

## ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 8: Adhikaar (Entitlement)

'Adhikaar', 'Entitlement', presents the egalitarian exponent's thought provoking interactions with seers, seekers and scholars in the oldest continually inhabited city where the River Ganga makes a U-turn. Guru Nanak raises his voice against inequalities. It also extends homage to the Saints who shared the same revolutionary philosophy as Guru Nanak.

nij ghar bais sahaj ghar laheeaai ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Dwelling within your being, intuitive peace is experienced.  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

Guru Nanak says, examining and observing one's own thoughts is a source to nurture awareness.

From Jhusi in Allahabad, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana travelled on a dirt track, parallel to the River Ganga, to reach the city of Varanasi.

Trailing Guru Nanak's footsteps, we now travel from Allahabad to Varanasi.

Sanctified as one of the holiest places in the Hindu scriptures, Varanasi, also known as Benares is amongst the oldest continuously inhabited cities. Historically, known as Kashi, it has attracted pilgrims from time immemorial who visit to pay obeisance at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva.

We first visit the 'ghats', the riverfront steps leading to the banks of the River Ganga.

The city has around 88 designated 'ghats' which are famous for performing various religious rituals. Varanasi has been attracting people of diverse philosophical mind sets.

Guru Nanak visited Varanasi to interact with Saints and Scholars.

On seeing people perform ritualistic bath in the River Ganga, Guru Nanak sang,

ga(n)g banaaras sifat tumaaree naavai aatam raau ||  
sachaa naavan taa(n) theeaai jaa(n) ahinis laagai bhaau ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Reflections on the attributes of the Creator is my River Ganga in Banaras (Varanasi),  
wherein my soul takes its sacred cleansing bath.

A cleansing bath is when there is a continuous regard for humanity.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

For Guru Nanak, self-reflection was more important than ritualistic practices of external cleansing at the pilgrimage centres.

Sitting on the banks of River Ganga, Guru Nanak observed a potpourri of activities going on at the 'ghats' (steps leading to a river). Scholars reading scriptures. Disciples listening to sermons. Aspirants meditating. Ascetics in a trance. 'Aghoris' (adherents of the left hand path) sitting in cremation grounds. Perplexed by people's ignorance, Guru Nanak sang,

dhubidhaa na paRau har bin hor napoojau maRai masaan na jaiee ||  
tirasanaa raach na par ghar jaavaa tirasanaa naam bhujhaiee ||  
ghar bheetar ghar guroo dhikhaiaa sahaj rate man bhaiee ||  
(Raag Sorath, Guru Nanak)

Don't be confused by duality. Apart from contemplation, do not look elsewhere. Then the soul does not die spiritually.

While engrossed in desires, higher abode can't be reached. Desires are quenched through self-reflection.

Within is the Divine abode which is revealed by experiential wisdom. Steeped in equipoise the soul is pleased.  
(Raag Sorath, Guru Nanak)

On hearing Guru Nanak sing, many pilgrims gathered around him, wanting to understand his message. Guru Nanak explained, it is a misconception that salvation can be realized through mechanical external adherence to futile ritualistic practices. Only internal motives are fruitful.

Ganga Ram, a high caste Brahmin resident of Varanasi was much impressed with Guru Nanak's demeanour and became his adherent.

Chatur Das, another upper caste Brahmin questioned, what kind of a devotee was Guru Nanak as he did not hold a rosary made of basil, neither adorned a sandalwood mark on the forehead, nor carried the fossilized stone, the 'Saligram' (representation of Lord Vishnu). To clarify, Guru Nanak sang the verse,

saalgraam bip pooj manaavahu sukirat tulasee maalaa ||  
raam naam jap beRaa baa(n)dhahu dhiaa karahu dhiaalaa ||  
kaahe kalaraa si(n)chahu janam gavaavahu ||  
kaachee ddahag dhivaal kaahe gach laavahu ||  
(Raag Basant Hindol, Guru Nanak)

The 'Saligram' stone is worshipped by the priest while adorning a rosary of basil. Instead, meditate to build a raft of self-reflection and seek the grace of wisdom.

