuing society's superficial values, our energies are squandered; we work harder and harder, and get tired, exhausted, frustrated, and thus remain dissatisfied in life.

To break the spell created by societal mass influence, and also to deprogram ourselves out of the brainwashing done to us from the very childhood, we should ask ourselves the following questions before pursuing any desire: Why do I want whatever I want? Why do I do whatever I do? What is the necessity of doing it, and is it righteous to do it? If it is not right or necessary to do, why should I continue to work hard in fulfilling the desire? If an act is righteous and necessary, why should I stop doing it? Through such reflection and introspection, we would not waste our energies in unrighteous and unnecessary pursuits. We would conserve our energies, and save both our time and hard earned money, for attaining to the higher state of consciousness, which brings peace, harmony and joy in our life.

In the present work we investigate aspects of our lives which waste tremendous amounts of time, energy, effort, and money. Through reflection and analysis, we explain that under the external influences of society, particularly of friends, relatives, and people around us, we come to perceive these unnecessary indulgences as good, and even right. Hypnotized under external influences and values, we become brainwashed and pursue them day and night. We behave as though under a spell, and waste our entire life pursuing unnecessary, and

sometimes even crazy, objects and goals.

Children born and brought up today are raised in a society which is constantly undergoing rapid changes due to high information input, technological advancements, and the availability of resources in abundance. These changes have led to a continuous flux and social instability. This instability is demonstrated in the increasing number of divorces, teenage pregnancies, school drop-outs, and drug addictions. These facts reach children through television, their school environment, and peer groups, and deeply influence their minds and lives. Many values, believed to bring pleasure and happiness, are endorsed by society in general. Upon reflection however, they are found to be empty because they ultimately lead to pain and suffering, both mental and physical.

This book investigates current societal values affecting people today, such as internet addiction, watching excessive television, wearing cosmetics and jewelry, listening to popular music, following the latest fashions and fads, drinking, dancing, and dating. It analyses these values from the rational viewpoint and the Guru's viewpoint. After analyzing in Part One how these aspects adversely affect the peace and harmony of life, in Part Two we analyze the five passions which are the undercurrents and motivating forces behind all of man's activities. Part Three of the book offers suggestions and gives guidance for making one's life happy and harmonious, in secular as well as spiritual spheres.

# CHAPTER I

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## Purpose of This Book

**W**HEN WE LOOK AROUND and reflect on our surroundings, we find that human beings are the supreme creation of nature on this planet. Human beings are uniquely different from the rest of creation. They are the only ones who have self-awareness and intelligence which enable them to reflect on the external world and introspect their inner world.

These capacities of reflection and introspection lead us to inquire into the unknown: Who am I? From where have I come? Where will I go after death? What is the meaning and purpose of my life and that of the cosmos? Our hearts cannot find peace and fulfillment until they know the truth about their existence.

To be able to reflect on these questions of ultimate concern, one has to have some time free from worldly involvements. Unfortunately, however, from childhood itself, we are indoctrinated with values that are trivial and superficial in nature. We are repeatedly exposed to social situations where worldly wealth, status, and power are given great importance. Over a period of time, we internalize what society

values and thus get brainwashed by such influences and suggestions. Consequently, we lead lives involved in the futile things of this world.

Deep down in his heart, we desire eternal peace and seek the Truth about Existence, but our worldly involvements neither bring us peace nor help us realize the Truth. It is our predicament that in spite of realizing the futility of these involvements, we cannot escape the delusion, and therefore, continue to pursue worldly pleasures and passions as though under a spell.

However, sometimes struck by the wonders of nature, one goes into a state of ecstasy, which stills his or her mind and transports him or her to the plane of reality, a state never experienced by him or her in the hollow pleasures of this world. It also happens that sometimes one experiences a sudden emotional shock in which one's mind is stilled and a deeper reality is experienced. Both these experiences, ecstasy and sudden emotional shock, momentarily awaken one out of the spell brought about by worldliness. Such experiences bring a temporary change in human beings. However, a more enduring change occurs in us when we use our faculties of self-awareness and intelligence to find the Truth through reflection and introspection. These capacities give us the freedom to choose between right and wrong, and thus help us to rid ourselves of society's fake values.

As a consequence of the aforementioned processes, one awakens from the 'hypnotic sleep' brought about by society's superficial values, and starts investigating the truth of the external world and that of their inner being. Through this investigation, they become aware of the inner and outer reality and acts rightly with full mindfulness and awareness. Thus, they attain a state where they are free from all bondage of worldly involvements, temptations, pleasures, and passions.

Keeping the foregoing facts about human life in mind, a detailed discussion of the uniqueness of humans and their state of unhappiness is undertaken in the rest of this chapter. This is done with a view to guide the reader towards investigating the futility of the pleasures and passions in which one gets involved, and which cause one to miss the

only opportunity (human life) to attain to a state of freedom, peace, and bliss.

## **What Makes Human Beings Unique?**

In order to understand the uniqueness of human beings, we must first consider the levels of existence below human beings. The lowest level of existence is matter. Matter consists of all non-living things. For example the book you read, the chair you sit on, and the car you drive; all these fall under the category of matter. Matter by itself does not move, reproduce, play, or communicate. It has no life.

Life begins at the plant level. Yet, plants also are restrained in the sense that they cannot move from place to place.

This freedom of movement begins at the animal level. Animals, even one-celled organisms, can move and react to their environment. Not only do animals communicate with one another, many, such as dogs and cats, share a personal bond with humans. Animals share many characteristics with humans; they play, they sleep, they eat, and they reproduce. However, there is a unique difference between humans and animals; man is self-conscious, whereas animals are not. Animals are conscious inasmuch as they have urges and show instinctive reactions in response to certain situations and circumstances. They are not, however, self-conscious.

Physiologically, the differences between humans and animals are obvious. Only humans can walk upright on their two legs and fully support themselves with their backbone. In addition, only humans have been bestowed with the gift of such long hair on his head. More important though, are humans' differences in the mental dimension.

To say that humans are self-conscious means that they are aware of themselves as a being separate from their surroundings and environment. This capacity of self-consciousness gives humans the faculties of reflection and introspection. They can reflect, inquire, and examine their surroundings, and consequently use their experiences to project and plan for a better future. Through their faculty of





Levels of Creation.

introspection, humans can investigate their inner self and thus, evaluate their thoughts and emotions.

These special faculties of humans place us at a unique position in the universe. We are at the apex of all creation. Humans, being reflective and introspective, cannot be in peace until they realize the Truth about the universe. Eventually, this leads humans to the search for their third dimension, the soul, which in essence is the same as Spirit, God, the Ultimate Reality, the ground of existence and awareness.

The fundamental nature of the soul is comprised of three attributes: eternity, bliss, and pure consciousness. The soul is absolutely free from all constraints. It is neither bound by the body or mind, nor by time or space.

Growth and development towards Perfection is possible in humans because of their self-awareness. This self-awareness is the ground of our freedom of choice. Because of our freedom to choose, we carry a moral burden to act rightly. Acting under animalistic, pleasure-seeking urges brings us moral anguish and suffering. We realize that we cannot escape this anguish unless we act rightly, that is, unless we act morally. This realization leads us to strive to attain Perfection.

It is only humans who can attain Perfection by realizing the Spirit within. This places us at a crossroad. We can choose either to climb up the ladder of existence to the Spirit, or return to the lower levels among animals, plants, and matter. If humans follow their animalistic urges and tendencies, we return to the lower levels of existence to fulfil them, and thus, continue in the vicious cycle of birth and death. If we attain to the Spirit within, the hierarchy of existence no longer binds us. We are liberated from all bondage; thus we attain to Perfection, a state of complete harmony, peace, and bliss.

## **Are We Happy?**

In the foregoing section, we have discussed that humans are at the apex of creation, and are bestowed with the faculties of reflection and introspection. We can use these faculties to free ourselves of suffering

and attain to Perfection. But how successful are we in avoiding suffering and becoming peaceful and happy? Before evaluating the state of our happiness, we should first know the meaning of ‘happiness’.

Happiness can be defined in terms of its opposite, sorrow. Happiness is that state of existence where there is no sorrow. We may sometimes feel that we are happy. But true happiness is not a temporary or a fleeting state. It is a state of mind in which man remains in peace and joy without ever dipping into sorrow. One remains in harmony, without any conflict or confusion; one neither experiences anxiety nor tension. Thus, happiness is a state of harmony, peace, and joy. Keeping the above definition of happiness in view, let us examine the question, “Are we happy?”

Whenever we ask someone “How are you?”, the typical reply is “I am fine” or “I’m feeling great”. But, if we introspect deeply our state of mind, we may find how happy we truly are. To find the true answer, we should ask ourselves: “If I am truly happy, then why am I often bored? Why do I seek pleasure? Why do I watch television? Why do I need my phone or the internet? Why do I need friends to talk to or gossip with about trivial matters? If I am truly happy, then why do I feel the need to beautify my body? Why do I use cosmetics, pluck my eyebrows, and shave my legs? Why do I shave my beard? Is the natural not more graceful? Why do I care about the opinions of others about my body and attire? Why do I get involved in so many fads and fashions, why do I buy so many fancy and expensive garments; why do I spend so much money, so much brain and brawn to glorify myself? If my ‘inner self’ is really happy, satisfied and fulfilled, what is the necessity of doing all these things?”

If we have found fulfilment, peace, and joy in our life, then why is there so much confusion, conflict, and contradiction between our way of thinking and acting? Why are we torn by conflicting desires and demands? Our consciousness is permeated by one desire now, another a little later, and yet another later on; we are torn by unending conflicts and contradictions. We experience many pulls in opposite directions, resulting in a state of ambivalence.

If we are truly happy, then why are adults and children seeking escape in drinking, dancing, dating, smoking, watching television, and going to parties? Why are so many addicted to alcohol, drugs, and sex? Are these not the signs of dissatisfaction with our own selves? In reality, our society as a whole is so unhappy, bored, and frustrated with life that our youth in general are becoming rebellious and destructive.

Another way to find out whether we are happy or not is to ask, “Do I feel irritated at times? Do I feel envious or jealous of others? Do I get angry at others? Do I feel dissatisfied and frustrated with my life? Do I sometimes feel that life is without purpose and meaning? Do I feel a disharmony between my external circumstances and internal desires? Do I feel internal contradictions and conflicts between the way I view the external world and the way I want to live my life?” If we are in disharmony, having conflicts and contradictions with the circumstances of the external world, and if we feel irritated, dissatisfied, and frustrated, then we can surely conclude that we are unhappy.

Yet another way to find out if I am happy or not is to investigate as to whether I am seeking pleasure; if I am, then there is some unhappiness in me. If I am already in a state of complete happiness, then why would I seek pleasure? If I am hungry, I seek food. If I am thirsty, I look for water. But if I am neither hungry nor thirsty then I seek neither food nor water. Similarly, if we are not happy, we seek pleasures and pastimes in various activities. If we are happy, however, we are at peace with ourselves, and therefore seek no change. We are then in harmony with the external world and at peace with ourselves.

Stated positively, happiness, peace, and harmony would mean an end to all desires. Using this criterion, let us once again ask the question, Are we truly happy? In answer to this question, we will find that only rare ones are happy, and that most of us are not.

## **Why Are We Not Happy?**

Deep down within us, we are seeking a state of bliss. Our ideal is peace and joy; in the pursuit of this ideal, all that we can attain,

as ordinary human beings, is sensual pleasures and intellectual satisfaction, both of which are temporary and fleeting. Because of the fleeting nature of all pleasures, we are never satiated; the desire for more and more pleasures keeps recurring continually. Repeated indulgences in fleeting sensual pleasures result in a vicious cycle which eventually destroys our inner freedom, and ties us in bondage and slavery. This creates a feeling of irritation, frustration, and dissatisfaction within us. The result is an unhappy life lived in hopelessness and misery.

The main reason for this unfortunate state of our being is that we accept the standards of others as our standards, as our ideals, and thus turn our back on our very being, which is the Source of Bliss. This unthoughtful and unconscious acceptance of others' standards as our own implies that we have slipped into a hypnosis. In this hypnosis we remain unreflective, unconscious of truth; we take the values adopted by others as our own values. The worst aspect of this hypnosis is that the values and patterns set by others become ultimates to be attained. These values are no more perceived as instrumental devices; they become end values for the unreflective. People are generally unreflective; they feel pulled by worldly temptations and allurements, as if they are under a spell. Rare are the ones among us who remain wakeful and escape this hypnosis, this charm of worldly enchantment and fascination.

Suffering and unhappiness is perpetuated by dissatisfaction in the ceaseless pursuit of illusory, mirage-like values. These values are illusory in the sense that no matter how much we may gather or attain them, they are never enough to still or fulfill us; we are always left insatiated, unsatisfied, and hankering for more and more.

If we reflect on our experiences, we will find that when we repeatedly get pleasure out of something, we get addicted to it, whether it is drugs, smoking, liquor, sex, money, ornaments, cosmetics, or any other such thing. Every time we draw some momentary pleasure or satisfaction out of these things, we are in for deeper trouble; very soon we not only need another 'fix' of the thing providing pleasure to us, but a bigger fix, one which will give us even more pleasure. But the



One can never get enough of what one is not really seeking.

problem with these repeated bigger fixes is that the pleasure returned by them keeps decreasing, and the required dose of fixes keeps increasing. The net result is a vicious, compulsive cycle of indulgence in ever increasing fixes.

We can never get enough of what we are not really seeking. We become unhappy in life in two ways: one, when we do not get that which we truly want; and the other, when we get that which we truly do not want. In the pursuit of that, which we truly want, we mistakenly keep collecting that which, in reality, is not what we truly want.

Getting more and more of what we really do not want, our thirst and craving is not satiated; we remain in a state of hankering and hunger. For example, if we are thirsty, we want water, but if instead of water we get food, money, gold, diamonds, status, and power, our thirst is not quenched; we continue suffering and looking for water.

The affairs of this world are always engaging our attention. We continue to spend more and more of our time and effort, first in earning money and then in spending it unwisely. In this way we waste our power, our energy, our breath, indeed our very life. Thus, our entire self is busy in things which are futile; futile because by their very nature they are such that they can neither truly fulfil us nor permanently satisfy and still our desires. Actually, we can never get enough of what we are not truly seeking. Thus, the basic reason for our unhappiness is our pursuit for happiness in the wrong direction, i.e., seeking pleasure through material objects.

## **How Can We Be Happy?**

How can we be happy? By what principle may we attain to a state of true happiness? The underlying principle that leads to happiness is this: happiness and righteousness are intrinsically related. We can be free from all anxiety, guilt, conflict, and tension if we act rightly all the time. In other words, we will be in a state of harmony, peace, and happiness, if we choose rightly, and if we act rightly.

To make the right choice we have to be sane. How sane are

we? In order to find out, we will use the processes of reflection and introspection. A sane person is one who:

1. Is aware of what they are doing.
2. Knows why they are doing whatever they are doing.
3. Can justify the righteousness of whatever they are doing.
4. Does only those actions which are necessary.
5. Has complete control over their actions; they continue to do what is right, and discontinues that which is wrong.

In order to act sanely, we must be aware of whatever we are doing. In other words, we must be aware of our actions. When people are not aware of their actions, they behave like robots. People who are not even aware of what they are doing are totally insane. Therefore, the very first step towards sanity is to be aware of what one is doing.

The second step towards sanity is to find out, “Why am I doing whatever I am doing?” A sane person knows the why of his actions. Let us reflect on this point. When I am asked why I did whatever I did, how many times have I answered “I don’t know”? Some of the questions that we may ask ourselves with regards to this second step towards sanity are: “Why do I use cosmetics, nail polish, hair dye, lipstick, fake eyelashes, etc? Why do I shave my hair, pluck my eyebrows, starch my turban, or wear a three piece suit with a tie when I go to Gurdwara for Kirtan and meditation? Why do I dress in ways that reveal certain parts of my body? Why do I watch television, engross myself in social media, drink wine, and smoke? Why do I cover my entire body but leave my head, the most important organ of my body, uncovered and unprotected?” Many of us are not aware of why we do these things. There are so many more questions that we may ask of ourselves, but not find the real answers. Are we not, therefore, insane to a large extent if we cannot find out why we do these things?

Even if we know why we are doing whatever we are doing, we cannot claim that we are fully sane, for, there is a third step towards sanity: Are my actions right or wrong? Can I give justification for the act that I am doing? For example, those Sikhs who shave their hair may be aware that they do it to become acceptable in society. But, the



question is, is it right to shave one's hair? Yet another example is the consumption of meat. Many people may answer that they are aware that they eat meat, and that they know why, but can they justify that it is righteous to kill other creatures for the sake of their own pleasure of taste? Many people are aware that they wear makeup and jewelry and are also aware as to why they do it. However, they cannot justify the colossal waste of energy, time, and money spent in decorating their bodies.

The fourth step towards sanity is the necessity of the action. Are my actions necessary? A sane person will not waste any time, effort, or money in doing unnecessary things. For example, is it necessary to stone-wash jeans and intentionally make holes in them before wearing them? Is it not insane to buy new clothes and then spend even more money to make them look torn and worn out. And yet, that is exactly what many people are doing! This is modern man's state of insanity! Unnecessary actions such as these are not justifiable.

A little reflection will show that only necessary actions are justifiable. The fifth step towards sanity is to control our actions, after having determined their righteousness and necessity. It demands bringing a change in our behaviour by not doing unrighteous or unnecessary acts, and continuing to do what is righteous and necessary in spite of adverse circumstances and Brainwashing pressure from peer groups and society.

Those who are completely sane are always aware of their actions. They are aware of the reasons motivating their actions. They can justify the righteousness of their actions. They have full control over their actions and they do not indulge in unnecessary activities. They never act unrighteously, and therefore, they never regret any choice they make. Because they never make a wrong choice, they neither carry the burden of moral transgression nor do they suffer any anguish. Thus, a sane person is never in confusion, conflict, tension, or anxiety. A sane person is forever in peace.

If we reflect on our actions, we will realize that we are not fully sane. Most of our actions are done unconsciously. If we are aware of



The steps to sanity.

some of the things we are doing, we are usually not aware as to why we are doing them. Even if we know why we are doing certain actions, we can seldom justify them. We hardly ever stick to the discipline of necessity. Lastly, we have no willful control of our actions. Hypnotized by society and its values, we find it very hard to continue righteous actions, and to discontinue or stop unrighteous actions. Thus, most of us are partially insane.

In the chapters that follow, an investigation of the pleasures and passions in which man gets involved, and wastes the precious gift of human life, is carried out in three parts. The purpose of this investigation is to make the reader aware of the unrighteousness of these involvements and passions.

Part One of the book deals with those pleasures of life in which humans get involved and wastes a major portion of their energy, time, and money. These include watching television, being addicted to the internet and other technology, following fads and fashions, wearing cosmetics and jewelry, listening to rock, pop, rap, and heavy metal music, dancing, dating, smoking, drinking, using drugs, eating meat, and cutting and styling hair.

Part Two, of the book deals with the five passions which enslave humans. These passions are ego, identification, greed, anger, and lust. They are our temptations, and are the undercurrents controlling our energies and actions.

Finally, Part Three of the book suggests a way of life and prescribes meditations for becoming aware and thus liberating oneself from the bondage of pleasures and passions. By understanding and practicing the suggested way of life and meditations, one may attain to a state of perfect peace, harmony, and joy.

# **PART 1**

**EXTERNAL FORCES:**

**PLEASURES  
INVOLVING  
HUMANS**

# CHAPTER II

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## ADDICTION TO TECHNOLOGY: TELEVISION, THE INTERNET AND CELL PHONES.

**W**E HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY to realize an ocean of tranquility and bliss within ourselves through spirituality and the teachings of Sikhi but we are constantly distracted from this journey by addictions to technology, whether that is television, video games, the internet or our cell phones. These addictions are very alluring but result in the stunting of our spiritual, mental and physical abilities and growth.

If we understand the dangers of this addiction, then we can save ourselves from them. To recognize that something is potentially dangerous is itself a protection against its dangers. It is, therefore, necessary that we fully understand the dangers of being addicted to technology. This is the aim of this chapter.

### **Watching Television Indiscretely is Dangerous**

Television is an alternative reality that allows the person watching to immerse themselves and forget their actual reality. Television provides us with cheap entertainment; it is so involving, exciting, and picture-perfect that one continues to see shows one after



You can't just change the channel in life.

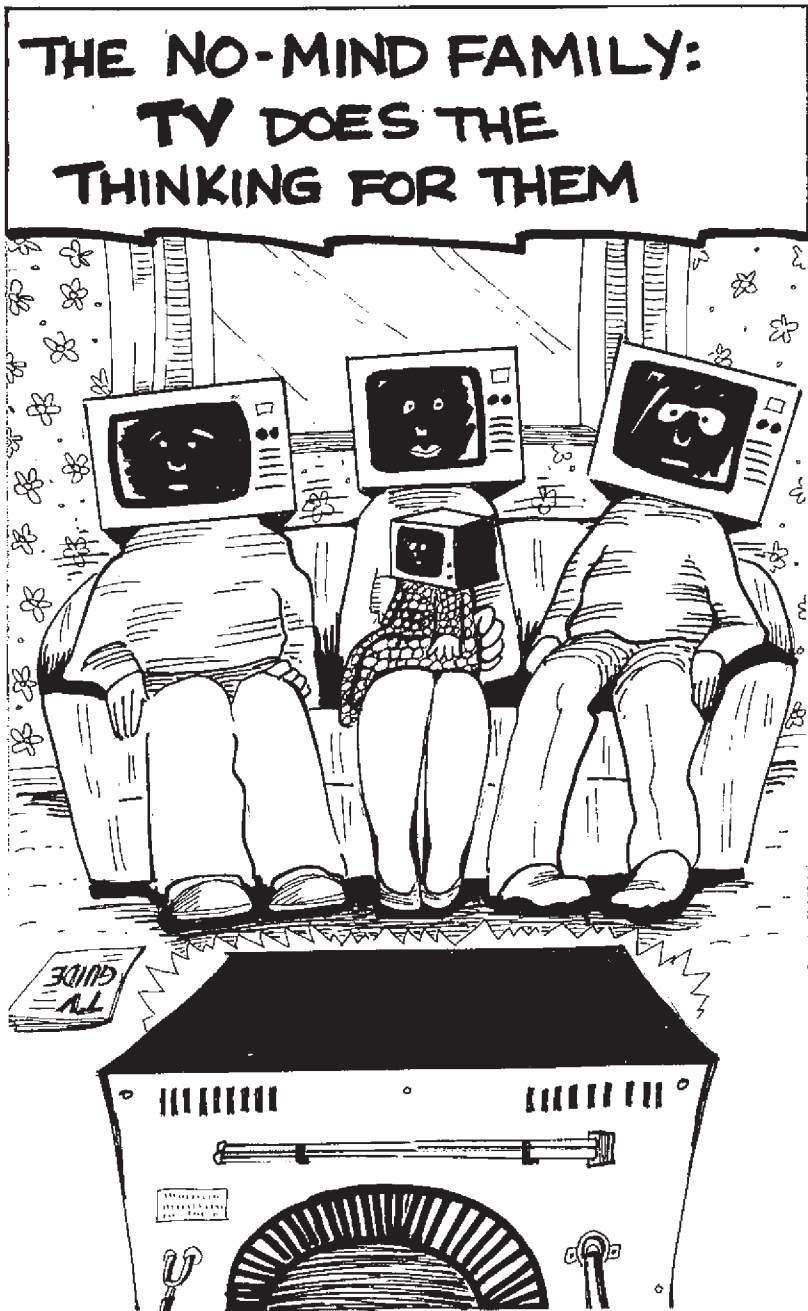
another, and remains glued to the sofa. The result is that the mind is never exercised, for it gets no time to do critical thinking.

Television feeds us constant stories and keeps us coming back for more. People find themselves stuck to a television series, waiting impatiently for the next episode and actually lamenting and mourning when their favourite characters meet with misfortune or death. We watch people 'fall in love' and believe that such relationships are ideal and look for them ourselves. We know it's not real, but still cannot stop the imaginary world of television from affecting our real lives.

Although estimates vary, of the time spent by children in watching television, they all indicate that by the time they are 18, they will have spent more of their life watching television than any other activity except sleep. Children are watching cheap and thrilling shows revolving around sex and violence. Even family oriented programs are detrimental to moral growth: telling lies, making fools of others, earning easy money for frivolous luxuries, stealing, and taking drugs are some of the activities which are portrayed and learned from television. Whatever children see, be it flashy clothing, cosmetics, dancing, dating, sex, or violence, is internalized as a value and affects their day to day behaviour.

Lack of thought and reflection due to being fed stories and emotions results in living a life without insight and the ability to engage with others, either in conversation or even on a thoughtful or emotional level. In short, television numbs and atrophies our brain. Much of what is shown on television is accepted as true and real by watchers. Having watched television, people, from their very childhood, do not do any thinking for themselves. They do not even question the truth of what is shown on television because they do not doubt the reality of what is seen.

As a result, much of what we know about the world is shaped by television. Television pictures, accompanied by audio sound, get permanently imbedded in our psyche, and thus, direct not only what we think, but also the way we think about, and live our life. Television and popular media has not only shaped our culture, but has become



Television is the command centre of our epistemology.



our culture.

## **Television Affects Your Brain's Capacity to Function**

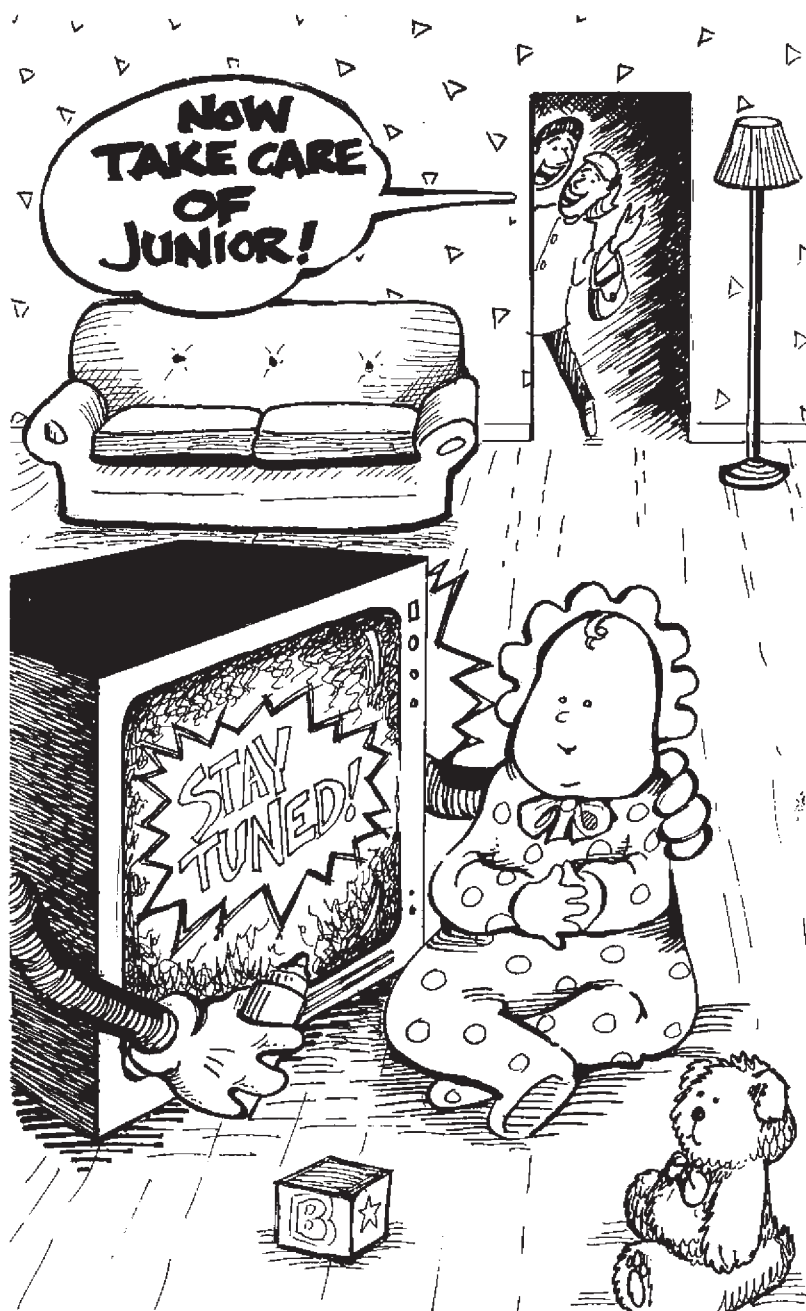
Scenes on television go by so fast that the average length of a shot is only about 3-4 seconds. The eyes never rest, for, there is always something new coming up. As a result, children cannot do any critical thinking, and therefore, do not develop the capacity to critically analyze anything. Television offers a variety of subject matter, requiring minimal skills to comprehend. Consequently, the mind is not exercised to comprehend deeper thoughts and complex situations.

