

Guru Nanak was visiting Pakpattan for the second time to interact with Sheikh Ibrahim Farid Sani, also known as Sheikh Brahm, the 12th successor of Baba Sheikh Farid's spiritual seat.

Aashik kul zamaana moti sucheya da ||
Lagde pehre hazaari peeraan ucheya da ||
Mere lai te yaara eyna kaafi ae ||
Main kutta haan ganj Shakar de valiya da ||
Raja, mera sab valiya da raja, Baba mera sab valiya da raja ||

In every era, the truthful are honourable.
The teachings of the spiritual masters resonate forever.
For me, this is enough.
I am graced to associate with the devotees of Ganj-e-Shakkar (Baba Farid).
Ganj-e-Shakkar (Baba Farid) is the king of Saints.

Guru Nanak and Sheikh Ibrahim exchanged spiritual thoughts through the medium of verses. In one such occasion Sheikh Ibrahim sang Baba Farid's verse to express the importance of simple living and high thinking.

fareedhaa paaR paTolaa dhaj karee ka(n)balaRee pahireau ||
jin(h)ee vesee sahu milai seiee ves kareau ||
(Shalok Sheikh Farid)

Farid says, I have torn the garb of discrimination to tatters and wear a blanket of Oneness.
Attributes which bring closer to the consciousness are adorned by me.
(Shalok Sheikh Farid)

Thereafter, Guru Nanak sang a verse endorsing Baba Farid's philosophy of unreserved love; a feeling which evokes the clarity of unity in diversity.

ghar hee mu(n)dh vidhes pir nit jhoore sa(n)mhaale ||
miladhiaa ddil na hoviee je neeat raas kare ||
(Raag Vadhans, Guru Nanak)

The consciousness is housed within, however, the attention remains outwards. Hence, the absence of beloved (virtues) is constantly mourned.
The beloved Consciousness is met without delay if honest intentions are sincerely practiced.
(Raag Vadhans, Guru Nanak)

In response, Sheikh Ibrahim expressed that even while leading a life of simplicity, the frivolous mind deviates from the path of unison.

In reply, Guru Nanak sang,

sach kee kaatee sach sabh saar ||
ghaaRat tis kee apar apaar ||
sabadhe saan rakhaiee lai ||
gun kee thekai vich samai ||
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Only if one is honest, it is akin to a genuine knife.
Its artisanship is incomparable and indiscernible.
After it is sharpened by the grindstone of words of wisdom,
it gets placed in the sheath of virtues.
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, when the mind recognizes the truth, it gains the strength akin to a sharp metaled knife that can slaughter avariciousness.

Malang Baba: Baba Farid's one of the successors, Ibrahim Farid Sani, interacted with Guru Nanak about universal love for the betterment of society. This tradition continues to be alive in present times. It is very heartening that Baba Farid and Baba Nanak toiled hard for the Oneness of humankind. Baba Farid showed the path of righteousness and kindness. He was a man of divinity. People of Punjab from all over revere his teachings. We, have immense reverence for Baba Nanak.

During this trip, with the help of Sheikh Ibrahim, Guru Nanak collated more verses of Baba Farid. This intensive collation was later inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture. It is believed during his stay at Pakpattan, Guru Nanak composed the first nine stanzas of the 'Asa-Ki-Var' a composition contained in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'.

From Pakpattan, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled on foot to the city of Multan.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Pakpattan to Multan.

Located on the banks of the river Chenab, the town of Multan in the state of Punjab dates back to antiquity. Prehistoric texts mention that the legendry tale of Prahlad and Hiranyakashipu took place in this town. In the year 326BC, when Alexander, the Greek King invaded Multan, it was under the rule of the Mali dynasty. Hiuen Tsiang, the seventh century Chinese traveller has also written about Multan's prominence. In the 8th century, Islam was introduced to Multan through the traders and invaders from central Asia. During Guru Nanak's visit, Multan was an important center for Muslim Faqirs of different traditions.

Amardeep Singh: Multan is a city of Saints. It is close to a place where the five rivers of the Punjab merge with the mighty River Indus. It is probably for this reason that the Sufi Saints believe that in Multan, one can lose one's ego, akin to the loss of the individual identity of the five rivers of the Punjab.

We visit the mausoleum of Sufi mystic, Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya.

Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya was a 12th century spiritual leader who established the Surhawardiya order of Baghdad in this region. It is believed that he was from the lineage of Prophet Muhammad.

During their journey through the south of Punjab, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana visited the shrines of three of four Sufi friends - Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya, Sheikh Jalaluddin Bukhari and Sheikh Farid Ganj-e-Shakkar. These Sufi Saints were the pioneers of the 13th century Chishti and Suhrawardiya orders. Famously known as the 'Char Yaars' their shrines are important places of Islamic religious congregation, probably a reason why Guru Nanak visited them.

