



In quest of
spiritual
awakening

- C.L. Gulati

IN QUEST OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

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Preface

That spiritual awakening is the primary objective of human life has been acknowledged by men of divine wisdom in every age. It stands for direct knowledge of God without which life is incomplete and man fumbles and stumbles in the darkness of ignorance.

For spiritual enlightenment, man must seek the grace and blessings of a perfect true master, who removes all the confusion and unites one with the Ultimate Reality. No amount of reading and reciting or performing religious rites and rituals may help man in realizing God. It is the True Master who reveals God which makes one understand Self also. It is after this spiritual awakening that one realizes the truth about one's real identity as well as one's relation with the Almighty . Nirankar and the material world including fellow human beings. Spiritual awakening brings a revolution in the heart and mind of a person. He develops positive attitude towards people and event, pious thoughts and loving attitude with make life pure, beautiful and sublime.

Spiritual Awakening was the theme of the Special Souvenir brought out by the Magazine Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal on the historic occasion of the 60th Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam held in Delhi in November, 2007. the Souvenir carried a number of revealing articles produced by distinguished scholars of the Sant Nirankari Mission from India and abroad.

The Souvenir which had three parts . Punjabi, Hindi and English was like by our esteemed readers. Rev Dr. Iqbaljit S. Rai, Working President, Sant Nirankari Mission, USA, his wife Dr. Manjit and some other saints from Canada and UK felt impressed by the contents and keenly suggested the need and scope of segregating the English portion of the Souvenir to be given the shape of an independent book on the subject which could be given to God-loving friends and thus help spreading the message of the Mission. This suggestion was subsequently supported by many other saints from India also.

The Member Incharge of the Magazine Department, Rev. C.L. Gulati, therefore, passed on the matter compiled by him to the Publications Department where the undersigned gave it its present shape. While doing so, some articles were edited or modified to make them more forceful and relevant to the needs of the readers. The Honorable Members of the Screening Committee attached to the Publications Department also gave their kind consent.

It is hoped that the book titled **“In Quest of Spiritual Awakening”** will be found useful not only by saints abroad but our esteemed readers in India also. The Publications Department is grateful to Rev. C.L. Gulati and his colleagues particularly the Associate Editors of the English portion of the Souvenir Rev.

Joginder Singh Ji and Rev. Des Raj Ahuja Ji, for this valuable addition to the Sant Nirankari Mission's literature. We are also grateful to the Honorable Member of Screening Committee for their kind co-operation and valuable advice. We pray to His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj to bless them all with ability to serve the Mission in this field more and more in future also.

Kirpa Sagar

Member Incharge Publications

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In quest of Spiritual Awakening

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: AN EXPOSITION

- Naranjan Singh IAS (Retd)

The dictionary meaning of Awakening is rousing. It also means a revival, an arousal of realization.

What do we mean when we discuss Spiritual Awakening? What is the procedure? And where do we reach? What do we gain, when the Spirit is awakened? More important is the basic question as to what Spirit is? Is it sleeping or dormant that we are to awaken it? All these questions need to be considered and answered. In this process of consideration, we have to be logical and scientific. After all, it is the age of science, and we should not mystify things.

Let us, address the basic question as to what Spirit is. Does it exist or is a mere product of our imagination, our intellectual accomplishment? If it is the latter, then Spirit is an abstract something having no logical base. It is unscientific to believe or deal with a thing which does not exist. To awaken a thing that does not exist, is to live in a world of illusion or hallucination. So let us be fully sure whether Spirit is an Existent and whether it can be understood, realized or captured by human brain.

The dictionary meaning of the word Spirit is the doctrine that reality is spiritual rather than material, a type of idealism that defines ultimate reality as spirit and the world as a realm of thoughts and ideas.

Spirit is believed to be a principle of conscious life and the vital principle in man; the in-corporeal part in man, separable from body at death time. Spirit is the base of human body and all the cosmic phenomena. It is the basic ultimate energy. As it created Matter, it alone sustains it and shall dissolve it.

Coming down to metaphysics, we come across the concept of Supreme Spirit. Spirit is said to be the base of human body. It is that unchanging base of human organism which does not change with the evolution and development of the physical portion. It is also the unchanging base of the cosmos. It is the basic ultimate substance. It manifests matter, sustains it, and dissolves it. These two unchanging bases correspond to each other. That way they not only exist but prove each other.

First we start with the Cosmic Spirit. It has following salient features:-

- i. Spirit is potential cosmic energy, cosmic and omnipresent.

- ii. Spirit is the first original state of matter. Matter is its manifested form, Spirit is formless, non-matter.
- iii. Spirit is both consciousness and intelligence. That is why it regulates and coordinates the entire cosmic phenomena.
- iv. Spirit is one common denominator of the cosmos. All matter and energy are ultimately Spirit in essence.

God is a Spirit
Whosoever shall worship God
Shall worship Him in Spirit
And in Truth

- St. John 4:24

The same Cosmic Spirit is called Jyoti. Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji says:

The One Spirit pervades the space
In between Earth and Sky
It neither increases nor decreases

The Adi Granth repeatedly refers to this Spirit as Formless God:

Neither it has form Nor colour,
Nor any lineament
God is devoid of all the three traits of matter

Prophet Mohammed also refers to the same Spirit as Allah which is nearer than the Jugular Vein.

In Geeta, Lord Krishna revealed the same Cosmic Spirit. This Spirit is the Virat-Swarup (universal form) of God which contains the entire material phenomena. When Arjuna saw the Spirit he said:

This space between heaven
and earth and all the quarters
are filled by you alone.

- Geeta 11-15

In the present age, the Nir-akar, (Nirankar or Formless), preached by the Sant Nirankari Mission is the Cosmic Spirit. To quote:

Beyond form, colour and lineament
I salute Thee a million times
Beyond mind, intellect and intelligence
I salute Thee a million times

- Avtar Bani -1

The Cosmic Spirit is ~~Satq~~ ~~Chitq~~and ~~Anandq~~ ~~Satq~~means that it is ~~Existentq~~ ~~Chitq~~means that it is ~~Consciousnessq~~in itself. ~~Anandq~~means that it is ~~blissq~~ in itself. This Spirit is One, indivisible, omnipresent and is cognizable by a human being.

The Organismic Spirit called ~~Soulq~~is kindred to the Cosmic Spirit, called God or Nirankar. Both being so, prove each other. To exemplify, the element of water in our organism and the element of water outside prove each other when after we are thirsty we take water and our thirst is quenched. This process proves the existence of water as part and whole. Part is in the organism, the whole of water is outside on the earth. Similar is the story of other elements. Our organism is a part of cosmos. All its constituents are part of the cosmic elements existing outside. On the same pattern, the spirit in the organism is proven by the Spirit in the cosmos.

This process, when the Cosmic Spirit brings out the Spirit in the Organism, is called Spiritual Awakening. The Spirit inside lies dormant and is in ignorance. Owing to this, it is identified with one form of matter or the other. In such a situation, it does not know itself. It feels it is matter alone and nothing else. When by the grace of the True Master, the Cosmic Spirit is revealed as One and Omnipresent, the organismic spirit (soul) at once catches it and gets identified with it. This is a revolution, a spiritual awakening, a total change of vision. It is said:

The Invisible (Cosmic Spirit)
Sovereign element, the unknowable
Is caught through the Word of the Master
I sacrifice my all unto the True Master.

- Adi Grandh-114

Integration with Cosmos

When the cosmic Formless Spirit and the organismic spirit are conjoined, one achieved integration with the Cosmos. This is the end purpose of spiritual awakening. Avtar Bani . 189 says:

This Formless Cosmic Spirit
Is thine real Home
It is also thine Cosmic Form

The home of cosmic phenomena is the Formless Being (Spirit). Naturally, it is the home of each self. All creation evolves and dissolves in this. So, contemplation of and identification with this Substance is the basic requirement. Proper connection with cosmic source (Spirit) is the aim of the organism. The source should be real and within reach. The organism is not to evolve the source, nor evolve itself into a source. Only knowing and connecting with the source is desired.

Nature has fixed what action to take for replenishing the elements inside the organism. Only one method is for eating food, drinking water, inhaling air, etc., etc. No Karma Kand or ritual is required for taking water, inhaling air. Similarly, Mind is the organ for knowing and connecting with the Cosmic Spirit. If we search the cosmos, there is no element which can bring out the mind and dissolve its impurities lying in the shape of Sanskaras, (tendencies). The mind is purified, and is raised to its original nature which is characterized by cosmic vastness.

Each self and element is a part of Cosmos. It is a hard fact. So, to enter the Cosmos and becoming integrated with it is the final destination. The entry and integration is through the gate of the Cosmic Spirit. Once entry is made, then one can have any thing lying in the Cosmic Chest.

This is Spiritual Awakening.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKING: The see-saw

- Col. (Retd) Dr. Karam Singh

☉ man, why are you sleeping in ignorance with your eyes closed.
Awaken and achieve the aim for which you have come in this world.
- Avtar Bani-167

Awake, arise and stop not till the goal is reached.
- Swami Vivekananda

☉ Only Satguru is awoken and rest of the world slumbers in worldly attachment (Maya).

Those who serve Satguru get awakened through the love of God's Name.
- Adi Granth-592

The word **☉spirit** is derived from the Latin word **☉spirit** which means breath or vital, animating essence of a person or animal i.e. the soul. It also means a rational or intelligent being without the material body. It is the part of a person that consists of feeling and character rather than thought and body, and is believed to survive after body's death. The word **☉spiritual** means anything to do with the spirit as opposed to material (physical) things i.e. having to do with religion or religious belief (devotional, divine, eternal, heavenly, holy, sacred, unworldly, incorporeal, refined and sensitive). The word **☉awake** means to be aware, conscious, open-eyed, active. The word **☉awaken** means to stir or arouse (a feeling). The word **☉awakening** means an act of becoming suddenly aware of something i.e. the beginning of a feeling or belief. **☉Spiritual Awakening** means that an individual becomes aware of his spiritual essence and starts feeling that spiritual values are more important than material possessions or physical comforts. Awakening as such implies the existence of its opposite i.e. sleeping from which the individual is to awaken or is to be awakened.

A human being, ordinarily, has three states of consciousness i.e. psychophysical sleep state, dream state and awake state. Ordinarily, a human being is considered as awake when he is aware of his body and surrounding objects and the world. When he goes to sleep, he has two states: dream state when he is dreaming and deep sleep state when he is neither dreaming nor aware of his body or his surroundings. From this psychophysical sleep he can awaken himself or can be awakened easily by anybody else. Spiritual sleep, on the other hand, means that the consciousness or spirit or Jiva of a person considers itself to be a physical body (gross material) and mind (subtle material) perceived the outer world as ultimate reality due to ignorance about its own real nature. This means that the spirit or consciousness identifies itself to be restricted to the above-mentioned three states or psychophysical awake, dream and deep sleep

states and is unaware of its fourth state of super-consciousness known as Turya in Hindu scriptures.

Ever since human being was born on the face of this earth, innumerable seers, sages, saints and prophets have been manifesting (taking birth) periodically to dispel the ignorance and awaken people to the reality that they are essentially spirit and have only acquired body and mind as coverings i.e. they are rays of the Supreme Sun (God or Formless or Nirankar) who is Omni-present, Omni-scient and Omni-potent, who is non-material and whose nature is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. When such Beings manifest, they bestow on seekers the divine knowledge and awaken the people to their spiritual reality. But human beings, due to the gravitational pull of their past actions (Karmas), again go to spiritual sleep. This phenomenon has been repeated in the history of human race many times. This see-saw of spiritual awakening and spiritual sleep has been going on.

When a Spiritual Master has either not manifested or his teachings are ignored, human beings start adopting methods suiting their own worldly interests but in vain because they not only do not lead to spiritual awakening but also tend to strengthen their spiritual ignorance/sleep. One such method is to do Jagaran (remaining awake throughout night and praying). Baba Avtar Singh Ji has stated:

God can neither be realized through psychophysical sleep nor by remaining psychophysically awake: many not frustrated (tired) by keeping physically awake and praying overnight.q

- Avtar Bani-306

Human being is also made aware about his state of ignorance:

⌘ For the sake of cowries you are wasting your life which is as precious as diamonds, God is right in front of you but you do not open your eyes.q

- Avtar Bani-160

That dormant spiritual eye of a human being is activated by the grace of a Satguru by bestowing the divine knowledge, Avtar Bani is very clear on this aspect:

⌘ True Master applied the collyrium of divine knowledge to my eyes and blessed me with the vision of God.q

- Avtar Bani -5

Release from the clutches of spiritual ignorance and its progeny (ego, anger, greed, attachment and worldly desires) is achieved by the grace of a contemporary Spiritual Master. When a person gets spiritually awakened, he

starts feeling the presence of God everywhere and can be recognized by certain traits i.e. his life becomes simple, sincere, sober, solemn, humble, harmonious, peaceful, loving and compassionate, which, in other words, means that his life is dominated by spiritual values and materiality takes its legitimate second position. He develops the attitude of detached attachment towards worldly affairs and relations.

When a Spiritual Master awakens the people from the spiritual sleep, it is a flowering (spring) season. He radiates the fragrance of spiritual awakening all around and makes all those who come to his lotus feet fragrant too. At present, Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj is spreading this divine fragrance untiringly, day and night, to one and all without any discrimination of caste, creed, colour or nationality i.e. to awaken the sleeping humanity to spirituality so that the whole world can live in peace and love as one family imbued with the feeling of universal brotherhood.

The Sant Nirankari Mission is synonymous with spiritual awakening movement started by Baba Buta Singh Ji in Pakistan followed by Baba Avtar Singh Ji in India, carried forward by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and now being broadened by Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj at full speed to become an international mass movement. But, we all Nirankari devotees, who have been spiritually awakened by Nirankari Baba Ji, should hope and pray to remain in the awakened state by doing Simran (Remembrance of Nirankar or Formless) attending Satsang (congregation of saints), rendering Sewa (selfless service) and following the Five Pledges sincerely to avoid falling in spiritual sleep again, the danger of which is ever present.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKING: Knowing The Unknown

- Dr. Iqbaljit S. Rai

Forgetfulness of God invites all suffering (Parmeshar Te Bhulian Viapan Sabhe Rog), say the scriptures. Materialistic progress has diminished the value of this dictum during the last two centuries. Now when the materialistic progress has brought the world to a dead-end, it is realizing the truth enshrined in this dictum. Of course, new meanings are being given to it, but that in no way minimizes its significance.

