

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 2: Shafaf Khayal (Clear Thought)

'Shafaf Khayal', 'Clear Thought', presents the youthful years of the compassionate defiant who endowed the clarity of unity in diversity. It also explores the legacy of Bhai Mardana, the lifelong friend of Guru Nanak.

naanak utam neech na koi ||
(Jap, Guru Nanak)

Nanak says, no one is high or low.
(Jap, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak establishes that 'all are equal'.

Guru Nanak's elder sister Bebe Nanaki was married to Jai Ram. The couple lived in Sultanpur Lodhi, a town on the eastern bank of the River Bein. The city holds immense importance in the context of the life events of Guru Nanak.

In present times, due to political reasons, the India-Pakistan border can only be crossed at a few designated points. To have insight into the formative years of his adulthood, we visit Sultanpur Lodhi in India through Wagah border.

During Guru Nanak's time, this city was under the governance of Daulat Khan Lodhi, a Muslim Governor of the Lodhi dynasty. Both, Hindu and Muslim communities were then an integral part of the social fabric of this city.

Concerned about her brother's future, who was still not showing any interest in worldly affairs, Bebe Nanaki and Jai Ram explored the idea of Guru Nanak relocating to Sultanpur Lodhi. Hoping a change of place may influence Guru Nanak's frame of mind, his parents agreed that he move to Sultanpur Lodhi.

In Sultanpur Lodhi, we visit the place which is believed to have once been the home of Bebe Nanaki and Jai Ram.

Jai Ram was a high-ranking official, the chief executive of the 'Modikhana', the state granary at Sultanpur Lodhi. Jai Ram recommended Guru Nanak's name for a job at the 'Modikhana' (state granary).

Daulat Khan Lodhi appointed Guru Nanak as a 'Modi', a position of immense authority entrusting him with supervising the state granary, keeping daily records of the commodities, and maintaining the ledger. Guru Nanak, now having settled with a job in

Sultanpur Lodhi, took up a house and got Mata Sulakhani, his wife, to move from Talwandi.

We visit the place where it is believed was once the home of Guru Nanak and Mata Sulakhani in Sultanpur Lodhi.

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak lived a householders life. Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh marks Guru Nanak's stay in Sultanpur Lodhi with his family.

Soon they were blessed with two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand. Sri Chand, the elder son, chose an ascetic lifestyle, initiating the 'Udasin' (ascetic) order, which contributed significantly to spreading the philosophy of Guru Nanak to far and wide lands. Sri Chand passed the leadership of the Udasin (ascetic) tradition to Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind, the 6th Sikh Guru. Lakhmi Chand, the second son of Guru Nanak led a householder's life.

At a short distance is the Gurdwara Hatt Sahib, built at the site where the 'Modikhana', the state granary existed.

Guru Nanak, now holding a seat of authority at the 'Modikhana' (state granary) was exposed to the immoral ways of society. Corruption was entrenched in the social system. For their benefit, the rich would bribe the authorities. To take advantage, the officials would misuse their power and the ones who suffered were the weaker sections of society. Guru Nanak, an adherent of honesty, sincerely performed his duties. For the underprivileged, Guru Nanak would distribute an incremental quota of grain. Soon, his reputation grew far and wide. The people at the grassroots were happy with Guru Nanak and he became popular as a hard-working, trustworthy, honest and compassionate officer. A jealous co-worker threatened by Guru Nanak's popularity complained to the Governor that Guru Nanak was an irresponsible officer who was squandering the state revenue. Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi ordered a tally of accounts and measurement of the quantity of grains. After a thorough inspection, the appointed officers found the accounts in order and a surplus amount of grains, which some citizens, having noticed Guru Nanak's charitable conduct, had donated for distribution to the needy.

naanak aakhai re manaa suneeaaai sikh sahee ||
lekhaa rab ma(n)geseeaa baiThaa kadd vahee ||
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Nanak says, O mind, hear the true instructions of the conscience.
The ledger of one's actions is accountable by one's consciousness.
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak draws attention to the immutable fact that no one can escape Consciousness which has the ledger of one's deeds. As per the law of nature, falsehood perishes and

truth prevails. Corruption is the exploitation of entrusted power for personal benefit. Honesty is the fulcrum for a fair democratic society leading to socio-economic equilibrium and harmony. This human rights revolution was seeded by Guru Nanak's actions at the 'Modikhana' (state granary).

