

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 23: Guru Chela (Mentor and Seeker)

'Guru Chela', 'Mentor and Seeker', presents the sublime ambrosia assimilated and disseminated by the exalted guide. Guru Nanak mentors his compadre to receive the spiritual baton.

teraa kavan guroo jis kaa too chelaa ||
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Who is your Guru? Whose disciple are you?
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak is an expression of divine wisdom. Who did Guru Nanak seek as his teacher and whose disciple was he?

sabadh guroo surat dhun chelaa ||
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Words of wisdom is the Guru. Conscious introspection is the disciple.
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, wisdom is the teacher and conscious introspection is the disciple.

After years of momentous journeys to far flung lands, Guru Nanak planned to settle in a pastoral location as a farmer. He desired to take care of his family and to dedicate the rest of his life to sharing his earnings. In doing so, he disseminated experiential knowledge for the benefit of society. In search for an appropriate location, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana departed from Talwandi, their hometown, which is now known as Nankana Sahib, and travelled north and selected a tranquil location on the banks of the River Ravi. According to 'Seehan Uppal Janamsakhi', this location was known as Jamanwali and was renamed Kartarpur during the times of Guru Nanak.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Nankana Sahib to Kartarpur, which is close to the India-Pakistan border.

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak spent the last 18 years of his life on the banks of River Ravi. Here, Guru Nanak propagated the three fundamental principles of his philosophy, which are 'Kirat Karo', 'Wand Chako', and 'Naam Japo'.

'Kirat Karo' is the act of earning one's living through honest means for the benefit of oneself and others.

'Wand Chako' is the sharing and consuming one's gains with others, be it material or spiritual.

'Naam Japo' is the process of 'introspection' that facilitates self and societal development.

A harmonious community is founded on a framework which enhances human and economic development and which simultaneously sustains the ecosystem. This ideology, which aids an equitable society, was Guru Nanak's way of life. It started attracting adherents to the banks of the River Ravi. In his 'Vaars' (poetic compositions), Bhai Gurdas mentions the names of the key members of the community: Taru Popatu, Moola, Pirtha, Kheda, Pirthi Mal Sehgal, Rama Didee, Maalo, Maanga, Kalu, Bhagta Ohri, Seehan Uppal, Jitta Randhawa, Boora Buddha, Phirana Khaira, Jodh, Jiva, Gujjar Lohar and Nae Dhinga.

The adherents started calling themselves 'Sikhs', which means learners, and the settlement at Jamanwali as Kartarpur; the name comprising two words, 'Kartar', meaning the Omnipresent and 'Pur', meaning a dwelling.

A community comprises a group of individuals with common interests who create a commune to exchange ideas and thoughts. Social connections, relationships, spirituality and societal well-being, are all interlinked. Guru Nanak ascribes virtues to worldly relations. He advises to nurture wisdom as the mother, imbibe contentment as the father and befriend truth as a sibling.

maataa mat pitaa sa(n)tokh ||
sat bhaiee kar eh visekh ||
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Nurture wisdom as the mother, contentment as the father
and honesty as a sibling. These are the loyal relations.
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

The community of Guru Nanak's adherents also started expanding on the eastern bank of River Ravi, which was known as Pakhoke Randhawa. From Kartarpur, Guru Nanak would often cross the River Ravi and visit Pakhoke Randhawa.

This congruent region on the east and west of River Ravi was divided by the Radcliffe Line in the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, with Pakhoke Randhawa becoming a part of India and Kartarpur a part of Pakistan.

In present times, due to political reasons, the India-Pakistan border can only be crossed at a few designated points. Hence, to explore Guru Nanak's memories on the eastern bank of the River Ravi, we travel to India through the Wagah border.

Amardeep Singh: On the eastern side of River Ravi, village Pakhoke Randhawa was renamed as Dera Baba Nanak in reverence of Guru Nanak.

