

“TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THE GURU’S EYES”¹

MOOL MANTRA & THE TRANSMISSION OF THE GURU’S MEDITATIVE AWARENESS

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It is common practice today to measure the vitality of Sikh dharma by its number of followers, its quantity of places of worship, the sum total of members working in status-carrying professions, and the number of schools and universities with programs that study it. These criteria are cited by influential philanthropist and inventor Narinder Singh Kapany.² An alternate view is that the Sikh nation is best judged by the degree to which it successfully conveys the original meditative awareness of its founders to its members in the present day. In this study, we will consider evidence for the existence of these two distinct paradigms: today’s, characterized by a focus on external accomplishments, with its religious expression in theology and ritual, and an original one marked by a robust culture of inner meditation and dynamic personal and social transformation. Recognizing the existence of these two opposing paradigms as a problem, we might ask ourselves: What can be done to restore the transmission of deeply transformative meditative awareness in the Sikh community and enable its members to envision themselves again as participants in an inspired historical movement? This humble article is an effort to describe the problem and prescribe a course of remedial action. In this effort, the author presents a case study using artistic representations of the holy *Mool Mantra* by a certain, artful *Saahibzaadee*.³

1. Meditation in Early Sikh History

Sikh dharma is historically rooted in the practice and experience of meditation. Roughly five hundred years ago, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) emerged from his illumination in the River Bein to announce to the world ‘there is no Hindu and there is no Muslim.’ In his lifetime, the founding Guru of the Sikh faith composed inspired verses termed *Gurbani*, many of which describe elements of the experience of deep meditation. *Gurbani* together with early Sikh history indicate that Guru Nanak conveyed his technique of inner communion to his disciples and that the practice of deep meditation continued at least to the time of the tenth Sikh master, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). The historic record informs us of children adept at the practice of meditation during this period, the most famous being Guru Harkrishan (1656-1664), the eighth Guru, who ruled the hearts of his Sikhs from the age of five to his passing at eight years of age.

Meditation has a long history and a respected place in India’s spiritual and philosophical traditions.⁴ By contrast, Western scientists have just begun to study the practice of basic meditation.⁵ Comparisons of the benefits of short-term and longer-term contemplative practice are also just starting to be made.⁶

Gurbani was composed by people who lived by meditation and encouraged the practice. *Gurbani* itself gives instruction to meditate. One of the most familiar directives to meditate is found near the beginning of the *Anand Sahib* of Guru Amar Das, recited at every Sikh spiritual gathering:

ਏ ਮਨ ਮੇਰਿਆ ਤੂ ਸਦਾ ਰਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਲੇ॥

O my mind, ever dwell on God! (Siri Guru Granth Sahib⁷, 917)

The ‘Sukhmani’ composed by Guru Arjan gives dozens of psychological, physiological and spiritual benefits related to the practice of Sikh meditation. One verse of several stanzas describes positive outcomes from even associating with a person who meditates. According to ‘Sukhmani’, one whose mind continually meditates has ‘realized the Creator.’

ਮਨਿ ਸਾਚਾ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਾਚਾ ਸੋਇ॥ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਪੇਖੈ ਏਕਸੁ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੋਇ॥ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਲਛਣ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਹੋਇ॥੧॥

Their mind and tongue are animated by pure, intrinsic being,

And they see none other than that being.

Nanak says these are the qualities of one who has realized the Creator. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 267)

Through their meditative practice, the Sikh Gurus realized wisdom and forbearance. The first Guru built the foundation of a spiritual legacy. The second collected Guru Nanak's *Bani* and continued his work. The third Guru expanded the community. Guru Ram Das managed conflicts in the community and founded Sri Amritsar. The fifth Guru compiled the *Adi Granth* and passed his spirit peacefully as a martyr. Guru Hargobind led his Sikhs to victory through four military attacks from the Mughals. The seventh Guru kept the peace. Guru Harkrishan lived as a saint and spiritual leader as a child. The ninth Guru stood nobly in the face of torture and death. Guru Gobind Singh opposed the bigoted Mughal empire and established *Siri Guru Granth Sahib* as Guru of the Sikhs from that time forward.⁸

Not only the ten Gurus showed the powers of meditation. Sikh history tells of many Sikhs believed to have been divinely inspired through their practice of meditation. Numerous disciples of the Guru went as missionaries across south Asia.⁹ Many thousands of brave women raised their children as Sikhs in times of dire religious oppression.¹⁰ Thousands of men defended the faith, often against overwhelming odds, in the Guru's armies.¹¹ Bhai Kanhaiya achieved distinction by serving water to the wounded and dying without distinction of friend and foe.¹² Then there were special cases such as Bhai Kaliana who healed the Raja of Mandi from incurable illness in the time of Guru Arjan¹³ and Bhai Jetha who, during Guru Hargobind's time, relieved Emperor Jehangir of his fearful visions.¹⁴ According to Sikh tradition, some devotees offended the Guru through their thoughtless use of spiritual powers gained through meditation. At nine years, Baba Atal raised his playmate, Mohan, from the dead.¹⁵ Baba Gurditta revived a cow a Sikh had mistakenly shot and killed.¹⁶ Ram Rai performed miracles for Emperor Aurangzeb.¹⁷

In the meditative culture that existed when *Gurbani* was composed, spiritual education could begin early in life. Baba Buddha was a boy when he met Guru Nanak and became his follower.¹⁸ The fourth Guru began his practice as a child when he was effectively adopted by Guru Amar Das.¹⁹ Guru Harkrishan rose to meditate alone each day before dawn by the age of five.²⁰ The ninth Guru retired into nine years of meditation at the age of twenty-three.²¹ In *Bachitar Natak*, his autobiographical account, Guru Gobind Singh describes his parents' prolonged devotions and his own *tapasia*²² in his previous life.

ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕਰਤ ਤਪੱਸਿਆ ਭਯੋ॥ਦਵੈ ਤੇ ਏਕ ਰੂਪ ਹਵੈ ਗਯੋ॥

ਤਤ ਮਾਤ ਮੁਰ ਅਲਖ ਅਰਾਧਾ॥ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਜੋਗ ਸਾਧਨਾ ਸਾਧਾ॥੩॥

I performed such an ordeal of spiritual hardship there

That I became one with the One.

My father and mother also meditated on the Unseen Being

And practised many types of yogic *sadhana*²³. [3]

Dasam Granth²⁴, 54

Through their meditation, Sikh children and youths acquired grace and inspiration, and their mothers played important roles as their first spiritual teachers, their *Gurdev Mata*. Guru Arjan Dev is believed to have composed 'Mere Man Lochai' when he was just 18 years old.²⁵ Guru Hargobind took up the full responsibilities of being Guru at the age of 10²⁶ and Guru Har Rai at 14.²⁷ Guru Harkrishan steered his way through difficult and dangerous circumstances, then peacefully surrendered his life during an outbreak of smallpox at the tender age of eight.²⁸ Guru Gobind Rai graciously received the severed head of his martyred father and took up the leadership of the *Panth*²⁹ when he was only nine.³⁰ Bibi Bhani set the course of Sikh history by deciding how the guruship would be passed on while she was a young woman.³¹ Mata Gujri³² and Mata Jito³³ both assumed their roles as Guru's wives at very young ages. At seven and nine, Baba Fateh Singh and Baba Zorowar Singh, spurned the temptations of Wazir Khan and embraced martyrdom.³⁴

Early Sikhs, their lives rooted in the daily practice and experience of meditation, prospered in challenging times. They experienced the blood of martyrdom and the gore of war. Despite every adversity, the community continued to grow and draw new members.

2. Depictions of Meditation in *Gurbani*

Deep meditation is not a part of everyone's daily experience. The saints who wrote *Gurbani* also devoted a good deal of their inspiration to depicting the details of their inner communion. They used distinctive terminology that may today be referenced as guideposts, allowing us today to navigate the sacred realm of profound meditation.

This terminology may be divided into four categories. Elements from each were freely combined, conveying several dimensions of the sublime reality of meditation. These categories are:

- 1) Conceptual: Terms such as 'the One,' duality, three *gunas*³⁵, 'three worlds' (animal, human, divine), *turiala*³⁶, the 'five thieves' (lust, anger, greed, pride, attachment), and samadhi situate the meditative experience within parameters and using definitions found in Indian tradition of philosophy and psychology.
- 2) Locational: Terms such as the 'tenth gate' (at the top of the head), the 'city of Shiva' (the brain), the forehead, *tribeni*³⁷, 'lotus of the mind,' and 'cave of being' (the skull), describe that experience as it relates to physical and metaphysical aspects of the body.
- 3) Physiological: The main physiological reference in *Gurbani* is to the 'flow of *amrit* (ambrosia).' While open to interpretation, these references readily correlate with the brain's secretion of gamma-aminobutyric-acid (GABA), dopamine, melatonin, and other neurochemicals associated with meditation.³⁸
- 4) Subjective: Terms such as the *anahat Shabad* (unstruck Word), *shun* (neutral mind), *anand* (spiritual bliss), *surat* (meditative awareness) and nirvana depict purely subjective components of the experience of deep meditation. Not much can be objectively said about these. Kabir describes the ineffability of meditative experience to a mute person's experience of eating sugar. How can they ever communicate what they are experiencing?³⁹

This terminology occurs many hundreds of times in *Gurbani*. Following are a few excerpts of this genre which demonstrate both the richness of the artistry and the continued passing on of the experience of meditation from Guru to disciple.

Guru Nanak:

ਉਲਟਿਓ ਕਮਲੁ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ॥ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਧਾਰ ਗਗਨਿ ਦਸ ਦੁਆਰਿ॥ਤਿਭਵਣੁ ਬੋਧਿਆ ਆਪਿ ਮੁਰਾਰਿ॥

Through meditation on the Creator, the lotus of the mind has come upright.

Amrit pours from the sky of the tenth gate.

The Lord himself pervades the three worlds. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 153)

ਅਦਿਸਟੁ ਦਿਸੈ ਤਾ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਇ॥ਬਿਨੁ ਦੇਖੇ ਕਹਣਾ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਾਇ॥ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਦੀਸੈ ਸਹਿਜ ਸੁਭਾਇ॥ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਏਕ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਇ॥

If the invisible could be seen with these eyes, it would surely be seen.

And without seeing, there is no use in speaking of it.

The enlightened one spontaneously sees what others do not

And serves with a meditative awareness. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 222)

ਸਿਵ ਨਗਰੀ ਮਹਿ ਆਸਣਿ ਬੈਸਉ ਕਲਪ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਬਾਦੰ॥ਸਿੰਝੀ ਸਬਦੁ ਸਦਾ ਧੁਨਿ ਸੋਹੈ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਪੂਰੈ ਨਾਦੰ॥

Leaving off schemes and contentions, in the city of Shiva, the Yogi takes up his meditative posture.

