

# ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels

## Episode 1: Noor-e-Tawheed (Light of Oneness)

Guru Nanak, the 15th-century spiritual leader, is a guiding force for many.

He spent over two decades travelling to distant lands to engage in philosophical and social dialogues with people of diverse cultures and belief systems. Through the medium of words and music, he gracefully imparted experiential insights, fearlessly challenged the binary constructs of society, and relentlessly opposed gender, religious, racial and class inequalities.

**Amardeep Singh:** My name is Amardeep Singh. I retrace the life events of Guru Nanak as narrated in the earliest historical texts.

**Mahant Vishnu Das Udasin:** Guru Nanak taught us the essence of Divinity, the One unifying force.

**Dr. Daljeet Sethi:** He had his own message of oneness of humanity and that cut across all religions.

**Anil Dhir:** 530 years ago coming to uncharted lands but still making such a big impact. An impact which not only had permanency, which was carried on.

'Noor-e-Tawheed', the 'Light of Oneness', presents the tender years of the gentle valiant who ignited the spirit of Oneness.

ikOankaar sat naam karataa purakh nirabhau niravair akaal moorat ajoonee saibha(n)  
gur prasaadh ||  
(Moolmantar, Guru Nanak)

One Omnipresent. The Truth. Personified in Creation. Fearless. Bereft of Discrimination. Eternal Form. Beyond Birth. Self-Existent. Realized through the Grace of Guidance.  
(Moolmantar, Guru Nanak)

Allegory is a revelation of a hidden meaning within a narrative!

For time immemorial, individuals have been travelling to new lands to fulfil their personal motives. Alexander conquered nations. Marco Polo explored trade opportunities. Guru Nanak holds a distinction. He traversed vast geographies on an altruistic purpose, to create an awareness of Oneness. Guru Nanak wrote nothing about his personal life but he did leave a large repository of experiential wisdom, which inspire many to remain as learners at every stage of their lives.

jab lag dhuneaa raheaa naanak kichh suneeaa kichh kaheaa ||  
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

As long we exist in this world, Nanak says, strive to acquire and impart knowledge.  
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

**Amardeep Singh:** The term 'Janamsakhi' comprises two words, 'Janam' meaning life and 'Sakhi' meaning narratives. This 'Janamsakhi' literature was produced to essentially preserve and spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak. Accounts of Guru Nanak's life events were passed on through oral traditions by people of faith and were later documented as texts.

Around 65 years after Guru Nanak's life, the first hagiographic account about him was scribed by Bhai Gurdas. This was followed by 'Janamsakhis', now known by the names - Seehan Uppal, Hafizabad, Meherban, Bhai Mani Singh, Vilayatwali, Colebrook's and B40. While these texts have overlaps and variances, they are the only earliest historic sources documenting life events of Guru Nanak. Interestingly, with passage of time, newer narratives have been expanding Guru Nanak's travels to geographies not mentioned in the earliest texts. In addition, his life events have been overlaid with miracles and myths, overshadowing his core philosophy. In recent times, Dr. Kirpal Singh, in his study titled, 'Janamsakhi Parampara', mapped the life events of Guru Nanak by rationally analysing the earliest hagiographies.

Guru Nanak's travels as per this assessment cover nine regions - Pakistan, India, Tibet, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

We travel to these regions to unravel the Allegory.

With a desire to understand the life and mission of Guru Nanak, we embarked on a journey, from his birth place in Pakistan.

'Rai Bhoje Di Talwandi', now known as Nankana Sahib, is a town approximately 80 Kilometres west of Lahore.

**Amardeep Singh:** We have reached Nankana Sahib. Nankana, the word comprises of two words, 'Nanak' and 'Aana'. It is the coming of Nanak.

This settlement was founded by a Muslim landlord Rai Bhoje. Today, this region is a thriving agricultural belt but in the 15<sup>th</sup> century it was a dense forest, nestled away from the seats of power, somewhat uninfluenced by the political and religious tumults of the region.

