

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 5: Tatvagian (Essence of Knowledge)

'Tatvagian', 'Essence of Knowledge', presents the ambrosial thoughts of the insightful preceptor on the Indic philosophical traditions. Guru Nanak engages in insightful dialogues with the 'Kanphata Jogis', the split-eared ascetics at 'Gorakhmatta'.

chhia ghar chhia gur chhia aupadhes ||
gur gur eko ves anek ||
jai ghar karate keerat hoi ||
so ghar raakh vaddaiee toh ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

There are six philosophies, six teachers, six doctrines (in the Indian spiritual tradition).
Teacher of all teachers is One Divine force with various forms.
Of all the systems in which the Creator's attributes are contemplated,
in that rests your greatness.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Open-mindedness to discuss and assimilate diverse philosophical views has historically been a unique strength of the Indic culture. Guru Nanak's acknowledgment of the six Indic philosophical systems - Sankhya, Yog, Nyay, Vaisesika, Mimamsa and Vedant is a reflection that he respected freedom of thought. However, above all, he endorsed the doctrine of Oneness as paramount.

From Haridwar, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Kotdwar, Srinagar, Kedarnath, Badrinath, Reetha Sahib, and reached Nanakmatta. They first visited the city of Kotdwar.

The city of Haridwar is considered as the gateway to the Gods since it is located at the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, a region which is associated with Puranic (ancient) tales.

Trailing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel to Kotdwar.

At Kotdwar, we visit the historic Sidhbali temple, located on top of a hill.

Amardeep Singh: On the banks of River Khoh, Kotdwar is located at the foothills of the Shivaliks. It is the last town before entering the hilly regions of Pauri.

During the time of Guru Nanak, this was a place of worship for the 'Nath Panthi' sect, followers of the 10th century influential spiritual leader - Guru Gorakhnath. In those days, this religious sect had a large following across India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

They were also known as 'Jogis' (ascetics) or 'Siddhas' (occults). A few amongst them, who would have their ear lobes split to wear thick ear rings would thus be known as 'Kanphattas' (split eared). Guru Gorakhnath and his predecessor Guru Matsyendranath lived much before Guru Nanak. However, in the 'Janamsakhi' artworks, Guru Nanak is often depicted in dialogue with both of them. These artworks portray Guru Nanak interacting with the successors of 'Kanphatta Jogi' sect (split eared).

Having acquired occult powers and observing ascetic discipline, the members of the sect had become egoistic. Observing their behaviour Guru Nanak sang,

so jogee jo jugat pachhaanai ||
gur parasaadhee eko jaanai ||
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

A true Yogi recognizes the essence of unity.
Through the grace of true wisdom, understands Oneness.
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Acquiring knowledge should result in becoming humble and not egoistic.

In the book 'Gur Tirath Sangrah' written in 1884 by Tara Singh Narotam, he mentions, to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit Gurdwara Charanpaduka existed in Kotdwar. The site has now ceased to exist.

From Kotdwar, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Srinagar on the banks of the Alaknanda River.

We now travel into the Himalayan hills, to the city of Srinagar in Pauri Garhwal.

Amardeep Singh: As per Gur Tirath Sangrah by Tara Singh Narotam, the Gurdwara Charanpaduka was built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Srinagar. It was destroyed in the floods of 1803. Presently there is no trace of this historical gurdwara in Srinagar.

In departing from Srinagar, I reflect on the constant creative process of creation and destruction. In every act of destruction, there is also an act of creation.

jis te aupajai tis te binasai ghaT ghaT sach bharpoor ||
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

From where we emerge, we eventually merge with it. In every aspect of creation, Truth pervades.
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

The nature of existence involves accepting and integrating the cycle of duality, namely creation and destruction. In destruction resides a new creation and vice-versa.

From Srinagar, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana ascended the hills to visit the valley of Kedarnath.

We travel to the high altitude Kedarnath valley along the Mandakini River.