God is not some bodily being, dwelling in the high heavens, as is generally believed. He is the unknown in the universe that was given this name. Since the unknown is far vaster than the known, thinking of the former fills the mind of mankind with humility. This feeling of humility inspires mankind to regard the unknown as Divine. Such a regard makes the human mind a vessel of noble feelings and emotions. Instead of conflict and competition, cooperation and mutual help become the guidelines for the social life. From a domestic angle, the Biblical injunction %love Thy Neighbour+acquires world-wide meaning.

No wonder, the feeling of the oneness of mankind becomes a norm from the ideal that has so far remained an ideal only for the spiritual mentors. Per Swami Vivekananda:

%As rain falling upon a mountain flows in various streams down the sides of the mountain, so all the energies you see here are from the one Centre. It has become manifold falling upon Maya (illusory world). Do not run after the manifold; go towards the One. He is in all that moves; He is in all that is pure. He fills the universe.+

Once this ideal becomes the norm, Kabir's sublime teaching %ek Noor Te Sabh Jag Upjya Kaun Bhale Ko Mande+(All have the same origin; who is good or bad) does not remain a dream.

If all are intrinsic part of the Divine, none is good or bad. This is a message, which holy beings have ceaselessly tried to give throughout the ages. Of course, their message has been intuitive to which the Western thinkers have added logical elaborations. All their intellectual efforts are commendable, indeed. But their purpose is not served unless commensurate feelings and emotions keep pace with them. This becomes possible by giving greater credence to the Unknown, that is, Divine, as well. More than the human effort, it is the grace of the Guru that a human being achieves this aim. Gurbani puts it very succinctly:

Bin Satgur Kine Na Payo
Bin Satgur Kine Na Paya
Satgur Wich Aap Rakhyan

(No body has attained nor can anyone attain God without the grace of a True Master; God dwells in the Master who reveals Him)

Educational institutions and universities seem to have realized that by making spirituality a part of their curriculum, the students will learn more of moral values. In olden times, churches and denominations believed it was their duty to morally educate the people. This was so commendable, says Rev Donna McNeal, a priest at the University of Pacific in Stockton, California:

Even now, I do not find the academic world and the Christian world in opposition to each other on this score – in fact, it's quite the opposite.

Says she further,

Any Chaplain should help people examine their moral and ethical beliefs.

A number of religious institutions in the United States are turning their attention towards teaching spirituality in the jails as a method of rehabilitation. This is the fine balance that pastors like Rev Ellis Stewart of Stockton's Mount Calvary Missionary Baptist Church try to bring about between human effort and divine grace – For the past 30 years, Stewart has spent his Saturday-nights at the local jails teaching spirituality to the inmates. According to Stewart, "Prisoners need teaching and spirituality as they are usually forgotten once they are in jail." One in three American inmates participates in a religious program during incarceration, according to the Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment. Research. In 2005, the University of Alabama conducted a study and found that religious inmates were 74% less likely than nonbelievers to engage in arguments and disorderly behaviour.

It has also been established through scientific research that there are real differences between religion and spirituality. Spirituality is based in conscience, whereas religion is in cognition. The most important difference they found is that spirituality is genetic, while religion is based on culture, tradition and beliefs and ideas. In other words, religion is mimetic, while spirituality is inherent. This is the reason why spirituality and religion have such differing impacts on individual lives and society, concludes Dr. Dean Hammer, a pre-eminent geneticist and author of this study. At least, one of the God genes, VMAT2, is a code for a protein that controls the ebb and flow of brain chemicals that play a key role in emotions and consciousness. It is all about seeing the world through new eyes. Dr. Hammer concluded that our genes could predispose us to believe, but do not tell us what to believe in. It is only by divine grace and the company of believers that a person becomes spiritually awakened. In one of his sermons on July 21, 2007,

at the Tracy Satsang Bhawan, near San Francisco, Baba Hardev Singh Ji mentioned the program organized by the youth group of Calgary (Canada) called Walk for values which are being eroded,+and said:

It will be more appreciable if we walk with values. If we wish to highlight the values, we have to uphold them as demonstrated by the spiritually enlightened saints.

With full awareness that the world is in God's image, true devotees plunge themselves in the service of their beloved God who is manifest in the form of near and dear ones as much as in the form of humanity in general. Such devotees stay detached from the world they live in. They neither protest over nor are troubled even by death. They are the spiritually awakened.

(The author is Working President of Sant Nirankari Mission in USA)

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HUMAN UNITY THRO' SPIRITUAL AWAKING:

- K.R. Chadha, Secretary, SNM

The United Nations declared and celebrated October 2, 2007 . the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi . as Non-violence Day. Obviously, Non-violence has been identified with Gandhi Ji who dreamt of an ideal society in which there shall be no high class or low class of people, in which all communities shall live in perfect, harmony without the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men and be at peace with the rest of the world. His philosophy still touches a chord.

India and the world may never ever again see Mahatma Gandhi. But that does not mean we cannot learn from him. To identify the genesis of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, we are guided by the words "Hey Ram" which he spoke while breathing his last. These words clearly lay open before us that Gandhi Ji's philosophy of non-violence and truth was derived from his belief in the power of the very same principles epitomized by Maryada Purshottam Ram, the ideal personage, immortalized in the legend's epic, the Ramayana narrated in as many languages as its plural versions.

Coming to the philosophy of Lord Rama, it is mentioned in Utra Kand of Ram Charit Manas:-

If you seek happiness here as well as hereafter, listen to my words and imprint them deeply in your hearts. It is an easy and pleasant road. Only devotion to Rama according to Puranas and the Vedas leads to knowledge for a blissful life.

The Vedas, the oldest known scriptures of mankind pointedly mention:-

O citizens of the world; life in harmony and concord.

Speak with one voice and make your resolution with one mind.

- Regaveda 10-191-2

The *Asudhaiva Kutumbakam* envisioned by the Vedas was further preached and practiced by Lord Gautam Buddha and Lord Mahavira. Lord Christ gave his commandment, "*Love thy neighbour as thyself and love thy enemy too.*" The dictum of Holy Quran is, "*Pehla Sabak Hai Kitabe Hida Ka, Ki Makhlook Sari Hai Kunba Khuda Ka.*"

We discover that all these teachings starting from the Vedas to the Upanishads, the Ram Charit Manas, the Bhagwad Geeta, the Holy Bible, the Holy Quran and the Adi Granth are totally congruent with each other, all spelling out the need of non-violence and unity through spiritual awakening. No power on earth can

possibly fulfill the slogan of human unity unless relationship between man and man becomes smooth and sweet. The possibility of creating mutual understanding is seen in the spiritual awakening i.e. actual realization of Fatherhood of God, which is the only force that is the mortar binding together the many-shaped bricks of human society into a coherent structure.

It is this spiritual awakening which is the real subject matter of the Sant Nirankari Mission. Without violating any of the principles and codes enumerated in the Vedas and other holy scriptures, the Mission sublimates the same Message, "*Sara Sansar Ek Parivar*" by creating an understanding of emotional integration in vast human family through spiritual awakening. The religion, like the white light of heavens, stands broken into many coloured fragments by the prisms of men. The Sant Nirankari Mission is changing this many coloured radiance back into the white light of heavenly truth to forge human unity and address the problems of life in all forms on our beautiful planet earth.

Watching the grotesque picture of the world, Nirankari Baba Ji has said that man today is stuck up at a cross-road where one way goes to non-violence and the other to death and destruction. Man has to make a candid choice whether to follow the path of survival or annihilation. Hope springs eternal that man will rise to the occasion, and prove, through spiritual awakening, that none of us is as strong as all of us together.

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IN QUEST OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING:

- Kirpa Sagar, IIS (Retd)

With the benign blessings of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, I revealed God on his behalf to a 12 year old girl. She understood every point I explained, every example I produced. At the end, however, she said that she was not able to perceive God-Nirankar. I quoted more evidence closer to her life, but she said: %Uncle, Nirankar Dikhayee Nahin Diya+. I made another attempt but in vain.

The next day I asked a distinguished Gyan Pracharak as to what could be the reason for this. He said, %It was not destined as yet; you and the girl's parents were trying to give her what Nirankar did not wish to grant at the moment.+ This was a statement of truth. Great spiritual masters declare:

Gian Anjan Gur Diya Again Andher Vinas
Har Kirpa Te Sant Bhetia Nanak Man Pargas

- Adi Granth-293

It means that the collyrium of God-knowledge is applied to our eyelashes by the True Master which ends the darkness of ignorance, but we meet the True Master with God's grace only and that makes our Mind illumined.

How does the destiny operate? A scholar says: "Don't run ahead of God. Let Him decide your steps. God has His plans and He has His time. God's clock is never fast nor late and He strikes on time." I was born in Punjab, the state where the Sant Nirankari Mission flourished first, and lived there for 23 years. Nobody introduced the Mission to me even though I belonged to a family of 'priests'. Then, I was in Delhi, the Headquarters of the Mission, for 12 years followed by another stint of two years in Punjab. I never came into contact with any follower of the Mission. In 1973, however, it was in a small congregation in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, that I received Brahm Gyan. I was 38. Today when I look back, I realize that if I had become a Nirankari in Punjab or in Delhi I would have faced lot of opposition from my relatives and friends. The situation in Bhopal was quite different. There was no relative or friend to question even though with the benign grace of Satguru and with my interest in Gurbani I had an answer to every possible query on the subject.

Destiny seems to have different plans for different individuals. A child may take birth in the family who are already enlightened spiritually. He or she may, therefore, start attending the congregation along with his or her parents from childhood and be blessed with spiritual knowledge on an appropriate day. There is nothing like a search or quest for spiritual awakening in such cases. It is an opportunity, a God-gifted situation that made it possible to achieve something which was never cherished.

There is, however, a very big risk here. One may not always be able to imbibe, relish and benefit from the divine gift. Brahm Gyan is like a seed. It will spring up and grow only if it gets a proper soil. It means the mind of the seeker must be prepared to receive the divine gift. Otherwise, it may either go futile or instead of flourishing, may make the receiver an egoist. And both the situations may not be conducive for spiritual bliss. On the other hand such a 'pseudo' devotee may take the congregation or the company of saints as another pasture for worldly pursuits and seek to promote his or her own interests other than spiritual.

Desire from Within

The quest for spiritual awakening or desire to know God should, therefore, come from within. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, one's desire to know God should be like the desire of a drowning person to come out of the water. Every spiritual master reminds us that this is the prime objective of human life. This Being Jeeva) has been given by the Almighty Nirankar this golden opportunity to know the Ultimate Truth i.e. God and be conscious of one's eternal abode after one leaves this mortal world. One may call it Mukti or Moksha; this human birth is to endeavour for it attain it:

Bhayee Prapat Manukh Dehuriya
Gobind Milan Ki Ih Teri Bariya
Avar Kaj Tere Kite Na Kaam
Mil Sadh Sangat Bhaj Kewal Naam

- Adi Granth - 12

It means, this human body has been given to you, O' man, as an opportunity to get united with God; all other acts of yours are futile. Seek the company of saints and recite the Divine Name i.e. remember God only.

Saints also tell us that knowing or perceiving God is not unachievable. Here again we find Swami Vivekananda being told by Thakur Ramakrishna Paramhansa that one can see God just as 'we see each other'. The only requirement is the perfect true master who can reveal God to us.

It also means that one should give top priority to spiritual enlightenment and waste no time in other affairs. God-knowledge must be attained as early as possible. This is so because one does not know the loss one has to bear in the absence of this divine gift. God-knowledge makes one submit to the will of God and thus feel relieved of the negative influence of dualities of the world:

Shabad Guru Da Je Man Vasse, Chanan Thein Bharpur Kare
Sabar Saboori Ghar Vich Ave Sari Dubidha Door Kare
Saukha Ho Jae Jeevan Painsa, Har Mushkal Asan Bane
Izzat Maan Mile Har Thanh Te, Je Banda Nirman Bane

- Avtar Bani - 114

It means if the word of the True Master (God-knowledge) dwells in mind, it gets illuminated fully. Spiritual awakening brings contentment and peace, and it removes all duality. The journey of life becomes smooth and every difficulty stands resolved. One receives honour and respect everywhere; one becomes humble (by virtue of God-knowledge).

Traditions

In majority of cases, traditions count a lot, even though this factor cuts both ways. They may motivate one for spiritual awakening and even drift him or her away from it. A religious scholar says, "Ordinarily a religious believer who follows conventional observances of his country, his religion has been made for him by others, determined to fixed forms by imitation and retained by habit. We may call it a second hand religion. If This is the form of religion man follows across the globe. This is the form of religion which is being preached and communicated to masses down the line. The more conscious and sincere among devotees may at one stage or the other feel the urge to understand the genesis and significance of the ceremonies, rites and rituals performed in the name of religion. The word 'God' is used everywhere and quite often. Naturally, like any other object in this age of science, many may like to know and understand this supreme existence also. A Hindu may like to know his 'Om', a Sikh his 'Ik Onkar', 'Satnam' and 'Karta Purakh', a Muslim his 'Allah' and so on. And once this desire takes birth, the quest begins which achieves its goal one day as per the divine plan for the individual.

It is, however, more common that rules which one has to follow without understanding them or becoming a party to their formation, take one away from the object or the goal. If traditions compel one to follow certain dogmas, enforce certain rights and wrongs against one's own choice, it may distance the person from spirituality i.e., God. It may affect his or her state of mind and take him or her towards blind faith. One may go on following what is ordained, by imitation and without understanding the reality behind it. Various rites and rituals become the be all and the end all of religion for him or her. He or she worships God but in ignorance, without knowing Him. It is only a divine trick that may lead such a person towards spiritual awakening.

Even ordinarily, something unusual may happen in one's life that may lead him or her towards a search for spiritual awakening. Prince Siddhartha saw the Old, the Diseased, the Dead and the Saintly Person and this was sufficient to create a deep quest for spiritual awakening in his mind, and he became Lord Buddha, a great spiritual master of the world. The child Dhruva was removed from the lap of his father, Emperor Utanpad, by his step-mother and this turned him to the holy search for the Supreme Father - God. Sant Tulsidas, the immortal author of Ramcharit Manas became mad in "love for his wife Ratna. He took snake as a rope and climbed to her room, and Ratna turned him towards God saying that if

he had shown the same love for God, he would have become a great soul. There are numerous tales like this to show that something unique may happen in the life of an individual and turn him or her towards spiritual awakening, and the person may receive that divine gift one day.

True Master

Satguru or the True Master plays a very big role in bestowing this divine gift of spiritual awakening. Truly speaking he appears in the World under a well-determined divine plan. It is believed that the Formless One - Nirankar, appears in the physical form (body) of the True Master in order to reveal Himself unto the world in delusion. Satguru rises above religion, caste, community, region, language and culture - the factors that seek to divide humanity, and calls upon every individual to know the God they worship. He, however, confines himself to persuasion or motivation by way of explaining the need of God-knowledge and its advantages, and leaves the final decision unto the listener. His followers i.e., preachers also repeat his message and remove the doubts, if any, and convince others that Satguru seeks to unite them with the Ultimate Truth i.e., God. They tell one and all that spiritual enlightenment or God-knowledge is the most important objective of human life. This is the only way to liberate oneself from the cycle of birth and death. However, here again comes destiny and only the fortunate ones are able to take the advantage.