We are now heading to meet the descendants of Rai Bular, who was the chieftain of this area at the time of Guru Nanak's birth.

**Amardeep Singh:** Salaam Bhatti Sahib (Islamic greeting).

**Saleem Bhatti:** Sat Sri Akal Ji (Sikh greeting).

**Amardeep Singh:** Rai Saleem Bhatti Ji, I would like to know a little bit about the association of your family with Guru Nanak.

**Saleem Bhatti:** I am the 19<sup>th</sup> generation of Rai Bular Bhatti, who was the one to recognize the divine authority of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj. Rai Bular Bhatti was the landlord of this area when Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj was born.

Rai Saleem Bhatti drove us to a small settlement close to Nankana, to show us an interesting connection to the past.

**Saleem Bhatti:** The old name of Nankana Sahib was 'Rai Bho Di Talwandi'. In present times, the villages of this region have different names. However, where we are standing today, this place is still known as Talwandi.

**Amardeep Singh:** This small place is still known by the name of Talwandi!

**Saleem Bhatti:** During our childhood, when we would come to play here, there used to be mounds. Now this is a very populated area. When it would rain, we would find coins belonging to the erstwhile era.

Guru Nanak was born here, at Talwandi, on 15th April 1469, to mother Tripta and father Kalyan Das Bedi, popularly known as Mehta Kalu, the local revenue official.

phir uThi aḳhir sada tauhid ki punjab se ||  
hind ko ik mard-e-kamil ne jagaya ḳhvab se ||  
(Allama Iqbal)

Finally, a call for Oneness arose from Punjab.  
A perfect man aroused the spirit of Hind (Hindustan) from slumber.  
(Allama Iqbal)

Several gurdwaras adorn Nankana Sahib. The most important of these being the Janam Asthan, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, which was earlier known as Kalu's Kotha.

satigur naanak pragaTiaa miTee dhu(n)dh jag chaanan hoaa ||  
(Bhai Gurdas)

With the emergence of Guru Nanak's wisdom, the mist cleared and illuminated  
consciousness.  
(Bhai Gurdas)

**Amardeep Singh:** This Gurdwara is built in the memory of Guru Nanak's birth.

In the partition of 1947, the subcontinent was divided into two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan. The displacement of communities based on faith, created a void in the presence of the followers of Guru Nanak in the city of Nankana.

In the 1970's, Pakistani Sikh community from the North-West region started settling in Nankana. Today, this city is bustling with a Sikh population, entirely of Pashtun descent.

**Amardeep Singh:** In the 'Janamsakhis' (hagiographies), it is mentioned that Pandit Hardayal had predicted, Guru Nanak will become a spiritual leader for both, Hindus and Muslims. Indeed, he grew up to become a spiritual light for the entire humanity. It is for this reason, that it is said,

Nanak Shah Fakir, Hinduaan Da Guru, Musalmana Da Peer ||

Nanak, the King of Fakirs, Guru for the Hindus, Saint for the Muslims.

Guru Nanak was the younger of the two siblings. The elder was his sister, Bebe Nanaki.

The Fifteenth century was a turbulent period, where society was operating on the pillars of caste divisions, ritualism, oppression and hierarchy. The religious leadership was socially oppressing the weak by imposing ritualistic norms and orthodoxy. For a long period, before the birth of Guru Nanak, the Indus region was experiencing political instability, caused by frequent invasions led by the Central Asian chieftains. Under these circumstances, the natives of the Indic region were deprived of their prerogative, the freedom of thought & belief. Guru Nanak, a beacon of revolution, strived to break the shackles that had entangled the society.

In close proximity to Gurdwara Janam Asthan, there are many more gurdwaras which commemorate Guru Nanak's childhood. We are heading towards Gurdwara Bal Leela, which is made in the memory of Guru Nanak's association with his playmates.

