

## ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 19: Nimrit Prabhav (Impression of Humility)

'Nimrit Prabhav', 'Impression of Humility', presents the humble philosopher's affability to soothe the egoistic hearts. Guru Nanak softens the hardened souls with the power of his philosophical words in the rocky hills of 'Takshila'.

agam agochar apar apaaraa paarabraham paradhaano ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

It is unfathomable, unperceivable, infinite and incomparable. It is the ultimate Supreme.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Marvels of nature arouse one's curiosity to know the Omnipresent who has designed all the infinite creations.

From Srinagar, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Hassan Abdal, Tilla Jogian, Sialkot, Pasrur and returned to Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib. Thereafter, they headed to Sultanpur Lodhi.

From Srinagar Valley, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled westwards through the hilly region and reached Hassan Abdal.

Due to diplomatic policies, in present times it is not possible to cross the India-Pakistan border from Kashmir. Hence, we travelled to Wagah border in Punjab and entered Pakistan to resume tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps from Hassan Abdal.

Hassan Abdal is a town in the Attock district of Punjab in Pakistan. This town was named after two men; Hassan, a herdsman, and Abdal, a Fakir. Legend says that the herdsman served cow's milk to the Fakir who in gratitude sprang a water source in the nearby hill to help the water-scarce city.

Interestingly, Hiuen Tsiang, the seventh century Chinese traveller, has written in his accounts that the sacred spring dates back to the times of King Elapatra.

On the hilltop in Hassan Abdal, we visit the shrine of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Rafizi Shia Sufi saint, popularly known as Baba Wali Kandahari.

**Amardeep Singh:** Baba Wali Kandahari was a mystic from Kandahar in Afghanistan, who had moved to Hassan Abdal and settled on this hilltop, where existed a water spring. This shrine is made in his memory.

According to the narrative, the only source of clean water in this area was a fresh water spring on this hilltop. Baba Wali Kandahari resided on this hilltop. He would preach to people who came to fetch water. Unfortunately, while a spiritual man of virtues, he had turned arrogant as a result of the adulation of fawning followers. He stopped allowing access to water to those who did not adhere to his preaching.

The narrative says, when Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana reached Hassan Abdal, they were unable to find water to quench their thirst.

When multiple requests by Bhai Mardana for access to clean water were refused by Baba Wali Kandahari, Guru Nanak is said to have moved aside a rock, from where sprang another source of fresh water spring. This infuriated Baba Wali Kandahari. Insecure and afraid of losing his credibility, it is said that he rolled a large boulder from the hill, which Guru Nanak stopped by raising his hand. The impression of a palm on a rock inside the premises of Gurdwara Panja Sahib is said to be that of Guru Nanak.

Interestingly, this narrative does not find mention in any of the earliest 'Janamsakhis' and only appears in the 'Bala Janamsakhi', which is a much recent text.

At Hassan Abdal, it was a delight to meet Ehsen Ali, a classical singer, who accompanied us to visit the Panja Sahib Gurdwara.

**Amardeep Singh:** At Hassan Abdal, the gurdwara Panja Sahib was made in the memory of Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana's visit and their dialogue here with Baba Wali Kandahari.

In 1821 this gurdwara was built by Hari Singh Nalwa, the renowned general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's court. In the 1920's the local Sikh community expanded the premises of the gurdwara, established a school and also built commercial shops in the outer periphery. During the religious divide in the partition of 1947, the followers of Guru Nanak from this region migrated to different lands.

It is satisfying to see that in present times, the school building and the shops continue to fulfill the educational and financial needs of the local Muslim community.

'Sarovar', the fresh water pool that surrounds the gurdwara, is organically replenished by a natural spring. As a ritualistic practice visitors reverently touch the palm impression on the rock, drink the 'sarovar' water and then splash it across their face.

**Ehsen Ali:** The hand impression on the stone is believed to be that of Guru Nanak's. I interpret it in this manner also that the stone over here, it represents the grossness, the darkness of human ego and the impression on top of it, it stands for the ultimate divine quality of humility. So here, it is telling us the story of the ultimate human aspiration, which is to go from the lowest, the darkest, ego to the ultimate humility.

naanak beRee sach kee tareeaaai gur veechaar ||  
eik aaveh ik jaavahee poor bhare aha(n)kaar ||  
manahaTh matee booddeeaai gurmukh sachu su taar ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Nanak says, honesty as a boat ferries one across the worldly ocean through spiritual wisdom and contemplation.

