

## ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 15: Sudh Uddesham (Seed of Intent)

'Sudh Uddesham', 'Seed of Intent', presents the magnanimity of sharing with pure intentions as illustrated by Guru Nanak, the righteous benevolent, in the backwaters of the lush 'Malabar'.

saachee surat naam nahee tirapate haumai karat gavaiaa ||  
par dhan par naaree rat ni(n)dhaa bikh khaiee dhukh paiaa ||  
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

Knowledge of Truth and introspection does not satisfy and life is wasted in egotism.  
Desiring other's wealth, lusting spouses of others and attachment to slander, is like  
consuming poison and enduring pain.  
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

Discontent is the foundation of negativity which in turn feeds immoral actions. Even the most learned can fall prey to temptations. Life can be a fulfilling experience by building on virtues.

In present times, due to political reasons, it is not possible to travel by sea from Sri Lanka to India. Hence, to retrace Guru Nanak's footsteps, we fly from Sri Lanka to India and continue our journey from Dhanushkodi.

According to mythology, to safeguard his kingdom from enemies, Vibhishan the new King of Lanka, requested Ramchandr to destroy the 'Setu Bandh' bridge on his return. Ramchandr broke the bridge with arrows from his bow thus the name of the spot came to be known as 'Dhanushkodi', meaning, the 'end of the bow'. It is a metaphor for breaking the shackles of negativity in order to preserve positivity.

**Amardeep Singh:** Guru Nanank and Bhai Mardana on their return from Sri Lanka, landed at the port of Setu Bandh in India, which is also known as Dhanushkodi.

From Dhanushkodi, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Rameswaram, Trivandrum, Kottayam, Annamalai Hills, Bidar, Nanded and reached Daulatabad. From Dhanushkodi, they first visited Rameswaram.

Retracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we now travel from Dhanushkodi to Rameswaram and visit the Ramanathaswamy Temple.

The name of the city of Rameswaram in Sanskrit means the 'Lord of Ramchandr', denoting Shiva. According to the epic 'Ramayan', Ramchandr prayed to Shiva here for absolution for any wrong doing he may have committed in the war against King Ravan. It

is believed that at this temple, Ramchandr, along with his wife Sita, installed the aniconic representation of Shiva, a 'Shivling', made from a black stone brought from Sri Lanka.

**Amardeep Singh:** Rameswaram is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites of the 'Shaivite' tradition. Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana, on their return from Sri Lanka, visited this city to have dialogues with the 'Jogis' (ascetics).

During a discourse, the ascetics questioned Guru Nanak, why as a follower of 'Nirgun', the formless, he had come to the Ramanathaswamy Temple, where the Divine is worshipped in the form of 'Shiva'. In reply, Guru Nanak sang,

ek nira(n)jan gurmukh jaataa ||  
dhoojaa maar sabadh pachhaataa ||  
eko hukam varatai sabh loiee ||  
ekas te sabh opat hoiee ||  
raeh dhovai khasam eko jaan ||  
gur kai sabadh hukam pachhaan ||  
sagal roop varan man maahee ||  
kahu naanak eko saalaahee ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

The One immaculate truth is recognized by the person inclined towards wisdom.

By overcoming duality, wisdom is gained.

The One law that unifies is all-pervading.

From One source, all come to be.

Paths are two (formless and with form). Recognize that the source is One.

Through the wisdom of the self-aware, recognize the laws of nature.

It is contained in the hearts of all forms and castes.

Says Nanak, One alone is praiseworthy.

(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak addressed the dilemma of the 'Jogis' by presenting his philosophy of Monism. Endorsing his belief in unity, he said that there is One Supreme, Formless, Omnipresent, Unifying force. He clarified that his intention to visit the temple was to interact with the spiritualists.