Why in mere rituals akin to irrigating barren land, waste a virtuous life?  
This body, akin to a mud wall will perish. Why plaster it with futile intentions?

(Raag Basant Hindol, Guru Nanak)

Adhering to customary practices is like irrigating a barren saline land which will not yield any produce. Instead one should focus on making change within, through selfless service, right intention and compassion. To enjoy the ambrosia of virtues, vices should be shed by keeping a check on one's thoughts. Guru Nanak says, with such actions one becomes a true devotee.

During his discussions with the scholars, Guru Nanak was asked if extensive study of religious texts could help one acquire spiritual upliftment. Guru Nanak replied, superficial recitation and mere reading of texts will not result in attaining true knowledge. It will only boost one's ego. Wisdom can be attained by practicing the essence of spiritual texts.

paRe'eh jete baras baras paRe'eh jete maas ||  
paReeai jete aarajaa paRe'eh jete saas ||  
naanak lekhai ik gal hor haumai jhakhanaa jhaakh ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Scriptures can be read year on year. They can be read every month.  
They can be read for an entire lifetime. They can be read with every breath.  
Nanak says, righteousness is the only action that is accountable. Rest is all prate and prattle in ego.

(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

Unless acquired knowledge benefits in spiritual upliftment of the self and others, it is just prattling of words in conceit and ego.

During Guru Nanak's times, many rituals relating to matters of purity and untouchability had been formulated by the priestly class. One such ritual was the observance of 'Sutak', which means impure, during which women had to abstain from entering the kitchen, visiting temples or attending social functions while going through their menstrual cycle. They also had to refrain from these activities during confinement after giving birth. While this tradition was well intended to replenish the physical strength of women, unfortunately it had taken the form of a strict religious adherence.

jiau joroo siranaavane aavai vaaro vaar ||  
jootte jootta mukh vasai nit nit hoi khuaar ||  
sooche eh na aakhe'eeh bahan j pi(n)ddaa dhoi ||  
sooche seiee naanaka jin man vasiaa soi ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

As a woman has a menstrual cycle month after month, society deems her impure. However, impurity resides in the mouth of the untruthful, which makes them disgraceful. Pure intended are not those who act to purify themselves by merely washing their bodies.

Those are pure, Nanak says, who stay true to themselves.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

To produce life is a biological phenomena bestowed upon women, without which the human race will cease to exist. Guru Nanak rebuked observance in the name of religion which discriminated and belittled others. He vehemently raised his voice against gender inequality.

We now visit Panchganga Ghat along the River Ganga in Varanasi. This is believed to be the site where Bhagat Ramanand taught the principles of the Indian Philosophical system.

Here exists a small temple built in the memory of Bhagat Ramanand.

**Janki Jivan Das:** At this congregational place, around 721 years ago, the world-renowned teacher Guru Ramanand Ji meditated. Here, Kabir Das Ji, Ravi Das Ji, Dhanna Ji, Pipa Ji, Sain Acharaya Ji, all of them became his disciples. In those times, he voiced not to judge anyone by their caste. By singing the praises of Divine, become like the Divine. His principle proclamation was that the institutionalized caste discrimination of those times should be abolished through devotion and on the path of benevolence for all. Nanak Ji also visited this site.

Born in 1366 AD, Bhagat Ramanand is regarded as a pioneer of the 'Bhakti' movement in the Gangetic belt. His expositions on Monism were inspired by Ramanuja, the South Indian 'Vedantic' philosopher.

The inclusion of Bhagat Ramanand's verse in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, is a testimony to the overlap of his and Guru Nanak's philosophy.

During Bhagat Ramanand's times, caste differentiation had weakened the entire foundation of Indic society. He broke norms by inducting disciples from the low caste and the Muslim faith.

Recommending the pursuit of devotion through knowledge of the inner self, Bhagat Ramanand discouraged austerities and ritualism, deeming them as meaningless.