Due to extreme cold weather conditions, Kedarnath valley is only accessible for six months in a year. It is a gruelling but a picturesque 7-8 hours steep climb to reach the valley. Kedarnath is one of the four high altitude pilgrimage sites for Hindus. The other three sites being - Yamunotri, Gangotri and Badrinath. Legend says that the 'Pandavas', the five brothers who won the battle of 'Mahabharat' sought forgiveness from Lord Shiva at Kedarnath. It is for this reason that pilgrims go through severe hardships to visit Kedarnath, to seek forgiveness and to enlighten their souls.

Can forgiveness be sought by mere visitation to sites of pilgrimages?

Jaisaa kare su taisaa paavai ||
Aap beej aape hee khaavai ||
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

Our actions yield consequences.
What we sow, we reap.
(Raag Dhanasri, Guru Nanak)

It is the intent which results in positive or negative outcomes. Guru Nanak says, just as one bears the consequences of ones actions, forgiveness too can be sought within through one's internal effort.

Amardeep Singh: We are at the Kedarnath Temple which is situated at the height of 11,775 feet. The word 'Kedar' means the fields. The word 'Nath' means the Lord. This valley symbolizes the fields of the Lord. Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana also visited this valley. However, there is no physical memory which signifies their visit.

Kedarnath Temple is dedicated to Shiva.

Represented by the symbol 'OM', in the Hindu trinity, there are three Gods: Brahma the generator, Vishnu the sustainer and Shiva the destroyer. Guru Nanak, an advocate of Oneness, affixed the numeral 'One' before 'Ongkar' (Omnipresent Creator), to represent the One indivisible force which creates, sustains and destroys.

saachaa sach soiee avar na koiee ||
jin sirajee tin hee fun goiee ||

jiau bhaavai tiau raakhahu rahanaa tum siau kias mukaraiee he ||
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

The Omnipresent force is a reality; outside of which there is no other Truth.
The one who creates the creation, annihilates it too.
Cosmic force, keep me as you desire. What rationalization can I do with you?
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

The human mind is veiled with limitations due to which it is unable to view the panoramic vastness of the Oneness. It remains myopic due to its divisive outlook and is not able to comprehend the ultimate truth of unity in diversity.

From Kedarnath, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled to Badrinath.

We now travel to Badrinath, a town nestled on the banks of the Alaknanda River in the Himalayas at a height of 10,800 feet.

Amardeep Singh: This temple at Badrinath is one of the holiest pilgrimage sites of the Hindu Vaishnavite belief system.

There is a belief that this temple was initially a Jain religious place of worship, which in the 8th century was converted into a Hindu pilgrimage site by Adi Shankracharya, the South Indian philosopher. Since then the 'Rawal' (Head Priest) of the shrine is appointed from the 'Nambudri Brahmin' (priests) clan from the South Indian state of Kerala.

Guru Nanak says, Change is a norm of existence to be gracefully accepted but core human values should be constant, never to be compromised.

sabh jap sabh tap sabh chaturaiee ||
uoojhaR bharamai raeh na paiee ||
bin boojhe ko thai napaiee ||
naam bihoonai maathe chhaiee ||
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Despite all kinds of worship, austerities and cleverness,
in doubt, one wanders in the wilderness, unable to find the path.
Without understanding, the mind does not find a resting place. Without contemplation,
the mind becomes like ash.
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Evolution is a natural progression of creation. However, frailty of the human mind is not able to nurture this reality. All forms of devotion are regressive if this quality of nurturing the inner self is not practised.

As per Indic philosophy, 'Tamo', 'Rajo' and 'Sato' are three dimensions present in all aspects of creation. 'Tamo' is inactivity, 'Rajo' is activity and 'Sato' is equilibrium. Guru Nanak encourages one to transcend to 'Turiya', the fourth dimension, where duality is shed to experience Oneness.

traï varatai chauthai ghar vaasaa ||
kaal bikaal ke'ee ik graasaa ||
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

Existence manifests in three states; in the fourth resides the consciousness.
It accepts birth and death as one.
(Raag Maru, Guru Nanak)

From Badrinath, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled through the hilly forests to a scenic terrain which is today known as Reetha Sahib.