The brief visual exposure prevents people from investigating the truth of the matter being viewed. With such a brief exposure, the rational capacity cannot come into play. When there is no reasoning, no questioning, there can be no sound judgment. People passively watch whatever is shown to them. Seeing so much glamour on the screen, they come to expect the same glamour in their lives. They take fantasy for reality: they are excited by the desire to possess all that they see. When their desires are not fulfilled, they become frustrated, agitated, and dissatisfied with their lives.

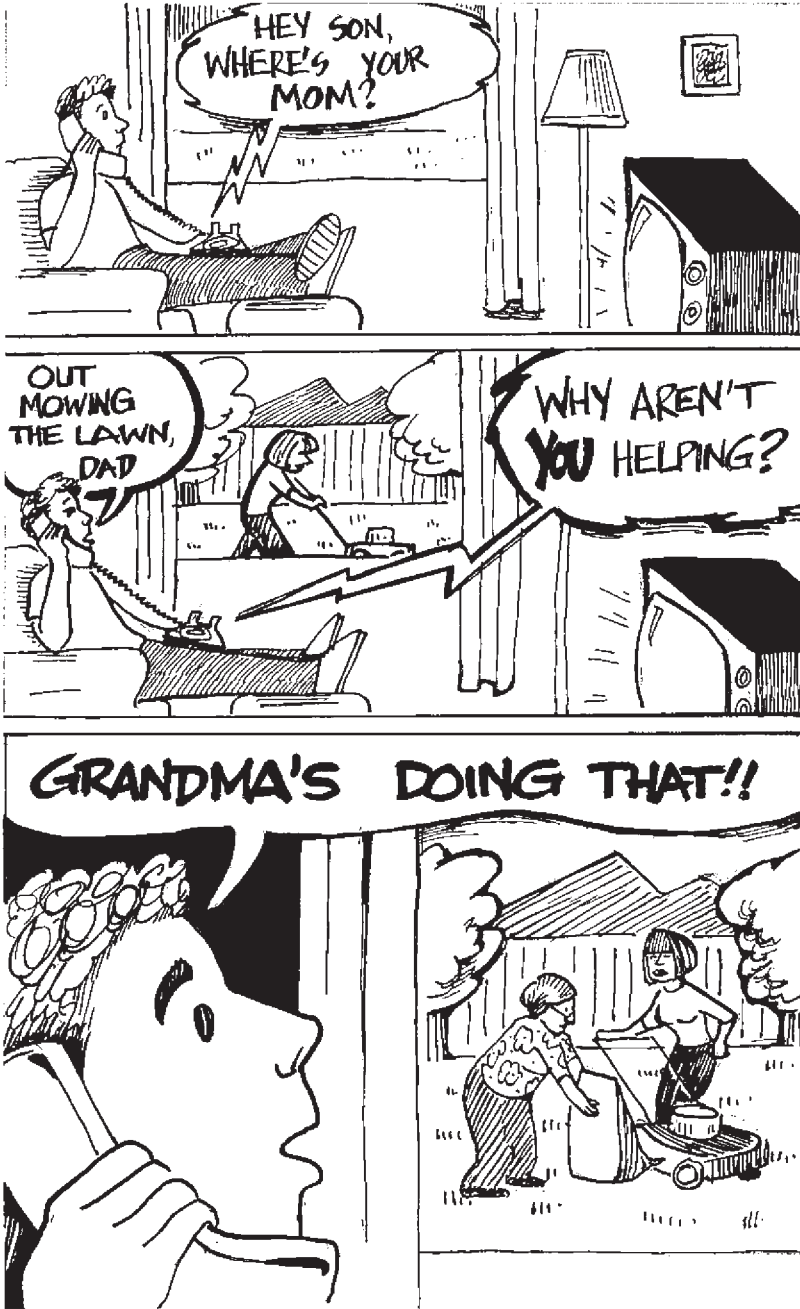
For meaningful conversation and communication one has to develop vocabulary and profound thoughts which come from reading good books. Moreover, it is necessary to have enough time to develop ideas and concepts by reflecting and critically analyzing the matter that is read or viewed. Furthermore, for developing communication skills it is necessary that these ideas be discussed with others, necessitating interpersonal communication through speech. Viewing television neither permits enough time for reflection nor for meaningful conversation. So, communication skills are not developed and remain at a low level.

## **The Internet & Cell Phones**

As written above, television is a form of technology that takes



The Electronic Babysitter.



Television makes one lazy and lethargic.

us away from our purpose in life. Similarly, the internet and cell phones also have the ability to distract us from our life's purpose. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are all applications that are being used indiscreetly by youth today.

The Internet is a tool that has the potential for great good. We can quickly research any topic, and learn about people, places and events far away from us. From a Sikhi perspective, we can read Gurbani, listen to keertan and interact with other Gursikhs.

But when used unwisely, the Internet has the potential for great harm and has in fact ruined the lives of many young people.

The Internet is often the first place where children interact with the world without adult supervision. The world of the Internet is exciting but filled with danger as well. There are many predators online who use tools such as threats, emotional exploitation, blackmail and even offering money to exploit youth. It also has many websites and images that a person would be ashamed to be seen viewing in public, but can view anonymously online. These are very real dangers.

Many youth are now constantly glued to their cell phones or computers, interacting with others in the cyber world but ignoring those around them in the real world. Cell phones and computers allow us to be in touch with the world at all hours, but some youngsters are so in touch with the world outside that they have lost touch with their families and even themselves.

Rather than building healthy relationships and friendships based on interpersonal communication, many youth spend the balance of their time on social media making 'friends' with people they do not know and have no real link to. Individuals with poor self-confidence start to base their self-value on the number of 'friends' they have on social media and the number of likes, re-tweets or favourites their pictures get.

It is a sad commentary on some youth today when they are constantly posting selfies, in the hope of receiving approval through likes and comments. If the expected positive feedback is not received, these individuals feel deeply hurt and their self-confidence is negatively

# If My Phone Could Talk...



HCT

Loldwell.com

affected.

Individual who engage in this type of exhibitionism are actually expressing a desperate cry for help. They are looking for approval in their lives, but looking in the wrong places.

Our self worth cannot and must not be tied to what others think of us. Trying to please the world is a certain recipe for unhappiness as it is a goal that simply cannot be achieved.

## **Dangers Online**

Another danger that today's youth must be aware of is that of chatting and texting. Chatrooms are filled with individuals who pose as people who they are not in order to lure children and youth. Pictures and video sent online can be made public or used to blackmail and extort. Many young Sikh girls have been the victims of these predators who have first encouraged them to send inappropriate pictures of themselves (sexting) and then used them to manipulate and coerce the senders.

Even where the person on the other side is not a predator, indiscreet chatting has lead many youth into inappropriate romantic relationships. While discussions may begin in an innocent manner, without supervision, they often escalate and become much more than just 'friendship'. In the passion of kaam and 'romance', often trying to copy what they have seen in popular media, youngsters have made decisions which have not only lead them away from Sikhi but seriously and permanently damaged their lives.

The danger of addiction to online pornography is also one that is very real. Many youngsters would be ashamed to view such things in public but do so secretly online. Seeing these images affects us very deeply and obviously leads us towards indulging in lust and seeing others not as people but as objects and body parts. Viewing these images can become an addiction that is very serious and has long term consequences for our future relationships. Those viewing these images also ignore the fact that those filmed are often themselves the victims of exploitation and are posing for these pictures due to



Addiction to the Plug-in Drug.

unfortunate circumstances. Those who see these images become party to the victimization and abuse of those pictured.

Whether it is online games, chatting, watching of videos or anything else, it is important to use the internet in a manner that is safe and responsible. If you would not feel appropriate having an elder or Gursikh seeing your activities online, it's likely what you're doing is damaging and wrong.

The internet and cell phones can become addictions if used in an uncontrolled manner. It can result in difficulty completing daily tasks such as housework or schoolwork, losing hours of time without even knowing, depression & anxiety, loneliness and becoming isolated from those around us. There are also serious health issues associated with internet and cell phone addiction such as trouble sleeping, strained eyes, weight gain and carpal tunnel syndrome.

If you are in trouble or have made a mistake in your activities online, it is essential to get help. If you are being forced into a situation you are uncomfortable with or are encountering someone who is pushing you into something you are not comfortable with or bullying you, or even if you have done something you now regret, it is important to let someone know who can help. Speak with your parents or another elder Gursikh. Doing so will ensure that you are protected from further harm.

## **The Guru's Message**

Busy seeing television shows and websites online and busy being engrossed in our cell phones and other new forms of technology, we do not have time to think about the deeper questions in life. Life can become purposeless as we never ask the deeper questions such as Who am I?"; "Who runs the universe?"; "How is this world functioning in such an order?"; "What is my purpose in life?"; or "What is the Ultimate Reality?"

All these questions are never asked because we remain busy entertaining ourselves and focussed outwards. Without knowing the truth about ourselves, we continue to suffer. We can never be satisfied





Children remain tied down to sofas and become 'couch potatoes' or 'television snakes'.

or truly happy by engaging only with the outside. True happiness can only come from connecting with our true self, within. Our true nature is divine and we are meant to experience the bliss of connecting with Vahiguru and sharing that bliss with those around us, making the world a better place.

*Bhai Gurdas jee tells us,*

*The eyes are not satisfied with beholding sights and exhibitions*

*The ears are not satisfied with hearing praise or slander, crying or laughing.*

*The tongue is not satisfied with eating what gives pleasure and delight.*

*The nose is not contented with pleasant or noxious smells.*

*No one can [through these methods] live a satisfied life, these are all false hopes.*

*But the love of the follower (Sikh) and master (Guru) is the way of of true satisfaction.*

We are meant to experience so much more than just the sights and sounds of television and the internet.

Sikhi offers us the opportunity to live a life of meaning, purpose and happiness by living the teachings of the Guru. We must always be vigilant not to be deprived of that experience because of the distractions of the outside world.

## CHAPTER III

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# FOLLOWING FADS AND FASHIONS

**A**N ORDINARY PERSON lives their life superfluously, seldom pondering deeply into the meaning and purpose of life. He or she lives his or her life uninvestigated. As a biological being, he or she eats, drinks, plays, works, sleeps, and reproduces. This cycle continues throughout his or her life. Humans, being social in nature, like to interact with others. To fulfill their need of belonging, they try to earn the appreciation of those with whom they interact, with a view to make friends with them. Their concept of themselves is a reflection of the opinions people form of them. They look into the mirror of society and take their reflection to be real.

### Why We Follow Fashions

It is our body with which we identify with the most. We identify ourselves with it the most because it is our outer covering which others notice first and by which they remember us. Therefore, with a view to glorify ourselves, we give much



Wearing stone-washed trousers with holes is irrational.

importance to the clothing we wear. For the sake of earning the appreciation of people and with a view to be accepted by them, we put on clothing which are in fashion. We do not care about the price, usefulness, or durability of the garments. Our primary concern is to be accepted by our peers, irrespective of their odd, unusual, and sometimes even crazy ways of dressing.

Ordinary people copy others. They neither have original ideas nor reason out logically the purpose of whatever they do. Normal human minds are prone to any suggestion just to be accepted and appreciated. All their actions are motivated towards this end in all areas of life. This is especially true with regards to their outer appearance. People blindly copy others and indiscriminately wear flashy clothes with crazy prints; clothes made of synthetic fibres and barely covering their bodies; stone-washed trousers with holes in the front and back; short shorts exposing their thighs; shirts and tops with deep, low-cut necklines exposing their chest area; and skin tight shorts, blouses, and sweaters to show the outlines of their bodies. Although these are worn mostly by girls to show off their bodies, boys also wear them to show off their muscles. People believe that as long as they keep up with the current trends in clothing, no matter how revealing or uncomfortable, they will look attractive and be liked. They try to please others without being true to themselves. By putting on an outer garb in the latest fashion, they are not showing a great sense of style as is commonly believed. In fact, they are only showing their weakness and lack of individuality by copying what is dictated by the latest fashion designs and by the media.

People with higher minds act out of reasoning and the principle of necessity. They do not get influenced by what the masses do. They decide the righteousness of an action based on reason and rationality. But, this is not the case with ordinary people.

People with an ordinary mind never ask themselves,



Some wear trousers with different colours and various patches, and they think they are dressing in style.

“What is so good about buying new trousers, making holes in them, stone-washing and decolouring them, and then putting them on?” They never inquire, “What is motivating me into this craziness?” The purpose of clothing is to cover and protect the body. By making holes in the fabric, the whole purpose of clothing is defeated. By stone-washing it, the durability of the fabric is reduced. And still worse, people are willing to pay more for such clothing. Thus, it is clear that wearing stone-washed trousers with holes is irrational. Buying new clothes and having them worn out artificially, and paying to have holes made in them is a great test of human intelligence. Are we regressing?

### **Clothing as a Show**

Where is the comfort, and the freedom for muscles to expand and contract with ease, when one is wearing tight clothes? They prevent proper breathing and proper functioning of the body. Being so tight, the shape and detail of the whole body is virtually seen. Why do people want to expose themselves to the view of all? Are they trying to invite people towards them? For what purpose?

The idea behind body-revealing clothing is to attract members of the opposite sex. In such cases, the motivating factor is not only ego recognition, but sex and body glorification as well. Society hypnotizes children by telling them that such garments look good. Television reinforces these values by showing actors dressed in the latest revealing styles. Glamorizing such clothing encourages children to ask for them, and so parents purchase the same.

Why wear heavily decorated material? It is so confusing to look at, that people do not know whether to look at the person or at the clothing. During a conversation, thoughts might get deviated to the clothing and physical appearance of the other person. The design or message of the print can sometimes be very distracting. The attention is then on the clothing. Very little



People wear mini skirts even when the temperature is below zero!



is left for a meaningful exchange.

What is the need for heavy prints and flashy colourful designs, if not to upstage and impress others, to compete, to assert oneself, or to show more wealth? Why do we have the desire to attract other people? Is it for our own personal glorification, and the pleasure which we draw out of it?

### **The Purpose of Clothing is Defeated**

What is the purpose of clothing after all? It has a very practical purpose: to cover the body and protect it from heat, cold, and dirt. Then where is the need for low necklines and sleeveless shirts? What about mini skirts? People wear them when it is not hot at all; in fact, they wear them even when the temperature is below zero. What purpose do they serve? Why is society pushing insane ideas into the minds of their children? Why is it inculcating lustful desires in children through such clothing? By prompting them to put on such clothing, parents promote exhibitionism in their children. Eventually, children get used to drawing the attention of others by putting on such clothing. This is harmful to their inner freedom, and healthy growth of personality. It goes without saying that dignified people with refined tastes choose to clothe themselves in simple garments made of natural fibres.

Synthetic clothing is worn just for its convenience (less ironing to do), its glamour, and its shine. This is the fashion promoted by society. Seeing these types of clothes on television and in magazines, people are led to believe that this is the standard to follow, no matter how uncomfortable they are. They do not care to find whether or not these clothes are detrimental to their health and hygiene.

It is known that synthetic fabric neither absorbs sweat nor lets air pass through to the skin, thereby creating poor circulation and increasing the chance of infection and rashes. Synthetic fibres allow a build-up of static electricity which makes people

uncomfortable, restless, and irritable. Such fabrics harm the body as well as the mind.

On the other hand, natural fibres like cotton and wool absorb sweat, let air circulate, and do not create static electricity. Furthermore, as opposed to printed clothing, plain coloured clothing is very appeasing and serene both to the wearer and to the onlooker.

The principles of necessity and economy demand that humans wear comfortable clothes and not have more clothing than required. We should have a minimal number of clothes for his daily functions; some loose clothing for meditation, some clothing for work and exercise, and some for sleeping. It does not make sense to have an abounding number of clothes.

### **Guru's Message**

Guru Saheb enjoins us to be humble, and wear only that clothing which is simple, which does not cause pain to our body, and which does not bring lustful and egotistic thoughts in our mind.

Guru Saheb tells us that though beautiful, flashy, and expensive clothing may earn us some appreciation here, in the court of God, we will not be judged on our clothing, but on our merits. We shall have to suffer for wasting our effort, money, and human life on pleasures of the body and egotistic assertions coming from our possessions and power. In the court of God, we will go naked; the show of our expensive clothing and wealth will not go with us; we shall then repent for having wasted our time on bodily glorification and gratification.

Clothing is one of the basic necessities of humans, along with food and shelter. The purpose of clothing is that it must cover and protect our bodies against heat, cold, rain, and snow. Thus, clothes must be durable and flexible enough to allow free body movement, and made from natural fibres to assure comfort.

In many societies, the purpose of clothing assumes a

supplementary function which, quite often, contradicts its primary function. The primary role of clothes is to cover the body, but humans use them as a device to attract others and compete with them. Society creates different styles of clothing and glorifies the thought that those who wear the latest style are better. Thus, fashion industries keep on designing outrageous new styles to allure people to keep on buying more and more. Many of these clothes are uncomfortable, not durable, and made from synthetic fibres. Nevertheless, this does not stop people from buying them, as ordinary people simply follow the crowd.

Reflective and rational people realize that society teaches many wrong values. All wrong values of society are set by material-oriented sleeping people who are unaware of the intrinsic value of human life. People with higher minds understand the futility of first earning money, then of spending the same on unnecessary clothing.

## CHAPTER IV

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# COSMETICS AND JEWELRY

**T**HERE IS NO ABSOLUTE concept of beauty; beauty lies in the eye of the beholder. The concept of beauty varies from culture to culture and society to society. Society and fashion industries define an image of beauty and encourage all to fall into that mould.

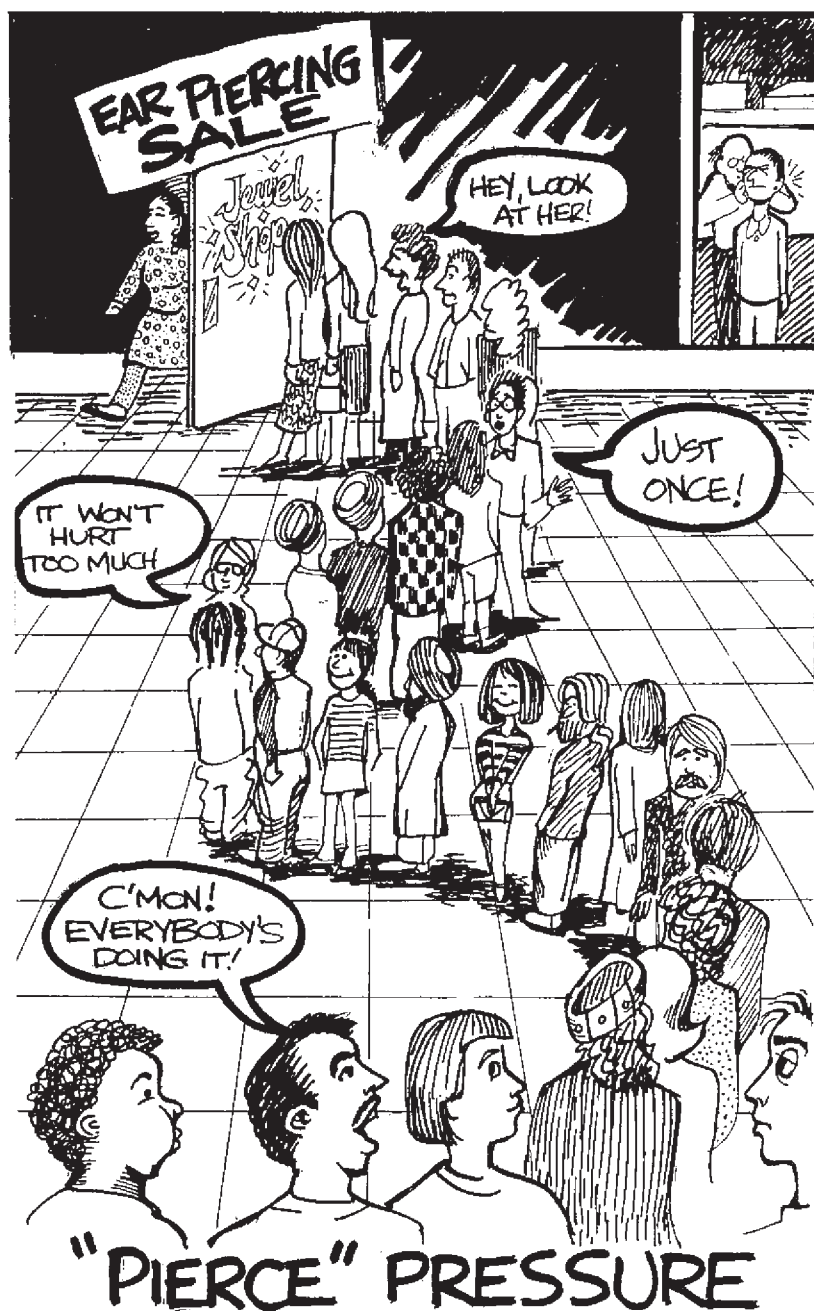
### Why People Deck Up

From the moment a child is born, they are evaluated on their physical appearance. As they grow, they are made more and more aware of their features. Their concept of themselves is thus thrust upon them by those around them. Society places much emphasis on one's physical image. It puts value on such things as eye colour, facial complexion, fullness of lips, shape and size of the nose and cheekbones.

Society presents people with ideals of beauty which they then try to emulate. Therefore, people colour, highlight, and accentuate their features with cosmetics, and further decorate their bodies with jewelry.



People deck up to stand out in a crowd.



Pierce Pressure.

Young children easily fall into the mould carved by society. Because they are told by those around them that they look good when they are decked up, they feel encouraged to wear cosmetics and jewelry. Therefore, they deck themselves up with cosmetics, lipstick, fake eyelashes, nail polish, earrings, necklaces, and rings. Furthermore, parents willingly provide these items to their children because they like to see them decked up. They buy them gifts of jewelry, not only to use as decorations, but also to show off their wealth.

### **More Pain than Gain**

People have been wearing jewelry from the earliest times. However, there is no intrinsic value in wearing jewelry. The main reason people wear it is to stand out and gain appreciation from others. If there was some intrinsic satisfaction gained from wearing the jewels themselves, then why would people not wear them while sleeping? People do not reflect on the necessity of their actions.

People go through a lot of pain to feel accepted by others. Much time, effort, and money is spent just for earning appreciation and for hearing a few words of praise. The two main motivating factors are ego glorification and lust.

On the pretext of caring for their bodies, people apply lotions, perfumes, and cosmetics. They want to look young and beautiful, so they apply creams to prevent wrinkles, and use foundation cream to cover up blemishes. Next, they use mascara, eyeliner, and eye shadow to bring out the colour of their eyes; rouge and blush to accentuate their cheekbones; and lip liner, lipstick, and lip gloss to draw attention to their lips.

Eventually, to remove this makeup they use yet more products. There is no end to beauty aids. The whole effort of people is to make themselves look beautiful and handsome to attract others. Actually it requires quite an extensive training to master the skills of applying makeup!

People will do virtually anything to be noticed by others and to allure them. Do they know, however, that lipstick covers the natural



Wearing jewelry, people remain chained and burdened.



moisture of the lips, and that nail polish prevents the nails from breathing? Many wear earrings even though it involves piercing their flesh and making holes in it. In addition, they inflict even more pain to themselves by plucking their eyebrows, and pulling or colouring their facial hairs. They think that since everybody else is doing it, it must be good, and therefore, they should do it too. This is the process by which children get brainwashed by the values of society.

### **Cosmetics and Jewelry Harm the Body**

Why do people burden themselves with the extra weight of ornaments? What is the idea of wearing rings? Is it to incapacitate themselves so that they cannot fully use their fingers and their hands? The more and bigger the rings, the more cumbersome they become, and that, simply to decorate the hands and show off one's wealth. By wearing necklaces and gold chains people remain chained because these are the chains of self-aggrandizement. People get hypnotised and believe that these ornaments embellish them, but actually they incapacitate them. They lower the potential of their bodies in order to accommodate and carry these trinkets; and all this to overcome their inferiority complex, or to assert their superiority. How can people become superior just by wearing metal and glass pieces?

It appears to be a similar situation with cosmetics. By applying these, people do not allow their skin to properly carry out its function. These block the pores so the body cannot excrete the toxins regularly released through body perspiration. Why do people interfere so much with the natural functioning of their body for the sake of a few words of appreciation?

Do people think that they are ugly and need fixing up? Do they believe they are so displeasing that they need to cover up so much?

Why do people try to please others? Is it to be accepted by them, to be liked by them, and to be told that they are beautiful? Why do they want to glorify themselves? Is it due to their selfish motives and their lustful inclinations? Left by themselves, they do not use all these products; they do so only when they meet others. Thus, it is clear that



What's taking so long behind those doors?

there is no personal satisfaction in adorning one's body with cosmetics and jewelry; it is only done for the purpose of inviting the attention of others, for gaining their appreciation and their acceptance.

## **Guru's Message**

When one thinks that they are more beautiful and handsome than others, they assert their ego on others, and thus, cause violence to them. If one looks down upon others and thus hurts them, one cannot expect to remain in a state of peace; one has to suffer as a consequence of their ego assertion.

Guru Saheb asks us why we wear ornaments and jewelry. They are just metal and stone pieces. They are not our personal merits. How do they make the body, mind, and soul better? Why does one not deck themselves with the beautiful diamonds and pearls of the Guru's intellect? Why does one not listen to the Guru's advice and develop inner merits of love and service to humanity? Guru Saheb tells us that all the worldly gems and pearls are part of the delusion of mind. The powers and possessions, the youth and beauty, and the pride of wealth and high caste are all deceptions and cheats because they keep one's consciousness tied to the vain objects of this world. They cause one to lose the merit of human life. Busy in the pursuit of pleasures and in the collection of jewelry, gold, pearls, and diamonds, one never attains to contentment and fulfilment. One dies hankering and crying for more and more wealth. One never attains peace through these trinkets.

Thus, through his instructions, Guru Saheb urges us to wash the dirt of lust and ego. Society hypnotizes us by glorifying cosmetics, jewelry, and trendy clothing. As a result, one decks up to appear as an object of lust. One suffers because of these activities. By indulging in these thoughts and activities one never gets quenched or satiated. One suffers more and more. One gets drained and withers away in despair. Guru Saheb warns us innumerable times not to indulge in glorifying the body and embellishing it in lustful ways; in this way, one can never be fulfilled. The only way one can attain to peace and eternal happiness is to abide by the Will of God, revealed through the Guru.

Guru Saheb exhorts us to be simple. He teaches dignity and equality of mankind. He warns against asserting one's ego by glorifying the body, and through the show of wealth. This hurts others, and mitigates against the universal brotherhood of mankind.

From the foregoing discussions, it is apparent that humans live their lives for others. Their every move is governed by what people will think of them. The main motivating factors for people to embellish their bodies with cosmetics and jewelry are acceptance by others, lust, and ego-glorification. These negative practices are being encouraged by society at large. It is the parents' duty to make their children aware of these negativities and not encourage their children to wear cosmetics and jewelry.

# CHAPTER V

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## POP, ROCK, RAP, AND DANCING

**M**USIC AFFECTS OUR mind and moods; it also is a great source of entertainment and can be used as a powerful medium to influence the masses. The styles of music in a society reflect its culture.

### Styles of Music

There are different styles of music; they have different effects on the listener. In the classical style of music there are various measures and rhythms. Melodies sung in classical music leave a very soothing and serene effect on the listener. Classical music brings harmony and peace, and elevates the being of a person. By listening to this style of music, the listener's consciousness is sometimes transported into a state of rapture and ecstasy; classical music is capable of not only bringing about a relaxed state free from tension, but also of curing many psycho-somatic disorders.