We now visit the site which was established in the memory of Guru Nanak as 'Nanak Udasin Muth' (centre of learning) in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by Chandu Lal, a Minister in the 'Nizam's' state of Hyderabad. In the mid-1970s, this site, which is now a large gurdwara, was handed over by the 'Udasin' (ascetic) Mahant Narinder Das to the Sikh community of Chennai. The management committee has maintained the memorial made by Mahant Narinder Das.

Guru Nanak's philosophy was and is invisibly housed in the hearts of many but the precept of visible divisions limit unity. The invisible formless Omnipresent leaves much affirmation of its underlying existence through numerous visible forms. Connecting one of these forms with another through sensory organs is evidence of unity. It is the mind which plays the game of misconceptions.

sahas tav nain nan nain heh toh kau sahas moorat nanaa ek tuohee ||  
sahas padh bimal nan ek padh ga(n)dh bin sahas tav ga(n)dh iv chalat mohee ||  
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Abundant are Your eyes, and yet You have none. Abundant are Your forms, and yet  
You have none.  
Abundant are Your lotus feet, and yet You have none. Without a nose, abundant are  
Your noses. How enchanting is Your play!  
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

From Rameswaram, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled along the sea coast and reached Trivandrum, the present day capital of the state of Kerala.

Trailing in Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Rameswaram to Trivandrum.

The city of Trivandrum takes its name from the word 'Thiruvananthapuram' which means a place of the Infinite; referring to Lord Vishnu the deity who is known as the Sustainer in the Hindu Trinity. Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, dedicated to Vishnu, is one of the many revered sites across India which attracts 'Vaishnavite' pilgrims.

There is no physical commemoration of Guru Nanak's visit to Trivandrum.

From Trivandrum, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Kottayam.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Trivandrum to Kottayam.

The city of Kottayam in the state of Kerala is established amidst a network of rivers. It is famous for the backwaters which feed into the Arabian Sea.

In Kottayam, Guru Nanak was hosted by a commune of Yogis.

**Amardeep Singh:** Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana visited the city of Kottayam. In a dialogue with the ascetics, Guru Nanak emphasized the importance of sharing.

According to a narrative, the 'Yogis' (ascetics) gave a sesame seed to Guru Nanak and asked if he could share it amongst the commune. Probably, they wanted to see if Guru Nanak would respond by performing a miracle. Guru Nanak's uniqueness was in his ability to explain the essence of a concept through practical examples. He pounded the

tiny sesame seed with some additional ingredients, making enough quantity to share with the commune. Expounding on the principle of sharing, he said if the intent is to share then the quantity of what is to be shared is irrelevant, be it sharing material things or knowledge.

je gun hovani(h) saajanaa mil saajh kareejai ||  
saajh kareejai guneh keree chhodd avagan chaleeaaai ||  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

If you have virtues, O friend, congregate and share them.  
Let us form a partnership to walk the path of sharing positivity and abandon negativity.  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Pandit Tara Singh Narotam mentions in the text entitled 'Guru Tirath Sangrah' that in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit, the 'Udasin' (ascetic) sect had established the Tilganji Sahib Gurdwara in the region of Kottayam. This shrine was also known as Kundikutlam. In present times there is no trace of this site.

Influenced by Guru Nanak's voice against caste system, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century around 300 native families of Kerala State had chosen to embrace Sikh identity and philosophy. This community has slowly dwindled in numbers. We visit the home of Lieutenant Colonel Lakhvir Singh, a native, whose ancestors had embraced Sikhism.

**Lakhvir Singh:** Guru Nanak Dev Ji is a universal teacher. He had his own philosophies. He was against ritual practice and he got into the core of spirituality. He wanted to see all people in the same platform. No discrimination based on religion, sex, caste or anything.

Lieutenant Colonel Lakhvir Singh is probably the last of the native Sikhs of Kerala.

From Kottayam, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled north and reached Annamalai Hills which are located at the border of the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Trailing in Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Kottayam to Annamalai Hills.