Along the hilly routes, we now travel from Badrninath to Reetha Sahib.

Amardeep Singh: Village Reetha is nestled within the higher peaks of the Himalayan range in the Champawat region, along the Nepal border.

During the 16th century, people of these hills were deeply influenced by Nath Jogis, the ascetics, disciples of Guru Gorakhnath. They had predominating presence in the Indian sub-continent because Guru Gorakhnath was one of the most revered saints of that era. At the confluence of the Lodhiya and Ratiya Rivers, at this tranquil location, existed a commune of 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics). Living reclusive lives, despite having an in depth knowledge of spirituality, these ascetics had become temperamentally inhospitable to anybody outside of their commune. When Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana reached the valley, they were not welcomed by the 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics).

We visit the 'Meetha Reetha Gurdwara' built to commemorate Guru Nanak's visit.

In these foothills of the Himalayas grows a native Sapindus tree, also known as 'Reetha'. The fruit berry of this tree is medicinal. It is also used as a cleanser, known as 'soap berry'. The berry is primarily bitter and inedible but a specific variety of tree bears both, sweet and bitter berries. Close to the commune, on the banks of the river, resting under one such 'Reetha' tree which bore, both, sweet and bitter berries, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana sang,

rachnaa raach rahe nira(n)kaaree prabh man karam sukaramaa ||
naanak pa(n)th nihaale saa dhan too sun aatam raamaa ||
baabeehaa pirau bole kokil baaneeaa ||
saa dhan sabh ras cholai a(n)k samaaneeaa ||
(Raag Tukhari, Guru Nanak)

Having created the creation, the formless Creator resides in it. Allegiance with Divinity,
transforms actions into righteous actions.

Nanak says, I gaze the path that is virtuous and listen to the Omnipresent
consciousness.

The beloved seeker speaks words of wisdom.

The soul enjoys the pleasures of wisdom by absorbing them.

(Raag Tukhari, Guru Nanak)

Akin to the 'Reetha' tree bearing both, sweet and bitter berries, and experiencing the hostility of the knowledgeable ascetic commune, Guru Nanak explained that every aspect of creation has both, negatives and positives, bitterness and sweetness, which are designed by the Creator to facilitate learning to cleanse one's thoughts and actions. In humility, one should embrace others without animosity or ego and aspire to learn from situations. Guru Nanak conveyed to the ascetics that knowledge bears fruits. It multiplies when shared but diminishes when hoarded.

On hearing the profound message of Guru Nanak, the 'Nath Jogis' welcomed him and Bhai Mardana. Both spent a few days in this area to interact with the members of the commune.

According to locals, for years the lineage of the 'Nath' commune continued their association with Guru Nanak by enshrining the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture in their 'Muth' (Temple). This tradition was prevalent till the 'Meetha Reetha Gurdwara' was constructed next to the 'Muth' (Temple) in 1960s.

Adjacent to the 'Meetha Reetha Gurdwara', we visit the 'Muth' (Temple) dedicated to Guru Gorakhnath.

Bhuvnath Goswami: My paternal grandfather and forefathers have been doing prayer services at this site for ages. Here, people would make everyday offerings and run a community kitchen. 'Bhagwat' and 'Shiv Puran' scriptures would be read. The 'Guru Granth Sahib' scripture would also be read. Our history was intertwined. It has been five years since I have had my ears pierced. At present, I manage the worship services at this temple. I am still a learner. I also visit the gurdwara. 'Gurmukhi' script is also a part of my legacy. We still read in 'Gurmukhi' during the religious services.

Experiencing the sweet and bitter Reetha fruits at this site, I introspect on my sweet and bitter attributes and what I learn from them.

prabh dhoor na hoiee ghaT ghaT soiee tis kee naar sabaiee ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

The Omnipresent energy is never distant. It resides in all and everything is its part.