The horn of the unstruck Word constantly makes celestial music,

Day and night in perfect tune. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 360)

ਅਲਿਪਤ ਗੁਫਾ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਹਿ ਨਿਰਾਰੇ॥ਤਸਕਰ ਪੰਚ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੰਘਾਰੇ॥

The enlightened one lives free in the pristine cave of being.
There, using the power of the Word, he does away with the five thieves. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 904)

ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਸਹਜਿ ਮਨੁ ਰਾਤਾ॥ਤਜਿ ਹਰਿ ਲੋਭਾ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਤਾ॥
With their mind easily absorbed in the samadhi of the neutral mind,
Giving up selfishness and greed, they recognize only the One. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 904)

Guru Angad:

ਨਉ ਦਰਵਾਜੇ ਕਾਇਆ ਕੋਟੁ ਹੈ ਦਸਵੈ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਰਖੀਜੈ॥ਬਜਰ ਕਪਾਟ ਨ ਖੁਲਾਨੀ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਖੁਲੀਜੈ॥
There are nine gates to the body castle. The tenth is kept well hid.
That stubborn gate is shut tight, but with the Guru's Word it opens. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 954)

Guru Amar Das:

ਤੈ ਗੁਣ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹੁ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਚੌਥਾ ਪਦੁ ਪਾਇ॥
From being lost in the grip of the enchanting three *gunas*,
The enlightened one realizes *turiala*, the fourth state. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 30)

Guru Ram Das:

ਨਉ ਦਰਵਾਜ ਨਵੇ ਦਰ ਫੀਕੇ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਦਸਵੇ ਦੁਈਜੈ॥
There are nine gates. Tasteless is the taste of these nine openings.
Amrit is extracted from the tenth. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 1324)

Guru Arjan:

ਗੁਝੜਾ ਲਧਮੁ ਲਾਲੁ ਮਥੈ ਹੀ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਬਿਆ॥ਸੋਈ ਸੁਹਾਵਾ ਥਾਨੁ ਜਿਥੈ ਪਿਰੀਏ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਤੂ ਵੁਠਿਆ॥
The jewel that was hidden has been found. It has appeared on my brow.
Beautiful and holy is that place, O Nanak, where you dwell, O my dear Lord! (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 1096)

Guru Tegh Bahadur:

ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਦੇਉ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਖੋਜੈ ਪਦੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਨਾ॥ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹੁ ਖੇਲੁ ਕਠਨੁ ਹੈ ਕਿਨਹੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਨਾ॥
Give up praise and blame. Seek instead the state of nirvana. Servant Nanak says, this is such a difficult game.
Only a few enlightened ones understand it. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 298)

In this selection of quotes, we see a variety of depictions of inner awareness using conceptual, locational, physiological, and subjective terminology. While this *Gurbani* may sound mystical and strange to anyone unfamiliar with the vocabulary, to a meditator they are masterful expressions and directions on the path of inner experience.

3. The Transmission of Meditative Awareness

The passing of meditative awareness from Guru to disciple ensured spiritual continuity through the crucial centuries of the founding of Sikh dharma. Every Guru, from the first to the tenth, instructed his disciples in meditation. In their life, each of them also lived as an example of meditative awareness. At the end of every Guru's life, he was then bound to choose the best among his disciples to take up his duties. The repeated and unflinching passing on of the discipline together with the virtues of guruship ensured the transmission of the living inspiration of Guru Nanak through succeeding generations.

The *Mool Mantra* was central to the passing on of the guruship. Indeed, it expressed the *mool* (root) of Guru Nanak's teachings. According to historian Max Arthur MacAuliffe and his learned teachers, the first Guru

communicated the *Mool Mantra* to Bhai Lehna, who would soon become his successor, only after he had passed Guru Nanak's last test.⁴⁰

In *Gurbani*, the idea of *paaras*, the 'philosopher's stone' that converts ordinary stone into gold, is used to describe the personal changes exacted by the Guru. In the following verse known as a *Vaar*, Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636 CE), the writer of early Sikh history, describes the relationship of spiritual transformation uniting Guru and disciple.

ਪਾਰਾਸੁ ਹੋਇਆ ਪਾਰਸਹੁ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵਡਿਆਈ। ਹੀਰੈ ਹੀਰਾ ਬੋਧਿਆ ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਮਿਲਾਈ। ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਲਿਵ ਲੀਣੁ ਹੋਇ ਜੰਤੁ ਜੰਤ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਈ।
ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ਚੇਲਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਰਚਾ ਪਰਚਾਈ। ਪੁਰਖਹੁ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਪੁਰਖੋਤਮ ਹਾਈ।

In creating the philosopher's stone, lies the greatness of the philosopher's stone, the enlightened one.
As a diamond is beautifully cut and shaped by another diamond,
The Guru's illumined awareness brings out the light of consciousness in his disciple.
At one with the Word, like a musician at one with their instrument,
Guru and disciple, disciple and Guru, become one and the same.
From one being, another came to be. It was ultimate being. (Vaar 9:9)

Elsewhere, Bhai Gurdas says;

ਗੁਰਸਿਖਹੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਹੈ ਪੀਰ ਪੀਰਹੁ ਕੋਈ॥ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਚੇਲਾ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ ਸੋਈ॥

From the Guru's instruction, disciples are made, but rarely does the Master make a second Master.
One who gives their mind to the meditative consciousness of the Guru becomes like God. (Vaar 13:2)

As in Bhai Lehna's case, the disciple's consciousness was not only reshaped and transformed by the Guru's grace, the disciple was also awarded the duties of guruship at the Guru's passing. The following *Gurbani*, composed by Kal, a musician at the Guru's court, describes the passage of the guruship, described here as the 'throne of *raj yoga*⁴¹, from Guru Nanak on to his successors, up to Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru.

ਪ੍ਰਥਮੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਚੰਦੁ ਜਗਤ ਭਯੋ ਆਨੰਦੁ ਤਾਰਨਿ ਮਨੁਖੁ ਜਨ ਕੀਅਉ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸ॥
ਗੁਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਦੀਅਉ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ਅਕਥ ਕਥਾ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਪੰਚ ਭੂਤ ਬਸਿ ਕੀਨੇ ਜਮਤ ਨ ਤ੍ਰਾਸ॥
ਗੁਰ ਅਮਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸਤਿ ਕਲਿਜੁਗਿ ਰਾਖੀ ਪਤਿ ਅਘਨ ਦੇਖਤ ਗਤੁ ਚਰਨ ਕਵਲ ਜਾਸ॥
ਸਭਿ ਬਿਧਿ ਮਾਨਿਉ ਮਨੁ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਭਯਉ ਪ੍ਰਸੰਨੁ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੋਗੁ ਤਖਤੁ ਦੀਅਨੁ ਗੁਰ ਰਾਮਦਾਸ॥੪॥

First Guru Nanak, like the moon, filled the world with bliss. He liberated humanity with his illumination.
Guru Angad was blessed with the treasure of divine discourse and knowledge of God.
He overcame the five demons and so was freed from the fear of death.
Guru Amar Das, the great and true Guru, is the preserver of honour in this age of depravity.
Seeing his holy feet, one's regrets and shortcomings are erased.
When his mind was in every way satisfied, he was pleased
And bestowed the throne of *raj yoga* on Guru Ram Das. (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 1399)

This verse depicts the journey of self-purification and self-realization under the guidance of the Guru. It focuses first on the efforts of Guru Nanak's most worthy disciple who eventually succeeded him as Guru Angad. Through meditation, he overcame his 'five demons' (also 'five thieves') of lust, anger, greed, pride and attachment. Before attaining the guruship, Guru Amar Das's best disciple needed to satisfy his Master's mind 'in every way.' Only then could he receive the throne of *raj yoga* and become Guru Ram Das.

Bhai Gurdas Singh wrote a similar *Gurbani* celebrating the relationship between Guru and disciple. It begins:

ਹਰਿ ਸਚੇ ਤਖਤੁ ਰਚਾਇਆ ਸਤਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੇਲਾ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਿਧਾਂ ਖੇਲਾ॥

God created the throne of true being in the gathering of the true.
Nanak, the fearless and formless, plays among the fearsome yogis!

Later in the same *Gurbani*, Bhai Gurdas Singh describes the contemplative practice of Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru:

ਸਪਤਮ ਮਹਿਲ ਅਗਮ ਹਰਿਰਾਇਆ॥ਜਿਨ ਸੁੰਨ ਧਿਆਨ ਕਰਿ ਜੋਗ ਕਮਾਇਆ॥
ਚੜ੍ਹਿ ਗਗਨ ਗੁਫਾ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਿਓ ਸਮਾਈ॥ਜਹਾ ਬੈਠ ਅਡੋਲ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਲਗਾਈ॥

The seventh Guru, the limitless Har Rai, who meditated with a neutral mind and realized oneness,
Raising the sky of his awareness, and finding unity in the cave of his mind,
Sat and felt unwavering samadhi.

The refrain of this well-known composition goes:

ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਚੇਲਾ॥

Great, great is Gobind Singh, himself the Guru and disciple!

Guru Gobind Singh composed *Khalsa Mahima* to celebrate the greatness of the Khalsa. In it, he repeatedly describes the oneness between himself and his devoted disciples, using various images and relationships:

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਹਿ ਹੋ ਕਰੋ ਨਿਵਾਸ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਮੁਖ ਹੈ ਅੰਗ॥ਖਾਲਸੇ ਕੇ ਹੋ ਸਦ ਸਦ ਸੰਗਾ॥
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਇਸ਼ਟ ਸੁਹਿਰਦਾ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਹੀਅਤ ਬਿਰਦਾ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪਛ ਅਰ ਪਾਤਾ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੁਖ ਅਹਿਲਾਦਾ॥...
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰਾ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੱਜਨ ਸੂਰਾ॥ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਬੁਧ ਅਰ ਗਿਆਨ॥ਖਾਲਸੇ ਕਾ ਹੋ ਧਰੋ ਧਿਆਨ॥...

Khalsa is my special form. I live in the Khalsa.

Khalsa is my face and limbs. I am ever, ever with the Khalsa.

Khalsa is my heart's love. Khalsa is my fame and renown.

Khalsa is my past and future. Khalsa is my joy and happiness...

Khalsa is my complete true Guru. Khalsa is my fearless friend.

Khalsa is my wisdom and knowledge. Khalsa is always in my thoughts...

In the end, having gone on for many lines, the tenth Guru places but one condition on his relationship with the Khalsa:

ਜਬ ਲਗ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਆਰਾ॥ਤਬ ਲਗ ਤੇਜ ਕੀਉ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਰਾ॥ਜਬ ਇਹ ਗਹੈ ਬਿਪਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ॥ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੋਂ ਇਨ ਕੀ ਪਰਾਤੀਤ॥

So long as Khalsa remains distinctive, I will bestow on it all my glory.

But if they follow the way of the ritualists, I will not keep them in my faith.

The passing of the Guru Nanak's meditative mind to Guru Angad, and continuing from Guru to most worthy disciple over several generations, guaranteed the continuity and integrity of the *Panth*. Guru Gobind Singh expressed great pride and joy in his oneness with the Khalsa, the creation of two hundred years of growth and transformation. The Guru's mind and heart lived on in the Khalsa. However, the tenth Guru also warned that if his Sikhs should ever leave his unique way of life and take up the path of Brahmanism, he would no longer support them in any way.

4. From a Golden Age of Meditation to the Present

A long view of Sikh history reveals a golden age of meditation from the time of Guru Nanak to the battle of Bhangani Sahib (1688). The best evidence for this exists in *Gurbani*, which has already been discussed. A second source is the accounts of the Guru and his Sikhs in this period.

During this period, the vitality of the Sikh community emanated from the practice of deep meditation, perfected and taught by the Guru. Children as young as five could achieve profound meditation and the mother played the unique role of *Gurdev Mata*, the first spiritual teacher of the newborn. In this era, the Guru's mothers, wives, widows, and daughters – and through them, all Sikh women – enjoyed a personal connection with the great teacher and leader of the Sikhs. Tradition tells us that Guru Hargobind taught:

Woman is the conscience. Money the servant. Children carry forward one's lineage.

A holy man identifies neither as Hindu or Muslim.

Generally speaking, the period from 1688 to the second half of the 18th century was a period of great violence and social upheaval. With widescale persecution and invasions, sheer survival would have been priorities. This is evidenced by the codes of living called the *rehitnamas* written in this period which focus on keeping Sikhs together, rather than meditation.⁴²

With the Sikh nation under threat, deep meditation gave way to martial exercises and everywhere, grown men came to predominate. With the passing of the guruship to Siri Guru Granth Sahib, both the care of the Guru and the transcription of new volumes was entrusted to men only.