Amardeep Singh: Gurdwara Hatt Sahib is a testimony of Guru Nanak's practical implementation of practicing what he preached. Honest earning, generous sharing and spiritual contemplation.

Bhagirath, the chief of the village Malsihan was a virtuous man. During his visits to deposit the grains as land revenue at the 'Modikhana' (state granary), he was deeply impressed by the new 'Modi' - Guru Nanak, who was proficient in both his job and knowledge of spirituality. Bhagirath started visiting Sultanpur frequently to have spiritual interactions with Guru Nanak. The adherents of Guru Nanak started from such first few like Bhagirath. The word of Guru Nanak's goodwill had spread around the region.

Deeply touched by Guru Nanak's radical influence in society, Bhai Mardana, who was in Talwandi, desired to meet him. As chance would have it, Mehta Kalu asked Bhai Mardana to visit Sultanpur and bring back news of Guru Nanak's welfare.

At Sultanpur, Bhai Mardana stayed at Guru Nanak's home. As a routine, in the early hours, Guru Nanak would bathe in the River Bein and then both he and Bhai Mardana would sing spiritual verses. One day, Bhai Mardana expressed his financial limitations to have his daughter married. On hearing Bhai Mardana's dilemma, Guru Nanak requested Bhagirath to facilitate the wedding requirements. Bhagirath visited Lahore to make the arrangements. Here he met Mansukh, a noted trader in the city. On hearing about the revolutionary thoughts and actions of Guru Nanak, Mansukh joined Bhagirath on his way back to Sultanpur. Mansukh was elated at meeting Guru Nanak and became another one of his early adherents. On having received the goods for the marriage, Bhai Mardana left for Talwandi. Soon after getting his daughter married, he returned to Sultanpur to be with Guru Nanak.

We now visit Gurdwara Ber Sahib on the banks of River Bein. This gurdwara is a landmark site in the heart of Sultanpur Lodhi city. The quaint, scenic beauty of this area was the reason Guru Nanak would meditate here after bathing in the river.

How can one attain truth without having to wander physically?

gur kaa sabadh rata(n)n hai kar chaanan aap dhikhaiaa ||
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

Spiritual knowledge is the gem through which the self illuminates.
(Raag Malar, Guru Nanak)

With an abundance of preachers in the realm of organised faiths, I wonder how many have experienced the Truth referred by Guru Nanak.

Amardeep Singh: Gurdwara Ber Sahib represents the time Guru Nanak spent on the banks of River Bein, meditating and having discourses with Allah Ditta, a Muslim holy man.

Time and again, saints have been proclaiming that the Creator resides in every aspect of the creation. So can pilgrimage sites provide spiritual solace to the seeker's mind?

pooj silaa teerath ban vaasaa ||
bharamat ddolat bhe udhaasaa ||
man mailai soochaa kiau hoi ||
saach milai paavai pat soi ||
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Humans worship stones, make pilgrimages, dwell in forests.
Wandering and faltering, they become renunciates.
How can a contaminated mind become pure?
By acquiring Truth, one attains integrity.
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak's message affirms the overarching importance of the right intentions to attain solace. I wonder why we continue to endorse ritualism and have not yet evolved to grasp the essence of Guru Nanak's wisdom.

To contemplate in seclusion, Guru Nanak would often visit the graveyard on the other side of the river.