It is believed that the name Dera Baba Nanak was given by Dharam Chand, the grandson of Guru Nanak, son of Lakhmi Chand.

Pakhoke Randhawa was the parental village of Guru Nanak's wife, Mata Sulakhni. Guru Nanak would often visit Pakhoke Randhawa to meet his father-in-law who worked there as a revenue officer.

At Dera Baba Nanak, we visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, which was made in memory of Guru Nanak's visits to the eastern side of River Ravi.

It is interesting to note that in the late 18th century, Diwan Chandu Lal, a Minister in the 'Nizam's' state of Hyderabad, had contributed significantly to the building of this gurdwara in the memory of Guru Nanak. Chandu Lal is the same person who helped spread the message of Guru Nanak across South India by establishing 'Muths' (centres of learning) in early 19th century in places like Guntur, Hyderabad, Kanchipuram, Rameswaram, Tiruchirappalli and Tiruvannamalai.

From Dera Baba Nanak one can see the village of Kartarpur in Pakistan.

72 years after the partition, in 2019, the 'Kartarpur Corridor', a 4.7 kilometer connector between India and Pakistan, connecting Dera Baba Nanak with Kartarpur was constructed to provide access to devotees from India to visit the Kartarpur Sahib Gurdwara in Pakistan.

It is stated in the 'Janamsakhi' texts that Ajitta Randhawa, a landlord of the village Pakhoke Randhawa, raised funds to construct a 'Dharamsal', a place of congregation from which Guru Nanak imparted his wisdom. Historical records do not mention on which side of the banks of the River Ravi, this 'Dharamsal' was established.

Duni Chand, who had become Guru Nanak's follower after they had interacted in Lahore during Guru Nanak's second odyssey, constructed a rest house for the visitors along the banks of the River Ravi.

We visit Gurdwara Chola Sahib where a 'Chola', a cloak, with Islamic verses, is on display. According to oral narrative, this cloak is said to have been gifted to Guru Nanak by a devotee in Baghdad and was brought to Dera Baba Nanak village in 1828 AD by a native named Kabali Mall. However, the 'Janamsakhi' texts do not mention the cloak being gifted to Guru Nanak in Baghdad.

I see the cloak as a symbol of love and reverence for Guru Nanak by people of all faiths for his utilitarian mantle of philosophical wisdom.

Bhai Mardana, having aged, passed away on the banks of River Ravi. He belonged to the community of 'Mirasis', a term derived from the Arabic word 'Miras', meaning inheritance. Bhai Mardana can be best described as an exemplary person who inherited the essence of 'Sangat', a term derived from Sanskrit word 'Sangh', which means fellowship. Bhai Mardana stood steadfast beside Guru Nanak in spreading the message of Oneness.

Having achieved spiritual freedom, Bhai Mardana did not desire recognition. Thus, he requested Guru Nanak that his body be put to rest in a way that there would be no memorial after his death. True to the name, Mardana, which means the one who never dies, Bhai Mardana's legacy continues to live on as an inseparable companion of Guru Nanak.

Even in his verses, Bhai Mardana attributes his divine wisdom in the name of Nanak. In one of his verses inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', he says,

giaan guR saalaeh ma(n)dde bhau maas aahaar ||
naanak ih bhojan sach hai sach naam aadhaar ||
kaa(n)yaa(n) laahan aap madh a(n)mirat tis kee dhaar ||
satasa(n)gat siau melaap hoi liv kaToree a(n)mirat bharee pee pee kaTeh bikaar ||
(Raag Bihagra, Bhai Mardana)

Make spiritual wisdom the molasses, prayer the bread and fear of degeneracy as the nourishment.

Nanak says, only such sustenance is pure. Self-reflection is the support.
Make the body as the vat to brew the wine of self-realization to produce ambrosial wisdom.