This region is heavily forested with valleys and riversides. In the lower slopes of these hills lived the indigenous tribe known as 'Kadan', which means, the lord of the hills. The 'Kadan' people are said to also be called 'Kauda'. Keeping minimal contact with the outside world, they had become temperamentally insular. Perhaps, the most ancient inhabitants of South India, these small bodied, thick lipped, frizzy-haired people lived on jungle produce and sheltered themselves in caves or under sheds made from foliage.

When Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana were passing through these hills, they ventured inside the forest in search of food. Presuming they were intruders, a member of the 'Kauda' tribe took Bhai Mardana as a captive. Before they could harm him, Guru Nanak

explained the reason for their visit. He said, fear gives the power to overtake thoughts and decisions. Since we are all part of one ecosystem, then why be fearful of fellow-beings?

Recognizing the sincerity in Guru Nanak's words, the members of 'Kauda' tribe released Bhai Mardana. Fascinated by Guru Nanak's words, the 'Kadan' people are said to have become less insular and more liberal.

bhai vich aaveh jaaveh poor ||  
sagaliaa bhau likhiaa sir lekh ||  
naanak nirabhau nira(n)kaar sach ek ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

In fear, multitudes come and go.  
All forms of fear are brought upon oneself through one's own manifestations.  
Nanak says, the fearless and formless is the One Truth.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

From Annamalai Hills, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Bidar, a hill top city in the north-eastern part of Karnataka state.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Annamalai Hills to Bidar.

This region was once a dense bamboo forest and the name of the city of Bidar is derived from the word 'Bidiru' which means bamboo. For about 200 years, Bidar was under the rule of the Bahmani Sultanate, a Persianate Muslim state in Deccan of South India. By the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, at the time Guru Nanak reached Bidar, the rule of Bahmani Sultanate was in decline and the region had come under the indirect influence of Amir Baird Shah. This city is dotted with many remnants of the rulers of that period.

har bin kiau dheerai man meraa ||  
koT kalap ke dhookh binaasan saach dhiraRai niberaa ||  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Without contemplation, how can my mind be comforted?  
The pain of endless guilt and sins is overcome when the Truth is understood.  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Insecurities manifest the desire for power. To fulfil this alter ego, people disempower others by physical warfare or through psychological aggression. Witnessing these magnanimous dilapidated monuments, once created to assert strength, what do I learn from them?

Guru Nanak says, grievances caused by alter ego, can be comforted by realizing that desires are momentary manifestations. Hence, efforts should be directed for the mind to seek harmony.

We visit the historic Nanak Jhira Gurdwara in Bidar.

<<Keertan>>

It is heartwarming to see that members of all communities pay respect at this gurdwara.

**Amardeep Singh:** The water spring at the Bidar Gurdwara, memorializes Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana's visit to this city. The Sikhs and Hindus call it as Nanak Jhira and the Muslims call it as Chashma-e-Shahda.

The two mausoleums next to Nanak Jhira Gurdwara in Bidar are said to be that of the Muslim Fakirs, Jalal-ud-din and Syad Yakub Ali.

During their interactions, the four spiritualists discussed the biases and perceptions held by people of their respective faiths. In ego, people glorify their own religion by undermining other belief systems. This group mentality, separates and classifies people, restricting their ability to see the oneness and interconnection of all humanity.

jal thal jeeaa pureeaa loaa aakaaraa aakaar ||  
oi j aakheh su too(n)hai jaaneh tinaa bh teree saar ||  
naanak bhagataa bhukh saalaahan sach naam aadhaar ||  
sadhaa ana(n)dh raheh dhin raatee gunava(n)tiaa paa chhaar ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

There are living beings in water, on land, in the entire creation, those with form and the formless.

What they say is known to the Omnipresent, they too are aware of its presence.  
Nanak says, devotees are hungry to revere omnipresence and honesty is their mainstay.

Always in eternal bliss is what they abide by day and night. I am the dust of the feet of such virtuous beings.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, he is in awe of those who, having understood the truth of unity, lead a blissful life.