Guru Nanak's father-in-law, Moola Khatri, along with Sama Pandit visited the graveyard to understand why Guru Nanak was spending much time in isolation. Unable to comprehend the meditative state of mind, Moola Khatri assumed Guru Nanak was possessed and sought assistance from Faqirs to free him from evil spirits.

One morning, when Guru Nanak went to bathe, he did not emerge from the River Bein. Worried by the disappearance, assuming Guru Nanak had drowned, the onlookers raised the alarm. Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi made every possible arrangement for his search but all efforts went futile. Guru Nanak had probably swum across the river, into the dense forest, to contemplate in solitude. After three days, he was seen coming out of the River Bein, about 3 kilometers away from the point he had entered.

The Gurdwara Sant Ghat is built to commemorate the emergence of Guru Nanak from the River Bein.

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak's philosophy of Oneness was pronounced by him at the banks of River Bein, after meditation and contemplation.

After this mystic experience, Guru Nanak was endowed with clarity that he wanted to disseminate with one and all.

eko dharam dhiraRai sach koiee ||
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

Righteousness is the only truthful universal law.
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

Connected with the Consciousness, Guru Nanak was in awe of the Omnipresent and only saw goodness in the universe.

Guru Nanak was now in 'Birha', an intense state of dispassion for duality. Seeing Guru Nanak wanting to relinquish his worldly possessions, people believed he had lost his sanity.

koiee aakhai bhootanaa ko kahai betaalaa ||
koiee aakhai aadhamee naanak vechaaraa ||
bhiaa dhivaanaa saeh kaa naanak bauraanaa ||
hau har bin avar na jaanaa ||
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Some call me a ghost, some a demon.
Some call Nanak a pitiful man.
Nanak has become insane in search for divinity.
Beyond this, he knows nothing.
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak stated, the most honourable religion is that of practicing righteousness. He fearlessly proclaimed that 'all are equal'. On the path of spirituality, there is no space for bigotry and supremacy of any religion, caste, colour and gender. This offended the custodians of the prevalent belief systems. Infuriated, they complained to Daulat Khan Lodhi, the Governor. Guru Nanak was summoned to give an explanation for his statement. Qazi, the arbiter of Islamic law, who supported the complaint, was also present to question Guru Nanak. He asked, if righteousness is the most honourable religion, then what is the importance of faiths, which have been established for centuries by Prophets, Seers, Sages and Bhagats? Guru Nanak replied that a truly religious person is one who follows the true essence of the religion.

The Qazi questioned Guru Nanak, since every man of religion follows a path, Muslim or Hindu, so what is Guru Nanak's chosen direction?

Guru Nanak replied that he seeks universal kinship and follows the path that leads to Divine Consciousness, which does not see anyone as a stranger and has no religion. Qazi, discontented with the answer, said, if you are on the path of the Divine, then join us for the 'Namaz', the Muslim prayer. Guru Nanak agreed and accompanied them to the mosque.

We visit the Gurdwara Antaryamta, which is built in the memory of the narrative of Guru Nanak being invited to read the 'Namaz'.

While the Qazi was reciting the 'Namaz', Guru Nanak looked at him and smiled. This infuriated the Qazi, who asked the reason for his amusement. Guru Nanak replied, you were not reciting the 'Namaz' honestly. Even though you were physically present in the mosque, your mind was at home, anxious about the newborn filly.

Adorning religious garb and performing rituals is easy, but the real test is practicing the path spiritual leaders subscribe. A faithful follower of one's faith is the one who is compassionate, humble, reposes complete faith and submits to the Divine Will. Else the daily prayers, rituals and clothing are nothing but a false show.

Even though we aspire to inculcate right actions, what hampers the aspiration?

man bhoollau bharamas aai jai ||
at lubadh lubhaanau bikham mai ||
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

The mind remains astray, in doubt between attachment and detachment.
It is extremely enticed and lured by poisonous temptations.
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

Illusioned by materialism and tricked by sensory attractions, the mind is subject to delusion. It causes human temperament to oscillate between attachment and detachment, which hampers the desired aspiration to act righteously.