Connecting with spiritual congregation, the bowl is filled with ambrosial wisdom.
Drinking it, malicious intentions are eradicated.
(Raag Bihagra, Bhai Mardana)

Bhai Mardana says, if the body is used as a barrel to brew self-realization, it produces a concoction of ambrosial wisdom. Companionship with spiritual people produces the ambrosia required to eradicate malicious intentions.

After Bhai Mardana's passing away, his son, Shahzada, took his place as the Rabab player.

Bhai Lehna, a resident of Khadur village, spent some days with Guru Nanak on the banks of the River Ravi on his way to the annual pilgrimage in Jwalaji. He was touched by Guru Nanak's philosophy and decided to stay with Guru Nanak. In time to come, Bhai Lehna became Guru Angad, the second Nanak.

In early 1525 AD, Guru Nanak embarked on a journey to places in and around Punjab. For some part of this odyssey, Guru Nanak was accompanied by Bhai Lehna. They visited Kathala, Achal Batala, Kiri Afghana, Sultanpur Lodhi, Sarai Naga and Bikaner. From Kartarpur, Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna first travelled to Kathala.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Dera Baba Nanak to Kathala village.

Amardeep Singh: In the village Kathala, Guru Nanak met two Sufi Mystics, Pir Abdul Rehman and Mian Mitha Sial. This is the mausoleum of Mian Mitha Sial.

Pir Abdul Rehman and Guru Nanak had discussions on the differences that existed in society.

During the partition of the Indian sub-continent based on religion in 1947, the Muslim community of this region migrated to Pakistan. This site is now maintained by the Sikh and Hindu residents of Kathala village.

The cohesive fellowship at this site is a reflection of the human capability to look beyond differences. However, instead of living in unity, society fosters skepticism and faith groups worry about losing the individuality of their respective belief systems. Guru Nanak says, entrapped in fear, we indulge in unproductive debates and waste an otherwise purposeful life through meaningless confrontations.

jhakh jhakh jhakhanaa jhagaRaa jhaakh ||
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

In unproductive debates, unnecessary worry, negative thoughts and confrontations, the
mind gets exhausted.
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

In the village Kathala, a gurdwara was built to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak.

In the nearby village of Jourian Kalan, Guru Nanak also had similar interaction with Ubare Khan. However there are no physical commemorations of the meeting with Ubare Khan.

From Kathala, Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna travelled to Achal Batala.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Kathala to Achal Batala, which is about 5 kilometers away from the city of Batala.

Historically, Achal Batala is known for the ancient Achaleshwar Temple, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva's elder son, Kartikey. Legend goes that Kartikey, after having lost a competition with his younger brother, Ganesh, made this place as his permanent abode.

‘Achaleshwar’ comprises of two words, ‘Achal’, meaning immovable and ‘Ishwar’, meaning divine.

In reverence for Lord Shiva, the Hindus observe an annual festival named ‘Shivratri’, which means the ‘Night of Shiva’. It is celebrated from dusk to dawn to denote the overcoming of the darkness of ignorance with the dawning of wisdom.

Amardeep Singh: During the festive occasion of ‘Shivratri’, Guru Nanak visited the ‘Achaleshwar Dham’ (Achaleshwar Temple) and had spiritual discourses with Bhangar Nath Jogi, a follower of the ‘Gorakhnath’ sect.

The ‘Jogis’ were of the opinion that leading a solitary life-entailing celibacy, soliciting alms and performing austerities was the only path to acquire spirituality. Bhangar Nath commented, though Guru Nanak was spiritually oriented, however, his decision to lead a householder’s life was akin to adding tartrate to milk which curdles it and makes it unworthy for consumption. According to him, living amongst family is a hindrance in attaining pristine wisdom. Guru Nanak replied, as a law of nature, plants and animals don’t choose isolation, they collectively generate to provide for other species. Similarly, humans too need to create life for the benefit of their surroundings. Guru Nanak mentioned that celibates have been graced with life by parents who led a family life. While celibates survive on provisions given as charity by householders, they consider these same householders as unworthy. Guru Nanak reminded the celibates that as ‘Shaivites’, they worshipped Lord Shiva, who himself led a family life. Guru Nanak sang,

aujal kaihaa chilakanaa ghoTim kaalaRee mas ||
dhotiaa jooTh na utarai je sau dhovaa tis ||
sajan seiee naal mai chaladhiaa naal chala(n)ni(h) ||
jithai lekhaa ma(n)geeai tithai khaRe dhisa(n)n ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Bronze shines brightly, but when it comes in contact with air, its blackness appears.
External washing does not wash away internal impurities, even if washed a hundred times.

