

## ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 7: Agochar (Seeing the Unseen)

'Agochar', 'Seeing the Unseen', presents the confluence of the seen and unseen waters. Guru Nanak, the discerning motivator, inspires to connect with the invisible flow within. It also pays tribute to Guru Nanak's contemporary, a Saint who infused radical spirit in society from his abode in an inauspicious village.

sun vaddaa aakhai sabh koi ||  
kevadd vadda ddeettaa hoi ||  
keemat pai na kahiaa jai ||  
kahanai vaale tere rahe samai ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

On hearing the greatness of the Creator, everyone speaks of it.  
How can its greatness be assessed?  
It's worth can't be known or expressed.  
Those, who are aware, remain absorbed in its attributes.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Many merely talk about the greatness of the 'One Unifying Force'. However, those who experience its vastness, go a step further by remaining immersed in practicing unity.

From Ayodhya, we make a detour from Guru Nanak's footsteps to visit Maghar to explore memories of Bhagat Kabir, a Saint whose philosophy was aligned with that of Guru Nanak's.

Such was the impact of Bhagat Kabir amongst both Hindus and Muslims that at Maghar, where he passed away, a temple and mausoleum are built in the same compound in his memory. In today's world, where communities are increasingly fragmented based on faith, this shrine represents unity in diversity.

Bhagat Kabir is one of the most quoted revolutionary saints of the 'Bhakti' movement. A low caste weaver of humble background, he was one of the most renowned exponent of his era. Even in present times his poetry is a part of literature studies. He was born in Varanasi in the year 1398 AD. Abandoned at birth, he was fostered by a Muslim couple, Niru and Nima of the weaver community. Choosing a householder's life over renunciation, he worked as a weaver to fulfil his worldly duties while focusing on the depths of spirituality. In a quest to acquire spiritual direction, a path higher than attachment to external forms, Bhagat Kabir convinced Swami Ramanand, an upper caste Brahmin of Varanasi to be his Guru.

Bhagat Kabir was a non-conformist. He spoke strongly against clergy, institutionalized faith and ritualistic observances, which he saw as barriers to freedom of thought and to acquiring knowledge.

**Singers at Kabir Temple:** Satgur Kabir, sees all beings as guests on this planet. He states in his 'shabad' (verse) that you are a guest for four days. So, what are you doing as a visitor! Towards this thought, he says,

aru mun pahoona gur bin jaibaa kauney baati ||  
eihva tau hindu turkey baney ho beech bharam ki taati ||  
aru savasa inkaa svarag sidharey ||  
(Bhagat Kabir)

O my mind, you are like the wind. Without true wisdom, which path will you traverse?  
Here, identified as a Hindu or a Muslim, you are stuck amidst doubt.  
The essence of life has departed.  
(Bhagat Kabir)

In his unique satirical style of writing, the 'Ulat Bani', inverted message, his verses raise ethical questions which are left unanswered; thus motivating the listener to search for answers.

ek acha(n)bhau sunahu tum(h) bhaiee ||  
dhekhath si(n)gh charaavat gaiee ||  
kahat kabeer ju is padh boojhai ||  
raam ramat tis sabh kichh soojhai ||  
(Raag Asa, Bhagat Kabir)

Listen to this surprising phenomenon, O brother!  
I have seen the lion herd the cows.  
Says Kabir, one who unfurls this puzzling secret,  
by immersing in Divinity can understand everything.  
(Raag Asa, Bhagat Kabir)

An interesting portrayal of reversals, this style beautifully tweaks one's perspective to challenge the norms of dogmatic thinking. He says, first the son is born and then the mother; the lion grazes with a cow and the Guru falls at the feet of the disciple. Through such profound verses, he challenged the established hierarchies of 'up' and 'down', 'high' and 'low', 'pure' and 'impure', 'human' and 'animal'.

Having spent his life in Varanasi, in his last days, Bhagat Kabir decided to move to Maghar, a barren village. According to a prevalent myth, dying and being cremated in Varanasi was a guarantee to achieve 'moksh', liberation from rebirth, while death in the village of Maghar was considered a hindrance to attaining liberation.