Some come, and some go; filled with egotism.  
Through stubborn-mindedness, the intellect is drowned. The spiritually wise understanding the Truth ferry across the worldly ocean.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Ehsen's understanding of Guru Nanak's verse in the context of the narrative associated with the hand impression on the rock affirms, if one makes an effort to understand the depth of spiritual words then true essence of philosophy takes precedence.

In my humble opinion, Guru Nanak would have mediated the water dispute between the residents and Baba Wali Kandahari, through 'Gur Veechar'; a medium of reflection, contemplation and dialogue. The soft impression of the palm on the hard boulder is a metaphor for the transformation of one's temperament from antipathy to empathy.

From Hassan Abdal, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to the Tilla Jogian hills in the district of Jhelum.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, from Hassan Abdal we travel to Tilla Jogian.

In reverence for Guru Nanak, Mr Talib, a landlord from the Jhelum district, drove us to Tilla Jogian which is only accessible through a hilly dirt track.

**Amardeep Singh:** So, Talib, thank you very much for taking out time to drive us up to the Tilla Jogian. Really means a lot to us. How long do you think it's going to take us to reach there?

**Nawabzada Talib Mahdi:** The journey is not that much long. It's around 20 to 25 kilometers long but the path is much bumpy and the terrain is like muddy and rocky. So, it would take around three and a half hours to four hours. Up till the top.

Tilla Jogian, a 1<sup>st</sup> century Hindu temple and monastic complex, is perched at an altitude of 3,200 feet on the highest peak of the Potohar plateau in the Salt Range. It is said, for centuries Hindu and Muslim ascetics lived in isolation on these mountains.

**Amardeep Singh:** For over two thousand years, and till the 1947, when the Indian subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan, on the Tilla Jogian, resided the

followers of Guru Gorakhnath, who were known as the 'Kanphatta Jogis' (split eared ascetics). The ascetics got dispersed and moved to new lands.

The abandoned and dilapidated structures of this magnificent complex are a reflection of a glorious past.

### **Amardeep Singh:**

kani mu(n)dra paa key, mathey tilak laga key, mei jaana jogi dey naal ||

Wearing earrings, adorning a mark on forehead, I want to go with the ascetics.

Tilla Jogian finds mention in Sufi Punjabi poetry. When Ranjha was unable to get his lady love Heer, he came to Tilla Jogian, got his ears pierced and found solace with the 'Kanphatta Jogis' (split eared ascetics) who resided on this mound.

The folklore of 'Heer Ranjha' is unfortunately misunderstood and perceived as a tragic tale of unsanctioned love. However, when the metaphors in the story are interpreted, they are embedded with powerful thoughts which are intended to shake the norms of society. 'Ranjha', the free spirited hero- represents the soul which breaks all social and religious shackles to unite with the magnificence of divinity which is represented by Heer, the fearless heroine.

**Amardeep Singh:** Bhai Gurdas writes in his Vaars.

raa(n)jhaa heer vakhaaneeaaai oh piraam paraatee ||  
peer mureedhaa pirahaRee gaavan parabhaatee ||  
(Bhai Gurdas)

Ranjha and Heer represent absolute love and devotion.  
Like the relationship of a teacher and disciple, in unison forever.  
(Bhai Gurdas)

The love of disciple for his Guru is described as Ranjha's love for Heer.

**Raja Waqar:** Tilla Jogian in every era has had its importance. From Alexander to different rulers, for example, Sikandar Lodhi, Zahiruddin Babur, have also visited Tilla at this place where we are standing today. Revered Baba Guru Nanak came here too. The tradition of 'Jogis' (ascetics) was also prevalent on this hill.

As this hilltop complex was frequented by pilgrims and scholars, thus Guru Nanak visited Tilla Jogian to interact with the congregation.