The years of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's rule in Punjab (1801-1839), witnessed a decline in the spiritual legacy of Guru Nanak. While temples were lavishly renovated and decorated, the Brahmanical rituals Guru Gobind Singh had warned of took hold in the maharaja's court and spread into everyday use in Sikh households.⁴³ Many new Sikh converts from Hinduism kept their Hindu customs and thinking, thereby affecting the Sikh community as a whole.⁴⁴

In place of meditation, alcohol lubricated the affairs of state. In place of the high status and dignity women had enjoyed in a previous time, women were bought and sold in Ludhiana, prostitution prevailed in Amritsar, and female singers and dancers provided entertainment for the maharaja and his male guests. Devout Sikhs were shocked to learn of the *sati*, the burning alive of four of his queens and seven maid servants at the funeral of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁴⁵ Neither the families of the Gurus, the Bedis and Sodhis, nor the religious teachers, the Nirmalas and Udasis, seemed to mind the deteriorating situation. Rather, most were comfortable with their new social status and wealth in the maharaja's kingdom.⁴⁶

The British period (1846-1947), partition and Indian independence (1947), together presented new challenges of marginalization and dilution of the faith.⁴⁷ The late 1800s was marked by two reform movements, the Nirankaris and the Namdharis, dedicated to purifying the faith. In the twentieth century, famous saints like Sant Baba Attar Singh, Sant Baba Nand Singh, and Bhai Randhir Singh, all known for their vigorous meditative practices, responded with movements of spiritual renewal.⁴⁸ In the late 1900s, Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa exported Sikh practices from India and helped gain recognition of the Sikh faith. He also taught meditation as a science and encouraged its scientific evaluation.⁴⁹

With the growing toll of stress and mental illness in the world today, one might think this to be an ideal time for the study of meditation. While the field of meditation research currently is dominated by the study of Buddhist and Hindu practices, Sikh dharma also has a vibrant contemplative tradition which may be explored. As there are no external physical threats to Sikhs individually and collectively today, the 21st century offers the opportunity of a second golden age of meditation.

A more pessimistic view of the present-day disconnect between Sikhs and their tradition of deep meditation recognizes the current conditions of the *Panth* and its focus on the realization of external objectives, together with its embrace of rituals and abstract theology, as a state of spiritual decay. Moreover, alcoholism is, and has for some time been, rampant among Sikh men. Drug addiction has also become common among Sikh youth, especially in Punjab.⁵⁰ *Gurbani* vividly describes the world in a state of duality and decay:

ਕਾਲੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਤ ਕਾ ਵਸੁ॥ ਬਾਨਸਟ ਜਗ ਭਰਿਸਟ ਹੋਏ ਡੂਬਤਾ ਇਵ ਜਗੁ॥੧॥
ਕਲ ਮਹਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਾਰੁ॥ ਅਖੀ ਤ ਮੀਟਹਿ ਨਾਕ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਠਗਣ ਕਉ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥
ਆਂਟ ਸੇਤੀ ਨਾਕੁ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਸੂਝਤੇ ਤਿਨਿ ਲੋਅ॥ ਮਗਰ ਪਾਛੈ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸੂਝੈ ਏਹੁ ਪਦਮੁ ਅਲੋਅ॥੨॥
ਖੜੀਆ ਤ ਧਰਮੁ ਛੋਡਿਆ ਮਲੋਛ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਗਹੀ॥ ਸਿੰਸਟਿ ਸਭ ਇਕ ਵਰਨ ਹੋਈ ਧਰਮ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਰਹੀ॥੩॥
ਅਸਟ ਸਾਜ ਸਾਜਿ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਸੋਧਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੇਦ ਅਭਿਆਸੁ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਨਾਮ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਦਾਸੁ॥੪॥੧॥੬੮॥

Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 662-663

In the Kal Age, there is no integrity and no course of truthfulness.

Holy places are desecrated and the world is drowning in delusion.

In the Kal Age, God's Name is the medicine. Closing their eyes and plugging their noses,

Humanity has descended into thuggery. Holding his nose shut with his fingers,

Man thinks he is seeing the three worlds, but he does not see even what goes on behind his back.

What a wonderful meditative posture is this!

The warrior class has abandoned its sacred duty and has taken up the language of the enemy.

There is no place of honour or honour of place in this world, and none considers right and wrong.

The scholars are polished in grammar and book-knowledge. Refined is their knowledge of sacred texts. Without God's Name, none is free, says Nanak the Lord's slave.

As in yesterday's situation, those who should be defending the faith have instead taken up habits at odds with a culture of meditation. Today as well, there are scholars polished in the language of *Gurbani*, but lacking in self-knowledge and inspiration.

Some thoughtful Sikh authors have described this era of dysfunction and decay. While these critics do not discuss meditation and the passing on of spiritual discipline, they criticize the religious administration in Amritsar. Writer and intellectual Kharak Singh states:

Leaders follow a policy of concentrating on politics alone; religious issues are not on their agenda... Not many among its elected members (or those who decorate Teja Singh Samundri Hall at its General Meetings for a few hours in a whole year) have religious scholarship or knowledge of Sikhism as their strong point... Resort to liquor distribution and other unfair means during elections are common knowledge... The challenges, unless adequately resolved, constitute a serious threat to the integrity and future of the Sikhs.⁵¹

Two hundred years in its formation, the last three hundred years have been filled with trial and difficulty for the Sikh nation. After a half century of persecution and invasions, the wealth and relative peace of a Sikh kingdom only weakened the spirit of Khalsa. This is when ritualism entered the *Panth*. The status of women generally declined. Neither children nor women any longer played any valuable role as teachers or keepers of the faith. British colonialism and colonial habits then took another jab at the inner life of the Sikh nation. The impact of the British was such that, seventy years after their departure, Western ways of thinking and dressing still dominate in Punjab and the diaspora. Like most British children, Sikh children are not typically encouraged to meditate or to reach for spiritual glory. Their parents want them to be a Western doctor or lawyer, not a saint-soldier. Even the students of Sikh schools are pressed to compete academically without detailed instruction in meditation and self-development.

5. Changing Characteristics of the Sikh *Panth*

This paper is based on the observation that the transmission of meditative awareness is no longer at the centre of Sikh practice. Numerous apparent changes in the historic vitality and integrity of the Sikh *Panth* may be traced to this development. In this section, we will briefly examine changes that have occurred in five aspects of Sikh culture: spiritual training and education, practice, culture, self-concept, sovereignty, and outreach.

5.1 Spiritual Training and Education

As we have previously seen, during the formative years of Sikh dharma, its leadership frequently emanated from its youth. From these examples, we can assume that spiritual training and education began very early in life.

Today however, Gurdwaras are typically administered by senior members of the community with minimal concern for the spiritual needs of children and youth. The ignorance of the soulful potentialities of the young and the neglect of their spiritual training may be partially attributed to the dominant secular educational model.⁵² Rather than focussing on character development, secular schooling gives training in skills designed to give a person an edge in an increasingly competitive, technology-driven world. As members of a religious minority and often as immigrants, Sikhs are particularly vulnerable to pressures to compete and be materially successful.

Several writers have described the shortcomings of Gurdwaras in passing the Sikh spiritual tradition to new generations.⁵³ Most of these studies focus on emigrant communities in the West, but the dynamic is practically identical in Punjab. A common issue is a confusion among parents between those values and practices which are religious and those which are merely cultural. One generally shared frustration among youngsters is that they feel they cannot both be Sikh and Westernized. Most Gurdwaras feed this apparent

dissonance by offering children Punjabi classes, but no form of spiritual training, as though by merely learning to read and write in their mother tongue these children will grow to be fully realized Sikhs of the Guru.⁵⁴

5.2 Practice

A culture of deep meditation and service filled the early Sikh community. In this spiritual environment, saints were created, *Gurbani* was written, the *Adi Granth* was compiled, *Miri Piri* was founded, and *Khalsa* was born. Sikh culture was graced with simplicity and a lack of pretentious formality.

By comparison, rituals and readings are now the main occupation of the *Granthis* (priests), *Paathis* readers, and *Ragis* (musicians) in most Sikh temples. The rituals and conventions of present day Sikh culture take up several pages of instructions on the SGPC website.⁵⁵ The culture of Gurdwaras today does not foster self-experience, self-empowerment or community development. In this presentation, we will call this trend the ‘brahminization’ of Sikh practice.

In recent times, it may be that the man who most truthfully shared the living, informal spirit of Guru Nanak was Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa. In his thirty-six years of active teaching, he shared a consistent message that God is near at hand and accessible through meditation and good actions. Siri Singh Sahib also warned of the corrupting influence of ritualism. The following is a quote from a lecture.

Guru Nanak said, ‘I don’t want heaven. I don’t want hell. I don’t want imperial kingdom. And I don’t want to be a beggar. I don’t want anything. I just long to communicate with You through the *Shabd* (Word). You are my *Shabd* and I am your response.’

Look at that relationship! Sikh religion has to be understood – by Sikhs also. Sikh religion has become the biggest pivot of Brahmanism. It has lost its track. It has gone astray. Nothing is understood.⁵⁶

With the increasing wealth of the community, Gurdwaras continue to be built, bigger and more ostentatious, and readings continue to be commissioned. Seniors rule the holy places as presidents and committees with no thought for the next hundred years. Children and youth are bored with Gurdwara and seek their destiny elsewhere.

5.3 Culture

In its early centuries, the sublime awareness communicated by *Gurbani* was readily accessible because of the culture of meditation and service at the heart of the Sikh community. Practical role models and encouragement in the practice of meditation abounded for young and old.

Gurbani is today widely interpreted as theology and taught in the abstract. Translations usually centre around a distant, male God. The papers presented at a conference on *Mool Mantra* organized by the Department of Guru Nanak Studies at Guru Nanak Dev University in 1973, and subsequently published as *Sikh Concept of the Divine* illustrates this well. These papers do not address the personal realization of *Mool Mantra*, but contend only with conceptual and linguistic interpretations.⁵⁷ The following depiction of *Mool Mantra*, from Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee’s publication of *Siri Guru Granth Sahib* in English, serves as an example of this thinking. In this paper, we will use the term ‘theologization’ to describe the transition from a culture of experience to one focused on theology.

There is but one God. True is His Name, creative His personality and immortal His form. He is without fear, sans enmity, unborn and self-illuminated. By the Guru’s grace (He is obtained).⁵⁸

Giving *Gurbani*, and especially the *Mool Mantra*, an abstract interpretation and treating it as though it were a matter understandable only by scholars, creates a divide between individual Sikhs and their Guru. If academics who should know better make *Gurbani* impersonal and hard to understand for adults, this is

especially the case among young people who are usually mere afterthoughts in Gurdwara culture.

5.4 Self-concept

Originally, a Sikh of the Guru was defined by their soulful activities, specifically their meditation in the pre-dawn hours and throughout the day. The classical definition of a Sikh is given by Guru Ram Das:

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ॥
ਉਦਮੁ ਕਰੇ ਭਲਕੇ ਪਰਭਾਤੀ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ਕਰੇ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰਿ ਨਾਵੈ॥
ਉਪਦੇਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਜਪੁ ਜਾਪੈ ਸਭਿ ਕਿਲਵਿਖ ਪਾਪ ਦੇਖ ਲਹਿ ਜਾਵੈ॥
ਫਿਰਿ ਚੜੈ ਦਿਵਸੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਗਾਵੈ ਬਹਦਿਆ ਉਠਦਿਆ ਹਰਿਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ॥
ਜੋ ਸਾਸਿ ਗਿਰਾਸਿ ਧਿਆਏ ਮੇਰਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਸੋ ਗੁਰਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ॥

Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 305-306

One who considers himself a disciple of the True Guru should rise before the coming of daylight
And contemplate God's Name. In the early hours of the morning, they should endeavour to bathe
In the ambrosial pool while repeating the Name taught by the Guru. In this way, they truly erase their sins.
Then, with the arrival of dawn, they should sing *Gurbani* and reflect on God's Name all through the day.
One who with each breath and morsel remembers my God, God is a beloved disciple of the Guru.

Today, the terms 'Punjabi' and 'Sikh' and are often confused. Movements in both the US and UK are presently engaged in efforts to have Sikhs recognized as a distinct ethnic (not religious) group in future national censuses.⁵⁹ Punjab is the birthplace of Guru Nanak, but a true Sikh is someone who practices a daily discipline and lives the lifestyle taught by the Guru. Eating, speaking and dressing Punjabi does not make one a Sikh. We will use the term 'ethnicization' here to describe attitudes and behaviours that support the reduction of the Sikh community from a spiritual movement to a cultural group.

5.5 Sovereignty

In its early days, the Sikh *Panth* conducted itself as a sovereign spiritual nation. This is no longer the case and may be attributed to two plausible causes: inherited psychological trauma and the brainwashing incurred when Sikhs lived under British rule.