Continuing further north in Guru Nanak's footsteps, we made a detour, visiting Barshi, to explore memories of Bhagat Trilochan, a Saint whose philosophy was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

Bhagat Trilochan was born in 1269 AD in the trader community of 'Vaishyas', which is one of the three upper castes of the Hindu caste system. There is no consensus as to Bhagat Trilochan's place of birth. Some historians claim, he was a native of village Barshi in Maharashtra, while others mention that he was born somewhere in Uttar Pradesh but spent most of his life in Barshi. In Barshi, there is no temple associated with Bhagat Trilochan.

An exponent of the revolutionary 'Bhakti' movement, akin to his name Trilochan, meaning 'three eyed', he had the spiritual vision to recognize vices within society. Bhagat Trilochan condemned ritualistic practices, including an undue focus on wearing religious garb and giving up family life as prerequisites to leading a spiritual life. He endorsed association with spiritualists as a medium to attain salvation. Even though they were born centuries apart, such was the similarity in the philosophies of Bhagat Trilochan and Guru Nanak that the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, contains verses written by Bhagat Trilochan. In one of his verses in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', Bhagat Trilochan says,

kai japahu re kai tapahu re kai bilovahu paanee ||  
lakh chauraseeh jini(h) upaiee so simarahu nirabaanee ||  
kai kama(n)ddal kaapaReeaa re aThasaTh kai firaahee ||  
badhat tiralochan sun re praanee kan bin gaahu k paahee ||  
(Raag Gujri, Bhagat Trilochan)

Why chant, why practice austerities and why churn water?  
Meditate on the immaculate Creator, who has created multitude life forms.  
Why carry a water-pot wearing a religious garb and why wander to the sixty eight holy  
places?  
Says Trilochan, hear, O mortal, why are you threshing crops that have no grains?  
(Raag Gujri, Bhagat Trilochan)

Propounding on the insignificance of connecting with external practices, at the expense of internal transformation, Bhagat Tirlochan explains that such practices are deceptive to the self and to others. They are like threshing crops which have no grains.

From Bidar, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana headed to Nanded.

After having made a detour to Barshi, we resume our journey in the footsteps of Guru Nanak.

Named after Shiva, the Hindu trinity God, attributed with destruction, Nanded is a town of antiquity which beholds many cultures. Emperor Ashoka, under his reign, left remnants of Buddhism. The Mughals brought Sufism during their rule and Sikh history too has a foot print, as the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, breathed his last in this town.

In the outskirts of Nanded, we visit Mal Tekri Gurdwara which is built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Nanded.

The word 'Mal Tekri' comprises of two words, 'Mal', meaning treasure and 'Tekri' meaning a mound. It is said that Faqir Lakkhar Shah, feeble of sight was physically unable to walk, was taking care of the treasure on this mound.

**Amardeep Singh:** During his visit to Nanded, Guru Nanak met Faqir Syed Hussain Lakkhar Shah. They had spiritual conversations at this place called 'Mal Tilla'. Here stands the tomb of Faqir Syed Hussain Lakkhar Shah and the Mal Tekri Gurdwara.

Sensory organs facilitate experiential learning. I wonder, if differently abled individuals are deprived of some facets of spiritual learning, or conversely, better equipped because of their so called infirmities.

anahadh vaajai bhram bhau bhaajai ||  
sagal biaap rahiaa prabh chhaajai ||  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

When the unstruck celestial currents of wisdom resound then doubt and fear vanish.  
The Cosmic Force is all-pervading, giving shade to all.  
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Human senses condition the mind with identities, which reduces the ability to feel the primordial vibrations of the soul which unites every being. Ironically, the physically abled remain visionless due to attachment; crippled with hatred and deafened by ego. Guru Nanak says that the state of 'Anhad', the self-emerging vibration, which unravels the cosmic Truth, is not dependent on sensory organs.