**Amardeep Singh:** When Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana arrived on Tilla Jogian, they were received by Baba Bal Nath. Baba Bal Nath asked Guru Nanak, who was his Guru and what was his path? Guru Nanak replied,

sidh saadhik jogee ar ja(n)gam ek sidh jinee dhiaaiaa ||  
(Guru Nanak)

Sorcerers, seekers, ascetics and mendicants are those who meditate on the path of Oneness.  
(Guru Nanak)

During congregational dialogue, Guru Nanak stressed the importance of having spiritual guidance; whether through self -reflection, experiential wisdom, or through a teacher. He noted that spiritual learning could be achieved by living a householder's life and not just by self-isolation.

ham ddolat beRee paap bharee hai pavan lagai mat jaiee ||  
sanamukh sidh bheTan kau aae nihachau dheh vaddiaaiee ||  
gur taar taaranahaariaa ||  
dheh bhagat pooran avinaasee hau tujh kau balihaariaa ||  
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

My boat (mind) is unstable and filled with misdeeds. With the flow of wind (senses), the mind sails in all directions.

The spiritually aware come forward to seek and imbibe the greatness of wisdom.

True wisdom helps to transit from darkness to light.

Grant me devotion, O perfect Omnipresent. I sacrifice myself to your Omnipresence.

(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Bhai Kahn Singh writes in 'Gurshabad Ratnakar' that in reverence of Guru Nanak the 'Jogis' had built a memorial to commemorate his visit to Tilla Jogian.

**Sufi Nazer Baba:** In that era, Muslim and Hindu ascetics resided together on this hill. In the eyes of Allah, all are one.

At the foot of the Tilla Jogian hills we visit the building of a gurdwara on the banks of the rivulet Naalah Ghaan.

**Amardeep Singh:** After having interacted with the 'Jogis' (ascetics) at the Tilla Jogian, on their onward journey, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana rested at this site, where existed a natural water spring. Later, in the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, a gurdwara by the name of Choa Baba Guru Nanak was built to commemorate Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana's stay out here. This site stands adjacent to the Rohtas Fort.

Before the partition of 1947, this gurdwara would host an annual congregation on the occasion of 'Vaisakhi', the harvest festival of Punjab. The festival would be celebrated by people of all faiths on the 27 acres of land, which was once a part of this site. After the partition of 1947, this site was abandoned and for years has remained devoid of visitors.

**Shakeel Ahmed:** I am a resident of Jhelum city. My name is Shakeel. My grandmother was very brilliant. She would tell about Guru Nanak Sahib that he travelled through this region. This narrative has passed through generations. A poem has been passed through generations, which I will recite,

Nanak says, serve the One who is present in water and land.  
Why worship the one who is bound by birth and death?

Carrying on the tradition, when I recite this poem, my soul becomes refreshed.

In 2019, when the world celebrated the 550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, a team led by Rubab Chishti, a young Architect from Lahore, undertook the restoration of this gurdwara using traditional building materials. It is heartening that this site will soon be a bridge connecting communities of this region.

**Rubab Fatima Chisti:** In delving into the history of gurdwara and Baba Nanak, I found myself exploring the soulful relationship that Baba Nanak and Baba Farid had. This project and the journey we had was a blessing. I am reminded of Guru Nanak's verse which is,

saach ridhai sach prem nivaas ||  
pranavat naanak ham taa ke dhaas ||  
(Guru Nanak)

In an honest heart resides true love.  
Nanak says, I am their humble servant.  
(Guru Nanak)

Which means, one whose heart is filled with truth and true love, in humility, Nanak says, I am their servant.

I feel like I am the servant of these spiritual masters and saints of the land of Indus, who have devoted their lives in the message of love to bring humanity together.

These abandoned colossal structures of the fort, gurdwara and Tilla Jogian represent the once strong political and spiritual accomplishments of this region.

Society classifies wealth, fame, designations and power as benchmarks for success. Can these parameters measure true achievements?

man cha(n)chal bidh naahee jaanai ||  
manmukh mailaa sabadh na pachhaanai ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

The fickle mind does not know the method.  
The filthy self-willed does not understand spiritual wisdom.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak uses the word 'Mun' in his verses, which is usually interpreted either as mind or heart. In the Indic tradition, it is a combination of intellect and ego; a faculty for decision making. Guru Nanak says, true accomplishment is when 'Mun', the moral arbiter, is kept under constant vigilance so that it does not deviate from the inner directive of positivity.

From Tilla Jogian, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled eastwards to Sialkot.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, travelling from Tilla Jogian we cross the Jhelum and Chenab rivers to reach the city of Sialkot.

