

FIFTY YEARS OF SPIRITUAL BLISS

Souvenir on The Golden Jubilee Nirankari Sant Samagam November 6-10, 1997

Edited By:

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ANNUAL NIRANKARI SANT SAMAGAMS A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

-By: Bupender 'Bekal' P.S. to His Holiness

The Sant Nirankari Mission celebrates its Golden Jubilee Sant Samagam from November 6 to 10, 1997 with full fervour and zeal. Identifying the history of the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagams, our memory takes us back to the spirited young saint of the Mission, Sajjan Singh, son of Baba Avtar Singh Ji Maharaj, who played unforgettable patent and latent roles in widely spreading the message of the Mission. Patently, he is the founder of the Nirankari Publications as he was instrumental in releasing the 'Sant Nirankari' monthly magazine in the year 1948. Latently speaking, Sajjan Singh fell ill and breathed his last the same year.

The death of young Sajjan moved everybody and a large number of devotees reached Delhi to express their feelings. His Holiness, however, impressed upon them all that we must surrender to the will of God. We should treat the body, mind and worldly belongings as gifts from the Almighty Nirankar, use them as trustees and feel in no way pained if and when any one of them is withdrawn or taken back by the Supreme Giver. Baba Ji counseled all to sit in congregation, remember God, express gratitude for whatever is left, pray for strength to serve humanity and beseech forgiveness or divine mercy for worldly short-comings.

The visiting saints gathered at Idgah Road in Delhi and took the form of a congregation. The Missionaries rose one after the other, to address the congregation. It was discovered that it would be really useful to share their views on the Mission's philosophy, their experience as also the style of communicating the same, on a periodical basis. This was the first one-day Samagam of the Mission, which inspired the Missionaries, and they decided that devotees from all over may assemble in Delhi at least once in a year in the month of October or November. Ever since, the Mission has been holding its Samagams every year regularly. The number of participants in Annual Samagams continues to be thicker and thicker from year to year.

The duration of every annual samagam has been 3 days except in the case of the 1st, 9th and the Golden jubilee Samagam which have been of one day, seven days and five days duration, respectively.

To avoid it becoming a ritual, no dates have been permanently fixed for the Annual Samagams. So far, these have been usually held during the period from late September to early November.

The first fifteen Samagams up to 1962 were held under the stewardship of Baba Avtar Singh Ji Maharaj. From 16th to 21st, Samagams were held in the august presence of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji Maharaj, Baba Avtar Singh Ji and Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji. From 22nd to 32nd, these Samagams were presided over by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji Maharaj Ji and Pujya Rajmata Ji. From 33rd Samagam onwards these have been held under the spiritual guidance of Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, Pujya Rajmata Ji and Pujya Mata Swinder Ji.

Venue

Place-wise, the first Samagam in 1948 was held at Idgah Road, Sadar. The 2nd Samagam was held at Panchkuin Road, New Delhi. The 3rd to 5th Samagams were held at Radio Colony near Sant Nirankari Colony. For the 8th to 17th Samagams Sant Nirankari Colony remained the venue. With the ever-increasing number of Nirankari devotees more spacious venue was needed. Therefore, the 18th to 30th Samagams were held in the Ram Lila Ground, Delhi. The 31st Samagam in 1978 was held at the India Gate Maidan, New Delhi. For the next eight years the venue was shifted to the open Maidan behind Red Fort opposite the Raj Ghat, Shanti Vana and Vijay Ghat where the 32nd to 39th Samagams were held. The next 3 Samagams were held near Santokh Sarovar (Nirankari Colony) across the Outer Ring Road. From the 43rd Samagam onwards the spacious ground opposite the Santokh Sarover (Burari Raod) is being used for this purpose. Thus, going by the need and availability, nine venues have been utilised so far for conducting 50 Annual Sant Samagams.

Series Uninterrupted

The 16th Samagam held in 1963 was the first Samagam presided over by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji. The physical departure of Baba Avtar Singh Ji in September 1969 did not cast any shadow of morose on the 22nd Samagam. The year 1972 witnessed the Silver Jubilee Samagam when the Nirankari Baba and Rajmata Ji were weighed against currency notes. This helped the Mission to step up its activities in the social welfare field. Despite Amritsar-episode of April 1978 and virtual anti Nirankari crusade in the northern region, there was no break in the chain of annual Samagams that year too. In the year 1980 also when Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji laid down his life for the ask of Truth, the 33rd Annual Samagam was held as usual under the spiritual command of Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj. This was the first Samagam presided over by him in which he inspired devotees to stick to their faith in Nirankar and take the message of the Mission to every door step, which would be the true homage to Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji.

Initially, the Annual Samagams used to start with a colourful procession with the Nirankari Baba seated in a well-decorated open vehicle, preceded by Sewa Dal Band and followed by the visiting saints in their traditional costumes singing praise of God and the True Master and high-lighting the message of the Mission, while marching on the specified long route. This used to be a scene to the enjoyed by one and all. The idea of the procession was to introduce the Mission to the masses.

In 1977, however, a procession could not take place in view of the deteriorated law and order situation. Once the chain stood broken, these processions were practically dropped from the Samagam programme.

Poetic Symposium

An important feature of the Annual Samagams has been a poetic symposium generally conducted in the evening of the concluding day. Except on seven occasions, when there were general poems, there has always been a specific theme for the poetic symposium, relevant to the situation and expected role for the followers of the Mission. It first started with the Samagam in 1952. The theme

was 'On seeing the Light of God every place gets illumined.' The other notable themes conveyed: Knowledge of God dispels darkness of ignorance and superstitions; love is the foundation of durable peace and prosperity; the saint knows how to maintain the spirit of love even against tyranny; service to mankind has great significance; the Mission stands for unity and salvation of the whole world; practice is better than preaching; intense love between man and man is essentially required to achieve peace and progress of mankind; love man to love God; humility is the hall-mark of life; devotion remains lop-sided unless it is founded on love and respect for other human beings; the primary aim of human life is that one should become true human being; etc. etc. The curves and contours of all the poetic themes run into one singular aim of transforming man into real human being worth the name. The poets with their attempts in Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and other languages touch new heights of imagination and filter the theme down the veins of the devotees.

Other Fortunes

A Sewa Dal Rally is usually held on the forenoon of the 2nd day of the Samagam. In this rally, the Sewa Dal volunteers present a spectacular scene with physical exercises and some cultural items in the presence of Baba Ji and renew their pledge of service to humanity.

General Body Meeting is also a regular feature of the Annual Samagam. This meeting normally takes place on the forenoon of the 3rd day of the Samagam. In this meeting all the Parcharaks, Mukhis, Parmukhs, Zonal Incharges, Sewa Dal Office-bearers and such other members of the Mission as may be nominated by the Satguru, participate. This meeting is held under the being presence of the Satguru and starts with an Annual Report read by the Secretary concerned giving brief account of the performance of the previous year. Then it is addressed by the Satguru, enjoining upon the participants the new tasks ahead.

Today, the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam in Delhi can easily be described as the 'Mission in Action'. Its message of human unity equality and fraternity based on spiritual awakening finds here a fine expression. People from all shades and layers of society assemble at one place forgetting their social, economic or official status. The mammoth gathering presents a view of unity in diversity and mutual love, respect and understanding. Humility marks the conduct of every devotee participating in the Samagam so much so that one is found touching the feet of the other irrespective of the age, sex or the status.

Free food (Langar) is served to all during the Samagam. The people sit on the carpets so affectionately that one finds senior officers, businessmen, factory owner and other elite taking food while seated by the side of the common people coming from remote rural areas. Even those who prepare or the serve the food work shoulder to shoulder irrespective of their social status, educational qualifications, economic background and so on. The Nirankari Langar is certainly an example of equality and fraternity as also the self-less service to others.

During the Samagam, the Nirankari Pradarshini - an Exhibition consisting of interesting models, paintings, photographs etc. is also a centre of attraction for the devotees. It depicts not only the history and the ideology of the Mission but also the various activities, particularly those related to the spread of its message.

The spiritual tours and the discourses of His Holiness also find ample representation in the Exhibition. The long queues display the sense of discipline on the part of the devotees.

The whole Samagam place looks like a township provided with all the facilities needed in the modern times. It represents the picture of mini-Globe by way of its participants from every nook and corner of the country and also from overseas.

Those prominent who attended the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagams in the past include the President of India, the Prime Minister, the Central Ministers, State Governors and Chief Ministers.

BLENDING MATTER WITH SPIRIT

- By K.R.Chadha, Secretary, Sant Nirankari Mandal, Delhi

The basic purport and concept of Truth is fundamentally the same, as testified by thousands of years of human history. But its scope and functions have varied from time to time, or to put it more correctly, have expanded and developed new orientations. The Mission of the Nirankari Baba in this modern technological age, age has to be judged in this context.

In the remote past when the world lacked the modern means of swift and safe communication and travel, the spiritual masters of those ages moved about with the Divine Gospel but within only a limited area. The saints and sages in all ages and in all regions of the world have conveyed to the people essentially the same message, showed identical paths to Divinity and deliverance, but all this basic and same truth got different colouring and clothing as a result of differences of language, culture, local usage and later, different interpretations but followers. This led to the rise of various religious faiths.

Every true faith believes in and worships one God, upholds divine spirituality, stands for truth, good deeds, human compassion, service of fellow-beings, spirit of universal brotherhood and tolerance between races, communities and sects; abhors evils of violence, exploitation and prejudice. And yet, the word history is full of most horrible wars, mass bloodshed of innocent men, women and children and most ignoble holocausts and devastation, all perpetuated in the name of religion, allegedly for demonstrating the supremacy of one faith over the other.

Material Advance

The world has since changed a lot. The advance of the material science and technology has brought the remotest part of the world much closer than could be dreamt of a few decades back. The expanding horizons of knowledge and the new dimensions it has attained as a result of discovery, invention and research has eliminated much of superstitions and taboos, but much more still remains with all its cankerous potents. Fifty years back, the Indian subcontinent, the cradle of spiritual knowledge, itself became the victim of worst-ever carried out under the pretext of religious identifications.

Science has done much good to the human race no doubt, but it has also invented means for its total destruction. Both science and religion are now exploited for satisfying lust for power and possessions by the evil genius. The grim situation which haunts the human brotherhood like a nightmare has destroyed the young generation's faith in future.

Master Both

Science means pursuit to know the real facts of both aspects of God's creation, the materialistic and cosmic. Both are covered by same principle, and parallel pursuit to master the both alone can help the human race to achieve the true purpose of life. Spiritual science alone can balance various extreme forces and prevent mankind from suicidal misuse of materialistic science for destructive purposes.

The Nirankari Masters are unique in one respect; they answer to the needs of modern world. The whole world is the field of their activity and accent on universality in their message is only natural and logical. Therefore, their approach to the problem is apparently unique.

The living True Master, His Holiness Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, widely known as Nirankari Baba and his predecessors have made it clear that they would not start another religion, because true religion is one and indivisible. The aim and object of their mission, a continuing process of spiritual awakening, is to prove and demonstrate this oneness of religion by eliminating all superstitions and taboos, so that once the clouds disappear, the sun of Truth shines in full splendence.

Oneness of God

The Sant Nirankari Mission believes that God is one, human race is one; the whole creation of His is one integrated process although limitless, fathomless and divided in so many planets, suns and moons. Therefore, the true religion must be one because Truth is not divisible or subject to compromises and evasions. Once the human race realises this and other virtues and values of common spiritual existence, it will be free from suffering and strife and achieve the true meaning, beauty and pleasure of Eternal Bliss.

The Nirankari Baba's emphasis on the one hand, on universal brotherhood and winning over others by love, persuasion and tolerance, and on the other, his exposition of the fact that differences of colour, race, language and culture are superfluous because they are the natural outcome of different climatic and material conditions of the world, and also on purposeful and logical spiritual development through simple living and high thinking is aimed to his mortal existence sublime and a vehicle for attaining salvation and eternal peace after death, provides answer to all the problems of human race.

The Mission has exploded the myth of ritualism, false notions of penance or leaving the worldly life to be recluse under the false hope of attaining God. He emphasises that human beings are born to live by honest toil to make this world more pleasant and ideal. All this needs dedicated work. And it is the most positive way to achieve divinity and spiritual peace by combining the normal life and spiritual existence with a dedicated sense to aspire and endeavour for the best of both.

The Nirankari Mission has also demonstrated beyond any doubt that God is within the reach of every body and so direct communion with Him is possible for everyone. What is needed is the Divine knowledge being revealed by the True Master in person or through competent and accredited saints. Everyone whether Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Budhist or coming from any other faith can enjoy this supreme bliss and become a true saint, a true Hindu, Muslim, Christian and so on.

The Nirankari Baba's Mission is to make everybody, regardless of caste, creed or colour, realise and recognise the soul-the true self-which is common in all humans and reflects to one Omnipresent God; and thus, unite the human race in common spiritual bond and lead it to self-regeneration and true peace and

progress. His field of activity is not confined to any one or new countries. He is a world citizen and moves from country to country and continent to continent to spread the message of Truth and spiritual salvation.

CONTENTMENT AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL

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

Everyone craves for peace and contentment in his or her life. Very few get it. The Holy Scriptures points out to the craving of the people for happiness (Sukh) but its turning out to be only pain (Dukh). This subject and the enigma of whether a person will get Sukh or Dhukh has been studied by all spiritual leaders. All have arrived at the same conclusion i.e. a person's Dukh is his own making. Lord Budha has termed it as attachment. Some scriptures have called it ego (Haumain). At other places it is named as pride (Ahankar). All the confusion arises due to ignorance (Agyan) of one's self and the failure to recognise the Supreme Lord of all creation.

Before proceeding further, it may be worthwhile to examine the process of getting contentment or feeling contented. You have desires, wishes (Vasna), wants and dreams. When these get fulfilled, you are contented. Now comes the catch. There is no end to a man's desires. Once one desire is fulfilled, another rises in its place. This unquenchable thirst of desires is never ending. There are the simple physical desires of food, clothing, water, and shelter. Then there are the subtle desires of position, fame, name, and recognition.

There is also the so-called hierarchy of desires. The lower level desires are food and water. The higher level are bungalows, car TV, etc. it is presumed that once lower level desires are satisfied, higher level desires crop up. The desires are universally applicable to all ages, times and people. Children may have different sets of desires such as toys, comics, etc. adults and grown ups will have another set of desires. No one in any country or climate is rid of this malady.

We may now summarise the malady. Firstly, every one has one desires or the other. No sooner one desire is satisfied, another crops up. Secondly, contentment may occur when a desire is fulfilled but it is short-lived. The same desire or others crop up again to drive away our feelings of contentment.

Source of Desires

So it seems that the malady is in the occurrence of desires and non-fulfillment thereof. Can a person be desireless? What are desires, after all? It seems that we have to locate the very source of desires and then destroy or at least negate it. The source of all desires is 'Me' or 'Mine'. This is Me and this is Mine. How nice it will be to have riches, children, house, jewellery, goods, services, relations, respect, name, fame, love, affection, etc. There is a need and drive for acquisition, domination and being one better than the other. It all comes from the thought of 'I'.

A little reflection will reveal that this 'I' is quite illusory. Is 'I' the body, which was born and would die? Is 'I' the consciousness, which sees and interprets the world and its working? Is 'I' the inner desire for more and better things all the time? One has to conclude that the 'I' and the consequent desires are all these things put together. This maze of 'I' and the world is termed as Being (Jiva) and the Super Being, God. There is the embodied soul (Jivatma) lost in this world of Illusion (Maya) which is controlled by God (Parmatma). It is an ever-lasting snare

into, which the human being has been ensnared. There does not seem to be an outlet to this never-ending treadmill of self, desires of the self, and hence the lack of contentment.

Remedy

The solution to this apparently unsolvable problem is offered by the saints. The first step is to realise the basic nature of this world and the power behind it - the Formless God (Nirankar), which can be shown to a true devotee as the Limitless Power behind all things. Everything, including self, the world, the universe, desires, aspirations, arises out of it and falls back into it. A human being is a very small insignificant part of the creation. The creation itself draws its sustenance from the Creator, which is Nirankar. Though created by the creator, the creation is inherently transitory. The only ever-lasting reality is the Nirankar. Rest is all illusory, transitory and short-lived. Attachment to any transitory thing will itself be transitory. It is like falling in love with a bird, which comes into your garden once and then flies away.

The true saints know all this and are not moved by worldly things. Their minds are fixed on Nirankar and they ever enjoy the everlasting bliss. For example, they do not say, 'God, give me this because I desire it.' Instead, they say, 'God, thank you for what you have given me. I have no desire or need for what you have not given.' A true devotee considers all his material possessions as a gift from God and uses them as a trustee. Any addition to this material possession is treated in the same way. Also there is no hankering and whining if you do not have which others may possess.

Well, how is this miracle to occur? How is it that a human being can get this viewpoint of contentment? It all comes out of Satguru's gift to a devotee. The Satguru explains the true nature of self and Nirankar. The knowledge thus imparted is further strengthened by Service (Sewa). Remembrance of God's name (Simran) and keeping company of true saints (Satsang). This is the way of the Universal Brotherhood.

Almost a similar solution is offered by Holy Bible: "Count thy blessings," it says. A selfish person will always concentrate on what he does not have rather than what he has. If one was to concentrate on all the bounties and gifts of God, which we take for granted, we would realise the true benevolent nature of God. He is all merciful and bountiful. It is only the selfish nature of man, which prevents him to realise the true greatness of the Lord. He is the Supreme Giver (Datar) and most generous (Sakhi). He is forever showering His gifts on His creation. Alas, the ignorant man does not see it but concentrates on only what he does not have.

A story illustrates the point further. A poor man went to a saint and narrated his tale of woe and misery. He wanted riches and money. He was informed that a way can be found if he is willing to part with what he has. He readily agreed and was asked to come the next day. When he eagerly arrived the next day, he was given a choice of 1 lakh or 2 lakh rupees. He was over joyed and wanted to know what he had to part with. But he became dejected when informed that by donating both his legs he can get 1 lakh and by donating both his eyes, 2 lakh rupees. 'How am I to enjoy my wealth if I lose my legs or eyes?' Thereafter, the saint explained to him the riches he already had, that is, Rs.1 lakh worth of legs

and Rs. 2 lakh worth of eyes. Hence he is quite rich by comparison and should not hanker after what he does not have.

'Contentment' or "Santokh' only comes as a result of enlightenment and shedding of ego. A true devotee works in a self-less (Nishkam) manner, donating all his labour and work to the Lord Almighty, and accepting what the good Lord gives in return. He then is the truly blissful individual, ever content and ever happy. Such a state of mind is possible and demonstrable by the saints of the Universal Brotherhood - Nirankari Mission.

EGO - THE SOURCE OF ALL EVILS

-By: Lt. Col. (Retd) B.L. Sachdeva

Spirituality calls for total negation of self. All the teachings of the spiritual masters have been directed towards the goal of eradication of ego without which union with God and God-realization is not possible. One of the principles of the Sant Nirankari Mission that our body, mind and all our worldly possessions are a gift of God, reminds us that man is just a puppet in the hands of God and his pride is misplaced. The practice of bowing at the feet of the Lord Master and fellow saints here is also directed towards this end of eradicating egoism. It means that for making spiritual progress one has to unlearn all past convictions and start afresh. Golf professional was once asked by a week-end golfer as to how long will it take him to learn playing proper and scientific golf. He replied, it will take him four years. The questioner was shocked since he thought that he already knew enough and it should not take him so long. He expressed his misgivings to the professional. The professional explained that if he were a beginner he would take only two years of coaching and practice to become a proficient golfer. On the other hand it would take him four years, because two extra years were required for unlearning all that he had acquired while playing so far.

The newborn child is without any ego. It is full of love for all with total absence of hatred. It takes about two years for the child before it starts responding to the name given to it for its individual identity. As it grows, it is the influence of its elders, which inflates its ego. If it is boy, parents tell him that boys are superior to girls in all spheres of human endeavour. The pride of his caste, religion, race and nationality is instilled in him. Generally speaking women are less egoistic than men. Consequently it is easier for them to make spiritual progress. If statistics are taken, it will be found that women are more religious than men. In fact in most cases, it is they who inspire their men folk to take to God worship.