Continuing further north in Guru Nanak's footsteps, we make a detour from Nanded and visit Hingoli to explore memories of Bhagat Namdev, a Saint whose philosophy also was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

Bestow vision to the entire world to imbibe 'Saguna', the perfect attributes.  
(Bhagat Namdev)

Bhagat Namdev is a famous Maharashtrian Saint who was born in 1270 AD in village Narsi. A Calico printer by profession he was from the 'Chhippa' community who were considered low caste. Even though he was born much before Guru Nanak, however, the two saints have been metaphorically living together as spiritual guides through their verses scribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture.

At Hingoli, we visit Aundha Nagnath Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva.

This temple is also associated with an event of Bhagat Namdev. Legend has it that he was rebuked and barred by the upper caste Brahmins from entering the Aundha Nagnath Temple. The sanctum is said to have rotated towards Bhagat Namdev as he sat outside the back wall of the temple in devotion.

In my humble opinion, the narrative of the temple rotating is a metaphor for the Omnipresence of the Creator; all so encompassing.

**Narayan Kali Das Rao Bhopi:** This temple is one of the 12 Jyoti Lingam Temples; it is the 8<sup>th</sup> Jyotirling. This is Nageshwar Deity's shrine, Saint Namdev had come here for a spiritual visit. He was performing prayers towards the east direction along with singing spiritual verses. He was instructed to perform the prayers in the backside of the temple. As he was engrossed in prayers and singing, he started moving from east towards west. To listen to his spiritual verses, Lord Shiv and Lord Nageshwar shifted the direction of their temple from east to west. This place is one of the important holy sites. Revered Namdev, here in Maharashtra, was a renowned Saint. He expounded that on the path of devotion, one can attain divinity.

dhehee mahajidh man maulaanaa sahaj nivaaj gujaarai ||  
beebee kaulaa sau kain teraa nira(n)kaar aakaarai ||  
bhagat karat mere taal chhinaae keh peh karau pukaaraa ||  
naame kaa suaamee a(n)tarajaamee fire sagal bedhesavaa ||  
(Raag Bhairo, Bhagat Namdev)

The human body is the mosque, and the mind is the priest, who peacefully leads the prayer.

Like an affluent lady who has many helpers, the formless Omnipresent has many forms.  
Performing devotional worship, my cymbals were snatched. Unto whom should I complain?

Namdev's teacher is the knower of hearts, which moves in all directions.  
(Raag Bhairo, Bhagat Namdev)

Bhagat Namdev says, we are made of the same substance; the duality, or 'otherness', resides in one's perception.

Bhagat Namdev is a pioneer of the 'Varkari' tradition from the 'Bhakti' school of thought. He became widely known throughout India for his devotional songs. Bhagat Namdev was a strong believer of pantheism or the philosophy of 'Nirgun'; of a formless creator and 'Sargun', the Creator manifesting in form.

Wherever Namdev travelled, the holy sanctuary followed him, glorifying Omnipresence of the Divine.

The all-pervading force drank milk from Namdev's hands.

Wherever Namdev travelled, the holy sanctuary followed him, glorifying Omnipresence  
of the Divine.

O Divine, why is there separation between you and me?

Bhagat Namdev's legacy is remembered in modern times by his devotees. For ages, his philosophy has continued to attract individuals from diverse classes and castes, manifested in the devotional singing congregations.

Reflecting on your goodness, I achieved wisdom.

Miseries of lifetimes got erased after my thoughts became oriented towards divinity.

From Nanded, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana headed to Daulatabad.

Having visited the sites associated with Bhagat Namdev, we resume our tracing of Guru Nanak's footsteps and proceed to Daulatabad.

The city of Daulatabad is in the state of Maharashtra. It dates back to 1000 BC and is famous for one of the largest rock-cut monastery-temple complexes in the world.

**Amardeep Singh:** The remains of Ellora Caves in Daulatabad give a glimpse that Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism were prevalent in this region since ancient times.