**Amardeep Singh:** It is written in the 'Janamsakhis' that Guru Nanak as a young child was temperamentally peaceful and spiritual. At a very young age, when the other children would engage in the worldly games, Guru Nanak would engage in spiritual dialogues. For instance, in 'Raag Suhi' (musical measure), he has said,

aatam raam sa(n)saaraa ||  
saachaa khel tum(h)aaraa ||

(Guru Nanak)

Supreme Consciousness resides in the universe.  
Play of its manifestation is the Truth.  
(Guru Nanak)

In this profound verse, Guru Nanak expounds on the truth of the worldly game. He advises not to remain engrossed in sensory pursuits but to acquire knowledge that motivates one to lead a virtuous life.

At the age of around 7 years, Mehta Kalu decided that Guru Nanak should receive formal education. A few yards away, we are now entering the Patti Sahib Gurdwara.

**Amardeep Singh:** The Patti Sahib Gurdwara is built at the site where Guru Nanak received his early education.

Guru Nanak's father enrolled him under the tutorship of Pandit Brij Nath. Under his guidance, young Nanak acquired knowledge of Indic scriptures, Sanskrit language and the Landa script. Later, Mehta Kalu requested Maulvi Qutab-ud-din to teach Persian, the court language of this region. The Maulvi also introduced him to Hijazi, known as Arabic, a language in which Quran and Islamic literature are scripted. At an early age, Guru Nanak became well acquainted with key insights of the religious texts of two major native religions - Hinduism and Islam.

**Amardeep Singh:** Standing at this site, I can feel Guru Nanak composing the 'Patti Likhi' verse in 'Raag Asa' (musical measure), in which he associates every alphabet with that of spirituality. For example, he says for the letter 'Sassa',

sasai soi sirasaT jin saajee sabhanaa saahib ek bhiaa ||  
sevat rahe chit jin(h) kaa laagaa aaiaa tin(h) kaa safal bhiaa ||  
man kaahe bhoole mooR manaa ||  
jab lekhaa dheveh beeraa tau paRiaa ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

'Sassa' (letter 'S') is associated with One Consciousness that created the creation. It is the sole source of one and all.

Those who are attuned to the Consciousness, their existence is successful. O, ignorant mind, why do you remain lost?

O fellow, accounts of one's actions are assessed by Consciousness.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

While for the teacher, the letter 'S' or 'Sassa' was a mere sound, Guru Nanak took the opportunity to enrich his teacher, stating that the Creator is the sole One for the entire creation. With the simplicity of using letters of the alphabet, the most fundamental

building blocks, he explained an important meaning of Oneness. As a part of One Supreme power, we all are equal. Discrimination is a result of ego. One who understands this truth is a true scholar.

Guru Nanak displayed a disposition to question ritualistic practices. Even during his childhood, he openly challenged social and religious implementations causing a downfall to the basic attributes of humanity. When Guru Nanak came of age, his parents decided to organise 'Yagnopavit', a religious custom prevalent in Hindu caste system, where only the male child from upper-caste families are invested with a sacred thread, called 'Janeu'.

**Amardeep Singh:** Guru Nanak was always a very curious child. He approached his sister, Bebe Nanaki and asked if she was wearing this thread too? On being told, the thread is supposed to be only for the male members belonging to the upper caste in the caste system, Guru Nanak was very disturbed. He approached the Pandit and asked, what is the purpose of this thread? On not getting a satisfactory answer, Guru Nanak reflected, the caste discrimination and the gender discrimination that existed in the society and he uttered these profound words,

dhiaa kapaeh sa(n)tokh soot jat ga(n)ddee sat vaT ||  
eh janeuoo jeea kaa hiee ta paadde ghat ||  
naa eh tuTai naa mal lagai naa eh jalai na jai ||  
dha(n)nu su maanas naanakaa jo gal chale pai ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, self-restraint the knot and truth the twist.