In contrast to melodious classical music, there are styles of music which create disharmony, hyper physical activity, high-strungness, heightened lustful emotions, and sometimes even aggression, hatred, or morbidity. Some of the styles which have been popular in recent

times are, rock'n'roll, heavy metal, disco, pop, and rap music. While listening to these styles of music, the listeners get so affected and involved, that they start dancing by twisting, turning, jumping, and even slamming their bodies against each other. While dancing, some become so crazy that they start yelling and making obscene bodily movements and gestures.

### **Why People Listen to Hyper Music**

Modern youth claim that listening to heavy metal music and dancing are enjoyable activities which make them feel relaxed. Why do they feel relaxed after listening to rock'n'roll, rap, pop, disco, hip hop, punk, and heavy metal music? They feel relaxed because they are able to release their pent-up energies in various ways of dancing.

In today's society, people are loaded with stress and strain because of the fast pace of life. They remain tense and agitated due to internal desires and social pressures in this competitive world. To counter the pain of tension, people seek pleasure; music and dancing are two such pleasure giving activities.

People either listen to music from the radio or tapes in their homes, or they go out to dance halls, bars, or concerts. No matter where they are, at home, dance halls, or clubs, they dance to the music.

New trends of music keep coming in style and people follow them as they would any other fad. They enjoy heavy metal, punk, rock'n'roll, rap, hip hop, or disco music. New styles of dance accompany the new trends in music. While some styles of dancing are not so violent, dancing to punk music involves bashing oneself against another and jumping all over.

### **Hyper Music Adversely Affects People**

The beats accompanying these styles of music excite the body and the whole nervous system. So much energy is built up that people do not know what to do with it; they start yelling and shaking their body violently. They call this dancing and singing. Instead of doing creative work, studying, or engaging themselves in healthy physical



If this is relaxing, then what does it mean to be hyper?

activities, people get into destructive ways of wasting energy. This impairs their intellectual and physical development.

As society is becoming more and more lenient towards loud hyper music and dancing as a way to release its tensions, it is closing its eyes to the dangerous amount of aggression and violence which is not directed towards anyone in particular but to everyone in general. In some cases, this leads to criminal activities such as stealing, raping, and killing.

### **The Extent of Music's Influence**

The aforementioned styles of music are very widespread. Even children in some Gursikh families listen to rock'n'roll, rap, pop, disco, hip hop, punk, and heavy metal music, and dance along with it. There are some homes in which the elders recite scriptures and meditate while, at the same time, their children play loud heavy metal or punk music containing abusive language. Sometimes a child is reciting prayers and meditating while their siblings are disturbing them with their loud music and dancing. This is not congenial for a spiritual way of life. In fact this loud music is so overpowering that it also disturbs others in whatever activity they may be involved in.

The heroes of today's youth are not the prophets or the saints of their religion; their heroes are Taylor Swift, Beyoncé and One Direction. Today's youth hang life-size posters of their heroes in their bedrooms. They watch the music videos of their heroes and emulate them in all the ways they can. People get influenced by the singers and by the lyrics of their songs. The themes of the songs commonly allude to experiences of love, sex, jealousy, frustration, hatred, and rejection. Many lyrics are vulgar, and the messages given allude to acts of aggression and sex. In addition, swear words are commonly used.

Therefore, this type of music is very damaging. So what is the way out of this? Why create tensions in the first place? Why not live a peaceful and harmonious life? To bring harmony in life, a conducive





This is not congenial for a spiritual way of life.

environment for physical, mental, and spiritual growth should be created by parents in particular, and by the community as a whole. Such an environment should cater for getting children involved in activities like playing sports, gardening, or performing selfless service for the whole community. Another way is to get children involved in singing keertan, reciting Gurbaanee, and learning to play various musical instruments to accompany the singing of Gurbaanee.

## **Guru's Message**

The human mind is never at peace. It is always in flux, seeking pleasure. It is the mind which wants to indulge in dancing and jumping. When one becomes introspective, one starts to ponder on the meaning of life and realizes the futility of fleeting pleasures. Those who have no fear of God, no fear of their death and future dreadful lives, do not care; they dance and jump. Only those who live in fear of God, by the law of existence, behave in a peaceful way and are able to enjoy the love and peace flowing in existence. Those who listen to the mind cannot experience this love and peace. Those who listen to, and abide by the Guru's instructions live in peace, harmony, and joy. They guide and help many others to tread the Guru's way. Says Guru Saheb, "O my Lord, let my ears not hear this sort of music. The worldly person in pursuit of power and pleasure sings various songs; whatever he sings is futile, even though put to music."

Guru Saheb tells us to leave all the worldly music and dancing, and to meditate. By singing the glories of God through Gurbaanee, peace comes to one's mind. When peace descends, the mind surrenders to the All-Pervading God, and then there is total harmony, peace, and fulfilment. It does not come through dancing, exciting pleasures, dating, and sex. All these are condemned in Gurbaanee.

As discussed in the foregoing pages, people find pleasure in hearing the sound of an instrument or a voice irrespective of what is being performed. They listen to loud, hyper music because that is the kind commonly broadcast by the media and generally appreciated in society. After listening to rock, rap, pop, and heavy metal music,

people are often hyper and need to release their pent-up emotions and tensions. They do not realize the precious value of human life, and so instead of doing something productive, they yell and jump about in weird contorted ways and behave aggressively towards others.

The best way to release their energies is to channel them into creative, constructive, and healthy activities such as sports, reading, classical music, and gardening. Then their potentialities and powers develop; they develop the qualities of team spirit and co-operation; they find genuine friendship and become part of a group which is holy, healthy, and happy.

## CHAPTER VI

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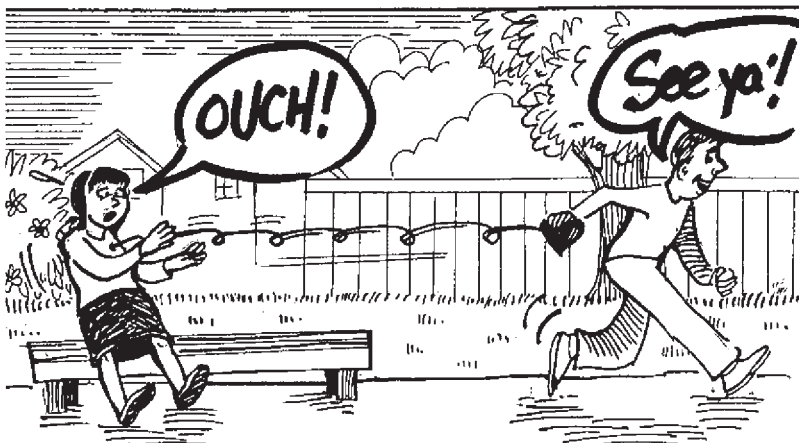
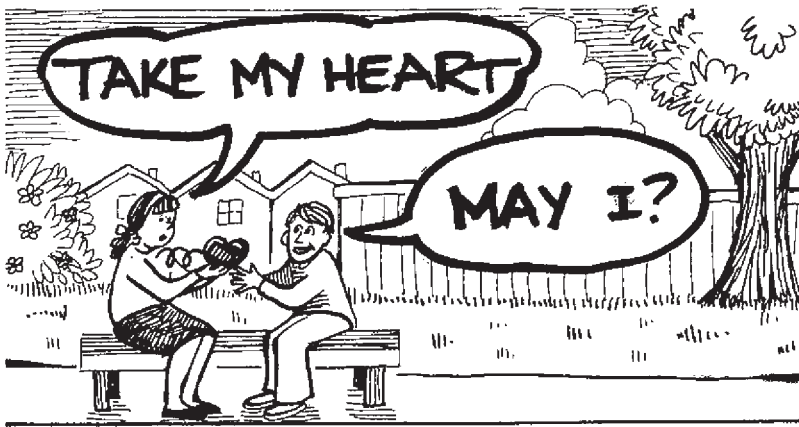
## DATING

**D**ATING MEANS finding a friend of the opposite sex and going out for the purpose of establishing a relationship. Dating, as practiced in North America today, differs markedly from dating as practiced in earlier times.

Earlier, the purpose of dating was to meet prospective candidates for marriage, to be able to screen them out, and to determine if they would make a good match. Couples then started going steady and finally decided if they would like to marry. While this practice is still prevalent, its sophistication, has since greatly diminished. Dating now just means to find a girlfriend or boyfriend to have some company (because for many, any company is better than none at all). Since dating for many is not with the intention of establishing a long-term relationship, there is no commitment in their relationships. Thus people change partners whenever they find a better person. This is the current practice in North American society today.

### Dating today

In the Western society, if a girl or a boy has never had a boyfriend or girlfriend or remains single, some friends and relatives become



People change partners without any concern for their previous partner.

concerned. They wonder what is wrong with the person, why no one likes him or her. They almost force the person to find a boyfriend or a girlfriend.

Dating is perceived as good by the Western youth because they think that through it, they can find good friends of the opposite sex, and can remain busy. Society perceives dating as a venue for intimacy through which people can open their hearts to each other. This positive view of dating has led it to be recognized and sanctioned in society. This has been the case for quite some time now, but it has taken a very indecent form. People date for a few days, and when the excitement dies down, they change partners. Children who have started dating keep on looking for better partners. This starts very early, even in elementary schools. In these cases, dating has nothing to do with marriage, the only concern is pleasure. As a result of this, we see many pregnancies among school age children.

### **Is It Right to Date?**

Is it right to get involved in physical pleasures? Youth is a time to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. It is a time to acquire enough knowledge to be able to earn an honest living, and to operate successfully and honourably in society. It is a time to understand the wonders of the world, and begin the search for the Self. But youth is wasted in the pursuit of lust. The energy which was to be used for becoming a better human being, for becoming more aware, and for becoming wiser, is drained out in lustful activities. Dating also results in jealousy, anger, and violence when a male or female changes partners without any concern for the previous partner.

When people who have dated and have had lustful relations eventually get married, they keep on comparing their spouse to all the previous partners they had. As a result, divorces occur because there is no commitment to their union. If one has not kept chaste, then one is not capable of fully appreciating a married life, and cannot give full love and loyalty to his/her partner.

People get used to a lustful life, and when it is not readily



People compare their partner to all the previous ones they have had.

available, some of them become perverted and some even abuse their own children. Why should dating and sex be permitted? Why should children be allowed to see all this on television? Why should parents allow them to enter into the company of others who may be delinquents and who may cause damage to their psyche and body?

Dating and lustful relations are very damaging for the growth of a sound personality. If the energy of youth could be directed towards other useful activities and healthier entertainment, such as classical music, painting, writing, and playing, then there would be no need for dating. Firstly, if this thought of dating was not glorified in the minds of young children through television and the media, they would remain pure, both mentally and physically. Then, when the appropriate time comes, they can get married and live a happy and healthy married life.

### **Guru's Message**

Guru Saheb strictly prohibits any lustful contact with anyone outside of wedlock. The aim of human life is to attain union with God through self-realization. To waste the priceless gift of human life in lustful indulgences is a great folly. Guru Saheb exhorts man not to look at the beauty of another's woman with lustful thoughts. Guru Saheb also says that eyes become foul by looking lustfully at the beauty of another's woman. Guru Saheb also says to consider other women as daughters, sisters, and mothers. Guru Saheb also says by indulging in bodily pleasure, man is never satiated; he keeps suffering and becomes dry. Guru Saheb also says that even if he indulges with thousands of women, and rules the nine regions of the world, he never attains happiness without the Lord's Love; he keeps coming and going in the cycle of birth and death!

What is the purpose of life? The purpose of life is to attain to Self-Realization by directing the life's energies in the quest of Truth. Without realizing the Ultimate Reality, one's destiny can never be fulfilled. Till one knows the Truth, one remains empty and keeps on wandering. Can dating and lustful relations fulfil this emptiness? Can they put a stop to his wandering? Obviously not. Then why date and



pursue lustful relations with others?

## **Why People Date**

People date because they feel empty, lonely, and bored. They want to fill this emptiness by talking and having a close relationship with another person. Boredom can be overcome by many other activities in a peer group. There are many useful engagements that one could be busy in to do away with boredom. But what is so important with dating? A little introspection will show that it is the pleasure which is drawn out of lustful relationships with the opposite sex that makes youth so enthusiastic about dating.

Dating is meeting for the purpose of developing a relationship. But what is the purpose of a relationship? Its real purpose is finding a partner of the opposite sex with whom to share common grounds, affinities, interests, emotions, and private thoughts, with a view to determine his or her suitability for marriage. Clearly, this implies that no one should be dating until one is financially, educationally, socially, and emotionally mature for marriage. Can children of 12 or 14 years of age fulfil these prerequisites? Obviously not! So why are kids dating? It is certainly not for marriage, it is for lustful relationships. They also date because of social pressure; because others of their age are doing so; and because television portrays children of their age dating. Since marriage is not an option at these young ages, dating should not be promoted in the interest of a healthy and sound development of children and for the overall good of society.

## **Should Dating be Promoted?**

Should dating be promoted for those who are financially, educationally, and emotionally mature for marriage? If it is promoted, it will still lead to going out and developing lustful relationships with more than one partner, because it is not certain that one would marry the very first person one dates.

Would any honourable person with a sense of dignity and self-respect like to marry and live with a person who has already had lustful

relations with many others? As no decent person would, then what is a dignified way of finding a marriage partner?

The best way of finding a marriage partner is to narrow one's choice to a few whom one has known sufficiently in social settings, the names of such persons should be referred to parents and elders who, with their experience, may recommend the most compatible ones, and arrange for meetings in socially approved situations. If the meeting with the first choice does not result in a decision to marry, then a similar meeting can be arranged with the next prospective person. The final decision to marry always remains with those who are marrying.

## CHAPTER VII

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# SMOKING, DRINKING, AND USING DRUGS

**I**N WESTERN SOCIETY, little importance is given to spiritual values; one spends their energies for materialistic gains. From a very young age, children are taught to compete in order to succeed in this fast-moving society. As a result, they remain loaded with stress, strain, tension, and anxiety. To find some relief from this continuous state of tension and anxiety, a large percentage of the population smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.

### **Damaging Effects of Intoxicants**

While the use of intoxicants adversely affects the health, job performance, and education of the present generation, the worst consequence of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use is that future generations will be born with physical and mental ailments and deficiencies. Through no fault of their own, offspring of drug addicts, alcoholics, and smokers are today suffering from diseases and disabilities. For example, drug addicts who have AIDS, transmit the disease to their infants even before they are born. Low birth weight babies may suffer various damaging consequences throughout their lives. Babies born to

mothers who drink alcohol may be affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, in which they suffer irreversible birth abnormalities. Babies born to drug addicted mothers are predisposed to become addicts themselves.

The entire world today is condemning the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs because medical science has proved that these substances are dangerous and harmful to mankind and to future generations. Guru Saheb, in his wisdom, condemned all forms of intoxicants over four hundred years ago and prohibited Sikhs from using them in order to ensure the purity of the Khalsa. To maintain this purity of conduct, it is our moral duty to ensure that our youth do not fall victim to the violence and suffering that is occurring to a large part of the world's population today.

Children are being exposed very early in their lives to smoking, drinking, and drugs. They try smoking and drinking with friends in school, at parties, and at home when their parents are away. Ninety percent of teenagers have tried drinking, and two thirds of the teenaged population has experimented with drugs. Children not only try intoxicants themselves but also make others try them as well. A large number of teenagers get initiated into smoking, drinking, and drugs because of peer pressure.

## **The Dangers of Tobacco Smoking**

Smoking is an addiction. Smokers perceive it as a pleasurable habit because it reduces tension, relieves boredom, and helps in day-dreaming and fanciful thinking. The overall effect of indulging in this pleasurable addictive habit is that smokers tend to become lazy and lethargic; they cannot apply themselves to their full capacities to achieve their goals and objectives.

Besides the addictive nature of tobacco smoking, it is a serious health hazard. The smoker's lungs eventually become a breeding ground for infections, and as a result, smokers are more susceptible to colds, respiratory infections, and chronic bronchitis. Cancer can begin in the lungs and spread to other parts of the body.

Nicotine from cigarettes enters the bloodstream and is pumped



Smoking in the 'fresh air'.

into the brain. This stimulates the brain to speed up the heart beat and raise the blood pressure. Smokers enjoy this change in the body's metabolism; it is the "lift" they get from cigarettes. What they do not realize, however, is that nicotine releases fatty acids which accumulate in the arteries, causing them to harden. This eventually leads to heart attacks, strokes, and other circulatory disorders. Smokers have a three times higher chance of dying of cancer than nonsmokers

The deleterious effects of smoking have been recognized by science and the wise sections of society since the beginning of the twentieth century. The dangers of smoking, to both smokers and non-smokers, have only recently been recognized by governments and the public.

The foregoing discussions point out the ill effects of smoking or being exposed to second hand smoke. Smokers cause harm not only to themselves but also to those around them. Babies born to mothers who smoke or inhale second-hand smoke are likely to be low-weight and suffer various disorders throughout their lives. Second-hand smoke is a cause of lung cancer in nonsmokers. This fact has been recognized by government health officials and as a result, smoking has been banned in public places in many cities across North America.

## **Smoking Prohibited**

While the adverse effects of tobacco use have only been discovered by science in this century, consuming and smoking tobacco in any form has never been allowed among Sikhs since the time of Guru Nanak Dev ji (1469-1539). Guru Saheb ji says: People smoke and keep chewing betel nuts for the purpose of pleasure and luxury; indulged in these pleasures, they waste their lives. Eventually, the agent of death carries them to the city of the dead. There, they face the celestial judge and suffer the consequences of having wasted their human life in seeking fleeting pleasures.

Guru Saheb knew the ill effects of smoking on the smokers' and their offspring's physical and psychological health. He therefore,

totally banned the consumption of tobacco; even touching tobacco or touching a package of cigarettes is considered a taboo among Sikhs.

## **Aim of Human Life**

Deep down within, humans seek eternal happiness. However, most people do not understand whence comes this happiness. Happiness is a state of harmony and peace within. When there is total harmony in life, one experiences peace, joy, and bliss. In such a state of existence, one has no desires, because they have what they really seek.

As a human's aim is to attain peace and happiness, should they ever drink liquor? The answer to this question can be found if we first examine the uniqueness of humans. Humans are at the apex of the whole creation. Their uniqueness lies in their capacities; they are the only being who has self-awareness and an intelligence which enables them to reflect on the external world and introspect the inner world. These capacities give them the freedom to choose; in fact, these capacities of self-awareness and intelligence direct humans to choose rightly, because if they fail to choose rightly, they feel anguish within. This anguish compels them to become moral; unless they attain to Perfection, the anguish within them continues to cause them pain. Only when one attains to Perfection by always acting rightly, do they attain to a state of eternal peace and full awareness.

## **Alcohol Dulls the Senses**

Those who make a choice in favour of the pleasures derived from drinking alcohol, are not making the right choice towards attainment of a state of harmony, peace, and bliss.

The journey towards Perfection demands a state of complete awareness and wilful control of thoughts. Drinking liquor or consuming intoxicants is not only a step backwards, but is also harmful. It is harmful because the use of intoxicants dulls the mind and senses. The awareness becomes hazy and wilful control becomes blunt. The result is that the inward journey to deeper levels of consciousness cannot



Drinking all weekend.



continue. The call of the higher Self becomes feeble, and the call of the id, the animal urges and tendencies, the lower self, becomes stronger and stronger; one gets entrapped in sensual pleasures. As a consequence, one keeps sinking into lower states of awareness and consciousness.

## **Consumption of Alcohol Prohibited**

Consuming alcohol is prohibited by Guru Saheb because a person under the influence of liquor loses their balance of mind and the sense of relationship between themselves and other family members. Their speech becomes foul, they speak nonsense, indulge in misconduct, and behave insanely. Because of this, they lose contact with their Master, God.

The tenth Guru's orders as compiled by Bhai Daysa Singh and Bhai Kaysar Singh in the Khalsa Code of Conduct are: "Those Sikhs are the wise ones who do not indulge in these evils - adultery, gambling, stealing, and drinking liquor." (Bhai Daysa Singh).

"A Sikh should never indulge in drinking liquor, consuming tobacco, gambling, and adultery." (Bhai Kaysar Singh Chibber).

Recognizing the adverse effects of alcohol, today's world governments have introduced various laws to control and restrict its use. These governments are laying legal restrictions on the age before which one may not drink alcohol. They are imposing tougher sanctions on those who drink and drive. Restrictions have been put on the places where alcohol is permitted to be served: a special license is required for its sale. These restrictions have been imposed because it has been scientifically proven that drinking alcohol not only harms the individual and society, but also future generations.

## **III Effects of Drinking**

What are the proven effects of drinking alcohol? One loses control of one's actions and judgements, and one can become severely addicted to alcohol. Drinking is the cause of many car accidents, fights, and sex related crimes. The drinker's selfish attitude affects everyone

at home; the financial stability of the family as also the harmony and peace are adversely affected.

The physical effects of alcohol intake result in the metabolic damage of many cells. It damages the liver, the central nervous system, the gastrointestinal system, and the heart. The life expectancy of alcoholics is decreased by 10 to 15 years. In addition, there is evidence to support a genetic pre-disposition to alcoholism. That implies that if parents are alcoholic, their children are susceptible to follow suit. Babies born to mothers who drink alcohol excessively may be affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, in which they suffer irreversible birth abnormalities. Alcohol-related diseases and accidents claim about 200,000 lives every year in the United States alone.

Those who are reflective and introspective develop a deeper understanding of life. They don't fall victim to drinking alcohol. Instead, they follow the right direction of going inward to their source of bliss where they find lasting inner happiness, peace, and joy. They remain fully aware and wakeful. They travel to deeper and deeper states of consciousness and enjoy the Nectar of Naam which flows from the Real within. They live a simple life; by meeting the basic necessities of life, they remain fully satisfied on the secular and material plane. They do not drink liquor or other intoxicants; they remain 'intoxicated' with the elixir that showers on their soul as a result of their ceaseless dwelling on the Loving Lord. Living their life this way, they, with Guru's Grace, eventually realize the Truth. Having themselves attained peace and bliss in their life, they enjoin and help others to follow this path to attain peace and happiness.

## **The Extent of Damage Due to Drug Use**

Using drugs is much worse than smoking or drinking liquor. Those who use drugs, even though in the beginning they experience a state of heightened perception and imagination, their brains eventually become dull and hazy. Those who continue to use drugs, for even a few weeks, become addicted to drugs and cannot live without them. To experience 'high' states, they keep taking larger amounts of drugs.

# DRUGS BUG YOU



Formication.

Finally, they lose contact with reality and live in a stupor-like state, thus, becoming non-functional in this world.

Children get initiated into taking drugs either voluntarily to experience 'high' states, or under peer group pressure. Once addicted, they find it difficult to live without them. Many drop out of school; they can neither continue with their studies nor find jobs. Consequently, they either become a burden on their parents or become vagabonds. Many of them end up in prisons for various crimes.

### **Adverse Psychophysical Effects**

The adverse effects of drugs are sudden and unpredictable. Some unpleasant physical and psychological effects of using drugs are listed below:

- insomnia and headaches
- sudden mood changes
- loss of appetite resulting in weight loss and malnutrition
- nausea and vomiting
- swelling and bleeding of the mucous membranes
- restlessness and anxiety
- psychosis, paranoia, hallucinations, and a condition known as formication, in which insects or snakes are perceived to be crawling under the skin.
- dependence on drugs impairs learning abilities, shortens attention span, reduces problem-solving skills, and decreases reading comprehension.
- long-term effects include fatigue and damage to the nervous system, liver, kidneys, blood, and bone marrow.
- overdoses depress the central nervous system to the extent that breathing and heart rate can slow down or stop altogether, resulting in death.
- injecting the drug with contaminated needles may result in skin ulcers, and expose the user to AIDS.
- babies born to drug addicted mothers are predisposed to become

addicts themselves.

From the foregoing, anyone can conclude that drugs are harmful. Once addicted, one cannot live without them. Using drugs is a very expensive habit and people addicted to them often resort to crime to pay for this debilitating habit. People misuse and abuse others by withholding drugs from them; they blackmail them for their own purposes and make them do many immoral acts in exchange for drugs.

## **Drugs Prohibited**

Guru Saheb condemns the use of all intoxicating substances. Guru Saheb does not permit a Sikh to consume intoxicants, including all variants of drugs. The Khalsa Code of Conduct clearly states that a Sikh should never even touch intoxicants like tobacco, opium, marijuana, and liquor.

The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh ji, included consuming intoxicants as a major transgression for a Sikh. Till today, if an Amritdhari (baptised Sikh) consumes tobacco alcohol, or drugs, they are considered an apostate. If they desire to rejoin the Khalsa, they have to appear before the Panj Pi-aaray (five holy ones) to confess their transgression, and have to request re-baptism.

Today, the use of drugs is condemned worldwide. Drug trafficking is a crime in all countries with responsible government. Governments are making a great effort and spending large portions of their budgets to check the spread of drug use, and to educate the public about the ill effects of drugs.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that smoking, drinking, and using drugs are very harmful and destructive habits. They are damaging and harmful not only to those who indulge in them, but also to their future generations and to those around them. It is our moral and bounden duty to ensure that the environment is kept clean and that life on this planet, including future generations to come, are kept disease-free. Therefore, as an initial step in this direction, smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol, and using drugs must be totally stopped.

## CHAPTER VIII

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### EATING MEAT AND EGGS

**H**UMANS ARE UNIQUE BEINGS having self-consciousness, rational will, and a sense of moral judgement. As such, our actions must come up to that standard. Human morality springs from understanding the principles of Unity and Love. All-pervading Conscious Reality manifests itself in all beings. The entire creation has emanated from the same source. In this creation of diverse forms, colours, and shapes, God manifests in all. Thus, there is Unity of God and oneness of mankind. God loves all His creation equally; He creates, sustains, provides, and protects all His creatures.

Cruelty or wrongdoing to others is an act against the divine law of Unity and Love. Such acts originate in humans in their love for self, which seeks pleasure and glorification. Because of this pleasure-seeking, humans commit the error of acting against the divine law of Unity and Love, and as a result of this transgression, they continue to suffer. If, abiding by the divine law of Unity and Love, humans act out of love for all beings, they can do no harm to others because the love would stop their hands at any action, and their mind at any thought

which might hurt another being. Compassion and concern for others is the manifestation of the divine law of Unity and Love. Without compassion, there can be no righteousness in relationships with other beings.

### **Why People Eat Meat**

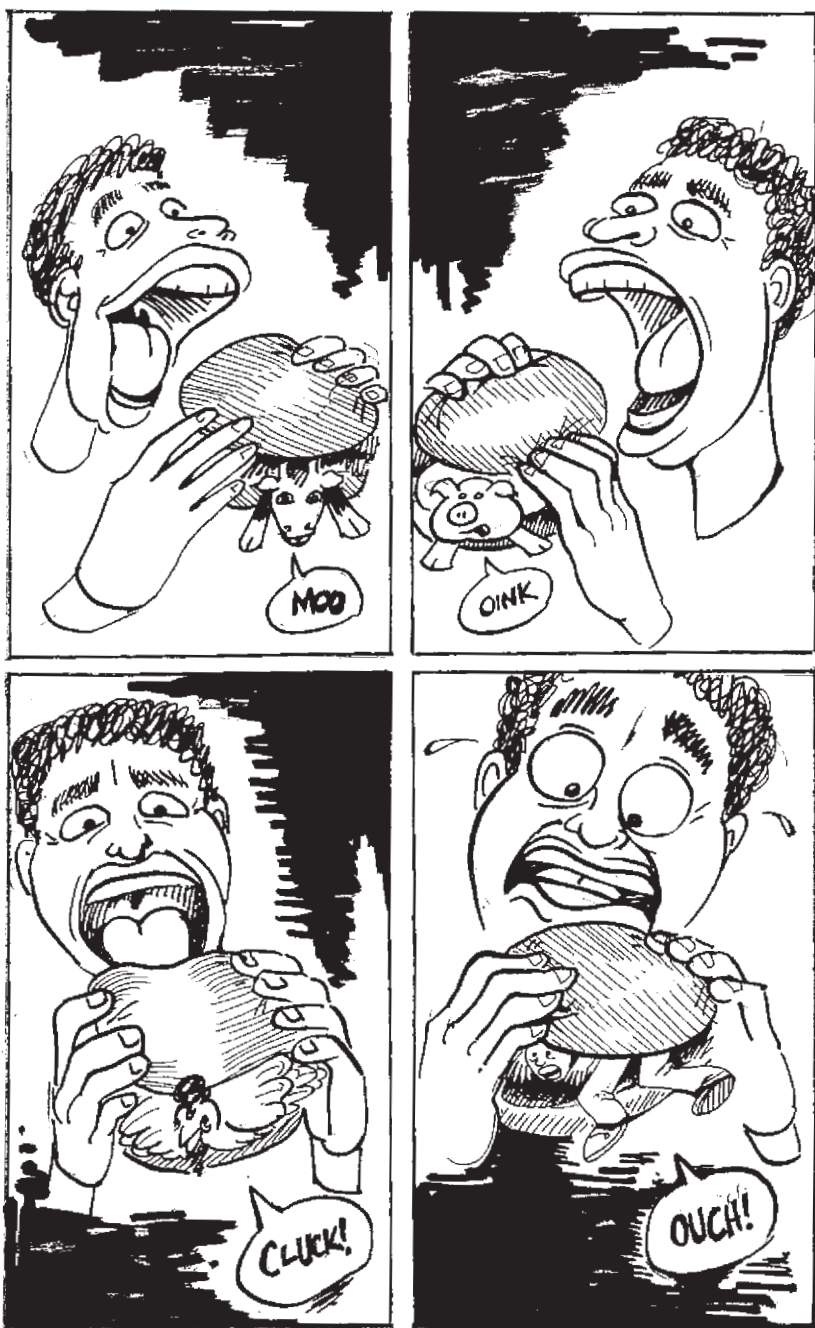
It is pleasure seeking in humans which leads them to kill animals and eat their flesh. God, who created humans, also created animals. The Creator loves His creatures equally, irrespective of their species. Will God love humans or will He punish them if they kill His creatures? Just because humans are stronger and have a clever mind, does it give them the right to kill weaker creatures with lesser minds?