(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Splendour is present in every aspect of Creation, also within us. The value of a situation depends on how it is reckoned. When appreciated, it becomes positive like the beloved. When discarded, it works against us, like a foe.

Descending from the hills of Reetha Sahib, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana reached the town of Gorakhmatta on the banks of the Deuha River in the plains of Terai. This town is now known as Nanakmatta.

We now travel to Nanakmatta, making the first stop at Nanak Sagar Reservoir.

Amardeep Singh: Situated on the banks of the Deuha River, this town was once known as Gorakhmatta, or Siddhmatta. In reverence of Guru Nanak's visit to this place, it is now known as Nanakmatta. The reservoir on the Deuha River is now known as Nanak Sagar.

To commemorate Guru Nanak's visit, the government has constructed a memorial in the form of a well within the Nanak Sagar Reservoir.

We now visit Gurdwara Nanakmatta Sahib which is the main site commemorating Guru Nanak's visit.

Admirers and adherents of Guru Nanak have been gathering at this site for centuries. This is evident from the writings of 'Khulasat-ut-Twarikh', a Persian account written in 1695, which states: "Nanakmatta is a place where disciples and devotees of Nanak gather in large numbers to pay obeisance and offerings." Before 1937, this gurdwara was maintained by 'Mahants' (Chief Priests) and thereafter its management was taken over by a local committee. This gurdwara is a great manifestation of interfaith harmony as its premises were expanded by a grant given by a man belonging to the Muslim faith, named Nawab Mehndi Ali Khan.

During the time Guru Nanak visited Gorakhmatta, it had a thriving settlement of 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics), the followers of Guru Gorakhnath. Over time the community of 'Nath' ascetics have moved from this region. In the memory of Guru Nanak's visit, the town is now known as Nanakmatta. At this place, Guru Nanak and the 'Nath Jogis' (ascetics) had an exchange of spiritual thoughts.

The 'Jogis' (ascetics) enquired about Guru Nanak's faith and the name and credentials of the teacher who initiated him.

Guru Nanak replied, humanity is my faith and I learn from the infallible Omnipresent.

kaun taraajee kavan tulaa teraa kavan saraaf bulaavaa ||
kaun guroo kai dheekhiaa levaa kai peh mul karaavaa ||

mere laal jeeau teraa a(n)t na jaanaa ||
too(n) jal thal maheeaal bharipur leenaa too(n) aape sarab samaanaa ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

What scale, what weights and what assayer shall I call upon.
From which teacher shall I receive guidance and have your value assessed.
O my Beloved, I am unaware of your limits.
You reside in the water, land and sky. You yourself are all pervading.
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

He says, what scale, what weights and which assessor should I call upon? Which mentor should I look up to and from whom should I ask the worth, as no one knows the limits of the all-pervading beloved Teacher? Only with thoughts, as the balance scale, self-awareness, as the measuring weight, and through selfless service, I can be a beneficiary. I have no scale with which to measure the infinite magnitude of the Omnipresent.

Fascinated by Guru Nanak's gripping response and assuming he would be an aspirant to join their commune, the 'Jogis' (ascetics) invited him to adopt their yogic attire. Guru Nanak calmly replied,

jog na khi(n)thaa jog na dda(n)ddai jog na bhasam chaRaieeaaai ||
jog na mu(n)dhee moo(n)dd muddaiaai jog na si(n)n(g)ee vaieeaaai ||
a(n)jan maeh nira(n)jan raheeaai jog jugat iv paieeaaai ||
galee jog na hoiee ||
ek dhirasaT kar samasar jaanai jogee kaheeaai soiee ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

The path of a Yogi is not in wearing a patched coat or carrying a staff. The path of a Yogi is not in smearing the body with ash.
The path of a Yogi is not in wearing earrings or shaving the head. The path of a Yogi is not in blowing musical horns.
Remain unaffected amid worldly pursuits. This is the way to be a Yogi (spiritually enlightened).
By mere utterance of words, 'Yog' (way of life) is not attained.
Only the one who treats all as equal is known as a Yogi, the realized one.
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Salvation is not attained by adorning outward garb. It requires treating the entire existence as one and remaining unaffected by attractions, while performing worldly duties. Guru Nanak's message to the 'Jogis' (ascetics) was to nurture the death of desires and sustain a virtuous existence.