If you have such a sacred thread for the soul, O Pandit, then give it to me.  
A thread that neither breaks, nor gets soiled. Neither burns nor gets lost.  
Says Nanak, blessed are the mortals who adorn such thread around their neck.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak asked the priest to give him the everlasting sacred thread, made of compassion instead of cotton, woven with a thread of contentment, knotted with modesty and twisted with truth. He emphasised on the importance of human virtues over outer symbols.

tag na i(n)dhree tag na naaree ||  
bhalake thuk pavai nit dhaaRee ||  
tag na pairee tag na hathee ||  
tag na jihavaa tag na akhee ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

There is no thread to restrain the sensory organs. There is no thread for women.  
In the dawning of realization, negative actions lead to self-disgrace.

There is no thread to restrain the actions of the feet. There is no thread to restrain the actions of the hands.

There is no thread to restrain the actions of the tongue. There is no thread to restrain the actions of the eyes.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

There is no thread to restrain the sensory organs and no thread for lust. He strongly questioned how one can become pious by merely wearing the religious garbs. He opposed religious and social rules, which based on birth and gender, overlooking actions, virtues and capabilities, deny dignity and respect to fellow human beings. Since childhood, Guru Nanak is known to have cherished the company of spiritualists over worldly activities. Concerned with Guru Nanak's disinterest in materialistic pursuits, his father assigned him the task of grazing the cattle. This chore became his daily routine.

Rai Saleem Bhatti took us to the sites which were once agricultural fields, owned by his ancestor, Rai Bular Bhatti. The oral tradition says that Guru Nanak would graze his cattle in this area.

**Saleem Bhatti:** This place is called Kiara Sahib and here Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji Maharaj used to graze his cattle.

One day, when Guru Nanak was immersed in deep thoughts, his cattle strayed into a crop-field. The farmer seeing Guru Nanak's cattle in his fields anticipated that they had damaged the crops. In annoyance, the angry farmer complained to the authorities about the carelessness of young Nanak. When the officials inspected the fields, they witnessed no damage to the crops. Emotions control one's actions. Overpowered by fear, anger and greed, the farmer had made assumed accusations. Sympathizing with the farmer's dilemma, who was remorseful of his actions, Guru Nanak calmed him with a metaphoric example of leading a virtuous life.

dhirag tinaa kaa jeeviaa j likh likh vecheh naau ||  
khetee jin kee ujaRai khalavaaRe kiaa thaau ||  
sachai saramai baahare agai laheh na dhaadh ||  
akal eh na aakheeaai akal gavaieeaai baadh ||  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Accursed is the life of those who are aware of Truth, yet live dishonestly.  
Those whose crops are ravaged, what can they harvest?  
Bereft of truth and humility, they are not worthy of honour.  
Intellect attuned to ego is not wisdom. Such intellect is wasted in conflict.  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Just as ravished crops can't yield a good harvest, similarly, we human beings can't reap a fulfilling life, if we lead a path of conflict, jealousy and anger.

Rai Saleem Bhatti now took us to the nearby Mall Ji Sahib Gurdwara.

**Saleem Bhatti:** One day, Rai Bular was passing through this place. He saw young Guru Nanak sleeping under this tree while a snake was providing shade by spreading its hood. Rai Bular felt that this child was not ordinary but a pure soul. Rai Bular immediately provisioned 750 acres of land in the name of Nanak. The city of Nankana is established on that land.

I often reflect on some of the events mentioned in the historical 'Janamsakhi' texts, like the shadow of a tree remaining static and a cobra snake spreading its hood to provide shade while young Nanak was asleep.

too(n) sabhanaa maeh samaiaa ||  
tin karatai aap lukaiaa ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

You, the Creator is contained in all. Having created, you have concealed yourself.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Acceptance or negation of unexplainable phenomena is challenging. Over time, in the realm of faith, many narratives of inexplicable phenomena get rooted as prestigious miraculous marvels that overshadow philosophical messages. Guru Nanak in his verse impresses upon the truth that the Creator resides in the entire creation which is one ecosystem. In my humble understanding, the Creator can wield situations beyond comprehension. Hence, personally, I focus on Guru Nanak's philosophy of Omnipresence over unexplainable marvels.