Amardeep Singh:

aape raseeaa aap ras aape raavanahaar ||
(Guru Nanak)

It is itself the producer, the ambrosia and the annihilator.
(Guru Nanak)

This profound verse about the Omnipresence of God was recited by Guru Nanak at this mausoleum of Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya. When Guru Nanak arrived in Multan, the then 'Makhdum' of this mausoleum warmly welcomed him and the two spent days in spiritual dialogues.

'Makhdum' is an Arabic word which means a teacher. In the sub-continent, it is a title bestowed upon the spiritual head of a Sufi shrine.

Makhdum Bahavadi at the mausoleum of Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya mentioned that he is aware that Guru Nanak saw no difference between a Hindu and a Muslim. However, he inquired if the supreme power resides in both Hindus and Muslims. In reply, Guru Nanak sang,

aape raseeaa aap ras aape raavanahaar ||
aape hovai cholaRaa aape sej bhataar ||
ra(n)g rataa meraa saahib rav rahiaa bharapoor ||
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

It is itself the producer, the ambrosia and the annihilator.
It is itself the bride (Consciousness) in the bridal dress (body). It is itself the bridegroom
(producer) and the bed (creation).
Imbued with love is my Supreme Omnipresent. It is permeating and pervading in all.
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, indeed the One supreme power resides in all. It is the Creator who permeates and beholds one and all.

Daata diyaan mehfilaaN sajaaN vaale change ne ||
Sohne te hardam darood rehande parhde ||
Ameen mehboob oh taa marde ni marde ||
Hazoor naal pakiyaan lagaauN vaale change ne ||
Aakaa diyaan mehfilaaN sajaaN vaale change ne ||

Blessed are those who adorn the congregation.
They forever remain engrossed in the attributes of Divine.
Those imbued with love for the Beloved, never die spiritually.
Those who strike an honest alliance with the Master are worthy.
Blessed are those who adorn the congregation.

The ancient Prahladpuri Temple made in reverence of Bhagat Prahlad is located adjacent to the shrine of Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya. In present times, this site is in ruins because its caretakers, the Hindu community of Multan, migrated to newer lands after the religious divide during the partition of 1947.

Amardeep Singh: Bhagat Prahlad in 'gurbani' (spiritual verses in 'Guru Granth Sahib') is referred as a 'Gurmukh', the one whose face is towards righteousness. This ancient temple in Multan is a testimony to the 'Puranic' (ancient) tale of Bhagat Prahlad.

'Bhagavat Puran', the prehistoric scriptural literature has a compilation of moral stories. In it, one of the tales is of Bhagat Prahlad and his father King Hiranyakaship, whose name means, the beholder of materialism, representing ego. The name Prahlad means unwavering positivity, which represents the strength to defy negativity. King Hiranyakaship had gained a boon which protected him from being killed by any human or animal, during day or night, indoors or outdoors or by any weapon. This grace made Hiranyakaship arrogant and he demanded to be worshiped. Bhagat Prahlad, nurtured by the values of his mother, Kayadhu, declined his father's demand. This infuriated King Hiranyakaship, who connived with his sister Holika, who had a boon to remain unscathed by fire. When Holika walked into a blazing pyre with Prahlad, she perished, while Prahlad remained unscathed. Thereafter, defying all parameters of the boon, Narasimha, a half-human, half-animal, killed King Hiranyakaship. To commemorate this triumph of righteousness over oppression, Hindus celebrate Holi, the festival of colours.

Even though Guru Nanak and Bhagat Prahald lived centuries apart, in the ‘Janamsakhi’ art works, the two are depicted in dialogue. In my humble opinion, these artworks convey the philosophical alliance between Guru Nanak and Bhagat Prahald.

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak mentions the essence of Prahald’s devotion in the verse,

dhuramat haranaakhas dhuraachaaree ||
prabh naarain garab prahaaree ||
prahalaadh udhaare kirapaa dhaaree ||
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

The evil-minded Hirnyakaship (ego) committed evil deeds.
The spiritually enlightened annihilate their ego.
Prahald (righteousness) is emancipated by imbibing kindness.
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled further south from Multan on the River Chenab to visit Uch.

Tracing Guru Nanak’s footsteps, we travel from Multan to Uch.

In the year 325 BC, King Alexander, the Greek ruler, founded a city called Alexandria, which is believed to be the erstwhile name of the city of Uch. After the conquest of this region by central Asian invaders in the 7th century, Uch attracted many Sufi saints, hence known as Uch Sharif, the exalted city.

Amardeep Singh: The town of Uch is in the southern-most tip of the Punjab. In the 12th century, it was known as Deogarh, which means a stronghold of God. Today, this town is famous for the historic shrines of Sufi saints.