Children are less egoistic than grown-ups. That is why we find that children of saints if they remain in touch with the Lord Master and the Sangat make for greater and faster progress than their parents in their spiritual level. I have seen a number of cases where children have continued to attend regular sangats even after their parents have stopped coming due to some reasons.

Self-aggrandizement

Now we come to the question as to why egotism is harmful for society. Both egoism and egotism refer to a preoccupation and concern only for oneself. In this state where self-interest becomes a predominant motive, both fair and foul means are used for self-aggrandizement. The result is oppression and exploitation of fellow human beings, which appears to be at its peak in the modern society, particularly in our country. Ego leads to unbridled ambition, when worldly success is the solitary aim and justifies the means.

This gives rise to monsters in society. We have examples of tyrants like Alexander, Hitler, Aurangzeb, and Mussolini in history. Even today there are people who are busy amassing crores for the satisfaction of their ego and ambition. On the other hand ego is the root cause of most disputes between individuals, families, tribes, clans and states as also amongst married couples.

Most of the divorce cases could be avoided if one of the contestants sheds ego and apologizes for his/her mistake and takes the initiative for reconciliation or reunion. But in most cases, this first step is never taken due to false sense of prestige and egotism even though there is a desire to patch up on both sides. The same applies to family, tribal and national dispute. Many wars have been fought for satisfying the ego of the rulers.

The Doer

The presence of ego in man is due to ignorance. Because of ignorance, man regards his self as the doer of actions. As per Gita Chapter 18 Shalokas 13 and 14, the following factors are mentioned as contributory to the accomplishment of all actions, right or wrong:-

Adhistanam : The seat of activity which is this body and material universe where actions are performed;

Karta (agent):- The soul rooted in the matter;

Karnam:- All activity connected with accomplishment of actions: and

Devam:- Destiny of fate which includes Prarabdha which is made up of latencies of past actions, both good and bad.

Action where the above ingredients are present must bear fruit. If one of the ingredients is missing, action will not lead to fruition. The cycle of birth and death is due to reaping fruits of actions performed in previous lives. We have no control on the presence of other ingredients save Karta. He whose mind is free from the sense of doer-ship and whose mind is not tainted by worldly objects and activities becomes free from the fruits of actions. To illustrate this point, I will give the example of fire. For fire to start, three ingredients must co-exist. They are: (a) Oxygen; (b) Material like wood or petrol; and (c) Source of ignition for raising temperature to required level. If one of the ingredients is missing, fire cannot start. Similarly, to extinguish fire we either remove oxygen or take away combustible materials or cool the temperature by pouring water.

The Salvation

After God realization and gaining true knowledge from the perfect master, we know our true self to be non-doeer, and all actions performed without ascribing sense of doer ship to self will not cause us to reap their fruits, and consequently lead us to Moksha or salvation. In fact Sewa (actions performed for general good without selfish motives) burns the residual effect of past Karma. Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji rightly proclaimed all actions to be chains leading to bondage. He said, good actions are golden chains and bad actions are iron chains. Only actions performed without attachment and sense of doer-ship can lead us to salvation. Obviously a person who has rid himself of ego can do no wrong. His actions will not lead to fruition. Gurbani says:

HUKME ANDAR SABH KO, BAHAR HUKAM NA KOYE;
NANAK HUKME JE BUJHE, TA HOME KAHE NA KOYE;

(Japji - 2)

Everyone is subject to the will of God. Says Nanak, anyone who understands this fact will not speak with egoism.

In Asa Di Var, before Pauri 7, Guru Nanak explains egoism, which I try to translate as under:

"Man comes or takes birth and goes or dies due to ego. Whatever he gives or takes is also under the influence of ego (because the actual giver or taker is God.) Whatever he earns and loses is also under the effect of ego. He is honest or dishonest because of ego. The concept of good or evil deeds is based on sense of ego. The man laughs and weeps under the influence of ego. The act of getting soiled or corrupted and later effort to purify himself (by performing austerities) is done under the influence of ego. The basis of casteism is ego. If a person is foolish or wise, this is also the result of egoism, while in actual fact no one knows the path to salvation. The man is deluded by Maya due to ego. One can realise truth only by understanding the concept of ego. Without knowing the Reality or God all talk is nonsense and exercise in futility. Says Nanak, Man's destiny is decided by the will of God. We see only what He wants us to see."

FOUR STAGES OF SPIRITUAL ASCENDANCE

- By B.N. Kaul (U.S.A.)

At the time of birth, man is no different from animal-kind; he is not only totally ignorant and uncomprehending but also more hapless than a newborn calf or pup. The latter needs the mother's milk and care for few days after it opens its eyes in this world. In these few days it learns to stand up, walk, even run and pick up food and feed itself. Then it is on its own. Instinct guides the animal from the very beginning. It has only instinct, and no intellect that is exclusively bestowed upon man, because of which he claims to be the super-species.

Unlike animals, human beings need guidance, care and help throughout their existence, from birth to death. It takes them a couple of year or more to learn under the care of parents and the family to eat, drink, stand up, walk, speak and understand the meaning of words in day to day use. Only through proper training, teaching and guidance, they develop their intelligence and learn the ways of life.

Inequality is latent in such intellectual development. Most people remain ordinary even if opportunity of education and instruction come their way. Only 15 to 20 percent may attain higher qualifications. The Ultra-brilliant develop very high caliber but they may not be more than one in a thousand. And all this attainment of whatever degree is possible only with the help of highly capable guidance, instruction and teaching. Men and women of extra-ordinary attainments welcome such guidance from their superiors and new sources of knowledge till the end of their careers.

Unfortunately, however, the man has failed to follow this golden rule of progression through competent guidance in his spiritual life, which if he had done would have helped him to realise the dream of utopia centuries ago-the dream of truly peaceful world with all humans leading a purposeful and comfortable life, all working dedicatedly for greater progress-spiritual social, economic and cultural,

for a world totally free from poverty, strife, hatred, conflicts, suspicion and intolerance.

Urge to Know

Why is there contradiction in the man's material and spiritual attainments? This is explained by the inherent dichotomy in man's nature. God has gifted human beings with intellect in varying degrees. Human life is an arena of struggle and conflict between good and bad; virtue and evil; truth and falsehood; love and hatred. Man is essentially made for leading a righteous and virtuous life and in proper environment he chooses that very path. But inherent in his nature are some weaknesses like avarice, anger, suspicion etc. In wrong environment and due to lack of proper guidance, he may fall victim of ignorance and the resultant evils. Provocation and misguidance may turn him violent and intolerant.

From his very birth man is by nature inquisitive, to know all about the world and life. He is possessed by the urge to know who he is, who created him and gifted him with life. What was the purpose of life? If the person is brought up in normal conditions, he develops into a good person, educated, wanting to know all the secrets of life. As in the case of material development a person needs education and training by qualified and competent teacher, he needs the same, indeed better, kind of guidance and teaching for spiritual advancement. Just as mundane temporal knowledge cannot be attained with the help of books alone and needs teachers, so also the spiritual knowledge cannot be attained with the help of scriptures alone but needs the guidance by True Master, who is gifted with full divine knowledge and with rare qualities of head and heart.

Reckoned as Righteous

The True Master can teach and guide not only a normal person but can reclaim even the fallen ones, bring to the right path those who for the various reasons might have gone astray. Lord Krishna says in Bhagwad Gita:

"Even if a person of the most vile conduct worships me (God) with undistracted devotion, he must be reckoned as righteous, as reclaimed, for he had rightly resolved."

(Chapter IX, Shaloka 30)

The Holy Quran, Bible and Buddhists scriptures all emphasise that any body can seek to realise God, whatever be his or her past. All that is needed is to take the right path, abjure all evils, be virtuous and stick to the resolve firmly and in a spirit of dedication. God realisation is the birth right of every human being and to exercise this right one needs only a purified mind, various behaviour and steadfastness of the resolve to realise God with guidance of the True Master.

As Einstein, the famous scientist philosopher has said, "The quest for truth, full and logically sound, as different from myth, is inherent quality of man, which if developed by proper instruction leads to great achievements and if suppressed, blunted or distorted leads to denigration and superstition, easy belief in falsehood." In spiritual terms the search of Truth leads to realisation of God, for He is the Ultimate Truth. Another great thinker, Luther Burbank says: "There is no personal salvation, there is no social salvation, except through search of truth." Still another great intellectual, Socrates says in his work, 'The light of Day':

"If we take science of truth our guide, if we accept and hold fast that alone what is verifiable, dogmas and falsehood will be dispelled."

True spirituality is true science. Man by inborn urge wants to know God, his own truth about the Almighty. But absence or lack of proper guidance strays the seeker and pushes him into dark grooves of myth, dogma and superstition.

Perfect Master

The first step for spiritual ascendancy is that the person interested in knowing the Truth and realising God with sincere desire and genuine determination should follow the righteous path that convinces his or her logic that answers positively to his or her conscience. That perfect resolve will inevitably lead the seeker to find true teacher and guide the Perfect Master, which for him is the second step after self-purification.

It is in this context that we may judge the Nirankari Baba and the relevance of the Sant Nirankari Mission headed by him. His unique message is aimed to build a global spiritual awakening, to turn the aim of Universal Brotherhood into a resplendent reality.

The Nirankari Baba has not and will not initiate a new faith or religion as the term is used and understood. He underscores indisputably that like God, humanity and its religion, the way to realise God and lead a worthy life to win salvation, is one and the same, only given different names in different languages. The teachings of all the Holy Scriptures and prophets of all ages who appeared in different regions of the world are one and same. Only rituals, dogmas and superstitions are different and conflicting, which tend to hide the truth and turn the attention of naïve people from the basic tenets of religion that unite the human beings. The Nirankari Mission has proved the eternal and all-pervading nature of the true religion. This is key to global unity, the salvation of mankind.

Accessible to All

The Nirankari Mission does not say leave the faith to which you belong. It is against every kind of conversion. It says to every seeker of spiritual enlightenment to open wide the windows of his mind and follow the basic tenets and teachings of all prophets which are one and same. Divine knowledge is accessible to all, regardless of ethnical origin, caste, community and creed of the seeker. God-formless, All-pervading, Omnipresent and Omnipotent not only can be realised by every seeker but also constant communion can be established with Him. He can be seen with spiritually awakened eyes and His presence felt everywhere, within and without.

The Mission has proved beyond any doubt that God can be realised by any one with the blessed guidance of the True Master. He needs neither any rituals, nor penance, nor renunciation of normal domestic life. What is needed is leading a purposeful productive and worthy life dedicated to the Divine Will.

Once one realises God through self-realisation, which is first step towards spiritual enlightenment, the enlightened one becomes a saint with the grace of Satguru (True Master). He will lead a pious, clean, morally sound and dedicated life. The spiritual discipline will make him or her to love all fellow beings in whom

lives the same soul as in him or her. If all people or at least a big majority of them round the globe cultivate such spiritual and social culture, there will prevail peace, harmony, concord and feelings of human brotherhood all over the earth. That is the essence of global spiritual enlightenment, which only a Master with global message and approach can usher in. And this is the third essential stage in the spiritual redemption of mankind.

Communion with God

The fourth and final stage is God Almighty Himself. He has no visible self. He is eternal, was never born, will never die. One, who perfectly realises Him with the blessed kindness of Satguru, remains in constant communion with Him. The purified and enlightened soul who has conquered all the human failings becomes a true saint, the beacon of divine light for other seekers, an example of perfection for them. With the Satguru's blessings he spreads the light and fights against darkness by his spiritual force. He realises the true purpose of the mortal life and attains Mukti or Salvation to be merged into God (Paramatma), the source of Atma.

Since Nirankari Baba insists on developing conviction and the need for enlightenment for each seeker at individual level, so the Mission is growing and spreading steadily. From few thousand votaries in the time of Baba Buta Singh Ji the Nirankari votaries now numbering tens of millions are spread all over the world. It has become truly a global movement with hundreds of branches appearing on the maps of Indian States and many other countries. The Mission encompasses followers of all the faiths belonging to all communities, castes and ethnic groups. The Nirankari International Brotherhood transcends all these distinction and dividing lines. The Mission today represents gradual building of the much dreamt new world order.

GOD KNOWLEDGE IS THE BED-ROCK OF UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

By: Naranjan Singh I.A.S.

The term "Universal Brotherhood" has become hackneyed and worn out as every man who matters has been proclaiming its urgency and efficacy. Undoubtedly it is the most needed now than in the past because of the serious ideological and political conflicts raging among nations equipped with monstrous power of annihilation. It is a tragedy that with the world having become a dangerous place to live in, we are not budging even an inch from our positions of prestige to effect some sort of reconciliation.

Just as it is evidently impossible to realise the prospect of a joint family without a uniting bond of love among its members, similarly a powerful nation cannot come into being without the spirit of mutual cohesion among its communities. On the same analogy, the cherished goal of Universal Brotherhood and peace would continue to be a mirage without the adoption of mutual tolerance and harmony by all the nations of the world.

Imagine a person who is concerned merely with the security of the particular branch of the tree he is sitting on, and is indifferent to the fate of the tree as a whole! And if that person starts cutting the very branch he sits on, one can understand the outcome. Let us pause and ponder whether this analogy does not apply to all of us. As a matter of fact, we are all crazy after solving national and international problems without comprehending and eradicating the rank selfishness raging in our own minds. Consequently, all our endeavours boil down to futile platitudes and pious resolutions.

The nations of the world are after all composed of individuals and it is the interrelation and liaison of the individuals that goes to constitute a society. Thus it is patent that the unit of our society, nation or human community at large is ultimately the individual. And who is that individual? Surely You and I. Hence, no power on earth can possibly make slogans of "Universal brotherhood" and "World Peace" a practical proposition unless relations between You and Me, or man to man become human in the sense of the term. In fine, it is eventually the strained relations between individuals that project and manifest themselves into global tensions and resulting violence.

A pertinent question arises: Who is to blame for vitiating the relations between You and Me? No book or person could offer any cogent and convincing answer. Through a continuous and close study of our day-to-day ideas and emotions, we could come to understand that the fulcrum of world problems lies in our own mind and heart. Far-reaching results could be achieved only by tackling the nearest target and that is our own self.

The sources of human actions are doubtless embedded in the minds of men. If the latter are properly controlled, we can mould our actions on constructive and co-operative channels. Hence the correct approach for resolving all human tangles must be primarily mental. Let us now think out ways and means of

changing the grooved minds and making them instruments for "Universal Brotherhood."

World Peace

World Peace is not possible without World Brotherhood. What is peace? Real peace signifies cessation of all kinds of hostilities. In a positive way also, peace postulates sense of voluntary submission, and mutual service. It is a qualitative abnegation of self to the selves of others. If I think 'I am this or that' and assert that what I think is the only righteousness, then mentally I shall be irreconciled to the views of others. The stronger my belief in my own philosophy of life, the harder is for me to reconcile with that of others. This brings in its wake hatred towards the different viewpoints in proportion to the positive content that I have built in my individuality.

If we take the religious side of a man, we can easily notice this irreconciling factor. The followers of the past prophets, under the banners of different pronounced religions, claim to belong to the same one God but practically do not see eye to eye with those professing different faiths. There is a vast cleavage between them and it is impossible to think of any harmony in such circumstances.

We make categorical assertion here that only a saint or spiritual master can unite mankind in the real sense and none else. All organized societies in the past where peace and brotherhood prevailed were the handiwork of a great master.

Reality and the Soul

How the Master does it? He resorts to the revelation of Ultimate Reality. Ultimate Reality is formless. It possesses no worldly quality such as of caste, of colour, of creed, of goodness or badness. It is indivisible and whole, partaking of no dual character. It is akin to zero and precedes as well as transcends the material phenomena. This Ultimate Reality also known as Formless Spirit is manifested by the Master to all. As this Formless Spirit is akin to the consciousness in us, the latter at once become identified with it. The individual consciousness becomes one with the Formless Spirit. There is a qualitative and quantitative extension of the individual consciousness. It becomes possessed of the traits, which characterise its Cosmic Formless source. It is just like a glass of water becoming ocean itself when thrown into it. Now individual consciousness becomes enlightened of its cosmic self and thereby its tiny outlook takes on a Universal aspect. It transcends all matter and shall get unsullied by the qualities that characterise the latter. It rises above the sense of duality and becomes established in the all-pervasive unity of the entire cosmos. The soul understands empirically at the bidding of the Master that it belongs to the whole Cosmos. This sense of belonging generates a consequential behaviour, which does not like to participate in the activities, which give the sense of smallness or "less than whole." It transcends all ideologies, religious faiths and limited worldly systems, which encourage rift and division in mankind. It does not belong to anything, but all things belong to it.

Great spiritual masters had this capability, who whole living in this world were detached from it. They did not believe in anything from dogmatic viewpoint. If they were passionately attached to the Formless Spirit, they also knew it. They

were not blindfolded. This was the highest righteousness. Christ says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all other things shall be added unto you." But the world is only after "other things." This pursuit after things other than God encourages feverish activity full of madness and acrimonious hatred for all. The one religion of God has been forgotten.

Material Pursuits

People have left the pursuit of the Formless and are after worshipping the religion of the flesh and matter. This does not mean that we should shun our normal functions. It only means that material pursuits should not become an over-riding obsession. They should be confined to physical plane and the search for spiritual consummation should go on unceasingly. The goal that "Be ye perfect even as your father which is in heaven is perfect" is to be attained. Perfection does not mean we should become disembodied spirits but that our mind should be one with Formless God which is Spirit and Truth and be guided by its quality of negated capability. This encourages the sense of nothingness. Such a person does not subscribe to the dualities of life or its forms. He does things without inner involvement and will not clash with his fellow beings on any matter of form, colour, creed or lineament. He is at peace with others as he is at peace with his own self. Inner peace and cessation of inward passions germinates an overall peace with the outer Cosmos. Why should he clash with others when he is not blindly attached to anything and has nothing to wrangle over uncertain, relative or changing patterns? The highest good is the submission to 'the Father in heaven.'

Let us take another example. If a man believes in one thing positively and passionately, it influences his behaviour – pattern and anybody not believing likewise shall be in conflict with him. The source of our conflict is that people suffering from blind ignorance make fetish of their systems or beliefs. This attachment to certain positive qualities brings them in conflict with those having different positive qualities (By positive qualities or positivism is meant the adherence to some thought or philosophy as opposed to the belief in nothingness). So positivism collides with positivism; both suffer, and the ignorant masses get tormented for nothing.

So, in such a situation, peace is impossible. If positivism clashes with negativism, the former perishes. It results in peace as negativism encourages love of the Formless way of life which transcends all sorts of casteism, parochialism or sectarianism. There cannot be peace so long as some people cling to different philosophies of life believing in some and rejecting others. Either there should be one single philosophy permeating the universe or none at all. Plethora of philosophies leads to plethora of troubles. Having one philosophy or none at all boils down to the same thing. A zero is qualitatively 'nothing' and its entity is 'one.' Peace and Universal Brotherhood are possible only when there is one philosophy for all.

There is a need for spiritual regeneration of mankind and recovery of faith in the highest Formless God. It will develop a mind, which shall rise above worldly barriers and be established in the oneness of God. Interpreting everything in terms of unity, oneness and cosmic whole. A mind which has seen the Formless

Light is not expected to live a life torn by considerations of form. In this mental make-up there is no room for artificial division agitation the world.

Knowledge of God

In another way, peace and harmony and the concomitants of the knowledge of God. Let us take the example of a family; in it two brothers automatically develop a sense of family and brotherhood. For, they have the knowledge of having descended from same father and one common family. This knowledge of Fatherhood germinates natural brotherhood. It is lasting and inborn and not imposed or artificial, as they know their father. One cannot just take two grown up persons ignorant of their fathers with different background to make them feel and behave as brothers. In fact brotherhood cannot be imposed; it has to grow from within and develop on the bedrock of the knowledge of a common Father. Then only will it be lasting and true.

Fatherhood precedes brotherhood and is causative of it. The latter cannot come out of vacuum. It has to grow out of the former. Have a father, known him and then spontaneously there shall dawn the consciousness of brotherhood. The world has lost its Father. It must listen to the man who helps it to search for Him. This is a spiritual process. A Spiritual Master teaches that one God is our Father and whosoever understands it and believes it becomes a member of the universal family. Such a follower takes on the discipline and behaviour pattern of the universality of the family where the accidental difference of this world shall not exist; where; peace and harmony shall be the order of the day.