The main consideration that makes one reluctant to receive Brahm Gyan even while Satguru is there to bestow it, is that while God is formless and invisible, one wonders how would it be possible to perceive Him. They fail to realise that it is also acknowledged universally that God is omnipresent. He pervades every object of the universe - animate as well as inanimate. What is more manifest than God? Look at any visible object, He is present there. A young girl said in an article in a leading newspaper: "You can see God wherever you want to see Him, most of all, in the least expected places. You can see Him in the smile of an urchin, in the carefree spirit of a slum-dweller, in the pride of a rickshaw-puller." It means it is your own desire or quest for knowing God that is required. God has already showered His grace on mankind and is revealing Himself through the True Master. It is not your worry as to how you can perceive God, it is the subject of the True Master or the saint who is to reveal God unto you.

Sacred Responsibility?

A spiritually enlightened girl introduced her sister to me and said, "Uncle, she has attended the congregation several times and is fully convinced that God must be realized and God can be realized. But she is not able to overcome her reluctance." I asked her sister as to what was preventing her from attaining Brahm Gyan when it was so readily available and she too was convinced about its need in human life. She said, "I am a very weak human being. I fear that I may not be able to shoulder this sacred responsibility. I may falter even after attaining

Brahm Gyan which will be a sin attracting punishment from divinity. I think I must render my life free from faults and then only attain this invaluable divine gift."

To this I answered: "Manju, Brahm Gyan is a sacred relationship between you and the almighty Nirankar. While as a humble human being you may continue to make mistakes, particularly because you are often dictated by circumstances which are beyond your control Brahm Gyan aligns you with the Supreme Power who is all-merciful. Brahm Gyan will bestow you with the art of surrender or submission to the will of God. You will know how to overcome the sense of doership and treat God as the source of everything occurring in your life, every object that you possess - physical, mental and material. Divine feelings of love, peace and goodwill will start dwelling your mind, relieving you of the most that causes tension. All will belong to you and you will belong to all. Moreover, Satguru who bestows Brahm Gyan will always be there to salvage you and show you the right path. You can pray to him in his formless presence and if you wish to speak to him in his physical form, you may speak to any enlightened saint as his embodiment, as his representative."

Manju was fully convinced. But her fear was so strong that she still wanted some more time to ponder and then return to me. I took this too as the divine plan and did not insist on an instant positive decision.

Some Other Restraints

There is another factor that often makes one reluctant to receive God-knowledge even when it is available at hand. An individual may have met a saint and received some incantation, some words or hymn to repeat. Naturally, he or she may treat it as the be all and the end all of her spiritual awakening. There is also a strong belief that you may have only one spiritual master. The question, however, is whether you have known the supreme entity, God, you seek to adore. If the answer is 'No', there should be no objection in approaching the saint who is capable of revealing God unto you. An honest teacher will never mind the student consulting another, particularly when the student does not feel satisfied.

The same is true of one's faith in a deity. A devotee fears that if he turns to any other deity for worship or attains spiritual awakening, he may attract a divine curse from the deity of his faith and he will know no power to salvage him from this misfortune or sin. The devotee, however, fails to realise that all deities represent the Formless One and derive their powers from Him alone. They may, therefore, have no problem if any devotee submits to God Himself.

Similarly, some fear that spiritual awakening' may mean conversion - leaving their own faith and moving to another. They forget that God-knowledge does not require all this. Spiritual awakening means freedom that includes the fact that we continue to follow our own customs and conventions so far as our social relations are concerned. In fact spiritual awakening makes a Hindu a true Hindu, a Muslim a true Muslim, a Christian a true Christian, and so on.

In some cases, religious customs take the form of social taboos. A member of the community cannot dare go against the rules even though he or she may be convinced about the need for spiritual awakening. The True Master who is above caste, creed and colour is identified with a particular religious faith and is sought to be avoided. The one who wishes to go to him and seek God-knowledge is threatened to be socially boycotted. Naturally, this becomes an unsurmountable barrier for an individual and he or she remains deprived of the divine gift of spiritual awakening in spite of his or her best intention to attain it.

Sometimes we do not look at Satguru or Brahm Gyan, but at the devotees. This also causes a hurdle, because all the followers may not be found to be on the top of spiritual bliss. The fact as to how far a devotee is able to subject his actions to spiritual awakening depends on many factors. Even ordinarily we find various students in the same class under the same teacher and with the same level of attendance obtaining different grades in the examination. Here also it is advisable that we may go by the quality of the Master and his teachings rather than the degree of spiritual success of the devotees.

A Sacred Act

The awarding of God-knowledge is a very sacred act. It has to be performed by the True Master himself or a person authorized by him. Brahm Gyan delivered without Satguru's authority lacks authenticity and may not benefit the seeker. Similarly, if the saint delivering Brahm Gyan makes any change or tries to interpret it in his or her own way, even though authorized, it may not benefit the receiver fully. It is, therefore, a very delicate task which must be performed without making any departure. In case the seeker does not feel satisfied, there should be no harm in receiving Brahm Gyan again from the same or some other saint. It is Satguru who has to guard Brahm Gyan and that makes all the more essential that the act may not be diluted in any manner.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING RULES OUT CONVERSIONS

- C.L. Gulati, B.A., LL.B., Advocate

The phenomenon of religious conversion is as old and wide as the human civilization and this has always been a contentious and emotive issue. In general, the two levers that often operate behind religious conversion and reconversion are material allurements and fear. In rural areas, social discrimination is also the reason for conversion. In villages, you can tell the caste and religion from the location and living conditions of the people. The SC/ST and tribals have often converted to Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or Sikhism to escape discrimination, unemployment and poverty. They believe that conversion cures their curse.

Fifty tribal Christian families were reconverted to Hinduism at Dewas, 170 kms from Bhopal on October 11, 2007 in a “**Ghar Wapsi Ceremony**” with a call, “**Wake up to the situation . protect tribals and provide health services, education and a regular source of income to them because poverty drove them to embrace the other religion.**”

Analytical study of this sort of conversion and reconversion brings out that winning over and then keeping people of any religion together on material considerations is as difficult as holding dry sand in a tightly closed fist. If some persons convert to other religion allured by concession of free education to their children, they can easily be further converted to other religion when offered bigger allurements like the housing facility. This chain of varied temptations and harmful desires eventually plunges them into grievous offences from which there can be no deliverance. Man changing religion under allurements or fear does not understand religion at all. In this game of conversion, rejoicing of gaining religious group becomes a matter of concern for the losing group. But the fact remains that if an outgoing member is considered a traitor, the incoming one would also be a traitor in the same spirit.

Instances of forcible religious conversions are also not wanting. The kingpin historical example is that of Aurangzeb who violently got removed the sacred threads (Janeus) of Hindus and forcibly converted them to Islam. Though thread-bearing was never supported by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the subsequent Gurus, yet Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji opened a front against this crime of forcible conversion and sacrificed his life. The traces of forcible religious conversion are visible globally even now.

According to the highest ideals, as set out in Articles 19 and 25 of the Constitution, India's founding fathers like B.R. Ambedkar and K.M. Munshi, anti-conversion laws are unconstitutional. But witnessing the ill-effects of conversions, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of anti-conversion laws enacted by certain states, though the latest one in Rajasthan had been returned by the

Governor for reconsideration. Thus, the opinion is divided on the legality of religious conversion but it is believed at all hands that the conflict over religious conversion often finds glory expression in violence.

In a Poetic Symposium on 'Communal Harmony', there was a motto, 'Mazhab key naam par larna hamaaqat hai' (It is folly to fight in the name of religion). Seeing the motto, poet Majaaz Lakhanavi thoughtfully quipped back, 'Aur hamaaqat key naam par larna maxhab hai' (And it is religion to fight over a folly). All forms of terrorism are dangerous, but the one fuelled by religious conversion is especially lethal. It is worth considering whether our behaviour is consistent with the conduct of prophets themselves whose honour we are so anxious to safe guard by conversions. Fed up with the of hydra-headed virus of conversions, spread globally, the saner elements are busy giving clarion call for inter-faith harmony at national and global levels.

Miracle of Spirituality

There is unlimited ignorance in the world. One may count the stars in the sky and sand particles on earth, but one cannot count the rituals and superstitions prevailing in the name of religion. Belief in one God is the corner stone of all the religions. If there is only one God, there can be only one Brotherhood. It is an irreligious act to break up universal brotherhood into small jarring communal groups. Inspired by this supreme vision, Swami Vivekananda went to the western world who had lost the fragrance of their lives at the alter of materialistic riches. To share with them the need of spiritual awakening, which shapes real life, Swami Ji got a chance to speak in the World Parliament of Religion in Chicago in 1893. When he addressed the audience "*My brothers and sisters of America*", an audience of 5000 in the packed Columbus Hall jumped in their chairs to cheer the Swami. He said, 'I am proud to belong to the religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.' The next day the leading newspapers of America flashed the news in big bold letters that a young Indian monk had dominated the World Parliament of Religion. Thus the worshiper of wealth surrendered to the worshiper of God. This is the miracle of spiritual awakening.

According to a popular fairy tale, the handsome prince kissed the Sleeping Beauty to awaken her physically from a deep slumber. Man is also sleeping, but at the level of soul. Like proverbial kiss of the prince, man's soul lying dormant for ages needs also a kissing touch of God knowledge to awaken the man spiritually. Highlighting the urgency and importance of this spiritual awakening, Sahjo Bai, a woman saint has said, 'O Sahjo, the trumpet of our breathing sounds day and night. The fool is lost in deep slumber while those who are awake do not rest even for a second.

Etymologically, the word Religion derives its root from the Latin word Religare meaning to blind back. The Sanskrit word Dharma has exactly the same significance with root in the word dhiri which means to sustain and bind

together. The Islam having its root in *Salam* means peace and not unjust wrong doing. Here the *binding-back* stands for reconstructing the broken relationship of soul with God. This self-transformation through God realization, spontaneously spells out binding together of the entire human race. This does not amount to any conversion, but reversion to one's real self with added firmness.

All great religions in their pristine pronouncements emphasized the spiritual rather than ritual aspects of living. If one can easily acknowledge the concept of one God for all, it should not be difficult to accept the idea of one religion for all i.e. the religion of man, a religion that can suit the whole human race. This can only be achieved through a living revelation of the all pervading God, the same for all religions and veiling over the chapter of non-essential rites and rituals which are different for different religions.

Dara Shikoh, an Islamic scholar, believing in the tenet "*Makhlook Sari Hai Kunda Khuda Ka*" could not reconcile segregating or hating Hindus. He specially learnt Sanskrit to study the Vedas and Upanishads to discover the same tenet in the words "*Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam*". The curves and contours of this tenet run through every scripture which becomes more clear from this story. A fanatic Christian went to a Hindu and read out from the Bible. The Hindu had tears in his eyes and said, *What a wonderful truth.* The fanatic was very happy. He thought he had done a great job and he could convert the Hindu. That evening he went to the Church and prayed, *Oh Lord, I got a Hindu confess that you are the son of God and that you are divine.* The Lord replied, *Does this act inflate your Christian ego or reduce it?*

When face to face with the Lord . the same with different names . true Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Muslim should reduce his ego and finally have no ego. That is the essence of spiritual awakening and enlightened living. This spiritual awakening is like a cool fresh breeze that flows gently into a dark and suffocating night and begins to remove the dust and haze, giving birth to the process to a clear and clean dawn . a dawn that is new but not unconnected with the dawns that are now resting in the lap of spiritual history.

For such spiritually enlightened persons there is a zero percent chance to convert to any other faith. In fact they know no conversion. It is totally ruled out by them. Their religion, based on God knowledge, deals with their soul and not with any fear or material considerations whatsoever. The singular example of spiritually awakened child saint Prahlad is sufficient to bring home all these points. His megalomaniac father king Harnakashyap coaxed and then subjected the child to mortal threats and the Almighty omnipresent God saved him at every point. Withstanding every temptation and deadly fear he did not give up his enlightened faith in Lord Rama. Today, he is remembered for his steadfastness and bold message, *When religion means knowledge and relationship with one God, there does not arise the question of any conversion.* What is true of child

saint Prahlad is equally true in respect of every enlightened saint throughout the world history. Material consideration, do not weigh with them. With a smile on lips and song in the heart, Sheikh Farid says: *“eat thy dry, hard bread and wash it down with water cool, and tempt not thy mind on seeing the buttered bread, O fool.”*

Paucity Amidst Plenty

Every school child knows that Cherrapunji is the wettest place on earth. The unbelievable tragedy of Cherrapunji however is that it reels under acute paucity of drinking water. In search of pure drinking water, they have to go to Guwahati. Similarly, there is plenty of ritual based religions, in the world, but there is a paucity of spiritual awakening. Physical efficiency and intellectual alertness are dangerous if spiritual illiteracy prevails in the world. Spiritual awakening broadens the horizon like the vastness of God and provides base for smooth life, full of mutual love and affection where all are ready to give their all for all.

The search for spiritual awakening has brought millions of seekers to the Sant Nirankari Mission which is an international spiritual movement and stands for perception of all pervading formless God; with love, mercy and compassion for every body without any discrimination. This spiritual awakening imparts righteousness in the heart, beauty in the character, harmony in the home, order in the nations and peace in the world. The teachings of Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj have become the household word and his Word (Brahamgyan) is spreading like the sound of a bell rung in the canopy of sky. Historically speaking, the message of the Mission is completely with the teachings of all the past prophets and scriptures. That way, the Mission represents the present milestone in the history of mainstream of spirituality conveying the bold message. *“Man is a man if he is human, he is human when the entire mankind is his family. Mankind is his family when the all pervading God is his home. God can be his home when he actually knows Him and blissfully identifies himself with Him by living upto the teaching of the True Master.”*

There is no sin as great as living in ignorance; and there is no sin greater than letting others live in ignorance. In other words, spiritual awakening is a sacred responsibility in itself to spread the message of the Mission unto each individual of all the nations. God wants us to share our spiritual expressions in our relationship with those human satellites which come within or touch our orbit. To serve the society at large, each one of spiritually awakened will have to put his shoulder. All shoulders cannot be put at one point alone; and so each one will have to shoulder at his own place and convert his own little place or corner of activity, a place of worship and be with Lord who is there to guide us all the times.