Earlier ruled by the Yadav Kings, Daulatabad, was initially known as Devagiri, the 'hill of Gods'. In 1322 AD, it was renamed as Daulatabad, 'the city of fortunes', by the Delhi Sultan, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the ruler famous for eccentricity and bizarre policies. With a desire to rule the whole of India, his inhumane decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Devagiri and then back to Delhi, resulted in thousands perishing during the ill-conceived journey.

jiau aaran lohaa pai bha(n)n ghaRaieeaaai ||  
tiau saakat jonee pai bhavai bhavaieeaaai ||  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

As iron is melted in the forge and re-shaped,  
Similarly, the disillusioned time and again wander aimlessly.  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Power, especially when unchecked and desired absolutely, is corrupting. The need to control is an indication of an individual's feelings of insecurity and fear of losing possessions. Guru Nanak says, akin to the recasting of iron, we humans are destined to reenounter the same dilemmas until we learn lessons from our actions.

Guru Nanak probably chose a route to pass through this city because of its historic religious and political affiliation with people and cultures of diverse backgrounds.

**Amardeep Singh:** The Sufi shrines in Daulatabad are a testimony that this town was once an entry point for Islam to spread through Deccan and South India.

In Daulatabad, there is no physical commemoration of Guru Nanak's visit to the region.

Guru Nanak, through the power of his words, challenged injustice and advocated human rights; values which were carried forward by the later Sikh Gurus. The district of Aurangabad is the resting place of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who is known for religious oppression. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Nanak, stood up for the fundamental principle of freedom of thought and belief. For this democratic choice, he was executed in Delhi under the order of Emperor Aurangzeb.

Witnessing the tomb of Emperor Aurangzeb, I was reminded of Guru Nanak's verse which draws contrasts between humility and false ego. Guru Nanak compares the worthlessness of human life which is doused in self-conceit to that of a 'Simal' tree which stands tall but is incapable of bearing tasteful fruit.

si(n)mal rukh sareer mai maijan dhekh bhula(n)ni(h) ||  
se fal ka(n)m na aavan(h)ee te gun mai tan ha(n)ni(h) ||  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

My body is like the attractive 'Simal' tree, seeing which the birds are befooled.  
However, the fruits of the tree are useless, just like the qualities of my body.  
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels** **Episode 15: Sudh Uddesham (Seed of Intent)**

This episode presents compelling discussion points illuminating the historical significance and philosophical richness of Guru Nanak's journey through South India. By examining his interactions with diverse communities and spiritual traditions, we gain insight into how Guru Nanak practically demonstrated his messages on unity, clear intent, selfless sharing, the triumph over fear and ego, and the understanding that sensory perception has limits in grasping spiritual truths. These questions invite reflection on how Guru Nanak's journey through South India exemplifies his broader vision of building bridges across religious divides and focusing on the essence of spirituality beyond ritual and dogma. The enduring presence of sites that commemorate his visits, paralleling the legacies of revered saints like Bhagat Trilochan and Bhagat Namdev, testifies to the lasting impact of his inclusive philosophy in a region marked by religious and cultural diversity.

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

**1. What significance did Guru Nanak's travel route through South India hold, and how did the diverse religious landscape influence his interactions?**

The episode traces his path from Dhanushkodi to Rameswaram, Trivandrum, Kottayam, Annamalai Hills, Bidar, Nanded, and finally to Daulatabad. This journey exposed him to a multitude of religious traditions—from Shaivite and Vaishnavite temples to indigenous tribal communities and regions influenced by Islam. How did these varied cultural contexts provide opportunities for Guru Nanak to demonstrate the universality of his message?

**2. How have Guru Nanak's visits to various South Indian locations been commemorated over time, and what does this reveal about his historical impact?**

The episode highlights several sites established in memory of Guru Nanak, including the 'Nanak Udasin Muth' in Rameswaram, which was later developed into a gurdwara. It also mentions the historic Nanak Jhira Gurdwara in Bidar, renowned for its water spring, and the Mal Tekri Gurdwara near Nanded. In contrast, some locations, such as the Tilganji Sahib Gurdwara in the Kottayam region, also known as Kundikutlam, have been lost to time. What factors might have influenced the survival of certain sites while others have disappeared?