Fearless to challenge the myth and clergy who were endorsing this superstition, to make a point, at a ripe age, Bhagat Kabir left Varanasi and chose to die at Maghar. He dared relentlessly to quell many such superstitions of his times.

From Maghar, we visit Kabir Muth at Lahartara in Varanasi. This is a centre built in memory of Bhagat Kabir's life spent in Varanasi.

haadd jale jaise lakaree, kes jale jaise ghaas ||  
sabh jag jalata dekh key bhey kabeer udhas ||  
(Bhagat Kabir)

After death, bones burn like wood and hair like grass.  
Seeing the world burning in the fire of negativities, Kabir is saddened.  
(Bhagat Kabir)

Both, Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir in their verses emphasize the significance of experiential wisdom and devotion over idolatry and imagery. Yet, today we see that in living one's daily life, imagery depicting these saints is more revered than the implementation of their philosophy.

kahat kabeer suno bhai sadho satgur naam thikana hai ||  
rehnaa nahi des, birana hai ||  
(Bhagat Kabir)

Kabir says, listen, O friend, reflections on the true wisdom is the anchor.  
One will not stay in this world. This world is a foreign land.  
This world is a foreign land.  
(Bhagat Kabir)

Though Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak were contemporaries, and some 'Janamsakhi' artworks show them in dialogue, there is no conclusive evidence that the two met. The inclusion of many of Bhagat Kabir's verses in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, is a testimony that philosophically their thoughts met.

**Mahant Veechar Das:** Many people believe that Kabir Sahib and Nanak Sahib met many times. Humanity was divided by identifying each other as inferior or superior based on discrimination. Both the Gurus made immense efforts to unite and improve society.

eih sansar oas ka boonda ||  
pawan lagey Jharh jaana hai ||  
rehna nahi des beerana hai ||  
eih des beerana hai ||  
(Bhagat Kabir)

This world is like a dew-drop.  
With the blow of the wind, it will shed.  
You will not reside here. This world is a foreign land.  
This word is a foreign land.  
(Bhagat Kabir)

**Mahant Veechar Das:** Sahib (Bhagat Kabir) preached that one's virtues are superior as the body is of no use. Hence leave vices and adopt good qualities. Work for the betterment of society and rise above discrimination. Recognize your spiritual self which alone is the aim of human existence.

Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir often talked in metaphors. 'Satyug', the bygone era of positives and 'Kaliyug', the present era of negatives are time epochs which find mention in the Indic scriptures. For Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir, these are not linear timelines but symbolic manifestations of the state of mind. Any moment when the mind is under influence of positive thoughts, it is 'Satyug'. Similarly, any moment when the mind is under the spell of negative thoughts, it is 'Kalyug'.

kalee a(n)dhar naanaka ji(n)naa(n) dhaa aautaar ||  
(Raag Bihagra, Guru Nanak)

In times of spiritual conflict, Nanak says, negativity takes precedence.  
(Raag Bihagra, Guru Nanak)

From Ayodhya, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana visited Nizamabad and Allahabad.

At the banks of the Ghagra River in Ayodhya, they boarded a boat and sailed eastwards, alighting close to the present day city in Uttar Pradesh, named Tanda. From here they walked to Nizamabad.

Trailing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we travel from Ayodhya to Nizamabad, a town in Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh.

Located on the banks of the Tamsa River, which is now reduced to a stream, the township of Nizamabad was named after General Nizam-ud-Din of Jaunpur.

Pandit Tara Singh Narotam, a famous 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the Nirmala sect, in his words, 'Gur Tirath Sangrah' mentions that Guru Nanak visited Nizamabad on his way from Ayodhya to Allahabad.

In Nizamabad village, we first visit Gurdwara Charan Paduka.

A short distance from the Tamsa River, Gurdwara Charan Paduka is built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Nizamabad. This was established as a centre of learning by Baba Prem Das Udasi of the 'Udasin' (ascetic) order. The 'Udasins' (ascetics) have made significant contributions in spreading Guru Nanak's philosophy to such far-flung regions. Unfortunately, the socio-political events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, fragmented the lovers of Guru Nanak. For this reason for many years this gurdwara's upkeep was compromised. In the last few years, the gurdwara has been revived.