I continue to struggle to achieve internal discipline, often reminding myself that there is indeed a way to attaining equipoise.

A(n)jan maeh nira(n)jan raheeaai jog jugat iv paieeaai ||
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Amidst impurities remain true in thought and action. This is the way of 'Yog' (way of life)
to achieve realization and equipoise.
(Raag Suhi, Guru Nanak)

Discussion Pointers

ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 5: Tatvagyan (Essence of Knowledge)

These discussion pointers shed light on the rich historical and philosophical aspects of Guru Nanak's journey in the Himalayas. Historically, they highlight his interactions with the influential Nath Panthi sect across multiple locations, trace the commemorative establishments, the evolution of these sites, and the lasting interfaith connections that resulted from his visits. Philosophically, they explore his inclusive broad spiritual vision, his definition of true yogic practice, his vision of embracing duality within a framework of ultimate Oneness, and his critique of empty ritualism in favor of authentic inner transformation. Together, these points help us understand how Guru Nanak's journey in the Himalayas represented both a geographic expedition and a profound philosophical exploratory interaction with the spiritual traditions of his time.

Historical Discussion Pointers:

1. What was the historical significance of the Nath Panthi sect during Guru Nanak's time?

The episode describes the Nath Panthi sect as followers of the 10th century influential spiritual leader - Guru Gorakhnath who had a large following across India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan. They were also known as 'Jogis' (ascetics) or 'Siddhas' (occults) with some having their ear lobes split to wear thick ear rings thus being known as 'Kanphattas' (split eared). The episode notes that Guru Gorakhnath and his predecessor, Matsyendranath, lived long before Guru Nanak. However, in the 'Janamsakhi' artworks, Guru Nanak is frequently depicted as engaging in dialogue with both; this portrayal symbolizes Guru Nanak's interaction with the successors of the 'Kanphatta Jogi' sect. How did the widespread influence of this sect shape the religious landscape that Guru Nanak encountered during his travels in the Himalayas?

2. How did the religious geography of the Himalayan region influence Guru Nanak's journey?

The episode describes several significant religious sites visited by Guru Nanak. Kotdwar is noted as a place of worship for the 'Nath Panthi' sect. Kedarnath is described as one of the four pilgrimage sites for Shavites where the 'Pandavas' sought forgiveness from Lord Shiva. Badrinath is described as one of the holiest pilgrimage sites of the Vaishnavite belief system, which was initially a Jain religious place of worship, which in the 8th century was converted into a Vaishnavite pilgrimage site by Adi Shankracharya. How did these diverse religious landscapes and historical transformations provide a backdrop for Guru Nanak's perceptions and interactions?

3. What evidence memorialises for the commemoration of Guru Nanak's Himalayan journey?

The episode mentions several commemorative sites along Guru Nanak's path. In Kotdwar, Gurdwara Charanpaduka existed. According to the book 'Gur Tirath Sangrah' written in 1884 by Tara Singh Narotam, though the site has now ceased to exist. In Srinagar, Gurdwara Charanpaduka was built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit but was destroyed in the floods of 1803. At Reetha Sahib, the Meetha Reetha Gurdwara was constructed in the 1960s, and at Nanakmatta, the government has constructed a memorial in the form of a well within the Nanak Sagar Reservoir and Gurdwara Nanakmatta Sahib exists as the main site commemorating Guru Nanak's visit. What do these sites reveal about Guru Nanak's influence on the people of the region of the Himalayas?