People who eat meat do so because they have been brought up in a society where the diet is meat based. They have been desensitized to the fact that what is lying in their plate was actually a living creature. In the supermarket, the meat is most often sold cut up in slices, small chunks, or even minced. Once it is cooked it is transformed in such a way that nothing would betray to a very young child that he is eating a dead animal. Over a period of time, children develop a taste for meat. When they grow up they rationalize that they eat meat and eggs because it meets their nutritional requirements. But, the actual fact is that people eat flesh to gratify their sensual pleasure of taste.

### **Why We Should Not Eat Meat**

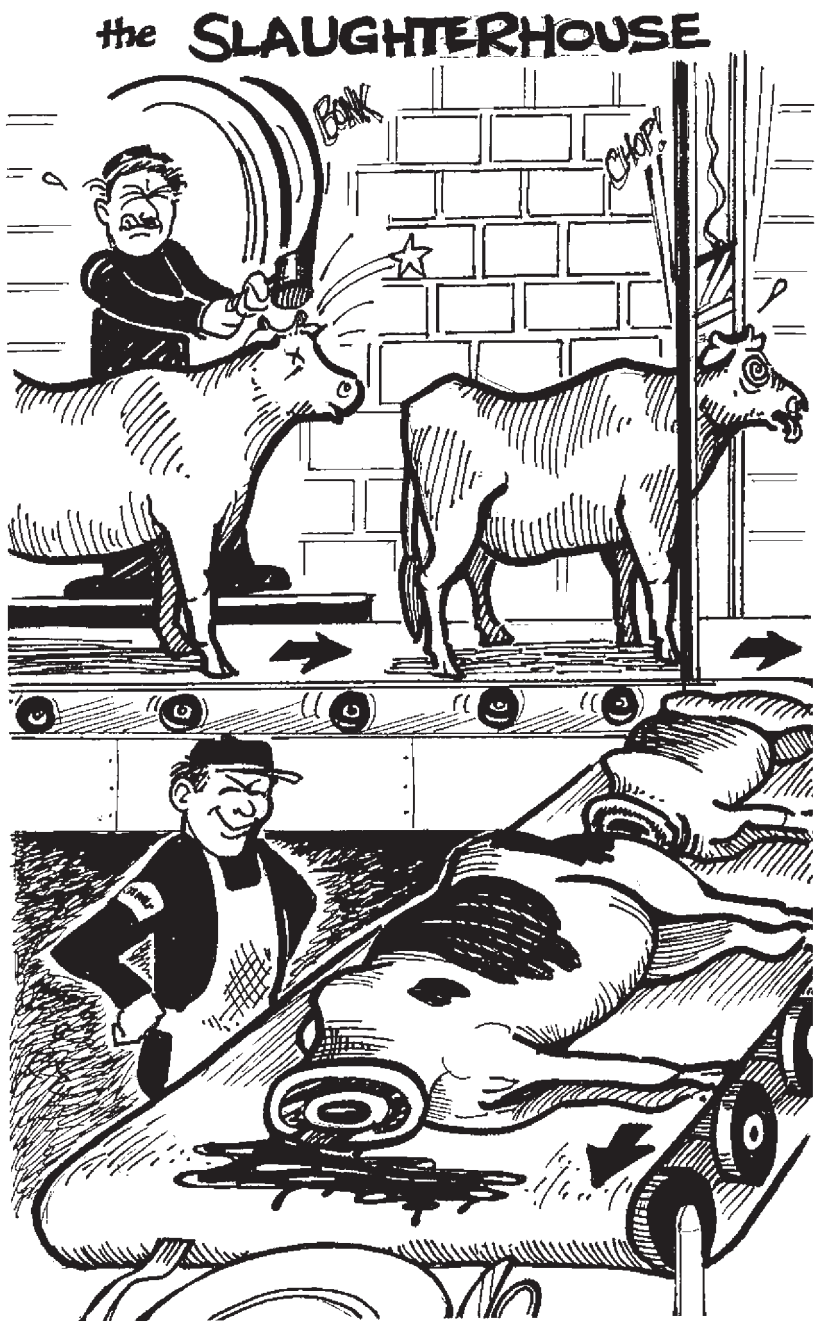
Animals have the same soul and feelings as human beings have; they also feel the same pain. Consider a dog who is so loving to his master. Until the master picks him up and gives him affection, the dog keeps on wagging its tail, rolling on the ground, and looking into its master's eyes to gain their attention. The same is the case for all other pets; they all turn to their masters looking for affection. Cats run to their masters, birds come to sit on them, and chimpanzees come to play with them. The animals feel happy and secure when they get their master's love.

For the sake of taste, human beings kill and eat animals. It is



Animals have feelings too.





The Slaughter House.

surprising that if someone hurts their pet, they go out of their way to seek justice. They even take the offender to court to get him punished. But, they are blind to the truth that all animals have the same soul, same feelings, and experience the same pain as their pets do. Just because other animals are not their pets, people do not care about them; they slaughter them and eat their flesh without hesitation. However, the truth is that to hurt other beings is wrong. To kill other creatures to satisfy one's own pleasure of taste is wrong.

A visit to a slaughterhouse will give a person first-hand experience about the bloodshed and pain caused to the animals. Helpless animals keep screaming and make crying sounds while trying to escape. They are made to stand in line awaiting their turn for death: many are hung upside down awaiting their slaughter. Very heavy sharp blades are used to sever their heads from their bodies. Blood flows all over, and the stench of dead bodies fills the building. Finally, the dead body is cut into pieces and packed as meat for sale in the market.

If anyone wants to know just how much pain animals suffer in the slaughterhouses, all that one has to do is take a knife and pierce any part of his or her own body. Can they imagine taking a dagger and piercing the heart of their own son, father, or mother? Imagine how much pain they would feel! But, because people do not know the animals personally, and because they themselves do not do the killing, they do not care about the pain the animals feel when they are butchered, and so, they continue to eat their meat without any feelings of moral anguish. When one's loved ones are physically harmed, however, they cry out against the injustice and takes the aggressor to court. It is the same life, same blood, same feeling, and same pain which flows in both humans and animals. The only difference is that animals are not endowed with the capacity to verbally express their feelings and pain in order to obtain justice.

## **Why Meat Eating is Unhealthy**

The common view that a meat diet provides better nutritional value than a vegetarian diet is false. A balanced vegetarian diet

provides all the essential nutrients and is healthier than a meat-based diet. Vegetarians eat a more wholesome and healthy diet which includes whole grain cereals, unsaturated fats obtained from vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables, and lentils. In fact, studies have proved that meat-based diets are detrimental to one's health. Meat-based diets contribute to heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, arthritis, and liver problems; high fat clogs the arteries, causing hypertension and heart disease; high protein leads to kidney failure and osteoporosis. Furthermore some diseases from which the animals suffer may be passed on to the consumer, along with drugs and toxic chemicals present in the animal's flesh. It only requires a little reflection and honest investigation to realize what meat actually is. A so-called delicacy such as steak, is nothing but the leg of a cow, and caviar is nothing but fish eggs. In reality, meat is part of a decomposing, chemically loaded, and diseased carcass.

Why then, do people continue to consume meat? People have been encouraged since childhood to eat meat. They have been fooled by the meat industry that glorifies the value of animal flesh. Though their mind may be fooled by advertisements in favour of meat, their body cannot be fooled, for it has to suffer the chronic diseases caused by meat eating. As well, vegetable-based fats and proteins are more easily digested by the human body than animal fats and proteins.

In addition to eating animal flesh, people consume eggs. The yolk of an egg is a great source of dietary cholesterol, a major cause of hypertension and heart disease. Eggs are like meat in that they have the potential to become animals themselves. It is a different matter that they may not be fertilized. Moreover, why should people eat eggs, which come out of the excretory organ of the hen? How many would like to eat eggs if they pondered over this fact? To some, it may seem obscene and unpleasant to talk of this. But, if just talking about it is so unpleasant, then is it not strange that people do not feel uncomfortable when they actually eat this product that comes out of the hen's excretory organ?

The facts in favour of vegetarianism are very strong. More and

# SCIENCE LABS



**WHADDYA' SAY WE BREAK FOR  
LUNCH? WANNA' BURGER?**

Are they not being hypocrites when they endorse two contradictory values?

more people are realizing that a meatless diet is better for them. All the required nutrients can be found in vegetables, fruits, lentils, grains, and milk products.

## **Guru's Message**

Guru Saheb exhorts us not to kill God's creatures. He says that those who kill living beings commit murder. They are sinners who keep committing sins. Causing violence to God's creatures or killing them is sinful. Countless people with dirty minds eat dirt, that is, eggs and the flesh of slaughtered animals.

Bhagat Kabir ji says that whosoever eats meat, fish, or drinks wine loses the merit of all his religious acts. He satirically asks the learned Hindu priests, who used to make sacrificial offerings to the gods and goddesses, that if killing creatures is supposed to be a righteous act, then what can be called unrighteous? If those who kill God's creatures are said to be holy, then who are the butchers?

Bhagat Kabir ji tells us, "On one hand you perform religious practices, keep fasts, and pray to God, yet on the other you kill animals for the sake of your taste and sensual gratification. All your religious acts are in vain, because you kill God's creatures and do not care about the suffering the creatures undergo as a result of your actions."

There are many hymns in Gurbaanee which state that killing God's beings is a sin which will be punished in the court of God. These hymns exhort us to behave like a human, and not like an animal. There are so many types of vegetables, fruits, and grains; why not eat them instead? Why cause pain to animals? Animals have their own role to play in nature. Even though animals might eat each other, man, as a self-conscious being with morality and judgement, should not cause injury to them.

## **Vegetarian Philosophy**

Vegetarians have a very simple philosophy, a philosophy of Unity in Existence and Love for all life. This philosophy leads to an understanding that one ought not eat food that requires killing,



Hens love their children too.

harming, or exploiting other creatures. All creatures have the same Divine Essence of God in them. As a moral human being, we have no right to take animals' lives for gratifying our sensual pleasure of taste. Animals have as much a right to live and grow as human beings have.

If a snake eats a frog, or if a tiger eats a zebra, it is a different matter: carnivorous animals eat the flesh of other animals in order to survive. They have no choice, for, they can neither grow crops, nor eat grass, leaves, or vegetables. Human beings have a choice: they can grow vegetables, fruits, and grains, and survive on vegetarian food. Therefore, they need not eat meat to survive.

The foregoing reflections have shown that from a rational, religious, and scientific point of view, killing animals and eating their flesh is not only wrong, but is absolutely unnecessary and goes against the divine laws of Unity and Love in existence.

## CHAPTER IX

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### CUTTING HAIR

**B**OTH MEN AND WOMEN, since primitive times have cut and styled their hair. Hairdressing is a means of personal adornment. People cut, trim, shave, and colour their hair in the name of comfort and style. Over the centuries, the styles have changed to suit our neverending desire for change and variety. In spite of being cumbersome and taxing on energy, time, and money, people adopt a variety of hair styles as a means of beautification.

The modern times have been characterized with significant developments in hairdressing. All the new techniques of hair styling, along with hair products such as hair dye and fixers, have developed a huge market all over the world. Because of the world-wide influence, most people automatically cut and style their hair from their childhood. Soon, the children start removing their body hair by waxing, shaving, or plucking them.

#### **Why People Cut Hair**

What are their motives behind cutting, styling, and fashioning their hair? There must be some strong motivating factors explaining

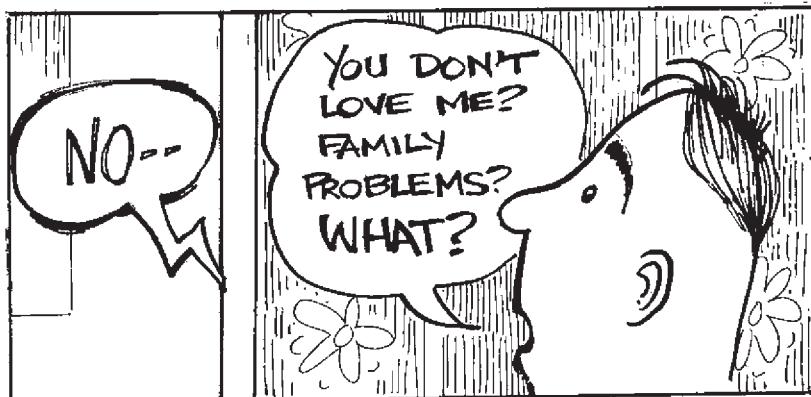


why humans have become used to cutting hair even when there is no need to do so. These motivating factors must be all-pervading, otherwise why would such a large percentage of human beings cut, shave, or remove their hair by various methods from many parts of the body? After all, they do not cut their noses, ears, fingers, or other parts of the body. The motivating factors could be either for acceptance by society, for comfort, or for attracting others. These factors will be analyzed and discussed in the following paragraphs in order to determine if they are necessary and righteous.

Some people cut their hair to be accepted in society. For social acceptance, people continue an activity, even though it may be wrong, irrational, or painful. They will not question it as long as they gain society's appreciation. Thus, people do whatever others appreciate. It becomes a vicious circle in which each member of society is trying to please the other in order to be accepted and appreciated. First, some people set a pattern of what is acceptable. In due course this becomes a social norm. People simply follow what others do. They never reflect as to whether a certain action is intrinsically right in itself and necessary. The same is the case regarding cutting and styling hair; people copy styles and fashions to be accepted in society.

There is another motive for fashioning and styling hair. Many say it is for comfort. But where is the comfort in having curls like a poodle in which the hair falls over the eyes, blocking the vision? Where is the comfort in plucking one's eyebrows, waxing and shaving one's legs and armpits? Where is the comfort in shaving one's beard every morning? Actually, it is cumbersome to cut, shave, or pick the hair. Moreover, after shaving the hair from any part of the body, the skin feels rough and irritable, due to the small stubs that remain or in any case grow again in a short time. This leads to a further problem of having to shave and get a haircut at regular intervals, taking extra time, effort, and money. All this can be saved by simply letting nature take its course.

Some people argue that long hair is harder to manage. But, in fact, it is easier to manage long hair than cut hair. Long hair can be



Some people are obsessed with how they look.

easily managed by tying it neatly in a bun, and covering it. In this way it would neither fly all over the face nor fall over the shoulders. This also saves the person the trouble of going to the barber or hair salon every few weeks. In addition, to leave one's hair intact causes no pain because it is as much a part of the body as is the face or the head.

The third motivating force for people to cut, pluck, shave, and wax their hair is to attract others. People think that the hairstyles and fashions make them look more beautiful and attractive. Actually, the natural is more beautiful. For example, in the case of men the beard is an adornment. All males in nature have been adorned: the peacock has a crest on his head and a large fan-like upper tail; the rooster has its plume, and the lion has a mane which makes him look majestic. Similarly, human males have been given a beard. Men look saintly and wise like sages, with long hair and flowing beards.

## **Hair is Just There**

People who shave and cut their hair ask those who do not, as to why they keep their hair. The question is invalid because those who have long hair do not keep it, it is just there! Do people keep their hands and legs or are they just there? They are part of the body so there is no question of keeping them. People never wonder if their nose is uncomfortable or if it needs a trim because it is too long, too broad, or too fat. It is just there. Similarly, hair is there, the beard is there, the eyebrows are there, the hair on the legs and all over the body is there. So, is it a question of keeping the hair or simply not cutting it? Which of the two is valid? In which one is the subject using their volition?

Is the wilful action implied in cutting the hair, or in keeping the hair? In which case is the action being done by the subject? In which case is the self-will being asserted by the subject, in cutting the hair or in letting nature take its course?

Cutting the hair implies volition and action on the part of the subject. It is a wilful action to assert one's self-will against the Will of God.

Therefore, the valid question to be asked is, "Why do you cut



Where is the comfort in having hair falling over the eyes, blocking the vision?

or shave your hair?” and not “Why do you grow your hair?” “Why do you keep your hair?” or “Why do you not cut or shave your hair?”

In letting the hair grow, humans are not committing an act, whereas in cutting the hair we are committing an act. In the former case, we are letting the Will of God work through us; we are accepting His Will unconditionally. In the latter case, we are denying the Will of God and asserting our self-will against God’s Will.

### **Why Should We Never Cut Hair?**

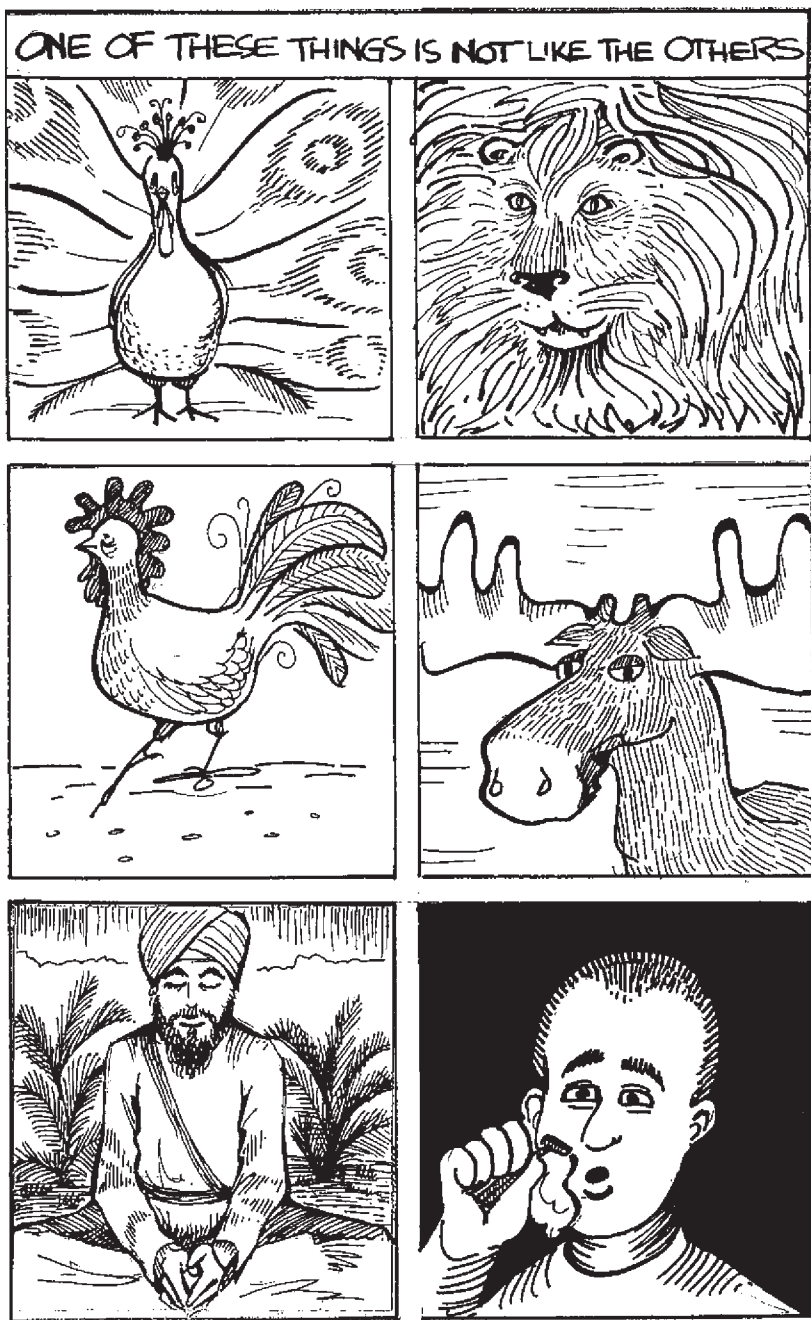
Why should human beings never cut or trim their hair? Hair is as much a gift from God as any other part of the body. Due to their ignorance, humans do not realize its importance. God knows best as to why He gave long hair to human beings on their head. No other creature has as long hair on its head as humans do. The reason behind giving such long hair to human beings is to protect the brain, which is the most vital and sensitive organ of human beings.

Humans are not aware of the spiritual reason for the gift of hair. We should remind ourselves of the Perfection of God, who has created human beings with a miraculous system which maintains and protects us against dangers and diseases.

Humans breathe many times a minute. Just think, who is running our breathing system? Are we consciously inhaling and exhaling, or is it happening of its own accord without our being constantly aware of it?

And what about our heartbeat? Do we pump our heart about 70 times a minute? Do we close and open the valves of our heart hundreds of times a minute in order to keep the blood circulating? Are we even aware that these functions are taking place? Or are they happening on their own accord?

Just think about the immune system. To keep us healthy and alive, millions of antibodies are being produced and are dying in their effort to kill foreign bodies that enter the blood stream. Are we aware of the war continuing in our system to protect us from disease? Who has created this system to keep us alive and healthy while we are busy



All males in nature have been adorned.

in the humdrum of life, unaware of what is happening in our bodies? If all these systems were not running in order, we would be dead. If our hearts stopped functioning, he would be dead in a few minutes, if not seconds.

The Perfect Being, God, who created this perfection in human systems, also created hair. Hair has a profound and subtle function to perform, of which humans are not aware. Only the Supreme Being, who has created us, knows why. If we wish to attain union with Him and enjoy eternal peace and bliss, we should abide by His Will. We should not deny His Perfection, for to do so is to deny Him.

For this reason, no human being should shave or trim his hair from any part of the body. Many are denying Him by doing away with His Gift of hair. But none of them ever attains to Him. While it is true that not all those who keep unshorn hair attain to Him, the universal truth, is however, that all those who attained union with Him had unshorn hair. For example, Moses, Jesus, Prophet Mohammed, and Zoroaster had unshorn hair and beard. It goes without saying that no Guru nor any of his saint-soldier Sikhs ever removed hair from any part of their body by any method.

Those who shave, trim, or remove their hair, do so because of their weakness of either desire for lust, comfort, acceptance by others, or a combination of all these factors. Those who abide by God's Will do not cut or remove their hair from any part of the body, for hair is a gift of God.

### **Why is it Right to Cut Nails?**

Some people wonder that if cutting hair is acting against the Will of God, then is not cutting nails also acting against the Will of God? The following explanation shows why it is necessary to cut nails.

If we reflect on the workings of our bodies, we will find that excretion of waste and dead matter from the body is part of its normal functioning. The excretory functions are necessary for the well-being of the body; if they fail, the situation becomes life-threatening.

There are various excretory processes in the body that help

excrete waste. When we breathe, we inhale oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. If the carbon dioxide was not expelled from our bodies, we would die of carbon dioxide poisoning. Besides the excretion of carbon dioxide, the automatic process of excretion continues through millions of pores in the skin. Waste material comprising various toxic chemicals is exuded through the pores as sweat. Furthermore, through this involuntary process, controlled by the central nervous system, waste is exuded in various forms through the mouth, nose, ears, and eyes, to keep the body clean. It goes without saying that the above processes of expelling waste are absolutely necessary for survival. It is not possible for a person to keep track of, and voluntarily control the above excreting processes. They are, therefore, automatic and beyond one's direct control.

Waste material is also excreted out of the body by way of urine and feces. But these are not discharged from the body automatically; there is some voluntary muscle control involved. If the waste is not released through the body's excretory organs, then pain results and infections in the bladder and colon occur. Though man has some voluntary control to excrete urine and excreta from his body at will, he cannot retain them in his body indefinitely. When the waste builds up in the bladder and colon, the biological mechanism in man signals him to voluntarily excrete it. The waste has to be expelled by the system, otherwise various organs such as the bladder and colon may get damaged and infected due to the pressure exerted by the waste material. The general health of the person then slowly deteriorates. Eventually, the physiological system works to force the waste material out of the body; it is biologically necessary to keep the body as clean and free from foreign matter as possible. Therefore, humans have only partial voluntary control over the excretion of waste material accumulated in their bladder and colon.

There are other ways to get rid of harmful waste from the body. These are under our full control; we use our external motor organs to remove such waste material from our bodies. We take baths to get rid of dirt and sweat from our bodies. We apply soap and rub our bodies.



In this process, waste material that has come out of the pores of our skin is washed off; dead skin is scrubbed off, and dead and weak hair fall off. One can notice this residual waste material, particularly hair, in the tub after a bath. Can humans refrain indefinitely from taking a bath? Technically, we can because these processes of removing waste material are solely under our control, as against those processes which are automatic or under our partial control. However, it is biologically necessary that dirt and waste material are removed from the body. If this biological necessity is disregarded by humans, then obviously, we are going to suffer from many skin diseases and infections. We will live an unhygienic and unhealthy life, detrimental to our general well-being and to the well-being of those around us.

It has been discussed in the above paragraph that when it comes to removing harmful waste material from the exterior body, it is voluntary on the part of humans. This is also true with regards to removing dead hair from the scalp and from the beard. For removing the weak and dead hair from the scalp and beard, we use a comb or a brush. If we let the dead hair remain and accumulate, the hair on our scalps will get entangled; dirt and dandruff will collect in the hair, thus, providing a conducive environment for the growth of ticks, lice, and germs. This in turn will cause various skin infections and diseases. It is, therefore, necessary that we keep our hair cleansed and combed. The important point to be noted here is that man uses an external instrument (comb or brush) for removing the dead hair from his scalp and beard.

As is the case with removing dead hair, so is the case with removing the dead part of the nails. According to the principle of biological necessity, anything which is harmful, waste, or dead must be removed from the body. A little reflection will show that keeping the dead part of the nail is unhygienic and harmful to oneself, just as is letting dead hair remain in one's hair on the scalp. In addition to being harmful to one's own health, long nails can cause injury to others and can spread diseases.

Another reason which necessitates cutting nails is that of

functional necessity; people with long nails cannot efficiently perform general day-to-day functions with their hands. How can a person with long nails pick up objects, type, do up their buttons, wash their hair, or even write with the same ease and efficiency as a person having short nails? There are hundreds of jobs such as gardening, farming, plumbing, carpentry, electrical fitting, automobile repair, nursing, dentistry, and surgery, which cannot be performed with any efficiency by those who have long nails.

Yet another reason which necessitates cutting nails is that long nails can cause injury to oneself during activities such as bathing, playing, and cooking. Those with long nails can also cause injury to children while caring, nursing, feeding, and cleaning them.

Keeping long nails is very dangerous for the health as the dirt collected under them can be the source of spreading various contagious diseases as well as food poisoning. While cooking or eating food, the dirt can pass into it, and the food may become contaminated. This is why health inspectors inspect restaurants and check those dealing with food to ensure they are hygienic and that their nails are cut and clean; they also check that their head is kept covered so that hair does not fall in the food. Imagine a person with long nails having worked with garbage and dirt, having scratched his body where there was an infection, or having just come out of the washroom; all the dirt that they have dealt with will stick under their long nails and pass into the food.