At these premises thirty-one copies of the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, which were handwritten by the 'Udasins' (ascetics) have now been restored and preserved.

**Satnam Singh:** This place was visited by Guru Nanak during his first odyssey. Later, the 'Udasin' (ascetic) community made considerable efforts to spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak. 'Guru Granth Sahib' (Sikh scripture) were hand written, of which 31 copies are still preserved here.

The local 'Kayasth' community, the high caste Hindus of Nizamabad were introduced to Guru Nanak's philosophy by the 'Udasins' (ascetics). Resonating with Guru Nanak's message, the local 'Kayasth' community adopted his philosophy in spirit, but this adherence is now on a decline, present only amongst the older generation.

We meet a local 'Kayasth' to understand the impact of Guru Nanak's philosophy on the local community.

**Charandeep Singh Gaur:** When Guru Nanak Dev Ji visited this place, impressed by his wisdom, of the over 250 'Gaur Kayasth' (upper caste Hindus) residents, about 150 adopted his philosophy and followed his path. I believe in the teachings inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. I am married into 'Kayasth' (upper caste Hindus) family who do not follow Guru Nanak but when my wife arrived here, she started reading the 'Guru Granth Sahib' and now recites the five prayers from the scriptures. Our children also follow. They visit the gurdwara every day to bow.

We now visit the banks of River Tamsa, where a temple and a gurdwara exist on the same premises.

**Amardeep Singh:** In a quaint village of Nizamabad, on the banks of River Tamsa, one experiences Guru Nanak's vision of religious harmony. A gurdwara, a temple and a mosque exist close to each other.

Overtime, this gurdwara too became deserted. It is now being maintained by the committee which manages Gurdwara Charan Paduka. However, this gurdwara still does not hold any congregational services.

nai terai sahaj nai saalaeh ||

naau teraa a(n)mirat bikh auth jai ||  
nai terai sabh sukh vaseh man aai ||  
(Raag Parbhathi Bibhas , Guru Nanak)

Contemplation provides equipoise and self-reflection gives honour.  
Knowledge is the elixir, which purges the poison of mammon.  
Realization gives elations that reside in the mind.  
(Raag Parbhathi Bibhas , Guru Nanak)

'Naam', the practice of remembrance, facilitates union of the mind with consciousness. I can't help but think about the dedication of the members of the 'Udasin' (ascetic) sect, who at this site, in remembrance of Guru Nanak, had made such an immense effort to script so many copies of the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture.

Having spent some time in the quaint town of Nizamabad, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana left for Prayag, now known as Allahabad.

We now travel from Nizamabad to Jhusi in Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.

'Kumbh Mela' is a festival organized in a cycle of twelve years, rotating at four pilgrimage sites of Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain, which are located on the banks of prominent rivers. While the festival is held periodically, these cities attract a continuous flow of pilgrims. 'Kumbh Mela' is a combination of two words. 'Kumbh' means a womb, representing fertility, the life generating source. 'Mela' means a festival. This festival was historically incepted to hold periodic congregations to generate spiritual thoughts for leading a virtuous life. Even though only two rivers meet here, yet this confluence is known as 'Triveni', the meeting point of three rivers. The mythical River Saraswati is considered as the third river, which is believed to be still flowing underground.

**Amardeep Singh:** At the banks of the confluence of River Ganges and Yamuna, Jhusi is an old settlement which for centuries has been a place of religious congregation for the Hindus.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana halted at Jhusi, close to the confluence of the Rivers Ganga and Jamuna to engage with the pilgrims.