I travel with noble beings, who are on the path of self-reflection.
The accounts of their deeds make them stand tall.
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak explained that a bronze utensil looks lustrous but turns black when it comes in contact with moisture. Similarly, people may seem enlightened but a reflection of their wisdom is gauged through observing their interactions with diverse people in different situations.

The Achal Sahib Gurdwara located across the Achaleshwar Temple was built to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit to Achal Batala. The land for this gurdwara was donated by Maharajah Ranjit Singh in the 19th century.

From Achal Batala, Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna travelled towards the Beas River and visited Kiri Afghana.

In Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Achal Batala to Kiri Afghana, located on the western banks of the River Beas near the present town of Sri Hargobindpur.

The 'Vilayatwali Janamsakhi' states that Guru Nanak interacted with some 'Pathans' at Kiri Afghana. It does not mention the name of any individual. However, according to local narrative, one of the Pathan's with whom Guru Nanak had interacted is referred to as Pir Dullo Shah.

Amardeep Singh: Guru Nanak met Pir Dullo Shah at the village Kiri Afghana, which is also known as Kiri Pathana. This is believed to be the grave of Pir Dullo Shah.

During the religion based partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the local Muslim community migrated to new lands. In present times, the grave is being maintained by the villagers.

The 'Vilayatwali Janamsakhi' also mentions that at Kiri Afghana, Guru Nanak stressed the importance of gratitude.

paanaa vaaRee hoi ghar khar saar na jaanai ||
raseeaa hovai musak kaa tab fool pachhaanai ||
apiau peevai jo naanakaa bhram bhram samaavai ||
sahaje sahaje mil rahai amaraa padh paavai ||
(Raag Tilang, Guru Nanak)

A garden of betel leaves (wisdom) is in the house (consciousness). The donkey (self-conceited) cannot appreciate its value.

If the fragrance is savoured, then the value of a flower can be appreciated.
Nanak says, when the spiritual nectar is consumed then doubts and wanderings subside.

Through tranquility essence is understood and immortality is gained.
(Raag Tilang, Guru Nanak)

A strong sense of self-preservation in donkeys prevents them from appreciating unfamiliar surroundings. Thus they have a reputation for stubbornness. Giving an example of a donkey which is not able to appreciate the bounties of a betel nut tree in its orchard, Guru Nanak says, a similar behaviour in humans, hampers their ability to savour the goodness

around them. Practicing gratitude can help shed doubts and allows one to savour the bounties of ambrosial wisdom.

From Kiri Afghana, Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna headed towards Sultanpur Lodhi. They sailed south on the River Beas and disembarked on the eastern bank at Khadur and walked to Sultanpur Lodhi, the town on the banks of the River Bein.

Tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, from Kiri Afghana, we travel to Sultanpur Lodhi.

At Sultanpur Lodhi, Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna spent a few days with Guru Nanak's sister, Bebe Nanaki, and thereafter proceeded further south to the village of Matte-Di-Sarai, which in present times is known as Sarai Naga.

In tracing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel to Sarai Naga in the Muktsar district.