4. What historical transformation occurred at Gorakhmatta, and what does it signify?

The episode states that situated on the banks of the Dehua River, this town was once known as Gorakhmatta, or Siddhmatta. In reverence of Guru Nanak's visit to this place, it is now known as Nanakmatta. The reservoir on the Deuha River is now known as Nanak Sagar. Historical records confirm this site's importance, as the writings of 'Khulasat-ut-Twarikh', a Persian account written in 1695 state that Nanakmatta is a place where disciples and devotees of Guru Nanak gather in large numbers to pay obeisance and offerings. What does this renaming from Gorakhmatta (associated with Guru Gorakhnath) to Nanakmatta reveal about the historical impact of Guru Nanak's visit on the religious landscape of this region?

5. How did the management of Guru Nanak's commemorative sites evolve over time?

The episode provides insights into how the sites commemorating Guru Nanak's journey were maintained across centuries. At Nanakmatta, before 1937, this gurdwara was maintained by 'Mahants' (Chief Priests) and thereafter its management was taken over by a local committee. The episode also notes that this gurdwara is a great example of interfaith harmony as its premises were expanded by a grant given by a man belonging to the Muslim faith, named Nawab Mehndi Ali Khan. At Reetha Sahib, for years the lineage of the 'Nath' commune continued their association with Guru Nanak by enshrining the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture in their 'Muth' (Temple). How do site management patterns show the changing relationships between different religious communities much after Guru Nanak's visits?

6. What evidence exists of continued interfaith connections between the Nath tradition and Sikh tradition?

The episode presents testimony from Bhuvnath Goswami at the Reetha Sahib site, who states that my paternal grandfather and forefathers have been doing prayer services at this site for ages. The 'Guru Granth Sahib' scripture would also be read. Our history was intertwined. I also visit the gurdwara. 'Gurmukhi' script is also a part

of my legacy. We still read in 'Gurmukhi' during the religious services. What does this contemporary account reveal about the lasting historical connections between the Nath tradition and the Sikh tradition in specific geographic locations, and how does it relate to Guru Nanak's original interactions?

Philosophical Discussion Pointers:

1. How does Guru Nanak's acknowledgment of six Indic philosophical systems reflect his approach to spiritual knowledge?

The episode begins with Guru Nanak's verse acknowledging the six philosophical systems: There are six philosophies, six teachers, six doctrines (in the Indian spiritual tradition). Teacher of all teachers is One Divine force with various forms. It further explains that Guru Nanak's acknowledgment of the six Indic philosophical systems - Sankhya, Yog, Nyay, Vaisesika, Mimamsa and Vedant is a reflection that he respected freedom of thought. However, above all, he endorsed the doctrine of Oneness as paramount. How does this philosophical positioning demonstrate Guru Nanak's approach to understanding of diverse philosophies while emphasising the ultimate unity of divine truth?

2. How does Guru Nanak redefine the concept of true yogic practice?

When invited by the Jogis to adopt their ascetic practices and attire, Guru Nanak responds with a verse that challenges conventional understanding of spiritual discipline, that the path of a Yogi is not in wearing a patched coat or carrying a staff. The path of a Yogi is not in smearing the body with ash. The path of a Yogi is not in wearing earrings or shaving the head. The path of a Yogi is not in blowing musical horns. Remain unaffected amid worldly pursuits. This is the way to be a Yogi (spiritually enlightened). He further states that amidst impurities, remain true in thought and action. This is the way of 'Yog' (way of life) to achieve realization and equipoise. How does this new revolutionary way of thinking alter our perception of spiritual discipline, focusing more on our inner states of being instead of outward presentations?

3. What is Guru Nanak's philosophical position on the relationship between creation and destruction?

The episode presents Guru Nanak's experiential observations that from where we emerge, we eventually merge within it. In every aspect of creation, Truth pervades. The narrator reflects that the nature of existence involves accepting and integrating the cycle of duality, namely creation and destruction. In destruction resides a new creation and vice-versa. Later, discussing Hindu trinitarian concepts, the episode notes that Guru Nanak affixed the numeral 'One' before 'Ongkar' (Omnipresent Creative energy), to represent the One indivisible force which creates, sustains and destroys. This is reinforced by the verse that the Omnipresent force is a reality; outside of which there is no other Truth. The one who creates the creation, annihilates it too.”