As Guru Nanak meditated on the banks of 'Triveni' (confluence of three rivers), people gathered around him to seek spiritual advice about their dilemma that despite performing rituals, meditating and worshipping, they are still not able to achieve a blissful state of mind. Guru Nanak replied, the shackles of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego are barriers to attain peace of mind, without which one is not able to experience bliss.

lab kutaa kooR choohaRaa thag khaadhaa muradhaar ||  
par ni(n)dhaa par mal mukh sudhee agan karodh cha(n)ddaal ||

ras kas aap salaahanaa e karam mere karataar ||  
baabaa boleetaai pat hoi ||  
uootam se dhar uootam kaheeh neech karam beh roi ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Greed is akin to a dog, falsehood is like filth and cheating is like eating a carcass.  
Slandering others is like putting others filth in one's mouth.  
Anger is like a deadly fire.

Pleasures, attachments and self-praise are my actions, O Creator!  
Baba says, utter those words which are honourable.  
Exalted are those whose actions are good. Those with unethical actions weep in misery.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

Intentions guide the mind to act in a particular manner, which results in shaping one's destiny. Noble intentions lead to peace and lowly intentions to distress.

Convinced with Guru Nanak's response, people were eager to understand why they were not able to get rid of their ego, evil intentions and physical ailments, despite performing pilgrimages, practicing austerities, self-affliction, and staying naked, as was prescribed by spiritual custom. Guru Nanak replied, tranquility can be achieved only through equipoise, the innate human attribute. He explained that external formalities are insignificant. To live in harmony with oneself and one's surroundings, it is required to orient oneself internally.

naa sat dhukheetaa naa sat sukheetaa naa sat paanee ja(n)t fireh ||  
naa sat moo(n)dd muddaiee kesse naa sat paRiaa dhes fireh ||  
naa sat rukhee birakhee pathar aap tachhaaveh dhukh saheh ||  
naa sat hasatee badhe sa(ngal naa sat gaiee ghaahu chareh ||  
jis hath sidh dhevai je soiee jis no dheI tis aai milai ||  
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

There is no truth in suffering. There is no truth in comfort. There is no truth in wandering like animals in the water.

There is no truth in shaving one's head. There is no truth in studying scriptures and wandering from place to place.

There is no truth in trees, plants, stones, self-affliction or in bearing hardships.  
There is no truth in confinement of the mind (chained elephant). There is no truth in freedom of the mind (grazing cows).

Hands that seek wisdom are graced. Those graced are united with the Truth.  
(Raag Ramkali, Guru Nanak)

The beauty of Guru Nanak's philosophy is that he emphasizes the importance of simple living, of evolving with the flow, generated through right actions.

During our visit to 'Triveni' (confluence of three rivers), we were unable to find any surviving physical site in memory of Guru Nanak's visit.

The local community mentioned that in memory of Guru Nanak's visit to 'Triveni' (confluence of three rivers), a raised platform existed at Jhusi but this has since been washed away by the river. This site was maintained by Baba Panch Nand, the 14<sup>th</sup> in succession to Bhagat Bhagwan, an 'Udasin' (ascetic), who was given the service by Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Guru, to spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak.

From 'Triveni' (confluence of three rivers), we visit 'Gurudwara Pakki Sangat' in Mohalla Ahiyapur in Allahabad. This gurdwara is built in the memory of the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru. As there is no site built in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to Allahabad, in present times, some texts also associate this site with Guru Nanak's visit.

We now pay a visit to 'Panchayati Akhara Bara Udasin'.

Up until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 'Udasin' (ascetic) sect was instrumental in spreading Guru Nanak's message to far flung regions like Allahabad in the Gangetic belt. In the past 100 years a lot has changed. The proponents of Guru Nanak who were under one umbrella have fragmented. During our visit to the 'Panchayati Akhara Bara Udasin' to explore remnants of the memories associated with the past intertwined culture, I saw valuable historic documents which reveal that Guru Nanak was once a central figure of this community.

Reflecting on the divide engulfing the society, I wonder if we have collectively faltered on Guru Nanak's vision of Oneness.