His verse inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib' reads,

satigur mai balihaaree tor ||  
jin sakal bikal bhram kaaTe mor ||  
raamaana(n)dh suaamee ramat braham ||

gur kaa sabadh kaaTai koT karam ||  
(Raag Basant Hindol, Ramanand)

My True Teacher, I sacrifice myself to you.  
The One, who has eradicated all my confusions and doubts.  
Ramanand says, his master is the all-pervading Creator.  
Guru's wise teachings rectify millions of misdeeds.  
(Raag Basant Hindol, Ramanand)

Departing from Panchganga Ghat, I pass through Manikarnika Ghat, the main cremation site in Varanasi. Following age-old tradition, many old people move to Varanasi towards the end of their lives as it is believed that dying in this city leads to freedom from the cycle of birth and death. Observing the process of cremation at Manikarnika Ghat can be deeply unsettling.

I wonder, 'Can dying in Varanasi be a gateway to emancipation?'

sabadh marai fir maran na hoi ||  
bin moee kiau pooraa hoi ||  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

One who submits to wisdom never dies.  
Without the death of negativity, how can wisdom be attained?  
(Raag Gauri, Guru Nanak)

For Guru Nanak, death of consciousness is to be feared and not death of the body. His words inspire us to not waver from the path of self-awareness.

Guru Nanak was invited for a meal by a Brahmin, who in due respect, took utmost care to follow the religious ritualistic protocol of purifying the hearth and the firewood to cook the food. To impress upon him the duelling perceptions of purity and impurity, Guru Nanak sang;

je kar sootak ma(n)neeaai sabh tai sootak hoi ||  
gohe atai lakaRee a(n)dhar keeRaa hoi ||  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

If one believes in impurity, then there is impurity everywhere.  
Even in cow-dung and wood reside worms.  
(Raag Asa, Guru Nanak)

If religious ritualistic protocols are the criteria for purity and impurity then the entire ecosystem would be impure. Guru Nanak emphasized the importance of acquiring such knowledge which purifies the mind of its impurities.

We now visit the 'Janam Asthan Mandir' of Bhagat Ravidas at Goverdhanpur locality in Varanasi.

Bhagat Ravidas was born in Varanasi in 1414 AD, to a family of cobblers, a community which is considered as low caste untouchables. He blatantly objected to the notion of a priestly class which proclaimed that caste plays a fundamental role in an individual's relationship with the Divine.

### Shiv Poojan Das:

naam tero aasano naam tero aurasaa naam teraa kesaro le chhiTakaare ||  
naam tero aaratee majan muraare ||  
har ke naam bin jhootte sagal paasaare ||  
(Bhagat Ravidas)

Meditation is the prayer mat. Meditation is the slab for making sandalwood paste.  
Meditation is the saffron that I sprinkle.  
Meditation is my worship and the holy bath.  
Without internal reflection, all external displays are false.  
(Bhagat Ravidas)

My name is Shiv Poojan Das. I reside in Baba Ravidas's Temple. The message of Ravidas was, You are me, and I am You. What is the difference between us? On this fact, he says, what is the difference between you and me? If you are the ocean then I am the wave on it.

Bhagat Ravidas saw no difference between the Creator and the creation; hence, he also saw the entire human race as one.

There is no documented proof that Bhagat Ravidas and Guru Nanak met in person, however, they shared the attribute of fearlessness. They both vehemently raised their voice against injustice.

In one of his many verses inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, he says;

re chit chet chet achet ||  
kaahe na baalameekeh dhekh ||  
kis jaat te keh padheh amario raam bhagat bisekh ||  
ajaamal pi(n)gulaa lubhat ku(n)char ge har kai paas ||  
aaise dhuramat nisatara too kiau na tareh ravidhaas ||  
(Raag Kedara, Ravidas)

O mind, contemplate to become conscious from being unconscious.  
Why don't you look at Balmiki.  
Being from a low caste, he attained the highest state of awareness through sublime  
devotion and contemplation.  
Many others, like, Ajaamal, Pingulaa, Lubhat and Kunchar submitted themselves to the  
Divine.  
If such negative-minded beings were all emancipated then  
why can't you achieve liberation, asks Ravidas.  
(Raag Kedara, Ravidas)

Bhagat Ravidas's spirit earned him such an honour that many from the upper class and royal families became his disciples.