How does this philosophical understanding of creation and destruction as unified processes reflect Guru Nanak's broader concept of Oneness?

4. How does Guru Nanak's explanation about the three dimensions and "Turiya" illuminate his philosophical viewpoint?

The episode explains that as per Indic philosophy, 'Tamo', 'Rajo' and 'Sato' are three dimensions present in all aspects of creation. 'Tamo' is inactivity, 'Rajo' is activity and 'Sato' is equilibrium. Guru Nanak encourages one to transcend to 'Turiya', the fourth dimension, where duality is shed to experience Oneness." This is illustrated in his verse: Existence manifests in three states; in the fourth resides the consciousness. It accepts birth and death as one. How does this philosophical framework provide a structure for understanding spiritual evolution and the transcendence of dualistic thinking in Guru Nanak's values?

5. How does the metaphor of the Reetha tree with sweet and bitter berries illustrate Guru Nanak's rationalism of embracing duality?

The episode describes how at Reetha Sahib, Guru Nanak rested under one such 'Reetha' tree which bore, both, sweet and bitter berries. In response to the hostility of the ascetic commune, akin to the 'Reetha' tree bearing both, sweet and bitter berries, Guru Nanak explained that every aspect of creation has both, negatives and positives, bitterness and sweetness, which are designed by the Creator to facilitate learning to cleanse one's thoughts and actions. The narrator later reflects that the value of a situation depends on how it is reckoned. When appreciated, it becomes positive like the beloved. When discarded, it works against us, like a foe. How does this natural metaphor encapsulate Guru Nanak's approach to embracing and learning from all aspects of existence, both pleasant and unpleasant?

6. What is Guru Nanak's philosophical critique of pilgrimage and ritualistic approaches to seek forgiveness for redemption?

At Kedarnath, a site where pilgrims go through severe hardship to seek forgiveness and to enlighten their souls, the episode poses the question: Can forgiveness be sought by mere visitation to sites of pilgrimages? Guru Nanak's response is that our actions yield consequences. What we sow, we reap. The episode elaborates that it is the intent which results in positive or negative outcomes. Guru Nanak says, just as one bears the consequences of one's actions, forgiveness too can be sought within through one's internal effort. Similarly, at Haridwar, he challenges water offerings to ancestors by demonstrating the futility of inconsequential rituals. How does this philosophy change our view of spiritual purification from being about external actions to focusing on internal transformation?

7. How does Guru Nanak's response to the Jogis about his spiritual teacher reflect his understanding of divine guidance?

When asked by the Jogis about his faith and spiritual teacher, Guru Nanak replied, humanity is my faith and I learn from the infallible Omnipresent. He elaborates: What scale, what weights and what assayer shall I call upon. From which teacher shall I receive guidance and have my value assessed? O my Beloved, I am unaware of your limits. You reside in the water, land and sky. You yourself are all pervading. In the episode, Guru Nanak observes that no one can fully comprehend the vastness of the Omnipresent. How does this philosophical position on spiritual guidance challenge conventional notions of religious initiation and hierarchical transmission of spiritual knowledge?

8. What is Guru Nanak's philosophical position on the hoarding versus sharing of knowledge?

At Reetha Sahib, after experiencing hostility from the reclusive Nath Jogis, Guru Nanak conveyed to the ascetics that knowledge bears fruits. It multiplies when shared but diminishes when hoarded. This guidance led the ascetics to welcome him and engage in dialogue. How does the principle regarding knowledge and wisdom challenge the notion that only certain individuals can achieve philosophical insight, and how does it support Guru Nanak's belief that everyone has the potential for spiritual enlightenment?