Sialkot, an industrial and trade hub of Pakistan, is witness to diverse rulers and faiths. In historical texts, Sialkot is mentioned as the capital city of the ancient Madra Kingdom founded by King Salya, who was a general in the army of 'Kauravs', the legendary hundred brothers from the epic of 'Mahabharat'. According to archival records, when Alexander attacked the Indus region in 2<sup>nd</sup> BC, Sialkot was known as Sagla.

At Sialkot, we visit the Gurdwara Babe-De-Ber.

**Amardeep Singh:** On his arrival at Sialkot, Baba Guru Nanak rested under this 'Ber' (Jujube) tree. The Babe-De-Ber Gurdwara at this site was built in the memory of his visit to Sialkot.

Guru Nanak's philosophy is universal. When understood, it touches the hearts of people from diverse faiths. This is evident from a plaque that mentions a Hindu name Data Ram, as a generous contributor to the construction of this site. Guru Nanak's message of Oneness, 'Ik Ongkar' (One Omnipresent force) is inscribed on the walls of the dilapidated 'Sarvoar' (pond), which was once in the precincts of the Babe-De-Ber Gurdwara. During the faith-based partition of the sub-continent in 1947, the Sikh and Hindu communities were displaced and this gurdwara fell into disrepair.

Thereafter, a migrant named Allah Muhammad took refuge in the abandoned gurdwara premises. He was a man of spiritual disposition and over time acquired a large following. After his death, he was buried by his devotees in the precincts of this gurdwara.

In recent years, the central building of the gurdwara has been restored with the support of the government and the miniscule Hindu and Sikh community of the district of Sialkot. Congregational services at this gurdwara have now been resumed.

Akash Singh, the caretaker at the Babe-De-Ber Gurdwara, walked us to the nearby graveyard which is built in the precincts of Pir Hamza Gaus memorial.

**Amardeep Singh:** During his stay at Sialkot, Guru Nanak came to know about a revered Sufi Saint by the name of Pir Hamza Gaus. The Pir had locked himself for an act of 40 days of austerities.

The expression 'Chilla' is derived from the Indic numeral 'Challis', which means the numeral forty. It is believed, it takes 20 days to break a habit and 20 days to form a new one. In anticipation of spiritual enhancement, many belief systems adhere to the 40 day tradition of abstinence. While this tradition was prescribed for character-building, the positive intent got lost when it was formulated as a ritualistic religious exercise and ignited superiority complexes amongst some adherents.

During spiritual discussions, Guru Nanak explained that the mind and heart do not become compassionate by rituals like fasting and abstinence. Practicing abstinence from negative thoughts calms the hunger of the ego.

**Amardeep Singh:** When Guru Nanak met with the 'Pir', he said to him,

varat tapan kar man nahee bheejai ||  
(Guru Nanak)

The mind is not softened by fasting or austerities.  
(Guru Nanak)

Which basically meant that it is the compassion of the heart which is more important than the act of austerities.

Akash Singh now walked us to the erstwhile Moola Khatri Gurdwara.

**Amardeep Singh:** Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana beautifully worked as a team to convey profound messages to the world. When in Sialkot, Guru Nanak gave two 'paisas' to Bhai Mardana and asked him to go and buy truth and falsehood. As Bhai Mardana went around the market, everyone remained perplexed. When he reached Moola Khatri's shop, he wrote on a piece of paper, Death is Truth, Life is False.

Touched by Moola Khatri's sincere response which aligned with his thinking, Guru Nanak sang a verse,

jiau aaiaa tiau jaaveh baure jiau janame tiau maran bhiaa ||  
jiau ras bhog ke'ee tetaa dhukh laagai naam visaar bhavajal paaa ||1||  
tan dhan dhekhat garab giaa ||  
kanik kaamanee siau het vadhaieh kee naam visaareh bharam giaa ||  
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

As you came, so will you leave, O ignorant! As you were born, so will you die.  
As you enjoy pleasures, so will you suffer pain. Forgetting self-reflection, you get  
sucked in the terrifying whirlwind of the worldly ocean.  
Gazing upon your body and wealth, you remain proud.  
Your love for materialism and pleasure increases. Having forgotten self-reflection, you  
wander in doubt.  
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Moola Khatri also hosted Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana.