Psychological trauma impacts self-esteem and the capacity for self-regulation, and can be transmitted through generations.⁶⁰ Recovery from the accumulated trauma of 18th century holocausts, 19th century colonization, and the horrors of 1947 and 1984 may require many years of self-reflection and healing. Until this healing has occurred, unconscious trauma may play a role in the day to day life of the *Panth*.

Many Sikhs today take perverse pride in what may be termed 'badges of bondage' acquired during the period of British rule. Having finally inflicted defeat on the Sikh nation in 1849, the British were expert at rewarding their helpers with land, status and lucrative employment, and at destroying the lives of those who opposed them. Bhai Jawahar Singh, son of the legendary general of the Sikh Raj, Hari Singh Nalwa, had his lands taken away and was refused even a pension to live on, while the traitor Teja Singh was given a landed estate with a handsome income for the rest of his life. The Namdharis were the first to boycott British education, fashion, justice, and its postal service. Its leaders were made to suffer for their choices. The Akalis continued the effort for self-rule, but the British did their best to soften their opposition with perks and various kinds of corruption. Before long, they had many lassidrinking Punjabis drinking tea, rolling their beards up into little nets, fighting their wars, and adopting English tastes and values.⁶¹ Today's addiction to black tea, the habit of beard-tying or being 'clean-shaven,' reliance on Western justice, a preference for Western fashions, absorption in consumerism and uncritical acceptance of corporate culture go largely unchallenged in Sikh culture, having long ago been abjectly absorbed and accepted into Sikh thinking.

5.6 Outreach

People say that Guru Nanak taught and travelled far and wide, reaching Mecca in the west, Tibet in the north, Assam in the east, and Sri Lanka to the south.⁶² The following Gurus also went on teaching tours to spread the faith.⁶³

While there are several Sikh missionary colleges in Punjab and Delhi today, their graduates are for internal consumption only, serving only existing Punjabi and Hindi speaking congregations. These colleges do not graduate true missionaries.⁶⁴

Such effective outreach as exists is independent of any religious body. Khalsa Aid, based in England, bravely provides vital supplies and disaster relief in Iraq, Mali, Greece, even flood-stricken England.⁶⁵ Sikh yoga and meditation organizations originating in Siri Singh Sahib's missionary efforts in the US also bring the *Shabad* Guru and aspects of Sikh lifestyle to dozens of countries on six continents.⁶⁶ Both groups, however, are limited in their support from the larger Sikh community.

In the golden years of Sikh spirituality, the Sikh community was awake and alive to the real challenges of that time. The Guru and his followers opposed tyranny, bigotry, and ritualistic religion. They also meditated, worked honestly, and shared their earnings with the needy. Sikhs were known and appreciated for their courage and integrity. Today, the traditional prayer *sarbat da bhalla* – may the good of all be served – is more often understood as 'may my good be served.' This change in attitude naturally affects the reality of Sikh dharma. It also raises questions for Sikh youth finding their spiritual identity.

6. Restoring the Transmission of Meditative Awareness

The following is a proposed six-part prescription for restoring the transmission of meditative awareness:

6.1 From Secular Education to Spiritual Training

Create a global initiative to enlighten Sikh parents, educators, and community leaders about the spiritual potential and needs of young people. Develop a culture and create tools and opportunities to give children and youth meditation training, spiritual guidance, and suitable roles of community responsibility from an early age.

While the push to compete, capitalize and exploit remains undeniable, there is also a growing global trend toward holism, cooperation and the realization of psychosocial well-being.⁶⁷ The best education in a world of increasing societal pressures, a deteriorating environment and declining planetary resources will likely be one that fosters resilience, adaptability and grace under pressure.⁶⁸ The best students of this system, the masters of meditation, may well be the leaders of tomorrow.

6.2 From Brahmanism to Fostering Well-being

Train *Granthis* away from ritual readings and observances and instead toward fostering mental, physical, social and spiritual well-being in themselves and their congregations.⁶⁹

While there will certainly continue to be Sikhs who will like to pay a trained professional to do a prayer, sing a *Shabad* or do a reading for them, the training of *Granthis* and others in evidence-based healing arts and social work would likely enhance the quality of life in Sikh communities. Together with creating a cadre of culturally-sensitive wellness experts, this initiative might also increase the value and dignity of *Granthis* in the community.

6.3 From Theology to Science

Educate Sikhs and the general public on scientific findings supporting the positive relationship between meditation and well-being. Support research on the different types of Sikh meditation and their benefits.⁷⁰ Up to the present, the majority of meditation studies have focussed on Buddhist and Hindu practices, while

just a handful of researchers have looked at Sikh practices. Not only Sikhs, but the world may become richer should Sikh institutions in Amritsar and abroad develop policies supporting the science of Sikh meditation.

6.4 From Ethnic to Universal

Let all Sikh media emphasize the universal dimensions of Sikh teachings. Encourage, incentivize and arrange cross-cultural exchanges within and beyond the global Sikh community.

A global trend toward universal values and standards is on-going. This movement encompasses a tendency toward inclusion and against prejudice of all kinds. It includes an increasing view, unthinkable a generation ago, but very much a part of Guru Nanak's vision, that other species share with humans the capacity to feel, reason and communicate.⁷¹ In its purest expression, it may oppose stale religious conventions and embrace instead a simple love of all things living.⁷² One might speculate that with its life-affirming values and its regard for the unshorn human body as an extension of intrinsic being, Guru Nanak's way of life is a timely expression of the universal values of "biophilia," the love of life.

6.5 From Colonial Thinking to Sovereign Mind

Celebrate and instil pride in original Sikh values and practices, while fostering education in global cultures, languages and religions. Encourage engagement and service in the wider community. The realization of true sovereignty begins with a life of self-discipline. According to psychologist M.E.P. Seligman, deficits in self-control often are related to depression, while exercises in self-mastery may increase self-confidence and resilience.⁷³ Spiritual sovereignty involves a natural pride in one's own heritage, while retaining an appreciation of all things good and a disdain for things destructive and unhealthy, regardless of their origin.

6.6 Outreach

If Sikh individuals and institutions develop faith and confidence in themselves as purveyors of an empowering, science-based, deeply ecological, universal, service-based way of life, it may profoundly alter relationships within the Sikh community, while also changing the dynamic between Sikhs and the rest of the world. In the author's view, a stressed, increasingly insular world desperately needs the sort of meditation and service inspired by Guru Nanak. Were Sikhs to begin to widely believe, practice and share the best of their tradition, it would certainly be a win-win for everyone.

7. A Case Study with *Mool Mantra* in Human Terms

While today's predominant Sikh culture at best merely patronizes the spiritual experiences and potentialities of children and youth, the case study described here sets out to assess an eight-year-old Sikh child's capacity to understand the core concepts underlying the *Mool Mantra*. In this case study we will use an interpretation of Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogi which depicts *Mool Mantra* as a template for self-realized being.

You are the One. *Ek*: One. *Ong Kaar*: You are the creation of the One. *Sat Naam*: Your identity is truth. *Kartaa Purkh*: You are the doer of everything. These are the faculties of God. *Nirbhao, Nirvair*—You are fearless and you are revengeless. Why? You are *Akaal Moorat*. That is because you are a personified God: *Akaal Moorat*. And when you reach that faculty of realization, then comes the other sentence: *Ajoonee, Saibhang, Gur Prasaad*. You are self-born because you are the product of the karma. *Ajoonee*: You didn't come. You didn't go. You are here. Here and now. You always talk about 'here and now.' *Ajoonee* means which does not come, which does not go. That is you. This identity is here. Soul came. Soul will go. Subtle body came. Subtle body will go. You won't. Your identity is here now! *Saibhang*: by your own grace, by your own karma, by your own individuality, by your own essence, by your own consciousness, by your own corruption, by your own honesty, you are, you

are! Nobody will tell you who you are. Nobody can tell you who you are. People can only help you. Therefore just remember in the end it said if you do not know all that, then you know by one virtue and that virtue is *Gur Prasaad*. Identify with the identity of the acknowledged learned. You will become learned.⁷⁴

The simplified version of Khalsa Yogi's *Mool Mantra* interpretation used here is designed to fulfil the criteria of being:

- 1) accessible to the young
- 2) based on principles of well-being
- 3) science-based and experiential
- 4) universal (non-gendered, non-cultured)
- 5) sovereign (encouraging self-regulation)

Each phrase of *Mool Mantra* is given in the light of human experience with a reverse meaning, designed to help clarify the original meaning by contrast. These phrases, and their opposites, were illustrated by Japp Kaur over the course of a series of visits in early 2017, after a few classes of meditation instruction with the author. It should be noted that the artist required very little guidance in the execution of her work. Once the purport, simple meaning, and reverse meaning were explained to Japp, she set to work with alacrity and intuitive ease.

ੴ 'IK ONG KAAR' (figure 1)

One Creator Creation

Basic translation: The is Oneness between Creator and Creation.

Purport: All the world is at play. May creativity, respect, and goodwill prevail.

Simple meaning: 'I play well.'

Contrast: Creator and Creation are estranged.

Contrasting meaning: 'I am bored.'



figure 1: 'IK ONG KAAR'

In her depiction, Japp shows a clear difference between the girl at play with her companion and the solitary bored girl who appears frustrated.

ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ 'SAT NAAM' (figure 2)

Intrinsic Identity

Translated as an affirmation: Be true to your Self.

Purport: May we be guided by our intrinsic values and meditation.

Simple meaning: 'I am my Self. God and me are One.'

Contrast: I have no sense of myself or my value.

Contrasting meaning: 'I want attention.'

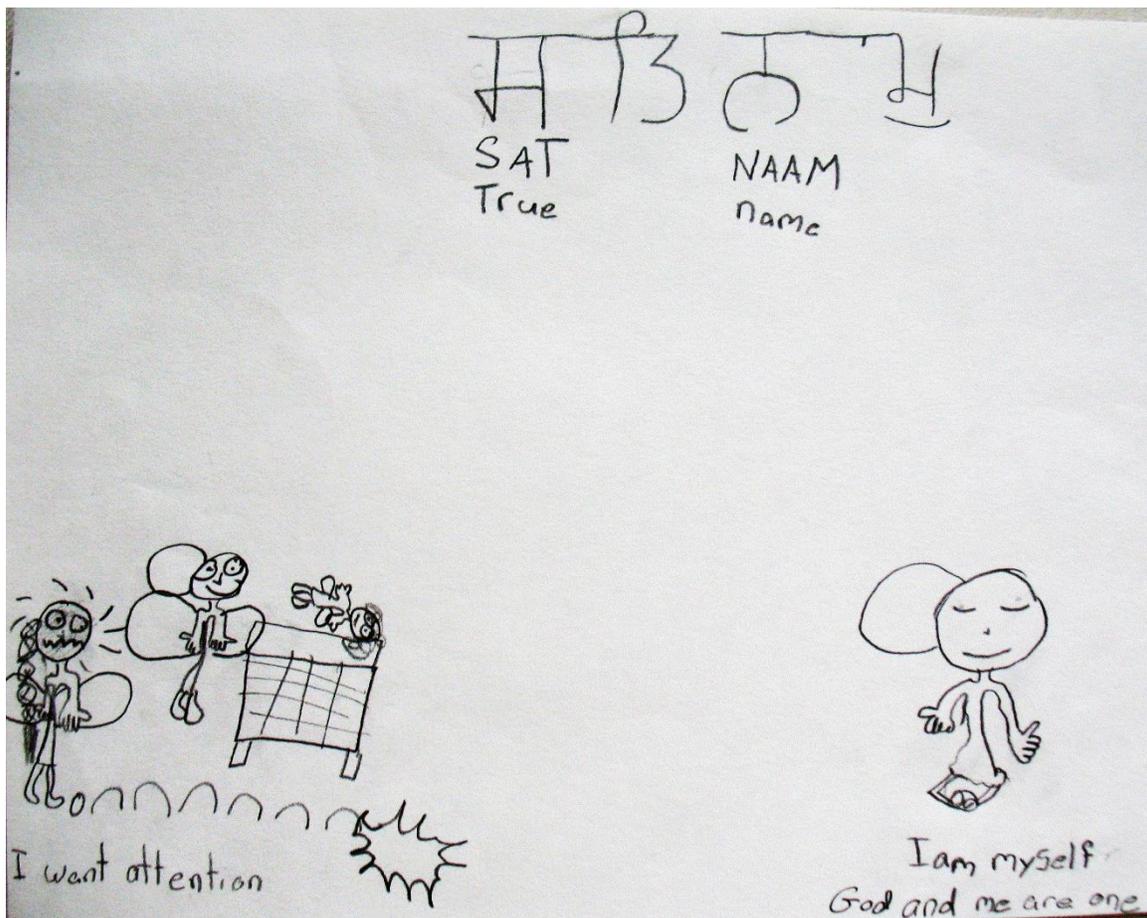


figure 2: 'SAT NAAM'

In this depiction, Japp shows the inner contentment and peace of the girl who has realized herself in contrast with her opposite who seems to be unsuccessfully competing for others' attention.

ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ 'KARTA PURKH' (figure 3)

Doing Being

Basic translation: Being is known through its actions.

Purport: May we seek out, and never shirk from, worthy actions.

Simple meaning: 'I am not discouraged.'

Contrast: Being is discouraged and does not act.

Contrasting meaning: 'There is no point in trying.'



figure 3: 'KARTA PURKH'

Japp shows the resilience of the girl who has fallen from the jungle gym in comparison with the 'loser' who has given up trying.

ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰ 'NIRBHAO NIRVAIR' (figure 4)

Fearless Revengeless

Basic translation: Intrinsic being, realized through meditation, is fearless and revengeless.

Purport: Through meditation, may we live fearlessly and resist the impulse toward vengeance.

Simple meaning: 'I am fearless and revengeless.'

Contrast: My mind is consumed by fear and vengeance.

Contrasting meaning: 'I am afraid and angry.'

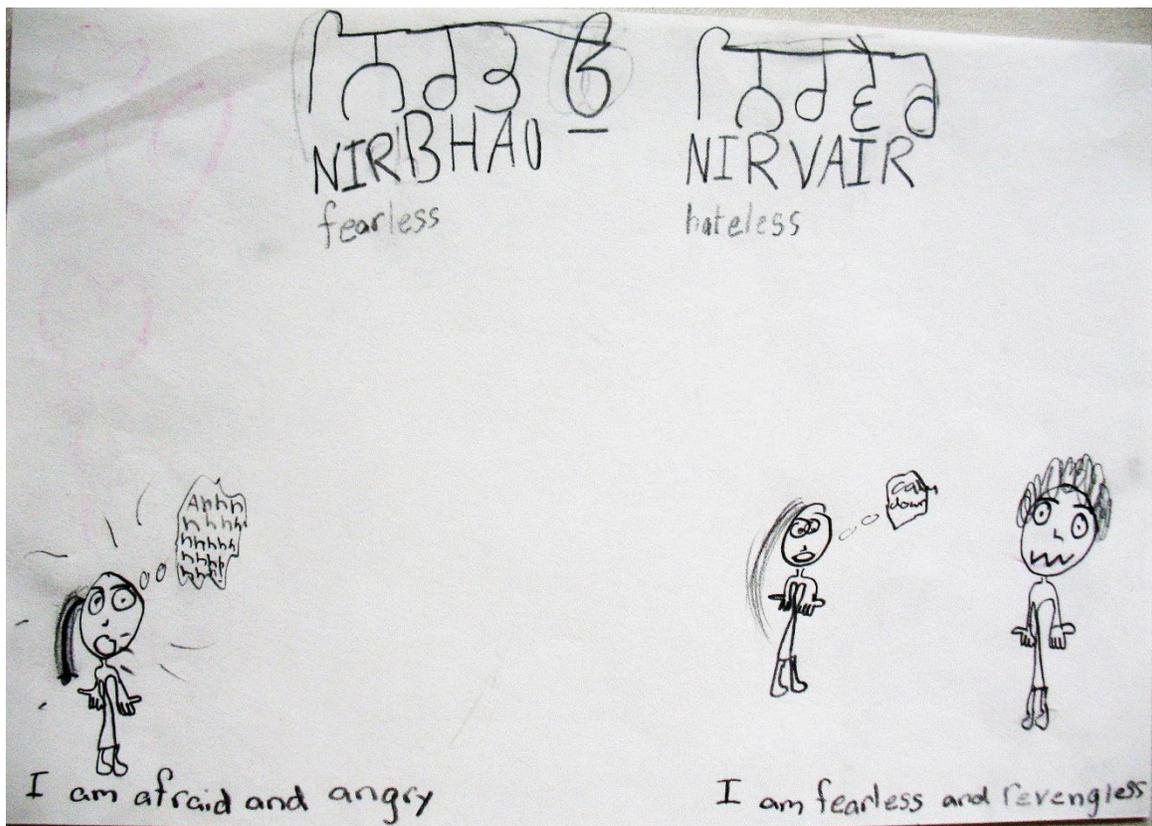


figure 4: 'NIRBHAO NIRVAIR'

Japp's Nirbhao-Nirvair girl tells herself to calm down in the face of provocation, while her opposite seems to be having an emotional meltdown.

ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ 'AKAAL MOORAT' (figure 5)

Timeless Rendering

Basic translation: The human form is a perfect embodiment of timeless spirit.

Purport: That body is good which does good things.

Simple meaning: 'My body is a beautiful temple and God lives inside.'

Contrast: Being is dissociated from embodiment.

Contrasting meaning: 'I don't like my body.'

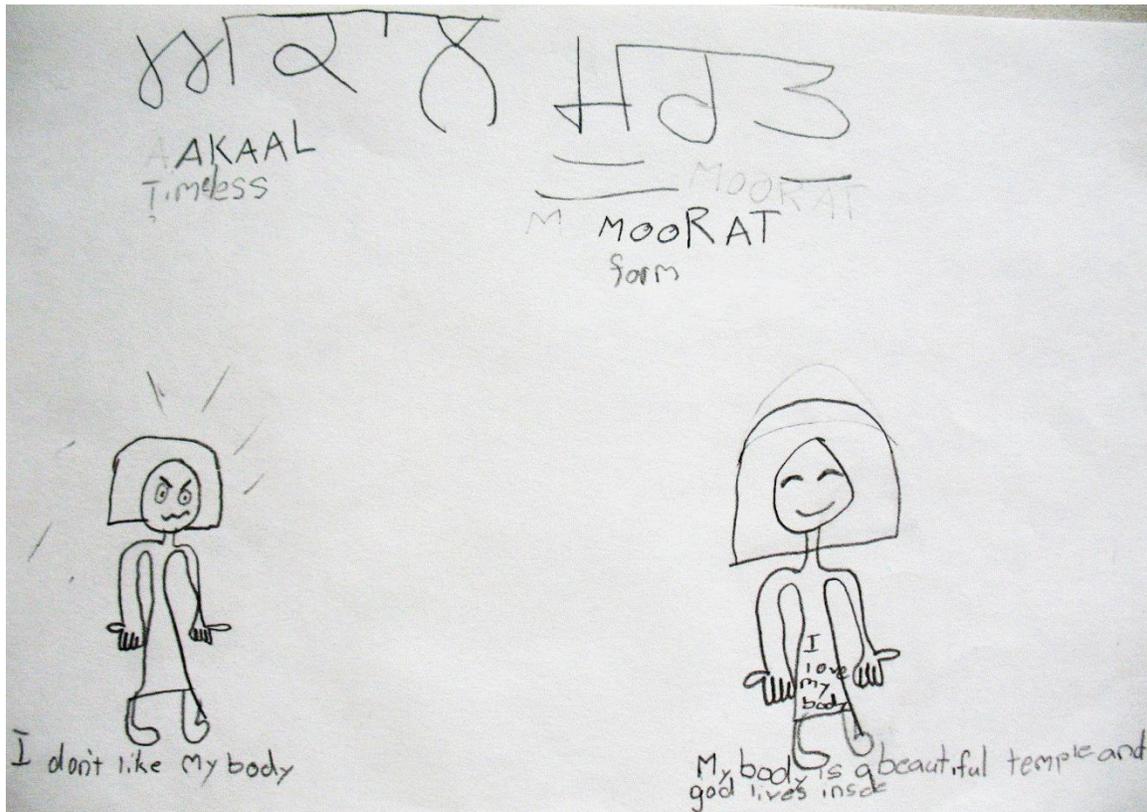


figure 5: 'AKAAL MOORAT'

In this picture, Japp shows the role model smiling and blissful. She obviously loves her body and stands in stark contrast with the other girl whose contorted face expresses profound frustration and malaise.

ਅਜੂਨੀ 'AJOONEE' (figure 6)

Wombless

Basic translation: Being is independent of any specific incarnation.

Purport: May we fulfill the purpose of this life this one time.

Simple meaning: 'The world is a school and we have been here many times.'

Contrast: Being is attached to this body and this lifetime only.

Contrasting meaning: 'Life is pointless.'

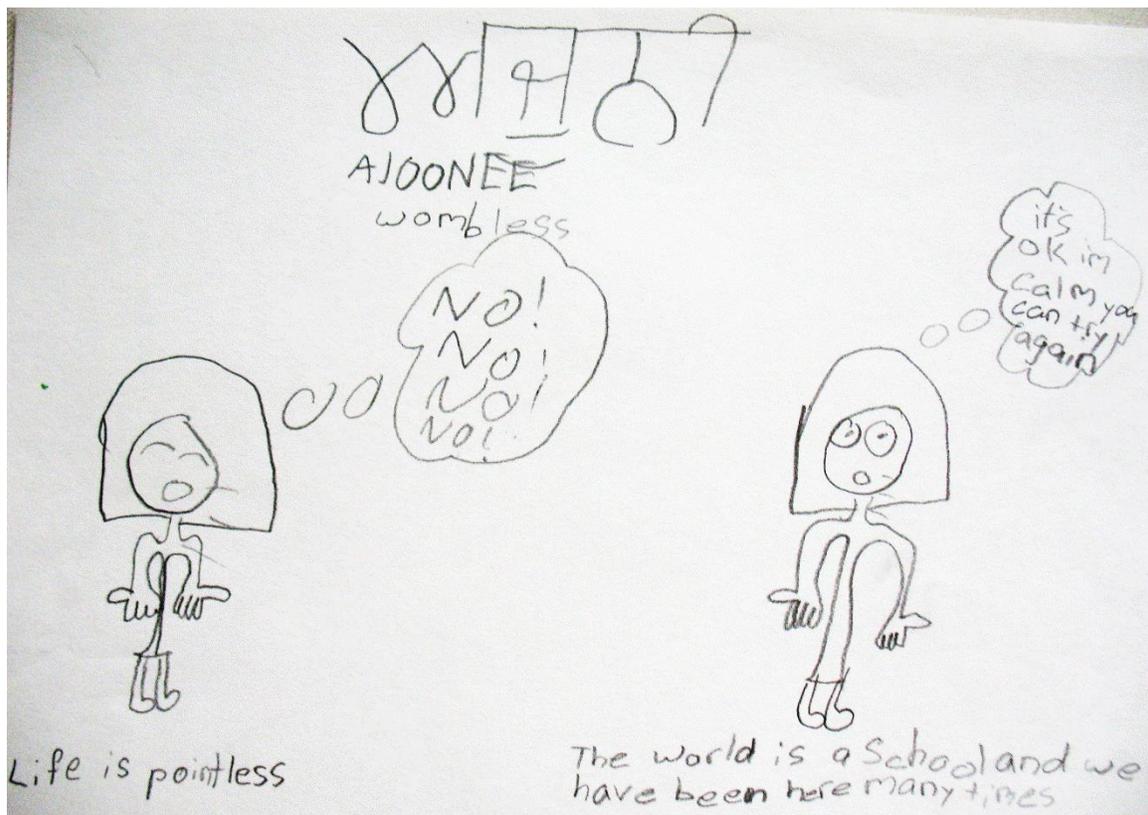


figure 6: 'AJOONEE'

Japp's wise girl in this picture appears to be facing a challenge by calming herself and encouraging herself to try again, while the unwise girl sees no point and is immersed in heated frustration and denial.