After the partition of 1947, due to a population swap based on religion, the city of Sultanpur Lodhi now has a majority Sikh and Hindu population, with a scant presence of Muslims. This historic mosque within the compound of the old fort is a beautiful representation of interfaith harmony. Within its premises, the Muslims of the city have kept scriptures containing Guru Nanak's verses as memorabilia of the message of Oneness.

Finally, Guru Nanak decided to embark on a spiritual journey to visit places of religious, social and cultural congregations.

He requested Bhai Mardana to accompany him in these spiritual explorations. Both probably felt they needed to incorporate music in their journey, and for this, they decided to carry a Rabab, a plucked string instrument, which has the ability to create a percussive sound along with string vibrations. Words overlaid with spiritual music help transcend the thoughts of the mind.

Amardeep Singh: Before embarking on his journey, Guru Nanak requested Bhai Mardana to buy a Rabab from an artisan by the name of Bhai Phiranda.

We now travel from Sultanpur Lodhi to Bharoana Village in the basin where the rivulet Bein joins the Beas River.

Amardeep Singh: This gurdwara is dedicated to Bhai Phiranda, an artisan who presented a Rabab to Bhai Mardana.

After Bhai Mardana procured the Rabab, Bhai Phiranda accompanied him to personally hand over the instrument to Guru Nanak in Sultanpur Lodhi.

In ecstasy, Guru Nanak sang,

hau ddaaddee vekaar kaarai laiaa ||
raat dhihai kai vaar dhurahu furamaiaa ||
ddaaddee sachai mahal khasam bulaiaa ||
sachee sifat saalaeh kapaRaa paiaa ||
sachaa a(n)mirat naam bhojan aaiaa ||
gurmatee khaadhaa raj tin sukh paiaa ||
(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

I, the unemployed Bard, have been assigned the service
to sing praises day and night.
The Bard has been summoned to the True abode by the Master
and dressed with the honour of True adoration.
The True nectar of contemplation has become my food.
Those who relish True wisdom, obtain contentment & peace.
(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak, in his humility, sees himself now prepared to undertake a mission. Having fulfilled his fatherly duty, Bhai Mardana was also ready to be a part of Guru Nanak's mission.

Bhai Gurdas, in his writings mentions,

eik baabaa akaal roop dhoojaa rabaabee maradhaanaa ||
(Bhai Gurdas)

One is Baba Nanak, the timeless wisdom. The other is Rababi Mardana.
(Bhai Gurdas)

Historically, Muslim Bards who sang 'Gurbani', the verses from 'Guru Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture), came to be known as 'Rababis'. For centuries they sang spiritual verses in the gurdwaras.

The partition in 1947 divided the subcontinent into two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan. Unfortunately, this political event not only divided the geography, it also adversely impacted many intertwined cultural aspects, including the 'Rababi' (Muslim Bards) tradition.

In present times, due to political reasons, the India Pakistan border can only be crossed at a few designated points. We now make a detour from the footsteps of Guru Nanak and travel to Lahore in Pakistan through Wagah border to connect with those strands who are keeping the legacy alive.

We visit Mohalla Hussain Pura in Lahore where reside the family of the 'Rababis' Mohammad Hussain Lal, Naeem Tahir Lal and Sarfraz Hussain Lal, who claim to be the 18th and 19th generation descendants of Bhai Mardana.

jaahar peer jagat gur baabaa ||
(Bhai Gurdas)

Baba (Guru Nanak) is revealed as a spiritual teacher for all.
(Bhai Gurdas)

Naeem Tahir: Welcome, brother. Sat Sri Akal (Sikh greeting).

Amardeep Singh: Salaam (Islamic greeting). How are you? Trust all is well.

Naeem Tahir & Amardeep Singh: Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa. Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh. (Salutations).