Guru Nanak's parents, concerned about their son's non-attachment to worldly affairs, thought they could alter his personality by getting him married. When he was 16 years of age, they started looking for a suitable alliance. At this young age, he was betrothed to Ghummi the only child of Moola Khatri, the father and Chando Rani, the mother. For the marriage ceremony, groom and bride's family gathered at Batala, a city in district Gurdaspur in India.

In present times, due to political reasons, the India-Pakistan border can only be crossed at a few designated points. Hence, we travel from Pakistan to India through the Wagah border and visit Batala.

Within the old city of Batala, we visit Gurdwara Dera Sahib which is built in the memory where Guru Nanak's marriage ceremony was held with Ghummi, who was affectionately known as Sulakhni. This site is believed to have been the home of Moola Khatri.

A few lanes away is Kandh Sahib Gurdwara, built at the place where the marriage gathering was hosted. It is believed this wall is probably the remains of the house where the marriage gathering had stayed.

Soon after the wedding, Guru Nanak and Mata Sulakhni travelled back to 'Rai Bho Di Talwandi', which is today known as Nankana Sahib.

maiddaa man rataa aapanaRe pir naal ||  
hau ghol ghumaiee kha(n)neeaai keetee hik bhoree nadhar nihaal ||  
(Raag Maru Kafi, Guru Nanak)

My soul is deeply imbued with love for my Beloved.  
I have shed duality. Grace me with a moment to envision bliss.  
(Raag Maru Kafi, Guru Nanak)

The marriage of two individuals is a union anchored in collective growth. A blissful spiritual relationship is achieved when the ego is renounced and duality is shed.

We cross the India-Pakistan border at Wagah and visit Farooqabad, which is at a distance of about 24 kilometers from Nankana Sahib.

**Amardeep Singh:** At the times of Guru Nanak, this place was known as Chuharkhana. It is at this place that Guru Nanak sowed the seeds of the tradition of 'Langar' (free community kitchen). Even at the age of 18 years, Guru Nanak showed no interest about worldly affairs. Concerned about his disposition, Mehta Kalu, his father, gave him 20 rupees and requested, do some business out of it.

Guru Nanak escorted by an attendant, had barely reached Chuharkhana, where they met Bhagat Rein, an ascetic, with his followers, who were hungry. Guru Nanak, being a man of compassion, brimming with the spirit of sharing and service to others, used the entire sum of money to purchase provisions to feed the ascetics. In this action of selfless service, he demonstrated the spirit of caring for one and all. Food is the basic source to sustain life. When shared and partaken collectively, it evokes feelings of compassion and Oneness.

rav sas dheep anoop jot tirabhavan jot apaar ||  
haaT paTan gaR koThaRee sach saudhaa vaapaar ||  
giaan a(n)jan bhai bha(n)janaa dhekh nira(n)jan bhai ||  
gupat pragaT sabh jaaneeaaai je man raakhai Thai ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

The Sun and Moon are lamps of incomparably beautiful light. The infinite light illuminates the entire creation.

The human body is the shop, city, fortress and godown where the merchandise of truth is traded.

Wisdom dispels worldly fear. It provides clarity to receive pure love.

Hidden mysteries manifest if the mind is kept balanced.

(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, when ignorance is dispelled, virtues manifest. True transactions are traded in a shop, represented by the human body, a temple for the soul, which needs to be illuminated by igniting knowledge of self-awareness. It is in this state that peace is exuberated.

**Amardeep Singh:** This was a 'Sacha Sauda', the true business that he did.

**Mata Satnam Kour:** The 'Langar' (free community kitchen) started by Guru Nanak was for everyone. It was a beautiful tradition which he initiated. We yearn for the day when people can freely visit and partake 'Langar' (free community kitchen).