All Spiritual Masters gave the knowledge of God to all and thereby enlisted discipline from people of multitudinous types to make a cosmic mosaic work of variegated individuals characterized by the qualities of mutual submission, mutual-service, self-abnegation and exalting everybody above one's self. Does not Christ say. "Whosoever humbles himself shall be exalted?" Submission leading to exaltation is the hallmark of such a family. Without these qualities one is unfit for such a family. Notwithstanding his pretensions to greatness and wisdom, such a one is the instrument of satanic forces and disturbs the peace of the world.

Concord of Souls

As discussed earlier, one spiritual philosophy on a cosmic scale is needed to ensure obedience and submission of all, which shall bind all in the discipline and love of family. It can be effective in another way. Universality and oneness of philosophy shall produce a concord of soul. In worldly life, likeness attracts likeness and persons with kindred nature become easily adjusted and friendly to each other. It is difficult to have peace between fire and water. If people have divergent ideas and objects of worship it is difficult to have mutual kinship. The source of sectarian conflicts is that people have different mind patterns; and the moment people with different patterns on the inner plane come together there is clash and violence.

Nations are composed of men and a nation is contributive to peace to the extent its citizens are so. If ordinary people have no consensus or meeting ground it shall colour the character of the nation and consequently the ethos of the age as a whole. So the brooding process is to start in the minds of men. Their souls

need to be washed, moulded and adapted to a fundamental and universal standard, which shall cancel the areas of conflict. This is the concord without which peace is impossible. When every body thinks that his thoughts are supreme, there cannot be clam understanding of others. Doubtless people shall have to submit their thoughts to one Cosmic thought of the Spiritual Masters and be blended into the desired pattern.

In the present era Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has undertaken the effort or reconstructing the society. Baba Ji is revealing the vision of one God and thereby transmuting the very nature of humans, installing into them, universal love for all and making them transcend all artificial barriers that plague the society. He has already created such a Formless Society. A huge segment of humanity has been cleansed or religious, linguistic and other parochial cankers. In this society pure brotherhood prevails and all the flames that are ablaze in the outside society have been extinguished once for all. This society is the corner stone for a future universal society where all sorts of strife shall totally cease, where racial animosity and social prejudices shall wither away. We invite the people to come and see for themselves this glorious experiment.

GOD REMEMBRANCE AND TRUE MASTER

-By: Lt. Col. (Retd) C.S. Toor

One can remember anything, which the eyes have seen and the mind retained in the brain. For example, nobody can conjure up the face of a child in his imagination unless the child is born. But once the child has been seen, one can recollect its face even when the child is away.

Seeing is believing. One can remember God only if seen or realised by the mind and properly retained in the brain. We profess God to be all-pervading and as such His omnipresence can be felt only once we have perceived Him all around:

ADIST DISSAI TAAN KAHIA JAYE, BIN DEKHE KEHNA BIRTHA JAYE
(Adi Granth, P-222)

That is, one can say something to God if He is in front of him, and without being face to face with Him, remembering Him or saying anything to Him is a futile effort.

In the Bible too emphasis has been laid on God-knowledge as the first step towards worship:-

"Ye worship ye know not what; We know what we worship".
(St. John 4:22)

By hearsay people believe that God is limitless. But one can say with authority only once His vastness has actually been perceived as such.

SUN WADDA AAKHE SAB KOYE, KEWAD WADDA DEETHA HOYE.
(Adi Granth, P-348)

Now the question arises, how to know God. To gain knowledge, one has to approach the teacher (Guru). To study a particular subject or to learn a particular art, we engage an instructor who is proficient in that sphere. One cannot get sweets from a cloth merchant. Like Hindi teacher teaches Hindi, English teacher English a driving instructor driving and so on and so forth. Likewise, the teacher who reveals truth (Sat), spiritual knowledge, is known as Satguru, the True Master.

SAT PURAKH JIN JANIA, SATGUR TIS KA NAU.
(Adi Granth, P-286)

All admit that God cannot be realised without the blessings of the True Master (Satguru). As Lord Krishna says:-

"Ask him who knows me, bow to him in respect,
He will unveil to you my real face".
(Bhagwad Gita)

IS KE RASOOL PE IMAN LAO, HAQ SE MIL JAO GE.
(Quran-e-Pak)

That is, have faith in the prophet of God and he will unite you with Truth.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; know, and it shall be opened unto you."

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

(St. Mathew 7:7 and 8)

Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji has also made it very clear in 'Avtar Bani' that the holy scriptures, Vedas and Quran have ordained one thing that you should bow your head in reverence at the feet of the True Master and you will realize God in no time:

IKO GALL KAHİ VED QUARANAN,
GUR CHARANAN TE SEES JHUKA;
IK CHHIN ANDAR RAB NOON PA

(Avtar Bani - 161)

From the above description it is quite evident that one can worship God or do Simran only after the Divine knowledge has been imparted by the True Master:

JAB DEKHA TAB GAWA

(Adi Granth P-656; Kabir)

It has been made amply clear by Saint Kabir that one can say anything in praise of God, only after having seen Him.

Remembrance of the Almighty Nirankar is not mere repetition of the Divine Name but feeling the presence of God all around, always and all the time. This has been made possible to the Nirankaris by the supreme blessings of the Nirankari Baba, currently His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, after they were initiated with the God-knowledge. The Simran here is:

IK TU HI NIRANKAR,
MAIN TERI SHARAN HOON,
MUJHE BAKHSH LO

Or

"One Thou Formless,
I Take Refuge In Thee,
I Pray, Forgive Me."

The word 'one' has a special significance in the Simran. It means that God is the only one in the universe who is formless. Even the scriptures vouch for His omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. He is limitless and does not

undergo any change. Rest of the nine constituents of the matter are subject to change and have limitations.

The first line of the Simran is an invocation to the Omnipresent that has been perceived by the devotee. The second line is a reminder of the pledge of self-surrender made at the time of God realisation. The third line is to entreat the Formless for forgiveness. This whole conversation is between the seeker and the sought, that is why it is in 'first person' and 'second person'.

The scriptures advocate that every breath should be devoted to God Remembrance,. But human brain can only think of one thing at a time. It is not imperative that one had to utter the Simran always. Like one does not devote any special time to remember one's own name. Once the name has been given to him by the parents, it becomes a part and parcel of one's life and he does not ever forget it. With the same analogy, the Simran should get so embedded into the recesses of one's heart that one should feel God's presence all around.

Congregation

This state of mind one can achieve only by attending the congregation of saints regularly. There is no short cut to it. A human mind is influenced by the company he keeps. If one indulges in the company of thieves, he will also become one of them. Similarly, if one keeps the company of saints, he would be thinking nothing else but of the Almighty Nirankar. And eventually it becomes his second nature.

Let us understand this by an example. A basket ball player, America's No.1, visited the Punjab University a few years back when he was on a world tour to pick up new techniques to improve his game. He had demonstrated to the players by throwing the basketball from different positions and every time he scored the basket. He was asked as to how he could achieve such proficiency. He said that he practiced so much that he had been throwing five thousand balls daily into the ring. Now he has achieved complete co-ordination between his eyes, hands and the brain.

Similarly, if one attends congregation daily, does Simran before sleeping in the night and on waking up in the morning, it would become one's second nature to feel the presence of Nirankar. Once a saint achieves this state, his mind gets transformed into soul. This transformation is brought about only through a holy communion between the individual soul and the Universal Soul. Thus, the seeker's soul is kindled with the light of divine knowledge and he perceives and feels the immediate presence of the all-pervading Formless God everywhere and at all moments of his life.

Help in Life

Now the question may arise in one's mind as to how does the Simran help in life. A small child can't speak, then how are its demands for survival met? It submits itself completely to the mother and she looks after the child in all respects. Her innerself knows when to feed him, what to feed, how to feed, when to give him bath, when to make him sleep and so on. The child does not have to worry about anything and all its requirements are met with automatically. Similarly when a saint surrenders himself in total to the will of the True Master, he is the happiest person devoid of all worries and leads a contented and blissful life. All his needs

and desires are automatically met with. He does not have to think of ever demanding anything.

This aspect has been made abundantly clear in the scriptures. They testify that God remembrance produces happiness, which is lasting. In fact divine name, they say, is the only source of tranquility in the present day world burning with hatred and violence:

KAL TAATI THAANDA HAR NAO, SIMAR SIMAR SADA SUKH PAO
(Adi Granth, P-288)

Show Off?

At the time of birth, a person neither bring anything after death; he has to shed all his material belongings. The only thing he can carry with him is his deposits in the spiritual account which he earns through Sewa, Simran and Satsang. He is thus cautioned:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal;
But lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

(St. Mathew 6:19 & 20)

A true disciple does not show off when he worships the Master; he does so silently and from the core of his heart with utter humility. This is the bench mark of a true saint. This has also been laid stress on, in the Holy Bible:

"And when thou pray, thou shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men-verity I say unto you, they have their reward."

"But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seethe in secret shall reward thee openly."

(St. Mathew-6:5 and 6)

Like above, innumerable examples can be quoted from the scriptures. One aspect is quite clear that those who worship God without knowing Him cannot enjoy that bliss here or hereafter. On one occasion His Holiness Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj said:

"God-realisation is possible only with the blessings of the Satguru, but faith in God is instilled in the company of God-realised fellow-devotees. The more we keep their company the more firm our faith becomes. The mind becomes calm. It derives strength because it perceives the omnipotent and omnipresent. By attending the Satsang one realises that God is the Great-Giver of all the gifts physical, mental, material and spiritual."

(Gurudev Hardev, P-23)

I earnestly pray to my Lord Master that every word and every action in my life should be in consonance with his teachings.

LOVE

-By: R. Govinda Rao

To give up everything for God, for the sake of righteousness is Love.

To see the whole humanity pervaded by god and taken care of by God is Love.

To surrender the ego of very self on the feet of True Master is Love.

To carry out the commands of the True Master is Love.

To criticise none for his failings is Love.

To help somebody in need is Love.

To rise above the dualities of attachment and hatred is love.

GOD-THE FATHER

- By Sapna Majumdar

King Hiranyakashyap had a son, named Prahlad, who like others also worshipped his father. One day, child Prahlad went out and happened to visit the locality where a potter's family resided. He was just watching the burning kiln in which earthen pots had been kept to be baked. Smoke was emitting from the kiln.

Prahlad was astonished to find the potter's wife remembering 'God' for something. He asked the lady why she was not remembering his Father, the king. The lady replied that the problem she faced was such that only 'God' could help and no other power on the earth.

All of a sudden Prahlad saw three kitten jumping alive out of the burning kiln. The lady exclaimed that her prayer had been heard by God. She told Prahlad that the kitten had been placed in the kiln by mistake and she was praying to God for their safety.

Prahlad was so much impressed that he requested the lady to reveal 'God' to him also. This was done instantly. He stood completely transformed and his faith shifted from his father, King Hiranyakashyap, to the Supreme Father, God.

MEET THE DIVINE INTERPRETER

- By: C.L.Gulati

It was in mid-sixties that I had been serving in the Punjab Civil Secretariat and chanced to receive an invitation to a Cultural Programme arranged in honour of a visiting Soviet Parliamentary Delegation in the State Guest House adjoining Sukhna Lake in Chandigarh. This invitation was the first of its kind in my life and I was very eagerly waiting for the moment to enjoy myself of the company of Russian friends.

The Cultural Programme was scheduled to start at 8:00 P.M. It was 7:45 P.M. and I was just hastening to leave for the Guest House. But to my utter surprise, I received an unexpected guest before I could leave my place. Really, he was to me like a fly in the ointment. I wanted to slip away but as he said, "Are you C.L. Gulati?" I thought he must have come for an express purpose. Psychologically, my response was not inviting, but to keep up appearance, I wished him good evening and inquired him of his purpose.

He said, "My name is Chahvan and I have come to you to elicit some important," Lo, he put me in a state of ambivalence. Two irreconcilable thoughts started haunting my mind: whether to attend to Mr. Chahvan or to attend the Cultural Programme. Willy nilly, I desired him to express his matter. Strangely enough, he took out the "Sant Nirankari", March, 1965 dog-eared its pages 11-16 and said, "Gulati Ji, your article on 'Poor Mortals', though contains valuable ideas, yet its very purpose is defeated until there be cogent and convincing information about the Divine Master" (Satguru). Then I could not put him off; rather I told him of my engagement, "Dear Chahvan, I am programmed to see Russian friends and attend a Cultural Programme in the Guest House at 8:00 P.M. It is already 7:50 P.M. How nice, if you also accompany me and thereafter we shall have a detailed talk on the subject. Two persons are invited on this card. Please do accompany me."

Mr. Chahvan became friendly and readily acceded to my request. We reached the Guest House exuberant with the ensuing fun and fair.

The first item presented in the cultural show was a Hindustani song. It centered round the Ganges and the Volga rivers, thereby dovetailing the common culture of the two countries. We enjoyed ourselves of the song very much but it was all Greek to the Russians and naturally, they could not share our happiness. Next item was presented by Russians and we were only mute spectators. After every item, the Interpreter, however, explained the contents to the audience. He knew the languages of both the countries. The programme went on till 9:30 P.M. leaving an indelible impression on us. We then enjoyed very sumptuous dinner and took our way home.

Mr. Chahvan suo-moto started expressing his opinion, "Gulati Ji, but for the Interpreter, we would not have been in a position to understand anything about the Sovietland and their songs. Likewise, they the would not have known about our cultural songs." I agreed. He continued, "Whatever the nationality of the Interpreter, it will have to be agreed that an apt Interpreter is a valuable link between the two countries. In fine, an Interpreter is a prerequisite for obtaining

any information from either country. He can interpret the discussion on the spot and no labour is involved on the part of the meeting persons".

Divine Master

I armed myself with Chahvan's views about the Interpreter and stole a chance to change the strategy of our talk, "Dear Chahvan as the Interpreter is an essential link between the two countries, so is the Divine Master who forms a real relationship between the human and God. As we could not understand the Russians sitting around us without the help of an Interpreter, similarly, we cannot perceive the Omnipresent God without the help of Divine Master, the True Interpreter. He can unveil the secret of Truth in no time, and is an essential link between the human being and God. On finding the Master, no labour is required on the part of an individual to realize God. If we, therefore, ignore the need of Divine Master we are doomed."

By then we had reached our home and sat in the drawing room. The discussion continued. Both of us were, however, not in a mood to disperse or go to sleep. Giving a turn to the discussion, I tried to draw Mr. Chahvan's attention towards another aspect of the role of the Divine Interpreter. Carrying the example of the cultural programme further, I just asked: "Mr. Chahvan, by the way, don't you think that the Divine Interpreter must be present in physical form, in person, in order to work as link between the human being and God? For interpreting the feelings expressed in the songs, the Interpreter had to be there personally, physically."

Holy Scriptures

Mr. Chahvan seemed to agree with me in principle. He however, feared that humanity had to wait for the Divine Master to appear in the world and declare his manifestation. In the mean time, he felt, mankind had to depend on holy scriptures as treasures of God-knowledge inherited from the Spiritual Masters.

To this I had three angles to react. One, why should any person taking birth or any soul entering human body during any period of time be deprived of being linked with Super-Soul, God? Is it not the objective of each and every individual to become God-conscious and thus make this life meaningful and purposeful? Is it not proclaimed by the Spiritual Masters of the past themselves that once this opportunity during human life is missed, the soul is bound to suffer the agony of being born millions of times as different creatures and continue to be separated from the Super-Soul till again it happens to be created as a human being? Secondly, suppose we had been given a valuable Russian book, could we make out anything during the cultural programme by just keeping it before us and without seeking any help from the Interpreter? Can you rule out the need of a teacher for the student simply because he or she has been provided the best available books on the subject? And lastly, when Interpreter is a must, one must be available somewhere all the time.

Confining himself to the realm of spirituality, Mr. Chahvan offered the answer apparently based on what he had studied. He said, "During the period when the Divine Master is not physically present, one could just do good deeds, avoid evils, and thus secure the soul's merger with God, ultimately."

I laughed at the very simplicity of his argument and asked, "Mr. Chahvan, who will tell you, what is good and what is bad? Who will interpret for your convenience as to what is noble and what is evil? Our purpose, a short while ago, was to understand Russian. We did not even mind as to whosoever the Interpreter was, whether he was Russian or an Indian. But the person must rise, come to the mike and address the audience in person. Let us also not forget that such an interpreter would be needed every time a Russian delegation visits India and the vice-versa, in future. Certainly it need not be the same Interpreter, but someone must be there in person to help the audience of the time understand both the sides, both the cultures."

Satguru of the Day

Mr. Chahvan, as if suddenly reminded of something, asked inquisitively "Gulati Ji, in your article 'Poor Mortals,' you mentioned in a passing reference that Nirankari Baba is Satguru of the day. How do you hold it out?"

I brought out: "Chahvan, there would be no denying the fact that the present world, bankrupt of spiritual values, has become weary and dull; staggering and limping its fatigued way, burying itself reluctantly and slowly into an abyss of gloom and darkness. As per scriptural warrant, only and active Divine Master can convert this inferno of the fire of frustrations and dejection into cozy abode by establishing real relationship of one human being with the other. The Nirankari Baba aims at creating an understanding of spirituality through a living revelation of God, thus paving the way to universal peace, unity and fraternity all over the world. His Mission stresses the concept of one God for all and easily unfolds the idea of one religion of humanity that suits and emotionally binds the whole human race. The Sant Nirankari Mission has succeeded in achieving this end through revelation of God, the same for all religions known to the world, and ignoring the non essential rituals which are different for different faiths.

"Whatsoever approaches Nirankari Baba or anyone of his anointed saints is instantaneously gifted with an abiding perception of the Omnipresent God. He glorifies the spiritual masters of the past by revealing their real greatness and decoding their teachings into layman's actual experience. It is for this reason that the followers of the Nirankari Mission do not feel converted to any new religion, but find themselves reverted to their respective faith with added firmness. The distinguishing feature of Nirankari Mission is that it first introduces the seeker to God and then leaves it to him or her to lead a godly life. The Nirankari Baba has no rituals to impose, no penance to subject his disciples to and no new religion to found."

Chahvan interrupted, "Do you really mean that Nirankari Mission does not set forth a new religion?"

"Yes," I explained to Chahvan, "it may be remembered that if religion lays open before us only outward superstitions and rituals, it is not a complement but a negation. Such a religion emanates when spirituality goes dormant. Snags in the way of Spiritual Masters are put mostly by such of their followers as interpret religion as dogmatic formalism. Spirituality deals with spirit, the inner soul. The Divine Master establishes real relationship of the soul with the Super-Soul, God. No differentiation is made on the basis of religion, caste, community, sex or

colour. The Nirankari Baba's message is for the human being in you and not for a member of any particular religion, community, race or nationality."

Sharing my own experience, I clarified. "The Sant Nirankari Mission is neither a new religion nor a sect, but an apolitical, all embracing spiritual movement dedicated to human welfare. It endorses and accomplishes the established age old truth that realisation of Fatherhood and God through the living Divine Master (Satguru) is the goal of human life and its spontaneous by product is the cherished achievement of Universal Brotherhood which is prerequisite for inherent peace of mind and overall progress of the mankind as a whole."

Visibly feeling convinced about the role of the Nirankari Mission, Chahvan made another searching probe: "Gulati Ji, every man is not well-versed in scriptures. How could you elucidate and bring out the relevance of the Mission to a common rational person?"

The Five Plus One

Dealing this delicate question in a scientific manner, I explained to Chahvan, "The Nirankari Mission believes that a human being comprises of five elements i.e. the earth, water, fire, air, ether (sound) plus the soul. The first five material constituents form the body, while the sixth represents the individual unit of consciousness. The human body fulfils its material needs from the counter-part mainstreams of earth, water, fire, air, sound working outside it. Whenever there is a deficiency of any of these five elements in the body, some sort of disease or disorder takes place. However, the deficiency of one element cannot be made good by any other. For example, the necessity of water cannot be met with by earth, fire, air or sound. Similarly, the lack of air cannot be replenished with water, fire etc. Exactly on the same pattern, no material elements can substitute the sixth i.e. the soul or the individual consciousness. To repeat, as the deficiency of water cannot be made good with an intake of any other material element, the lack of practical knowledge of cosmic consciousness also cannot be made good with any amount of material gains whatsoever. Even the most affluent who materially lack nothing in life find themselves face to face with situations when they feel that they have lost every thing. This is the moment, when one seeks of that power which he has been negating hither to blinded by the materialistic galore.