ਸੈਭੰ 'SAIBHANG' (figure 7)

Self-existent

Basic translation: Existing in and of, and ultimately for, oneself

Purport: May we experience the blessing of being happy with ourselves.

Simple meaning: 'I am, I am.'

Contrast: Existing primarily for the gratification of others.

Simple meaning: 'Who am I?'

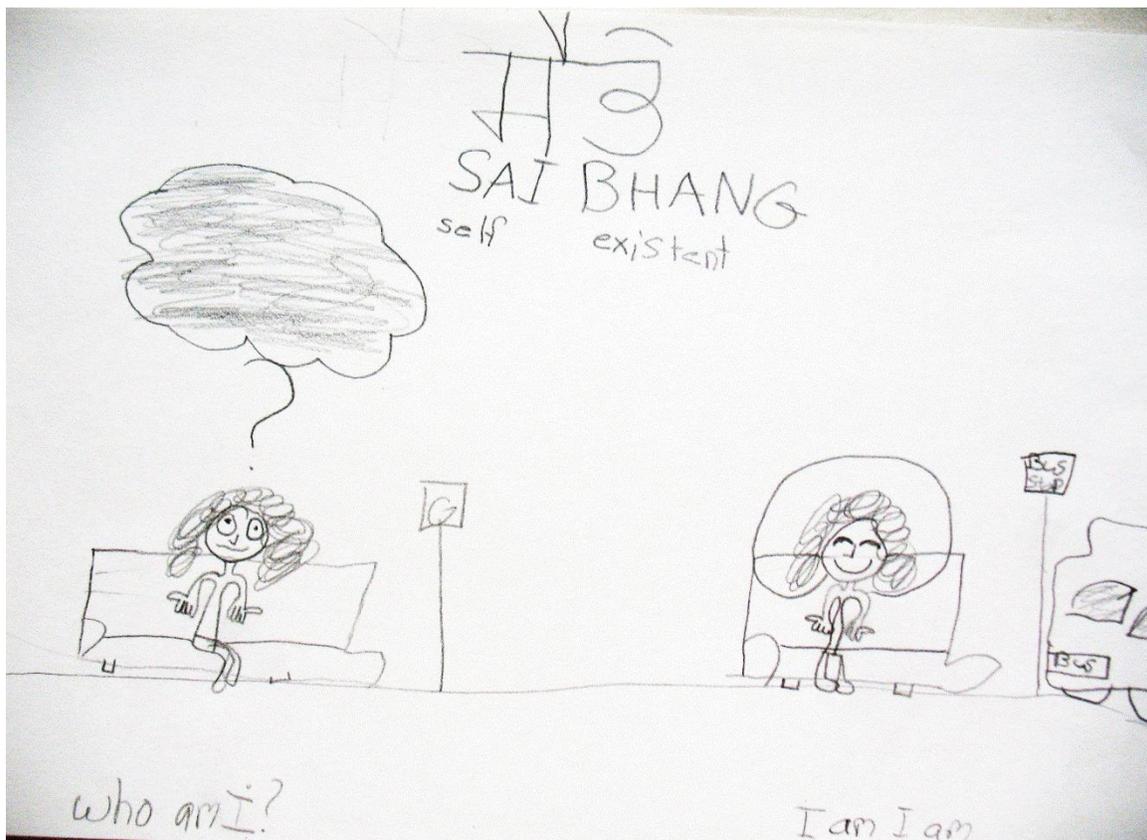


figure 7: 'SAIBHANG'

In this picture, Japp's happy girl is immersed in spiritual bliss. It is not clear whether the bus is just arriving or has just left the stop, but she seems perfectly attuned to the situation, while her unhappy girl ruminates under a dark cloud.

ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ 'GUR PRASAAD' (figure 8)

Guru's Grace

Basic translation: Intrinsic being is realized by the Guru's grace. It is inherently graceful.

Purport: The more realized we are, the sweeter we become.

Simple meaning: 'I am good. I am kind to myself and others.'

Contrast: Life without wisdom and without grace.

Simple expression: 'Get lost!'

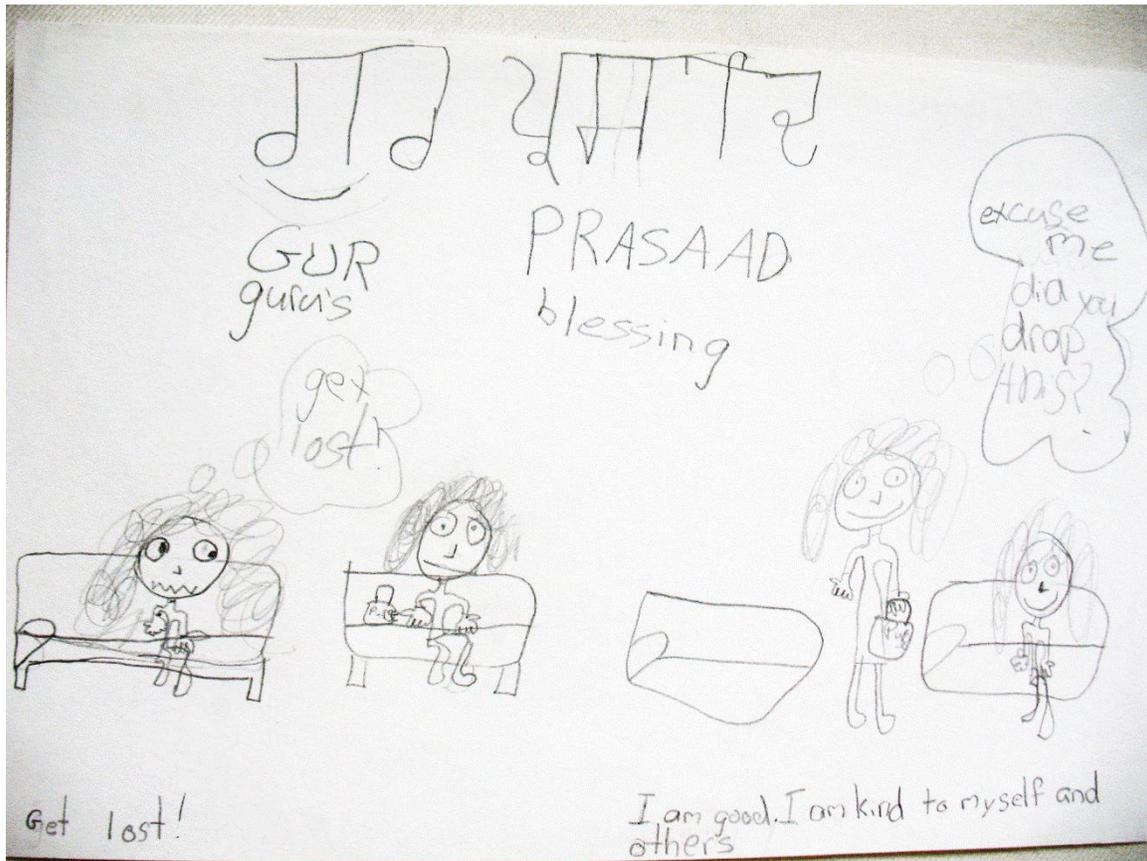


figure 8: 'GUR PRASAAD'

In 'Gur Prasaad,' Japp shows her role model being a blessing to others by retrieving another girl's lost purse. Her opposite is utterly annoyed and wishes her neighbour to 'get lost.'

In this case study we are able to see a simple case of transmission of spiritual awareness from a Sikh adult practiced in meditation to a young Sikh child with a beginning practice of meditation. We can observe that the young artist seems to have understood the core values of the *Mool Mantra* set in a human context and to have presented each of its constituent ideas with creativity and artistry appropriate to her age. Further studies of children, some with and some without meditative experience, may deepen our understanding of this original case study.

8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the important role of meditation in early Sikh history. We have appreciated the evocative depiction of meditative experience using a rich pallet of conceptual, locational, physiological and subjective terminologies. We have studied *Gurbani* and historical accounts of the passing of the Guru's meditative awareness to his foremost disciples. We have also appreciated the role of the *Mool Mantra* in this transmission and taken note of Guru Gobind Singh's warning against leaving his distinctive path and taking up a path of rituals. We have examined Sikh history and found there the first hints of the breaking of this chain of transmission in the mid 1700's when sheer survival from persecution and war were primary concerns. In the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, we observed the declining status of women and the rise of rituals in the imperial court and throughout Sikh society. We have also studied the period of British colonial rule over the Sikhs, when many British habits and forms of thinking became predominant, never to recede even with the achievement of political independence.

Suggestions have been made to recover the vital transmission of meditative awareness from Guru to Sikh. These suggestions would require a refocussing of energies toward: spiritual training of children and youth, fostering individual and community well-being, research and education on the benefits of Sikh meditation, developing a culture of Sikh pride, and thoughtful outreach to other communities.

Sikh children and youth present a case of special concern. Innocent and unknowledgeable about Sikh teachings and traditions, they are utterly dependent on parents and elders for their guidance and support. As our case study has shown, a modern Sikh child as young as eight years old is capable of grasping and working with core Sikh concepts if they are presented to them in simple language and in human terms. The legacies of Guru Harkrishan, Bibi Nanaki, Baba Budha, Baba Fateh Singh and Baba Zorowar Singh bear witness that children can reach to high levels of spiritual realization if only they are properly instructed.

Children are children, but they are not stupid. They are not naturally dull and listless. They do not naturally crave digital entertainments. Insensitivity and addictive behaviours are first modelled by elders who in their pursuit of worldly objectives ignore the reality of the precious, God-given souls at their feet.

Adults are uniquely situated to guide the fortunes of the young. Through their teaching and example, they may guide them toward egotistical achievements of wealth, power and status and their attendant stresses and calamities. With wisdom, they may guide them from a young age, in the womb even, to a life of contemplation and service of others.

Much is made of the supposed status of women in Sikh dharma, equal to men in all things. Our study instead shows a dramatic drop in the role and prestige of womankind during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a decline from which Sikh women arguably have never recovered. With the decline in women's position in Sikh society, there is a virtual disappearance of women and children in meaningful roles in Sikh dharma.

Sikh dharma has behind it a glorious history of empowerment and social transformation. It carries with it also generations of physical and psychological trauma. It may be that many Sikhs today are too haunted by the ghosts and demons of the near and distant past – of the genocidal Mir Mannu, the traitor Lal Singh, the mass-murderer, General Dyer; the Partitionist, Muhammad Jinnah; the cunning Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi – to take their rightful place in the present.

The interruption of the unbroken transmission of the Guru's meditative awareness may be part cause and part consequence of these harrowing turns of history. It is the author's hope that a renewed and invigorated transmission of that inspired state of mind may take the Sikh nation from the depths of despair and disunity to a return to the heights of dedicated service and love of humanity.

It is hoped that the suggestions made here will be discussed and improved on by those with an interest in them. Assuming the suggestions are more or less valid, a larger question arises: Who will implement them? Will souls at the apex of the foremost religious organization of Sikh dharma, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee in Amritsar recognize a need for change and take the lead? Is there a possibility of grassroots education and mobilization? What are the chances of everyone working together to this end?

Time will tell.