After having spent all the money to feed the hungry ascetics, Guru Nanak returned to Talwandi. Anticipating his father, Mehta Kalu's displeasure with his decision, he stopped on the outskirts of the city, under a grove of trees, which is now on the premises of the Gurdwara Tambu Sahib.

Mehta Kalu was briefed by the attendant about the events at Chuharkhana. Raging with anger, Mehta Kalu came to Guru Nanak and questioned him for wasting money to feed the ascetics, instead of doing a profitable transaction. Guru Nanak calmly responded that he found no more virtuous and profitable bargain than feeding the hungry.

**Saleem Bhatti:** Rai Bular, the Governor of this place, came to know that Mehta Kalu was angry with his son, Baba Guru Nanak. From his pocket, Rai Bular gave 20 rupees to Mehta Kalu to compensate for the loss.

According to 'Janamsakhi' accounts, Rai Bular had great affection for Guru Nanak and held him in high esteem. A noble and pious man, he was inspired by young Nanak's personality.

Guru Nanak in his early years started aspiring to experience places of various faiths which were then famous for pilgrimage congregations. He expressed this desire to Bhai Mardana with whom he had a deep bond as they shared similar thought process.

**Amardeep Singh:** Bhai Mardana was a long-time companion of Baba Guru Nanak. He played an integral part in the mission of Baba Guru Nanak to spread the message of humanity. Bhai Mardana was born in this village, now known as Nankana Sahib. He was born to a 'Mirasi' (genealogy singers) family. At the age of twenty years, Baba Guru Nanak requested Bhai Mardana to accompany him on his spiritual journeys.

Mehta Kalu did not give his consent for the travels. Bhai Mardana also suggested putting the idea on hold as he had the responsibility for his daughter's marriage. The aspiration to travel indicates that Guru Nanak, from a young age, was inclined to interact with people of diverse belief systems.

Concerned with young Nanak's disposition towards philosophical thinking and dispassion for materialistic pursuits, his parents became worried. Assuming that he may be suffering from a disease, Mehta Kalu, his father, called for a 'Vaid,' a physician, to examine him. As the physician held Guru Nanak's wrist to check the pulse, he withdrew his arm and sang,

vaidh bulaiaa vaidhagee pakaR dda(n)ddole baa(n)h ||  
bholaa vaidh na jaaniee karak kaleje maeh ||  
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

The physician is called to provide a remedy.  
He holds the wrist to feel the pulse.  
The innocent physician is unaware that the pain is deep within the heart.  
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak was not suffering from any physical ailment. He was agonized to experience the disease of 'I,' the ego in society, which was degenerating the core values of social structure, causing a disconnect amongst fellow beings.

To pay our respects to Rai Bular Bhatti, we visited his memorial which is built on a mound, a short distance from the Janam Asthan Gurdwara in Nankana Sahib.

**Saleem Bhatti:** The world today is divided by petty issues. We, the descendants of Rai Bular, always strive to be like Rai Bular Sahib and Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who led a fulfilling life, balanced between spirituality and worldly affairs. We too wish to lead our life in the same manner.

A true partnership seeks love and strives to gain spiritual wisdom. Guru Nanak says,

gun gai ma(n)gal prem rahasee mu(n)dh man omaaho ||  
saajan raha(n)se dhusaT viaape saach jap sach laaho ||  
(Raag Gauri Poorbi, Guru Nanak)

Singing the songs of love with joy, the soul is ecstatic.  
Virtuous rejoice while unvirtuous remain dejected.  
Contemplating on Truth, peace is attained.  
(Raag Gauri Poorbi, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 1: Noor-e-Tawheed (Light of Oneness)**

The following points for discussion approach a framework that provides a platform to analyze the historical context and impact of Guru Nanak's philosophical contribution, based on the themes present in the episode. By examining the interplay between his life experiences and his experiential insights, we gain a deeper understanding into how his spiritual journey shaped his message of Oneness. The questions prompt critical thinking on how Guru Nanak's timeless wisdom challenged the social norms and divisions of 15th-century India based on caste, gender, and religious dogma, and continues to resonate and inspire the present.