Like the peak of Mount Everest, Spiritual awakening is the highest state of blissful mind which we are supposed to maintain and sustain. Any other step

taken from the peak takes us downwards. The priority of life is to identify with the Mission and carry it further because with every person attaining spiritual awakening, the whole world gains.

For the spiritually awakened, seeing others in ignorance is a great sin, but the most sinful act is when, for any reason, the motto of spreading the spirituality somehow becomes the camouflage of serving one's selfish motive. In this respect it is worthwhile mentioning the Biblical warning:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.

- St. Peter 2:4

And

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

- St. Peter 2:21

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING A UNIQUE POTENTIAL

- Rajan G. Ramchandani, Singapore

Everything in the universe has potentiality. A seed had the potential in it to grow into a tree. A hair follicle has the potential to manifest into a strand of hair. An embryo has the potential to be born as a mammal of one kind or another. All the comforts we take for granted today started with an abstract idea in the mind of its inventor. An idea is nothing but a potentiality that eventually manifests into form.

Potentiality is transitory and can be irretrievably lost if it is not actualized or realized. Once actualized, however, the potentiality becomes a reality. This reality is then irrevocably stored into our memory banks and saved from its transitory nature into what we have come to know as our past.

Everything in the universe is in eternal motion. From energy to matter and back into energy, this eternal dance of nature can be seen in the atoms through microscopes, in the galaxies by telescopes and beyond. This eternal dance forms the basis of growth step-by-step. As we awaken from the process of one step, we progress toward the next step of our growth.

Awakening, therefore, leads one to fulfil one's own unique potential for self-actualization. Self-actualization, in Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, is man's search for meaning. America's famous chess player of the 50s and a philosopher and author, Robert Byrne, once said. "The purpose of life is a life of purpose." Saints helping man in his search for meaning for the purpose of life. I have come to realize that the purpose of my life is to know and grow.

Knowing is a process that consists of two stages. The first stage, when knowledge is information, is when information is received. This can be akin to receiving the knowledge of Nirankar (Formless). Knowledge is nothing but processed information. Hence after receiving the knowledge of Nirankar, it becomes our responsibility and a necessity, if we wish to awaken our potentiality and actualize our true Self, to convert this information into knowledge.

This conversion takes place as we raise our awareness of all that is happening within and without us. We become cognizant of the laws of nature, how they operate and how they apply to our life. Every individual has the capacity and the capability to raise their consciousness to levels beyond their imagination.

Once we are fully awakened in the knowledge of God, we realize our purpose. The Sant Nirankari Mission, through its five tenets, reveals the importance of fulfilling our basic biological, physiological and safety needs along with our need to belong to and love our Self. It is only after we have fulfilled our basic needs, can we focus entirely on awakening to our purpose of self-actualization.

Everyone agrees that we never have and never will live this moment ever again. Every moment, therefore, brings with it the potential to awaken the power, to change our life situations, within us. It is upto us to make the best use of this potential-filled moment. In his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali said:

Dormant forces, faculties and talents become alive and you discover yourself to be a greater person than you ever dreamed yourself to be.

You might be asking yourself, "All this makes sense but where do I start, what do I do now?"

Nothing, just concentrate and contemplate.

Why do you think the Nirankari Mission emphasizes on the importance of holy congregation (Satsang), selfless service (Seva), and God-remembrance (Simran) after bestowing the Knowledge of Nirankar (Gyan)? Congregation brings us back to the thought about our purpose; selfless service to mankind reminds us of our connection with the source that is in everyone, while remembrance of God keeps our connection with our source clean and pure. Scriptures have also reminded us, time and time again, "As you think so shall you be." Contemplation gives the power of thought to all that we wish to understand, and thereby manifest, in our life.

Concentration, on the other hand, helps us view our life situations with detachment - as an observer. An observer does not judge, has no opinion and is not attached to any event, thing or person. An observer always enjoys peace and tranquility within. A person who is attached to any thing, event or another person will experience unhappiness, sadness and disappointment. This is the nature of attachment.

Hence daily concentration and contemplation helps in the awakening of the Being within. The more we think about it, the more the meaning and purpose of life sinks in. The deeper this message of His Holiness Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj sinks in, the faster we will traverse the path of Spiritual Awakening.

Awakening, therefore, is inspiration, realization, enthusiasm, insight, epiphany, motivation, deep perception and Satori . the zen Buddhists term for enlightenment.

Awakening happens in contemplation, concentration, quietude and observation.

Awakening is our purpose in life.

Awakening is what saints and sages from times immemorial have done, are doing and will continue to do.

%We spend all our time looking for some concept of Truth, but Truth is what is left when we drop all concepts.+

- David Merzel

An era of awakening is just beginning.

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SANT NIRANKARI MISSION AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

- Amrik Singh IAS (Retd)

God is the light and life. God is eternal Truth, but the world is perishable and false. God is love, and love is God. God is source of peace, salvation and contentment. The irony is that allured by mammon, man forgets God and keeps clung to the materialistic values . amassing wealth and earning name, fame, pelf and power. Lost in the worldly pursuits, man, at last, is left with nothing but pain, misery and repentance. On the other side, there are men of God. Having known the Omnipresent God from the True Master, they repose full faith in God and serve the humanity selflessly. Those, who perceive the Formless One (Nirankar), face to face, with the kind grace of the True Master, are spiritually awakened.

The Sant Nirankari Mission is the Mission of God- an international spiritual movement which embraces in its fold people of all religions, faiths and cultures under one divine umbrella to sing the glory of the Almighty God. This Matchless Mission represents the essence of true religion, the religion of love, compassion, humanism and universal brotherhood. It propounds the kernel part of religion and not the husk . religiosity. It aims at dispelling the darkness of ignorance, superstitions, bigotry, rituals, etc. The people all over the globe are being awakened to the ultimate reality under the spiritual guidance of the True Master. Hundreds of thousands of the seekers of Truth have been blessed with spiritual awakening. They have attained peace, the real purpose of human life.

The Sant Nirankari Mission is unique, because it bestows spiritual awakening by uniting the soul with God. It does not discriminate on account of one's caste, creed, colour, race and nationality. It fosters the concept of %One God, One Religion, One Human Race,+ removes all bondages and barriers, divisions and dissensions. It enjoins upon its devotees to keep company of saints (Satsang), render selfless service to the humanity (Seva) and constantly remember God (Simran). It does not require anyone to renounce the world or change existing faith and belief, rather improves the quality of life by inculcating spiritual and moral values.

The scriptures make it clear that those who are ignorant of God, the Creator, are lifeless. Forgetful of One God, obsessed by ego, hatred, jealousy and duality, people of the world are slumbering in deep sleep of materialism and worldliness. The great Gurus and sages have always been awakening such people by transmitting the divine message not to get engulfed in the muddy materialism, as nothing goes with man at last except the Divine Name. They inspire people to awaken from the slumber of materialism and to know God, the Master and Redeemer of all. As the Upanishads declare:

%If you know God within this life, it is good. But if you do not know Him, it will be your greatest loss.+

So, it is imperative for every human being to know God during his life span, failing which he shall have to undergo the endless cycle of births and deaths. All other endeavours and accomplishments of man, howsoever great, are of no avail. Only the Divine Knowledge can save one from sin, suffering and fear of death.

This spiritual truth has been clearly stated by Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji:

O man why are you slumbering carelessly with the eyes of the mind closed Arise, awake and accomplish the task for which you came into this world.

- Avtar Bani - 167

All those who have attained the spiritual vision can see the light, but the blind cannot see. The wise, therefore, attain the Divine Light, but the unwise, self-willed or perverts do not. This Divine Light can be bestowed by none except the True Master or Spiritual Guide. Today, it is being bestowed by Nirankari Baba across the globe.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: A STATE OF BLISSFULNESS

- R.K. Kapoor, Advocate

Once a child went to a doctor in the evening and complained:

Child: Doctor, I am suffering from stomach-ache.

Doctor: Did you take any stale or junk food?

Child: What?

Doctor : I am asking you whether you have eaten any stale or junk food during lunch time, (The child was surprised how the doctor came to know that he had eaten such food.)

Child : Doctor, how do you know that I took such a food?

Doctor : My dear son, the stomach cannot tell a lie. Whatever you eat is reflected by your stomach and then by your health.

In fact, similar is the position with respect to our mindset. If we have the intake of good and virtuous thoughts, our mindset becomes positive. On the other hand, if negative thoughts are permitted to make inroads, then the mind becomes a storehouse of junk thoughts. As junk food produces a junk body, junk thoughts produce a junk mindset. After all, nothing comes from nothing. The hard fact is that the mind only clicks that picture which it sees through the eyes, just like a camera. This is why it is said that always see good things and always listen to good thoughts. The produced thoughts or the retained thoughts cannot be better than the perceived thoughts.

This is why it is often said that one must frequently attend spiritual congregations. Only spiritual congregations would lead to spiritual awakening. A product cannot be better than its input. A good car is the one which has good input parts which are not only sound and durable but also well connected with each other. Similarly, good thoughts, if well connected, lead to a sound mind. The better the quality of intake thoughts, the better the awakening and better the mental health.

Once spiritual awakening is there, there would be its natural effect, as is always the relationship of cause and effect. Spiritual awakening leads to an enlightened mind which, in turn, controls our actions. Positive actions lead to positive results which then give solace to mine and the mindset further becomes stronger.

If this positively continues then in due course one indulges only in positive activities and the result is that one attains the state of blissfulness. Then small things, here and there, do not disturb one's mind, irrespective of whether one's

status is like that of Kind Janaka or Saint Kabir. This is how spiritual awakening influences our lives, and why it is so essential.

Now the question arises how to attain the spiritual awakening. Let us see what the Holy Bible says:

Ask and ye shall find
Knock and its shall be opened
Ask and it shall be given to you

- Mathew 7:7

The question arises what one would seek and how one will find it; at what door one should knock and who will open it. Further, what one should ask for and who will give it. The answer to these questions is also contained in the Holy Bible:

I am the way, the truth and the life and no body comes to the Father but by me

- John 14:6

The answer is clear that the one who knows (Satguru) is the door as also the opener of the door to the Kingdom of God. Further, what one has to seek is God-knowledge which a Satguru or True Master alone can impart. Hence the first step to God-realisation is to search for the knower who can bestow the knowledge of God. When God-knowledge is bestowed by a True Master, the result is spiritual awakening and its fruit a blissful life.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: EVOLVEMENT

- Lt. Gen. (Retd) A.S. Bhullar

The word ~~Awakening~~ has the sense of arising out of sleep to the waking state. The statement could apply to almost the whole of the human population. The humanity in general is not aware of their true origin.

We are making quite a damaging statement about the human beings in general and, therefore, it needs some clarification. The first point to note is that according to some, the human being is in a process of evolution from animals which have been part of creation for thousands of years. The human being could be traced back to primates and mammals. Also a human being is quite a recent addition to the animal kingdom as compared to other animals such as dinosaurs, who dominated the animal kingdom for thousands of years. Though of recent origin human is perhaps the topmost dominating creature in view of his enterprise and intelligence.

It would be wrong to think or consider that the process of evolution has halted or slowed down. The evolutionary process continue and it may be worth our while to ascertain and understand the present status of a typical human being.

A human being passes through a process of development through various stages, some very different from other animals. A few well-known examples may illustrate the point. A small baby duck knows how to swim in water soon after its birth. A baby deer starts running along beside its mother soon after birth. For a human baby, the lactation and development period is long and may be counted in years. For most animals, this is comparatively shorter and faster. On an average the animal progeny have to grow up into adults and fend for themselves at a much younger age.

Yet it is the human who has greater intelligence and capacity to dominate the other creatures. It is the human being who uses them for various purposes such as work, sports, guarding, food and as pets. The horse, dog, cat, poultry, pigs, cows and many others are dominated and used as required by humans. This is just to illustrate the point of eminence of a human being compared to all other creatures. A further point worth noting is the comparative late arrival of the human species as compared to other creatures. All known evidence points towards this comparative late arrival of the human species. It may be pointing towards more continued development of the human being. Which direction this development takes place will also depend on the human beings themselves, at least partly.

Regarding the development stages in a human, there follows a period of education and acquiring of skills. Employment, marriage and children management may be next. This is followed by introspection and old age. Notwithstanding what stages human development follows, one arrives at a

natural point of human development at a certain point in life. There could be variation and variety to the development stages, but the final discernible stage is somewhat uniform and similar. This is the stage a human being reaches almost automatically and routinely. Beyond this stage a person would need outside help. This could be named as Spiritual Awakening. We could perhaps elaborate this point of development of a human being, beyond which he/she would need external help and guidance.

An unaided, unsolicited and unasked and undesired mental state is what a human gets. Initially, it may be nothing beyond appeasement of hunger, comfort and the process of evacuation. Slowly, the awareness of one's own body arises. There may follow the perception of relations, starting with mother, siblings, father and other relatives, such as uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. The next may follow the awareness of possessing, starting with toys and later to houses, cars, jewellery, etc. This view of a human being may be summarized into a perception of what is Me and what is Mine. This view changes with age, stage of development, and final inner beliefs of a human being.

By and large, the un-aided view of an individual is that of one's body being his/her self and the dissolution or termination of the body being the end of one's self. The enlightened view is somewhat different. A human being consists of two elements. The seed portion consists of the divine element and is the everlasting portion which never dies, vanishes or diminishes. The temporary portion is the physical human body which perishes and its component elements merge with their original ones. Coming to think of it, the divine indestructible portion also merges with its everlasting divine element. So what we normally can call death is just a change in the state of one's existence. The human body might terminate, but the essential inner portion carries on in a changed state.

Mere enunciation and mentioning of the Truth is hardly convincing for the human being. That is why a formal Gyan Daan (Enlightenment ceremony) is evolved. In this, a discerning and sincere seeker is introduced to Nirankar (the Formless One) by the Satguru (Lord Master) himself or his accredited emissary. It is only after this that a devotee understands and knows his/her true origin. This may be taken as a rebirth into enlightenment, freedom, joy, bliss and a fruitful life. Lot of further introspection and development still remains, but a firm foundation has been laid for the Spiritual Awakening.

So actually, there are views for a human. The first is, of course, the automatic, unaided and perhaps the unenlightened view of one's self being the human body. It may be summarized as I am the body and its dissolution is my end. This view of Me may not be very correct. The actual state could be summarized as I am not the body. The body belongs to me. I am a constituent of the Divine Element which never perishes or terminates. The mere statement or enunciation is, however, hardly understood or grasped. There is a lot needed from the devotee.

Also involved is the help and succour by the Guru (Lord Master or Murshid). The role played by the Divine could not be ignored either.