Blabbering 'I' and 'Mine', many have perished in grief.

meree meree kar mue vin naavai dhukh bhaal ||  
(Raag Ramkali Dakhni, Guru Nanak)

Consumed by the ego of 'I' and 'mine', one dies spiritually. Without self-reflection,  
suffering is sought.  
(Raag Ramkali Dakhni, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 7: Agochar (Seeing the Unseen)**

These discussion pointers beautifully portray the historical and philosophical contexts of Guru Nanak's journey from Ayodhya to Allahabad. Historically, they trace his interactions with diverse communities, the commemorative sites established along his route, and the critical role of the Udasin ascetics in preserving and spreading his philosophy in the Gangetic region. Additionally, they explore the legacy of Bhagat Kabir, whose philosophical alignment with Guru Nanak is evident in the verses inscribed in the Guru Granth Sahib. Philosophically, the pointers examine the shared vision of the spiritual mentors' emphasis on experiential wisdom over mere ritualism, fearless critique of religious orthodoxy, unique literary approaches to challenging conventional thinking and overcoming social divisions through recognizing the fundamental oneness of humanity. Guru Nanak's geographic and spiritual journey through this region presents the religious and social realities of his time.

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

##### **1. What historical evidence supports the connection between Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir?**

The episode states that although Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak were contemporaries, and some 'Janamsakhi' artworks show them in dialogue, Mahant Veechar Das says that many people believe that Kabir Sahib and Nanak Sahib have met many times. However, there is no conclusive evidence of such meetings. The narrator concludes that philosophically, their thoughts met as many of Bhagat Kabir's verses are inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. How can we understand the depth of their shared ideas, even without direct proof of their interactions? And what does this suggest about the transmission of concepts across various traditions in 15th-century India?

##### **2. What was the philosophical significance of Bhagat Kabir's move from Varanasi to Maghar?**

According to the episode, having spent his life in Varanasi, in his last days, Bhagat Kabir decided to move to Maghar, a barren village. According to a prevalent myth, dying and being cremated in Varanasi was a guarantee to achieve 'moksh', liberation from rebirth, while death in the village of Maghar was considered a hindrance to attaining liberation. The text explains that fearless to challenge the myth and clergy who were endorsing this superstition, to make a point, at a ripe age, Bhagat Kabir left Varanasi and chose to die at Maghar. He dared relentlessly to quell many such superstitions of his times. How did this deliberate choice to challenge religious orthodoxy reflect Bhagat Kabir's approach to religious reform, and what impact did this action have on his society's understanding of the true meaning of liberation?

### **3. How did the Udasin ascetic order contribute to spreading Guru Nanak's philosophy in the Gangetic region?**

The episode emphasizes that the 'Udasins' (ascetics) have made significant contributions in spreading Guru Nanak's philosophy to such far-flung regions. At Gurdwara Charan Paduka in Nizamabad, thirty-one copies of the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, which were handwritten by the 'Udasins' (ascetics) have now been restored and preserved. Caretaker Satnam Singh mentions that later, the 'Udasin' (ascetic) community made considerable efforts to spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak. 'Guru Granth Sahib' was hand written by them, of which 31 copies are still preserved here. At Triveni (the confluence of three rivers), a site associated with Guru Nanak was maintained by Baba Panch Nand, the 14th in succession to Bhagat Bhagwan, an 'Udasin' (ascetic), who was given the service by Guru Har Rai, the seventh Sikh Guru, to spread the philosophy of Guru Nanak. How does this evidence demonstrate the historical role of the Udasin order in preserving and disseminating Guru Nanak's message, and what factors might explain their particular devotion to this mission?

### **4. What does the episode tell us about the response of local communities like the Kayasth to Guru Nanak's spiritual concepts?**

The episode mentions that the local 'Kayasth' community, the high caste Hindus of Nizamabad were introduced to Guru Nanak's philosophy by the 'Udasins' (ascetics). Resonating with Guru Nanak's message, the local 'Kayasth' community adopted his philosophy in spirit, but this adherence is now on a decline, present only amongst the older generation. Charandeep Singh Gaur, a local Kayasth, provides a historical fact that when Guru Nanak visited this place, impressed by his wisdom, of the over 250 'Gaur Kayasth' (caste in Hindu social structure) residents, about 150 adopted his philosophy and followed his path. He further mentions that he is married into 'Kayasth' family who do not follow Guru Nanak but when his wife arrived here, she started reading the 'Guru Granth Sahib' and now recites the five prayers from the scriptures. His children also follow. What does this account suggest about the historical adoption of Guru Nanak's philosophy by diverse communities, and how has this relationship evolved over time?