In Uch, we visit the mausoleum of the 12th century Sufi saint, Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari. A native of Bukhara in Uzbekistan, he was an Islamic missionary who was known as Surkh Posh for adorning red attire. He was popular amongst people of all strata, gender and beliefs. It is said that one of his renowned female disciples was Lal Ded, who broke social biases of gender and religious discrimination. Lal Ded embraced the overlapping philosophies of Sufism, Islam, Shaivism and Buddhism. In the region of Kashmir, Lal Ded is considered a patron saint of both, Hindus and Muslims.

Amardeep Singh: In the 13th century, the famous Sufi saint, Jalaluddin Bukhari from Bukhara moved to Uch and settled in this town. This shrine in Uch Sharif is where he lies buried. When Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana visited Uch, the then ‘Makhdum’ of this shrine, by the name of Haji Sheikh Abdul Bukhari received them.

The musty room containing Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari's coffin has captivating interiors. Multiple wooden pillars holding the flat roof are carved with intricate designs. Walls are decorated with ornate glazed tiles, and the ceiling with hand painted floral and geometric designs cast in lacquer. The room is filled with the graves of other saints and relatives of the Sufi saint, Jalaluddin Bukhari. It seems as if they all are still holding a congregation.

Many Sikh authors have reported that relics of Guru Nanak are present with the 'Makhdums' of Uch.

We visit the home of Syed Zamurd Hussain Hasnie Al Hussaini the present 'Makhdum', the caretaker of the shrine of Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari.

Syed Zamurd Hussain Hasnie Al Hussaini: I am a humble servant of 'Surkhposh', the king of kings, Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari. In the times of one of our ancestors, the caretaker of Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari's shrine, honourable Guru Nanak visited here. Guru Nanak presented a book containing the compilation of his verses to him.

Syed Zamurd Hassan Zamrud Bukhari: Guru Nanak presented his footwear, bangles and this book to one of our ancestors. These possessions have been passed on through generations. This is the book. Baba Guru Nanak himself scribed it.

On a closer look at the scripture claimed as a gift by Guru Nanak to the 'Makhdums', we found it to be a printed version of the 'Sukhmani Sahib' verses of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru. The other relics referred by the caretakers were not presented.

Even though these relics are not of antiquity, they are a medium through which the lineage of the 'Makhdums' of Uch associate themselves with Guru Nanak.

sachahu orai sabh ko upar sach aachaar ||
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Truth is higher than everything. However, higher still is truthful living.
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Only if true to oneself, can one be true to others. Guru Nanak reminds us that Truth is high but living a life of truthful conduct is supreme.

While Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana were being hosted by Makhdum Haji Abdul Sheikh Bukhari, Makhdum Bahavadi of Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya's shrine of Multan, also arrived in Uch. The two 'Makhdums' decided to visit Mecca for performing 'Haj'. Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana accompanied them on their boat from Uch. Sailing through the Rivers Chenab and Indus, they reached Sukkur in Sindh.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Uch to Sukkur in Sindh.

Amardeep Singh: Sindh is in the crossroads of land and sea routes. It borders Punjab and Balochistan in Pakistan and Rajasthan and Gujarat in India. Historically, cultures, civilizations, faiths and philosophies converged in Sindh. It is probably for this reason that Guru Nanak also visited Sindh to interact with different cultures and faiths.

Famous for the Mohenjo-daro civilization, Sindh derives its name because of its close proximity to the Sindhu River, which is also known as the Indus.

For centuries, Hinduism and Buddhism were the integral belief systems of this region. Later, Sufism too blossomed here. Historically, natives of Sindh have been known for their syncretism.

Guru Nanak's message of universal fellowship and monism became deeply embedded in the socio-religious beliefs of Sindh. The philosophy of Guru Nanak resonated with the people of this region, primarily of Hindu background, who came to be known as 'Nanakpanthis'.

At Sukkur, we visit the island in the River Indus where exists a historic 'Nanakpanthi' temple, known as Sadhu Bela.

Amardeep Singh: Sind is a mystical land which has always fascinated me. It is here that the faiths start merging. Whether one is a Hindu, Sufi or a Sikh, they become one.

At Sadhu Bela Temple, inscriptions of Guru Nanak's verses on its walls are a testimony of the impact of Guru Nanak's philosophy in this region.

In the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, both 'Bhagvat Gita', the Hindu scripture, and the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture are enshrined. The walls are adorned with pictures of Sikh Gurus and Hindu deities.

The temple caretaker warmly received us and read a few verses from the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture.

Priest:

dhiaa miaa kirapaa naanak kau sun sun jas jeevaau ||
Satnam Sri Waheguru ||
Bolo Guru Nanak Sahib ki Jai ||

Kindness, grace and compassion are sought by Nanak. Hearing about Divine attributes,
I live imbibing them.

True are spiritual words and the revered teacher.
Glory to respected Guru Nanak.

Sadhu Bela temple gives an insight into the rich ethos of the Sindhi community.