Amardeep Singh: It is a pleasure to meet you. Please tell me about your family. How was the milieu prior to the partition of 1947 and how is it today?

Naeem Tahir: Before partition, from the lineage of Bhai Mardana, 12 groups would perform 'Keertan' (singing of spiritual verses) at the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. In many gurdwaras, the descendants of the 'Rababi' (Muslim Bards) tradition would perform Keertan (singing of spiritual verses). Bhai Lal Ji was born in Goindwal Sahib. My eldest paternal uncle was appointed to perform 'Keertan' (singing of spiritual verses) at the Sis Ganj Gurdwara. Our paternal and maternal grandfather, Bhai Chiragh

Din, were appointed to perform 'Keertan' at Goindwal Sahib. After partition, the tradition of 'Rababis' performing 'Keertan' at gurdwaras was totally finished. Ashik Ali Bhai Lal Ji, my father, was a renowned personality, who after migration, went through many hardships and therefore started singing 'Qawwalis' (Sufi songs). We are the 19th generation of Bhai Mardana. We earn living through labour work. During festive congregations, when visitors come to Pakistan, we perform 'Keertan'. We are trying our best not to quit this tradition. We seek Guru Nanak's blessings to continue.

ga(n)g banaaras hi(n)dhooaa(n) makaa kaabaa musalamaane ||
ghar ghar baabaa gaaveeaaai vajan taal miradha(n)g rabaabaa ||
jaahar peer jagat gur baabaa ||
(Bhai Gurdas)

River Ganga at Benares is revered by Hindus. Muslims revere the 'Kabba' in Mecca. Universally, Baba's (Guru Nanak) message of Oneness is being sung in accompaniment of drums and rababs.

Baba (Guru Nanak) is revealed as a spiritual teacher for all.
(Bhai Gurdas)

This visit has deeply saddened me with the present conditions of the descendants of the 'Rababi' tradition. Their forefathers were soulful preserves of Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana's legacy.

To get a glimpse of individuals in Lahore who continue to carry forward the light of Guru Nanak, we visit Dr. Asma Qadri, a Professor at the Oriental College in the University of Punjab.

Dr. Asma Qadri: Welcome.

Amardeep Singh: Salaam (Islamic greeting), respected Asma.

Dr. Asma Qadri: Sat Sri Akal (Sikh greeting). How are you?

Amardeep Singh: Salaam (Islamic greeting) and Sat Sri Akal (Sikh greeting). How are you?

Dr. Asma Qadri: All is well.

Amardeep Singh: Thank you for your time.

Dr. Asma Qadri: No problems. You are the one travelling with time. This meeting has been pre-ordained. It is making us transcend through time. Before you arrived, I received this new book, 'Gaavan Sang', which I opened and Nanak's verse came in front and you entered.

jau tau prem khelan kaa chaau ||
sir dhar talee galee meree aau ||
eit maarag pair dhareejai ||
sir dheejai kaan na keejai ||
(Guru Nanak)

If you desire to play the game of love
then step on the path with your ego placed on the palm.
Once you step on this path,
in giving up the ego, do not hesitate.
(Guru Nanak)

Amardeep Singh: Asma Ji, I am curious as to know about your connection with Guru Nanak.

Dr. Asma Qadri: Our classical poetry, it all starts from Baba Farid followed by Sultan Bahu, Sachal Sarmast, Shah Hussain, Bullhe Shah, Waris Shah, Damodar, Mian Muhammad Bakhsh, Maulvi Gulam Rasool Alam Pooni. We have read all these poets in the congregation with Najam Sahib. For the last 40-45 years this process is ongoing, every week. There itself, we have been reading the 'Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture) and gaining its wisdom within us. The tradition before Baba Nanak is that of Baba Farid. What was the linkage of our poets with Baba Nanak? You will be surprised to learn. In our Sindh, there was one poet, Sachal. A new poet, Yusuf came to him. Sachal read his poetry, and renamed him 'Nanak Yusuf'. So in Sindh, the works of 'Nanak Yusuf', the poet, are still there. We have studied his works in the sangat of Najam Hussain Sahib. In the sangat of Najam Hussain Syed, we are now reading and understanding 'Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture) for the fourth time. With us, even today, even at this time, within Lahore, all this is ongoing. Nanak is alive. He is present. The seeds which he sowed, they are sprouting. Every seed has two parts within but only one plant emerges from it. This is the wisdom to awaken consciousness which has been sowed as seeds by Nanak.