**3. What can we learn from Guru Nanak's dialogues with other spiritual figures during his South Indian journey?**

The episode records his interactions with Jogis (ascetics) at Rameswaram, the native 'Kauda' tribe in Annamalai Hills, and Muslim fakirs like Jalal-ud-din, Syad Yakub Ali, and Faqir Syed Hussain Lakkar Shah. These conversations often centered on overcoming religious biases and recognizing the unity of all humanity. How did these exchanges shape the reception of Guru Nanak's philosophy in South India?

**4. How do the legacies of saints like Bhagat Trilochan and Bhagat Namdev complement one's understanding of Guru Nanak's philosophical impact?**

Although Bhagat Trilochan was born in 1269 AD and Bhagat Namdev in 1270 AD, both saints lived centuries before Guru Nanak. However, their spiritual messages resonate with Guru Nanak's philosophy. Their verses were later included in the Guru Granth Sahib, serving as a testament to this connection. Both saints criticized ritualistic practices and emphasized the importance of spiritual transformation. What does this philosophical continuity suggest about the evolution of devotional movements in India?

### **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

**1. What does the sesame seed story at Kottayam reveal about Guru Nanak's philosophy of sharing and generosity?**

When yogis asked Guru Nanak to share a single sesame seed with their community, he demonstrated that the intent to share is more important than the quantity being shared. Through his verse, he emphasized that if you have virtues, it's essential to come together, share those virtues, and unite to foster positivity while eradicating negativity. How does this concept of 'Sudh Uddesham' (pure intent) challenge conventional understandings of charity and communal responsibility?

**2. How did Guru Nanak address the apparent contradiction between worshipping the formless (Nirgun) and divine forms (Sargun)?**

At Rameswaram's Ramanathaswamy Temple, ascetics questioned Guru Nanak about his visit to a Shiva temple as a devotee of the formless divine. He responded with a profound verse, illustrating the coexistence of two paths of devotion, one to the formless and one to the embodied. He asserted that both paths originate from a singular unifying force. How does the philosophy of monism unify diverse religious expressions and serve as a foundation for fostering universal harmony?

**3. What insights did Guru Nanak offer about the nature of fear in human relationships during his encounter with the Kadan tribe?**

When the Indigenous Kadan people in the Annamalai Hills captured Bhai Mardana, believing him to be an intruder, Guru Nanak explained that fear can dominate our thoughts and decisions. He emphasized that since we are all part of one ecosystem, there is no reason to be afraid of one another. In his verse, he elaborates that many

thoughts and individuals come and go due to fear. All forms of fear are self-imposed through our manifestations. Guru Nanak endorses that the only true reality is the fearless and formless omnipresence. How does this message apply to contemporary social divisions?

**4. How did Guru Nanak articulate the limitations of physical senses in spiritual understanding?**

The episode illustrates Guru Nanak's profound exchange with Faqir Lakkar Shah, who faced challenges with his vision. This moment serves as a powerful catalyst for contemplation if individuals with disabilities lack spiritual understanding or whether their unique experiences grant them more profound insights. Guru Nanak's verse emphasizes that the cosmic force is omnipresent, offering insights without discrimination. When the unstruck celestial currents of wisdom resonate within, doubts and fears vanish. How does this understanding confront and enrich our traditional views on physical ability and spiritual insight and encourage us to recognize the strengths that may arise from perceived limitations?

**5. What does Guru Nanak's commentary on power and ego enlighten us about leadership and human nature?**

Observing the monuments of Daulatabad, once built by the ruler Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq to assert strength, the episode notes Guru Nanak's message that as iron is melted in the forge and re-shaped, similarly, the disillusioned time and again wander aimlessly. How does this perspective on power relate to his critique of ego, exemplified in the simile of the Simal tree that stands tall but is incapable of bearing tasteful fruit?