In any case, why do people want long nails? Nails are an obstacle in day to day functioning. For hygienic and functional reasons, it is necessary that people cut their nails; only the dead part of the nails needs to be cut, not the whole nails. Just as dead hair is removed with a comb, the dead part of nails, which grow beyond the finger, should be cut with a nail cutter. The nail cutter is as much an external instrument as the comb. It is only a different instrument for the purpose of eliminating the dead, harmful part from the body.

From the foregoing reflections, one can conclude that it is

necessary to cut nails. The necessity to cut nails arises from hygienic and functional reasons. Long nails can cause injury and spread diseases. They are an interference in the performance of day-to-day chores as well as daily work done to earn a living. With regards to hair, they do not interfere in the performance of daily chores or work life. In fact, they protect our most important organ, the brain, which is housed in the skull. However, in the case of hair, just as in the case of nails, dead hair is removed. The only difference is that dead hair is removed with a comb and dead nails with a nail cutter.

Thus, at the core of the above discussion lies the principle of necessity. It is for the individual to reflect on the necessity of cutting hair, plucking eyebrows, or shaving the beard and legs. A little reflection will reveal that there is no necessity in cutting or shaving hair, but there is a necessity in cutting nails.

### **Guru's Message**

All the Gurus had unshorn hair. They never cut their hair nor trimmed or shaved their beards. In fact, they never removed hair from any part of their body by any means. The Gurus knew that the Perfect God has given a form to humans which they have no reason to alter. Altering it would be acting against the Will of God. The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh ji, proclaimed it mandatory for a Sikh to have unshorn hair in order to receive amrit (baptism). Removing hair from any part of the body by any means is one of the four cardinal sins for an amritdhari Sikh. An amritdhari Sikh who violates this discipline is considered an apostate, and is outcast from the Brotherhood of Khalsa. They can only re-enter the Brotherhood of Khalsa after voluntarily confessing their transgression and getting re-baptised.

In conclusion we may say that hair is as much a gift of nature to us as any other part of our body. The hair is just there. It is there for a purpose. This purpose is partly clear to us; the hair on the skull protects the brain, the most important organ of our body. The hair on the rest of our body also has a function to perform; countless number of pores in our skin are protected by the hair. There could be other

deeper purposes for which hair is there on our body, but, ordinary humans are not aware of them; these purposes are spiritual in nature. Only when one reaches higher states of consciousness, does one come to realize these. But we do know that spiritually enlightened sages and seers have never cut their hair; they leave it on their bodies as given by Mother Nature.

Those who cut, shave, trim, or remove their hair by plucking or waxing, do so for their selfish motives; no one does anything without a motive unless one is in stupor or under a hypnotic spell. The motives one can think of for cutting hair are: to be accepted by people, for comfort, or for pleasure in lustful relations.

Our reflections on all these positions have shown us that a reflective and introspective person, who wants to act out of the principles of righteousness and necessity, in order to attain a state of complete harmony and peace, respects nature's gift and never resorts to cutting, shaving, or removing hair from any part of their body by any means.

# **PART 2**

**INTERNAL FORCES:**

**THE FIVE  
PASSIONS  
ENSLAVING  
HUMANS**

## CHAPTER X

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### Ego

**W**HAT IS EGO? Ego is the specific expression of universally pervading consciousness which takes experience as mine. Its function is self-assertion. In other words, ego is a sense of individuality which tries to assert itself over others. This sense of individual identity makes a person stand apart from others and generates a feeling that one is different from others. From ego is born the sense of 'I' and 'thou', and 'mine' and 'thine'. Thus, the disease of duality and comparison begins. This is the delusion (Maayaa), the offspring of ignorance.

The truth is that the same essence is there in all human beings. In fact, the same essence pervades in all beings and in all existence. But, due to error in perception arising out of ignorance, we identify ourselves with our body, mind, and memories, and thus, we stand apart from others as a separate individual. That which does not comprise our body, mind, and memories (ourselves), we consider as others (non-self). As a consequence, we identify ourselves with our self and consider all else as non-self.

## **Ego - A Disease of Comparison**

Because of our identification with self, it is natural that our concern is mostly for ourself. We want to assert that we are better than others; we want to reach higher and higher, and become greater in all fields. This desire shows up in his competitions with those around us. In brief, it is a disease of comparison. Humans compare themselves with others and want to be superior in every field, whether it be education, athletics, physical strength, knowledge, clothing, beauty, power, wealth, or social status.

Even in religious spheres, the same disease of comparison continues: “I sing better, I play instruments better, I have more knowledge of the religion.” One tries to show superiority in holiness by indulging in trivialities such as wearing clothing printed with holy words, and putting on items such as rosaries and chakkars, which are regarded by others as symbols of holiness, and purity. Thus, comparison continues in both secular and religious spheres of life.

Comparison creates competition from the beginning of one’s life. Since parents suffer from the disease of comparison and ego-assertion, children also get infected by it.

Even before children go to school, parents inject them with the disease of ego. Parents start training children at home so that they will compete with others at school. To please their parents, children work very hard and compete with others even at the cost of forsaking their childhood fun and games. If they get lower marks in comparison to others, they are told, “What good are you? You will never get anywhere in life, you will end up working in a factory or at a gas station. You are a disgrace to the family.” Children are rejected for failing to perform better than their peers. In contrast, if their marks are higher than others, they are showered with praise and approval for being better than others. They eventually come to look forward to this recognition and acceptance. For this self-recognition, they work harder and harder, day and night, and suffer in the pursuit of ego.

When a child reaches adolescence, their sense of ego develops

as they internalize the values taught by their parents and society. They compulsively compare themselves with others, and try to show that they are greater and superior. The painful race of ego starts in childhood and continues throughout their education and career; it ends only with their death.

## **A Race with No Finish Line**

Just to show that they are greater than others, humans want more university degrees, more wealth, larger houses, and expensive cars. Humans desire to become a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer, or any other professional held in high regard by society. Thus, humans willingly accept a great amount of suffering and privation for earning recognition and honour in society. In spite of the fact that they undergo suffering and pain, they continue running the race for achieving status, power, and wealth.

When someone is not fully satisfied with the recognition gained by becoming rich and powerful, they start spending the amassed wealth by donating to charities, and by holding religious functions with great pomp and show to earn more recognition and honour.

It is clear that this race of ego-glorification is doomed to failure because every individual is trying to defeat the other; in striving for the top, an endless rat-race begins. At least rats can find food after the race and feel satisfied. But humans are neither satiated nor ever fulfilled in this race. Each individual competes as if he were the enemy of all others, trying to prove that they are greater than others. Everyone is in this race for the purpose of self-recognition. It is, therefore, obvious that this race is doomed to failure, leaving the countless competitors thirsty, hungry, and craving to become the most powerful and the greatest. It is a contradiction to expect everyone to be at the top, for there can be only one person at the top. Anyone who appears to be reaching the top is pulled down by others who are trying to defeat them. In a way, then all those who aspire to be at the top are foolish; they forever suffer the pain of ego.

The result is two types of pain. First, in running the race to

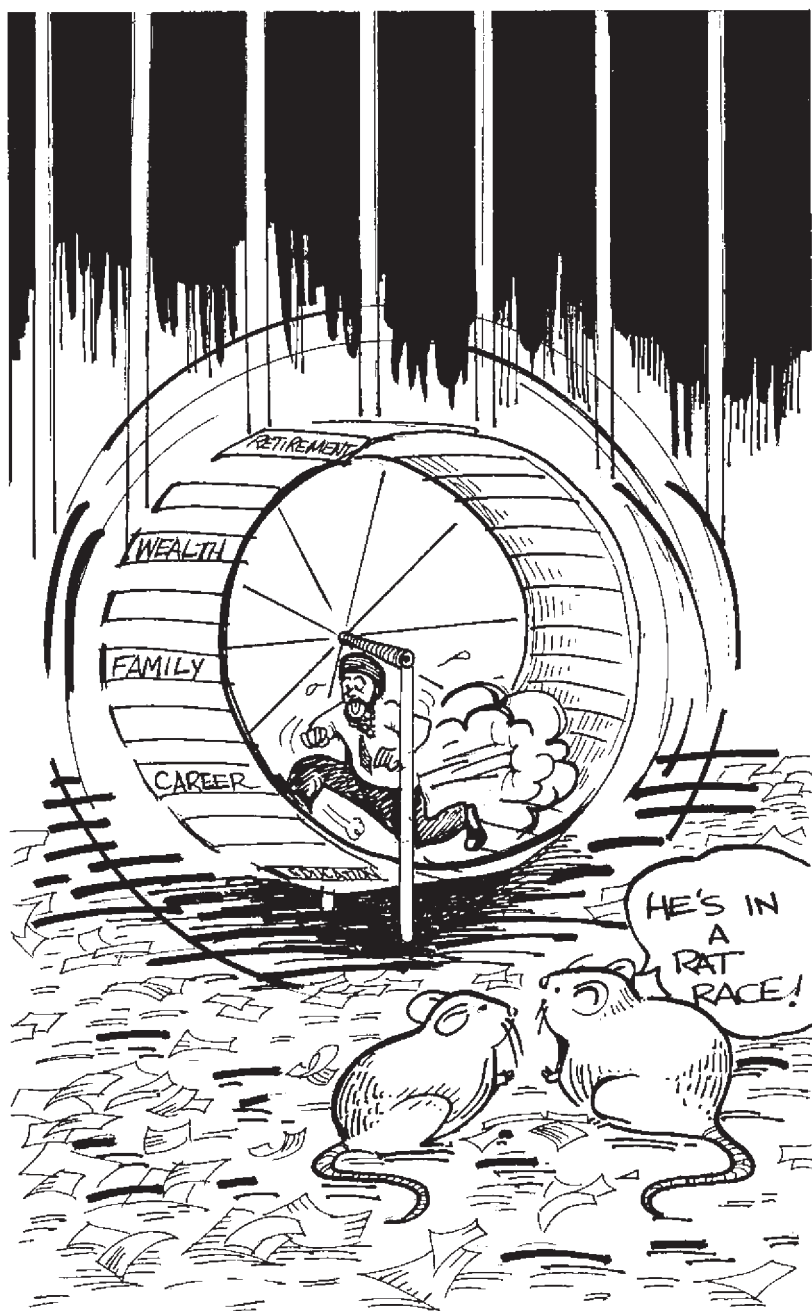


climb higher and higher, humans find themselves under continuous stress and tension. Second, when they think that they have reached the “finish line”, they discover that this finish line is the starting line for many others. Thus, they find that their pursuit for supremacy is a delusion. There is no question of a human being reaching the finish line; there is always the next peak. Unless one effaces one’s ego, there is no chance of being released from the pain of ego.

### **Comparison with No Intrinsic Standards**

The disease of comparison has no intrinsic standards, attaining which one would be satisfied. It is all a matter of asserting that “I am greater than others”. For example, in a class of 40 students, if a person were to achieve a mark of 80%, it neither means anything from the point of view of experiencing pleasure through ego-recognition nor does it mean experiencing pain through ego-insult. What matters is whether the mark of 80% is higher or lower than others. If everyone else earned less than 80%, then he or she is at the top of the class, and feels like he or she is on top of the world. However, if everyone else has a mark higher than 80%, then he or she becomes the lowest in the class, and feels like he or she is at the bottom of the world. Note that his or her mark has remained unchanged at 80%, but his or her feelings change depending on whether he or she has done better or worse in comparison to others. This demonstrates that there is no intrinsic standard for ego fulfilment, achieving which, one may feel happy and satisfied. The disease of ego is simply the disease of self-recognition and comparison with others.

Similarly, there is no standard of wealth, achieving which, one can say they are at peace. Suppose a man has one million dollars, a large house, an expensive car, and lives in a neighbourhood where all others have assets of less than \$100,000 each, with an average house and car. Then, in spite of the fact that he may be an ordinary good man, the neighbours will treat him with respect, and he will always derive a sense of pleasure from this respect and recognition. Now, thinking



The never ending rat-race of ego.

that he is a very rich man as compared to others in the neighbourhood, he decides to move to a neighbourhood of higher social status, where all members are multimillionaires and very highly placed. Upon his arrival in this new neighbourhood, he finds himself at the lowest rung of the social ladder and finds that nobody cares much about him. In social gatherings, people of this neighbourhood interact among themselves and ignore him. So he feels a sense of pain due to lack of ego recognition in this society. His wealth of a million dollars has not changed. What has changed is that comparatively, he is the poorest in the new neighbourhood, whereas he was the richest in the old neighbourhood. This shows that there are no absolute standards of wealth, attaining which, a person may be happy and at peace. One can attain happiness only through understanding the nature of reality of the things around them.

### **Liking is Drawing Pleasure**

Another aspect which relates to ego pain or pleasure is the aspect of clothing, cosmetics, and jewelry. When people are asked why they wear printed flashy clothing, nail polish, lipstick, jewelry, hair colouring, and eye-shadow, they reply that they like it. If they are told that their liking implies that they are hankering for ego-recognition, and that through this ego-recognition they are trying to reduce their ego pain, they do not readily agree. But when they are asked to investigate the fact that these items of dress and decoration neither satisfy their physiological needs nor their moral or spiritual needs, and that they satisfy only their need for ego-recognition, the reflective ones among them understand the point. The point is that whenever people say they like a certain thing, what they mean is that either they draw pleasure of ego-recognition out of it, or that it reduces their ego pain.

### **Getting Out of the Game**

The whole game is of being recognized by society. The pain of non-recognition is the worst; whereas the physiological pain or the

pain from boredom comes and goes, the pain of non-recognition is continuous. However, there are times when we may be temporarily out of the pain of non-recognition. This happens when we are not caught up by the values of the world; when we are not in the company of those people who glorify the worldly values. When we introspect or reflect: and asks ourselves, “Why do I have to accept the values of this world?”, we find that we are more peaceful. With the help of such reflections, we can start extricating ourselves out of the ego-race. However, these thoughts come only when one gains the wisdom that all are part of the same existence; that it is the same All-Pervading Supreme Being who is in all. By understanding the truth that all beings are intrinsically the same, one stops asserting one’s ego on others. By asserting our ego on others, by claiming that we are better than others, we hurt others, and thus, sin against our very self. If we have the Guru’s wisdom in us, then we can make the right choice. Without the right choice, we sin and suffer forever. We carry the burden of guilt which stems from our failure in our moral obligation to choose and act rightly.

### **Guru’s Message**

Guru Sahib tells us that ego is the most serious and chronic disease from which we suffer. Ego binds us. Whatever we do out of ego, whether good or bad, we are chained by it. We suffer because we want things to happen our way. As long as we hope for results in accordance with our will, our suffering continues. However, this disease of ego carries within it the seed of its own destruction; that seed is the suffering that it brings. The suffering continues as long as the desire to assert one’s ego continues. When we realize that the cause of our suffering is our ego, we try to efface our ego. The only way the suffering comes to an end is by surrendering one’s own will to God’s Will, and living in accordance with the instructions of Guru Sahib.

Ego causes us to sin; it is the cause of our coming and going in the cycle of birth and death. It is due to ego that estrangement among

friends occur and that staunch enemies are made. It is ego which makes humans spread out far and wide, and thus, tires them; it is ego which keeps humans ever wandering, experiencing pleasure and pain; it is ego which makes humans walk through the utter wilderness of doubt and duality, and afflicts them with incurable diseases. Says Guru Nanak Saheb: God alone is the Cure of the deep malady of ego: therefore, pray and seek His help.

Ego is, therefore, the root cause of our problems. Humans go through all types of hardships and pain to elevate themselves in society. It is because of ego that we try to glorify ourselves by possessing people, power, material wealth, and knowledge.

The disease of ego starts in childhood when values of society are ingrained into the minds of children. For the sake of earning appreciation and an esteemed position in society, they keep on doing whatever people want them to do. Though they continue to suffer, they work more and more to get degrees and diplomas, more wealth, big houses, cars, expensive clothing, and jewelry. They work for these things untiringly because they perceive them as end goals of their lives.

People have endless desires. These desires are unfulfillable. They keep recurring in one form or another. However, most desires spring from the root desire for ego glorification. When goals and wants are not fulfilled, tension builds up inside and there is no peace of mind. All people want peace. Peace can only be attained when there are no cravings, hankerings, or desires; all these spring out of our efforts to glorify ourselves. It follows that if we can efface our ego then we can be in peace, harmony, and joy. But, is an ego-less state attainable? Yes, it is. An ego-less state can be attained by living in accordance with Guru Saheb's instructions.

## CHAPTER XI

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# IDENTIFICATION (ATTACHMENT)

**I**DENTIFICATION, greed, anger, and lust are the offspring of ego. Ego is their master. They are instrumental in serving the ego. As explained in the previous chapter, ego is the sense of individualism in humans. It takes itself to be different from others and perceives them as a threat to itself. One may question that if this was true, then why would social interactions take place? The answer is that there are two forces working in man: one of love, which pulls people together; and the other of ego, which asserts its individualism. In order to understand this truth at a deeper level, one must understand that ego is the specific or individualized expression of the all pervading general consciousness. The assertion of ego that it is greater than others is fundamentally an effort to overcome its feeling of insecurity and threat from powerful others.

With ego driving one to assert their superiority over others, humans try to possess more and more material objects, people, power, status, and knowledge. When they come to possess some of these, they identify themselves with them as if they were them. Their possessions become their ego extensions. They identify themselves with their ego

extensions to such an extent that any insult, damage, or loss incurred to them is felt by them as if it was they who suffered from them. When the people, objects, or ideologies with which they identify are appreciated or praised, they feel elated and happy. Thus, their identification with others brings them both joy and suffering.

At the core of ego is the sense of “I”, in contrast to others. At the core of attachment or identification is the sense of mine, as against thine. When I extends into something, I becomes mine.

### **Error in Perception**

Whatever one possesses, one perceives as mine. It is the possessive sense of I which leads to a wrong belief and error in perception that things and people are mine. For example, people say “my son”, “my daughter”, “my wife”, “my husband”, “my house”, “my religion”, “my idea”. The error is the claim that “my son is mine”. In fact, the son is a person, an individual with his own consciousness, mind, and body. He has his own ego, around which his world revolves and evolves. Similarly, an animal, tree, or rock is a thing in itself. It is there by itself; it has its own contents; it exists not because of the possessor’s ego but because it is there.

The human’s error in perception and belief does not stop at their possessive sense of mine. When their ego extends into things or people, it is the person themselves extending into the thing or person which they claim to possess. It is as if they flow out of themselves and become the objects; they become one with them. There is a feeling of identity with the objects. Whatever happens to the object, is felt as if happening to the person identifying with it. This error in perception is the cause of great suffering and misery. As it is, it is difficult enough for humans to deal with the problems created by their own ego. By identifying with others, they take upon themselves others’ problems as well, and thus, multiply their suffering.

Thus, much of human suffering is due to identification, which is rooted in delusion (Maayaa), arising out of the sense of individuation

and possession, that is, the sense of I am (Ahang) and mine (Mamtaa).

## **We Identify with Ego-Extensions**

When a man gets married, his ego extends into his spouse and he identifies with her. If she is praised in society, she of course feels happy, but her husband, who identifies with her, also feels elated and happy. On the other hand, if she is insulted in society, she feels insulted and so does her husband. Thus, identification brings suffering as well as happiness. But both are unreal, because they depend on others' state of mind. When children are born, parents identify with them. The children become their ego extensions, the source of their ego fulfilment.

Parents feel proud when children bring home good results from school. They even exaggerate their children's performances in showing off to other parents and relatives. In contrast, if their children do poorly, parents feel ashamed and insulted. They try to avoid talking about their children to others because of their sense of shame. From their identification with their children, parents come to see their children's successes or failures as their own. The same is true in most close relationships.

A person's ego extends to anything with which they identify, be it an object, idea, ideology, person, family, race, religion, caste, creed, sports team, celebrity, country, or nationality. If any of these are glorified, one feels as if they themselves are glorified. If any of these are criticized, one feels as if they have been criticized. For example, if a man's house, sofa, car, or clothing is criticized, he feels hurt even though the truth is that he is neither the house, the sofa, the car, nor the clothing he wears.

A person becomes that with which they identify. For example, a person identifying with the ideologies of a political party says, "I am a Liberal", "I am a Conservative", "I am a Socialist". Similarly, a person identifying with the beliefs of a religion says "I am Christian", "I am Hindu", "I am Sikh", "I am Muslim", "I am Jewish". Similarly, people identify themselves with races, castes, creeds, and nationalities.



## **A Mistaken Love**

Identification results in attachment. When a person gets intensely attached to any object or person, they feel a constant pull towards it. As a result, separation from the object is felt as pain; wherever the object goes, the person's heart is pulled by it and goes with it. The pull is due to error in perception because of identification. People mistake it for love.

Actually, Real Love is the most blissful experience that one can have. Existence is Love: it is the Real Love: it is the ultimate experience of Bliss and Beauty. It comes out of realizing the Truth behind the phenomenal existence. Real Love is Universal; it is the basis of the Unity of Existence of various forms and names. However, because worldly people know not the Real, they believe the unreal to be the Real. Hence, the pull coming from attachment with external objects is termed as love.

Such love is narrow and selfish because it springs from one's ego to possess others and to draw pleasure and satisfaction out of them. This false love is glorified by society as if it is the Real Love. Worldly people know only a counterfeit love which is simply a fraud. Love in all the relations of the world, be it mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife, or friend, is largely superficial.

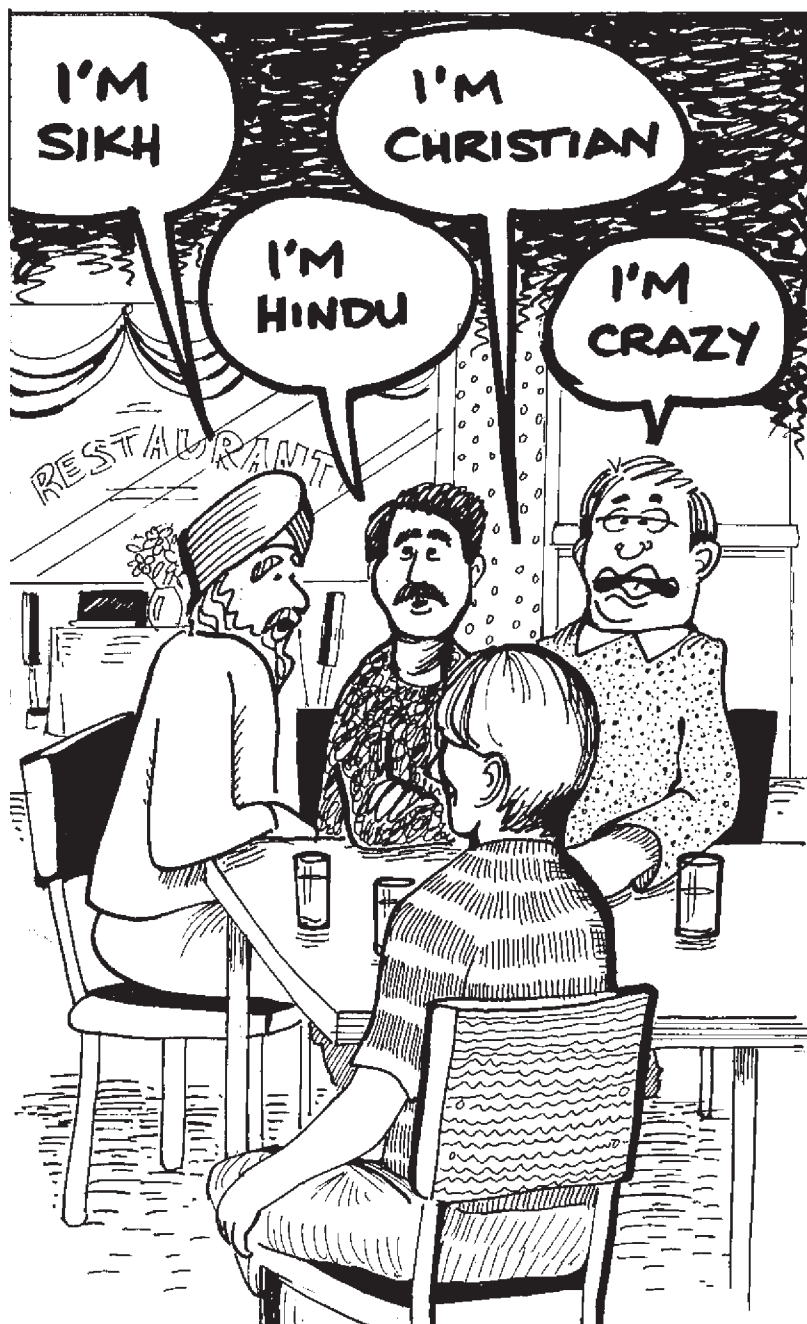
At the root of one's love is the ego's desire to glorify itself by possessing others. However, because one gets attached to whatever one possesses, one suffers when one is separated from the object of attachment due to any reason, be it death, divorce, or conflict. The suffering is due to an error in believing that the superficial love is the Real Love.

## **Identification Leads to Suffering**

If one reflects on the phenomenon of identification and attachment, it will be easy to understand that identification leads to extreme suffering. Parents identify themselves with their children and



Due to identification, the children's successes become the parents' successes.



Man's identification with his ideologies affects him the most.

consider them as their extensions. They love their children because they are attached to them. But, when children become the source of insult and dishonour, parents feel hurt and dislike them. At times, this dislike grows strong and intense. Under such conditions, two opposite emotions exist in the parents at the same time: They love their children because they are attached to them; yet, they dislike them because they bring dishonour to the family.

This state of liking and disliking the same object at the same time is a state of ambivalence. When one loves and hates the same object at the same time, great anxiety is caused and life becomes miserable.

The people with whom one is attached, are perceived by them as dear; they cannot live happily without them. When they separate from them, they feel great suffering. For example, when a son or daughter dies, the parents suffer immensely. To some people the separation becomes so unbearable that life loses all its charm and beauty.

## **Levels of Identification**

Identification with one's body is very deep. Humans love their body to such an extent that the thought of death upsets them and makes them feel terrified. They can drop identification with an object or person, but they cannot think of de-identifying themselves from their body. The identification with the body is so strong that one actually feels that they are the body. They can sacrifice any other object or person that they are identified with but cannot sacrifice their body because they cannot conceive of their existence without the body. Therefore, human love of their body is very deep, and the thought of death, that is, separation from the body, is very painful.

Deeper than one's identification with their body is their identification with their ideas and ideology. People are ready to die to uphold their ideologies, be it religious or political. But such is not nearly the case over differences in physical appearance or even mental capacity.

For example, if person A was to comment that person B is fat or

has some physical disability, then B would not be disturbed, and may even accept such remarks without offence. But, if A told B that he was crazy or dumb, B may feel so offended and disturbed that he may avoid A or completely break-off from him. This shows that we identify more with our mental capacity than with our physical body.

## **Identification Leads to False Beliefs and Wars**

Identification with one's ideologies affects them the most. If A told B that his religious beliefs and ideologies are stupid, or that his prophet's ideas are crazy, B may react so wildly that A's life may even be in danger. This shows that one's identification with one's ideologies, beliefs, and faith are the deepest. Religious wars take place because of one's identification with one's religion. It is because of this identification with a religion that followers of a religion believe that their religion is the only true religion and that their scriptures are the only true scriptures, thereby believing that all other religions and religious scriptures are false. This identification with their religion makes them so blind that they do not hesitate to proclaim that their prophet was the only true prophet and that there will never be another prophet afterwards. Due to the identification with their religion, they become so blind to the truth that they do not understand that by holding such beliefs and making such claims, they are passing a judgement on God's Omnipotence. In fact, what they are saying is that God is so limited in power that he cannot send another prophet to this planet. People with such beliefs are the ones who aggressively try to convert others to their religion. This is because they identify with the belief that humanity can be saved only through their religion.

Identification with the aforementioned beliefs results in wars in which millions are killed. For example, millions of lives were lost in the battles between the Christians and the Muslims during the Crusades. In the Second World War, over 6 million Jews were killed by Hitler on the basis of his ideology. Throughout history, many rulers falsely representing their religions have used a policy of forcible conversion, where anyone who did not belong to the ruler's

religion had to either accept the ruler's religious ideology, or death. Until a few years ago, much of the world was split up into two blocs: the Democratic countries, such as the United States, England, West Germany; and the Communist countries such as U.S.S.R., Poland, and East Germany. Hundreds of thousands died fighting for their political ideology. But for the recent change in the world's political ideology which has shifted in favour of democracy, millions more would have died fighting to prove superiority of their political ideology. This is the consequence of mass identification.