Amardeep Singh: In the memory of Guru Nanak's travel through Sukkur in Sindh, the 'Nanakpanthi Udasin Sadhus' established this site of Sadhu Bela in the centre of the Indus River.

Bankhandi Sadhu, a 'Nanakpanthi' from Nepal, moved to Sukkur in the year 1823 to spread Guru Nanak's message of monism. An invocation to Bankhandi Sadhu is inscribed on a marble slab along with a verse of Guru Nanak from the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture.

Amardeep Singh:

motee ta ma(n)dhar uosareh ratanee ta hoh jaRaau ||
kasatoor ku(n)goo agar cha(n)dhan leep aavai chaa ||
mat dhekh bhooola veesarai teraa chit na aavai naau ||
(Guru Nanak)

If I make a palace of pearls, inlaid with jewels.
If I scent it with musk, saffron and sandalwood to make it enchanting.
Don't let this affluence make me go astray so that I forget contemplating on
consciousness.
(Guru Nanak)

Interestingly, we observed that the historical inscriptions have been tampered. 'Guru Nanak' which was originally engraved on this marble plaque is painted over as 'Guru Sri Chand', the name of Guru Nanak's son who is associated with the 'Udasin' (ascetic) tradition. This overwriting is one of the many indicators of the socio-political forces which fragmented the diversity of the culture of 'Nanakpanthis', the bouquet of believers of Guru Nanak.

Amardeep Singh:

ikOankaar ||
pauri ||
naanak jaachai ek naam man tan bhaava(n)dhaa ||

One Universal Creator
Stanza

Nanak seeks contemplation on singularity, which is pleasing to mind and body.

The Sadhu Bela Temple gives an insight to the erstwhile rich synergic Sindhi community. Unfortunately, the 'Nanakpanthi' culture of Sindh was fragmented in the partition of 1947 based on religion.

Insecurities overpower rational thinking creating distrust and disharmony amongst communities.

bhau much bhaaraa vaddaa tol ||
man mat haulee bole bol ||
(Raag Gauri Guareri, Guru Nanak)

Fear is regressive and extremely heavy in weight.
It entices the intellect to prattle insignificant words.
(Raag Gauri Guareri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana accompanied the Makhdums of Multan and Uch and travelled on foot from Sukkur to Shikarpur.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Sukkur to Shikarpur.

At Shikarpur, we visit Dada Rewa Chand's residence to experience his love for Guru Nanak.

Dada Rewa Chand:

dda(n)ddaut ba(n)dhan anik baar sarab kalaa samarath ||
ddolan te raakhahu prabhoo naanak dhe kar hath ||
firat firat prabh aaiiaa pariaa tau saranai ||
naanak kee prabh benatee apanee bhagatee lai ||
(Guru Arjan)

I bow in adoration countless times to the all-pervading Omnipresent.
Save me from wavering, O Omnipresent Master. Nanak requests to be saved by its
extended grace.
Having wandered, I have submitted myself in your sanctuary.
Nanak requests the Omnipresent to be attached to its service.
(Guru Arjan)

The local people are Sindhi Nanakpanthis. They revere Guru Nanak. People of Balochistan who come here, those who are from our community, especially Hindus, they also believe in Guru Nanak. Whichever temple is there in this area, be it of any religion, the 'Guru Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture) is definitely enshrined in them. Whatever message was given by Guru Nanak, it was about imparting love and staying humble.

man maiaa man dhaiaa man pa(n)khee aakaas ||
tasakar sabadh nivaariaa ||
(Guru Nanak)

Mind is illusionary. Mind is a wanderer. Mind is like a bird flying in the sky.
Thieves (senses) which mislead the mind are controlled by spiritual wisdom.
(Guru Nanak)

Mind wanders like a bird in the sky of illusion, desiring to accumulate worldly wealth.

<<Sindhi children reciting verses from 'Guru Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture).>>

Ham guru gur nath re ||
Nanak naam hamaara re ||
(Sain Aijaz Shah Rashdi)

I am the Guru, Guru of the 'Naths'.
Nanak is my name.
(Sain Aijaz Shah Rashdi)

We visit the Shankar Anand Bharati Darbar which is one of the oldest sites established in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Shikarpur.

Guru bhi main hoon, chela bhi main hoon ||
Nanak bhi main hoon, Sachal bhi main hoon ||
Nath bhi main hoon, Aadam bhi main hoon ||
Shiv bhi main hoon ||
Eesa bhi main hoon ||
Moosa bhi main hoon ||
Mere se koi juda nahi hai ||
Naam aleda hai ||
Ham guru gur nath re, Nanak naam hamaara re ||
Nanak naam hamaara re, Har ghat dhaam hamaara re ||
(Sain Aijaz Shah Rashdi)

I am also the Guru. I am also the disciple.
I am also Nanak. I am also Sachal.
I am also a 'Nath' (ascetic). I am also Adam.
I am also Shiv.
I am also Christ.
I am also Moses.
No one is separate from me.
Only the names are different.
I am the Guru. Guru of the 'Naths' (ascetics). Nanak is my name.
Nanak is my name. I reside in every heart.
(Sain Aijaz Shah Rashdi)

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana spent a few days in Shikarpur. Their stay on the banks of a river is depicted in this painting at the Shankar Anand Bharati Temple in Shikarpur. This temple is a syncretic place of worship for the 'Nanakpanthi' communities of this region.