"This mainstream of consciousness is a non-psychic-objective-reality, the experience of which is not only essentially but also instantaneously sharable. The living experience of this objective reality, imparted by the Nirankari Baba is quite indispensable for the fulfilment of human life."

Invisible Yet Concrete

To his question, "Why is it called the Nirankari Mission?" I told Mr. Chahvan, "The mainstream of consciousness has been termed as Nirankar (Formless God), though invisible yet all concrete, a cosmic force unifying the whole universe. The one who experiences it is known a Nirankari. The sole aim of the Mission is to impart the knowledge of Nirankar to the seeker's soul, hence its name-, the Nirankari Mission."

Mr. Chahvan then asked, "Is the Nirankari mission exclusively devoted to imparting knowledge of Nirankar only?" and hastened to add, "Does the Mission play any social role also?" Re-iterating the earlier points in a nut-shell, I told him-" From North Pole to South Pole the world seems to be like a vast seething cauldron. Bringing human beings emotionally and intimately close to each other through God-realisation is a king-pin contribution to the society on the part of the Mission. The Divine Knowledge as such, is the key to all vexing problems of the society. Otherwise also, the Mission is not paying mere lip service to the ideal of Universal Brotherhood, but it is practically devoted to this noble cause by bringing together people from different cultures, beliefs, castes, colours, creeds, races, without any discrimination. Rainbow is the best natural example of explaining the type of unity guaranteed by the Mission. All the seven colours of the rainbow are distinctly visible but are so mixed up with each other that one cannot be separated from the other. The objective result of the universal human family so founded is to be always one in pain and pleasure. With the gregarious instinct inside and social needs around, the Mission has practically reached the needy brethren possibly at all places and at all times."

Like a patent seeker, Mr. Chahvan did not resist asking another question, "Guru is a must. What is the practical test of the Satguru?" In reply, I told him emphatically, "When any member of our family falls sick our purpose is to have him treated properly. Our duty does not end in the mere formality of taking him to any doctor. We continue consulting doctors, one after the other, till the patient is fully recovered and becomes normal. Human malady lies in the broken relationship of human soul with God. To achieve panacea for all ills, our endeavour should, therefore, be to keep our search on till we come in contact with the Satguru who imparts us the knowledge of God, the real purpose of life."

"As the sun-light is in itself the practical proof of Sun-rise; likewise the practical instantaneous imparting of Divine Knowledge (Revelation of God) is the singular acid test of the Divine Master. The True Master is the communicator of Divine Truth. He himself leads a normal family life and does not require others to renounce the world in search of God. He inspires his devotees to lead a life of complete identification with God and show deepest regards and respect for all the past prophets and scriptures." Bringing home the point, I told him, "Taste of the pudding lies in eating it. So, you may please meet the Nirankari Baba and pray for instantaneous revelation of God. Afterwards, you will not be left with any question. Rather, you will be equipped with the Truth to satiate any query from any other seeker."

It was past mid-night and pitch dark outside. Chahvan bade me good-bye with a silver lining in his head and heart to meet at the earliest the Nirankari Baba, the Divine Interpreter of the day, whose teachings have become the house-hold word and whose Word (Brahm-Gyan) is spreading like the sound of a bell rung in the canopy of sky resounding the words: "No God, No Peace; Know God, know Peace."

NIRANKARI MISSION IN UK AND EUROPE

-By: Barrister Harbans Singh (UK)

The Second World War had left Britain starving for manpower that it required to reconstruct its economy. To satisfy its growing hunger for unskilled, skilled, blue and white-collar labour force, migrant workers in hundreds of thousands came to the United Kingdom from the Indian sub-continent and West Indies, within the two post-war decades. And, in the early sixties, among the many thousands of Indian immigrants were a number of Nirankaris who had come to make their contribution to the British economy.

These Nirankaris kept in touch with the Nirankari Mandal in Delhi through letters and 'Sant Nirankari' magazine. It did not take them long to seek each other out in this new land, and to organise themselves into a *Sangat* comprising of handful of enlightened souls. By 1964, they were holding weekly congregations in rotation at Slough, Leicester and Birmingham, despite the fact that this involved many hours and miles of travel each week to majority of the congregates. Their undoubting determination and will power prevailed all adversities.

This small but strong and very young congregation nourished an intense desire to see His Holiness in the UK. And their prayers were finally answered in 1967 when they were awarded with the first ever visit of His Holiness Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji Maharaj.

His Holiness, with his entourage, travelled in a volkswagen overland from Iran through Europe to the UK. This was an historical visit, which transformed the congregation of a handful souls into that of many hundreds of Nirankaris. Suddenly Branches mushroomed all over the UK where regular congregations were established and the Samagams became an annual feature.

The spiritual four of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji Maharaja had been a tremendous success. Nineteen sixty-seven had witnessed the genesis of the Nirankari Mission in the United Kingdom.

The year 1968 too turned out to be a memorable year. It was marked with Shehenshah Baba Avtar Singh Ji's nearly three month long historic visit. We all had a wonderful time. Seekers thronged in hundreds to listen to Shehenshahji's postulations.

Shahenshahji tirelessly travelled up and down the country preaching the gospel of truth and explaining the message of Holy Scriptures, guiding the disciples and seekers alike. During those summer months, where ever Shahenshahji went, seekers were blessed with divine knowledge, Gyan, in large numbers. Shehenshahji used to tell us *angrezzan kol brahmgyanian wale sare gun han, sirf gyan di lor hai*. (These English people have all the qualities of the enlightened souls, all they need is God-knowledge).

Following year was Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's second visit. By now the Mission had become well established with the help of the youthful and resourceful team of Missionaries under the aegis of senior, but young founder Nirankaris. (The

average age of the Mission's members in the UK in those days was probably less than 25 years).

Sewa Dal

Rapid growth of the Mission necessitated the constituting of the UK Sewa Dal and also the founding of the national Executive Committee to manage the Mission's affairs under the supreme stewardship of His Holiness. The constitution for the Nirankari Mission in the UK was formally adopted, and the Mission was registered as a Charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales in the name of Sant Nirankari Mandal UK also known as Universal Brotherhood or Nirankari Mission.

Bhawans

The seventies obliged the UK Mandal to focus its attention on the needs of the continuously expanding local congregations and to the provision of meeting places, Bhawans. First such Bhawan was acquired in Smethwick near Birmingham, which is the Mission's UK head office. The Smethwick Bhawan was followed by acquisition of further two Bhawans in Leicester and Wednesbury.

Today, there are seven Bhawans wholly owned by the Mission, the other four being situated in Bradford, Bedford, Oxford and London. The London Bhawan is hardly a stone's throw distance from the world's busiest airport and is located in an open space area on two-and-half acres of prime land. Plans are also in the pipeline to expand the London Bhawan to meet growing traffic, and the local needs. The plans are under consideration to build a massive Bhawan-cum-community centre for the West Midlands region.

The Mission has maintained excellent links with the other people and has over the years sponsored, contributed and / or executed the economic, business and social regeneration schemes. In line with its motto to serve mankind, the Mission sponsored and supported charitable causes, and will continue to do so with zeal and dedication.

British Asians

In the UK, we now have second and third generation of British born Indians/Pakistanis, who rather call themselves "British Asians". These generations find themselves living in two cultures: the culture of the parents at home, and the culture of the West outside. This situation has given rise to unwelcome conflicts and dilemmas: mental torment and suffering. Many a youth have been rendered rootless and face a serious dilemma.

The Indian youths in the UK are searching for their roots and the ancestral past, so that, they too can have a sense of belonging to the past of which they can be proud of.

However, our British born Nirankari youths, I am happy to record, are able to enjoy full immunity from these multi-cultural dilemmas and conflicts that inflict their contemporaries. Their upbringing in this Mission and their grounding in the Mission's philosophy of equality and respect for other cultures, has served well to give them ability, strength and skill to negotiate such problems and spread tolerance, love, respect and understanding, instead. Our Nirankari youths are in

a position to show their colleagues way out of these dilemmas and to direct them to leading a purposeful life of service to the society and mankind.

Moreover, British Nirankari youths are mindful of the Mission's expectations, and are preparing themselves for their role for the millennium. Our youths are being encouraged to learn Indian as well as the modern language, and are being equipped to understand and appreciate other cultures, the importance of having diversity and the relevance of the concept of unity in the Divine Being Nirankar. They know that they are expected to form bridges between different cultures and countries: between India and Britain and between Britain and other nations.

Young Nirankaris are fully aware that this land has been specially blessed by His Holiness Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, who once said "this land will become land of the enlightened souls." To make those words come true (these words are going to come true anyway), they seek to organise and equip themselves with Baba Ji's blessings to perform the task that lies ahead.

Expansion in Europe

The UK also has been the base for the expansion of the Mission to other European countries. As a result, we have Nirankari Mission centres in Germany, France, Holland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Spain. The Missionaries from the UK have regularly supported these centres, and the UK Mandal is set to promote the expansion of these European centres.

One may also mention that search of better jobs has taken many a prominent saints who were also members of the UK congregations, to the USA and Canada. They are, of course, playing leading roles in the Mission in those countries.

The UK Mandal acknowledges it has a mammoth MISSION to fulfil, which it will doubtlessly do with the "Divine Blessings" and guidance of Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj. Four of the founder Nirankaris, who brought the message of the Nirankari Mission to this country in the sixties, are already serving the UK Mandal as President, Vice-President, General Secretary and as an Executive Member.

NIRANKARI MISSION IN SERVICE OF SOCIETY

-By: Brig.(Retd.) Shamsher Singh

Spiritual awakening by itself is a great service to society, rather humanity. Those slumbering in darkness of ignorance and living in a world of dreams are sought to be shaken and awakened, shown the light and linked with the Ultimate Reality i.e. God. Otherwise, who knows how long the ignorance may prevail?

According to the Mission, if there is no peace in the world, if, mankind is afflicted by hatred and violence, it is because the man is failing to see the image of God in fellow beings. Once the distance between man and God is removed the distance between man and man will also disappear. Every heart will be filled with love and goodwill and there will be peace and prosperity all around.

As essentially a spiritual movement, the Mission's principal commitment to its followers is, therefore, to make their minds conscious of the eternal Reality and unite their soul with the Creator, the Formless God. Congregations and big Samagams are organized for this purpose. The long and hectic spiritual tours undertaken by the Nirankari Baba and a large number of Missionaries (Parcharaks), have also the same objective. They constitute a part of the Mission's endeavour to remove the ignorance by making spiritual enlightenment within the reach of every man and woman-young and old, rich and poor, high and low, whatever the language, faith and culture, whatever the State or the nation.

Link with Society

The Mission, however, believes that God can be realized while fulfilling one's responsibilities towards self, the family, the society, and the humanity as such. One need not become a recluse in search of Truth. On the other hand, one must work hard, save as much as it is possible and spend the same in the service of the needy. In a way, the Mission would like every Nirankari to set an example of day-to-day life based on spiritual awakening. Universal Brotherhood must not be a hollow slogan but a practical way of life, which implies that one should always be prepared to sacrifice comforts for the others. Devotion to God, it says, must find expression in man's behaviour towards fellow-beings.

Guided by this spirit the Mission would, therefore, like to participate in the social welfare effort including health care and education, to the extent it can afford to divert its resources from its primary activities as a spiritual movement. Interestingly even this token participation is receiving mass support from the followers of the Mission all over who see no difference between devotion to God and service to others.

Sewa Dal

No doubt the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal (voluntary corps) is primarily committed to make arrangements for spiritual assemblies and ensure an appropriate environment for the devotees to sit together and sing the praise of God. Yet when it comes to social welfare activities of the Mission, they present an excellent example of service to mankind. They symbolise the Mission's commitment to the spirit of unity, equality and fraternity with an added virtue of self-discipline. Coming from the different layers of society, they work shoulder to

shoulder, least conscious of their social, economic or official status. The men in their Khaki (brown) and women in their blue and white are seen vying with one another to snatch an opportunity to be of help to others. They may be officers, doctors, engineers, businessmen or ordinary workers; they would not mind working in the kitchen, sweeping the floors and even clearing the toilets.

Natural Calmities

The Sewa Dal remains ever ready to help the people in pain and misery, and they reach wherever they are needed. During 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak conflicts when the police personnel and the Home Guards volunteers were deployed for paramilitary jobs, the Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal effectively helped the traffic management in various cities, including Delhi. In 1977 when many areas of Delhi were hit with the floods, these selfless volunteers not only saved the flood-hit people and removed them to safe places but also ran a dispensary to give free medicines to the sick, round the clock. They also made arrangements for a free kitchen. In 1994, and 1996, the Sewa Dal did a yeoman's service to the flood victims in Punjab and Haryana. It also lent a helping hand in mitigating the miseries of earthquake victims in Latur in Maharashtra. In November 1996, the Sewa Dal did a fine job to rescue and rehabilitate the cyclone sufferers in Andhra Pradesh, which was highly appreciated by the State Government.

Varied amounts of money were donated by the Mission to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the rehabilitation of the victims of natural calamities. Such contribution were made following an earthquake in Uttar Kashi, floods in Punjab and Haryana and cyclone in Andhara Pradesh. A sum of Rs.500, 000 was given to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in Maharashtra following bomb blasts in Bombay in 1993, even though the calamity was man's own creation. The violence smacked communal hatred but the Mission sympathized with the victims declaring that the attack was against humanity and the blood thus shed was that of human beings. Essentially the Mission's gesture was in the spirit of Universal Brotherhood.

Blood Donation

The Sant Nirankari Mission today is one of the leading blood donation voluntary organizations in India. Scores of blood donation camps are organized in the month of April every year to commemorate the martyrdom of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji who fell to the bullets of some fanatics on April 24,1980, as also the other martyrs. The day is observed as Human Unity Day (Manav Ekta Diwas) by the Mission all over the world. These camps are held in close co-ordination with the Indian Red Cross Society and in perfect hygienic conditions.

The Mission has organized about 200 Blood Donation Camps in India during the past one decade. It is estimated that nearly 1,50,000 units of blood have so far been donated by the volunteers of the Nirankari Sewa Dal and other devotees. Quite often, His Holiness, his esteemed spouse and other members of the gracious family also donate blood during these camps. The miracle is that the number of blood donors always exceeds the capacity of the blood collecting teams. From 1997, the Blood Donation Camps have, therefore, been staggered over the entire summer i.e. from April to August. This will make blood available when the Blood Banks generally face the shortage.

Health Care

The Mission is running a full-fledged Health Care Centre with modern facilities at the Headquarters in Delhi. Moreover, land has already been acquired adjacent to the Nirankari Santokh Sarovar Complex to set up a General Hospital. In Madras, the Mission has a mini Hospital. In addition, the Mission has about 75 charitable dispensaries attached to Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans in different parts of the country, where medicines and treatment are provided free to thousands of patients every month. In addition, the Mission is now organizing health check-up camps also.

Free Eye Camps

Free Eye Camps for cataract operation are also organized by the Mission from time to time. Two such camps, one at Faridabad in Haryana and the other at Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh are still remembered for their success. The patients were not only provided free treatment but glasses also, on behalf of the Mission. There are instances where Nirankari devotees have donated their eyes so that even after death they serve humanity.

Education

The Mission is running Nirankari Baba Gurbachan Singh Memorial Degree College at Sohna, Distt. Gurgaon (Haryana) where students have university positions to their credit. The Mission has also a number of Senior Secondary Schools and Public Schools in and outside Delhi where apart from curricular instruction, moral education is imparted so as to prepare the youngsters to come up as ideal citizens with high moral character.

The Education Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal is running a scholarship scheme under which the merited students of the educational institutions run by the Mandal are given scholarships. The Nirankari children achieving distinctions in other schools and colleges run/recognised by the Government are also covered under this scheme. This scheme benefits the proficient and the needy students in academic, technical and professional fields. The Nirankari students showing excellence in foreign languages, all-India and state level competitions and sports are also attracted under the umbrella of the scheme.

Welfare of Women

The Social Welfare Department of the Sant Nirankari Mandal has a scheme for the welfare of women. It has set up 17 Tailoring and Embroidery Centres for women, including five in Delhi. The training is imparted to the needy women so that they can earn their livelihood and stand on their own feet.

Compassionate Aid

The Mission is providing adhoc relief or financial assistance in individual cases to the aged, infirm, handicapped, widows, poor, and the needy persons, who have no support and cannot make both ends meet. They also include many families who lost their bread earners in terrorist-violence in Punjab.

The Mission is also in the process of setting up a 'Home for the Aged' in Delhi. The scheme may be extended to other areas provided the State governments concerned make suitable land available.

Social Reforms

From spiritual point of view, the Mission is convinced that whatever one eats, drinks or wears is related to body and has nothing to do with the soul. One may, therefore, eat, drink or wear what one likes or what is dictated by Nature through varied climatic conditions. But when it comes to practice, the Mission advises its followers to refrain from taking any kind of intoxicants, because it considers the same as the root cause of all kinds of social evils.

Similarly, the Mission believes that man should be a man first and anything else later. It means that one should rise above all considerations of religious faith, caste or creed in the matter of social relations. Accordingly, the Mission advises its followers to observe austerity in marriage ceremonies and other social functions. It counsels them to avoid show of dowry etc. The Mission, of course, exhorts its members to spare whatever they can and utilize the same for the common good of humanity.

Thus we find that the Sant Nirankari Mission has not only been awakening the people from ignorance and revealing the Truth to every thirsty soul, but also working for improvement in the day-to-day life of its followers. It is expanding its social base to ameliorate the conditions of the people, with more and more social welfare schemes. Transformation, of course, gets reflected in the attitude of the Mission's followers towards others, which is certainly based on love, cooperation and understanding.

ON GOLDEN JUBILEE OF SPIRITUAL BLISS

By: Kirpa Sagar, Indian Information Service (Retd)

Let it sound amazing, paradoxical or even contradictory, but here is an example of eternal bliss springing from what could turn out to be one of the most painful worldly tragedies. An incident that could make people sit for days in mourning and express grief, curse and bemoan, lay concrete foundations of a magnificent edifice to be used for rejoicing year after year.

The then Head of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji, who had succeeded the Mission's founder Baba Avtar Singh Ji only five years back, lost his son Sajjan Singh in August, 1948. Young Sajjan Singh who was yet to be out of his teens, had already endeared himself to the devotees of the Mission for his spiritual leaning, polite behaviour and zeal to serve the Mission. So, as soon as they came to know about his sudden death, many Missionaries (Parcharaks) and other devotees reached Delhi to express their grief. His Holiness, however, reminded them that all that we possess-body, mind and the wealth, are the bounties of the Formless God, Nirankar, and in case something is taken away, we must submit to the divine will. We should not feel elated when fortune smiles and sulk if it frowns. Baba Ji called upon 'the mourners' to sing the praise of God and express their gratitude for what continued to be at their disposal as trustees of the divine gifts.

Those were the days when the wounds inflicted by the Partition of India and the migration of population that took place in its wake had not yet healed up fully. Right thinking people were still to reconcile themselves to the fact as to why the followers of one religious faith could not stay together with those subscribing to another, The Mission, with human unity, religious tolerance and social harmony as its bedrock, found direct relevance to the situation. The Nirankari Missionaries were helping people to overcome the trauma, in their own humble way. Baba Avtar Singh Ji invited them to share their experience and consider how the Mission could do better and reach out to more and more people.

Consequently, the assembly turned into a fine get together of the devotees with the True Master, a congregating to discuss the message of the Mission and a forum to seek Satguru's blessings to spread it further with faster pace. They rose one after the other to address the congregation, expressed their views on the Mission's philosophy, their experience of sharing it with others and the hazards they came across. The discussion turned out to be so exciting, so blissful that every participant felt that they must assemble in Delhi every year and have similar brainstorming sessions under the most benevolent guidance of the Master. This would give them an opportunity to review their activities of the previous year and seek the blessings of the Nirankari Baba on their plans for the coming 12 months.

Ever since, all Missionaries authorized to reveal the truth on behalf of His Holiness and those assigned with various duties under the aegis of the Sant Nirankari Mandal, the organizational outfit of the Mission which was registered in September, 1948, as also an ever increasing number of devotees have assembled at the Headquarters of the Mission sometime in October or November

every year. The spiritual get-together has been described as Annual Nirankari Sant Samagam and organized regularly, without any gap or lapse, not withstanding the law and order situation which was always not the same, and the Mission's own share of ups and downs.