One could comment that there seems to be hardly any difference between the two views. A little reflection will, however, show that there is a discernible difference between such two individuals, especially in their attitude to life and fellow human beings. The one considering himself/herself to be only a human body is likely to be egoistic, self-centric, grasping, pushing, inclined towards undeserved and wrongful gain and generally disturbed and unhappy. The one considering himself/herself to be part of the Divine is likely to be honest, stable, more helpful conscious of his/her duty in all spheres, a well adjusted member of the society and more happy. This is the sign of a spiritually awakened person.

No one is demanding or suggesting a person to abandon or forgo one's body-consciousness. This body-consciousness stays as it is. What happens is that a person gaining Enlightenment (Gyan) knows his/her true source and origin. He/she becomes a person with better, higher knowledge and thereby a better person and individual. This is the 'Spiritual Awakening' of a human being when coming in contact with an enlightened person or Satguru (Lord Master). A special devotion, surrender and change are called for from a deserving, discernible devotee. A mere eyewash or lip-service will not suffice. Genuine inner change is what is needed.

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MEANING OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

- Dr. B.S. Cheema

The subject matter relates to the domain of theology which implies the concept of the existence of God and God-knowledge. The Holy Bible says:

God is a Spirit and those who want to love and worship Him must know Him in Spirit only; in Him we live, we move and exist.

The spirit is referred to as God in formless existence (Nirankar), filling the whole cosmic void. To become aware of God in this form is taken as spiritual awakening in its simplest definition. By and large, a human being is oblivious of this fact as if he is asleep. The acceptance of this concept based on the existence of God and its mentalization is to become aware of the spirituality, which is not a matter of logic or measurement but a matter of fact and belief. At the state of indifference of the human being to God, Sufi Saint Baba Farid Ji lamented:

O' Farid, awake and go around the world to find a blessed one that you may also be blessed.

Baba Farid is astonished at the lack of concern for the holy Spirit in man and suggests how one can benefit by the grace of the Lord. It also conveys that it is only in conscious and awakened state of mind that one can perceive the presence of the omnipresent Divine Spirit by the grace of a contemporary True Master (Satguru).

The one, who knows God, can make others know Him provided one is desirous of knowing and approaches a True Master. It has been said that man, in reality, is a spiritual being having worldly experience. This concept is fully supported by a French Philosopher Teilhard who says:

You are not a physical being but a spiritual being having physical experience. This means that the spirit is vital to our life and this spirit component is related to the divine consciousness i.e. God. With spiritual awakening we are in communion with Divinity which rekindles the spirit in man.

Vibrant conscious state of mind lends meaning to life. As we develop this consciousness, we grow in wisdom and love for the creation and the Creator. We thus experience splendour of the Creator and become regardful of our connectedness to the humanity. Then one's prayers become worship of all living and non-living creatures of the world. This new and unique experience of the seeker reveals a cosmic dimension of the real self. The outlook of the person is totally changed. So his whole being and total organismic existence is influenced. The senses and actions change accordingly. So the self realizes itself to be a counterpart of the greater cosmic consciousness. Physical existence gets

humanized and shows concern for the total humanity. The society looks congenial and peaceful and there is an urge in the individual for respect for fellow beings which ushers in the peaceful co-existence. Spiritual Awakening is, therefore, very necessary for man for his here (worldly existence) and hereafter. Such type of individuals can promote and ensure lasting growth and well-being of the society, at large. Thus the call of Baba Farid Ji for spiritual awakening is always relevant and more so in the present era.

The individual, who is established in the wisdom of this awakening, lives in a continuous awareness that he is not the perishable body but a part of pure consciousness i.e. God. He further sees the self in every one and the same self universally present in all.

(The author is Managing Director Cheema Medical Complex, Mohali)

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING FOR UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

- Shravan Kumar Garg, Principal

"Awakening" means to arouse from sleep, yet it is different from the common act of opening one's eyes. It means the arousing of watchfulness or the act of coming out of darkness into light, from ignorance to knowledge, wisdom or enlightenment. Whatever man has achieved in life is through wisdom or awareness. The physical eye is capable only of seeing the materialistic reality, but it is only spiritual awakening that can enable us to look behind and beyond the surface and peep into the inner 'life' of things in order to understand the hidden reality or mystery.

Great men of knowledge have always stressed the need of arousing our awareness. One of the well-known prayer in the great Indian scriptures is: O' God, lead me from darkness to light. That is why our saints, sages and seers have always advised us to arouse our inner wisdom, to open our inward eye which alone is capable of 'seeing' the reality. It is only after the acquisition of God-realisation from a True Master that our inner wisdom is aroused and we become spiritually awakened. A spiritually awakened person always leads his family, his society, his nation from ignorance and backwardness to knowledge and progress in the right direction. Such a person always performs his duties sincerely and lives for the fulfilment of the divine will as well as for the perpetuation of the higher moral values.

A spiritually awakened person always promotes love, cooperation, peaceful co-existence, mutual understanding and always avoids clashes, violence, ill-will and hatred. He knows that he is just one link in the long chain of humanity. He is deeply aware of the fact that the whole humanity is one living organism, and that like all others, he is a part and parcel of this vast organism. He knows that the whole of humanity and the universe is a family and that he is a member of this family. A spiritually awakened person is an individual who has entered the Kingdom of God. Such a person has holy spirit as the vital and determining principle of his life. Just as a part cannot do anything against the Whole, of which it is a part, a spiritually awakened person cannot do anything contrary to the Divine Will.

Spirituality is the essential temper of an awakened individual and it consists of the possession of the individual by God whose blessed presence is manifest in an increasing moral insight into the mysteries of this universe, and an ever more tender and sensitive love towards God and, Man. Thus the motive of a spiritually awakened person is obviously the same as that of God. The Almighty has created this universe as a living unity or as one organic whole in which the various constituents are interdependent on one another. Man is a microcosm of this vast macrocosm, called the universe, and a spiritually awakened person is always conscious of this fact.

God created the universe. He did not create any caste or community or country. Birds and animals all over the world are known as birds and animals. A sparrow or a cow remains and is known as a sparrow or cow throughout the world. The change of name due to the change of language does not change their species. Man too is just one species throughout the world, but because of ignorance and lack of wisdom, starts dividing himself on the basis of region, caste or religion. The moment true wisdom dawns upon man and he becomes spiritually awakened, all the differences of creed, colour, country and caste will automatically disappear. The whole world will become one as God made it and there will be no place in it for injustice, exploitation, domination and racial discrimination. Every human being will be a co-sharer in the prosperity or adversity of all other human beings. Everyone will need and love everyone else, and so every one will pray for the welfare of all. There will be no strife or conflict or clash anywhere. Under the rules of creation, preservation and change, whole world will again look like a living specimen of the divine Trinity-Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

It is then that the effort of my beloved Satguru Baba Hardev Singh ji Maharaj will bear fruit and his dream of establishing a Universal Brotherhood come true. The need of the hour, therefore, is to arouse wisdom and become spiritually awakened by acquiring God-realisation from Baba ji. It is then that the heart of everyone throughout the world will overflow with love for humanity. It is then that we shall become truly spiritually awakened.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING THRO' SPIRITUAL TEACHER

- Col. (Retd) C.S. Toor

The spiritually enlightened and the ignorant do not appear to be different to look at. However, an enlightened person perceives the omnipresent God, while the ignorant one does not behold Him.

- Avtar Bani - 298

Ever since human being came into existence, there have been spiritual teachers, saints and mystics to tell the real purpose of life. The term saint, mystic or spiritual teacher applies to a person in whom God manifests. Such a person is known as Satguru (Teacher of Truth). He shows us humans the path to our ultimate goal. He puts us in communion with God so that we may worship Him, face to face:

I will hear the prayer of him who prayeth, when he prayeth unto Me.

- Holy Quran, II

But the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.

-John 4:23

Nothing can obstruct the holy work of a saint.

A simple prayer can remove all obstacles.

- Baba Gurbachan Singh

To achieve anything in any field in life, one requires a guide and that too a living one. At birth, our first teacher (guru) is our mother, then a primary school teacher, a high school teacher, a college professor, a professional/technical instructor and so on. We keep on learning as long as we follow their instructions and ultimately we are also qualified with their help and guidance. Although books are available in the market, yet we cannot benefit from them without a teacher. There is hardly a skill or profession in the world that can be mastered without a teacher. Likewise, to get spiritually awakened from the slumber of ignorance, we do need a perfect spiritual teacher. The prophets of the past were also, no doubt, true spiritual teachers, but we cannot benefit from them now, nor can we understand the scriptures without a guide. Just as a sick man has to consult a living doctor and not a past one, no matter how famous the latter might be, we need a living spiritual teacher who can 'introduce' us to the Lord face to face:

Listen to the word of the True Master and behold God by your side.

- Adi Granth - 295

Now ask the wise concerning God.

- Quran 25:59

How can God be found from anywhere except the Teacher (Guru), who is able to say, this is.

- Kath Upanishad: 12

This is God your Lord.

- Quran 6:103

For This (God) is our God forever and ever.

- Psalm 48:14

And

The True Master manifests in the world for the entire humanity.

- Avtar Bani - 67

The spiritual teacher speaks from his own experience. Since he is one with God, he enables his devotees to experience God. He does not tell his followers to worship the Unknown but he first reveals God and then tells them to worship Him. This is the real mark of a True Master:

A perfect True Master, reveals the Eternal Abode (God); he unites our soul with the Super Soul (God).

- Avtar Bani - 299

A True Master unites and does not divide humans. The sun emits many rays and as we look at them, they may seem different from each other, but when we look at the source, we see they come from the one. Similarly, we may refer to God as Rama, Allah, J ehova, Nirankar and so on, but in reality, God is one. Spirituality has nothing to do with rites and rituals; its main concern is to realise God. There is confusion about the term 'Salvation'.

It simply means to get rid of the cycle of birth and death. The True Master of the time can salvage one from this cycle by imparting Spiritual Awakening (God-knowledge), by which the blessee starts living in unison with God and knows his ultimate abode-Salvation.

Aspirants of Salvation through Spiritual Awakening can approach Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, the True Master of the time.

(The author is a Member of Working Committee,
Sant Nirankari Mandai)

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: TRUE RELIGION

- Dr. V.P. Ahuja, Principal Scientist (Retd)

Throughout history, God has revealed himself through a series of Messenger. In this series, we can name a few with due respect, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavira, Lord Jesus Christ, Prophet Mohammed and Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj. Essentially, their message to humanity is love for God and love for humanity. As these messengers manifested on this earth at different times (periods) and at different places, they gave their message of love for humanity in different languages. As the time passed by, these messages became different religions.

These messages were delivered not only during different time periods, but the different places also which were far off from each other. There was neither fast communication nor fast transport system; hence the messages remained in isolation. The variation in messages, which was due to local climatic and social conditions and status of knowledge prevailing at that time in a particular society, did not matter for the people. But at present, the whole humanity is living very closely. No country on this earth now can live in isolation. It appears now, we are living in a global village. In this village, people of all faiths, all colours, all languages, people eating different diets, people wearing different dresses, people having different cultural backgrounds, have come close and are trying to exist together. These differences in their habits, foods, dresses, languages, and their understanding about religion, their mode of worship and concept about God over the long period which is stated as culture, not occasionally but often have resulted in conflict among them. They start fighting and become enemies of each other. Many wars are being fought on this account only.

All that a human being has to understand is that every one on this earth has a right to exist, has a right to live peacefully, in this great village. All should get chance to grow, to progress and live happily. This awakening will come only, if we change our prevailing concept about the religions.

Truly speaking, all faiths do recognize that God is one, formless, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. But when it comes to God worship, different people follow different ways. Some go to one place of worship, while others go to another place. At times, they undertake a long and hazardous journey because they have faith in a particular shrine. They carry out different rites and rituals to please their God whether they know Him or not. And in due course, they start feeling superior or better. So much so that there is hatred, jealousy and, many times, violence erupts among them. Perhaps there would have been no problem if they had chosen to follow their own path and felt happy. But they run down each other. According to one estimate violence flamed by religious intolerance has caused more loss of life than all other wars in the world and it is further believed that very high percentage of the wars were related to religious intolerance, directly or indirectly.

The Sant Nirankari Mission says that this conflict among different faiths is because of ignorance about God and lack of spirituality. Spiritual life demands divine knowledge. Man has divided human beings into different classes, namely, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra. He has also divided the places of worship into Temples, Gurudwaras, Mosques and Churches. He fails to understand that Om, Allah, Akalpurakh, and God are the names of one and same Entity who is all-pervading, all-powerful and all-knowing. The goal of all faiths is to be a good human being but due to ignorance about the basic message, man is involved in rites and rituals and instead of developing good qualities, he believes in dogmas, delusions, doubts and illusions, which lead to ego, pride, hatred, jealousy, etc. He becomes a prey to his own ignorance. To be a good human being, one should be spiritually conscious and awakened. He should simply understand that all human beings, irrespective of nationality and gender, have only one source, i.e. God who permeates every being, whether a man or a woman (Avtar Bani - 9B). Hence all are brothers and sisters and thus related to each other. One does not hate another on the basis of diet and dress because these are the needs of the particular environment. Scientifically also all human beings belong to one family. A chemical namely, DNA, is the basis of life in all humans; hence humans should not be discriminated on the basis of races, caste, colour or creed; that human beings have only one race that is 'humanity'. This understanding will automatically destroy all the barriers erected between different people.

For spiritual awakening it will be essential to know God first. As our Satguru says: Know One (God), believe in the One and be one. The person who has this divine knowledge will be free of dogmas, superstitions, illusions and delusions. The rites and rituals will bear no importance for him. He will be free of ego, pride, greed, anger, lust, attachment jealousy and hatred. These are said to be the gates which lead to hell (Gita 16/21) and once a person attains this divine knowledge, he will be transformed into a kind, humble, tolerant sweet, friendly, loving, compassionate, tranquil human being. He will develop equal vision, treat the whole humanity as his own family and wish for happiness and prosperity of every one. He will be at peace, joyful and blissful.

Know the One, follow the One and be one. This concept can stop all the wars. Humanity should be made aware that in the present century if we do not change and shed our so-called concept of religion, and if we do not adopt spirituality in our day-to-day life, it will lead us to a point of no return, and it will destroy the whole humanity. Our Satguru wishes for a new human being, a new humanity, and only one human religion of love all over the world. This can save the whole world from destruction, otherwise the people will continue to fight and inflict injuries on each other. There is a constant need to be alert and be spiritually awakened.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING: AN OPPORTUNITY

- A.K. Shanna, Distt. Sessions Judge (Retd)

Human being is the supreme creation amongst the eighty-four lakh species on the earthly planet. Consciousness is the most distinguishing feature in the human being which makes him stand apart and on a higher pedestal than other entities. Man gets a golden opportunity to liberate himself from the cycle of birth and death. Once he misses this opportunity, it is gone for ever like a ripe fruit fallen from a tree.