From Shikarpur, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana headed back towards River Indus. They boarded a boat and sailed southwards. The Makhdum of Uch and the Makhdum of Multan took the land route towards Mecca.

From Shikarpur, we make a detour from Guru Nanak's footsteps to visit Sehwan Sharif to explore memories of Bhagat Sadhna, a Saint whose philosophy was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

Ho laal mori pat rakhyo bala jhoole laalan ||
Sindhri da sevan da Shahbaaz Qalandar ||
Dama dam mast Qalandar ||
Sakhi Shahbaaz Qalandar ||
Meri har dam andar ||

O red-robed Qalandar (free-spirited), preserve my honour.
Of Sindh and Sehwan, you are the royal falcon of Qalandars (non-conformists).
Every breath of mine is for the Qalandar (free-thinker).
I have befriended the noble Qalandar (unconventional).
In my every breath, they reside.

Bhagat Sadhna, also known as Sadhna Qasai, was a saint born in 1180 AD to a Muslim butcher family in Sehwan Sharif, a city in Sindh province of Pakistan.

Much after the time of Bhagat Sadhna's birth, the city became famous for the Shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

Utho rindo ||
Utho rindo ||
Piyo jaam e Qalandar ||
Talue sahr hai shaam e Qalandar ||
Qalandar laal laj paa le jhoole laa ||

Awaken, O intoxicated.
Drink the ambrosia of Qalandar (free-thinker).
In dawn and dusk resides the Qalandar (free-spirited).
O Qalandar (free-thinker), grace me with honour, O Jhuley Lal.

The Sufi 'Malangs', the carefree mystics, and 'Qalandars', the saints who associate themselves with boundary less existence, associate themselves with this shrine. Bhagat Sadhna was also of the same spiritual disposition.

It is said, Bhagat Sadhna was presented a 'Saligram', an aniconic stone representing the Hindu deity Vishnu by a Brahmin. In paying respect, Bhagat Sadhna would first worship the stone and then use it for weighing meat for his customers. This action angered the Hindu Brahmins and the Muslims rebuked him for worshiping an idol. The authorities viewed this as disrespect of religions and sentenced him to being bricked alive in a wall. It is said that the wall fell and Bhagat Sadhna survived.

In my humble opinion, the incident of the wall breaking is a metaphor for Bhagat Sadhna's disassociation from dogmatic norms prescribed by religious authorities.

Bhagat Sadhna spent most of his adulthood in the city of Sirhind in East Punjab in India where he breathed his last.

Even though Bhagat Sadhna and Guru Nanak were born centuries apart yet their core philosophies intertwined. One of Bhagat Sadhna's verse is inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture.

tav gun kahaa jagat guraa jau karam na naasai ||
si(n)gh saran kat jaieeai jau ja(n)buk graasai ||
mai naahee kachh hau nahee kichh aah na moraa ||
aasar lajaa raakh leh sadhanaa jan toraa ||
(Raag Bilawal, Bhagat Sadhna)

What is your value, O world teacher? If you do not guide me, how to erase negative actions?

Why seek safety from a lion who is to be eaten by a jackal?
I am nothing, I have nothing, and nothing belongs to me.
For this reason, protect my honor. Sadhna is your humble servant.
(Raag Bilawal, Bhagat Sadhna)

From Shikarpur, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana sailed on the River Indus and visited Mirpur Khas.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Shikarpur to Mirpur Khas.

Amardeep Singh: While travelling through Sindh, Guru Nanak & Bhai Mardana stopped at the city of Mirpur Khas. This gurdwara in the centre of the city was built in their memory.

This gurdwara was abandoned during the partition of the Indian subcontinent in the year 1947 when the followers of Guru Nanak had to migrate from Mirpur Khas.

From Mirpur Khas, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana continued their journey by boat on the River Indus. Travelling through what was then called the River Kori, which merged into the Arabian Sea, they reached the port of Lakhpat.

From Mirpur Khas, we travel back to Punjab in Pakistan to cross the Pakistan-India border and resume trailing Guru Nanak's footsteps from Lakhpat in the Indian state of Gujarat.

Amardeep Singh: Kot Lakhpat was once a prosperous town. A fertile agricultural area, important for trade and pilgrimage. It hosted people of diverse belief systems.