The Samagams are in no way confined to the preachers and other Missionaries assigned with organizational and managerial responsibilities because other devotees and seekers of Truth would like to enjoy the bliss and be benefited by the views expressed by them and fellow devotees on the philosophy about God and its relevance to human behaviour in prevailing living conditions, and of course, seek the blessings of the True Master.

To-day, colourful processions, Sewa Dal rallies, Publication stalls, impressive exhibitions, poetic symposia, school children's programmes, Qawalis and media publicity etc. have become an integral part of these Samagams, whereas canteens, public call offices and inquiry counters etc. lend them a colour of festivities. Mass marriages from this year may further add to this colour.

The in-house brainstorming session of the Missionaries is, of course, an important part of the Annual Samagam and is described as the General Body Meeting of the Sant Nirankari Mandal. It is presided over by His Holiness, currently Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj. The Secretary concerned presents a report on the previous year's activities by way of a review. Baba Ji blesses the participants by setting the agenda for future. Important appointments and changes, if any, are also announced in the General body Meeting. But the open sessions described as Satsang remain the main highlight of the Samagam. No doubt a review takes place here too, but with a change. The context here is the role of the Mission as such vis-a vis the situation prevailing in the world and the problems faced by mankind. It is a discussion on the Nirankari approach to spiritual aspect of human life and its significance to the present day world.

The 50th Annual Samagam of the Mission, the Golden Jubilee Nirankari Sant Samagam is being held from November 6 to 10, 1997. On this historic and most auspicious occasion, it would be appropriate only to perambulate the past fifty years of the Mission and know the landmarks of its contribution to the world not only by way of regenerating the faith in God and moral human values but through other activities also. One may come across many examples that would show the way to the world to make the human sojourn on earth a real boon, a real bliss.

World as Unit

The first thing that strikes about this Mission of practical life based on spiritual enlightenment is that the entire world is one single unit for it. That God is Formless, omnipresent, all-pervading, eternal, and infinite is acknowledged by one and all, but here God is revealed. And while revealing God, the Nirankari Baba makes no discrimination on account of one's religious faith, caste creed or colour, language, region or nationality. The Truth, the message, the revelation of God is for one and all, whether it is communicated in a group discussion, a small congregation or a thickly attended Samagam.

The emphasis in the context of India has always been on religious tolerance and elimination of discord, hatred and violence taking place in the name of great

spiritual masters whose teachings and Holy Scriptures did never seek to propagate such negative feelings. The Mission has endeavoured to remove the very roots that lay in ignorance and superstitions and their exploitation by the vested interests. It has proved that all religious practices have no meaning unless the worshipper knows the God being worshipped. Therefore, the Mission always proved to be the most convenient forum for equal respect and honour to one and all, including those bitten by the poison of caste and communalism.

As soon as the Mission crossed the Indian frontiers in 1967 the world welcomed it because it found relevance to the needs of overseas societies also. Only recently, Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj was heard pointing out on the soil of Germany that both the erection and dismantling of the Berlin Wall was the result of human thinking, first, motivated by hatred and then influenced by love. We must, therefore, keep the minds cool and in tranquility by making God dwell in the same, by making fundamental unity and fraternity of mankind a part of human thought and action, he said. The stress on universal brother-hood came, of course, automatically. Similarly, both Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and Baba Hardev Singh Ji have been telling the Americans and Canadians in their own countries that mere material progress or amassing of wealth is not going to produce the real, lasting joy, which will flow only from treating all worldly assets as ultimately belonging to their Supreme Giver, God and utilizing the same for common good, as trustees. All the development in science, technology and other fields, Baba Ji said, is welcome so long as it does not threaten the world of its destruction in part or complete. At the same time, the Mission has been telling the world that no weapon, even if produced, can by itself harm life and property, until and unless there is some human mind behind it – inflicted by hatred, jealousy and pride. We must, therefore, fight the wars within and defeat all tendencies of violence by linking human mind with God-the Supreme Source of love, peace and tolerance. The Mission, thus, has been endeavouring for world peace based on human co-existences with the spirit of unity and fraternity derived from one-ness of Fatherhood. And peace, as we all know, is essential for prosperity.

Peace Preserved

The voice of Truth raised by the Mission did have its share of opposition. The orthodox forces did resist. But this is how the Mission treated them. In Delhi, some critics of the Mission started shouting slogans against Baba Avtar Singh Ji outside a place where he was addressing a congregation. They had certainly come prepared for a clash. But Baba Ji did not allow any of his followers to get provoked. On the other hand, after some time he sent some devotees with water to be served to the demonstrators in that hot weather. The gesture proved its instant efficacy and several demonstrators begged forgiveness and decided to join the Mission.

As the Mission spread by leaps and bounds under the spiritual guidance of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, certain fanatic elements in Punjab started opposing it, and they used violence. They disturbed congregations and violent attacks were reported from several places in Punjab and elsewhere. Baba Ji's offer to talk to them was ignored. Following an attack on a Nirankari Samagam in Amritsar on April 13, 1978, when the police had to open fire, several lives were lost. More than 60 innocent Nirankaris had to undergo the agony of judicial custody for about two years. Even during those days, Baba Ji was telling his followers not to

point out the shortcomings of others and advising them to maintain their cool and keep on marching on the path of truth notwithstanding the provocation. The truth triumphed and all the accused Nirankaris were acquitted and released honourably. But the vicious elements continued to oppose the voice of truth and Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji himself and his distinguished devotee Pratap Singh fell to their bullets on April 24, 1980.

Perhaps still greater a price for peace was paid by His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, who succeeded Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji as Head of the Mission. He described Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's martyrdom as the will of God and declared that there would be no feeling of vengeance at all. He called upon the followers of the Mission to spread the voice to truth while praying for goodwill of all. He said: "Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's martyrdom is the will of God. Perceptions differ from people to people. The ignorant say it may lead to bloodshed, but the devotees believe that being supreme sacrifice, it shall usher in peace and harmony. Imbibing such lofty ideals, we should continue to spread the Mission with greater zeal."

The message to the world was, of course, unique. It could never expect such an attitude from a youth of 26 whose great loving father had been assassinated brutally and who had all the resources at his disposal to wage a war of vengeance, whose one hint could cause riots and disturb peace for the entire country. No doubt the followers of the Mission continued to suffer both in terms of life and property here and there, the Mission's message of love, peace and tolerance had continued to spread far and wide. No provocation has been able to deter Baba Ji and his followers including the families who lost their bread earners, from this noble mission.

Further, Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj declared on the very first martyrdom anniversary of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji in 1981, that the day would be described as Manav Ekta Diwas and dedicated to the cause of Human Unity for which Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji had endeavoured as Head of the Mission. He went another step forward, when he declared in 1987, that the day would also be marked by organizing a number of blood donation camps every year at different centres in the country. He pointed out that 'blood should flow in veins and not in drains'. The number of such camps organized in 1997 was 53. The Mission has already emerged as one of the leading blood donating voluntary organizations in India. Some camps have been organized in other countries also.

Attitude Towards Death

We have already come to know about Baba Avtar Singh Ji's attitude towards the death of his young son, Sajjan Singh. When Baba Ji himself fell sick towards the end of his sojourn in this world, he used to say, "I am alright, only my body has some problem." This showed his detachment from body and attachment to the eternal abode of the soul i.e. God. And when he breathed his last, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji decided to perform a simple funeral at the electric crematorium in Delhi saying, "Dead body is just a dead body whether it belonged to an ordinary person, an intellectual or even a holy man". He set aside all worldly considerations that would have found Baba Avtar Singh Ji's body deserving a grand funeral with sandalwood and costly perfumes, for which there

was no dearth of resources. No wonder, the same treatment was given to the body of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji on his martyrdom.

The message of the world is clear. One must give priority to the soul and not to the body. The soul must realize its own dwelling place (Nij Ghar), the Formless God, during the human life itself and thus cease to worry about the cycle of birth and death. And this can be achieved by bowing one's head at the holy feet of the True Master and seeking his blessings.

Status of women

The Mission makes no discrimination on the basis of sex. A human being is just a human being. Similarly, a devotee is just a devotee. Women are not only encouraged to seek God-knowledge but participate and preside over congregations also. Many women devotees have been authorized by His Holiness to reveal God-knowledge on his behalf. They command equal reverence with the other Missionaries. Besides their participation in regular, general congregations, they have their own congregations also, suited to their convenience.

Ever since Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji became the Head of the Mission 1962, his esteemed spouse Nirankari Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji had been participating in the missionary activities shoulder to shoulder with Baba Ji. The divine couple undertook long and hectic tours in India and abroad. Even today, Rajmata Ji continues to be a source of spiritual inspiration and motherly affection to the devotees.

Pujya Mata Swinder Ji has received similar reverence from the devotees even since His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj became the Head of the Mission. The divine couple adorns the dais, where gracious Rajmata Ji is also seated. Pujya Mata Sawinder Ji too is a great source of inspiration for the devotees. She accompanies Baba Ji during spiritual tours both inside the country and overseas.

Indian youth Abroad

The Mission has been helping the Indian residents' abroad to solve a ticklish problem faced by almost every family. There was a time when their children appeared to have lost interest not only in Indian culture and tradition but Indian languages also. They were so deeply rooted in the culture of the land of their birth that they had virtually declared themselves opposed to the values their elders had preserved so meticulously. It was Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji who took notice of this cultural crisis. He encouraged the youth to attend congregations. He, however, gave them the freedom to express their views in any language. Baba Ji also called upon the elders not to condemn the youngsters altogether. He advised them to listen to the views of the youth and react objectively, giving full consideration to the latter's aspirations in the given environment. Gradually, this worked and the Mission's congregations started experiencing a fine harmony between the two generations and their cultural outlooks.

His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has also paid considerable attention to this problem. Thanks to his frequent visit abroad and the inspiration provided to youth, one finds today more and more youth boys and girls making speeches,

presenting songs and reciting poems on the Mission's ideology, in congregations where the attendance is growing thicker and thicker every day. Puja Mata Sawinder Ji also remains a great source of inspiration for the younger generation. She has her own pleasant way to attract them towards the Mission and persuade them to take part in the various activities, rising above all worldly considerations normally baffling our youth. No wonder, the young boys and girls are seen today making all kinds of arrangements for the congregations. Wearing the Nirankari Sewa Dal uniform, they are practically vying with one another to snatch an opportunity to work for the Mission. They are fully convinced of the bliss that lies in using material wealth with spiritual consciousness.

Dedication to people

Although all the Heads of the Mission had a lot to their personal credit, yet they all saw to it that the Mission was not identified with their names. One of the steps taken was that the various Samagams were dedicated to the people instead of the Masters themselves. No wonder the Mission remembers Baba Avtar Singh Ji and Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji on August 15 along with many other who also devoted their lives for the spiritual awakening of fellow-beings, particularly from the forum of the Sant Nirankari Mission. The day is described as 'Mukti Diwas', the Spiritual Liberation Day. The martyrdom of Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and hundreds of those who laid down their lives for the sake of human unity, equality and Fraternity is recalled on April 24, and the day is observed as Manav Ekta Diwas or Human Unity Day. Bhakti Parv in January recalls the devotion and the services of all those devotees and Missionaries who spread its voice of Truth till their last breath.

No dates are fixed for the Annual Nirankari Sant Samagams just to safeguard them from becoming a ritual. The dates are fixed keeping in view the convenience of the participants. Moreover, with the kind blessings of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, more and more Annual Samagams are now being held at the state or regional level. This enables people to receive the Mission's message in their own language and feel blessed without getting detached from their social and cultural environment. In a way the Mission is enriching their culture by adding its own colour to the same.

Down to earth

The Mission's principal commitment is to make people God-conscious. It seeks to remove their ignorance, detach them from superstition and link them with the Eternal Reality. All its effort, however, is not confined to the spiritual aspect of their life. Being a down to earth practical human experience, the Mission does not seek to detach itself from human fraternity. It has rather endeavoured to present an example of a way of life based on material progress with a fine blending with spiritual awakening. The Mission is convinced that one cannot visualize one's own prosperity without the progress of the society as a whole.

During the Silver Jubilee Nirankari Sant Samagam in 1972, the devotees decided to mark the historic occasion by weighing the then Head of the Mission Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and his holy spouse Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji, against currency notes. Baba Ji acceded to the wishes of the devotees but declared that the money would be spent exclusively on the welfare of the people. Ever since, the spirit has not only been maintained but strengthened day by day. To-day, the

Mission has hospitals, dispensaries, a college, schools, tailoring and embroidery training centres for women, and so on. Varied amounts of money have been donated by the Mission towards the rehabilitation of those affected by natural calamities.

As a well-wisher of the society, the Mission advises its followers to observe maximum austerity in marriage ceremonies and other social functions. It counsels them to avoid unnecessary show of dowry etc. Inter-caste marriages are also encouraged. In fact, Nirankaris do not go by the caste or community in their social relations. What they value is the spiritual enlightenment and devotion to God. The approach found all the needed stress first in the Mussoorie Conference of the Mission's functionaries convened by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji in 1973 and then reiteration at the two similar conferences held in Delhi under the benign guidance of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj, one in 1987 and the other in 1997. The Mission is providing another dimension by organizing Mass Marriages during the Golden Jubilee Samagam.

As for the use of intoxicants, the Mission considers it as a root cause of many social evils and advises the devotees to refrain from it. However, Nirankaris do not hate the addicts as such. The Mission's approach is not to hate any one on account of what one eats, drinks or wears. This was also re-emphasized during the conferences mentioned above.

Santokh Sarovar is another example of the Mission's token participation in common good. The entire complex has been set up by voluntary labour. No doubt the devotees take a dip or use the reservoir's neat water with a sense of faith, it is proving a valuable anti-pollution gift to Delhi ecology.

Thus on this most auspicious and historic occasion of the Golden Jubilee Nirankari Sant Samagam, we can say with full sense of satisfaction that the Mission has not only helped the seekers of Truth to know the Ultimate Reality i.e. God, but also shown the way to peace and tranquility so essential for human prosperity. It has also expressed itself in most convincing and conclusive manner on several issues and aspects of human behaviour that keep on agitating the minds of people not only in the Indian but societies overseas also. It has certainly made the life of its followers blissful and also shown the way the world may take to find the joy that is real and lasting.

ORGANIZATIONAL OUTFIT OF SANT NIRANKARI MISSION

- By: Gobind Singh, General Secretary, Sant Nirankari Mandal, Delhi.

In order to manage and superior the holding of congregations and meet the requirements of the increasing number of saints all over the country, the then Spiritual Head of the Mission, Baba Avtar Singh Ji gave it an organizational outfit, Sant Nirankari Mandal. The Mandal was got registered under the Societies Registration Act, with its Headquarters at Delhi in September 1948. Its aims and objects include to preach and propagate the concept of One Formless God (Nirankar) and promote peace, non-violence and Universal Brotherhood among the people all over the world by holding congregations and otherwise. It is also stated that Sant Nirankari Mission is a religious order, which believes that God can be realised only with the grace of living Satguru. Further, it shall not associate itself with any political party.

Initially, the Nirankari Baba nominated a seven-member Executive Body of the Mandal. Their principal qualification was devotion to God and the True Master as also their spirit of self-sacrifice for fellow devotees. Baba Ji exhorted them to set an example for others through their personal life. Ever since, the members of the Executive Committee have exalted themselves in the eyes of the devotees for their sense of devotion, love and respect as also their guidance and help.

In a way, time has proved the efficacy of the Mandal. The Executive Body has embodies in itself selfless service, devotion and dedication. The faith reposed in its members by the Master and the Mission has been upheld. The Members have stood the test of time and circumstances. Nominations and replacements by the Satguru have thus proved flawless.

The Mandal found changes in its set up from time to time as and when considered necessary. The organisation indeed went on expanding with the growth of the Mission and its activities. To-day, it bears the complexion of any sound democratic institution, although its basic commitment remains unchanged i.e. spiritual awakening among the masses. The Mission has about 1,200 Branches in India. Organizationally, each Branch is headed by a Mukhi or Pramukh. In addition, there are Missionaries (Pramukhs) who address congregations in close co-ordination with the Head of the Branch concerned. Generally, all these functionaries are authorised by His Holiness to reveal God-knowledge to the seekers, on his behalf.

For administrative efficiency, the Branches have been distributed among 36 Zones. The Zonal In-charges co-ordinates the activities among Branches and also serves as a link between the Branches and also serves as a link between the Branches and the Headquarters. A Zonal In-charges is nominated by the Executive Committee with approval of the Satguru.

As per Memorandum of Association and Rules and Regulations of the Sant Nirankari Mandal, it has the following organs:

General Body: It comprises all the Parcharaks, Mukhis, Parkukhs, Zonal In-charges, Sewa Dal office-bearers and such other members of the Mission as

may be nominated by the Satguru. It meets at least once a year under the benign Chairmanship of the Satguru. The General Body reviews the progress of the Mission and lays down policy guidelines for its promotion further.

Working Committee: It consists of 51 Member or more, to be elected by the General Body for two years. It meets at least once a year and decides all policy matters, including the Annual Budget.

Executive Committee: The Executive Committee may have at least 11 Members. They are nominated by the Satguru from amongst the Members of the Working Committee for two years. The Committee must meet at least once in two months. At present there are 19 Members of the Executive Committee, each Member looking after the subject specifically allotted to him. This Committee has nine office-bearers i.e. President, Two Vice-Presidents, one General Secretary, four Secretaries and one Treasure. All the Members of the Executive Committee are collectively responsible to implement the decisions taken by the Working Committee as also the General Body.

Advisory Committee: Almost every Department has an Advisory Committee attached to it. The Member-Incharge of the Department is its Chairman. The Members are such devotees as have the talent and experience of the subject concerned. Nominated by the Executive Committee with the blessings of His Holiness, the Member of the Advisory Committee have a tenure of two years.

All properties, movable and immovable, belonging to and acquired by the Mandal from time to time vest in the Sant Nirankari Mandal. All donations, offerings, gifts etc. in cash or kind, constitute the funds and assets of Mandal. These are utilized for activities and programmes designed to achieve the aims and objects of the Mandal. Proper and true accounts of the income and expenditure in respect of the Mandal and its Branches are maintained at Delhi Headquarters under the overall supervision of the Executive Committee. The accounts of the Mandal are audited by the Chartered Accountants annually.

Overseas

While Delhi (India) is the world headquarters of the Mission and, being the seat of the Satguru forms the Mother Church for this global Mission, the organisation in each country outside India enjoys considerable degree of organisational and managerial independence. All the Branches in one country look forward to their national headquarters of the Mission for policy guidelines, plans and programmes for reaching out the message of the Mission to more and more people. All funds received in the form of offerings and donations are retained and utilised for the Mission's activities in the country concerned. Similarly, they administer the properties of the Mission as per the rules and regulations of the local government. For this purpose there are independent Executive Boards of the Mandal to manage and propagate the Mission in their respective countries.

Organizationally, the Mission stands registered with the government in several countries, including USA, Canada, UK, Germany and Australia. The office-bearers are appointed as per the rules and regulations of the Mission in each country, with the approval of the Satguru.

In all, there are over 100 Branches of the Mission outside India. The Mission is already flourishing in countries like USA, Canada and UK. Several towns in these countries have Sant Nirankari Satsang Bhawans, where congregations are held regularly. Sewa Dal volunteers in uniform make all the arrangements. Considerable stress is laid on inter-country and inter-regional co-operation and co-ordination in the matter of missionary activities. Like in India, country-level and regional level congregations (Samagams) are becoming more and more popular abroad also. For example, USA and Canada hold special Samagams jointly on regional basis. The UK Sant Nirankari Mandal over-sees the missionary activities all over Europe.

Thus we find that as per the universal character of the Sant Nirankari Mission, the Mandal is keeping due pace in establishing and managing effectively the Branches set up at home and abroad. With such arrangement the Mandal has made earnest effort to make every devotee feel at home and remain in regular touch with the Mission and the Master. The administrative network between the Master and the devotee anywhere in the world, is result-oriented.

By itself the Mandal is a great source of inspiration to devotees and the seekers alike to come and seek the blessings of His Holiness Baba Ji and make their life really meaningful and purposeful.