Alas! Having been trapped in the clutches of five enemies - lust, anger, avarice, infatuation and ego (Kam, Krodh, Lobh, Moh and Ahamkar), man suffers mental and physical pain through endless trials and tribulations:

Whole of the world is suffering except the one who seeks the shelter of Supreme Divine Power and surrenders to His Will.

- Adi Granth - 954

Divine Enlightenment is the panacea for all worldly sufferings. No amount of worldly comforts, luxuries, riches and sumptuous dishes can bring peace and happiness to this ever thirsty soul in the physical frame (human body) unless it is wedded to the Divine Lord after attaining spiritual awakening and perfection. Lord Krishna made it explicit to his friend/follower Arjuna in the Bhagwad Gita:

The eternal Jivatma (soul) in this body is a particle of My own being and it is that alone which draws around itself the mind and the five senses which rests on Prakriti (Nature).

- Geeta 15:7

The Lord further elaborates its universality:

It exists without and within all beings and constitutes the animate and inanimate creation as well and by reason of its subtlety, it is incomprehensible, it is close at hand and afar too.

- Geeta: 13:15

People are trying to gain the whole world but they miss the soul miss the Atma, a particle of the Super Divine Power. What is lost? The horse or the rider? The body is like a horse and the Atma, the true self, the soul is like a rider. The rider is lost the horse is there. Daily we talk about worldly things. This is my turban. All right. There is a relation between turban and me. The turban is my property and I am the owner. But I am not the turban, the turban is mine. Likewise, the statement my body, my ears, my head or my hand, proves that I am something else. Similarly this is my property, I am the owner. I am the master. The body is like my garment and I am the owner. The body is like my horse and I am the rider. So is the case with brain, mind and intellect. When world renowned

scientists like Newton and Einstein and philosophers Benjamin Franklin and Aristotle failed to unravel the mysteries of nature of millions and billions of suns, moons and stars, how can an average person reach the true Divinity or God? God is beyond the reach of words and the minds. Again, Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna and unveils the secret of intricate Maya (Nature) in Bhagwad Geeta:

Whole of this creation is deluded by the objects evolved from three modes of Prakriti, i.e. Sattav, Rajas and Tamas; that is why the world fails to recognize me standing apart from these and imperishable.

- Geeta 7:13

Likewise, Gurbani reiterates the traits of Divinity in the following words:

God (Nirankar) is beyond three Gunas, i.e. Sattav, Rajas and Tamas but only the blessed one achieves the state of spiritual awakening.

- Adi Granth - 284

How to attain Spiritual Enlightenment? Gurbani says:

Seek the shelter of a Perfect Enlightened Preceptor and listen to his sermons and he will unravel the Divinity very close to you.

- Adi Granth - 295

Traits of True Master, Satguru are also described as under:

The blessed one attains the redemption only from the one who is God-realized and spiritually enlightened and who makes him eulogies the Divine Power.

- Adi Granth - 286

But for gaining spiritual awakening, condition precedent is your sincere and earnest quest and prayer of a true seeker of truth as invoked in the Vedic prayer:

Lead me from unreal to real
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality

It is a matter of immense fortune and delight that a divine enlightened preceptor and my spiritual Lord of the Lords Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has appeared on this earthly planet to dispel darkness with divine enlightenment with the same Spiritual Mantra with invocation of:

Tu Hj Njrankar,
Majn Terj Sharan Haan,
Mainu Baksh Lao.

Thou Formless, I take refuge in Thee, Pray, forgive me.

After having been blessed with Divine Enlightenment and having abided by the commandments of His Holiness, I am sure the fortunate blessed one acquires the traits of a God-realised soul as revealed by Lord Krishna to Arjuna:

He who sitting like a witness is not disturbed by the three Gunas, and who knowing that Gunas alone move among the Gunas, remains established in identity with God, and never falls off from that state.

- Geeta 14:23

And the Lord further exhorts:

He who is ever established in the Self, takes woe and joy alike, regards a clod of earth, a stone and a piece of gold equal in value, the pleasant and the unpleasant in the same spirit and views censure and praise alike.

- Geeta 14:24

He who is equipoise in honour and ignominy, and is alike to the cause of a friend as well as to that of an enemy and renounced the sense of doership in all undisputedly is said to have risen above three Gunas.

- Geeta 14:25

Neither the sun nor the moon nor even fire can illumine that supreme self-fulgent state, attaining to which they never return to this world. That is My Supreme Abode.

- Geeta 15:6

Such a blessed person attains spiritual awakening and achieves the state of "SATANAND" (Truth, Consciousness, Bliss).

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING RELIEVES STRESS

- Nishi Bahl, USA

Once a group of alumni, highly established in their careers got together to visit their old university professor. After exchange of pleasantries, their rosy conversation soon turned into complaints about stress and strain of their pressure-cooker lifestyles. Caught in a maze, they were discovered to be facing the pressure of their own growth where alcohol and mental stress take a huge toll of talent.

Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee, snacks and an assortment of cups _ porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite, telling them to help themselves to hot coffee. When all the status-conscious students had a cup of coffee in hand, the learned professor said, "If you noticed, all the nice looking expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. It is but normal for you to want only the best for yourselves; that is the source of your problems and stress. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup; but you consciously went for the best cups and were eyeing each other's cup. Now, if life is coffee, and the jobs, money and status in society are the cups, they are just tools to hold life. By raising the material standard of living, the quality of life does not change until man learns to live life soul wise.

Man in his pilgrimage from womb to tomb, is incessantly motivated and propelled by two inevitable impulses, namely, revulsion to sorrow and craving for joy. Our firm belief is that the joy we experience through our senses, lies in the objects of the world. Consistent with this belief we are constantly engaged in acquiring and possessing more and more wealth as if this is the 'he-all and end-all' of our life. But this is not universally true because possession of wealth is no measure of the quantum of one's happiness. We are but too familiar with the striking contradictions in life between a millionaire sitting and mourning in his palatial citadel and the rough-clad peasant roaring in joy amidst his simple circumstances. On the other hand, Saint Kabir earning two paise (Takka) a day by weaving and King Janaka living in grand palaces, despite being poles apart socially and economically are on the same wavelength enjoying stress-free blissful life based on spiritual awakening. As per scriptural advice, praise is given not to the person who 'taketh a city' but to the stronger man who ruleth his own spirit. The holy Bible mentions, "What shall it profiteth a man if he gains the whole world but loseth his own soul?" St. Augustine of Hippo has rightly said, "Restless are our souls until they rest in Thee, my God." He further adds, "There are plenty of people, who are dead without knowing Him.

Death is considered painful but more painful than that is the situation when man lives with his soul lying dead within. Despite materially lacking nothing in life, he invariably finds himself face to face with moments when he painfully feels that he has lost everything and the fear of death increases in exact proportion to the

increase in his wealth. It is regrettable that possessed by possessions, the scriptural advice for awakening the spirit is being ignored unwittingly. As a result there is Shocking crash in human values and mankind is torn apart under stress and duress. It reminds us of famous Urdu poet Ghalib who describes life in his Couplet:

"Rau mein hai raksh-i-umr- Kahan dekhiye thamey, Na haath hag par ha/ Na paa rakah mein.+

The steed of life is galloping, let us see where it stops. Neither are reins in my hand, nor my feet in stirrups.

Mankind has witnessed many revolutions _ industrial revolution, green revolution, social revolution, economic revolution and the like, for ameliorating the lot of society at large. But, now is the time for the Brave New World to bring world-wide revolution of Spiritual Awakening, for living a life of peace, purity and prosperity.

Today, Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, Head of the Sant Nirankari Mission plays a positive role in giving relief to the suffering humanity by striking a unique balance between materialism and spirituality-combining the art of living with lasting inner peace. With his Mission spread across the globe, Baba Ji says that for spiritual awakening the first thing that man needs is the realization of God which is the thread that binds the humanity and generates the sense of oneness. The confluence of humanity at the Nirankari Samagams cannot be explained by any other description than the coming alive of the ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family).

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CONTINUOUS GUIDING SPIRIT

- Jintendra Mandal, U.S.A.

A man's earthly knowledge what he calls learning, is often only the knowledge of names and forms; it has no capacity for the knowledge of Truth or God. It is the innocent and pure mind which has capacity for learning. When a person comes to take a lesson on any subject, and he brings his own knowledge with him, the teacher has little to teach him, for the doors of his mind are not open. His mind that should be empty in order to receive knowledge is occupied by the knowledge that he already has acquired.

Intellect has the knowledge of names and forms, their character and nature, gathered from the external world. It shows in an infant from the birth, when he begins to be curious about all he sees; then, by storing in his mind the various forms and figures he sees, he recognizes them as an addition to his knowledge of variety. Man thus gathers the knowledge of numberless forms of the world in his mind and holds them ... and calls that 'learning'. This becomes his world, although it neither gives him a sense of lasting comfort, nor does he thereby gain an everlasting peace.

Wisdom is different from intellect which is illumined by the light within; it comes with maturity, and opens up the sight to the unity in all things and beings, as well as in names and forms. The wise man penetrates the spirit of all things; he sees the human in the male and female, and races and nations. He sees the human in all people and the divine immanence in all things in the universe, until the vision of the whole humanity becomes to him the vision of the One Alone, the most beautiful and beloved God.

Although the tongue of God is continually speaking all things, yet in order to speak to the deaf ears of many among us, it is necessary for Him to speak through the tongue of man. He has done this all through the history of man: every great teacher of the past having been this guiding spirit living the life of God in human guise. In other words, their human guise has been various coats worn by the same being, who only appeared to be different in each: Shiva, Buddha, Rama, Krishna on the one side; Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad on the other ... Those, who knew the Messenger when they saw him, recognized him in whatever form or guise, while those, who could only see the coat, went astray. To the Nirankari devotees, therefore, there is only one Teacher, whatever name he may be given at different periods in history; and he comes constantly to spiritually awaken the humanity from the slumber of this life of illusion and to guide man onward towards the divine protection. As one progresses in this view one recognizes his Lord not only in the holy ones but also in the wise and the foolish, in the saint and in the sinner.

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UPLIFT THRO' SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

- A.P. Anand, Mumbai

Our life is in shambles in the present era. Almost everyone in all countries is stirred up and fighting aimlessly in the name of religion or for some other cause. In fact, they do not believe in the principles of religion and are much confused. There is an attrition even in the same community and blasphemous talks and acts are galore. We have trampled under our feet all the tenets of brotherhood and coexistence. While religion is a way of life, it is also what we imbibe or follow. Religion without humanity and virtues is meaningless. God has given the faculty of thinking and discernment only to human beings but we hardly use our intellect, the reason why we are at loggerheads with one another and at crossroads with daggers drawn. It is a proven fact, beyond doubt, that a baby's intellect starts grooming from the day he/she enters the mother's womb, depending upon the ongoing attributes and thoughts of the mother which should be noble and pure for making the child a responsible citizen. To achieve our goal we should ignite the spark of spiritual awakening in the young minds to flourish in future and start uninterrupted flow in life. Without faith in ourselves and in God we cannot achieve anything. The saints/sages and the enlightened souls are beacon lights to show us the door of spirituality, but it depends upon our own endeavour to enter it.

God's existence can be observed in every speck. He makes Himself visible in the form of the creation which should be studied in detail and depth. The Lord has sustained our lives without a discriminatory mind. We all enjoy His bounties equally but fail to acknowledge Him. Everything in the world is temporary and a myth except Ultimate Truth (God); then why not to tread the right path to imbibe virtues and enjoy life? We should not forget that the trials, tribulations and miseries in our lives are heckles/pushes to awaken our spirituality but we should probe the reasons of our faults and put an end to them forthwith to avoid further damage.

Apart from above, we should be clear that we have to face the consequences of our Karmas or deeds to sanctify and liberate our souls and that our birth is an opportunity granted to us by the Lord to singe our vices and sins.

As said above, spirituality, virtues, humanity and values of Karmas (deeds) which are sine qua non should be nurtured right from the beginning as these are the stepping-stones or opening chapters for awakening us in our lives. The main hurdles for the spiritual advancement are: ego, rancour, anger, jealousy, brooding over the dead past, argumentation, limitless craving for materials, hypocrisy, pillage, cheating, boasting, etc., while the main virtues are forgiveness, charity, selfless service, use of sweet language, surrender to Heavenly Father, compassion, love, reposing firm faith in God and godly persons, restraint, tolerance, sense control, maintaining positive attitude, self-confidence, universal brotherhood, etc.

As the charity begins at home, so is the case for instilling spiritual values by the elderly in the youngsters at home. The valuable advice of the saints and the mellowed straightens many tangles of our lives and helps in transforming us from gross body (physical) to subtle body (spirit or soul). Even the blind famed devotee of his times. Sur Das, by his opened inner divine eye, sang melodious, animating, spiritual awakening and soul-stirring songs in praise of Lord Krishna and sanctified his life. Attending spiritual interfaith congregations and healthy debates are of much help. Also company of the realized souls gives an added advantage.

If we sink in spirituality, bit by bit, we will start enjoying the fruits of our lives. We have to face the result of our Karmas (deeds), any way, but having faith in God makes it easy for us to sustain our lives in a lively way. More the problems for us to face, more the opportunities to wash off our sins. Spirituality causes a thaw in our relations with others which is necessary for amicable coexistence. The Lord may appear to us, unknowingly, in physical form (anthropomorphism) or transcendental form in some garb to rescue us from our worries. No one has been able to understand His mysteries.

The one, who prays, has faith in God and acts according to His commandments during pleasure times, feels less sorrows and pangs when faced with difficult days. He becomes sublime and is purified and equipoised.

Spirituality is the shaft of light which dispels ignorance. We can uplift our body, mind and spirits through spiritualism. The blind medical nurse, Helen Keller, rightly said, "The best and the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart due to Lord's grace."

Life without embellishing it with virtuous qualities and saying goodbye to the devilish instincts is impure and bland. Let us sow the seeds of love and spirituality, the Lord will take care in fertilizing and fructifying it. While praying for our own welfare, we should beseech the Lord for the same for others also. While braving the tides of vicious world we, generally, land in breakdown state, but in imbibing spiritualism, there is complete breakthrough. Once one reached the echelon of spirituality, one is one with the Supreme Lord.

The Sant Nirankari Mission is one of the platforms for binding together people of all walks of life, removing ego and imbibing Lord's vision, which is a divine service. Let us become the role models for others to emulate.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING FOR LIBERATION

- Kiran Panday, New York

Just as the establishment of a hospital is an indication of the existence of physical malignancy, spiritual awakening indicates the existence of spiritual slumber of ignorance.