Notes

- 1 This line is taken from *The Song of the Khalsa* by Livtar Singh Khalsa.
Daughters of the Khalsa, in your strength our future lies.
Give our children fearless minds to see the world through the Guru's eyes. (Khalsa, 1976)
- 2 Kapany, 2017. By funding and otherwise supporting these aspects of Sikh culture, Kapany and others perpetuate current structures, values, and thought processes.
- 3 *Saahibzaadee* (ਸਾਹਿਬਜ਼ਾਦੀ, feminine of *saahibzaadaa*, ਸਾਹਿਬਜ਼ਾਦਾ) is a princess, in this case, a spiritual princess (Nabha, 1981, 178).
- 4 Meditation was a central activity of early Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism (Olivelle, 1998, 3). Evidence of the practice has been found in Indus Valley wall art dating from about 5,000 to 3,500 BC (Puff, 2013).
- 5 Possibly the earliest scientific meditation study was published in the 1930's (Alexander, 1931). Until the late 1960's and the seminal work of Herbert Benson, these types of efforts remained unusual (Monro et al, 1989; Williamson, 2010). The vast majority of studies have thus far focussed on the effects of simple techniques such as Transcendental Meditation, involving unstructured recitation of a monosyllabic mantra, Mindfulness Meditation, with its realignment of mental focus, and various breath-based meditations (Goyal et al, 2014). Most have been quantitative studies focussed on specific physiological responses to meditation, such as levels of various neurochemicals. One 2014 review (Fox et al, 2014) has reported on research into changes in brain structure associated with various contemplative practices. Few studies have been done on complex meditations with various constituent modalities, such as posture, mantra, mudra, breath sequencing, and mental focus. Studies are also lacking in temporal aspects of meditation, such as meditation in the pre-dawn hours as compared with other times of day. There is also a lack of work on the effects of long term meditation on personality development. Moreover, many clinical trials are lacking in methodological rigour (Ospina et al, 2008).
- 6 The effects of longer-term contemplative practice are as yet little evaluated and understood. One study of long-term Buddhist meditators (Lutz & al, 2004) revealed a distinctive pattern of sustained electroencephalographic high-amplitude gamma-band oscillations and phase-synchrony during meditation, compared with controls. Another trial of Buddhist meditators (Brefcynski-Lewis et al, 2006) showed variance in regions of brain activation between long-term meditators and novices.
- 7 Siri Guru Granth Sahib, comprising 1,430 pages of *Gurbani*, is considered the living Guru of all Sikhs (Taran Singh, 1998, 239).
- 8 This formative period of Sikh history is covered by Harbans Singh (Hb. Singh, 1994, 12-104), J. S. Grewal (Grewal, 1990, 28-81), and Gopal Singh (Go. Singh, 1988, 71-330).
- 9 Sikh missionaries are known to have first been deputed with various regions of responsibility in the time of Guru Amar Das, 1552-1574, the furthest from Punjab perhaps being Kabul, Afghanistan (Padam, 1995; F. Singh, 1979, 116-129). Around 1705, Guru Gobind Singh also trained and sent teachers considerable distances to propagate the faith (Gandhi, 2004, 305-306). Later in the 18th and into the 19th century, the order of Udasis, then also the order of Nirmalas continued the work of spreading the faith within India (Oberoi, 1994, 124-129), although Surjeet Gandhi remarks that the Nirmalas' 'services to the cause of Sikhism in the later part of the eighteenth century and onward were not worthy of admiration' because of their view that Sikh dharma existed as an outgrowth of Hindu tradition (Gandhi, 2004, 134).
- 10 Sikh women endured horrible sufferings during the mid-18th century when the Afghan rulers tried to break the spirit of the nation (Go. Singh, 1988, 391; Hb. Singh, 1994, 122).
- 11 Sikh men were called upon to defend against invaders and oppressors beginning in the sixth Guru and tenth Guru. Typically, they were vastly outnumbered and greatly out-provisioned by the armies of their Mughal, Afghan, and hill raja opponents (Gupta, 1973, 116-120; 150-159, 198-209, 218-220; Go. Singh, 1988, 224-232, 271-273, 292-297, 301-313). Through most of the 18th century,

- Sikhs engaged in guerrilla warfare or outright battles with Mughal and Afghan armies. (Latif, 1964, 274-344; Go. Singh, 1988, 333-440).
- 12 Bhai Kanhaiya adopted the Sikh way of life under Guru Tegh Bahadur, but was made famous by his impartial service at Anandpur in 1705. When his fellows complained to Guru Gobind Singh, Kanhaiya replied: 'I saw no Mughals or Sikhs in the battlefield. I only saw the Guru's face in everyone.' (Padam, 1996, 424) The account continues that the tenth Guru expressed his pleasure his disciple had correctly understood his teachings (Padam, *ibid.*; Go. Singh, 1988, 304).
- 13 According to MacAuliffe and his sources, Bhai Kaliana was first sentenced with the amputation of a leg and expulsion for his nonobservance of customary ritual observances in the kingdom of Mandi where he was seeking assistance for the completion of the great Sikh temple being constructed in Amritsar. When the raja subsequently fell ill and only Bhai Kaliana was able to heal him, Raja Hari Sen gave him the required the help he needed, then accompanied him to Amritsar and received spiritual instruction from Guru Arjan (MacAuliffe, 1978, 3:6-7). While omitting reference to the healing of the raja, Tara Singh describes Bhai Kaliana as being 'specially blessed by Guru Arjan for his dedication and piety' (Tara Singh, 1996, 417).
- 14 Bhai Jetha was a devoted Sikh who attended on Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind (M. Singh, 1996, 2:374). According to MacAuliffe, Jetha went to Delhi to secure Guru Hargobind's release from prison and, in meeting the Emperor Jahangir, was able to relieve him of his fearful visions. The Guru afterwards remarked that Bhai Jetha appeared conceited after his performance and admonished him (MacAuliffe, 1978, 4:24-25)
- 15 According to Sikh tradition, Guru Hargobind's son, Baba Atal turned up one morning to resume play with his friend Mohan to find his family distraught and mourning. Atal approached Mohan, who was lying under a sheet. Touching him with a stick, he urged Mohan to rise and resume their play, upon which the boy stood up. Guru Hargobind was not pleased at this outcome and scolded his son for interfering with the divine Will. Baba Atal took the admonition to heart. Respectfully bowing, he went to the Harimandir Sahib temple and entered a deep meditation whereby he took leave of his body and passed from this world. A nine-story octagonal edifice was subsequently erected at that spot to commemorate the Guru's nine-year-old son (MacAuliffe, 1978, 4:130-132; Gu. Singh, 1995, 208). Incredible as this event might seem, it may be seen as a foreshadowing of the tenth Guru's Baisakhi miracle of beheading five disciples and returning them to life. (Ashok, 1997, 283) While accounts of people being returned from the dead are very rare, a few cases also exist in Christian and Jewish religious history. (Meredith, 1980, 115)
- 16 According to legend, Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind, resurrected a cow that had been killed by a Sikh hunter, mistaking it for a deer. To appease the angry owner of the dead animal and free his disciple from arrest, Gurditta brought the animal back to life. When the Guru heard of his son's miracle working, he admonished him, saying 'People die every day. Everybody will be bringing their dead to my door. And whom shall I select for reanimation?' (MacAuliffe, 1978, 4:220-221) Gurditta subsequently retired to a quiet place outside of the town where he entered his final meditation (M. Singh, 1996, 2:144-145).
- 17 Tradition states that in order to ingratiate himself with Emperor Aurangzeb, Ram Rai, the elder son of Guru Har Rai performed a number of miracles at his court in Delhi (MacAuliffe, 1978, 4:308). Harbans Singh relates that one old text narrates six, another source says there were forty (Hb. Singh, 1994, 55).
- 18 Tradition states that Baba Buddha was just seven years old when he first met Guru Nanak (MacAuliffe, 1978, I:133). The Master named him *buddha* for his precocious wisdom (MacAuliffe, *op.cit.*; Rajguru, 1995, 399).
- 19 Bhai Jetha, who became the fourth Guru, was orphaned at a young age. He and his maternal grandmother responded to Guru Amar Das's invitation and moved to Goindwal to live with the Master (MacAuliffe, 1978, II:89; Mansukhani, 1997, 451).
- 20 Guru Harkrishan is said to have exerted tremendous self-discipline at an early age. After his meditation, he would join the congregation in their singing of hymns. Satbir Singh specifies the Guru's early rising in his account (S. Singh, 1989, 20-21), while Tarlochan Singh dwells on Guru

- Har Krishan's education and training, and that he 'spent many hours in quiet and meditations (sic)' (Tarlochan Singh, 1981, 18).
- 21 MacAuliffe states that before becoming Guru, Tegh Bahadur remained in the town of Bakala (MacAuliffe, 1978, IV:239), while Banerjee elaborates that 'he lived a strict and holy life and spent most of his time in meditation.' (Banerjee, 1998, 4:330) This was affirmed in Guru Gobind Singh's following account.
- 22 *Tapasia* (ਤਪਸਿਆ, ਤਪਸੀ, ਤਪ) is an intense exercise of self-discipline (Nabha, 1981, 574).
- 23 *Sadhana* (ਸਾਧਣਾ) is an act of spiritual discipline or conquest (Nabha, 1981, 182)
- 24 Dasam Granth is a compilation of *Gurbani* attributed to Guru Gobind Singh (Loehlin & Jaggi, 1995, 514).
- 25 'Mere Man Lochai' is a piece of heart-rending longing composed by Arjan while separated from his father, Guru Ram Das (Go. Singh, 1988, 174-174; MacAuliffe, 1978, 2:278-282).
- 26 Guru Hargobind assumed the guruship upon the martyrdom of his father, Guru Arjan in 1606 (F. Singh, 1996, 233).
- 27 Guru Har Rai was designated the seventh Guru by his grandfather, Guru Hargobind before his passing in 1644 (B. Singh, 1996, 262).
- 28 Guru Harkrishan assumed the guruship in 1661, superseding his elder brother, Ram Rai who had fallen out of favour with his father, Guru Har Rai (B. Singh, 1996, 262).
- 29 *Panth* (ਪੰਥ) is a term used for the whole Sikh community or nation (F. Singh, 1997, 288).
- 30 Gobind Rai (the name of the tenth Guru from his birth in 1666 to his creation of the order of Khalsa in 1699, when he entered the order of Khalsa and adopted the name 'Guru Gobind Singh') effectively became the tenth Guru after the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur in November 1675 and was formally installed in March 1676 (Ga. Singh, 1996, 88).
- 31 Guru Amar Das granted Bibi Bhani her wish that the guruship remain in the family line of the Guru (MacAuliffe, 1978, 2:144; Hn. Singh, 1995, 346).
- 32 Mata Gurji married, as was often the custom, at nine or ten years of age (Banerjee, 1996, 113; MacAuliffe, 1978, 4:189).
- 33 The exact age of Mata Jito at her marriage in 1673 is unknown (MacAuliffe, 1978, 5:2), however her spouse, the tenth Guru would have been about 11 years of age at the time. She gave birth to three sons in 1691, 1696, and 1699 (Ashok, 1996, 385).
- 34 In 1705, Guru Gobind Singh's youngest sons were captured and brought before the governor of Sirhind. Wazir Khan promised Fateh Singh and Zorowar Singh, aged seven and nine, riches and honours, and then threatened them with death should they not embrace Islam. They chose to die martyrs rather than abjure their faith (Gandhi, 2004, 289; Ashok, 1998, 461).
- 35 *Gunas* (ਗੁਣ), numbering three, comprise a traditional Indian system of description and categorization. These three are: *sattwa* representing balance and wisdom, *tamas* inertia, and *rajas* activity or restlessness (Vivekananda, 1973, 288).
- 36 *Turiala* (ਤੁਰੀਆ, ਤੁਰੀਆਗੁਣ, ਤੁਰੀਆਪਦ, ਤੁਰੀਆਵਸਥਾ) is the fourth state of awareness existing beyond the states of dreamless sleep, dreaming sleep, and ordinary waking consciousness (Nabha, 1981, 598).
- 37 In yogic terminology, *tribeni* (ਤ੍ਰਿਬੇਣੀ, ਤ੍ਰਿਬੇਣੀ, ਤ੍ਰਿਬੈਣੀ) refers to the place where the subtle nerve channels, *ira*, *pingala*, and *sushmana* meet at the root of the nose (Nabha, 1981, 608).
- 38 Current research associates increased secretion of GABA, and the 'feel good' chemicals melatonin and dopamine, and decreased secretion of the stress hormones cortisol and norepinephrine, with meditation (Newberg & Iverson, 2003). Possible increases in serotonin and other neurochemicals are speculative owing to complexity and difficulties with measuring methods (Esch, 2014).
- 39 ਜਿਉ ਗੁੰਗੇ ਸਾਕਰ ਮਨ ਮਾਨਿਆ॥੧॥ਐਸਾ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਕਥੈ ਬਨਵਾਰੀ॥ Like the taste of sugar to a mute who cannot describe it, so is the wisdom imparted by the Lord (Siri Guru Granth Sahib, 327).
- 40 Macauliffe, 1909, 1:185.
- 41 *Raaj yoga* (ਰਾਜਯੋਗ) is living royally in the world, yet remaining detached from it (Nabha, 1981, 1029).