Amardeep Singh: Although 70 years post partition, a lot of our heritage has faded, yet within Lahore, the links are still present. Seeing this one feels elated. Baba (Guru Nanak) is still present here. You all have nurtured him.

Spirituality is beyond the realms of organized belief systems, best defined as a free flow of personal inquiry into diverse philosophies.

so kiau visarai meree mai ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Why do you forget , O my Soul?
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Saleema Khawaja, a lawyer by profession is one such soul who got attracted to Guru Nanak's philosophy by listening to the late Rababi, Bhai Ghulam Muhammad Chand, son of late Bhai Chand, one of the last Rababi's to perform 'Keertan' at the Darbar Sahib, the Golden Temple, at Amritsar, in India.

aakhaa jeevaa visarai mar jaau ||
aakhan aakhaa saachaa naau ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

When I contemplate, I remain alive, forgetting, I die.
Acquiring true awareness is difficult.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Saleema Khawaja: It started somewhat like this. I met Bhai Chand. He then came to our home and sang 'Shabads' (Verses from Sikh scripture). I was drawn to that. The way he was singing that. There was a pull. A definite pull. There I realized the expanse of Baba Nanak's verses. In the year 2007, I started learning from him. Embodiment of that tradition was Bhai Chand and he imbibed from his elders. Through oral tradition, this heritage has been passed on and somehow has reached me. I am very fortunate.

galee jog na hoiee ||
ek dhirasaT kar samasar jaanai jogee kaheeaai soiee ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

By mere words, the union is not attained.
Those who look upon all as one, only they can be known as spiritually enlightened.
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

I am reminded of a saying by a Japanese scholar, 'Beholding the wise in reverence will not make one wise. What they sought, does.'

From Lahore in Pakistan we cross the India-Pakistan border at Wagah and resume exploring the life journey of Guru Nanak from Sultanpur Lodhi in India. In travelling, I reflect on the true meaning of 'sangat', congregational learning. It is indeed a practical way in which these few people in Lahore continue to seek beyond the boundaries of faiths.

saahib meraa eko hai ||
eko hai bhaiee eko hai ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

My master is One.
It is one, O fellow, it is one.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Discussion Pointers

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels **Episode 2: Shafaf Khayal (Clear Thought)**

These discussion pointers offer pathways to explore the rich historical and philosophical content about Guru Nanak's life and his spiritual imports. The questions aim to stimulate deeper understanding of both the historical context that shaped his pursuit and the enduring philosophical insights that emerged from his experiences in Sultanpur Lodhi and beyond.

Historical Discussion Pointers:

1. What was the significance of Sultanpur Lodhi in Guru Nanak's formative years?

The episode reveals that Sultanpur Lodhi played a crucial role in Guru Nanak's early adulthood. It was here that Guru Nanak was appointed as a 'Modi' (supervisor of the state granary) by Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi. This city, situated on the eastern bank of the River Bein, was where Guru Nanak settled into married life, had two sons (Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand), and was recognized as an honest, compassionate official. How could the diverse urban environment, with its harmonious blend of mixed communities, have shaped Guru Nanak's evolving perspective on the world?

2. How did Guru Nanak's approach to his official duties at the Modikhana reflect his emerging spiritual values?

As supervisor of the state granary, Guru Nanak demonstrated exceptional integrity in a corrupt system. The episode states that Guru Nanak, an adherent of honesty, sincerely performed his duties. For the underprivileged, Guru Nanak would distribute an incremental quota of grain. When accused of mismanagement, an inspection found his accounts "in order and a surplus amount of grains. How did this practical application of ethics reflect the foundations of his revolutionary messages?