An experience of darkness is important in order to appreciate light. Guru Nanak, during his momentous travels had encountered immense hardships. A conscientious spiritualist with a heart beating with empathy, an eye for detail and a mind empowered with grit, Guru Nanak recognized adversities as opportunities. He says, challenging situations are akin to a remedy and favourable conditions akin to a disease because comforts alone hamper the need for self-actualization.

dhukh dhaaroo sukh rog bhiaa jaa sukh taam na hoiee ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Challenging situations are medicine and worldly pleasures, the disease.
Where there is pleasure, there can be no desire for self-reflection and growth.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Sarai Naga is the birthplace and hometown of Bhai Lehna.

Amardeep Singh: This gurdwara is built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to the village Sarai Naga.

A mentor is an essential trajectory in a seeker's development. The sacred alliance between Guru Nanak, the mentor, and Bhai Lehna, the seeker, was in its twilight years. The moment of handing over of the spiritual baton was on the horizon. Twilight is the magical time of dusk and dawn when the sky illuminates. Dusk drifts towards sunset offering moments of reflections on past endings and dawn progresses into sunrise inspiring novel beginnings. Similarly, 'Gurmukhs', the spiritually oriented illuminate by reflecting and inspiring. Guru Nanak says,

gurmukh jaag rahe chookee abhimaanee raam ||
anadhin bhor bhiaa saach samaanee raam ||

(Guru Nanak)

The spiritually oriented remain aware and eradicate self-attachments.
They always remain in the humble state of 'Twilight' to merge with divine truth.
(Guru Nanak)

At Sarai Naga, Guru Nanak asked Bhai Lehna to return to Kartarpur to manage the commune while he continued his journey ahead.

From Sarai Naga Guru Nanak proceeded to Bikaner, in the region of Rajputana.

Samundar Sa Satguru Kiya, Aur diya Abichal Gyan ||
Jaha Dekhu Taha Eik Hi, Aur Dooja Nahi Aap ||

Guru is an ocean of wisdom that has provided eternal knowledge.
Wherever I see, I experience only Oneness. There is no duality.

In the footsteps of Guru Nanak, we travel from Sarai Naga to Bikaner.

Ab Thara Lal Samandra, Mai Ho Marjiva, Laal Liyavey Ho ||
Arey Bhai Desh Ajab Hai, Nugraa Thag Na Paya, Gur Ji ||
Haa Sugraa Ki Gati ||

Now, your child, having dipped in the ocean of knowledge, O mother, has overcome worldly desires to acquire gems of wisdom.

O brother, this country is amazing. Without wisdom, one can't unravel its secrets, O revered Guru.

Only the one with wisdom can unravel it.

Bikaner is located in the Indian state of Rajasthan, close to the India-Pakistan border. It gets its name from its founder; a royal chieftain named Rao Bika of the Rathore clan from Mewar. In the 15th century he had established a small settlement within a fort in this region which was known as 'Jangaladesh'.

Desh Ajab Hai, Nugraa Thag Na Paya, Gur Ji ||

This country is amazing. Without wisdom, one can't unravel its secrets, O revered Guru.

Amardeep Singh: In the midst of the Thar Desert, Bikaner is a city rich in heritage and culture. When Guru Nanak visited this city, it was a hub for traders and pilgrims as it was on the trade route for Central Asia.

Historically, the indigenous Rajasthani culture practiced the worshipping of various elements of nature. Later, 'Mahanubhavis' and 'Varkaripanthis' of Maharashtra influenced 'Vaishnavism', the worship of Lord Vishnu in Rajasthan.

Jainism too flourished in these lands. Hence, Bikaner has an interesting array of temples from various traditions.

In a village in Bikaner, Guru Nanak met some 'Vaishnavites', the followers of Lord Vishnu. The villagers asked Guru Nanak; since there are several paths that direct the seeker to the Divine, which was the most appropriate. In response Guru Nanak sang,

rooRo Thaakur maaharo rooRee gurbaanee ||
vaddai bhaag satigur milai paieeai padh nirabaanee ||
mai ol(h)geeaa ol(h)gee ham chhoro thaare ||
jiau too(n) raakheh tiau rahaa mukh naam hamaare ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Beautiful is my Master. Beautiful is wisdom.
Through high ideals, the true teacher is realized who facilitates enlightenment.
I am the slave of slaves. I am your servant.
I live as per your will. I remain oriented towards self-reflection.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, a path of humility, contemplation and living in accordance with the laws of nature is the most appropriate.