Thus, we see that the disease of identification can travel from family members to mass identification at the religious and political ideology levels, causing widespread suffering.

All identification or attachment with objects, persons, religion, caste, colour, creed, nationality, or ideology creates bondage. Human consciousness remains chained to those with which one is attached to or identified with.

### **Shifting Pulls**

Attachment implies a pull. All the objects with which one is attached to, pull them. When someone says they are in love with someone, what they mean is that they are pulled by the one with whom they are in love. They, in turn want to possess the person they are pulled by. Because our consciousness is identified with or attached to thousands of objects, persons, or ideas, our minds never find rest. One keeps wandering from one object to another; their I keeps shifting from one object to another. For example, one moment they say "I like this", and another moment later they say, "No, I like that instead". As a result of this wandering, there is never unity within them; there are constant inner divisions. Because there are inner divisions, they wander and never find peace; their heart is ever restless. At one moment, their I identifies with one desire, at another moment, it identifies with a desire which is totally in contradiction to the earlier one. These contradictions create confusion in one's mind, resulting in a state of turmoil, tension, and anxiety.

Unless there is complete harmony, equilibrium, and peace within, there is no chance of a person being with his being. Arrested by their desires arising out of their attachment to worldly objects, their consciousness keeps travelling at the surface, pursuing objects of this world. In such a state of consciousness there can neither be any contentment nor any peace. Consequently there can be no chance of seeking the Real within. Only when one is contented, and when one seeks the Truth, do they have a chance to realize the Real within.

### **Guru's Message**

People say that they love their family and friends, but do they really? Actually, what they love is the pleasure they get out of relationships with other persons. Guru Saheb says that the "whole world is trading with you. Everyone is bonded with you for the sake of their own self-interest". Their love is not real love. When the person they claim they love, departs from the body, they burn or bury the dead body within hours. They do not want to keep his dead body in the house even for a few days. Where is the love? Where is the affection? It is simply a utilitarian relationship. As long as the person is alive, they are useful and are, therefore, cared for. But, even while alive, if the person becomes an obstacle or a source of insult or injury, the 'love' is dropped within seconds and replaced with hatred. Most relationships are characterized by a state of ambivalence in which both love and hatred are experienced towards a person at the same time.

Are the people one loves and those who love them really their's? They work for them day and night and eventually they leave them. Guru Saheb says that neither one's parents nor their children really love them. Everybody is seeking their own self-interest.

God reveals Himself in the heart of those who love Him, who surrender themselves to Him, who ever cherish Him, who have no other love but of Him, who neither identify with their bodies nor with others. The consciousness of those who love God, is filled with His Love. They develop love for all humanity as they see Him pervading in His Creation.

“O God, we are full of sins and have no merits. Forsaking the nectar of God’s Love we partake only of the poison of delusion, and thus, suffer. We have gone astray due to doubt created by delusion; we are identified with and attached to our sons and wives. Sublime is the path of the Guru, meeting whom all the dread of death vanishes. The bard Keerat prays: O Guru Raamdaas keep me ever in thy Refuge.” Those who have become detached from within, the True One makes their life noble. Guru Saheb says that this wisdom to detach oneself from the worldliness is obtained from the Guru, and it is with the Guru’s Grace that Bliss is attained.



## CHAPTER XII

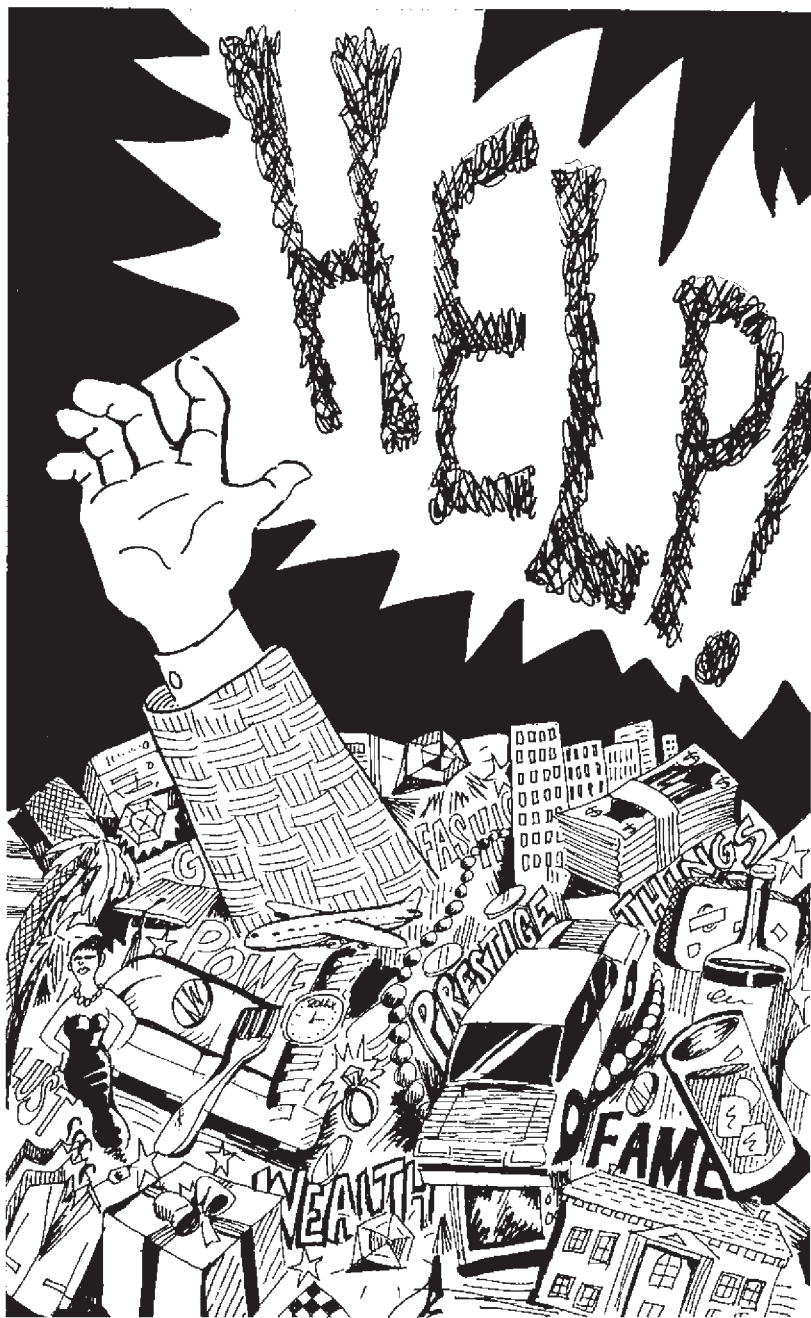
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### GREED

**H**UMAN EXISTENCE comprises three dimensions, physical, mental, and spiritual. These dimensions are not separate compartments; they form an integral unit. While the mind is like a bridge connecting the physical and the spiritual, neither the physical nor the spiritual can exist separately. Therefore, it is necessary for the existence of life that one's physical body be maintained. It is in this context that the food, shelter, and clothing required for maintenance of life, are considered as basic biological necessities. The efforts made by an individual to earn enough money to meet the biological necessities for the maintenance of life cannot be classified as greed.

#### What is Greed

Greed is trisnaa, an insatiable thirst for having more and more of everything, be it wealth, money, jewelry, cars, clothing, or houses. In contrast to trisnaa is tripat, a state of satiety. Human beings, who are in a state of trisnaa, are so thirsty for wealth, power, and status, that they never feel satisfied. They remain deluded in a mirage-like delusion (Mrig-Trisnaa). No amount of riches can quench their thirst.



Drowning in one's own greed.

The craving to possess more and more continues. Even if one happens to possess the wealth of the whole world, their craving for more and more is not stilled. A greedy person is never at peace; their mind wanders in all directions hankering for ever more riches.

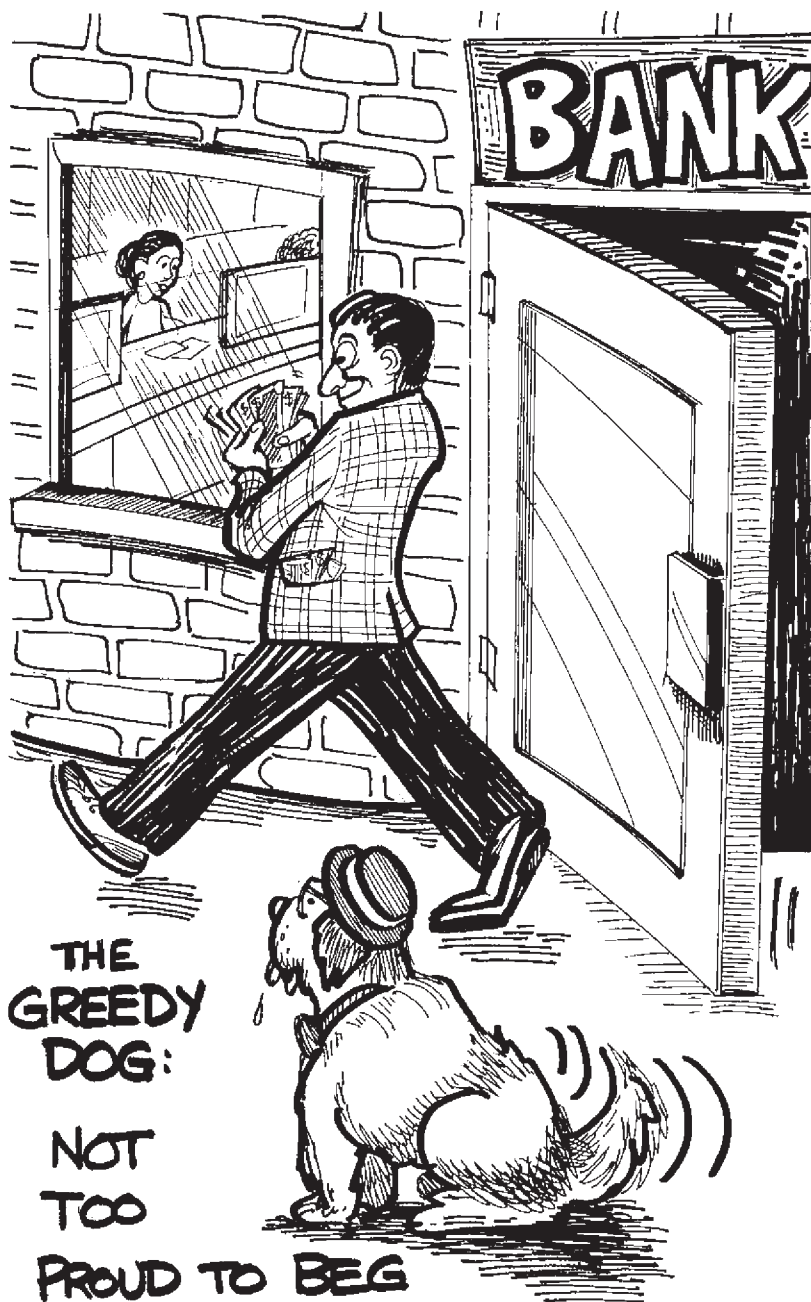
### **Why Are Humans Greedy?**

There are two reasons because of which humans are greedy. Both of these have been discussed in the previous two chapters. These are ego and ego-identification: Humans want more wealth than others in order to fulfil their desire for ego-glorification. Humans also want more and more wealth to please and glorify those relations and friends with whom they identify. Thus, for the glorification of themselves and of those with whom they identify, they need wealth, power and status. As there are always some people around them who possess more wealth than them, their desire for collecting more and more wealth never ends. Thus greed imprisons one's mind and inflicts it with an ever burning desire for more and more wealth, materialistic possessions, and status.

Regardless of the amount of wealth one may earn, they can never feel satisfied. For a greedy person, no amount of wealth is enough. In fact, wealth no more remains a means to glorify one's ego, for it becomes an end in itself. For a greedy person, wealth becomes their mainstay, their only support of life. Amassing wealth becomes their be-all and end-all in life.

### **Evils of Greed**

A greedy person is prepared to amass wealth by any means, be it right or wrong, good or bad. A greedy person is so foolish that they do not realize the obvious truth that the wealth which they amass by wrongful means, exploiting the poor and appropriating their share, and then leaves behind, will not be used by them in their lifetime. After their death, this wealth is not worthy of their family and friends left behind. It is not worthy of those for whom they leave it behind for because they have not worked hard to earn the wealth. It is, therefore,



To gain some wealth, a greedy man is ready to beg like a dog wagging his tail.

abused by them; they spend it for indulgence in pleasures and thus, through misuse, harm themselves.

Because a greedy person is held by their thirst for riches, their selfishness makes their intellect evil. Greed is such a powerful passion that even those of great worldly wisdom succumb to it. The consciousness of a person arrested by covetousness is swayed in no time towards the object of greed. A person affected by the fury of avarice becomes clever and deceitful. Their only aim is to collect wealth and riches by hook or by crook. A person coveting riches is not dependable: a greedy person cannot be relied upon for they do not keep their promises. They are the friend of no one. They have no respect and dignity for themselves: they are like a dog. Guru Saheb warns: Never trust a greedy person for they drag the trusting person in such a quicksand-like situation in which one finds no support to escape.

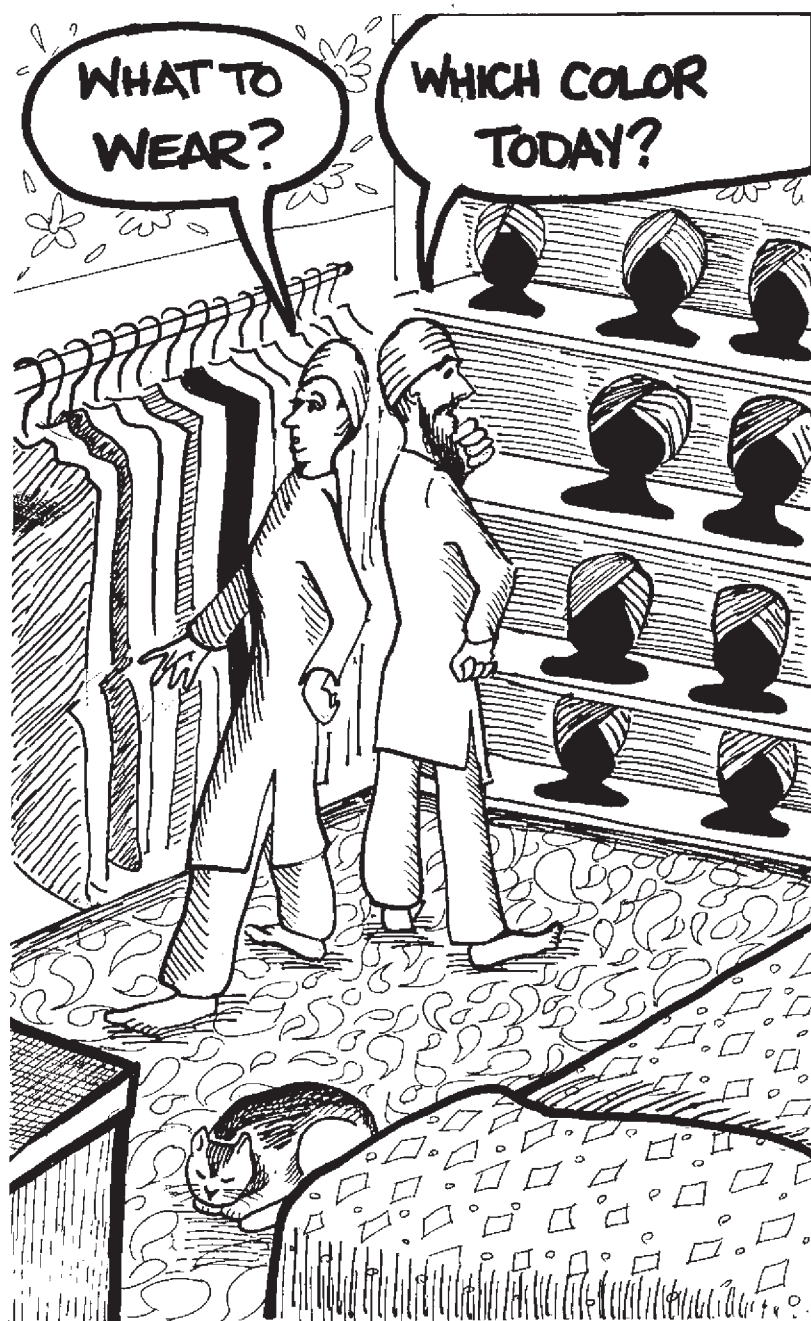
A person inflicted by avarice may stoop down to usurping others' wealth; they forsake all ethics for collecting wealth, trading in drugs, liquor, women, and smuggling of illicit goods.

With its waves, greed sways away even the wise. Those afflicted by avarice waver and wobble and run about in all directions to gather more and more. The passion of covetousness makes greedy people shameless; they respect neither their friends, teachers, relatives, nor parents. Greedy people do what they ought not do; they eat what they ought not eat; and they build what they ought not build. One can escape greed only by praying to God, only by taking His shelter, only by surrendering oneself to Him.

Thus, we see that greed is rooted in ego and identification. From ego and attachment springs the insatiable passion for more and more wealth and possessions. A person struck by the passion for greed, goes about dishonourably like a dog wagging his tail before anyone from whom he hopes to gain some wealth.

## **How to Overcome the Effects of Greed**

A little reflection will show that though money can buy fast cars,



The eternal question: what to wear?



And we think we have problems?!

big houses, diamonds and jewelry, it cannot buy peace and happiness. Are wealthy people really happy? How can big houses, luxurious cars, or hundreds of fancy clothes bring peace and happiness? Happiness is a state of mind. It concerns inner harmony, contentment, and peace. Possessions of material wealth and riches have little, if anything, to do with inner peace and harmony. Moreover one has to undergo a lot of pain and suffering to earn the money required for buying luxurious cars, big houses, jewelry, and diamonds. Pain and suffering does not end with possessing these objects; their maintenance, security, and care brings even more misery and suffering.

One can avoid all the pain and suffering involved in buying and maintaining expensive material objects. All that one needs to do is to reflect and introspect to understand the truth about leading a peaceful and happy life. The fact is that in order to live a comfortable life, one does not require a mansion with many extra rooms; nor does one need luxurious cars, many of which are rarely used. Nor does one need a hundred sets of clothes, many of which are scarcely worn.

Through reflection and introspection, one begins to realize that there is no end to material possessions in this world, and that trying to gain the appreciation of others through such possessions is meaningless and futile. This race of greed to serve the ego-needs never ends because there is always somebody who has more material wealth, status, and power.

Through reflection and introspection one realizes that rather than running the painful race of materialism, one can live a peaceful and happy life by having only those material objects which meet the basic necessities for leading a simple life. By leading a simple life, one saves time, energy, and money. Time, energy, and money thus saved can be utilized towards activities that will help one lead a happy, holy, and healthy life. Leading such a holy life implies sharing one's wealth and capacities with others with a view to guide them to also lead a holy and healthy life.



## CHAPTER XIII

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# ANGER AND AGGRESSION

**H**UMANS WANT things to go their way so that their passions of ego, attachment, greed, and lust are satisfied. When things do not proceed as they desire, they feel dissatisfied, frustrated, and angry. Their anger is directed towards those persons, objects, or situations, which are perceived by them as obstructions in the fulfilment of their desires.

### Roots of Anger

Anger is rooted in the lack of one's understanding of oneself. Some causes of anger are within the grasp of one's understanding, for they are in the foreground of one's consciousness. However, there are other causes of anger which are deep-seated and beyond one's normal understanding. Whatever be the external causes of one's anger, the fact that its primary roots are in one's own self does not change. The external causes, the environment, the situation, or the people can always change but the internal causes remain constant.

## **Why Does Anger Arise?**

In the previous three chapters, we have pondered over the passions of ego, identification, and greed. Through our reflections we found that the desire to glorify oneself, and those with whom one identifies, results in one becoming greedy. One craves to gain wealth, status, and power. In their pursuit of wealth, status, and power, one does not care much about ethics and morals. One has to compete with others to gain more wealth, higher status, and more power. However, these are not easily obtained. There are many obstructions in gaining wealth and power. These obstructions may be created by human beings, situations, or by one's own external or internal incapacities. If, even after a struggle, one cannot remove these obstacles, then one starts feeling frustrated and agitated. Naturally, there is a feeling of aggression and violence against the persons, situations, external circumstances, or internal incapacities which are obstructing the attainment of his desires. This feeling of aggression and violence within, finds expression in anger. Thus, anger is an emotion rooted in violence and aggression.

In addition to one's desires for wealth, status, and power, humans seek pleasure. Humans' desire for pleasure arises out of their need to counteract the pain and tension that results from their pursuit of worldly wealth, status, and power. Thus, humans seek pleasure to relieve themselves of the pain and tension in which they normally live. Pain and tension are the underlying currents which make humans feel restless, anxious, and angry. When one's efforts to enjoy pleasures are obstructed, they feel doubly angry.

People find pleasure in tasty food, watching television, drinking liquor, smoking, dancing, and lustful relationships. If their pleasure is thwarted, they get very mad. Thus, people feel angry when they are not able to fulfil their desires.

In other words, anger is a feeling that arises in someone when things do not go their way. When small children get angry, they do not hide their anger; they let it out by yelling, and they often hit the person

they are angry at. However, as they become older they are restricted by social norms which do not let them openly express their anger. Their anger thus remains suppressed. Many release their suppressed anger by throwing objects, slamming doors, and breaking things. But sometimes their civil sense or culture does not allow them to release their anger even through these means, so, they often keep it pent up within themselves and this makes them suffer even more. Because of this pent up anger, they are unable to concentrate and focus on whatever job they have in hand.

## **Destructive Effects of Anger**

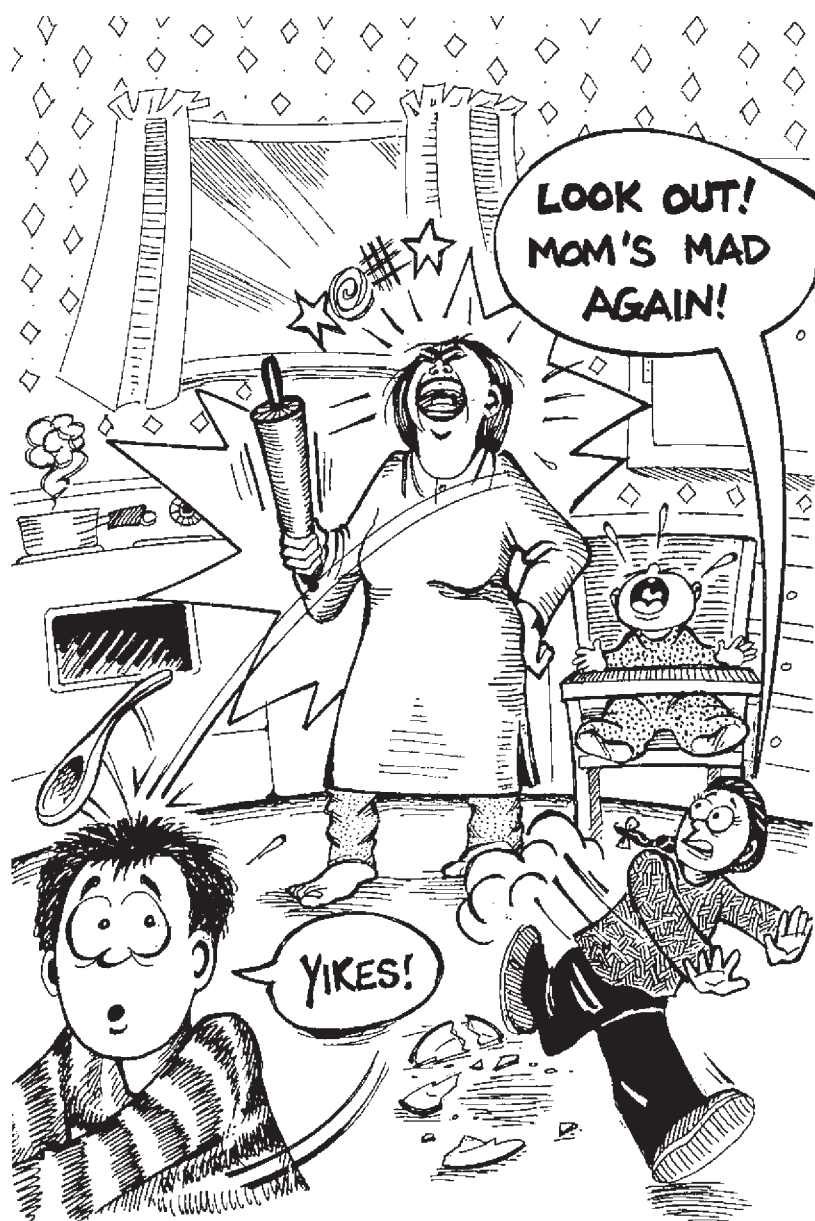
In anger, one loses control over themselves. They act in such ways and speak such hurting words to others that they later feel ashamed and sorry. A person in anger burns within and becomes violent; they fling things around, speak harsh words, and scream as if in hysteria. In short, they behave like an insane person. An angry person's thoughts are blurred and confused, and their mind is in a state of chaos. In extreme anger, a person may beat up his own children; they may even threaten or kill others, including their near and dear ones.

No one likes to be around an angry person. An angry person takes away the peace, happiness, and laughter from persons around them; they create an environment of fear, gloom, and sadness.

Anger is such a destructive fury that those who happen to be around an angry person have unpleasant feelings, and become uneasy, uncomfortable, and restless. Some even feel afraid and wish to run away from the scene. Guru Saheb says one should never go anywhere near those who harbour anger within themselves.

Wrath or anger destroys one's power of reasoning and makes them act insanely. It is the cause of many fights in the home, wars among nations, and suffering among humanity. It has scarred many civilizations and cultures.

Anger or wrath sweeps away the humane emotions of kindness and mercy. A person in anger knows no compassion; their heart becomes like a stone; their victims' prayers and appeals for mercy fall



## COOKING UP A STORM

No one likes to be around an angry person.

on deaf ears. Those who are engulfed by anger lose their self-control, become vicious, and hurt others for no reason.

Angry, violent, and aggressive individuals are eventually punished manyfold. First, they are punished by their conscience; they suffer within, burning in anger and hatred; their life becomes unbearable and miserable. Second, they are punished by society; people around them, including their relatives, do not like them and avoid their company. Third, the law also punishes aggressive persons. An angry person is likely to hurt and injure other persons. Those who commit such acts of violence are punished in a court of law. Lastly, an angry, violent, and aggressive person's soul finds peace neither here nor after death. They suffer for the sins of hurting others when they are taken by the agents of death and punished by the celestial judge. Living in anger and hatred, an angry person actually lives in a self-created hell, both here in this world and hereafter in the next.

Guru Saheb says, "O wrath, thou art the root of strife, thou knowest no compassion. Men gripped by thee are enslaved, and dance like monkeys; they face immense punishment at the hands of the couriers of yamma (death). Wrath, only those of low character keep company with thee. To escape thy attack, I have sought the refuge of God, the Saviour of all, who delivers us from all sorrow."

## **How Can We Get Rid of Anger?**

People sometimes recommend that one should release one's anger through aggressive actions and fantasies. Though fantasizing aggressive retaliatory actions may be therapeutic and may bring a temporary feeling of relief, actual aggressive actions are harmful and destructive. When one is allowed to retaliate against someone who has provoked him, he may calm down temporarily, but this does not eliminate their anger. In fact, repeatedly resorting to blowing off the steam of one's anger may breed more anger for two reasons: First, it may easily trigger hostile retaliation, and second, the temporary relief may be reinforcing and, therefore, habit-forming. Thus expressing anger does not bring peace and harmony.

Peace, harmony, and happiness are only possible if man is free from anger. Compassion, kindness, and forgiveness, are the keys to peace and joy. Only through understanding can one forgive others. One can avoid the fury of anger by remaining self-aware and understanding the nature of anger.