REACHING THE MASSESS

-By J.S. Chugh, Secretary, Sant Nirankari Mandal

The Sant Nirankari Mission's approach to spiritual enlightenment is quite simple and straight. It is not loaded with any rites and rituals and it prescribes no or the least restrictions. Its philosophy has no intricacy that may call for a scholarly exposition, elaboration or discussion. The seeker of truth here feels fully satisfied by the hint that is provided by the True Master, the living Satguru. No wonder, ever since Baba Buta Singh Ji launched it in 1929, the Mission has spread in India and abroad by leaps and bounds. Millions have already taken advantage of its message which is so easy to understand and so convenient to follow in day-to-day life.

Ignorance and superstition are, however, so widespread in this vast world that this Mission's message of divine light and truth will have to be reached out to the masses with more vigour and speed. We must share the bliss flowing from the benevolence of the Satguru with as many people as possible within the shortest time. It becomes all the more essential when we find the world to be fast moving towards destruction due to the arms race in general and nuclear weapons in particular.

In fact, whosoever is blessed with the Mission's message of God-knowledge and a way of life based on it, feels so thrilled and excited that he or she would be anxious to distribute the joy with as many people as possible. Every member of the Mission desires that its message of human unity understanding, love and tolerance should reach every human being.

Person to Person

Initially, congregation based on person to-person approach was the only mode of taking the Mission's message to the masses. The Founder, Baba Buta Singh Ji and his close associate Baba Avtar Singh Ji would go round, meet the people and discuss the Truth they wanted to reveal to the world. Naturally, people had all kinds of queries and doubts, and the congregations would turn into group discussions. The approach, however, proved effective. While the message was simple, both Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji were perfect orators and would answer every question to the satisfaction of the person(s) concerned. Consequently, many with spiritual leaning who were reluctant rather critical in the beginning, joined the movement and dedicated themselves to take its voice of Truth forward.

This inter-personal approach continued to be found useful even when the Headquarters of the Mission got shifted from Peshawar to Delhi in the wake of the partition in 1947. People from all faiths and castes rallied round Baba Avtar Singh Ji, because they had just seen what damage the communal disharmony and bigotry could inflict upon humanity. And the Mission offered its forum where all of them were received as equally respected and dignified members.

Mass Media

As the Mission grew, efforts began to be made to take the help of the mass media also. By the late fifties, the Mission was able to seek publicity not only

through newspapers, though not many in number, but also over All India Radio and Films Division of the Govt. of India (Indian News Review). This subject was discussed during the Second Mussoorie Conference in May 1973 where it was felt that the mass media and other modes of publicity may also be utilised to create mass awareness about the message of the Mission. The then Head of the Mission, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji loved to meet the media persons and answer questions, so that they could understand the Mission's ideology and project it correctly.

The glimpses of our Samagam, particularly the processions, were included in the Indian News Review (INR) by the Films Division for many years beginning from 1962. The Samagams were also noticed by the global networks, including BBC and WTN, taking the message of the Mission to almost all parts of the world.

During Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's times, a number of documentaries were prepared and shown to the devotees at the time of Sangats. Although the number of such documentaries was not very large, yet they proved quite effective.

This media approach has been continued by His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj also. Today, the Department of Press & Publicity is in touch with the media persons on regular basis. Press Teams have been set up at important newspaper centres to keep the media informed about the Mission's activities from time to time. The Annual Samagams in Delhi and State level Samagams elsewhere are not the only occasions to invite newsmen or issue press releases. The spiritual tours of His Holiness and senior Missionaries are also utilised for media coverage. Baba Ji's discourses are now being splashed prominently by the newspapers of all levels of circulation.

The Mission is taking advantage of the News and other programmes over the electronic media also. Information about the Mission is available even on the Internet. Video-cassettes based on the discourses by His Holiness are run by several renowned TV Cable and satellite networks, with the result that they are viewed by devotees and others in almost all parts of the world. Baba Ji's visits abroad are noticed with keen interest by the media in those countries and regions. There are instances where certain TV networks have devoted full slot of the programme of the Mission. Besides, our social welfare programmes' particularly the Blood Donation Movement from 1987, have been receiving wide coverage through the newspapers and magazines. Another significant development is that while the publicity effort hitherto were mostly confined to Hindi knowing States, now the newspaper of all regions are giving prominent coverage to Baba Ji's discourses irrespective of the places he visits. He is receiving ovation for his message of universal brotherhood all over India. The same is the case overseas also.

Press Meet

For the first time in the history of the Mission, an All India Nirankari Press Meet was held at Mussoorie on June 23 and 24, 1997. Organised by the Press & Publicity Department of the Mandal, the Conference was attended by delegates and members of the Press Teams from Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Orissa and

Rajasthan. His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj blessed the delegates both in the opening and concluding sessions. His Holiness appreciated the efforts being made by the Press Teams both at the Headquarters and in the regions. It showed, he said, that those involved in the task of media coverage possess the requested talent, aptitude, potential and the spirit of devotion and dedication. Commenting on the delicate nature of their job, Baba Ji suggested that they must keep themselves fully informed so that they are able to satisfy the media. Moreover, instead of criticizing or contradicting others, they must explain their own view-point in positive terms.

Baba Ji said that all the three media-print, audio and video are important and we must continue to take their help. He hoped that more and more persons with media aptitude would come forward and join the Press Teams.

His Holiness concluded that there is no better mode of publicity than our own conduct and behaviour towards others. From this angle, every member of the Mission is a roving newspaper, he said. We must, therefore, see to it that there is no discrepancy between our word and the deed, he exhorted.

Nirankari Publications

Every effort has been made to keep the masses informed about the Mission's activities through its own magazines, books and other literature. Photographs, audio cassettes and now video cassettes also form an important part of the activities of the Mission's Publication Department.

Since the Mission is a spiritual movement, the principal commitment of Nirankari literature is to elucidate its spiritual aspect i.e. its ideology, philosophy and the principles. What is preached by the Nirankari Baba through his discourses and sought to be communicated by other missionaries and devotee Saints during congregations is made available in printed word also. This helps not only those who listen to Baba Ji or attend congregations, but also those who might have not been able to do so. The needs of elite or scholarly readers in different languages are also taken care of both by Nirankari periodicals and books. Moreover, the Mission is convinced that a truthful record of what is preached and practiced today will constitute the Mission's history for succeeding generations.

To-day our magazine 'Sant Nirankari' is published in 10 languages. The English, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, editions are published from Delhi while others are Marathi from Bombay; Singhi from Ahmedabad; Gujrati from Baroda; Telugu from Hyderabad; Bengali from Calcutta and Oriya from Cuttack.

Besides, we are publishing 'Ek Nagar', a news magazine, containing information on day-to-day activities of the Mission. It also contains the discourses of His Holiness and write-ups on on-controversial subjects of social interest. It is published from Delhi as a Fortnightly in Hindi and Punjabi, separately. 'Hansti Duniya' is another popular Nirankari magazine. It is published from Delhi as a monthly in English, Hindi, and Punjabi, 'Hansti Duniya' is primarily for children.

The Publication Department also brings out special Souvenirs on the occasion of Annual Samagams. Some of these Souvenirs have been devoted to specific theme such as Tolerance, Faith in God, Humility and so on.

So far as the Nirankari literature is concerned, the Mission has already entered the National Book Fairs. People have linked our publications not only for their contents, but also the prices, which they find more realistic rather subsidized than elsewhere.

Spiritual Tours

All these efforts, however, appear to be a mere shadow when compared to the real force behind the Mission's popularity i.e. the spiritual tours of the True Master. Initially, Baba Buta Singh Ji and Baba Avtar Singh Ji did not mind walking miles together to meet even a single devotee or the seeker of Truth. They knew that ignorant people caught into the web of ritualism would not be able to come out unless they were helped to do so. So they went from place to place, notwithstanding the poor means of transportation. Gradually people started listening to them and the number of devotees increased day by day.

Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji continued to visit as many places as possible round the year. The presence of his benign spouse, Nirankari Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji added further grace to these spiritual tours and encouraged women to come forward and share the bliss of spiritual enlightenment. Processions during their visit to various places become more and more popular as also colourful. On their part, the divine couple did not care for their comforts and blessed the devotees in far-flung places including those in hilly, rural and backward areas. The congregations that took off as virtual group discussions during the days of Baba Buta Singh Ji and became a regular forum for the praise of God during Baba Avtar Singh Ji's attained the form of mammoth public gatherings proving that the Mission had become a mass movement of spiritual awakening.

The first spiritual tour abroad was also undertaken by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji, in July 1967. Accompanied by Rajmata Ji and some Missionaries, Baba Ji visited UK and several other countries of Europe, by road. This was followed by the first World Spiritual Tour in 1971 covering Far East, USA, Canada, UK and some other countries. Thereafter, the divine couple toured various parts of the world almost every year till 1977.

His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj has also maintained the same tradition of spiritual tours within the country and abroad. Ever since he took over as Head of the Mission in 1980, Baba Ji and his esteemed spouse Pujya Mata Swinder Ji have been undertaking long and hectic tour of different places all over India and visiting some countries of the world, for better part of the year. Even when in Delhi, Baba Ji addresses congregations in the nearby areas almost daily. Certain colonies, towns, villages, State and countries not visited earlier are included particularly in every itinerary. To-day almost every congregation addressed by Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj gives a look of a big Samagam. It is also a big occasion to attract the media persons who take the voice of Truth further to masses through their newspapers and electronic networks.

In addition, spiritual tours are also undertaken by Mukhis, Parmukhs and Parcharaks in their own areas. A number of Missionaries visit different States of the country as planned by the Headquarters at Delhi. Some of them go abroad also.

Thus the Mission which started with handful of devotees has encompassed millions of people all over the world. It shows that the efforts being made to reach the masses through person-to-person based congregations, the use of mass-media and the Mission's own periodicals etc., and, above all through the spiritual tours of His Holiness and the Missionaries, have proved effective. With Baba Ji's blessings, masses are now quite aware of the Mission's message. But as stated in the beginning, the efforts have to be kept up rather accelerated, because the darkness of ignorance is still widespread in the world.

RELEVANCE OF SATGURU IN COMPUTER AGE

-By: R.K. Kapoor, Advocate

It is true that we are living in a computer Age. It is also true that it is we who have made the computer. It is equally true that we have invented or made the computer for our comforts and make life easy-going. It is also true that computer is nothing but an assembly of certain elements in an orderly fashion.

It is also true that computer give us back only what we feed to it. It cannot go beyond that. It is true that basic purpose of computer is computation and it can make complicated calculations in seconds only. It can store innumerable data and information. The computer has:

Increased our speed.

Increased our output.

Increased degree of accuracy.

By its speed and variety it has brought men, separated by distance, together. A man living in one corner of the world can communicate with another living in the farthest corner of the earth through computer software like internet, multi-media etc.

In short the computer has made our life faster, easier and comfortable and has brought the world together.

But what is that which has come closer. The physique or the mind? We may say both. But then has it brought together the hearts also?

Can we say that in the computer age, expenditure on armaments has decreased? Can we say that border disputes between the countries have come to an end? Can we say that racialism and caste-wars have come to an end? Can we say that an average man has become healthier. Has he got peace of mind by creating another mind in the form of a computer. The answer to all these questions would be, NO.

The Operator

Why is it so? It is because the operator behind the working of the computer is the same MAN. Till the stuff in the man changes and improves we cannot get a better world merely by inventing modern machines, one after the other, computers and super-computers. Computer is after all a sophisticated MAN-MADE-MACHINE, which works faster than Man. We have increased the quality of the machine, i.e. the computer, but have we correspondingly increased the quality man? This is where we are stuck up. Either we do not know how to increase the quality of man or we are not working in that direction. In either case we ourselves are to be blamed? But does it mean that there is no solution?

Let us think in that direction. Firstly, after all why do we want to improve/enhance the quality of man? And, then secondly, how to improve the quality of man?

First of all we shall have to answer the first question as to why do we want to improve the quality of Man.

Let us go back to our COMPUTER. Why are we doing our constant research work to improve the quality of computers?

So that our output is faster and better in quality; so that its communication, inter action and computation becomes easier and faster. Similarly we want to enhance/ improve the quality of man so that he thinks better, thinks positive, and has a peace of mind.

But then who can help us in achieving all this?

In the case of a computer who can help us in improving its quality?

A Lawyer ? No.

A Doctor? No.

Then who can do it? Obviously a COMPUTER-GUIDE who has the know-how of the computer. Nobody can give us better than what he himself has. A Lawyer can guide us in law, a doctor can guide us in medicine, and similarly a computer-guide only can guide us in computer. Therefore, by now it is clear that if we want to improve the quality of our computer, we shall have to go to the computer guide. As a computer guide can improve the quality of a computer, like wise a True-guide can improve the quality of man.

It has been said in the Holy Bible:-

Seek and Ye shall find;
Knock and it shall be opened to you;
Ask and it shall be given to you.

Therefore, we shall have to seek if we really want to know the Truth.

As in the case of learning a computer, there are two entities:

The Learner; and
The computer-guide,

Similarly in the case of realisation of Truth, two entities are required,

The Seeker; and
The True-guide.

This point would also become clear if we read the above passage of Bible carefully. From the reading of that passage again it would be clear that realisation of God will come only to those who are seekers, and, then further it is said that "ASK" and it shall be given to you. It means the seeker will have to ask. But to whom? The moment we say that seeker will have to ask, means, there are two entities involved in the process of realisation of God:

One entity is the seeker who asks about the Truth, and,
The other entity is the one from whom the Truth is sought i.e. the True-guide.

Therefore, for realisation of God, existence of two entities is a must.

If we go little further, the above quotation from Bible clarifies another thing and that is that the acid test of a True-guide is that he shall be able to devolve the realisation of Truth instantaneously. The expression, which has been used, is "ask and it shall be given to you." It means the True-guide must have that which he has to give to the seeker. And he can give to the seeker only if he himself already had it. If the guide tells to the seeker certain ways and means to reach the Truth, then he is not, and cannot be, a True-guide. According to Bible the True-guide shall be able to give 'it' to the seeker, then and there. Further, in the above quote the expression, which had been used, is "Ask and "it" shall be given to you" means something which is to be given has been identified as "it", and not "that". It means the Truth, which has to be revealed to the seeker is always there, and can be given instantaneously. Here the seeker can differentiate between a True-guide and an ordinary guide.

Input

Now this is regarding the True guide, but then the man of computer age asks a question:

"We need to know God only if it really exists, if it does not (exit), then what is the need to know it? And then there is no need to go to the True guide. Can somebody prove the existence of God scientifically? If not, then why should I believe it?"

The man of computer age very well knows that the simplest formula for the working of the computer is that something is fed to the computer called "input", and, then we get the "output". It "output" is thee, it means there was certain "input". For instance, if we feed to the computer 2+2, and then seek an answer, the computer would give the answer as 2+2=4. Here "2+2" is the "input" and "4" is the "output". Similarly if we feed in the computer "Force 'x' Distance", the computer would give the result as "Work". Now "work" (W) is the output for the input of "force" (F) and "Distance" (D).

The scientific formula which we have is $F \times D = W$

i. e.

Force X Distance = Work,

Or we can say

$W = F \times D$.

i.e.

Work = Force x Distance.

In other words if there is no input of "Force" (F) there would be no "Work" (W). This formula has been scientifically proved and tested for a long time and is a true principle. From the formula, it is clear that if the output is "Work", it means some "Force" was there as an "input". In other words, no work is possible without a force.

Now we see that every day Sun rises in the East, sets in the West. Moon comes, rotates and disappears, apparently decreases and increases in size at regular intervals. Nine planets revolve around the sun. Besides, there are innumerable stars and some stars are even bigger than the Sun of our planet. All these things are working regularly and in a disciplined manner. Now see the tremendous super-work, which is being done which, is beyond the comprehension of a man. This "super-work" is being done by the "super-force". It is this super-force which is present everywhere and has been given the expression "it" in the Holy Bible: "Ask and "it" shall be given to you."

It is this super-force i.e. "it" which has to be revealed by the True-guide to the seeker.

It is only after the realization of Truth from the True (Sat)- guide (Guru), that the seeker becomes a true-man and imbibes in himself the qualities of a real man. It is then that the quality of man improves. Now when such a man is put behind the working of the computer then we can imagine the positive thinking and the better man made out of him. Since the quality of "whole" depends upon its constituents, once man improves, the society would improve automatically. Then once this man who has realized truth understands the relationship with the other men in the society, there would be no hatred, no radicalism, no boundary disputes, no enemy, and, when is no enemy, there would be no need of armaments, and then money and energy can be spent on activities for the welfare of man. It is only then that we can live in peace.

Thus we have seen that even in the computer Age we can get a serene world through the blessings of the True guide i.e. SATGURU. This is how Satguru is relevant even in the computer Age. Computer Age without Satguru would lead to devastation and at a greater speed, but with Satguru it will lead to a serene world. Since in the computer Age speed and magnitude of devastation had increased manifold the relevance of Satguru has also increased manifold. The sooner we realize it the better it would be for the world.

SOILED HANDS THAT CLEANSE HEARTS

- By *Puran Prakash 'Saqi'*

Delhi 1965. A couple of European visitors came to meet Baba Gurbachan Singh. I went looking for him and found him working underneath a car, in the automobile workshop located inside the Sant Nirankari Mission headquarters compound. When I mentioned to Baba Ji that there were a couple of foreign visitors at the reception, Baba Ji directed me to bring them over to the workshop office. I was hoping that Baba Ji would ask me to bring them to the visitor lobby. Anyway, I went to the reception and came back to the workshop, along with the visitors. I thought that Baba Ji would be ready, but he was still working on the automobile. So, I introduced him to the visitors by saying, "Here is Baba Ji." Baba Ji greeted the visitors with a big smile and folded hands and said, "I am sorry, I can't shake hands with you. My hands are soiled." Then Baba Ji and the visitors started talking.

At the time, a devotee brought some pastries and offered them to Baba Ji, who smilingly looked at the pastries, then at his soiled hands, then at me. I don't know if it was right or wrong; I picked up a piece and put into Baba Ji's mouth. And lo, every body stated doing the same. Soon, we were feeding one another. Baba Ji smiled and said, "Instead of hoarding, if we start sharing and instead of being greedy if we start feeding our fellow beings, hunger and many of our problems can be solved easily."

Impressed by Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji's simple living and high thinking, the visitors said, "Here are the soiled hands that cleanse the hearts."

THE 'I' THAT'S YOU

-Daljit K. Mehta (UK)

The "I" that I am
Is a part of Thee
The "I" that's me
Is what you see

Nothing but a facet
Is the "I" you see
A mere drop of water
In a fathomless sea

I am possessed by maya
Forever consumed by fire
I am in search of the rest
From the corporeal mire

I am mercurial
I am never still
Every wish granted
I want at will

Every incarnation is
Desire taking birth
Upon satiation, death
Which ceased to be mirth

Like a bee gathering nectar
From a lotus in full bloom
I am seduced by the fragrance
And oblivious of the doom

But in spite of it's temporal
And transitory pleasures
I long for the illusory
And material treasures

The visible, physical nature
The sensual, mental delight
Cloud the inner vision
And I go on losing sight

The essentiality I know not
Of duality I am unaware
Of the real purpose of life
I am just not aware

The "I" having sought
The sea of life anew
Enters a state of Bliss
Where the "I" becomes you.

THE MATCHLESS MISSION

-By: Amrik Singh I.A.S. (Retd)

The clouds of war and violence can be seen hovering in various parts of the world. Hatred, jealousy, greed, discords and dissension continue to defile the society. Humanism and human values have been forgotten. The concept of love, light, and unity seems to have disappeared. In spite of tremendous progress in the field of science and technology, the Man continues to remain bewildered. Why?

Obsessed by ego and lust for the mammon, man behaves like a beast. Forgetful of God-the Ultimate Reality – man is crazy after pelf and power. The wisdom, wealth and manpower are being harnessed for promotion of selfish ends for oppression of the weak and for acts designed to cause tumult, turmoil and devastation. The world is on the brink of disaster. There is chaos, confusion and degeneration in society. The whole humanity is anxiously looking for peace, bliss and tranquility:-

AAG LAGI AKASH MEIN, JHAR JHAR PADEN ANGAR;
SANT NA HOTE HAGAT MEIN, JAL MARTA SANSAR.