3. What was the significance of Guru Nanak's three-day disappearance in the River Bein?

The episode describes a pivotal mystical experience: One morning, when Guru Nanak went to bathe, he did not emerge from the River Bein and after three days he was seen coming out of the River Bein, about 3 kilometers away from the point he had entered. After this experience, he was endowed with clarity that he wanted to share widely. What could this transformative experience reveal about his profound understanding of the essence of life?

4. How did individuals become attracted to Guru Nanak's way of life, and what does this tell us about the growing influence of his philosophy?

The episode mentions several early adherents: Bhagirath, chief of the village of Malsihan, who was deeply impressed by the new 'Modi'; Bhai Mardana, who came from Talwandi seeking Guru Nanak; and Mansukh, a noted trader in the city, who joined after hearing about the revolutionary thoughts and actions of Guru Nanak. What does the diverse background of these early adherents suggest about Guru Nanak's appeal?

5. How did Guru Nanak respond to challenges from religious authorities?

When questioned about his radical statements by the Qazi and summoned before Daulat Khan Lodhi, Guru Nanak maintained that the most honourable religion is that of practicing righteousness. When invited to join the Muslim prayer, he agreed but pointed out the Qazi's wandering thoughts during prayer. In what ways did these encounters demonstrate Guru Nanak's innovative approach to challenging established religious authorities?

6. What has been the legacy of Bhai Mardana and the Rababi tradition across centuries?

The episode reveals the background of Bhai Mardana, Guru Nanak's spiritual companion, who accompanied him with his Rabab (stringed instrument). His progeny established a tradition of Muslim bards known as 'Rababis' who sang Gurbani (verses from Sikh scripture). The partition of 1947 severely impacted this centuries-old tradition; however, descendants of Bhai Mardana in Lahore, claiming to be the '18th and 19th generation,' are continuing this legacy despite hardships. How does this musical tradition reflect the interfaith dimensions of Guru Nanak's message?

Philosophical Discussion Pointers:

1. How does Guru Nanak's declaration of equality challenge social hierarchies?

The episode quotes Guru Nanak: no one is high or low. His proclamation that all are equal, fundamentally rejected distinctions based on religion, caste, colour and gender. How revolutionary was this stance in a society structured around hierarchical divisions?

2. What does Guru Nanak mention about the relationship between honesty and spirituality?

Guru Nanak states: hear the true instructions of the conscience. The ledger of one's actions is accountable by one's consciousness. How does this verse connect ethical conduct with spiritual awareness?

3. How does Guru Nanak define true religion beyond ritualistic practices?

When questioned by the Qazi, Guru Nanak maintained that Righteousness is the only truthful universal law. He stated that he follows the path that leads to Divine

Consciousness, which does not see anyone as a stranger and has no religion. What implications does this position have for traditional religious boundaries?

4. How does Guru Nanak describe the challenges of the mind in spiritual seeking?

Guru Nanak acknowledges that the mind remains astray, in doubt between attachment and detachment. It is extremely enticed and lured by poisonous temptations. How does this understanding of human psychology inform his spiritual insights?

5. What is the significance of Oneness in Guru Nanak's spiritual vision?

The episode concludes with Guru Nanak's verse: My master is One. It is one. Throughout the episode, there are references to his message of Oneness and philosophy of Oneness. How does this concept of unity extend beyond theological monotheism to social and spiritual unity?

6. How does Guru Nanak's concept of self-illumination relate to his approach to truth?

Guru Nanak states that Spiritual knowledge is the gem through which the self illuminates. This appears in the context of questioning how to attain truth without having to wander physically. What does this suggest about Guru Nanak's view on the internal versus external sources of spiritual insight?