Humans get frustrated and angry when their efforts to achieve their desired objects and goals are obstructed. While some of the desired objects and goals are based on their biological needs, others are mostly to fulfil their pleasure seeking and self-glorification. Thus, besides the fulfilment of biological needs, self-glorification and pleasure are the main motivating factors in human beings. When one cannot attain them, they get angry.

A person who acts aggressively and becomes angry is acting out of negative emotions of lust, greed, identification, and ego. When a person acts out of negative emotions, reason and logic escape them. Regardless of the causes, one becomes angry when their desires are not fulfilled. Nothing else matters to them at that time; they want things to happen their way. They get charged with negativity and let it pour out on those around them. While angry, a person cannot observe how crazy their actions are. It is only when one has calmed down that one may realize the inappropriateness of their actions. One loses all peace by getting agitated and angry. Anger causes guilt and anxiety. Is this alone not reason enough to avoid getting angry?

But the question remains, how to avoid getting angry? Because anger arises when one's desires and expectations are thwarted, the best way to avoid anger is to have no expectations or desires. If there are no desires, no expectations, no hopes, there would be no disappointments, no dissatisfaction, no frustration, and therefore, no anger.

But how to extinguish desires and hopes, and eliminate expectations? This is only possible by understanding the nature of existence. A person's desires and hopes are tied with their ego and ego-extensions. If one remains aware of the temporary nature of his own existence and of those with whom he identifies, one's ego and desires would lessen to a great extent.

Furthermore, if one remains aware that peace, harmony, and happiness are states of one's mind and consciousness, and are not the result of worldly wealth, power, and status, then one's desires and hopes for gaining them can be eliminated. The final release from desires and hopes can only come when a seeker of Truth understands the delusion of *maayaa* and sheds their duality and ego. Such a state brings an end to desires and hopes. In this state, there is no trace of anger left; there is total peace and bliss.

Guru Saheb says: Lust and anger burn the body away just like borax (*sohaagaa*) melts gold. No one ever attained to self-realization by becoming angry and lustful. Therefore, do avoid the company of those who lose their temper, who harbour anger, and who by nature are violent and aggressive.

## CHAPTER XIV

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### LUST

**D**UE TO DELUSION, ego and duality develop. Due to this duality, a person identifies with the objects of this world. Ego and identification together become the root causes of greed in a person, because that person wants to collect more and more for themselves and for their ego extensions. Obstructions in achieving the objects of greed or objects of other desires cause anger to arise. Anger injects poison in a person; it creates toxins and cathexes in one's nervous system and makes them agitated. To relieve themselves of the tension and anxiety caused by toxins and cathexes in the nervous system, people seek pleasures in drinking, dancing, and lustful indulgences.

#### **Why People Indulge in Lust**

Ignorant people use lustful indulgences as an outlet for releasing tensions and toxins from the nervous system. Guru Saheb portrays the plight of a greedy man who remains tense and angry during his daily pursuit of wealth, and then, to release this tension, indulges in lustful relations during the night. This also implies that if the man was not



under any tension or anxiety, if he was not agitated or angry, if he was in peace, in a desireless state, he would not indulge in sex. A state of harmony, peace, and bliss is so fulfilling that there is nothing more pleasing or pleasurable than such a state. If one is already in bliss, in peace and joy, then why would one waste one's energies seeking petty pleasure through lustful activities, be it sex, drinking wine, or dancing. It is only because one is in pain, in tension, in anguish, that one indulges in lustful pleasures to counterbalance one's painful state of existence. In other words, because indulgence in sex reduces pain caused by tension, anxiety, anguish, and anger, it is perceived as pleasurable.

Any source of pleasure, be it an inanimate object, pet animal, or a person, is liked by us because we draw pleasure out of it. Because of this pleasure, we want to possess it. When one draws pleasure out of a sexual relationship, one wants to possess the person with whom one is indulging; one wants to monopolize the source of one's pleasure. We want to possess not only our sexual partner (wife or husband), but any other object which provides us pleasure, be it a car, house, flower, tree, animal, or human being.

## **Selfish Love is False**

All objects which are the means to fulfilment of our desires, our emotions, our passions, are perceived by us as pleasing, likeable, and loving. When one says to you, "I like you, I love you," what he or she is implying is: "I get pleasure out of you, I am able to reduce my pain by interacting with you.

Because I feel so much better by interacting with you, I want to possess you. I want to monopolize you. But, it is all for myself. If it was to be otherwise, if I were not to get any pleasure out of you, if my pain, instead of getting reduced, was to increase by interacting with you, if you were to become a source of pain rather than pleasure to me, then I would not like you. Then I would hate to be in your association. This is why when any relationship (be it between husband and wife, or parents and children) becomes a source of pain, it breaks. Even though

we use such a holy word as “love” for our pleasure-giving relationship, it is simply selfish. Whenever the selfish interest of obtaining pleasure is over, the love vanishes, the relationship breaks.

So when a person tells you that they love you, what they truly mean is that they get a pleasurable feeling by being with you. It is not you as a person, who is the focus of any meaningfulness, it is the pleasure that the so-called lover draws out of you which is important and meaningful to them. In other words, your lover treats you not as an end, but as a means, as an instrument for their own pleasure. You, as a person, are of no consequence to them.

Self-love lies at the foundation of all human love. Love of wife, mother, husband, father, son, daughter, friends and relatives is self-love. As soon as one of the two parties involved feels that its interests are no longer being met, its desires are not being satisfied, conflict starts, bringing with it quarrels and fights, resulting in tension, anxiety, pain, and misery. All human beings who have not transcended the self have their own pleasure-seeking ego. They only love others as long as they are able to draw pleasure out of them. As soon as they are not able to draw pleasure from them, they no longer love them. If others become a source of pain, they start hating them.

## **Lust as Desire**

To understand the question of sexual indulgences a little deeper, we will have to ponder over the original Punjabi word ‘kaam’ which is usually interpreted as sex. It is derived from the word ‘kaamna’ meaning ‘desire’. Somewhat close to this meaning is the meaning of the English word ‘lust’. Whereas lust commonly means sexual indulgence, it also means an overwhelming desire or craving. The point is that ‘lust’ or ‘Kaamna’ both basically mean ‘desire’. Sex or kaam both are forms of overwhelming and passionate desires.

The basic fact about human desires is that the objects which fulfil them are perceived as pleasurable, and therefore, humans want to possess them. On the contrary, the objects which cause obstruction in the fulfilment of one’s desires are perceived as painful, and therefore,

one gets angry at them. Because sexual desires are overwhelmingly pleasurable, any person causing obstruction in the fulfilment of sexual desire becomes an object of anger and aggression.

## **Consciousness as Energy**

In order to understand deeply the phenomenon of lust, one has to understand that there is nothing in this world except energy. In the ultimate analysis, energy is consciousness. In the not too distant past, people thought that matter and energy were two different realities. Now scientists know that matter is the gross form of energy. But, scientists are yet to discover that all energy is the gross form of Consciousness. In fact, the whole creation is, in the ultimate analysis, a manifestation of Consciousness.

When consciousness flows outside, it takes the form of lustful desires, of all kinds of desires. The fulfilment of these desires requires possessing the objects of desires or attaining goals. Therefore, a great amount of energy is wasted in fulfilling these desires. As a result, humans become weaker and weaker in trying to gain possession of the objects for satisfying their desires. One day comes when one's battery is fully discharged; there is no more energy left to flow outside to fulfill one's desires. So one dies just like that battery which dies because its energy kept on flowing outside in the movement of the vehicle, without ever getting recharged by a generator.

When consciousness flows inwards, it takes the form of desirelessness (akaam). With the inward flow of consciousness, one rediscovers one's Real Self (aatmaan). Thus, if a seeker utilises the energy of life by taking the flow of his Consciousness inwards, then they become Aatam Gyaani, and thus, attains to eternal peace and bliss. But, if one lets Consciousness flow outside, then it becomes lust: one wastes one's energy of Consciousness in gratifying the overwhelming desire of sex and other pleasures. Through the outward flow of Consciousness energy, one may obtain many material possessions and gratify many lustful pleasures, but one loses the only opportunity to

realize the Self. As a result, one continues in the dreadful ocean of birth and death.

### **Guru's Message**

Deploring sexual indulgences, Guru Saheb exhorts us to desist from them, because those who indulge in them never attain to eternal joy; instead, they suffer forever in misery and anguish. There are hundreds of hymns in Sri Guru Granth Saheb in which Guru Saheb warns the seekers of Truth against indulgences in lustful affairs. In this regard, some of Guru Saheb's injunctions are given below:

1. For a momentary fleeting pleasure thou sufferest for millions of days. For an instant and a trice, thou shalt enjoy revelments, but afterwards, thou shalt repent again and again.
2. The lustful and sensuous man enjoys many women, but even then his hankering for more women does not cease. Everyday he indulges in lustful relations and then regrets; in woe and greed he withers away.
3. If a man were to live lustfully with a million women, and rule over the entire earth, even then he shall never have peace without the True Guru, and shall continue to suffer in the cycle of birth and death.
4. The man who renounces the lure of the world and covetousness, and frees himself from all desire, abjures lust and wrath -- In the heart of such a one dwells the Supreme Being.'
5. Saith Nanak: None involved in lust and wrath ever attained Him; -- ask this from the Enlightened ones.
6. The true religious judge is the one who, not even in a dream, indulges in lust: Such a one shall meet neither old age nor death.

## CHAPTER XV

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# ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE PASSIONS

**T**he root cause of all the five passions of ego, identification, greed, anger, and lust is the ‘Ignorance of Self’. Not knowing the Self becomes ‘knowing others’. ‘Ignorance of the self’ is the basis of ‘knowledge of others’. ‘Others’ are recognised only because the ‘Self’ has not been recognised.

Because humans are ignorant of their Real Self, they cannot see the Real within themselves; they can see themselves only as a body. Therefore, one identifies themselves with their body. When one interacts with another, they see them also as a body. One can neither see the Real Essence behind their own body nor behind another’s body. Therefore, their body interacts only with another’s body. Thus, the only possibility of interaction between those who are ignorant of their Real Self, is to have relationships between bodies. Thus, understood correctly, ego, identification, greed, anger, and lust are expressed through interactions between bodies.

If we were enlightened, there would neither be ego, identification, greed, anger, nor lust. For all these passions to exist,

there has to be an 'other'. For example, the function of ego is to assert itself on others. Unless the 'other' exists, on whom would the ego assert itself or with whom would the ego compare itself to establish its superiority? Similarly, if there was no 'other' then with whom would the identification take place? Again, unless there is an 'other', from whom would one collect wealth, on whom would one spend it, and with whom would one compare the amassed wealth, cars, diamonds, houses? Unless there was the other, at whom would one get angry, against whom would one commit violence or aggression? And lastly, unless there is an 'other', whom would one love and with whom would one indulge in lust?

Only the Aatam agyaani (the one ignorant of the Real Self) can assert their ego, can identify with others, can be greedy or violent, and can indulge in lust.

One who is Self-Realized cannot do any of these things because there is no 'other' for them to interact with. Aatam gyaani (the Self-Realized) knows the *aatmaa* (spirit). Therefore, they see the same essence in all, the same *aatmaaii*, the same spirit; there is no 'other' for an *aatam gyaani*, for, there is no delusion of duality in him or her. They see themselves in all. Therefore, they cannot be affected by any of the five passions.

The root cause of all the five passions is ignorance (*agyaan*). Delusion is the offspring of ignorance. It is because of this *aatam agyaan* (Ignorance of Self) that one sees oneself as different from others. Reality is the All Pervading General Consciousness, but, due to ignorance, one experiences oneself as a unique and specific consciousness. The specific expression of General Consciousness, makes a person as an individualized soul and the delusion of duality begins.

The only way out of this delusion of duality is to realize the Real Self (*aatmaan*). Till *Aatam gyaan* occurs, one continues to suffer due to delusion and duality.

Why are the five negative emotions said to be the product of

delusion of duality? Why are these emotions false? Why are they not real? For a thing or a feeling to be true and real, it must exist forever, eternally. A thing or feeling which is false and unreal can exist for some time, but not forever.

Human's real nature is Peace, Pure awareness, and Eternity. Therefore, humans are always seeking to be eternally peaceful and fully aware. If we realize our Real Self, then we will forever be in peace and joy.

One cannot remain forever in a state of consciousness produced by any of the five passions. For example, no person can remain in a state of anger forever; if they did, they would soon die. This is because a state of anger is not their natural state of existence. By nature, the essence of humans is peace and joy, whereas a state of anger is full of pain and suffering. One gets angry, not to remain angry forever, but to bring a change in the state of affairs so that their anger would go, and they would return to their relatively natural state of peace.

No person can remain in a continuous state of identification with anyone. Similarly, no one can remain indulged in a continuous lustful relationship, in a state of greed, or in a state of egotism. One immerses themselves in these five negative emotions with the mistaken belief that they will find peace by satisfying these emotions. Deep down within us, we want to return to our real nature of eternal peace, joy, and awareness, but not knowing the right path, we mistakenly fall prey to the negative emotions.

When we are in peace, there is no desire for ego-assertion. There is no pull towards anyone, no greed for more wealth, and no lustful desires. There is no anger whatsoever. Negative emotions hold our attention only when we are not in peace, in the very nature of our essence.

Because the Real is the essence of our nature, its attainment requires no effort on our part. Furthermore, because the nature of this essence is Eternal Peace, Awareness, and Truth, one need not do anything to attain them.

In contrast to not having to do anything to attain to one's Real nature, all the five passions demand some action. Moreover, being negative and unnatural to one's essence, they cause much pain and suffering: Ego demands assertion on others, thus, hurting their feelings; identification brings attachment, causing suffering when separation occurs; greed exploits others, and thus hurts them; anger, rooted in violence and aggression, brings nothing but suffering; and lastly, indulgences in lust weaken one's potentials and bring suffering and emptiness.

But, due to ignorance, one continues to mistakenly believe that peace can come through satisfying these passions. One suffers immensely in trying to quench the insatiable fire of these negative emotions. One never attains eternal peace and joy. One remains unaware in delusion and suffers. If one could shed these five passions, they would be in their Real Self.

In Part III, we reflect on the ways through which it may be possible for a seeker of Truth to dispel the delusion of duality and shed the five passions.



**PART 3**  
**OVERCOMING**  
**EXTERNAL AND**  
**INTERNAL FORCES:**

**THE**  
**SUPREME**  
**MEDITATIONS**

## CHAPTER XVI

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# PEACE AND CONTENTMENT

**T**HE 'EXISTENCE OF OTHERS', as well as of one's own ego, is born out of the 'ignorance of Self'. In its effort to assert itself on 'others', ego remains locked in great struggle, turmoil, and tension. It is not possible to escape the game of duality and ego, born out of ignorance, without understanding the nature of Reality and delusion. To understand the nature of this intricate delusion, one must have some available time free from the mad race of ego.

With a view to get some time free from this race, the first and foremost step one must take is to reflect on the fleeting and temporary nature of their existence, as also on the vainness of their pursuits which bring nothing but suffering in life. Once one understands this fact about their existence, they slow down in the race for ego glorification. They become content to some extent and start their quest for the Real in order to attain lasting peace and bliss. We have the capacity to live in peace and harmony with ourselves and others. Peace and joy are always there in us. Peace, joy, and awareness are part of our very nature. But we are seldom in touch with them because we mistakenly seek them in external things. Peace, happiness, and joy

are right within us; we do not have to travel outside. All we need to do is to be in harmony with ourselves, to be content with what we have, and then we will experience the elixir of peace, joy, and happiness flowing within us. We can work, walk, and do our daily chores, and yet be in peace and joy; all that we need is contentment and harmony within, no conflicts, no contradictions, and no confusions.

The contradiction in our life is that we sacrifice what is there with us for that which is not there. We live either in the past or the future, but never in the present. In fact, only the present is with us; the past has gone and the future has yet to come. We keep complaining about the past but miss the present; we constantly prepare ourselves to live in the future, but are very poor at living life now. We spend many years to earn a degree, a diploma, and we work breathlessly to get a high status job, a good car, a big house. All this is just to earn the appreciation of others.

We are almost never with ourselves, never aware of ourselves; we forget that we are alive now; we forget that only the present moment is available to live. We cannot live in the past; it is gone. We cannot live in the future; it has not yet arrived. To live in the past or the future and expect to be in a state of peace and joy is a contradiction, for life is real only in the present moment, it is neither in the past, nor in the future. Planning for the future has its place in the scheme of our life, but engaging in it ought never to steal the present from us.

What does it mean to be in the present? To be in the present is to be in awareness. To be in awareness, one has to be in a state of peace.

We are too much with the world; so we think and imagine too much. Though some thinking for dealing with the present problems and for planning our future is necessary, most of our thinking is useless. We unnecessarily and repeatedly think about our past, and imagine and worry about our future. A psychodrama continues in our psyche day and night as if a video tape is ceaselessly running. One could stop a video tape by pressing a stop button, but we cannot stop our thinking and imagining; we have no stop button for stopping our mind. The only thing people can do is to dull their mind and slow

down their thinking by taking some sleeping pills or tranquilizers, by drinking alcohol or by taking drugs, or by indulging in sensual pleasures. But this does not eliminate the problem: in fact, the problem usually becomes worse; people get addicted to drugs, or sensual pleasures. They end up daydreaming during their wakeful hours, and having nightmares during their sleep.

Because we are too involved with this world, we often feel exhausted by the overcrowded routine demanding the continuous engagement of our senses. Our sensory organs are our windows to the external world. When we leave our windows open for most of the time, we are invaded by the overwhelming stimuli of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Under such exhaustion, we wish to close our windows and withdraw to ourselves to experience the calm and peace within. But most people do not know the way to peace and joy, so their wish to go within themselves remains only a wish.

The point for pondering is that if there is peace and beauty within ourselves, then why do we not remain there, or why do we not go within ourselves more often? Those who are able to travel deeper beyond their false self, they long to go deeper and deeper within more often, and remain there for longer periods. But they who cannot get rid of the company of their mind, find it difficult to go within.

They therefore keep their windows open and remain engaged outside of themselves. This way they never find peace. There is a way to make our inner self beautiful; we must protect our peace. While we shut our windows to all the trash that flows into us from watching television, dancing, dating, and running a rat race for worldly powers and possessions, we must open our inner windows to the miraculous beauty, harmony, and peace within.

All this peace and joy is only possible if we do not run after superficial values and goals set by ignorant people in our society. If we can curtail our desires by understanding the fleeting nature of our physical existence, and then gradually become desireless, we would effortlessly attain a state of peace and joy. Thus, the key to harmony

and happiness is to curtail our desires to the barest minimum, and become aware of every activity that we do.

How do we decide which activities and things are necessary and which are not? There is a principle of necessity. If we abide by this principle, we would have curtailed all that is unnecessary, and thus would have automatically limited our desires and wanderings. Energy, time, and money thus saved could be used for spiritual upliftment. In the chapter that follows we discuss the principle of necessity.

## CHAPTER XVII

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### PRINCIPLE OF NECESSITY

**H**UMAN LIFE is the greatest gift that nature bestows on any being. Human beings, with all the capacities endowed on them, are capable of attaining to a state of emancipation, a state of total freedom from all bondage, desires, and sufferings. But this can only be achieved if human beings utilize all of their energies towards attaining Perfection. A state of Perfection implies a state in which there are no shortcomings and no failings. This state is characterized by eternal peace, joy, and pure consciousness.

The principle of necessity requires of us, before we do any act, including that of thinking and imagining, to ask ourselves: “Is the act necessary?” Is it necessary to do the act we are planning to do in order to attain to Perfection? If the act is not necessary for the attainment of Perfection, or if the act does not help the growth of an individual towards the attainment of Perfection, then efforts towards undertaking the proposed venture must be brought to an end immediately. Even thinking and imagining about such a venture should be stopped immediately. If this is not done, then much of the energy spent in

imagining, planning, and executing the unnecessary venture would have been wasted.

It goes without saying that a serious seeker of Truth would not like to waste their energies on things which are unnecessary in attaining to the goal of Perfection. It is necessary for the seeker in quest of Truth to utilize all their energies for thoughts and actions which make possible their survival and growth towards Perfection.

In the following pages, we will briefly investigate and answer three important questions from the point of view of attaining Perfection: (1) What things and activities are necessary for a seeker's survival and spiritual growth? (2) What things and activities are unnecessary and harmful for spiritual growth? (3) How to meet some typical needs of a seeker of Truth?

## **Necessities For Survival**

Humans are an integral unit of body, mind, and soul. The process of life cannot continue unless the psychophysical system is sound and healthy. To remain healthy and functional, humans' following basic biological needs must be met: food, clothing, shelter and sleep.

Humans need food for the physical body to survive and grow, and to provide strength for their functioning. Humans need clothing to protect their body from heat, cold, dust, and injury. Humans need shelter to provide protection from weather conditions, animals, and other threats, and to provide facilities necessary for the maintenance and propagation of life. Sleep is a basic necessity for the existence of a healthy body and mind. Thus, we see that the above four requirements are the basic necessities for the existence of life. But what quantity and quality of these necessities are conducive to the growth of spirituality? The answer to this question may be found in the following lines:

- A seeker in quest of Truth requires sufficient nourishing food, to maintain the physical body. This food should not be obtained by hurting and killing other creatures.

- A seeker should have sufficient clothing to protect them from cold and heat. The clothing should be made of comfortable and simple material like cotton, without getting into various flashy designs, fashions, and fads.
- A seeker should have a house which protects them from heat and cold, and provides shelter and security. The house should provide enough space for meeting the daily routine requirements, including meditation.
- A seeker in quest of Truth should sleep a minimum amount which provides for the well-being of their body and mind. Sleep and food in excess cause lethargy and should therefore be avoided.
- A seeker of Truth should earn their livelihood to provide for the above mentioned basic necessities.

In order to earn their livelihood by honest and moral means, the seeker should have enough practical knowledge. There are means of earning money, which according to social norms are honest, but are not moral from a spiritual point of view. For example, earning one's livelihood by producing alcoholic drinks, butchering animals for meat, or producing or selling tobacco products may be socially and legally sanctioned, but these means of earning money are harmful to mankind at large, and particularly damaging to the seeker of Truth.

Therefore, a seeker of Truth should never resort to earning his livelihood by such means.

## **Necessities for Spiritual Growth**

It is necessary for a seeker in quest of Truth:

- To read scriptures and spiritually oriented books.
- To associate with those holy seekers who are trying to become perfect in order to attain to Truth.
- To spend their time in meditation for spiritual growth and attainment of Perfection.



A seeker must contribute a sizeable portion of their earnings, time, and energy in the service of spiritual growth in the society around them, particularly to help those who are sincerely seeking spiritual growth and perfection for the attainment of the Ultimate Truth.

## **What is Unnecessary**

A seeker in quest of Truth ought to discard all spurious activities because they are unnecessary and harmful for spiritual growth. Some of these spurious activities are listed below:

- Eating food of various tastes to create an artificial appetite, and eating extra food which strains digestion, and makes one obese, resulting in many diseases and disorders.
- Eating meat by killing God's creatures, and eating eggs which are reproductive bodies having the capacity to develop into living creatures and which come out from the excretory organs of hens. Amidst eating, drinking, laughing, and sleeping, one forgets death. Forgetting the Lord, one ruins themselves and renders their life accursed.
- Buying clothing in excess of requirements. Some require two or four dresses, some may require ten - one has to decide the numbers based on the functional necessity of one's work. The questions one must ask oneself are "why is it necessary to buy another set of clothing? Why have different combinations of colours or prints? Why is it necessary to buy polyester or polythene clothes which cause itching, produce static electricity, prevent the flow of air, and do not absorb perspiration?"
- Cosmetics and jewelry are in no way necessary for a seeker in quest of Truth. Spiritual growth, peace, and Pure Awareness do not come by applying nail polish, lipstick, eyeliner, eye shadow, and starch on the turban. One should ask oneself before buying and using these products whether they are necessary for one's spiritual growth and for existence of life. Similarly, jewelry items such as chains, necklaces, bangles, and rings are not necessary for spiritual growth. How do they help a seeker of Truth in attaining

to Perfection and Liberation from bondage? In fact, they create bondage, and curtail freedom. Guru Saheb says: Accursed is the food, accursed the sleep, and accursed the robe which one wears on the body. Accursed is the body along with the family, when one attains not to his Master now.

- For a seeker of Truth, it is not necessary to cut or dye the hair, shave the beard, or pluck the eyebrows; these waste time and effort, and are done either for glorification of the body or to conform to social practices in vogue.

A seeker of Truth must reflect and observe that the aforementioned unnecessary activities cause not only a wastage of time and energy, but also require extra money, taxing the seeker's energy, and wasting their time which could be utilized for their growth towards Perfection.

Excessive talking, imagining, and telling lies are the three most harmful and unnecessary activities in which human beings indulge and waste their precious gift of energy. In order to conserve their energy for the attainment of Pure Awareness and Enlightenment, a seeker in search of Truth must not indulge in unnecessary talking, imagining, and speaking words which are not true. They should ask themselves the following questions regarding talking, imagining and lying:

*(a) Talking:*

“Is it necessary to say whatever I am going to say? If not, then why should I talk?”

Unnecessary talking wastes most of our energies and creates trouble for us and others. The energy which is wasted in unnecessary talking could be utilized for meditation, and for reading and understanding the spiritual message. We do not realize that a great amount of energy is wasted in gossiping about matters which are of no relevance to the search for Truth.

*(b) Imagining:*

Is it necessary to imagine or plan things? Nobody denies that there are certain important matters for which imagining is required for

planning. But humans unnecessarily keep on imagining about matters which have no relevance or meaningfulness for spiritual growth. A seeker of Truth must ask themselves the question: "Am I indulging in imagining and wishful fantasizing for pleasures, or does the subject about which I am imagining concern my basic necessities for survival and spiritual growth?" If it is not absolutely necessary to imagine and plan for the achievement of an object or goal necessary for the survival of life or for seeking the Truth, a seeker should cease thinking and imagining about it. One should think and plan about a project at hand; once planning has been completed, one should stop further thinking and imagining about it. Continuous imagining after planning has been completed is a curse: it creates worries and anxieties without solving anything; it drains one's energies and weakens people. As a result, such people cannot be peaceful.

*(c) Speaking the truth:*

There are two types of lies people tell: One, when they know the truth but conceal it or modify it by mixing it with falsities; the other is when they do not know anything about a matter and they imagine things about it and claim that what they know is true. In other words, they claim knowledge about the unknown. To avoid telling lies, which is a frequent indulgence of worldly people, a seeker in quest of Truth must inquire of himself before he speaks: "Is it the truth that I am going to speak or is it mixed with lies? Am I modifying the truth because I want appreciation or because I fear people? Am I telling a lie because I just want to boast about the matter or joke about it? Am I concealing something that I know to be true? Am I claiming knowledge of a matter of which I know nothing about?" This is the worst lie people speak. It is the worst lie because people misguide others by telling them things about which they themselves know nothing. For example, priests and preachers claim knowledge of the unknown without being Enlightened. If one tells lies, one carries guilt in their conscience. This guilt creates a burden of tension and anxiety. This anxiety drains a great amount of energy which could be used for

meditation and growth towards the attainment of Truth.

## **How to Meet Some Typical Needs**

In addition to the necessities for survival, there are a few other needs for an ordinary person. These are: the need for security, the need for genuine friendship and belonging in a social group, the need for social acceptance and status, and the need for self-actualization. For a seeker of Truth, most of these needs could be fulfilled within the definition of accepted necessities for survival and growth of spirituality. Security is two dimensional: financial security (for meeting basic survival needs), and psychological security. Both of these dimensions can be fulfilled by belonging to a holy social group which values sharing of wealth, and physical and mental effort for the good of others, particularly for the seekers of Truth. The need for genuine friendship, belonging to a social group, and social acceptance can also be fulfilled through association with such holy people.

For an ordinary person, the need for social status is counter-productive to spiritual growth because it is purely egotistic. It is unnecessary and harmful for a seeker in quest of Truth.

The need for self-actualization can also be fulfilled by association with holy people. Self-actualization activities like creative writing, art, music, gardening, and altruistic service for others can all be fulfilled in a group of holy souls. These self-actualizing activities are not only conducive to individuals but also to the social group as a whole.