Lately, we have been encountering the quote:

We are not human beings with spiritual experience but we are spiritual beings having human experience.+ Every human being at the core is no more or less than an equal part of the Super Soul. Being a direct descendent of the Almighty, every human on this earth must be portraying the paradigm of Divinity. But it is here that a loophole in human destiny comes to sight. Regardless of being the apple of our Father's eye, over the course of many millennia, we have wandered through eighty four lakhs of different lives and it is during this timeless journey that each and everyone of us has lost our true legacy and succumbed to the seemingly sweet coma of ignorance. This abysmal routine (of repeated births and deaths) will run its course unless and until we seek spiritual awakening from a Spiritual Master or True Master. The sole aim of every soul, then is to realize its true status, which translates to attaining Salvation (from the cycle of birth and death). As stated in Geeta, it is the first and foremost duty of every human to realize God and attain Salvation.

Why is spiritual awakening such a challenging task? Let us analyze it. Before we are born as human beings, the soul has already gone through eighty-four lakh species and human life is the golden opportunity to attain Salvation by realizing God. While passing through eighty-four lakh species, the soul forgets its original self. It starts identifying itself with the physical body. When it is in the form of a dog, it starts identifying itself with the dog. Once the dog dies, this soul transmigrates to another body, may be of a cow. Then it starts identifying itself with the cow. It feels that it is a cow and nothing else. This cycle keeps on going with each life after death. Finally, the soul attains the form of a human being. This habit of the soul to identify itself with the body it assumes does not change and now it starts identifying itself with the human body. It totally forgets its root; it forgets that it is an integral part of the Super Soul (Nirankar or God Formless). This state of the soul is called ignorant state. At this point of time, God takes pity on the soul and one meets a God-realized soul who introduces him to the True Master (Satguru) of the time. The True Master is kind enough to bless him with the divine vision to perceive God.

As the story goes. There was a cub (baby lion) that was brought up in a herd of sheep. It started playing with and imitating the sheep. One day tiger attacked the herd. Every sheep started running around in panic. Not surprisingly, the cub also started running in scare. However, when the tiger saw this bizarre behaviour on the part of the cub, it was quite baffled. To check this atypical act of the cub, the tiger got hold of it and enquired, Why are you scared of me?+ In

response, the nervous cub stuttered, "Well, who would not be? You are the mighty king of the jungle, and we are the weaklings." Now even more puzzled, the tiger emphasized. "They are sheep and they are supposed to be afraid of me, but you are a Tiger yourself; you do not have to be afraid of me." To further clarify his point, the tiger led the cub to a pond and pointing to its reflection in the pond, said. "Look at me and then look at your own reflection. Do you see any difference?" In great amazement the cub replied, "No." The tiger assured the cub, "You do not need to be afraid of tigers anymore. You yourself is the king of jungle and the sheep should be afraid of you."

Analogously, while dwelling in the human body, the soul starts to feel and eventually comes to believe that it is the physical body itself, imbibing all human feelings and instincts. However, when it crosses all boundaries of humanism, the True Master picks up the soul and blesses it with the divine vision. As the tiger showed the cub its reflection in the pond, a True Master shows Nirankar (Formless) to the soul and asks it, "Do you see any difference between yourself and Nirankar?" Once the soul attains the divine glimpse of Nirankar, it realizes its true self and attains Liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Here we should keep in mind a vital point. We wake up where we sleep; we sleep in a bedroom and wake up there as well; we do not have to go to some other place to wake up. Similarly, to wake up spiritually, one doesn't have to go to far off places but to approach a True Master and be spiritually awakened.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING UNRAVELS MYSTERY

- Poonam Bhagchandani, Mumbai

A person was drunk for 17 years. He was crying at a party, once, about how no one loved him and that he always felt lonely. He was drunk. A friend of his leaned over and despite the fact that he was in tears told him, "A lot of people care about you, Stephen - you are just too drunk to see them."

I read this episode in a newspaper and my mind received a jolt. Given the present day circumstances, aren't we too drunk with materialism that we are unable to see the love of God? We rarely come across any person who says he is happy. Almost everyone has something or the other to complain about. Our lives are driven by materialism and spiritualism has taken a backseat. Time and again, questions such as "Who am I?" "Why have I come on this earth?" "Why does death occur?" "Who is the controller of the Universe?".. do crop up in our mind. Most people hardly spare a thought to understand the purpose of life or are so engrossed in ritualistic approach towards God that they turn a blind eye towards the Truth. Even if we become aware of the Truth, we have not surrendered completely. That is the reason we don't experience bliss in our lives.

Just imagine if our memory is lost, would we be able to recognize our own parents and brethren. We would feel lonely even in a crowd. We have lost memory of our true self. When I say "I" it means my physical body; I fail to see beyond it. We are what we think.

If I am this physical structure, then with this "I" are associated lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. I become a slave of these and so will have to face the consequences. I experience pleasure and pain. Contentment is never mine. I yearn for happiness but can never achieve it. The more I run after it, the further it seems to go away from me. It may seem that the means of pleasure, convenience, luxury, comfort, etc., make a man happy. In that case the rich and the wealthy would have been the happiest persons. But the reality is quite contrary.

Just as a doctor gives treatment and revives the memory of the patient, so also the True Master of the time, by his grace, saves mankind and brings about spiritual awakening. We wake up from slumber of "I". The truth draws on us that "I" is not this physical form but it is the spirit; with this realization, the mystery of human life gets unraveled. The pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of Karma (action), knowledge and salvation fall into place and the entire picture is clear. This is the very purpose of human life and can be achieved only by the grace of the True Master.

As is written in the Avtar Bani:

A True Saint rises above the three Gunas (modes) . weakness for material pleasure (Rajas), shortcoming of ignorance (Tamas) and pride of being righteous (Sattva);

A True Saint is spiritually enlightened,

A True Saint is like a limitless ocean.

A True Saint's greatness is beyond description.

A True Saint's greatness has been narrated by Saints.

Avtar says, there is no difference between a True Saint and God.

- Avtar Bani - 58

With spiritual awakening comes freedom from the bondage of blind faith and rituals. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa's Guru Totapuri had to demolish his idol of Kali to make Ramakrishna free of attachment to attain Moksha (Liberation). He explained how, with this story. Once three robbers pounced upon a man and robbed him. One robber said, "What's the use of keeping this man alive?" He was about to kill him, when the second robber interrupted, "Oh, no! What is the use of killing him? Tie his hands and feet and leave him here." The robbers did that and went away. After a while the third robber returned and said, "I'm sorry. Are you hurt? I will release you from your bonds." After setting him free, the robber said, "Come I will take you to the highway." When they reached the road, he said, "Follow this road, over there you will find your house." The man said, "Sir, you have been very kind, come home with me and accept my hospitality." "Oh no!" the robber replied, "I can't go there. The police will catch me." The world is like that forest. The three robbers are the Gunas-Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Tamas wants to destroy us. Rajas binds us to the world. And Sattva rescues us from the clutches of Rajas and Tamas.

Under the protection of Sattva, man is rescued from anger, passion and other evil effects of Tamas. Further, Sattva loosens the bonds of the world. But Sattva is also a robber. It can only show us the road to God. Setting us on the path, Sattva says, "Look yonder, There is your home." The Supreme Reality has no attributes, it is Nirguna (beyond Gunas). Our scriptures show us the path but in the end a pole-vaulter must leave the pole to get across the hurdle.

(Courtesy: Hindustan Times Inner Voice July 9, 2007)

The greatness of the Satguru lies in the fact that he connects the devotees to God and never to any physical entity. Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji has ushered in this era of spiritual awakening. Let us imbibe God-knowledge not only in letter but also in spirit. This is the only way to external happiness. Our quest ends here.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING THE FIRST STEP

- Sunaina Naresh Uttam, Ooty

We all are born with a belief in God. He is the mystery from the beginning of time and beyond the limits of space. Spiritual awakening occurs in everyone's life at some point of time. If it is early in life, it would be precious blessing from God . hence the need to encourage children to attend Satsang or holy congregations and also develop a curiosity to study spiritual books and magazines. It is only with the association of saints and their teachings that little minds will have an interest to learn more about spirituality and blossom into stable and understanding citizens and thus realize God before it gets too late. Of course, it is better late than never, though the sooner the better!

Children with enlightened family members who attend Sangat and take interest in spiritual teachings surely have an edge over their counterparts as they grow up in a spiritual atmosphere. Their young minds filled with thoughts about God provide them the opportunity to understand the spiritual essence of life and help them lead a pious blissful life. The spiritual query which leads to God-realization is when we ask ourselves: ~~what~~ what is the goal of life? No science or person can answer this query except a True Master or Satguru. We are indeed indebted to our dear Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj for bestowing upon us the priceless gift of Gyan or God-knowledge and even thanking him in every breath would not be enough. It can be said with conviction that it is only by Satguru Baba Ji's grace that we know our real self (soul) as being an integral part of the Super Soul (God or Nirankar). Progress in spiritual awakening is directly proportional to the extent of faith and devotion that the seeker has.

To know our real self and the absolute reality that underlies all creation requires an insight that does not allow one to get entangled in the deceptive material world. A spiritual aspirant should endeavour to grasp the subtlety of the One Supreme Lord who is omnipresent and the significant implication of His immanence in all. God-knowledge alone can give us a sense of detachment and control over desires. Spiritual awakening is the first step towards faith and trust in God and the cultivation of divine character and equable vision. In the slumber of ignorance, a lot of precious time is wasted by being entangled in worldly matters.

Time and again, saints have stressed on the awakening of man to love humanity and attain liberation. It is only in this human life that one can attain liberation for which spiritual awakening is mandatory. This can be achieved by conscious, sincere and dedicated effort to aspire for liberation by overcoming worldly attractions. This also gives us an insight into the fact that spiritual knowledge is possible only by the divine grace of True Masters or Saints who since ages have been dedicating their lives to teach man to wake up and fulfil the prime purpose of life . God-realization.

Thus, spiritual awakening in the true sense can be summed up as an inquiry into the *raison d'être* of human existence and then following the principles of the Nirankari Mission, as taught by our Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj along with practicing the golden triangle of Sewa (selfless service), Satsang (congregation of saints) and Simran (God-remembrance). Spiritual awakening opens our hearts to perceive God in everyone and rise above all distinctions. When Lord God or Nirankar dwells in our hearts, there is no room except for endless gratitude, stability, and surrender to God's will in all situation. It is only when we are spiritually awake and live upto the teachings of our Satguru that we can be blessed with peace, bliss and tranquility . then, undoubtedly, there's no looking back. Can there be any other precious treasure than this?

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING A TRANSFORMATION

- Madhu Walia, Sonepat

By spiritual awakening we mean awakening of the spirit or soul; it is the synonym of Divine Knowledge and Spirituality. It also stands for Self-realisation and God-realisation. Man's life is incomplete, useless and meaningless without achieving it. Spiritual Awakening is food for man's soul. When we cannot imagine life without oxygen, sunshine and water, how can we imagine it without spiritual knowledge?

Life is full of dualities: with joy there is sorrow, with richness poverty, in youth there is fear of old age, in health fear of sickness. Everything is changeable. So, to be ever blissful which is our true nature, we should know our real self . Atma, Brahm (God), Pure Consciousness . which is unchangeable, unaffected and complete bliss.

This world is a stage where the play is going on. The play is written by our own Karma or deeds. So let us be in our real self and let the play go on. Then knowledge shines, darkness is eradicated and truth illumines. Anger, jealousy, hatred, anxiety, worry, all our negative emotions disappear in the light of Divine Knowledge. The question is: Who will bestow this knowledge? Only a Satguru like Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj who is our spiritual Teacher.

Baba Ji is a living legend. He is a social architect. The people who come in contact with him bear his super stamp. Selfless service is his guiding light. He is on a spiritual mission. He has an alchemic touch. He is one in millions. He is an ocean of love. He is a miracle. Without the help of such a Guru inner journey is not possible.

Spiritual awakening brings drastic changes in the life of a man. It makes him a true devotee and different from others. Spiritual enlightenment enables man to know that God is the Father and all humans are His children. All humans belong to one race. The same Light dwells in all humans, male or female, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaish or Sudra: all are created by God. A devotee believes in *ashudhaiv Kutumbakam*. the world is a vast family of God. A poet has aptly said:

Be not a Hindu or Muslim,
Be a human.

The devotees inspire man: Know the One, Believe in the One and be One. After realizing God, a devotee devotes himself to His alone and claims no separate identity. He realizes that one's true self is a constituent of God. He merges in God. Saint Kabir says:

A stream which merges into the river Ganges, turns Ganges;

A plant that grows by sandal wood, smells like sandalwood.

Copper that touches the philosopher's stone, turns into gold.

Likewise, by associating with saints, one turns a saint . godly.

Worldly people raise walls, while spiritually awakened ones build bridges. Saints and devotees demolish walls so that people may come closer, irrespective of their caste, race and nationality. When one realizes Truth, all walls crumble automatically, all distinctions are dissolved and all become one, belonging to one species. This is called Equable Vision.

Holy beings have exalted and termed love as God. Love is the need not only of today but of all times and of all ages. A devotee imbibes love; he not only turns into a true human but into an angel. Today, worldly people do not love ~~love~~ but they love ~~hatred~~. On the contrary, the devotees love ~~love~~. Man should never forsake love because love is a thread which binds humans together. Do not snap it by jerking. Once broken, it cannot be rejoined. And if rejoined, there will be a knot in it.

A devotee imbibes love and makes sacrifices for others. So the lamp of love has to be kept burning. A devotee is a peaceful soul, Peace can be ushered in by love, not by hatred. Hatred leads to conflict. A poet has rightly said:

A whole life is short for love, how do people find time for hatred?

The precious human life is sacrificed at the altar of hatred. If one has to sacrifice life, one should do it for love and humanism, not for hatred.

A spiritually enlightened person is always in the company of saints. Some he attains salvation as well as learns the art of living. He is never proud. He never suppresses anyone. He knows: Pride hath a fall. Due to his innate greatness, he is ever humble. A diamond does not boast of being precious. Its inherent quality makes it precious. The traits of a devotee make him great.

A spiritually awakened soul sets an example of tolerance and forgiveness. He never wishes ill of anyone. He is ever equipoised. His thinking is as deep as an ocean. An ocean is calm because it is deep, while there is no depth in the swirling streams. Greatness lies in being broad-minded.

A spiritually enlightened person tries to create devotional environment everywhere, does good to all as he understands the message of the Master and follows it also. He believes that God has created man in His own image. So there is dire need to bear this in mind. The world can change if a person changes himself. He should strike a balance between materialism and

spiritualism. He should combine the art of living with lasting inner peace. This will indeed be a spiritual transformation.