Interestingly, this Gurdwara which was built in the memory of Moola Khatri and Guru Nanak's association, and was abandoned in the partition of 1947, now serves as a school for the blind.

I feel that even though I am visually able, I remain spiritually blind.

mai a(n)dhule naam na veesarai Tek Tikee ghar jaau ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

I am blind. May I never forget self-reflection! Under its protection, one shall reach the  
peaceful abode.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Travel is the best way to enhance personal growth, especially in the company of people of spiritual disposition. Moola Khatri accompanied Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana for a few days during their further travels from Sialkot.

From Sialkot, Guru Nanak, Bhai Mardana and Moola Khatri travelled to Pasrur.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Sialkot to Pasrur, a town in Sialkot district, to visit the site which was made in the memory of Guru Nanak's meeting with Faqir Mian Mittha.

According to the narrative, Mian Mittha was a respected spiritual person of this town. On hearing about the arrival of Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana, he came to visit them. During their interactions, he questioned Guru Nanak; if a lamp can't be lit without oil, then how can salvation be achieved without a prophet? In reply, Guru Nanak sang,

pothee puraan kamaieeaaai ||  
bhau vaTee it tan paieeaaai ||  
sach boojhan aan jalaieeaaai ||  
eih tel dheevaa iau jalai ||  
kar chaanan saahib tau milai ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Earn from the wisdom of scriptures.  
Make the wick of knowledge and put it in the body.  
Ignite the fire within to attain Truth.  
With the oil of contemplation, light the lamp of wisdom.  
Illuminate so that you can meet the Supreme Omnipresent.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak believed in undertaking truthful actions as reverence for the One omnipresent force. In his verse, he says, reading of scriptures is helpful and a spiritual mentor is beneficial. The apex virtue, however, is of good conduct which is likened to a lamp that illuminates the soul of the self and the others.

With the migration of the Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan in the partition of 1947, this gurdwara fell into disrepair and only part of the structure survives today.

Universal fellowship is the essence of all religious philosophies, yet in history, we find that political aspirations have led to fragmentation based on belief systems.

Beavers have unique characteristics. They mark their territory by constructing fragrant mounds made with mud and their inherent bodily scent. Humans, too, have an intrinsic fragrance of Divine wisdom, yet, like beavers, they mark divisions by constructing boundaries with identities.

Guru Nanak says, with the grace of self-reflection, mounds of ego are broken and the everlasting fragrance of unity is effused.

kar kirapaa ghar mahal dhikhaiaa ||  
naanak haumai maar milaiaa ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

I seek the grace that the celestial abode within is realized.  
Nanak says, by conquering ego, one gets united.  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

From Pasrur, along with Moola Khatri, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana headed to Talwandi, their home town, which is now known as Nankana Sahib.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Pasrur to Nankana Sahib.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana returned to Talwandi after completing their second odyssey. Triangulating the timeframes of the first and the third odysseys, it can be estimated that the second journey commenced in 1517 AD and concluded in four years, in 1520 AD, when Guru Nanak would have reached 51 years of age.

Mata Tripta, Guru Nanak's mother, was delighted to meet her child after such a long period. She desired to shower her love by preparing and feeding him delicacies of his choice.

Guru Nanak's soul, having tasted spiritual delicacies during his travels, was satiated with contentment and undesirous of worldly tastes. His soul was inclined to savor and feed the food of contentment and unity in society.

baabaa hor khaanaa khusee khuaar ||  
jit khaadhai tan peeReeai man meh chaleh vikaar ||  
rataa painan man rataa supedhee sat dhaan ||  
neelee siaahee kadhaa karanee pahiran pair dhiaan ||  
kamaraba(n)dh sa(n)tokh kaa dhan joban teraa naam ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

O wise one, savouring those worldly pleasures is false through which the body withers  
in pain and the mind gets corrupted.

Adorning positivity, the mind becomes positive. Honesty and charity are akin to clean  
attire.

Erase the blackness of ill-intent and wear the robe of contemplation.  
Contentment is my waistband. Wealth and beauty is in self-reflection.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Moola Khatri took leave from Guru Nanak and went back to Sialkot.

Guru Nanak and his family travelled from Talwandi to Sultanpur Lodhi to meet his sister Bebe Nanaki.