There is fire in the sky and burning embers are falling on the earth. Had there been no saints, the world would have been reduced to ashes.

The fire in the sky here apparently points out to the man's ego, the root cause for degeneration of society. It is for saints, God in human form, to dispel the darkness of ignorance, to establish righteousness, to uphold the truth, to eliminate falsehood, to establish peace, love and light in this world and to extricate man from the mud puddle of materialism, and unite him with God:

TARWAR, SARWAR, SANT JAN, CHAUTHA BARSEMEH;
PAROPKAR KE KARNE, CHARON BHARYEN DEH.

The trees, the lakes, the saints and the rains do appear for the good of others.

True Master

One needs a Teacher, a Guide, to know about a person, place and the environment. Likewise, for seeking the omnipresent God, one does need the guidance and grace of the True Master (Satguru). True Master is indispensable in the process of God- realisation. 'None has been able to attain Divine Knowledge without the True Master' and none shall see God without the True Master' is the law of the Kingdom of God. Even Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Hazrat Mohammed, Guru Nanak and other great spiritual masters had to follow this tradition. The True Master holds the key to the Kingdom of God and he can reveal God to every seeker.

God has two forms; one is the visible manifestation, the Nature, the living and non-living objects; and the other is the invisible, formless, all-pervading spirit of God. True Master dispenses God-knowledge to redeem the ignorant and the wayward. He is like the sun transmitting light to all the people of the world. He

belongs to the whole humanity and not for any particular sect, community and country:

"I am the way, the truth and the life. No one cometh unto the Father but by me."

(Bible)

"The true Guru has broken the shell of the egg of delusion and my mind has been illuminated. He has cut all the shackles and my captive soul has been liberated."

(Adi Grasnth)

Unique Mission

"Nirankari" means the Formless Omnipresent God. Every human being who gets initiated and receives the Divine-knowledge with the grace of the True Master is a "Nirankari". The Sant Nirankari Mission represents the essence and fragrance of all the religions known to the world.

"There is no religious faith greater than beholding God face to face; there is no act better than serving the saints."

(Avtar Bani)

The Mission strives to bring about unity in diversity. The people of the world are united together through a common spiritual chord irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, language, region and nationality being different. The Mission preaches peace, love, humanism, tolerance and universal brotherhood. All human beings here constitute "One Word Family" despite their different sings and symbols. Everybody is respected and love irrespective of his or her being a Hindu, a Christian, a Muslim, a Sikh, a Buddhist, a Jain and a Zoroastrian, etc.

God-knowledge is the panacea for all ills and ailments afflicting the mankind. Luckily the Nirankari Baba is amidst us to bestow Divine-knowledge and to grant perpetual peace, bliss and deliverance. The Sant Nirankari Mission is unique in terms of making possible the coveted goal of God realisation. The Mission does not subscribe to religious forms, symbols, dogmas and rituals.

Avtar Bani

A key to the Nirankari Mission 'Avtar Bani' is a unique contribution of Nirankari Baba Avtar Singh Ji. It contains the germs and jewels of divine wisdom, in a simple language and easy style. The teachings of the True Master have been embodied in 376 hymns covering a wide range of spiritual topics, such as attributes and glory of the Formless God, the need of the True Master, the aim of human life, the life-style of a devotee, the fundamental principles, the true religion, the real devotion, man without God-knowledge, life of wayward person, futility of rites and rituals, the grace of the True Master and the message to every human being "Know God Ye Worship".

Avtar Bani explains the philosophy about God and also breaks the wrong beliefs and superstitions which the people are framed about God. It seeks to dispel the misapprehension and misunderstandings of those who were either ignorant or

misguided about the true religion. It stresses the basic Truth and inspires men to understand and fulfil the real purpose of human life.

Not only Baba Avtar Singh Ji tries to reestablish the faith of the people in God but also tells them that they too can realise God by approaching the Lord Master of the time. To the society which is suffering from the most dangerous disease called untouchability, the Nirankari Baba preaches that all human beings are the children of the one and the same God and there is no use discriminating on any ground between one person and the other living in any part of the world. With this, the Baba not only eliminates the seed of hatred from the human mind but also strengthens the doctrines of fraternity, love and humility, which are the backbone of a healthy society.

Social Reforms

The Sant Nirankari Mission has always endeavoured to promote patriotism and social reforms. The Nirankari Baba and the Missionaries authorized on his behalf have dispensed God-knowledge and worked for ushering in an era of peace, truth, love, light and Universal Brotherhood. They have always worked for such social reforms as may adorn the life of the people with divine virtues, such as humility, nobleness, piety, sweet language of love, righteousness, fair deeds and dealings. The Mission has introduced multiple social reforms for the welfare of the people especially the poor and the needy.

The Nirankari Mission has a corps of volunteers known as Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal. As is clear from its very name it is an organization of volunteers engaged in the service of Mission without any pecuniary interest or any other material compensation. To serve humanity is considered as the sacred duty by every volunteer of the Nirankari Sewa Dal. To them it is as good as devotion to God. Even for their uniforms, they spend from their own resources.

The Nirankari Sewa Dal symbolises the Mission's commitment to the spirit of self-discipline and selfless service to humanity. Today, the Nirankari Sewa Dal has thousands of volunteers, men and women in their respective uniforms. They come from all communities, from all classes of the society. They are businessmen, doctors, teachers, professors, officers, engineers, architects, craftsmen, workers, laborers, and rather people from all ranks. They work shoulder to shoulder least conscious of their social, economic or official status.

Sant Nirankari Sewa Dal volunteers play a vital role in organising Blood Donation Camps, where thousands of Nirankaris donate the blood to save lives of the sick and the wounded. The Sewa Dal volunteers also render useful services during rescue and relief operations in emergent situations such as floods, earthquakes, cyclones, train disasters, and violence-oriented distress.

Other social welfare measures and reforms introduced by Sant Nirankari Mission include simple and dowry-free marriages, observing austerity and refraining from extravagance and exhibitionism, rising above social barriers, complete ban on the use of liquor and other intoxicants in any form, monetary help and other relief assistance to the old, the poor, the destitute and the widows etc.

Sant Samagams

It is rightly said:

SUT DARA AUR LAXMI PAPI KE BHI HOYE;
SANT SAMAGAM HARI KATHA,
TULSI DURLABH DOYE.

Son, wife and wealth can be possessed even by the sinner, But one rarely comes across the mammoth gathering of the saints (Sant Samagam).

Holding of annual Nirankari Sant Samagams at Sant Nirankari Mandal Headquarters is a regular feature of the Mission under the divine inspiration and blessings of the True Master. Lakhs of devotees of the Mission from all over the world gather in Delhi for three-days in October or November every year. The panoramic view of the huge congregation of saints depicts a sea of love, humanism and Unity in Diversity and presents a pleasing festive look, which thrills the mind with joy and peace.

The significance of this world spiritual meet is unparalleled and cannot be described in words. Only those who are drenched in the divine nectar of the True Master, Nirankari Baba can visualise and enjoy the bliss of this wonderful Samagam. This peace and bliss is of everlasting character, does not diminish, rather gets accentuated every day, every time, as one gets intoxicated with Divine name and sings the glory of God in the lap of the Holy Congregation. The sermon of His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj towards the conclusion of the congregation culminates the daily deliberations. Everybody longs to listen to the holy words of the True Master, which provide life to the lifeless and transform the mind even of a pervert.

Gift to Mankind

The Nirankari Mission is the greatest gift to mankind. It stands for redemption of the teeming millions. It aims at refurbishing of the errant society; and providing solace for the desperate humanity.

This Mission is reviving the moral and spiritual values, which are vital to nation building and for the spiritual development of the individual and the society. The Nirankari Baba is building bridges of understanding among people of all nations. The man is divested of the ego and pride and God-knowledge instilled in mind, which brings peace and prosperity forever. The fabric of the strife-torn society is being rewoven to establish a new social order where every one can live in peace, loving and respecting one another.

The miracle of Nirankari Mission is that the people belonging to different religious faiths, cultures, and nationalities have come together under the divine umbrella of one Formless God. The much-talked about unity of mankind despite religious and social disparities has been made a reality. The Nirankari Baba transforms the mind, without interfering with or altering the outer form, appearance, signs and symbols of any person. The message here is that this voice of truth is the need of the time and one should not waste the precious human life in wavering. One must realise God for which purpose one got the gift of human life. This is only way to get peace, bliss and salvation.

THE ZERO THAT MATTERS

- Mrs. Joginder 'Jogi'

The philosophers and scientists are in tremendous search for knowing the basis and origin of matter. Can Matter create itself by its own power? Even the acceptance of this basic question shall lead to the conclusion that Matter must have existed in invisible, no-matter state, for when we see something newly emergent it is understood that it was not seen previously and existed in a formless state. Then also in the process of deifying matter as the self-creator, we read into matter some intrinsic and spiritual meaning as if something non-material that was latent in matter created it.

All Matter is the "Manifestation" which is adorned with the qualities of form, motion, density etc, etc. Logically a thing with these qualities is the display of an effect, or rather is an Effect in itself. In a way, all matter is the manifested effect. Whatever is a series of effects of an ordered Manifestation cannot exist in itself. By its very nature it cannot be self-caused, for it is relative and not absolute. Matter is just an ordered effect of a single cause. If the existence of matter has a sense of the "Material" about it, the existence of the cause has the subtle characteristic of consciousness and mind. Matter has motion, form and density, whereas the cause of it is divested of all form, density and motion.

In another way the relative cannot be the cause of the relative. Only the absolute can produce the relative. A thing, which is bound by laws, cannot exist without the laws 2 might be in immediate relation to 1, but in the ultimate sense, it is in relation to 0. Like this, all matter may be inter-related, but in the ultimate analysis, it is in relation to something non-material and formless, which exists and has Cosmic Entity.

If Matter and Energy are interchangeable, then which came first? Logically there must be something third which produced both. Verily, that third force must be different from matter and energy, and should be formless and unchangeable for whatever moves or has form, belongs to the sphere of matter and Energy. It is the Formless, non-material substance that has the faculty to manifest the varying forms. Matter in all its varying forms is delusive and possesses no definite form. Only the unchangeable, Formless, with the definitely eternal form of "non-form" is beyond all delusion. By virtue of its definite form it can create all indefinite forms. Matter does not fulfil this condition, only the Formless substance has this capability of causing the phenomena.

State of Nothingness

In Mathematics all the digits have relative values. 9 has value because 8 precedes it; 7 has value because 6 precedes it; likewise 2 has value in relation to 1, but 1 has value in relation to 0. Now 0 has no relation to a digit. It is 0 in relation to itself. 0 is absolute and beyond positive or negative value. The value of the digit is ultimately latent I 0. If the theory of Relativity applies to digits the theory of absoluteness applies to 0. It is self-existing, independent entity. It is in itself non-active but when used in relation to digits it can increase their value to infinity.

Now this 0 signifies a state of nothingness. It is fundamental and possesses negative capability by virtue of which it can become "Everything" and yet in itself remains "Nothing", for whatever is "Something" cannot be "Everything". Anything that limits itself to some qualities shall not be able to assume all qualities. To illustrate this let the example of a writer be taken. If he is to write a perfect drama in which each individual character possesses living vitality and life-like individuality of his own, then the writer shall have to efface all his personality and become essence of life itself. He should be completely unbiased, unprejudiced and beyond all values, good or bad. He should favour none, and hate none. He should be unmanifested life which should manifest with equal fervour and fullness in all characters whether heroes or villains, males or females, kings or the underlings. Now such an author has no dogmatic personality, no particularized quality and yet creates personalities in his characters. He identifies wholly with all, and yet is detached from all. You cannot say which character represents the viewpoint of the author fully.

Indeed the personality of the author is the material out of which personalities of other characters are made. He is the raw stuff of life itself, which gives birth to countless cults on the scale of relative values, yet remaining entirely detached from his creatures. He does not fully lose his essence in the process of creation for creation is his art and not dissolution of his primeval self.

As in the case of the author likewise, zero (0) is immanent in all digits, and leads them to infinity and yet retains its individual personality of Nothingness. Verily, like this there is a substance in the universe, which is formless in itself and yet has manifested itself in all forms (Matter). In another way, the word "Form" is suggestive of some manifestation, some Effect which leaves it understood that there is something already present which is formless or unmanifested. When we say '1' (one) it is understood that there is '0' already. Our very speech in day-to-day life is suggestive of relativity of objects as when we say "Goodness" it automatically means that "Badness" is also there. Where goodness is, evil must be, for both are mutual. Similarly, the concept of Matter and its forms in itself proves the prior existence of Nonmaterial and formless substance.

Formless is Present

Logically Formless has precedence over Forms and Matter as '0' has precedence over 1,2,3,4 and so on to 00. So this Formless substance is at the core of all Forms, and is universally present. Even all Matter is disjointed and this Formless indivisible substance is present in every pore of it. If Matter is endowed with the qualities of Motion, Density and Form, then this Formless has no motion and density. It is rather the place itself, which is occupied by all matter. Thus when we recognize Goodness and at the same time its counter part Evil and all colours are recognised only in relation to colourlessness-then we must accept "Formlessness" and "Nothingness" in relation to all material forms. As scientific people, we shall have to recognize that as yet unrecognized the prior and primeval existence of the Formless. Failure on this point shall be tantamount to deliberate omission of something that stands logically and even scientifically proved.

The digits symbolize matter, and 0 represents the Formless substance. St. Augustine compares this substance with a circle (which is also like zero), whose

centre is everywhere, but whose circumference is nowhere. All forms are the grossing of this Formless substance. It is so subtle that it has lost all form, and is yet all pervasive. Its existence is full and eternal. The things when they are subtilised become more powerful. The subtler a thing, the greater its powers. An atom is capable of destroying a mountain so much so that in the case of the formless it has lost its self, and yet it exists. That is why it is the most powerful basic substance of the universe. It is perfect and full in itself. Matter is just its expression (Sport or Lila). It is not that it dissolves itself to create Matter. Dissolution is not creation. Creation is just a game, an art of the Formless Artist.

Self-Created

As for its creation, It did itself. For, who can create the Formless? Only the Formless can create the Formless. It was full in the beginning, full in the middle, and full in the end. It was never born and so shall never die. You take the Formless out of the Formless, yet the Formless remains.

Is not : $0-0=0$;

Or $0+0=0$;

Whereas : $1-1=0$

And $1+1=2$?

In case if Zero (Formless) the result remains the same, whereas in case of digits (Matter) the results differ. "Nothingness" minus 'Nothingness' is 'Nothingness. This Formless is unchangeable, eternal, full and proof to all effects.

This Formless substance is not dead as some might think. It lives and is Consciousness itself. It is akin to our consciousness. This Consciousness in our body is formless, and is portion of this universal Formless substance. As when a drop of water mixes with the ocean for it is a portion of it, likewise our tiny consciousness shall mix with this cosmic substance when it recognizes its universal presence. This is fully practicable and not an abstraction. To see the formless and get identified with it is to transcend all material manifestations, is to cross the limits of Time, and become established in the Eternal Essence of the Universe where no duality (Goodness or badness, hell or Paradise) exists, where sheer unconditioned Absolute existence exists with its fulfilled nature.

The Formless was never born and shall never die and so its eulogizers and votaries too shall cross the duality of life and death. This is not E1 Dorado but everyone can reach this state of mind within a second on this earth within this life, and even while discharging all social obligations. The spiritual law is that this Formless has to be seen from a Perfect Teacher. Whosoever realizes it practically, attains to fuller and non-active prosperity for all times to come.

TOLERANCE CURES TENSION

- By: B.S. Nim, Chairman Working Committee

It may be recalled that the UN proclaimed 1995 as the Year of Tolerance, saying that the ability to be tolerant of the actions, beliefs and opinions of others is a major factor in promoting world peace. Amid the resurgence of ethnic conflicts, discrimination against minorities and xenophobia directed against refugees and asylum seekers, Tolerance is the only way forward, said a statement by UNESCO.

This proclamation reminded us of the warning once given by Dr. Radhakrishnan that modern State was breeding a new kind of citizenry, which believed that the worst man in my religion is better (and I must stand by him whatever his crimes and venality) than the good man in the other faith. Suddenly as it were, we are becoming 'momiphants', a hybrid animal species, invented by Arthur Koestler. A momiphant combines the frailty and sensitiveness of the mimosa (which crumbles at the faintest touch), with the thick-skinned robustness of an elephant. You curl up when your feelings are hurt, even slightly, but you have no compunction about trampling over the feelings of others.

It has been witnessed all around that as a result of religious intolerance, the society at large has been caught in the grip of tension. Human values are crashing, both horizontally and vertically. One is bewildered as to what is going to become of us. Disgusting communal conflicts and clashes are taking place in such quick succession and so routinely that man is getting immune to shocks. From North to South, the society seems to be like a vast seething cauldron. One wilts like salad under salt on watching the insensitiveness extending to mass killing in the name of religion. There is Society for Prevention of Cruelty towards Animals. Now we also need a Society for preventing of cruelty towards the species called human beings.

Oneness of God

All communities claim that they believe in one God even though they have different names for Him. This seems a blasphemous lie to what is actually being done at regular intervals. Communal hatred, ill-will and superstitions are the root cause of all-round misery and strife in the world.

God, after all, dwells in the human heart, unless we banish Him from that abode and force Him to take refuge in brick and mortar structures. Going by what is being done in the name of God, it may well be stated that right now all major communities are engaged in 'rehabilitating' Him in their own ways.

If a man is true to his own, he ought to respect others' faiths also. He who has the fear of God would not kill any other creature. "Thou shall not kill," implies that life being a gift of God, man is only its custodian and that he must not take what he cannot give.

The man-made barriers of religious faith-have divided humanity into sects and isms, each claiming to hold an olive branch but inward tensions of intolerance inciting them to strike others over the head with that very olive stick. In this way,

men are running apart like excited molecules of an atom. It is, therefore, not divided atom but divided mankind, which is becoming more difficult to deal with.

It is strange but true that man today knows more of the astral bodies than of himself. He claims to have unravelled the mysteries of the universe, but is baffled by the behaviour of man. The scientists have discovered how and when man was born, but what they apparently do not know yet is how to save him from destruction.

Intolerance

Intolerance causes tension. To identify the genesis of religious intolerance, one has to distinguish between blind faith in God and actual realisation of God. Faith in God is subjective and the perception may differ from man to man. Those who have actually realised Him, however, share the same viewpoint, based on their actual experience. Thus blind faith creates intolerance and causes tension, while actual realisation inspires tolerance and prevents tension. For this reason, there would certainly not remain any intolerance and subsequent tension once God is actually realised, face to face, irrespective of His different names. God realizations the only mortar that can bind together the many shaped bricks of mankind into a coherent structure. God, though invisible, is all concrete, a cosmic force, unifying the whole universe.

With this consideration in mind, a successful attempt can be made to achieve harmony through a living revelation of the all-pervading God, the same for all the religious faiths and ignoring the nonessentials (rites, rituals, etc.) which are different for different faiths. The realisation of Fatherhood of God will spontaneously foster the cherished Brotherhood of Mankind. This essential unity of man over-rides all man-made barriers. It is only through a realisation of this unity that an element of spirituality can be imparted to human thought and action.

As a sequel to God-realisation, one realises that all asserts, material and mental, belong to God and we, as trustees only, are ordained to use them for the common good of whole human race. This spells a living above narrow prejudices and dogmas of caste, creed, etc. Thus one becomes tolerant and respectful towards the other's mode of worship, dress, diet and culture and leads a purposeful, harmonious life. God-realisation is, thus, a panacea for all ills.

In fine, when we lack faith in God, our Creator, we lose faith in ourselves. It spells crisis of character, resulting in chaos and violence in the society. The distance between various places anywhere on the globe can be covered by one or the other mode of transport but yawning distance between the hearts of men cannot be 'covered' without the realisation of Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind, harmonizing all tempers and temperaments. Let us, therefore, produce a heave in unison to rejuvenate religious faith by a living revelation of God through the grace of Nirankari Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj in order to foster tolerance and cure tension.

TOWARDS ENJOYING THE BLISS OF GOD-REALIZATION

-By: S.S.Bassan, P.Eng., President, Sant Nirankari Mission, Canada

This planet called "earth" is only tiny creation in the entire vast and limitless universe. Human beings are scattered all over the surface of the earth. The population of human beings in this world currently stands at a few billion and is ever increasing. Humans are pre-occupied with different objectives in their lives, with only a small fraction of the population paying attention towards fulfilling the principal aim of life.