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AWAKENING OF SPIRITUALITY

- Dr. Satya Anand, Delhi

When first the beauty of spiritual life dawns on our vision, our reaction to it is pre-eminently emotional. We lack understanding, we do not know the bearings of the path that leads to the spiritual goal; we are moved by an impulse. But very soon we feel the want of clear knowledge. Doubts assail us and we yearn to know the why and the wherefore of things.

Some may think that the necessity for knowledge, art, work, etc. in the preparation for religious life are integral part of SPIRITUALITY. That, however, would be a wrong conclusion. The habit and experience of countless lives have taught us to regard what is really unnatural as natural!

No religion ever really says that the human soul is material or finite. Reason also dictates that the immaterial and the infinite must be beyond all definition, limitation or want, and that the ways of the infinite can never be those of the finite. Yet we have been deluded that our conception of perfection often partakes of the nature of the limited and the imperfect. We resist the idea of the negation of our present nature. We magnify our imperfection and call it perfection.

The idea of the harmony of head, hear and hand is an instance of this delusion. No doubt, there is a state in our SPIRITUAL progress, in which this harmony is beneficial and has to be practiced, but it would be erroneous to consider it to be the goal itself.

We perceive external objects through sense-intuition and then we systematize those perceptions, which is an indirect process. Similarly, we must perceive the spirit through spiritual-intuition. This is religion that is spirituality. So intellectualism and spiritual intuition cannot be identical. They are altogether distinct. Therefore intellectualism does not help us spiritually. Spirituality penetrates beyond the appearances and reaches the heart of things, which is Divinity.

God, to intellect, is a concept, to religion, the soul of one's soul. In religion, we seek to realize Reality which appears to our present experience as half material, half living universe. This differentiates religion essentially from intellectualism. We want knowledge not for any positive gain, but to rid ourselves of the gross side of our nature to reach a state of refinement where we can usefully and efficiently take up the culture of spirituality. When our mind has become fine enough, when through knowledge, activity, aesthetic and moral culture and social service our mind has become averse to sense-enjoyment, it longs for SPIRITUAL realities and searches for the One in the many. Then the time has come to take to new ways, to turn a sharp corner, to give up our habitual outlook on life and things and develop a new, the spiritual outlook. In fact, by then our mind has already unconsciously developed new ways. A new vision has been slowly rising

of itself. What we have to do is to leave off the old ways altogether and perfect the new vision.

cThe heart is the temple of God. Is there room for philosophy in the communion of lovers? In order to love a man, do we require a knowledge of biology, anatomy or physiology?

The time has not yet arrived, when we can dispense with intellectualism. That time will come when we shall feel an overwhelming love for God or at least when we shall be firmly established in the knowledge of the ideal we want to grasp and its pros and cons and ways and means. For unless there is an unassailable conviction about the ideal in our mind, serious and an uninterrupted practice is not possible. We are bound to be disturbed by conflicting ideas.

We see three different evolutions of intellectualism. In the first stage, its culture is positively beneficial as it leads to refinement of mind. In the second stage, we feel that it does not lead to spiritual knowledge proper, which we have to acquire through quite a different kind of perception, the spiritual-intuition. But though we feel the ultimate worthlessness of intellectualism, we still have to cultivate it, until we are engulfed by the overwhelming love of God, in order to be fully spiritual ideal, so that there may not be any subsequent conflict.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND MANKIND

- Radha Kishore Dash Adhikari, Advocate, Orissa

Life comprises three vital elements, namely, body, mind and soul. A healthy body is essential for life and a sound mind is of no less importance. However, without the soul, life is unthinkable. When the soul departs, the body decays and along with it the mind becomes defunct. So the soul is at the core of life. For existence, one has to take care of one's body. Mind can be active and enriched by proper moral, ethical and philosophical education. Awakening of the soul is also essential. Every heart is a temple, the citadel of the soul or God. So it is our paramount duty to learn the art of opening the gate of the temple to have an exciting glance of the Supreme dwelling there.

Body, mind and soul are inextricably interwoven with each other. The wellness of each one depends on the other. If mind is not happy and joyous, body also becomes weak, exhausted, powerless and inactive. If someone is ill, he feels mentally sick and lacks enthusiasm and fervour for work. Similarly, in order to retain the calmness, poise and serenity of the mind, one has to realize God. God-realization will help him to attain peace and bliss. For an ordinary person God-realization is not spontaneous. For God-realization, he needs the grace of a Satguru or True Master who is the incarnation of God on Earth. To have the proximity of a True Master is also a golden opportunity. Everybody is not fortunate to come across the super man, the holy man, the saint, True Master, who can illuminate the dark recesses of his mind, so that the veil of ignorance is removed from his mind. With the proper guidance of the True Master he treads along the path of perfection. The True Master preaches the essence of religion. He teaches us spirituality which means the power of perceiving the formless spiritual Entity. Dr Radhakrishnan says: "God is life". The True Master propagates that God dwells in all living beings. In order to worship our benign God and surrender oneself completely to Him, the Designer and Governor of the whole universe, we have to love all. By dint of this act one can coexist with all others in peace and harmony. To attain the peace, one has to shower, peace, love and compassion on others. When one is spiritually awakened and has self-realization with the blessings of the True Master, one becomes free from all the narrowness of mind and baser feelings.

All the saints and sages have preached only one Religion, that is, the Truth. The divine wisdom they impart is that there is only one God who dwells in every being and everywhere as He is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient.

The True Master guides us in the troubled world. The world is full of chaos and confusion. All the nations are reeking with violence, bloodshed, corruption and selfishness. Man is drifting into the vast ocean of suffering and miseries. True Master's guidance and preaching can redeem man from such an abysmal depth wherein he gropes in darkness, ignorance, pain and anguish.

His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj paves the way to perfection. Baba Ji advises us to have a clean life, a broad and open mind, a pure, simple and innocent heart, an inquisitive, eager intellect, a superb spiritual perception, spirit of universal brotherhood, a profound unflinching faith in God, a sincere adherence to Truth, fortitude to endure all personal injustice and follow moral principles. Baba Ji also inculcates in us the spirit of philanthropy, that is, to sacrifice oneself for welfare of humanity. Our selfishness and ego are to be crushed. The sincere call of the hour is to dedicate ourselves for the all round development and prosperity of our country as well as of the whole humanity.

With the magnetic and majestic spell of Satguru Baba Ji we have proper understanding of our inner being and our inner spiritual transformation, so that we feel ourselves one transformation, so that we feel ourselves one with God, which is state of a perfect bliss. We have a superb feeling that we are completely one with God or Truth or the Supreme Bliss or Beauty. If we surrender ourselves to God as well as the True Master, Earth can be transformed into heaven. We will shed all discrimination, discord, conflict and corruption and attain peace and bliss. We can attain divinity in this human life and overcome bestiality, the root cause of our downfall, degradation and illusion.

The True Master instills in us the patriotic spirit, the spirit of self-sacrifice, self-effacement, self-control, selfless service, cooperation and tolerance. These are the most important values and principles, ideals and precepts. We have to cultivate these to turn the whole humanity into a vast family. So our motto should be universal brotherhood, perpetual peace and harmony in the technologically advanced self-centred modern humanity. Then only life can be fruitful, valuable and significant in this world. Prosperity of oneself should be associated with the progress of the whole humanity. So we should whole-heartedly serve the mankind, ignoring our self-interest to have that supreme spiritual consciousness of the oneness with God. This will open the gate to our salvation.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING THE REAL LIFE

- Pal Poonam, Delhi

Life of spirit is the only life worth living. The one who is spiritually awakened is living in the true sense. Others are all called by the sages as the dead bodies, moving corpses, a slur, a curse on humanity.

With spiritual awakening life blooms, glows, sparkles and smoothens. It is the fragrance and beauty of life.

The remedy for all ills and ailments, the cure for all tensions and turmoils and the solution for all problems facing the mankind lies in awakening of the spirit in the human body. Self awakening makes life meaningful and blissful.

Being awake and aware of one's real self as an immortal and an ever glowing spirit, spiritual awaking transforms life into peaceful, blissful, loving and everlasting one.

Spiritual awakening brings a revolution in the heart and mind of a person. Positive attitude towards all people, events and happenings, pious thoughts and noble sentiments, loving all and hating none and compassionate feelings sublimate life.

Work done, duties and responsibilities performed by an enlightened being are beneficial to others.

Self awakening enables proper understanding of the situations and circumstances, the judgment of doing or avoiding, in all walks of life. It gives clear perception of the happenings in day-to-day life. The thoughts, words and deeds are in harmony and as a result one's life is exalted.

A spiritually enlightened person's life is full of joy, love and peace. He is highly beneficial to himself, to his family and to the society.

Creative, nourishing, healing and sustaining forces are at work in a spiritually awakened person. The presence of such a being fills the environment with spiritual fragrance which is a great boon to the society. The prime purpose and real achievement of human life is spiritual awakening. Swami Vivekananda says:

Arise, awake and stop not
Till the goal is achieved.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND GLOBAL PEACE

- G.K. Malhotra, Chandigarh

Spirituality and religion are interlinked like two sides of the same coin. Spirituality denotes self-introspection for inner solace and to determine or analyze, what is wrong or what is right, while following the principles of religion as enshrined in the holy scriptures. Every human being must know the meaning of true religion and then glorify the same through his conduct. The great poet Tulsidas has summed up religion as under:

Compassion or mercy is the root of true
religion and evil the root cause of ego.

Man may inhabit any part of the world, may have any cultural background, but if he possesses feelings of love, tolerance and mercy, he is a blessing for the earth and boon to the mankind. The great spiritual masters like Lord Buddha, Lord Rama, Lord Krishna Lord Jesus Christ, Hazrat Mohammed and in recent times Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji continued to appear on earth in different ages to guide the destiny of mankind. All of them sought to tell the man that the entire humanity is in the image of God and He did not create any caste, creed or religion. The prophets preached love and compassion for co-existence and commanded that all the creation is one because He himself dwells in all mankind.

Despite religious edicts and exhortations, man has failed to love man as a human being for lack of Divine Knowledge. Today, man is identified by the family he belongs to. The family is identified with a caste and religion which in turn are symbolized by different attires or styles of dress. Even when we describe that everyone belongs to the family of God, we have to identify the God one belongs to. No doubt, each and every religion claims that there is only one God but still mankind continues to be divided. In fact, man is groping in the dark without knowing or realizing God and the ultimate truth without which any amount of meditation, worship in holy shrines, recitation of holy scriptures becomes futile. Consequently, he is unable to get rid of man-apprehensions and shed hatred. Isa Upanishad elucidates this point:

God permeates everything. All belongs to God, nothing belongs to you, not even your body. Those who worship ignorance go to hell. Those who worship Godless knowledge without action go into the dark hell.

If we see the present day scenario, we are confronted with a dismal picture. In the strife torn world of today, the man has sunk himself in a kind of sub-existence. Being arrogant he has lost all sense resulting in crumbling of human values. The whole set-up . social, economic, political and cultural has degenerated to the core. Terrorism and violence have become a global phenomenon.

We attribute all this to ~~Envy~~ and Pride Syndrome+ (Irsha and Aahankar). The present sorry state of affairs is linked to all round decay in moral values. Self-aggrandizement, cheating, dishonesty, greed, materialism, falsehood, muscle power, corruption, exploitation, discrimination and hatred based on caste, creed and religion are ruling the roost all over the world. The remedy suggested for all these human-ills and degenerating social values is only through social, emotional and spiritual development. The re-generation requires sustained efforts by cultivating positive teachings of religion and propagation of positive thinking of moral and spiritual values. The spiritual awakening, is, therefore, essential to bring about transformation of mankind and vital for promoting world peace, prosperity, communal harmony and sense of brotherhood.

The Sant Nirankari Mission has launched a world wise movement to spread spiritual awareness by bestowing Divine Knowledge for the promotion of Universal Brotherhood and World Peace based on the following five principles:-

1. All worldly assets . physical, mental and material, ultimately belong to God and one should treat them as such and not be proud of the same.
2. One should not be proud of one's caste, creed and colour and discriminate against others on this account.
3. One should not hate or criticize others on account of their diet and dress.
4. God can be realized while performing normal duties of domestic life. One must not leave one's hearth and home and become a recluse or ascetic and thus be a burden on society.
5. One must not divulge to others the divine knowledge as revealed by the True Master, without his permission.

It is generally described by thinkers and philosophers that human life is a pilgrimage and should not be wasted in material pursuits. This journey would remain incomplete for the soul without seeking the ~~Ultimate Reality~~ of the Infinite, Eternal and Divine Bliss.

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SPIRITUAL AWAKENING A PRIORITY

- Bal Krishan Sharma, Gurgaon

We are products of two entities . animate and inanimate. Our body, mind and intellect and all that is connected with the body is inanimate, while our soul, that is an indivisible part of the Super Soul (God), is animate. The characteristics of both the body and the soul are opposite to each other. The body is changing every moment and is mortal, while the soul never changes and is immortal. Birth, childhood, youth, old age and death are different stages of the body but not of the immortal soul. We can feel the body through our senses but not the soul. According to Swami Shankarachary, they are as different as light and darkness. Of these two, the soul is far more important than the body. Without the soul the body is lifeless, good-for-nothing, just as without the electric current all electrical appliances . bulb, tube, television set, cooler, heater, etc., are useless.

Stressing the importance of the soul, Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji, in one of his sermons said: It is not that we are human beings having spiritual experience, rather we are spiritual beings having human experience. It shows that our original, real, permanent self, the soul, is spiritual, while our body, with all its organs, which is ever-changing, is physical. Baba Avtar Singh Ji says:

O man, you too are His (God's) integral part; a spark of the Divine Light. Though a pure pearl, you are lost among shells. He (God) is your real abode; He is your sublime self.

- Avtar Bani-189

The conclusion is that priority should be given to the eternal soul. But, generally, we neglect our soul and care more for our body and relations.

Spiritual awakening means realizing our real self and the means to be adopted are company of saints, attending holy congregation, always feeling the presence of God near us and rendering selfless service. But it does not mean that we should neglect our body, mind, intellect and relations. Proper attention must also be paid to them. They are God's blessings. If utilized properly, they are complementary to our spiritual advancement and awakening.

A question arises: Why are forget our eternal real self? The only reason is our too much indulgence and attachment to our body and relations. This attachment does not allow us to rise above our body-consciousness and reach the plane of soul-consciousness. Saint Tulsi Das Ji says that the world is sleeping in the night of attachment and is having various kinds of dreams.

The attachment causes great harm. To counter attachment and ego, we must feel and realize our true self by being God-conscious. No other creature has as much developed mind even to dream of God-consciousness. So our foremost duty is to reach the plane of God-conscious. Then there will be no fear of death as we will realize that our eternal, immutable self is our immortal soul, not the mortal body.

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