To retrace Guru Nanak's footsteps, we visit India through Wagah border and continue our journey from Sultanpur Lodhi.

Guru Nanak was warmly welcomed by his sister Bebe Nanaki and the people of Sultanpur Lodhi. When the news of his arrival reached Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi, he personally came to pay respects to Guru Nanak. He enquired about Guru Nanak's travel experiences and his plans to settle down. In reply, Guru Nanak sang,

mukaam kar ghar baisanaa nit chalanai kee dhokh ||  
mukaam taa par jaaneeaaai jaa rahai nihachal lok ||  
dhuneeaa kais mukaame ||  
kar sidhak karanee kharach baadhahu laag rahu naame ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Assuming this existence as a permanent destination, one remains in fear of departing.  
This would be known as a permanent place only if the universe remained unchanging.

What sort of destination can this world be?

Have faith and spend time on worthy actions. Remain committed to contemplation.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Home comprises of an infrastructure where the resident feels comfortable and secure.  
Guru Nanak had created a spiritual infrastructure within, in which he had housed the entire  
creation as one unified family. His settlement was any place where love inhabited.

Having spent time with family in Sultanpur Lodhi, Guru Nanak decided to embark on  
another journey to visit places where Muslims congregated. Bhai Mardana consented to  
travel with Guru Nanak towards the west.

As a traveller in Guru Nanak's footsteps, I have witnessed infinite benefactions, yet my  
mind focuses on what I have not received. How do I get satiated with these endowments  
and not desire for more?

jevadd saahib tevadd dhaatee dhe dhe kare rajaiee ||  
naanak nadhar kare jis upar sach naam vaddiaaiee ||  
(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

As is the Master, so are the benefactions which it bestows endlessly to satiate its  
creation.

Nanak says, those who are graced to accept these benefactions, they obtain greatness  
of True wisdom.

(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 19: Nimrit Prabhav (Impression of Humility)**

The discussion points provide a framework for exploring the rich historical and philosophical dimensions of Guru Nanak's journey, as presented in the episode. By examining his travels to significant locations like Hassan Abdal, Tilla Jogian, and Sialkot, we gain insight into the cultural context of the 16th-century sub-continent and the timeless wisdom Guru Nanak shared during his interactions. This philosophical inquiry reveals that Guru Nanak consistently emphasized humility, inner transformation, and overcoming ego as essential components of spiritual growth. He also challenged ritualistic practices and the divisions between people. His philosophy on contentment, the transient nature of existence, and universal fellowship remains relevant today, offering guidance on navigating the complexities of human experience with wisdom and compassion.

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

- 1. How do the historical narratives of Guru Nanak's visit to Hassan Abdal inspire us to reflect on the challenges in authenticating accounts of his journeys?**

The episode recounts Guru Nanak's interaction with Baba Wali Kandahari at Hassan Abdal. During this encounter, Guru Nanak is said to have created a water spring by moving a rock and stopping a boulder with his hand, which left an impression of his palm. However, it is essential to note that this narrative does not appear in any of the earliest 'Janamsakhis' and is only found in the 'Bala Janamsakhi', a much later text. What does this fact tell us about the evolution of historical memory regarding Guru Nanak, and how should we engage with these commemorative narratives?

- 2. What is the historical significance of the site of Tilla Jogian, and how did Guru Nanak interact with the members of this spiritual tradition?**

The episode describes Tilla Jogian as a first-century Hindu temple and monastic complex located at 3,200 feet on the highest peak of the Potohar plateau in the Salt Range. For over two thousand years, until 1947, it was home to the followers of Guru Gorakhnath, known as the 'Kanphatta Jogis' (split-eared ascetics). Guru Nanak was welcomed by Baba Bal Nath when he visited the site. How did Guru Nanak's engagement with this ancient ascetic tradition reflect his approach to various spiritual practices?

- 3. How has the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent affected the preservation and remembrance of sites associated with Guru Nanak's journey?**

The episode frequently highlights abandoned and dilapidated gurdwaras that resulted from the faith-based partition of the subcontinent in 1947. For example, the Choa Baba Nanak Gurdwara near Tilla Jogiyān and the Babe-De-Ber Gurdwara in Sialkot fell into disrepair after the displacement of the Sikh and Hindu communities during this turbulent time. What efforts are mentioned to preserve these gurdwaras, and what do they reveal about contemporary efforts toward this shared heritage?