There is nothing new in this kind of attitude as this has always been the case since beginning of human history. Those who wish to pursue this lofty aim of human life will have to take the next step and that is to find a True Guide. This search for locating such a personality is by no means an easy task. The seeker is bound to encounter mountains of ignorance, mass confusion and persistent denials from all corners, to prove that such a Guide can exist at this time. People claim to sing praises of the past Messengers, yet do not want to follow their lofty teachings.

The Holy scriptures clearly explain that God-realization is not possible unless we meet a True Guide in our lifetime and that such a Messenger is always present in this world in human form. The statement is a basic divine principle.

I should be always grateful to Almighty that He blessed me with a golden opportunity of having the human birth at the time when a True Guide in the person of Baba Hardev Singh Ji is present in this world. A clear message that "God-realization is possible" is being very humbly conveyed to all human beings through a spiritual movement, known as "The Sant Nirankari Mandal".

Grateful to a Friend

In normal course of worldly dealings in every day life, we feel obliged to someone who did something for us and wish to convey our feelings of gratitude in this regard. Let us take a few examples. A person was drowning in a lake and just as he was going to take his last breath, he was suddenly pulled out of the water by a passerby and saved. Naturally the drowning person is always going to be grateful to this passerby. Someone lost in a vast dense forest, will always be grateful to a person who shows up at this desperate time and gives direction to his destination.

Similarly, in search of the Supreme Knowledge, a sincere person may have to knock on many doors, until finally with the grace of God, this seeker comes across a friend who had already found a True messenger in person. The seeker will now be able to realize God with the divine blessings of this Holy personality. We should always show utmost respect and reverence to such a friend. In my particular case, I will always be grateful to my aunt Mata Atma Kaur Ji and Rev. Jagir Singh Ji (Bilaspur, India) who, in October 1957, guided me to reach unto the lotus feet of Shahenshah Baba Avtar Singh Ji (successor to the Founder of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Baba Buta Singh Ji) for receiving the divine knowledge and later on enabled me to be a recipient of showers of numerous

gracious blessings of Satguru Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji and at present Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj.

Grateful to the Master

In the chain of process leading up to the deliverance of soul from shackles of births and deaths, the role of the True Master is of supreme importance. When a seeker humbly approaches the True Master for God-realization, the knowledge (Brahm Gyan) is imparted instantly. The seeker's mind is enlightened with divine wisdom and the soul, after experiencing millions of years of separation due to sheer ignorance, now finds peace and harmony in communion with the Almighty, all pervading, everlasting, one and only one Formless God, also commonly called "Nirankar". Such a Messenger of the absolute truth and fountainhead of divine knowledge can be called by any name, such as "True Master", "True Saint", "Prophet", "Sage", "Seer" or even "a Wise Friend".

A True master guides his followers to lead pious and peaceful life in all situations and worship God with every breath. This has always been the teaching of all past True Master as written in the Holy Scriptures.

It is worth mentioning that every spoken word and action of such a Holy personality is directed toward improving the spiritual and worldly well being of all human beings. He is not here to create a new religion or a separate sect, but instead wants to enlighten our minds by explaining the relationship of soul (child) to the Oversoul (Father Almighty), thereby endeavoring to create an environment where better mutual understanding, harmony, peace and love among all human beings in this world can flourish. The underlying secret to unity among otherwise different and diverse humans is the common soul and its relationship with the oversoul. It is for this reason that "Sant Nirankari Mission" is also known as "universal Brotherhood Mission".

At time, you will find yourself in a situation, when you cannot count on words to convey your feelings. This is what happens to me when I try to find words of gratefulness to the Nirankari Baba for imparting me the divine vision and wisdom to perceive the Creator and the entire creation in true perspective. Today, every moment of His Holiness, along with Her Holiness Mata Swinder Ji and Most Rev. Rajmata Kulwant Kaur Ji, is dedicated to the propagation of the noble cause of Universal Brotherhood in this world. I wish and pray that we all could be of service to the Master in any shape or form.

Company of Enlightened Souls

All human beings in this world are meant to serve one another in some form. We cannot live in seclusion, we have to meet and perform our moral obligations, duties and responsibilities to our families and to society at large. The True Master, himself a family man, discharges these actions as a model human being and sets an example for others.

Just as doctors, engineers, accountants, scientists and teachers perform their various respective public duties, but keep in touch with their fellow professionals through personal contacts, periodicals and associations to maintain their competence, in the same way enlightened souls should keep the company of and congregate with holy persons, to maintain a blissful state of mind.

Selfless Service

Any service performed with a selfish motive is not a true service and is more like paid labour. Such an action will not result in a happy state of mind. The hallmark of a truly saintly person is the pleasure he or she derives with selfless service performed according to the wishes of the True Master.

Message for Self

With the grace of god and inspiration given by my grandmother Mata Santi Ji right from birth, I was always greatly fascinated by reading about the past Prophets and their disciples. The inspiration which I received from their pious lives soon turned into disappointment because I was not born in their times and thus not able to receive their blessings in person. I used to question the God Almighty for not giving me such an opportunity in the past.

Finally, my prayers were heard when, in 1957, I met the True Master of that time, who with his divine grace helped me realize God. Now, my mind is at peace with all pervading 'Nirankar' and is fully convinced that the knowledge I received is the most supreme and there is nothing more to know beyond this.

An Ideal Disciple

Needless to say, it is the wish of every sincere student to excel in the class, for every player to win the game and for every devoted child to be the darling of the father. In the same way, a disciple of divine science would aim to be dear to the True Master. The traits of such a disciple are summarized in the following words from the Holy Gita:

"He who is free from malice towards all beings, friendly and compassionate, rid of 'I' and 'mine', balanced in joy and sorrow, forgiving by nature, ever-contented and mentally united with Me, nay, who has subdued his mind, senses and body has a firm resolve, and has surrendered his mind and reason to me, that devotee of Mine is dear to Me."

To be able to perform these actions, I would request the readers to follow and practise in life that five principles of the Sant Nirankari Mission, in conjunction with the Remembrance of God (Simran), Selfless Service (Sewa) and Congregation (Satgang). The principles are:

All the physical, mental and material possessions of the human being belong ultimately to God. If the human being uses the same as trustee and remembers God he or she shall derive happiness.

Not to be proud of one's caste, colour and creed and not to hate others on this account.

Not to hate or criticise others on account of their diet and dress, declaring one's own as superior and pride-worthy.

Not to leave one's hearth and home and become vagrant, recluse or ascetic for the realisation of God, but lead normal family life without becoming a burden on others.

Not to deviate from and divulge to others the divine knowledge, as revealed by the True Master, without a word from him.

Humble Prayer

Any human being, who has read this article, will be able to conclude that with the grace of Almighty, a True Messenger in the person of Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji is present among us, and thus God-realization is possible just by mere asking. While striving for material and spiritual well being of all the inhabitants of this beautiful planet, it is my humble prayer that everybody will be able to fulfil the principal aim of human life by realizing God and living in peace, harmony and bliss.

"Saints should not simply wish well for others, rather prove by their practical deeds and actions. As fire gives light, water coolness, saints should naturally strive for the greatest good of humanity."

-Baba Hardev Singh

UNIFYING HUMAN RACE

- By: Prof. (Smt.) Raj Vasdev Singh

Let us make this earth a liveable planet. This echoing slogan compels us to think; "What is wrong with this planet? Is Nature really indifferent to man or we are unnecessarily thinking as to what man has made of man?"

The answer is very obvious. Nature is bountiful and its provisionary store never gets exhausted. The various elements of nature have been serving the needs of mankind endlessly. The earth has been producing vegetables, fruits and food grains since time immemorial but its fertility is never finished. Similarly, the air, the water, the fire, the sound – all these elements of nature have been a perennial source of energy for every creature of this planet.

Now, the question arises: "Why this world is considered full of fever and fret, tears and fears, disloyalties and betrayals, disillusion and depressions?" The answer is simple and fundamental. The misconception about the purpose of life and the misuse of the divine gifts is the main cause of the sufferings and miseries of mankind. The lust for more and more makes man vicious. He has forgotten that he was sent to this planet to realise the eternal and absolute Truth and live truthfully, but ignorance has thrown him into the mesh of sensuous pleasures, which are transitory in nature. The pomp and show, power and pelf, has made him spiritually crippled and morally bankrupt. There is overall degradation of human values. Consequently, the noble emotions of love, humility, sincerity, purity, compassion and selflessness are over-shadowed by the wicked forces of hatred, jealousy, ego, selfishness and pride.

The misconceived religion with all its superstitions, rites and rituals has caused more harm and destruction to mankind than the world wars. A common man is lost in the mushroom growth of cults, faiths and sects. Parrot-like monotonous, mechanical repetition of memorised and crammed up scriptures by barren hearts do not enlighten the human mind. Certainly such erring religion is a treasonable violation of allegiance to one God-monotheism and His worship.

Oneness of Origin

To unite humanity and to establish one world family, we have to know our origin, our creator, our father, One and the same for all. On perceiving the omnipresent, omniscient, immortal, eternal Truth (God), one becomes God-conscious. An enlightened man is, therefore, ever under the holy spell of his reverential fear that deters him from going astray, protects him from being inhuman and turns him into a humble, resigned and God-fearing being, who surrenders and merges his will into 'The Divine Will' and lives truthfully. With his God consciousness, one can well understand and realise the meaning of a true Hindu, a true Mohammedan, a true Christian and above all a true human being.

The knowledge and realisation of one origin eliminates all the differences of caste, colour, creed or nationality:

AWAL ALLAH NUR UPAYA, KUDRAT DE SABH BANDE;
EK NOOR TE SABH JAG UPJIA, KAUN BHALE KO MANDE

- Adi Granth

God, the eternal, manifested His light in the entire mankind as Divine Creation; when the whole world had its origin in the Supreme Light of the One, then who is superior and who is inferior?

Realisation of True religion is the only thread that can unite the scattered humanity. True religion is free from artificiality and fabrication. It is not merely an oral profession, it is a living essence. It is highly practical realisation. Nirankari Mission enables man to know and practice 'True Religion'.

Humanism

Nirankari Mission believes only in humanism because the Creator never puts the seal of any particular religion of the world or caste while giving life to a child. Such dividing signs are only man-made. It provides universality of outlook. This universal relationship creates the spirit of oneness. No one seems foreigner, every human being is seen as a part of the single body. As the Holy Bible also reminds:-

"Thou shall love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all they mind. Thou shall love thy neighbour, as thy self."

It is very easy to follow customary and ritualised religion but too difficult and a lifelong process to be a true devotee of God.

Sultan Bahu, a Sufi Punjabi saint also writes:

MAJBAN WALE DARWAJE UCHE, RAH RUBANAN MORI HU

Meaning there by that a true saint has to pass through a hole to enter the kingdom of God and he passes through this small hole by minimising his ego, pride, selfishness and desires. The followers of 'Isms' and sects believe in following certain religious rites and rituals, ceremonies and customs. Hence their gate is wider but leads them to nowhere.

To imbibe the spirit of the scriptures, one has to go to the Lord Master (Satguru) and first see God and then eulogize (worship) Him. Nirankari Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji has rightly said, "Mere discourses and sermons will do us no good. Books cannot give us enlightened life, though they can give us knowledge." A true saint can mould our life to a particular pattern. When we are told that mere reading or reciting scriptures will not solve the problems of spiritual living, this does not mean that we do not believe in the perfection of the past prophets or holiness of scriptures. Nirankari Baba has clarified it emphatically:

"All prophets had enlightened the mankind whenever and wherever they were. We must follow them in spirit, not in rituals or symbols."

True Religion

Nirankari Mission warns mankind that narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness combined with sectarianism, communalism, fanaticism will lead to destruction of human values. If human values disappear from the world, man will be considered no better than beasts. His beastly living style will turn this planet into a hell. The devil will reign and the angels suffer. So it is high time to revive the spirit of true religion - the religion that teaches universal love, selflessness, self-surrender and service to mankind leading to spiritual living.

The message of love has been delivered by each great spiritual master but it is pity that men hate on another in their very name. In fact the followers of the 'Isms' forget that by confining their universal masters to a particular sect, ignorantly, they are minimizing their esteem and honour.

Nirankari Mission declares that the one who realises the Formless God, Nirankar, is a Nirankari. It believes in only one God, one human race, one sweet language of love appealing to every heart. It revives, reconstructs and revitalizes the essence of Truth in its original form. It is unifying the humanity under one banner of Truth. God is within and without us. So, for union with God, not the ways but only the hint is required.

It is only the perfect Lord Master who dispels ignorance and enlightens the souls with the Divine-knowledge. Hence this mission of truth is unconventional.

The bond of Truth is the strongest unifying force transcending all barriers of castes, colours, race and nationalities. Hence Nirankari Mission is unifying the human race as one human family, under the parentage of one God.

UNIVERSALISM AND WORLD PEACE

- By K. L. Nagpal, HCS (Retd.)

Man is admittedly the kingpin of the Universe. For aeons, he had his domicile on its soil. He has all through sought sustenance and food from the products of the Universe. Nevertheless he has seldom (exceptions apart) bothered to appreciate its essence and message. This eternal essence is known as Universalism.

The simplest definition of the universalism is boundless breadth of vision, possessed generally by a God realised person or Brahm Gyani. Universalism requires one to step out of his island of parochial and personal individualism and merge himself into the vast ocean of Brahmand. Actually Brahmand means infinite expansion of consciousness. The Vedantic version of such an idealised perception is "Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam". In this perception, all dualism is dissolved. No distance or difference exists between 'I', 'You' and 'He'. The vision of the Universalist is not fragmented but holistic. This means a perspective of totality that envisions the part as the whole and vice-versa.

Universalism enunciates the attitude of one for all and all for one. It is also consonant with the Advait philosophy of non-dual Brahm, so ably elucidated by Shankaracharya. It envisages the whole Universe as monistic Brahm - the only reality. All else is illusion.

Universalism of God

In this context, god or Brahm also broadly embraces the forces or agents of nature. These agents include the sun, the stars, the moon, the rain, the rivers, the earth, the wind and the hills etc. Since the dawn of creation these agents have proclaimed and unceasingly practised the message of universalism. They have been serving man, may all beings, without any discrimination. The principal practitioner and role model of universalism is of course the Almighty God. Even His detractors and atheists are generously fed, nourished and housed by Him. God's omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience too are light-house-manifestations of His universalism.

Universalism of man

As a matter of fact man is an amusing blend of individualism and universalism. The chain of hospitals, dispensaries, laboratories, roads, canals, educational institutions, powerhouse, post and telegraph offices, orphanages and red cross centres set up by man in all corners of the world are standing symbols of his spirit of universalism. In the even of any country being afflicted by an emergency, disaster, or calamity, all the other countries suo-moto rally together to the relief and rescue of the afflicted country. Man has also founded and organised so many international institutions and bodies like the League of Nation (now defunct), the United Nations Organisation, the UNESCO, International Court of Justice etc. All such institutions are man's concrete achievements in universalism. Good samaritans, altruistic crusaders and philanthropists can be found in Plenty even now. Then there are high human and ethical values evolved by man as his proud heritage. Some of these precious values are humanism, harmony, peace, love, compassion, cooperation, tolerance and God-consciousness. They are ornaments and beacon lights of universalism.

This universalism is at once the cause and consequences of unfolding the potential divinity in man. Our holy texts also proclaim man's innate universalism. The Upanishads have it that both 'I' and 'you' are God (Aham brahmasmi and 'Tat Twamasi'). The Bible tells us that man was created in God's own image (O.T. Genesis 1:27). The Bhagwad Gita provides a splendid blue print for universalism in the shape of three classic yogic disciplines i.e. the Gyan Yoga, Karma Yoga and the Bhakti Yoga.

Gross Ground Reality

Despite all the rosy picture of Universalism and the blue prints for actualising it, the ground reality, however, is quite gross and turbid. The first grievous blow to universalism was struck by the eldest son of our first ancestor i.e. Adam, named Cain. He killed his own younger brother Abel out of petty jealousy. Since then, blood-shed and brutality, division and discord have been adopted by mankind as their pet pastime and guiding rule of life. War and violence on the slightest excuse were embraced by man as his standing sport and strategy. Such a sub-standard stance battered universalism and entailed perpetual anguish and agony for mankind. The Second World War alone accounted for the wanton slaughter of fifty four million humans from 1939 to 1945. During the subsequent period 1945 to 1985, even after the establishment of the UNO twenty million persons were killed in one hundred and sixty wars. This leads to the categorical conclusion that international bodies like UNO created particularly for preventing wars and establishing peace proved helpless to tame the savage tiger roaring in human heart. The partition of India in 1947 turned humans into beasts. Out of sheer communal frenzy, they butchered lakhs of their innocent brethren in that dark period.

The First Battlefield

The first and formidable theatre of all wars is surely the human heart. It is in this theatre that the fire of war first erupts for some reasons, real or imaginary. Thereafter it spreads like wild fire and converts peaceful fields, homes and flourishing centres of civilisation into pools of blood. Imagination reels to remember the terrific tool of death and devastation wrought by Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, two Japanese cities, during World War II.

Currently, man is awfully overwhelmed by crippling crisis of conscience and character. The moral universe i.e. universalism is fast degenerating. It is on the verge of collapse. Social, moral and spiritual consciousness is fading from human heart. Man has torn himself from moral moorings. The country stands disrupted even by individual civil and criminal disputes to the tune of two and half crore cases pending in various courts of India. Such disputes obviously rob the peace of mind of the citizens, besides involving colossal waste of their precious time. This is again due to lack of spirit of universalism. Battlefields apart, the devils of war and violence are enacting a dreadful dance in nearly every home and habitat.

Needless to say that universalism and peace are inseparable. Both have their ultimate Headquarters in human hearts. In fact the entire edifice of human civilisation, culture, art and thought is built on the firm and fine foundations of peace and love. It is direly and immediately needed to regenerate and renovate the degenerated and degraded human heart and psyche.

The crusader of Humanism

Happily, the Nirankari Baba is currently crusading for the regeneration of moral values. His Holiness, the Head of the Universal Brotherhood Mission with headquarters in Delhi, is committed to the creation of Kingdom of God here and now. His mystic code carries certain novel features, which make an enduring impact on human heart. One such feature is that no discrimination is made on account of age, sex, caste, colour and creed. This means that he initiates even young children and the youth. Their hearts are deeply imbued with God-consciousness and humanism. Their hands are also trained invariably to touch and caress that feet of their fellowmen. How can such caressing hands ever be lifted to strike or injure anyone? Another concept diffused by the Baba among his devotees is one of non-proprietorship and non-possession by man, of all worldly assets. These assets, according to the Baba, belong to the Almighty and not to any individual. They have been bestowed on man by God simply as a trust to be utilised for human welfare.

The Nirankari Baba is verily the apostle of Universalism. His basic teaching 'You God is My God' is for all. This way the Holy Baba is determined to elevate every man to superman. Let us take a pledge to assist the Holy Baba in this grand mission. This should indeed be our souvenir of the 'golden Jubilee Samagam' to the mankind.

UNIVERSALITY

By: O. P. Tandon (USA)

This happened in Paris. After a hectic day, Baba Gurbachan Singh Ji was about to retire when two ladies, both in late thirties come to see him. The Baba could not disappoint them. From his door none has ever returned disappointed. One of them could speak English and she narrated how going into the whirl of materialistic life they had sinned, lost their husbands, their families, their love, and finally to get refuge and solace of mind, become nuns. Here they wanted to realise God. For this they had done penance, suffered much, prayed for long spells and yet they become more impatient and frustrated.

The Baba briefly explained them the true meaning of worship. It was purifying the soul by merging it with the Cosmic Soul. Rituals, physical suffering, long prayers, which the mind could not echo or respond and which were mere lip service, served no purpose. As the Christ had said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." The ladies bade a respectful adieu to the Guru, saying that for the first time in their lives they felt spiritual satisfaction and true gaiety of life.

Later they collected more information from me. And it appealed them very much that Sant Nirankari Mission or its Guru was not out to start a new religion or debunking any creed. The aim was to kindle true spirituality in all men and women and this was acknowledged by every religious faith and prophet. Now enlightened, the ladies agreed that humanity could be integrated by the bonds of true spirituality.

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