The fate of Lakhpat was decided by the 1819 Rann of Kachchh earthquake. The ground sank by 15 feet, and filled the creeks with saline sea water, turning the once fertile region into barren land. The River Indus and Kori changed their course away from the city of Lakhpat. Thus, the once prosperous port town lost its importance. After the partition of 1947, this region has been transformed into a high security border zone.

Amardeep Singh: When Guru Nanak travelled to Kot Lakhpat, this town was known as Basta Bandar. This shrine was built by the 'Udasins' (ascetic) and is now managed as a gurdwara.

Land records indicate that this site was built in the early 19th century. The native ruler, in reverence of Guru Nanak and the 'Nanakpanthi' followers, had allotted a nearby village named Koriyani to this site to generate revenue for its maintenance.

From Lakhpat, we make a detour to visit Koriyani village at a distance of around 20 kilometers.

At Koriyani, the villagers guided us to a dilapidated building next to a lake. They mentioned, this site was built by the 'Udasins' (ascetics) and was managed by the same management who had built the site in Lakhpat in the memory of Guru Nanak. This building, which is now in ruins, was abandoned in the 1960s.

Rana Sodha: I am Rana Ji Ramoji Sodha. I live in Koriyani. We Sodha people are Rajputs. We arrived here from Pakistan in 1971. When I arrived here, this building was still intact. Even the roof was intact. Even now, we believe in Guru Nanak's teachings. All the spiritually inclined people in our community believed in Guru Nanak's teachings. Anyone who has adopted the path of spirituality is well acquainted with Guru Nanak's teachings.

In departing from this Indo-Pak border region of Lakhpat and Koriyani, I reflect, even though human beings share certain characteristic with other species, their uniqueness is in their cognitive ability and co-operative flexibility. Yet, they falter and create divisions.

Guru Nanak compares different states of human mind with the characteristics of other species, prompting us to emulate the positive virtues and discard the negatives.

kete rukh birakh ham cheene kete pasoo upaae ||
kete naag kulee meh aae kete pa(n)kh uddaae ||
(Raag Gauri Cheti, Guru Nanak)

Many a times, I have behaved like a tree and a plant. Many a times, I have conducted myself like an animal.

Many a times, I have transformed as the movement of a cobra. Many a times, I have flown like a bird.

(Raag Gauri Cheti, Guru Nanak)

From Lakhpat, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana walked along the coastline and reached Koteshvar.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Lakhpat to Koteshvar.

In the Kachchh district of Gujarat, Koteshvar is located at the mouth of the Kori Creek and is famous for the ancient Koteshvar temple.

Historically, 'Shaivites', the followers of Lord Shiva would visit both, the Koteshvar and Hinglaj temples as part of their pilgrimage. During Guru Nanak's visit the 'Kanphatta Jogis' (split eared ascetics), the followers of Guru Gorakhnath, were the primary care takers of this site. It is believed that Guru Nanak had dialogue with them at Koteshvar.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana boarded a boat at Koteshvar and travelled on the Arabian Sea to the port of Somiani.

We now travel from India to Pakistan and resume tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps from Somiani in Balochistan.

Somiani is a coastal town northwest of Karachi. It was once a prosperous natural port, a hub for trade with Central Asia.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled on land from Somiani, and passing through Chandrakup, they reached Hinglaj.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, travelling from Somiani to Hinglaj, we visit Chandrakup, the cluster of Hingol mud volcanoes.

The word 'Chandra' means Moon and 'Kup' means a mud basin. One of the mud volcanoes, which is around 300 feet high, is a site of pilgrimage for the Hindus who visit

the Hinglaj Temple. These mud basins which are formed by volcanic activities are considered as physical representation of Lord Shiva's anger.

From Chandrakup, we proceed further to the Hinglaj Temple.

Hinglaj is situated on the west bank of the Aghor River in Balochistan, close to one of the mountains of the Makran coastal range.

Ik dam rasni, kare jwaala ||
Noe kot ko deve jawaani ||
Hinglaj par cham gai raani ||
Har jan ke hridaye me jaani ||
Bhagat janaa ke khari rahaani ||
ikOankaar ka bhajan kare ni ||

She, in the form of Hinglaj, ignited herself.
Amongst the nine forms, she (Hinglaj) is the giver of life.
She has ordained herself on the Hinglaj mountains.
She resides in one and all.
She is the protector of the devotees.
She sings the praises of One Omnipresent.

The shrine of Hinglaj Temple is in a small natural cave in the hilly area of the Lyari Tehsil. Known as one of the 51 sacred 'Shakti Peeths', it is dedicated to Shiva's consort Sati. It is believed Sati's severed head fell at this place. In the Hindu tradition, Hinglaj is an important place of worship for 'Shaktism', feminine worship. A stone, which is worshiped as Hinglaj Mata, is known as 'Nani Ka Mandir' by Hindus and 'Nani Ka Haj' by Muslims.

During Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana's visit to Hinglaj, the ascetics of the 'Nathpanthi' sect, had a strong presence in this region. Looking at Guru Nanak's unique attire, they were unable to discern if he was a 'Haji', a Muslim pilgrim on his way to perform 'Haj', the Islamic pilgrimage, or if he was a Hindu pilgrim visiting 'Nani Ka Mandir'. When they inquired about his faith, Guru Nanak sang,

sach varat sa(n)tokh teerath giaan dhiaan isanaan ||
dhiaa dhevataa khimaa japamaalee te maanas paradhaan ||
jugat dhotee surat chaukaa tilak karanee hoi ||
bhaau bhojan naanakaa viralaa ta koiee koi ||
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Make honesty as fasting and contentment as pilgrimage. Make wisdom and
contemplation as ablution.
Make kindness as deity and forgiveness as chanting beads. People with such attributes
are par excellence.

Make equipoise as the loincloth and intuitive awareness as the purified kitchen. Make good deeds as the ceremonial forehead mark. Savour conscious thoughts as food, says Nanak says. Rare are people with such intent. (Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak discounts religious and ritualistic constructs as rules of conduct prescribed by society. He says, those who give precedence to universal love are beings of a true religion. They are beyond the realm of concepts such as pilgrimages, identities, fasting and garb.

Amardeep Singh: In this dry and barren region of Balochistan, along the River Aghor, in the hills of Hinglaj, there is a site made in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit, which we are going to go and explore.

These barren Rocky Mountains are daunting, their magnificence challenged our spirits and the scorching heat tested our resilience. Unsure of our physical capabilities, with conviction we started the climb. The initial ascent was difficult, the latter part was exhausting and the final destination was gratifying. I guess this process of scaling the mountain is synonymous to surmounting our daily challenges.

ddoo(n)gar dhekh ddaraavano peieeaRai ddareeaas ||
uoochau parabat gaakhaRo naa pauRee tit taas ||
gurmukh a(n)tar jaaniaa gur melee tareeaas ||
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Seeing the dangerous mountains like the ways of the world, I am terrified. It is so difficult to scale these high mountains as there is no ladder for support. The spiritually enlightened seek wisdom within to cross the worldly challenges. (Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Amardeep Singh: Respected sir, remarkable is the spiritual teacher.

Prem Balmiki: Accolades to the Goddess.

Amardeep Singh: How are you?

Prem Balmiki: This is Hinglaj. Here many prominent saints have come. Guru Nanak also came here. A little ahead are Guru Gorakhnath's memorial as foot impressions and a sacred hearth.

Amardeep Singh: The 'Nanakpanthi' and the Hindu community of Balochistan and the Sindh region have made a memorial with a foot impression at this site which represents the visit of Guru Nanak in the region of Hinglaj.

Close to this site, there is another memorial with impressions of the foot of Guru Gorakhnath made by people of faith.

The memorial in the form of Guru Nanak's foot impression is an endorsement of love and reverence of the local Hindu community for Guru Nanak. For me, the foot impression is a reminder for us to walk on the path of Oneness for which Guru Nanak had travelled to such remote and harsh terrains.

British author, A.W.Hughes in his book entitled 'The Country of Balochistan', published in the year 1877, has mentioned the 'Gitchki' tribe. He has classified them as Sikhs, the believers of Guru Nanak who resided in the Hinglaj, Makran and Kalat regions. After the partition of 1947, there are no 'Gitchki' Sikhs residing in these regions.

Amardeep Singh: After having spent some time with the mystics at Hinglaj, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled back to Somiani and took the sea route to the Persian Gulf.

Water that emerges from the ocean, momentarily creates an identity as a wave but soon loses its singularity and merges with the ocean. This phenomenon reminds me of Guru Nanak's verse which explains the fallacy of individuality which gets dissolved when 'Atma', the awareness, becomes one with 'Paratama', the wisdom.

aatamaa paraatamaa eko karai ||
a(n)tar kee dhubidhaa a(n)tar marai ||
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

When inner consciousness merges with the Cosmic Consciousness,
duality residing within perishes within.
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Discussion Pointers

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels

'ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels', the 24 Episode Guru Nanak Docuseries
is available in 5 languages at TheGuruNanak.com
Email: onenessindiversityfoundation@gmail.com

Episode 20: Rangeen Guldasta (Colourful Bouquet)

This discussion framework analyzes Guru Nanak's third Odyssey as presented in this episode, focusing on his interactions with Sufi saints, the Nanakpanthi traditions, and his memories of the Indus Region of Pakistan. Guru Nanak's critique of ritualism, his insights on truthfulness, the impact of fear, the nature of consciousness, and the effects of Oneness reveal how his experiential knowledge fostered lasting philosophical connections among diverse cultures. His wisdom offers timeless guidance that transcends religious boundaries. Guru Nanak's travels serve as both a physical and spiritual journey, resonating across different faiths and regions, even as historical events like the partition of 1947 fragmented some of these connections.