- 42 W. H. McLeod's study of 18th and 19th century Sikh codes of conduct shows a focus on regulations meant to inspire social cohesion among the Sikh community and to distinguish it from the Hindus and Muslims (McLeod, 2003, 82-150). For daily discipline, Sikhs are instructed to rise before dawn, bathe, recite *Gurbani*, then join the congregation for communal worship (*Ibid.*, 46, 91, 115, 145). The directive to recite *Gurbani* appears to be a change from the earlier protocol of rising, bathing and meditating on *Naam* (spiritual identity), although the reference to bathing may also imply immersion in meditation.
- 43 According to Harbans Singh, "Conventional and superstitious ritual which, forbidden by the Gurus, had become acceptable as an adjunct of regal pomp and ceremony during the days of Sikh power gained an increasing hold over the Sikh mind." (Ha. Singh, 1994, 190) Gopal Singh cites the belief among many Sikhs after Maharaja Ranjit Singh that 'the basics of their religion... had been corrupted by the resurgence of Brahmanism during the hey-days of their empire.' (Go. Singh, 1988, 602)
- 44 Jolly, 1988, 10.
- 45 Historians differ about the status of women during this period. Certainly, in the golden age of Sikh spirituality, women – particularly the wives, widows, and mothers of the Guru, several of whom might coexist in a given period – were honoured and respected. This practice extended until nearly the mid-1700s, as the tenth Guru's consorts, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Devan, administered some of the affairs of the Khalsa (Ashok, 1998). Bhagat Singh finds evidence that Sikh women enjoyed a status comparable to that of men, or at least 'as compared to the Hindu and Muslim ladies (it was) undoubtedly much superior.' (Bh. Singh, 1990, 319). Singh and Rai describe women's emancipation in the time of Guru Amar Das while also depicting their roles as queens, performers, and concubines in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court (Singh & Rai, 2008, 57-58, 68-74, 81, 153-171) and the maharaja's love of strong alcohol. (*ibid.*, 97, 154, 167, 198) Doris Jakobsh, on the other hand, cites the references of French scientist and traveller V. Jacquemont to prostitution in Amritsar and the trafficking in women in Ludhiana during his visits in 1831 (Jakobsh, 2003). This was a cause taken up by Baba Ram Singh and the Namdhari movement in the 1860s (*ibid.*).
- 46 In her study of the situation at the end of the Sikh kingdom, Surjit Kaur adds that 'Sikhism was just reduced to a thing of hair and beard. The Sikh aristocracy had fallen in to all possible vices. Gradually they had acquired enormous wealth and power. Many of these newly rich were taken to the pleasures of drink and debauchery.' (Jolly, 1988, 6-7)
- 47 Under the British, this dilution and marginalization was sometimes symbolic, an effort to subvert the proud psyche of the Sikhs, such as when the Nanakshahi coinage was replaced by coinage of a cheaper metal with an image of Queen Victoria (Khalsa, 1996, 6). At other times, such as in the awarding of estates and positions in government (Grewal, 1998, 135), its treatment of Maharaja Dalip Singh (N. Singh, 2011, 137-140), and its support of Christian missionary work in Punjab (Oberoi, 1994, 218-222; N. Singh, 2011, 142-143), this effort was less than subtle. The partition of India and Pakistan which accompanied their independence from British rule was augured by a toxic atmosphere of communal disharmony, the uprooting of millions of Sikhs from their homes in what became Pakistan, 'pure land' to the Muslims, and a descent into intercommunal slaughter that claimed many thousands of lives (Harb. Singh, 1994, 290-304; Go. Singh, 1988, 694-712).
- 48 Sant Baba Attar Singh, Sant Baba Nand Singh, and Bhai Randhir Singh provided powerful counter-narratives of self-determination and Sikh pride at a time when British secularism and Christianity threatened the integrity of the Sikh nation. In the words of Sant Baba Attar Singh:
- 'As long as India has existed, such a sinful atmosphere has never prevailed in the country. Even Aurangzeb was better than the English because he used to earn his daily meal by himself writing out the verses of Holy Koran. In doing so, there was an indication of asceticism. Nowadays, people laugh at asceticism. This sinful period, too, will pass.' (Khalsa, 2008, p. 206)
- 49 For his part, Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa founded a global spiritual community based on the original precepts of the Sikh faith. The early teaching manuals of the 3HO Foundation

featured prominently the dictate of Guru Ram Das that ‘a disciple of the True Guru should rise before the coming of the light and contemplate the Name.’ (3HO, 1973, 1)

50 A British study cites the high rates of alcoholism among Sikh males (Singh and Tatla, 2006, 177). A more recent survey in Punjab found a high rate of addiction to hard drugs, 400,000 addicts out of a population of 27.9 million (Dhaliwal, 2016).

51 Kha. Singh, 2008, 494-495. Kapur Singh, the National Professor of Sikhism, spoke similar words of criticism twenty years earlier: ‘...those in control of the statutory Sikh gurdwaras are not aware of Sikh doctrines and the nature of institution founded on them... The SGPC is the creation of a Government statute and is elected by a college of voters which includes a large percentage of those who are not qualified to be described as members of Khalsa and, by and large, they vote either for money or liquor or for their groups and cliques.’ (Dilgeer, 1980, 92)

52 John Taylor Gatto gives an interesting critique of the modern compulsory schooling system and its soul-wracking job of grooming children to a life of submission to impersonal, corporate culture (Gatto, 2017, 1-32). Today’s mass education factories called ‘schools’ differ significantly from the *madrassas* in vogue in Punjab at the time of Britain’s conquest. Class sizes of six students were typical, and teacher and students had a lifelong family-like association. Moreover, literacy was higher in Punjab than in some British provinces. English schools, when they arrived in Punjab, were clearly instruments of cultural assimilation (Khalsa, 1996, 23-25, 34).

53 Mann, 2000, 273-274; Singh & Tatla, 2006, 90.

54 Hall, 1995, 246-261; Nayar, 2004, 141-149.

55 SGPC, 2017, 2-16, 18-19.

56 Khalsa, 2008, 224.

57 Singh, 2002.

58 Man. Singh, 1962, 1.

59 Evidence for these movements can be found online. A 2016 survey in England claims to represent a popular demand among Sikhs in that country to be represented in national surveys as an ethnic group (The Sikh Network, 2016). An American movement based in California demands similar representation in the US (Jakara, 2017). In Canada where Sikhs are better represented in government, including members in the federal cabinet, there is no such movement (Khalsa, 2017).

60 Recent studies point toward the intergenerational transmission of psychological trauma (Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008, Lev-Wiesel, 2007). These findings shed a new light on the history of war and conflict. While land and treasure may be won and lost, psychological trauma sustained by both combatants and non-combatants swept up in conflict may potentially affect the mental health and well-being of future generations.

61 Khalsa, 1996, 12, 17-18, 26-32.

62 Tradition states that Guru Nanak visited Mecca, Medina and Baghdad in the west, Haridwar and Tibet in the north, Varanasi, Gaya and Assam in the east, and Sri Lanka in the south, over four long missionary expeditions before settling in Kartarpur in present day Pakistan (Dawe, 1997, 167).

63 Guru Amar Das is said to have journeyed from Goindval to teach at the pilgrimage site of Kurushetra in present day Haryana during a solar eclipse (Padam, 1995, 88). Guru Arjan began his life of teaching as a young man, developing a community in Lahore at the direction of Guru Ram Das. As Guru, he toured through east Punjab, establishing Tarn Taran, and founding a second Kartarpur between the Beas and Sutlej rivers, and Sri Hargobindpur on the River Beas (Talib, 1995, 189). Aside from his years in the prison of Gwalior in Madya Pradesh and at Kiratpur where he eventually settled, the sixth Guru, Hargobind is recorded to have travelled widely, visiting Nanakmata in Uttarakhand and Kashmir (F.Singh, 1996, 234). Guru Har Rai travelled from his base at Kiratpur to Kashmir (B. Singh, 1996, 262). The eighth Guru, Harkrishan despite his young age, travelled from Kiratpur to Delhi, teaching along the way and in the imperial capital (Anand, 1996, 255). According to tradition, Guru Tegh Bahadur was the most travelled Guru since Guru Nanak. His mission took him through much of Punjab and east to Allahabad, Varanasi, Gaya, Patna, Dhaka and Assam (Banerjee, 1998, 331). In his travels, the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh taught at Anandpur, Paonta and

Damdama in Punjab, and in the final days of his mission, in Nanded, in present day Maharashtra (Ga. Singh, 1996, 92).

64 The first Sikh Missionary College was founded by the S.G.P.C. in Amritsar in the 1920's. Having achieved the independence of their Gurdwaras from British domination, the Akalis next seemed set on turning the tables on the imperialists who had long used religion as a tool of colonial rule. The British need not have worried however as the college had very little influence outside of Punjab. The similarly named colleges in Ropar, Ludhiana, Damdama Sahib, Patiala, Jallandar and Delhi all serve the domestic need for *ragi* Singhs and *Granthis*, and offer correspondence courses in *Gurmat*. Not one of them trains true missionaries to learn foreign languages and expand the domain of Sikh dharma around the world, as Christian missionaries have done for hundreds of years (Khalsa, 2001).

65 Founded in 1999, Khalsa Aid has crossed numerous religious and geographical boundaries providing service to nonSikh communities in Europe, Asia and Africa (Khalsa Aid, 2017).

66 Started by Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa in California in 1969, the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization or '3HO' Foundation proffers classes and courses in Kundalini Yoga and healthy living in dozens of countries based on the precepts of Sikh dharma (3HO, 2017). Its sister organization is Sikh Dharma International (Sikh Dharma, 2017). One of the flagship projects of Sikh Dharma is Miri Piri Academy, an international boarding school located in the environs of Amritsar (Miri Piri Academy, 2017).

67 In numerous sciences, there is a trend away from reductionism, the breaking down of systems into their smallest constituent elements, and toward holism, the appreciation of systems as coherent wholes whose component parts are best understood in relation to one another and to the whole (Goldstein, 2012; Schwartz & Jax, 2011). The trend toward altruistic endeavour may be recognized in the worldwide proliferation and growth of charitable and non-profit nongovernmental organizations dedicated to all kinds of local and international projects (Lewis, 2010; Solomon, 1992).

68 While Sikh schools like Miri Piri Academy in Punjab and Akal Academy in Himachal Pradesh, together with scores of nonSikh schools aspire to offer holistic and empowering programs for their students, no known studies have been done of the outcomes of this type of education in later life.

69 The largest initiative toward transforming the skills and role of *Granthis* in the author's memory emanated from the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation in Maryland, U. S. A. in the late 1990's. While high hopes and a conference emanated from this initiative, it seems to have vanished without a trace.

70 A recent meta-study focused on a Buddhism-based meditation practice (Goyal et al, 2014) concluded that small to moderate effects on stress might be felt from such practice. The paper stated that stronger study designs are needed to properly assess the effects of meditation programs on mental health. A number of texts now cite the mental health benefits of religious practices (Miller & Thorensen, 2003; Koenig, King & Carson, 2012). Studies specific to Sikh meditation practices are needed.

71 One recent publication of interest is the *Oxford Handbook of Evolutionary Family Psychology* which explains current scientific understandings of sibling rivalry, cooperation, mate selection, grandparenting and other behaviours in human and nonhuman species (Salmon & Shakelford, 2011). Another text that testifies to the existence of intelligent life in species other than our own is *The Hidden Life of Trees*, an account of trees' capacities to communicate and cooperate with one another through their root systems and the fungi that permeate forest soil (Wohlleben, 2016).

72 The term biophilia—literally 'love of life'—was coined by Edward O. Wilson. His hypothesis suggests that the tendency to connect with nature and other forms of life is innate to humans (Wilson, 1983).

73 Seligman, 1998.

74 Khalsa, 2008, 222-223.

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