#### **4. Which historical interactions between Guru Nanak and mentors from other faith traditions are presented in this episode?**

The episode details Guru Nanak's encounters with various spiritual leaders, including Baba Wali Kandahari, an Afghan mystic; the Jogis at Tilla Jogian; Pir Hamza Gaus in Sialkot; and Faqir Mian Mittha in Pasrur. How do these diverse interactions demonstrate Guru Nanak's approach to interfaith dialogue in a religiously pluralistic environment?

#### **5. How did Guru Nanak's interactions with political figures like Daulat Khan Lodhi illustrate his significant influence in society?**

The episode mentions that upon hearing of Guru Nanak's arrival, Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi personally came to pay his respects. He asked Guru Nanak about his travel experiences and intentions regarding settling down. What might this reception by a high-ranking official suggest about Guru Nanak's reputation and influence at this stage of his life?

### **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

#### **1. How does Guru Nanak's interaction with Baba Wali Kandahari at Hassan Abdal highlight his profound understanding of the contrast between humility and ego?**

The episode presents a historical narrative in which Baba Wali Kandahari had become arrogant due to the admiration of his followers and began denying access to water to those who did not adhere to his preachings. Ehsen Ali interprets the palm impression on the rock as a symbol of the ultimate divine quality of humility, contrasting it with the stone, representing the darkness human ego. How does this narrative embody the episode's title, "Nimrit Prabhav" (Impression of Humility)?

#### **2. How does Guru Nanak's dialogue with ascetics at Tilla Jogian shed light on his perspective regarding the connection between spiritual practices and the ordinary tasks of daily life?**

The episode explains that Guru Nanak observed that spiritual learning can be achieved while living as a householder, rather than solely through isolation. When the Jogis asked about his guru and his path, Guru Nanak responded that self-reflection is his mentor and

Oneness is his path. How does this perspective challenge traditional notions of spirituality requiring withdrawal from worldly affairs?

**3. How does the episode in Sialkot reflect Guru Nanak's views on the impermanence of life and material possessions during his interactions with Moola Khatri?**

When asked to procure truth and falsehood, Moola Khatri reflected and responded that death is truth and that life is false. Guru Nanak endorsed this perspective, stating that one arrives in this world as one will ultimately leave it. Focusing on the body and material wealth leads to pride. As individuals become more attached to materialism and pleasure, they may lose sight of self-reflection and become consumed by doubt. What philosophical perspective does this reveal about Guru Nanak's views on attachment to worldly things?

**4. What is Guru Nanak's perspective on ritualistic religious practices as revealed in his discussions with Pir Hamza Gaus and Faqir Mian Mittha?**

Guru Nanak addressed Pir Hamza Gaus, who had confined himself for 40 days of austerities, by emphasizing that fasting and austerities do not soften the mind. When Mian Mittha asked how to attain salvation without a prophet, Guru Nanak replied with spiritual wisdom about creating a "wick" of knowledge and placing it within the body to ignite the inner fire that leads to attaining Truth. How do these responses reflect his approach to religious rituals and intermediaries?

**5. How does Guru Nanak define true contentment in his verse shared upon returning to his family?**

When his mother wanted to prepare his favourite foods, the episode reveals that Guru Nanak's soul, having experienced spiritual delights during his travels, was content and no longer desired worldly pleasures. He expressed this sentiment with a verse stating that indulging in earthly pleasures is misleading, as they lead to physical suffering and a corrupted mind. He emphasized that true contentment is like a supportive waistband, while genuine wealth and beauty can be found in self-reflection. What does this reveal about his philosophy of true satisfaction?

**6. What does Guru Nanak mean by referring to "Mun" as a moral arbiter that demands our continual attention and awareness?**

The episode explains that Guru Nanak uses the term 'Mun' in his verses, which is typically interpreted as the mind or heart. In the Indic tradition, 'Mun' represents a combination of intellect and ego, serving as a faculty for decision-making. Guru Nanak emphasizes that true accomplishment occurs when 'Mun,' as the moral arbiter, remains vigilant to ensure it does not stray from the inner directive of positivity. How does this concept relate to his emphasis on practising self-reflection?