Historical Discussion Pointers:

- 1. What is the timeline of Guru Nanak's third journey, and why is it essential to grasp this chronology to comprehend the profound influence of his travels?**
The episode highlights that after cherishing moments with their families in Nankana Sahib and Sultanpur Lodhi, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana commenced their third odyssey, believed to have begun in 1520 AD. This journey took them westward to engage with key sites of religious significance for the adherents of Islamic belief. How does this quest embody Guru Nanak's overarching vision and commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue?
- 2. How did Guru Nanak's interactions with Sufi mystics create a rich tapestry of spiritual insights that motivated him to collate devotional literature?**
During his visit to Pakpattan, Guru Nanak and Sheikh Ibrahim exchanged philosophical insights through the spiritual verses. With Sheikh Ibrahim's assistance, Guru Nanak collated more verses of Baba Farid. This intensive collation was later inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. What does this collaborative effort reveal about Guru Nanak's approach to preserving spiritual wisdom across religious boundaries for the benefit of all?
- 3. How did the establishment of vibrant Sufi shrines in the diverse regions transform the religious landscape that were visited by Guru Nanak?**
The episode highlights that in the 8th century, Islam was introduced to Multan through traders and invaders from Central Asia. During Guru Nanak's visit to the region, Uch in Multan was a significant centre for Muslim Faqirs from various traditions. It became a hub for many Sufi saints, which is reflected in its name, Uch Sharif, meaning "the exalted city." How did these Sufi centres facilitate opportunities for spiritual dialogue?
- 4. In the regions visited by Guru Nanak, what influence did his travels have on the importance of the 'Nanakpanthi' tradition, and how was this tradition affected by historical events?**

The episode states that Guru Nanak's message of universal fellowship and monism became deeply embedded in Sindh's socio-religious beliefs. Guru Nanak's philosophy resonated with the people of this region, primarily of Hindu background, who came to be known as 'Nanakpanthis'. How did the partition of 1947 impact this syncretic tradition, as evidenced in the references to abandoned sites and fragmented communities?

5. How did local communities preserve the memory of Guru Nanak's visits to different regions?

Throughout the episode, we encounter references to sites established to commemorate Guru Nanak's visits. One notable example is the Shankar Anand Bharati Darbar, which is one of the oldest sites dedicated to honouring Guru Nanak's time in Shikarpur and his journey through Sukkur in Sindh. Additionally, the 'Nanakpanthi Udasin Sadhus' founded the Sadhu Bela site in the centre of the Indus River. What do these commemorative sites reveal about the lasting impact of Guru Nanak's visits and his significance in the region's spiritual heritage?

Philosophical Discussion Pointers:

1. How does Guru Nanak's concept of truthful living transcend religious boundaries?

In the episode, Guru Nanak expresses that Truth is higher than everything. However, higher still is truthful living. How does this perspective on truth as an action rather than merely a concept create bridges between different religious traditions he encountered during his travels?

2. What is Guru Nanak's critique of ritualism, and how does he reframe spiritual practice?

When questioned by pilgrims about his faith at Hinglaj, Guru Nanak replied with his verse, which advised them to make honesty as fasting and contentment as a pilgrimage, wisdom and contemplation as an ablution, kindness as a deity, and forgiveness as the chanting beads. He further discounts religious and ritualistic constructs as rules of conduct prescribed by society. He says those who give precedence to universal love are beings of a true religion. How does this transform our understanding of spiritual practice?

3. In what ways does Guru Nanak illuminate our understanding of the mind and consciousness through his philosophical insights?

The episode includes verses in which Guru Nanak expresses that the mind is illusory and wanders like a bird in the sky. He compares the senses to thieves who mislead the mind, suggesting the illusions of the senses can be comprehended through spiritual wisdom. In another verse, he explains that the duality within perishes when inner consciousness merges with Cosmic Consciousness. What does this reveal about his understanding of human psychology and spiritual transformation?

4. How does Guru Nanak's philosophy of Oneness reflect in his interactions with various faith traditions?

When asked whether the supreme power resides in both Hindus and Muslims, Guru Nanak answered that this power is the creator, the source of sustenance, and the destroyer. The Supreme Omnipresent entity is filled with love and permeates everything. It embodies consciousness, just as a bride adorns her bridal attire. How does this perspective help dissolve religious boundaries?

5. How does fear contribute to the division among humans, as seen through the insights of Guru Nanak?

The episode includes a verse from Guru Nanak expressing that fear is regressive and burdensome. It distracts the mind, leading to meaningless conversations. How does this insight help us understand the root causes of communal divisions, both in his time and ours?