In another village in Bikaner, a group of 'Vaishnavites' (followers of Lord Vishnu) hosted Guru Nanak. During dialogue, the 'Vaishnavites' asked, during the journey between birth to death, what should be the primary mission of one's life. In response Guru Nanak sang,

a(n)dhule kiaa paiaa jag aai ||
raam ridhai nahee gur kee sevaa chaale mool gavai ||
(Raag Bhairo, Guru Nanak)

O ignorant being, what have you obtained by coming into the world?
Not beholding the essence of the Creator in your heart and not striving to do selfless service, the importance of birth is lost.
(Raag Bhairo, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, the primary goal of human life is to gain the wisdom which teaches us to behold the entire creation as part of the one divine force.

We now visit a shrine in the Bara Bazaar of Bikaner.

Amardeep Singh: The 'Nanakpanthis' of Bikaner have built this syncretic place of worship in reverence of Guru Nanak's visit to this city.

The Sindhi community of Rajasthan are worshippers of Satya Narayan, a form of the Divine in the Hindu tradition, and they are also ardent followers of Guru Nanak. In this Satya Narayan temple, both Guru Nanak and Satya Narayan are revered.

In the outskirts of Bikaner, Kolayat is a historical Hindu pilgrimage center. A temple on the banks of Kapil Sarovar (Lake) is dedicated to Kapil Muni, an ancient sage who lived in 500 BC. He is credited with having founded 'Samkhya', one of the six schools of Indic philosophy. It is believed that Kapil Muni left his bodily form at this site.

On the banks of the Kapil Sarovar (Lake), Guru Nanak interacted with members of the Jain community and the followers of Sage Kapila.

This gurdwara on the banks of Kapil Sarovar (Lake) in Kolayat was built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit.

Jain adherents talked about their agnostic philosophy which claims no opinion on the existence or non-existence of God. Followers of Kapil Muni elaborated upon the 'Samkhya' philosophy which teaches that creation consists of dual independent facets; 'Purusha', the pure consciousness, and 'Prakriti', the physical matter. Guru Nanak presented his thoughts on Monism by expounding on the term 'Karta Purakh', implying that 'Karta', the Creator manifested as matter, is the same as 'Purakh', the 'Purusha', the Divine Consciousness. Guru Nanak sang,

sarabe joi agachhamee dhookh ghanero aath ||
kaalar laadhas sar laaghanau laabh na poo(n)jee saath ||
poo(n)jee saachau naam too akhuTau dharab apaar ||
naanak vakhar niramalau dha(n)n saahu vaapaar ||
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

See the imperishable Omnipresent everywhere. Attachment to materialism only induces pain.

Loaded with negativities, one attempts to tread the worldly ocean; hence does not carry any profits across.

True capital is self-reflection. This wealth is inexhaustible and infinite.

Nanak says, this merchandise is immaculate. Blessed is the trader who trades in it.

(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, the primary aim of human life is to recognize the everlasting nature and omnipresence of the Creator.

The Thar Desert of Rajasthan in India and Sindh in Pakistan is known as 'Maru', a term associated with its dry, arid, sandy and windy terrain. Indic spiritual traditions refer to 'Maru' as a state of mind which has wisdom but remains parched of self-reflection, thus keeping it longing to be showered with Consciousness.