#### **Historical Discussion Pointers:**

**1. What were the social and political conditions during Guru Nanak's time, and how did they influence his spiritual quest?**

The episode describes the fifteenth century as a turbulent period, where society was operating on the pillars of caste divisions, ritualism, oppression and hierarchy. It notes that the religious leadership was socially oppressing the weak by imposing ritualistic norms and orthodoxy. Furthermore, for a long period, before the birth of Guru Nanak, the Indus region was experiencing political instability, caused by frequent invasions led by the Central Asian chieftains. Under these circumstances, the natives of the Indic region were deprived of their prerogative, the freedom of thought & belief. How did these conditions shape Guru Nanak's pursuit to break the shackles that had entangled the society?

**2. How was Guru Nanak's early education significant in shaping his philosophical perspectives?**

According to the episode, Guru Nanak studied under Pandit Brij Nath who taught him Indic scriptures, Sanskrit language and the Landa script, and later under Maulvi Qutab-ud-din who taught him Persian, the court language of this region and introduced him to Hijazi, known as Arabic, a language in which Quran and Islamic literature are scripted. Guru Nanak became well acquainted with key insights of the religious texts of two major native religions - Hinduism and Islam. How did this early exposure to different religious traditions influence his inclusive philosophy and his ability to engage in spiritual dialogues with diverse cultures?

**3. What role did the Janamsakhi tradition play in preserving Guru Nanak's life story and spiritual insights?**

The episode explains that the term 'Janamsakhi' comprises two words, 'Janam' meaning life and 'Sakhi' meaning narratives. This 'Janamsakhi' literature was produced

to essentially preserve and spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak. It further notes that accounts of Guru Nanak's life events were passed on through oral traditions by people of faith and were later documented as texts. The first hagiographic account was written around 65 years after Guru Nanak's life by Bhai Gurdas, followed by various Janamsakhis known by different names. The episode also mentions that with passage of time, newer narratives have been expanding Guru Nanak's travels to geographies not mentioned in the earliest texts. In addition, his life events have been overlaid with miracles and myths, overshadowing his core philosophy. How have these evolving narratives both preserved and potentially transformed our understanding of Guru Nanak's life and philosophy?

#### **4. What was the significance of the Sacha Sauda incident in establishing Guru Nanak's priorities?**

The episode recounts that when Guru Nanak was 18 years old, his father gave him 20 rupees and requested that he do some business out of it. However, upon meeting Bhagat Rein, an ascetic, with his followers, who were hungry, Guru Nanak used the entire sum of money to purchase provisions to feed the ascetics. The episode explains that in this action of selfless service, he demonstrated the spirit of caring for one and all. When questioned by his angry father, Guru Nanak calmly responded that he found no more virtuous and profitable bargain than feeding the hungry. This incident is described as a 'Sacha Sauda', the true business that he did and is credited with starting the seeds of the tradition of 'Langar' (free community kitchen). How does this early incident establish Guru Nanak's priorities regarding material wealth versus universal welfare?

### **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

#### **1. What is the essence of Guru Nanak's philosophy as reflected in the Mool Mantar?**

The episode presents the Mool Mantar as: One Omnipresent. The Truth. Personified in Creation. Fearless. Bereft of Discrimination. Eternal Form. Beyond Birth. Self-Existent. Realized through the Grace of Guidance. This foundational verse establishes key concepts in Guru Nanak's philosophy, including Oneness, Truth, Fearlessness, Non-discrimination, and Eternality. How do these fundamental principles form the foundation for Guru Nanak's broader outlook about equality and spiritual awareness?