### **5. How does the episode describe the historical context and significance of the Kumbh Mela?**

The episode explains that 'Kumbh Mela' is a festival organized in a cycle of twelve years, rotating at four pilgrimage sites of Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain, which are located on the banks of prominent rivers." It elaborates on the etymology: 'Kumbh Mela' is a combination of two words. 'Kumbh' means a womb, representing fertility, the life generating source. 'Mela' means a festival. This festival was historically instituted to hold periodic congregations to discuss, and exchange spiritual thoughts for leading a virtuous life. The episode also notes the geographic significance even though only two rivers meet here, yet this confluence is known as 'Triveni', the meeting point of

three rivers. The mythical River Saraswati is considered as the third river, which is believed to be still flowing underground. How does this context help us understand the significance of Guru Nanak's visit to this site, and what might have drawn him to engage with pilgrims at this particular location?

#### **6. What factors have affected the preservation of historical sites commemorating Guru Nanak's journey in this region?**

The episode mentions several factors affecting the preservation of sites associated with Guru Nanak. Regarding Gurdwara Charan Paduka in Nizamabad, it mentions that the socio-political events of the early 20th century, fragmented the lovers of Guru Nanak. For this reason for many years this gurdwara's upkeep was compromised. In the last few years, the gurdwara has been revived. For another gurdwara on the banks of the Tamsa River, is now being maintained by the committee which manages Gurdwara Charan Paduka. However, this gurdwara still does not hold any congregational services. What do these patterns suggest about the challenges in preserving the historical memory of Guru Nanak's journeys, and how have different factors—social, political, and environmental—contributed to the loss or revival of these sites?

### **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

#### **1. How do Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir's philosophical approaches compare in addressing religious orthodoxy?**

The episode states that Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir in their verses emphasize the significance of experiential wisdom and devotion over idolatry and imagery. Bhagat Kabir is described as a non-conformist who spoke strongly against clergy, institutionalized faith and ritualistic observances, which he saw as barriers to freedom of thought and to acquiring knowledge. Similarly, when people at Triveni asked Guru Nanak why they couldn't overcome their problems despite following religious practices, he responded that external formalities are insignificant. To live in harmony with oneself and one's surroundings, it is required to orient oneself internally. Both the saints made immense efforts to unite and improve society. How do these parallel critiques of religious orthodoxy reflect the social currents of their time, and what specific approaches did each take to redirect religious focus from external observances to internal transformation?

#### **2. What is the significance of Bhagat Kabir's "Ulat Bani" (inverted message) style in challenging established hierarchies?**

The episode explores Bhagat Kabir's distinctive literary approach, particularly his use of "Ulat Bani," or inverted messages. His verses employ a unique satirical style and raise unresolved ethical questions, encouraging listeners to seek their own answers. For instance, one of Kabir's verses states that the child is born first, then the mother, that a lion grazes alongside a cow, and that the guru bows to the disciple. This text presents a fascinating portrayal of reversals, effectively challenging conventional

dogmatic thinking. Through such profound verses, Kabir questioned established hierarchies regarding 'up' and 'down,' 'high' and 'low,' 'pure' and 'impure,' and 'human' and 'animal.' How does his literary technique serve as a philosophical tool for disrupting conventional thinking and aim to challenge specific hierarchies present in medieval Indian society?

### **3. How do Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir articulate their understanding of the impermanence of life?**

The episode features a verse by Bhagat Kabir, describing the world as a dew-drop that will shed with the blow of the wind. He emphasizes that we will not reside here permanently; this world is a foreign land. In another verse, he reflects that true wisdom serves as an anchor. Mahant Veechar Das further explains that Kabir asserted that one's virtues are more important because the body ultimately serves no purpose. Therefore, one should forsake vices and embrace good qualities. Guru Nanak shares a similar message, warning that being consumed by the ego of 'I' and 'mine' leads to spiritual death. How do these insights about life's impermanence shape their spiritual philosophies, and what practical implications do they draw from this understanding of transience?