Music evokes vicarious emotions in listeners. Travelling through the arid 'Maru' terrain, I yearn to immerse my 'Maru' mind in Guru Nanak's verse in Rag Majh, a musical framework that evokes longing and hope for union with the One after experiencing the pain of separation.

maaroo meeh na tirapatiaa agee lahai na bhukh ||
raajaa raaj na tirapatiaa sair bhare kisuk ||
naanak sache naam kee ketee puchhaa puchh ||
(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

The desert is not satisfied by rain. The fire of desires is not satiated.
The king is not satisfied with his kingdom. The oceans never overflow.
Nanak says, seeking true wisdom should not be appeased.
(Raag Majh, Guru Nanak)

Discussion Pointers

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 23: Guru Chela (Mentor and Seeker)

This episode highlights key discussion points that create a compelling framework for exploring the historical context and philosophical depth of Guru Nanak's life and spiritual insights. By examining his vision of the establishment of the community at Kartarpur, his interactions with various religious traditions, and his relationship with Bhai Mardana and Bhai Lehna, we can see how Guru Nanak's philosophy took practical shape in everyday life. The philosophical exploration delves into his fundamental principles, innovative approaches to seeking spiritual guidance, managing a fulfilling life, and his universal perspective grounded in Monism rather than Monotheism. The historic sites that commemorate his legacy across northern India and Pakistan stand as testaments to the enduring impact of his journey and philosophy, despite being affected by the political divisions of recent history. These discussions show how Guru Nanak's holistic approach integrates spiritual wisdom with practical living to provide valuable insights into today's life. Embracing Guru Nanak's wisdom can enrich our lives today and inspire a deeper understanding of unity and spirituality.

Historical Discussion Pointers:

- 1. What was the significance of Kartarpur in Guru Nanak's life, and how did this settlement embody and reflect his vision for a harmonious, diverse community?**
After years of significant journeys to distant lands, Guru Nanak chose a peaceful location on the banks of the River Ravi, initially known as Jamanwali and later renamed Kartarpur. In this serene setting, he spent the final 18 years of his life as a farmer, tending to his family while sharing his experiential knowledge to benefit the community. How did this settlement practically embody Guru Nanak's philosophy of community living and spiritual practice?
- 2. How did Guru Nanak's interactions with diverse religious communities during his travels deepen and enrich his unique interfaith philosophy?**
The episode highlights various encounters between Guru Nanak and religious figures from different traditions, including Sufi mystics like Pir Abdul Rehman and Mian Mitha Sial in Kathala, Jogis such as Bhangar Nath in Achal Batala, Vaishnavites in Bikaner, and Jain devotees in Kolayat. What do these interactions reveal about Guru Nanak's approach to interfaith dialogue and his ability to respectfully engage with diverse philosophical perspectives?
- 3. What role did Bhai Mardana play in Guru Nanak's journey, and how is his legacy preserved?**

Bhai Mardana played a vital role alongside Guru Nanak during his journeys and stands out as a remarkable example of 'Sangat' (community). His unwavering support was instrumental in spreading the powerful message of oneness. His wish was that no memorial be established in his name after his passing, but his influence remains significant through the verses he contributed to the Guru Granth Sahib. How does Bhai Mardana's relationship with Guru Nanak illustrate the concept of spiritual companionship?

4. How did the relationship between Guru Nanak and Bhai Lehna evolve, and what does this reveal about spiritual succession?

Bhai Lehna, a devoted resident of Khadur village, encountered Guru Nanak while journeying on an annual pilgrimage. Instantly captivated by Guru Nanak's profound philosophy, he decided to stay with him. As their bond strengthened, Bhai Lehna earned the revered title of Guru Angad. This episode highlights the spiritual connection between Guru Nanak, the mentor, and Bhai Lehna, the seeker. What does this transition reveal about Guru Nanak's approach to mentorship and the continuation of his vision of the oneness of all creation?

5. How do the historical sites mentioned in the episode preserve and commemorate Guru Nanak's legacy?

The episode highlights several gurdwaras and memorial sites that honour Guru Nanak's visits throughout northern India. These include Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak, Gurdwara Chola Sahib, Gurdwara Achal Sahib, and the syncretic shrine in Bikaner. What do these sites indicate about the geographical reach of Guru Nanak's influence and the widespread respect for his philosophy across different cultures?