#### **2. How did Guru Nanak challenge social and religious discriminations through his messages?**

The episode describes how Guru Nanak fearlessly challenged the binary constructs of society, and relentlessly opposed gender, religious, racial and class inequalities. His challenge to the Janeu ceremony questioned why the sacred thread was only for the male members belonging to the upper caste in the caste system, revealing his opposition to both gender and caste discrimination. In response to religious formalism, he emphasized that there is no thread to restrain the sensory organs and no thread

for lust and questioned how one can become pious by merely wearing the religious garbs. How do these critiques of social and religious discrimination reflect Guru Nanak's broader vision of equality and spiritual authenticity?

**3. What is the significance of the Langar tradition in Guru Nanak's philosophy of service?**

The episode credits Guru Nanak with the seeds of the tradition of 'Langar' (free community kitchen) through the Sacha Sauda incident. It explains that when Guru Nanak encountered hungry ascetics, being a man of compassion, brimming with the spirit of sharing and service to others, he used the entire sum of money to purchase provisions to feed the ascetics. The episode notes that food is the basic source to sustain life. When shared and partaken collectively, it evokes feelings of compassion and Oneness. A community member in the episode states that the 'Langar' (free community kitchen) started by Guru Nanak was for everyone. It was a beautiful tradition which he initiated. How does the Langar tradition embody Guru Nanak's philosophy of equality, service, and communal harmony?

**4. How does Guru Nanak's concept of 'true business' relate to his broader spiritual viewpoint?**

The episode describes the 'Sacha Sauda' narrative as the true business that he did when Guru Nanak used money meant for commerce to feed hungry ascetics. When questioned by his father, Guru Nanak calmly responded that he found no more virtuous and profitable bargain than feeding the hungry. The episode connects this concept to Guru Nanak's verse: the human body is the shop, city, fortress and godown where the merchandise of truth is traded. Wisdom dispels worldly fear. It provides clarity to receive pure love. Hidden mysteries manifest if the mind is kept balanced. How does this concept of 'true business' challenge conventional notions of trade and value, and what does it reveal about Guru Nanak's view of spiritual economics?

**5. What does Guru Nanak express about the nature of the Creator and its relationship to creation?**

The episode includes several of Guru Nanak's verses about the relationship between the Creator and creation. In Raag Suhi, he states: Supreme Consciousness resides in the universe. Play of its manifestation is the Truth. In Sri Raag, he declares: You, the Creator is contained in all. Having created, you have concealed yourself. He associates the letter 'S' with One Consciousness that created the creation. It is the sole source of one and all. The episode explains that as a part of One Supreme power, we all are equal. Discrimination is a result of ego. How does this concept about the omnipresence of the Creator in creation form the basis for Guru Nanak's philosophy of equality and his critique of discrimination?

**6. How does Guru Nanak address the concept of ego in his philosophy?**

The episode describes how Guru Nanak told the physician examining him that he was agonized to experience the disease of 'I,' the ego in society, which was degenerating

the core values of social structure, causing a disconnect amongst fellow beings. In explaining the 'Patti Likhi' verse, the episode notes that discrimination is a result of ego. One who understands this truth is a true scholar. When discussing marriage, it is stated in the episode that a blissful spiritual relationship is achieved when the ego is renounced and duality is shed. How does Guru Nanak's critique of ego inspire his broader social message that fosters his vision for uplifting human relationships and enriching spiritual growth?

**7. What is the role of learning and knowledge in Guru Nanak's spiritual belief?**

The episode quotes Guru Nanak's verse from Raag Dhanasri: As long as we exist in this world, Nanak says, strive to acquire and impart knowledge. It describes how Guru Nanak did leave a large repository of experiential wisdom, which inspires many to remain as learners at every stage of their lives. During a lesson on alphabets, he transformed it into a profound spiritual learning about Oneness. The episode also mentions that the human body, a temple for the soul, which needs to be illuminated by igniting knowledge of self-awareness. How does Guru Nanak's emphasis on continuous learning and knowledge acquisition relate to his understanding of spiritual growth and human purpose?