### **4. How does Guru Nanak's spiritual insights at Triveni address the barriers to achieving peace of mind?**

At Triveni, when people asked why they couldn't achieve peace despite religious practices, Guru Nanak replied that the shackles of lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego are barriers to attaining peace of mind, without which one cannot experience bliss. This truth is elaborated in his verse, which mentions that greed is akin to a dog, falsehood is like filth, and cheating is like eating a carcass. Slandering others is like putting others' filth in one's mouth. The episode explains that intentions guide the mind to act in a particular manner, shaping one's destiny. Noble intentions lead to peace, and lowly intentions lead to distress. How does this analysis of human psychological barriers provide a practical framework for spiritual development, and how does it differ from conventional religious prescriptions of Guru Nanak's time?

### **5. What is Guru Nanak's perspective on ritualistic practices versus inner transformation?**

When pilgrims at Triveni asked why they couldn't overcome their ego, evil intentions, and physical ailments despite performing pilgrimages, practising austerities, self-affliction, and remaining naked, Guru Nanak responded that tranquillity could only be achieved through equipoise, an innate human quality. His spiritual insights elaborate that suffering holds no inherent truth, nor does comfort. There is no truth in aimlessly wandering like animals in water, shaving one's head, or merely studying scriptures and wandering around. This episode highlights the beauty of Guru Nanak's philosophy by underscoring the importance of simple living and evolving through the positive flow generated by the right actions. How do these concepts fundamentally reorient spiritual

practice from external observances toward inner development, and what alternatives does Guru Nanak offer to traditional ascetic practices?

**6. How do Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir reinterpret traditional time epochs (Satyug and Kaliyug) to convey spiritual truths?**

The episode explains that Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir often talked in metaphors. 'Satyug', the bygone era of positives and 'Kaliyug', the present era of negatives are time epochs which find mention in the Indic scriptures. For Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir, these are not linear timelines but symbolic manifestations of the state of mind. Any moment when the mind is under the influence of positive thoughts, it is 'Satyug'. Similarly, any moment when the mind is under the spell of negative thoughts, it is 'Kalyug'. Guru Nanak's verse illustrates that in times of spiritual conflict, negativity takes precedence. How does reimagining traditional cosmic time cycles shift our perception from viewing them as mere external historical events to understanding them as profound internal psychological experiences, and what implications does this have for understanding religious practices?

**7. What is the philosophical significance of 'Naam' (remembrance) in Guru Nanak's way of life?**

The episode states that 'Naam', the practice of remembrance, facilitates union of the mind with consciousness. Guru Nanak's verse elaborates that contemplation provides equipoise and self-reflection gives honour. Knowledge is the elixir, which purges the poison of mammon. Realization gives elations that reside in the mind. How does this concept of remembrance function as a central spiritual practice in Guru Nanak's philosophy, and how does it connect to his broader insights about overcoming ego and experiencing inner transformation?

**8. How do Guru Nanak and Bhagat Kabir's messages address social divisions and discrimination?**

Mahant Veechar Das states that humanity was divided by identifying each other as inferior or superior based on discrimination. Both the saints made immense efforts to unite and improve society. He further explains that Kabir propogated that one's virtues are superior as the body is of no use. Hence leave vices and adopt good qualities. Work for the betterment of society and rise above discrimination. Recognize your spiritual self which alone is the aim of human existence. The episode notes that Bhagat Kabir's impact transcended religious boundaries, as at Maghar, where he passed away, a temple and mausoleum are built in the same compound in his memory. In today's world, where communities are increasingly fragmented based on faith, this shrine represents unity in diversity. The episode concludes with the narrator wondering if we have collectively faltered on Guru Nanak's vision of Oneness, citing his verse that says when consumed by the ego of 'I' and 'mine', one dies spiritually. How do these messages provide a philosophical basis for overcoming social divisions, and what specific approaches did they offer for addressing discrimination in their society?