In addition to the above needs there is a biologically compelling urge in human beings for reproduction of the species. This need is overpowering in the whole creation; it is the natural design for continuance of life in various forms across the whole existence. The pleasure-giving sexual instinct inherent in human beings and other creatures ensures continuance of life. Among human beings, the institution of marriage regulates wedlock between man and woman for the purpose of reproduction, nourishing, caring, and wholesome

growth of offspring. The institution of marriage is a family institution and is the basic social unit for interaction within society. The institution of family also allows for the propagation of spiritual values to children and society at large.

In the Sikh way of life, the householder's life is an accepted norm because the mind fulfils most of its needs within a small holy group. The family also provides a secure social base to which its members can return to fulfil their biological and psychological needs. A Sikh's household is a place where righteousness, holiness, worship and singing of the glories of God are practiced.

A seeker of Truth may decide at an opportune time to enter into marriage with another seeker of Truth. Because the seeker is marrying for the growth of spirituality and attainment of perfection, his or her indulgence in the family affairs should be kept to what is absolutely necessary to meet the physical and psychological needs. The seeker must keep in mind the Guru's injunctions that exhort man to use the householder's life as a holy institution for spiritual growth towards attainment of Truth, and not as a means for continuous indulgence in sensual pleasures, attachment, and ego-glorification.

But if the above dictums of Guru Saheb are not heeded, and the husband and wife indulge in sensual pleasures, and thus, waste their energies and the gift of human life, then they suffer miserably. Guru Saheb says: *False is the husband and false the wife, who languish and become miserable. The false one loves the false, and thus forsake the Lord.*

## CHAPTER XVIII

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# MEDITATIONS FOR ATTAINMENT

**A**TTAINMENT is the direct apprehension of Truth or the Union with God. It is an intuitive and immediate experience central to one's being; it is beyond perceptual or intellectual apprehension. Attainment implies a complete unity between the self and the Universe; all differentiations disappear, all boundaries merge, and the self is no longer experienced as a separate object.

Once attainment occurs, the old ways of perception, cognition, and intellectual apprehension of external phenomena pass away. The perception of everything is altered: there is a new calm and nectar-like sweet cast everywhere on everything. Everything appears vibrant with God's presence. One is struck by the glories of God; overwhelmed by His glories, one cannot help but sing His praises. Divine Glory is seen in everything. One transcends duality and remains in a state of eternal peace and bliss. Then, even though in body, one never suffers.

### **Obstacles on the Path to Attainment**

The mind is the root cause of all problems: The mind always

chatters. It wanders all over. One moment it is here, the next moment it is there. It travels millions of miles in micro seconds. Its speed is faster than the speed of light.

The mind keeps jumping from past to future, and from future to past. It never rests in the present. During the day, it indulges in imagining fanciful and fearful things. During the night, it translates its thinking and imagining into dreams fanciful and scary. Thus, the mind constantly keeps thinking; the flow of thoughts never stops.

The stream of thoughts creates a curtain between the mind and the soul. As a result, the Soul, one's Real Self, is not seen. One remains engaged in thoughts. Unless their thoughts can be eliminated, effaced, controlled, or transcended, it is not possible for one to have an immediate and intuitive experience of the soul.

### **Why does the mind wander?**

The mind wanders here and there because of desires. It seeks to fulfil its desires. What type of desires are there in the mind? One's desires can be classified into two categories: First, those desires which seek pleasure; second, those desires which seek self-recognition, that is, earning the appreciation of others. These desires keep on haunting the mind. Therefore, the mind keeps on wandering, keeps thinking of ways to fulfil their desires.

### **How Can the Mind be Controlled?**

Controlling the mind means controlling desires and hopes. How can desires be controlled? They can be controlled by understanding the nature of things. All desires and hopes are for the achievement of some goals and objectives of this world. If one understands that the nature of things of this world is fleeting and alluring, and that pursuing them eventually brings suffering, one's desires would appear meaningless. Through understanding the alluring nature of this world, the mind no longer runs after the things of this world, nor does it care for the opinion of people. Thus, one transcends the desires for pleasure as well as for ego recognition. As a consequence of this realization,

one is in peace and harmony.

## **How to Develop Understanding and Awareness**

The path to Self Realization is an untreaded path. The Self is a mystery. Only those who have Realized the Self can show this path to others. Gurus were Enlightened beings, who showed to mankind the path of attainment. Their writings, as also the writings of other Enlightened souls, are inscribed in Sri Guru Granth Saheb, the Holiest of Holy scriptures. These hymns make a seeker aware of the illusory nature of the things of this world; they develop in the seeker the understanding and awareness of the Truth, thus bringing awakening.

As a result of awakening, a seeker's ego-oriented pulls for the worldly possessions, powers, and pleasures are contained and gradually effaced. Seeing the wonder of God's creation, the seeker's heart is filled with God's glories; their heart is pulled towards God. As Enlightenment implies a journey from the outer circles of existence to the very centre of existence (*nij ghar*), a seeker spends a minimal amount of energy for meeting the requirements of the outer circles of existence. For example, the outermost circle of one's existence is their body. To maintain the body in a healthy condition, one needs to eat certain amounts of nourishing food and wear clothing to protect the body. If one gets entangled in eating various kinds of tasty food or wearing clothing and other items of accouterment, believing that certain types of garbs makes one enlightened, then one has gone astray. There is no particular way of cooking and eating, and there is no particular garb or article of dress, wearing which one can get Enlightenment. If a seeker was to get entangled in such beliefs, they would get stuck at the outer circle of body and will not be able to continue their journey towards the centre. Similarly, if a seeker was to get stuck in religious rituals, ceremonies, and identify themselves with certain religions, they would not be able to get to their centre; they would be held by the outer circle of their mind.

Your body is a circle, around your centre, Your mind too is a circle, around your centre. There are many circles around your centre.



Identify yourself, not with the outer circles. You are their centre; remain at the centre.

The Holy Message of Sri Guru Granth Saheb guides the seeker to extricate themselves out of the unnecessary entanglements in the outer circle of existence and urges them to continue their journey towards the centre.

To be able to understand this Holy Message, one has to become aware, reflective, and introspective. But, the ordinary person is asleep in their ego-oriented pursuits. One may keep reading *Gurbaanee* required by religious code, but unless one understands its importance, and abides by the injunctions of the Guru, progress in the journey towards the centre does not occur. In order to raise one's level of awareness, the seeker needs to meditate on his or her actions and thoughts.

## **What is Meditation?**

One's mind is always chattering: it is either thinking of the future, or of the past. But it is never in the present. The chattering of mind never allows one to live a life free of worries. In the company of the mind, one lives a poor life. The constant chattering of the mind robs one of the joys of life.

Meditation is witnessing. To meditate means to become a witness, to become aware. Meditation means awareness. Whatever you do with awareness is meditation. A deeper meditation is to realize the watcher who is witnessing your actions and thoughts. Just watching your actions can be meditation if you remain watchful.

Watch your actions, watch your thoughts, watch your feelings, emotions, and moods. In the beginning you will notice that your body does actions without your being aware of them; your mind continually keeps thinking without your being aware of those thoughts; your emotions and your moods are all out of your control, they arise without your being aware of them. With awareness meditation, you slowly become aware of your actions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Gradually you develop power to control them. A time comes when

thoughts slow down, a gap is seen between them. It is during these gaps that you become aware of yourself; you become aware of your being. Slowly and slowly the gaps between your thoughts keep increasing. Then comes a time when the thoughts one is watching disappear; only the watcher is left. Finally, the watcher turns into Pure Awareness - this is the fourth or the Ultimate State (*turiyaa pad*). In this awakening, one transcends all duality; there is eternal Bliss.

## **The Advantages of Awareness Meditation**

You are the Real. But you lost your self in the allurements of this world. You need to rediscover your self. Meditation makes you aware of your self: your real self. When you become aware of your real self, you will be different, you will be unique.

Meditation will make you a free individual. You will not be governed by traditions and superstitions. People will not be able to exploit you. They will not be able to drive you like they drive sheep and cattle. Masses will no more influence your thinking. You will not be directed by the values that society imposes on you. You will not waste your life clinging to the mask given to you by this society. You will be a free individual acting under the awareness of your being. Meditation creates freedom and removes barriers created by society. Intelligence is rediscovered through meditation. When understanding occurs, the mischief created by society cannot affect you anymore; the conspiracy of priests, politicians, preachers, and teachers become ineffective. You become a free, authentic, and awakened individual.

Meditation will help you transcend sex, lust, and narrow love; your physical and psychological energies will get sublimated into spiritual growth. Love and compassion will replace physical and psychological pleasures.

Meditation will bring harmony and peace in you. As a result of experiencing peace within, your desires will be stilled, you will no longer be a beggar desiring things. You will not be dependent on anyone. You will be self-sufficient and capable of living by yourself, capable of being alone. Aloneness and solitude create silence. This

silence is not emptiness; it is the positive taste of your inner being. Your being is utterly silent and peaceful. There has never been any noise there. Your inner journey is a journey towards absolute silence and aloneness. You cannot take anyone there with you. Only you are there, the pure you, bathed in the elixir of Celestial Music, Light, and Fragrance. You will experience the greatest peace and joy in tasting the utter silence within you. When you go in, all connections with the outside world are broken; all bondages are burnt. It needs courage to travel towards absolute silence and aloneness. But once you are there, a great joy wells up within; there is the singing of the Song of Bliss. You are fulfilled. Your mind wanders no more; it is coloured with the Love of the Lord.

Meditation will grow in you the sensitivity to the Spirit that pervades and fills all phenomenon. This sensitivity will create in you the feeling of oneness with everything - with birds, with animals, with trees, with mountains, with stars, with oceans, with water, with wind. Your inner self will become rich with the love growing and flowing towards all creation.

You will experience Real Love born out of your inner depths, not the false love born out of your mind. Love born out of the mind is selfish. It drains one of all energy and leaves one dry and empty. The fragrance of Love, born out of inner depths, flows in all directions unconditionally; it is not directed towards anybody in particular; it is not a relationship; it has nothing to do with others. You become Loving, for, your true nature is Love.

## **Suggestions for Awareness Meditation**

The ideal place for meditation is a natural setting. Sitting under a tree with birds singing and water flowing close by is an excellent site for meditation. In case you do not have access to a natural setting, then you should reserve a separate room for meditation, because every room has its own purpose and each setting and activity creates its own thoughts and memories. When you meditate in a room, your spiritual

vibrations fill that room, thus making it easier for you to meditate.

You should have had enough sleep and should not be feeling tired. For this purpose sleep early so that you are ready for meditation before the break of dawn.

The posture of your body should be such that you feel relaxed and comfortable, while remaining alert. Do not take a posture in which you will feel sleepy. Particularly for breathing meditation, sit in a posture in which the backbone is straight.

When you sit for meditation, your energy which is normally used in routine work, is not being used; this energy finds an outlet in recollecting past memories and in planning for the future. As a result, you are troubled by more thoughts when you sit for meditation, than when you do not. Thus, in a sitting posture for meditation, you become aware of more madness in your mind than you do when you are busy in your daily chores. Because of this, in the beginning, awareness meditation may be done while walking mindfully or standing.

In the beginning, it is difficult to control thoughts. Particularly, when you sit for meditation, they come with a great gush. But slowly and gradually, the more we are able to watch our thoughts, the more control we have over them. When you attain the power to control your thoughts, when you can travel to your being and remain rooted in your being, then nothing anymore makes any difference. It is just like a plant which has become firmly rooted in the ground and has grown into a tree, then not even a storm can uproot it.

While you meditate, do not expect lightning results. Be patient and wait. Ego always hankers for results. Ego struggles to get peace and joy in the minimum time. But with meditation it does not happen that way. More struggle means more tension and more hope. This goes contrary to peace and harmony. Do not expect. Just surrender your will and self, and wait for nature to take its course. With this attitude you will one day experience peace and bliss.

## **Meditations For Becoming Aware**

There are various meditations which bring awareness. All of

these meditations aim at realising the watcher, the spectator within. Because we do not know that which watches, who we really are, we only see what we are not, i.e. our body and others, so we keep on watching them. Our awareness and attention is always directed towards others.

Watching is not something to be taught to us, we all know what watching is. So there is no question of learning it. It is just a question of changing the direction and objects of watching. What we need to do is to change the direction of the arrow from others towards our inner self, towards our inner thoughts, feelings, emotions, and moods. A great transformation occurs in our being by becoming aware and watchful of our inner self. We should watch every action of our body, mind, and heart.

Watchfulness sharpens our awareness and helps in realising our being. Some of the very effective awareness meditations are explained below.

## **Becoming Aware of Breathing**

Breathing is a bridge between the body and mind. It is the glue which keeps the body, mind, and soul together as an integral unit. When breathing stops, the mind and soul leave the body. Breathing can become a vehicle for your transformation and spiritual experience. All that you need to do is remain mindful and aware. For this meditation, you should sit cross-legged, keeping your body erect with your backbone straight in a vertical position, hands comfortably placed on your lap, and eyes closed.

You breathe day and night, but ordinarily you never pay attention to your breathing; the act of breathing continues without your ever being aware of it. For developing contemplative spirit, you should become aware of your breathing. You can become aware of your breathing in three ways. First, breathe naturally and pay attention to your breath going in and out. Focus your attention on your belly, you will notice that as your breath travels in, your belly starts expanding outwards, and as your breath travels out, your belly starts contracting

inwards. You should be aware of your belly moving out and in due to breathing in, and breathing out. As you become more and more aware of the movement of your belly due to breathing, your mind will start becoming silent.

The second way is to be aware of your breathing when your breath goes through your nostrils. You will feel a cooling sensation at the entrance of your nostrils as the breath goes in, and you will feel some sensation in your nostrils as the breath goes out.

The third way to be aware of your breathing is to keep your attention focussed on your breath going in from your nostrils to your belly, and your breath going out from your belly to your nostrils. You should breathe naturally and not strain yourself. Just remain focussed on your breath going in, and going out. When your attention is fully focused on your breathing, you will experience stillness of thoughts. Your emotions and moods will disappear and you will feel harmony and peace within you.

In the beginning you will find it extremely difficult to keep your attention focused on the movement of breath. Your mind will wander away in a moment: it will not stay focussed. It will get distracted by all types of thoughts, and external and internal stimuli. Gradually, distractions will become less and less, and your mind will begin to remain focused on breathing. With your development of focus, your awareness will grow. The quality of your life will become rich. You will be more relaxed and will have sound sleep. Your body and mind will become healthy. You will develop a cool and reflective mind. Your power of concentration and ability to focus your attention will increase. As a result, you will be able to do better in all spheres of life.

After practicing daily for an hour or two over a period of a few months, your breathing will become deep and slow. As a result, thoughts will remain dormant during the breathing meditation, and there will be peace and harmony. Whenever you sit for this awareness meditation, you will notice that when your breath travels from your nostrils towards your belly, a part of it travels through your nasal

cavity upwards towards the forehead and beyond to the centre of your skull, and while exhaling, part of the breath also rises up on the same path. This rising of the breath through the nasal cavity straight to the forehead brings stillness of thought and peace. This state stays for some time after each meditation. The more one practices this awareness breathing, the more one tastes the elixir of peace.

## **Awareness Meditation**

To be aware means to be in the present. When contemplative spirit develops, one develops the power to remain in one's being. To be in one's being is to be in the present. One does not spend time thinking of the past and hoping for things in the future. Generally people are not aware of the present moment; they live their life in the past or the future. Hoping for a better future, they remain frustrated with their present life. They try to escape the present for the future. They never live a Real life. They escape the Real for the unreal.

The fundamentals of the awareness meditations are that you should remain aware of your body, mind, and heart: At the body level, you should remain aware of whatever actions you are doing; at the mind level, you should remain aware of whatever thoughts are occurring; at the heart level you should remain aware of your emotions, your feelings, your moods, your desires.

At the body level, watch whatever your body does. While you walk, you should be aware and mindful of your walking, pay attention and feel the contact of each foot as it touches the ground. While moving your hand you should be aware that you are moving your hand. It is easy to move like a machine, mechanically without being aware; you can go for a walk and can go on walking without being aware of the movement of your feet or hands. You can walk and go on thinking. Similarly you can eat, and keep on thinking, or you can take a shower, and go on thinking. But, this is living a life without being conscious and without being aware of whatever you do. Instead, you should replace thinking by awareness. Start practicing awareness with small acts, such as walking, eating, dressing, or taking a shower. Be

aware of the various movements of your body. While taking a shower, be aware of the water falling on you, be aware of the soap that you apply, and the rubbing that you do; be aware of all your movements. Your movements should not be happening in an unconscious state. You should watch all movements of your body. Starting with these simple activities of daily routine, you can remain aware and watchful of more complicated activities. After a long practice, awareness and watchfulness become as natural as breathing. Then you can become so aware that there is no activity in the world in which you cannot remain fully aware.

Once you have become an expert in watching and being aware of all activities of your physical dimension, you should start watching the subtler dimensions of your existence, the mind. Watch your thoughts: whatever thoughts pass on the screen of your mind, watch them, be aware of them; witness the psychodrama being played on the screen of your consciousness. In the beginning you will find it difficult to single out your thoughts and determine their contents. Your thoughts move at such a great speed that you cannot ordinarily identify them. As you keep on making an effort to watch them, you will be able to witness their contents by seeing their images. Then you can even single out a thought and its image, and fix it in your mind without letting it move. With more practice in watching your thoughts, a gap in thoughts will be seen; there will be moments without thoughts, without images. Then you will experience a peaceful state of existence. You will experience what it is to be in pure awareness, pure consciousness, and along with this awareness you will experience the peace of the kind that you have never known before. This will be your firsthand experience of being in your being, of knowing what it is to be in a state of stillness of mind; you will have a glimpse of your Real Self and the bliss that accompanies it.

When you have become an expert at watching your thoughts, then you should start watching your feelings, your emotions, and your moods. Whatever emotions and feelings arise in your heart, watch them with full awareness, and remain a witness. Like a spectator,



watch them arising. Do not get involved or identified with them. As you watch them with full awareness as a spectator watching a drama, they will start subsiding, vanishing. Merely watching the emotions with full awareness makes them subside and eventually kills them, be it anger, lust, greed, attachment, ego, envy, jealousy, or hatred. Witnessing them with full awareness kills them. The moment you start watching, the watcher in you becomes stronger and your thoughts, your emotions, become weaker. Ordinarily, emotions and desires are your masters. They keep you on the go; making you do many things, they do not give you a respite. When emotions are being watched by the watcher, they know that the master is watching. So they become the servants.

It is just like putting on the lights in a dark house. If the lights in a house are on, thieves do not come anywhere near that house. They know that the master is awake and it is not the time to enter the house and steal. But, when the lights are off, the thieves are at large, stealing all the valuables.

Not only do the five master thieves (lust, anger, attachment, greed, and ego) start stealing, they also invite their brothers, sisters, and offsprings (envy, jealousy, hatred, revenge) to steal. What do they do? They rob one of their merits, leaving them bereft of peace and bliss. But if the master is there, if the watcher is there witnessing everything, the light is on in the house and the thieves dare not enter. When the watcher is present, the mind is absent; and when the watcher is absent, the mind returns. When light is present, there is no darkness; when light is absent, there is darkness. Thus, for peace and bliss to be there, all one needs is to be aware and wakefully witnessing forever.

But how to become aware forever? Just by watching your actions, your thoughts, your emotions, a miracle starts happening; the watcher in you starts becoming more aware and stronger. The more the watcher watches, the stronger it becomes. When it attains to a state of purity in awareness, it attains to the Real. To find the witnessing soul in its purity is the greatest achievement, because this opens the door not only to the mysteries of our own existence, our own individualised

soul, but also to the mysteries of all Existence; it brings you to the very door of God. Finding one's soul is finding the gateway to God, the Ultimate Truth is realized in the very soul.

## **Naam: The Supreme Meditation**

The Sikh religion is monotheistic. It believes in One Supreme God, Absolute, Immanent in His Creation, All Pervading, the Creator, the Cause of causes, sans enmity, sans hatred, Eternal, Uncreated, Self-illuminated, attained through the Grace of God.

In the Sikh thought, Naam is the central theme. Guru Nanak Dev ji introduced the Naam Maarg for attainment of the Ultimate Truth, which he called Sach. What is Naam? Naam is the Spirit, the very Being of God, pervading in all creation. In fact all creation is nothing but the Spirit manifested in phenomena. Guru Saheb says, “Jaytaa keetaa taytaa naa-o, Vin naavai nahi ko thaa-o.” (p. 4): All that created is Naam, without Naam there is no place, no creation.

The ceaseless recitation of God's Name works as persistent reminder of our destination. Naam is not merely the ‘Name of God’ as is commonly believed; it symbolizes the Being of God filling all Creation.

As we cannot focus our mind or attention on God, who is Absolute, or even on Naam, the invisible Essence of God in His Creation, the Name of God is the only medium available to us for approaching Him. When we recite God's Name, we evoke within ourselves His Glories and Excellences. Thus, it is through the Name of God that we are able to think of Him, to remember Him. In other words, the ‘Name of God’ is God Himself adopted to our powers of perception and thought, adopted to the capacities of our body and mind. Because we are endowed with the capacities to utter and attentively listen, the continuous recitation of and attentive listening to the Name of God focuses our mind on the object of the invocation, resulting in a state of ceaseless remembrance of God (dhiaan). This dhiaan, in turn, results in complete absorption of our consciousness on the thought of God, who responds to our earnest invocation and reveals Himself in

our inner being. The revelation of the Essence of Reality within us is the revelation of Naam, the invisible dimension of God in His visible Creation.

When the revelation of Naam occurs within, the devotee sees the Essence of God (Naam) pervading throughout His Creation.

Thus, the Name of God is the medium of appellation to God, who reveals Himself in response to the devotee's earnest invocation. In Sikhism, at the time of initiation (Amrit Sanchaar) the Name of God, Waheguru (Wonderful God), is given as Gurmantar (Guru's Holy Word) by the Panj Pi-aaray (the Five Beloved, acting as Guru) to the initiate for continuous recitation and remembrance of God. To repeatedly recite the Gurmantar given by the Guru, and to cherish it in the heart, is the essence of prayer and devotion to the Formless God.

Unless the name of God is uttered with full awareness and loving devotion, it can become a mechanical utterance, a mere mental exercise which would bring no fruit. It is therefore necessary that a seeker of Truth should first develop the capacity to become aware and watch their actions, thoughts, and emotions. It is because of this reason that we have discussed the usefulness of the awareness meditations and described their procedure in order to develop the awareness to watch oneself.

The Truth can be revealed in our heart only by the Grace of God. The belief in God, and the feeling of the presence of God helps the devotee to detach himself from the worldly support, and take refuge in God. This brings in the devotee a great strength and security. Thus, the devotee ever remains carefree.

We give here the description of the Supreme Meditations which combine the effect of the awareness meditations with devotional meditations of Naam, simran, and kirtan.

## **1. Simran with Breathing Meditations:**

The main aim of simran meditation is to remember the Lord, and through such remembrance, attain a state of complete absorption in the love of the Lord, forsaking all other loves. The remembrance of



**IN PEACE AND BLISS**

Simran Meditation.

God can take place by loudly reciting God's name or by synchronising the utterance of the word 'Waheguru' with the breathing, or silently within the heart.

Once you have become fully aware of your breathing while meditating, you should start uttering the Holy Word 'Waheguru' (Wonderful Lord) in rhythm with the breathing. While breathing out say the word 'Guru' (Guroo) and while breathing in say the word 'Wahe' (Waahe). Ensure that while you say 'Guru' you exhale and your belly contracts inward; and while you say 'Wahe' you inhale, and your belly expands outwards. With every breath that you take you are invoking God's blessing and grace. Keep your attention focused on the Holy Word.

Those who become contemplative through Simran (loving remembrance of God) with breathing meditation, they remain aware in the present and thus enjoy a life of harmony, peace, and bliss. By uttering the Guru's Holy Word Waheguru with each breath, one is blessed by the Guru, and God reveals Himself to such a devotee.

## **2. Kirtan Meditations:**

Having attained to a state of awareness of self as a watcher, the seeker of Truth can gain the maximum benefit from singing or listening to Gurbaanee. While singing or listening to kirtan, the seeker can enter a state of Pure Awareness, and thus remain absorbed in the elixir of Naam. In addition, by understanding the Message of the Guru, an awakened seeker would live a God-centred life, serving humanity selflessly.

## **3. Seva Meditations:**

Through self-awareness meditations, one comes to understand the nature of things as they are. Therefore, they transcend the worldly entanglements with their family and friends. They live their life with minimum necessities, and contribute their wealth and labour towards uplifting others. By understanding the Guru's Message, the seeker serves humanity selflessly, and becomes aware of their very

soul. Becoming aware of the Ultimate Truth within, they see the same spirit in all Existence. Through the selfless seva, they become egoless; and their consciousness merges in union with God, thus becoming Universal.

The contents of this chapter as also the reflections made throughout the book lead us to a discipline that a seeker of Truth ought to follow in order to have union with God. Along, with remembrance of God and singing his praises, a seeker ought to practice the following five broad precepts in order to attain to a state of peace, harmony, and joy.

1. A seeker of Truth ought not to use their life force for accumulating wealth and worldly possessions, for even if they gather worldly riches, they will still remain poor within, and unhappy. The worldly wealth and wisdom cannot quench the thirst of the soul for the eternal bliss. If a seeker wants to be happy, they ought to overcome their greed and covetousness. Barring earning their livelihood to meet their basic needs, using life force for amassing wealth is vain and foolish.

2. The bondage with the worldly objects and desire for enjoyment of pleasures from them is the cause of suffering. Therefore, an attitude of detachment from worldly objects, family members and friends, is necessary in order to remain liberated and happy. A note of caution is necessary here: detachment neither implies running away from the secular duties of a householder nor does it imply leaving the home and the family and going into isolation. What it really implies is an attitude of renunciation of self-oriented desires and hopes; an attitude of detachment from the worldliness, and attachment and absorption in the loving admiration of the Real.

3. If one wants to be happy, one ought to drop selfish attitudes. A seeker of Truth ought not to listen to the voice of the narrow self, for it monopolizes the life force for pleasure seeking and self-glorification. Instead, one ought to enlarge their concern for the good of others, thus gradually transforming their small self into a universal Self, which recognises the existence of God in all; therefore one should love all

and serve all equally without any selfish motive.

4. Attachment, antipathy, lust and anger, pride and jealousy, which always bring misery and unhappiness, should be controlled by rightly understanding these passions. For the right understanding, one must study the Enlightener's gospel (Gurbaanee), and realize the truth of His teachings. For realizing the Truth, one must reflect on the Guru's Word and introspect within. In addition, one must avoid the company of the power-seeker materialist and join instead the company of holy ones seeking the Truth. True thoughts, true speech, and true work is the outcome of remaining in the holy company of the true ones. Singing Gurbaanee Kirtan in the glory of God, reflecting on its contents, doing selfless service while remembering the Lord by reciting His Name, are the sure ways to attain to a state of peace, harmony, and eternal joy.

5. Contemplative Spirit (Dhiaan), which springs out of the Love of God, is the single most important factor in attaining union with God. What does contemplative spirit imply? It implies oneness of thought: all thoughts, particularly analytical and discursive, vanish from the mind; the mind remains empty of everything except the percepts of the object on which the mind is contemplating. It is a continuous remembrance in which one's attention remains focused on the object of contemplation.

Why does one not normally remain in contemplative spirit? Society has brainwashed humans through indoctrination of superficial values from their very childhood. Without ever questioning the usefulness and necessity of these spurious values in attaining harmony, peace, and joy in life, humans continue to pursue these values as if they were held in a spell. Humans remain too involved in this world; all their attention and energy flow out of their five senses towards the phenomenal things external to them. To travel inwards towards Naam, the very source of all existence, contemplative spirit is necessary.

Worldly desires, goals, hopes, passions, and pleasures, are all distractions and interferences in the development of contemplative

spirit on the Ultimate Reality. Guru's Holy Word (Gurbaanee) is of great help in extricating the seeker out of worldly involvements as it makes the seeker aware of the futility of worldly pursuits, as also of the suffering such pursuits bring. Realizing the futility of worldly pursuits and pleasures, the seeker adopts a lifestyle of moderation by renouncing all except what is necessary for running the affairs of life. Renunciation of the five passions, cravings for worldly objects, and control of speech, thoughts, and imagination, are the hallmarks of a seeker of Truth. For enjoying spiritual bliss, it is necessary that the mind be still. A seeker should utilise his each breath of his life in remembrance and in singing the glories of the Wonderful God, Waheguru.





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