6. How did the 1947 partition impact and reshape the historical geography connected to Guru Nanak?

The episode states that this congruent region on the east and west of the River Ravi was divided by the Radcliffe Line in the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, with Pakhoke Randhawa becoming a part of India and Kartarpur a part of Pakistan. How did this division affect the continuity of Guru Nanak's legacy, and what significance does the establishment of the Kartarpur Corridor in 2019 hold for reconnecting these historically linked places?

Philosophical Discussion Pointers:

1. How do Guru Nanak's three fundamental principles form the foundation of his social philosophy?

The episode identifies Guru Nanak's three fundamental principles as 'Kirat Karo', 'Wand Chako', and 'Naam Japo'. 'Kirat Karo' involves earning one's living through honest means for the benefit of oneself and others, 'Wand Chako' means "sharing and consuming one's gains with others, be it material or spiritual," and 'Naam Japo' is the process of 'introspection' that facilitates self and societal development. How do these

principles collectively create a harmonious community founded on a framework which enhances spiritual and economic growth?

2. What does Guru Nanak's concept of the relationship between wisdom and discipleship reveal about his view of spiritual guidance?

When asked about his mentor, Guru Nanak asserted, "Words of wisdom are the Guru, and conscious introspection is the disciple." How does this statement redefine traditional concepts of spiritual authority and guidance? What implications does it have for understanding the source and transmission of wisdom?

3. In what ways did Guru Nanak confront and redefine the ascetic traditions by advocating for a lifestyle that embraces spiritual engagement and connection with the world?

At Achal Batala, Guru Nanak met Bhangar Nath Jogi, who believed that a solitary life characterized by celibacy, begging for alms, and practising austerities was the only way to achieve spirituality. Guru Nanak challenged this view by pointing out that, according to the laws of nature, plants and animals do not choose isolation; instead, they coexist and work together to provide for other species. He also reminded the ascetics that even Lord Shiva, whom they revered, led a family life. How does Guru Nanak's defence of being a householder spirituality challenge conventional religious dichotomy?

4. What did Guru Nanak identify as the primary mission of human life?

When Vaishnavites in Bikaner asked Guru Nanak about the primary mission between birth and death, he responded with a verse highlighting that if one does not embrace the essence of the Creator in their heart and fails to engage in selfless service, the significance of birth is diminished. He further emphasized that the primary goal of human life is to attain wisdom, which encourages us to view all of creation as part of the one divine force. How does this perspective shape his understanding of the human purpose and spiritual fulfilment?

5. How does Guru Nanak's concept of 'Karta Purakh' present a monistic worldview that differs from the philosophy of duality in nature?

During his interaction with the followers of Kapil Muni at Kolayat, Guru Nanak encountered the 'Samkhya' philosophy, which highlights that creation consists of two independent facets: 'Purusha', representing pure consciousness, and 'Prakriti', representing physical matter. In response to this duality, Guru Nanak shared his thoughts on Monism by introducing the term 'Karta Purakh'. He suggested that 'Karta', the Creator manifested in matter, is the same as 'Purakh', the Divine Consciousness or 'Purusha'. What implications does this perspective of one unified creation have for understanding the relationship between consciousness and matter?

6. How do Guru Nanak's insightful verses on gratitude and adversity reveal his thoughts on navigating and overcoming life's circumstances, which are perceived as challenges?

The episode features several verses from Guru Nanak that emphasize the value of challenges and the importance of gratitude. In one verse, he states, "Challenging situations are like medicine, while worldly pleasures are a disease." He explains that where there is pleasure, there can be no desire for self-reflection and personal growth. In another verse, he uses the metaphor of a donkey who fails to appreciate the bounty of a betel nut tree, illustrating how a lack of gratitude hinders our ability to savour the goodness around us. How do these insights reframe our understanding of life's difficulties and the importance of appreciation?