Followers of Bhagat Ravidas in Punjab are closely associated with Guru Nanak. Historically, they would enshrine the 'Guru Granth Sahib' in their places of worship. During our explorations, we have observed that this tradition has started diminishing. Divisions amongst communities is a collective responsibility of society. I feel we have faltered to imbibe the essence of universality as practiced by Guru Nanak and Bhagat Ravidas.

guramat pooraa jug jug soiee ||  
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

With spiritual wisdom one gains a perfect understanding that through ages, there is only  
One Omnipresent force.  
(Raag Basant, Guru Nanak)

We now visit Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh, which is close to the 'ghats'.

**Amardeep Singh:** Close to the banks of River Ganges, the 'Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh' is dedicated to Guru Nanak's visit to the 'ghats' of Banaras, where he had discourse with various spiritualists.

On the banks of River Ganga, a group of priestly class, the Brahmins, asked Guru Nanak about his perspective on what was greater; holding knowledge of the scriptures or the intentions backing one's deeds.

bedh vapaaree giaan raas karamee palai hoi ||  
naanak raasee baaharaa ladh na chaliaa koi ||  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

The scriptures are merchants. Spiritual wisdom is the True capital, which is attained  
through righteous actions.  
Nanak says, beyond this capital, no other pursuit can generate profit.  
(Raag Sarang, Guru Nanak)

Knowledge becomes the ambrosial wisdom for spiritual growth, when applied with right intentions and a lethal poison for spiritual regression, when applied with wrong intentions.

Intermingling with people of diverse backgrounds in Varanasi, I often felt like a fish trying to perceive the expanse beyond the realm of the river.

too dhareeaau dhaanaa beenaa mai machhulee kaise a(n)t lahaa ||  
jeh jeh dhekhaa teh the too hai tujh te nikasee foot maraa ||  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

You are the river, all-knowing and all-seeing. I am just a fish. How can I comprehend the limits of the Omnipresent?

Wherever I look, I see your presence. Separating from unity, I would burst and die.  
(Sri Raag, Guru Nanak)

## Discussion Pointers

### **ALLEGORY: A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels Episode 8: Adhikaar (Entitlement)**

These discussion points highlight the profound historical and philosophical significance of Guru Nanak's visit to Varanasi. They reveal his connections with influential spiritual reformers like Bhagat Ramanand and Bhagat Ravidas. Philosophically, they shed light on his critique of ritualism and the superficiality of external piety, his redefinition of purity and spiritual knowledge, his bold challenge to caste discrimination, and his inspiring vision of human relationship with the divine. Collectively, these insights create a framework for understanding how Guru Nanak's journey to Varanasi not only engaged in spiritual dialogues at one of the most revered religious centers but also offered a profound philosophical challenge to the religious practices of his time. His legacy calls us to embrace spirituality rooted in ethical conduct, self-reflection, and the recognition of the divine presence that resides in all creation.

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

**1. What was the historical significance of Varanasi during Guru Nanak's time, and why did he choose to visit this city?**

The episode describes Varanasi also known as Benares or Kashi as amongst the oldest continuously inhabited cities that was sanctified as one of the holiest places in the Hindu scriptures. It had attracted pilgrims from time immemorial who visited to pay obeisance at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The episode mentions that the city has around 88 designated 'ghats' which are famous for performing various religious rituals and have been attracting people of diverse philosophical mind sets. Significantly, the episode states that Guru Nanak visited Varanasi to interact with Saints and Scholars. How did Guru Nanak disseminate his spiritual message of equality and social reform during his interactions with established religious centres and scholarly communities? What objectives might he have hoped to achieve in this ancient centre of learning and ritualistic practice?

**2. How did Brahmins and scholars in Varanasi respond to Guru Nanak's viewpoints, and what do these interactions reveal about religious dialogues of that period?**

The episode mentions several significant interactions with the Brahmin community. It states that "Ganga Ram, a high caste Brahmin resident of Varanasi was much impressed with Guru Nanak's demeanour and became his adherent. In contrast, Chatur Das, another upper caste Brahmin questioned, what kind of a devotee was Guru Nanak as he did not hold a rosary made of basil, neither adorned a sandalwood mark on the forehead, nor carried the fossilized stone, the 'Saligram'. Guru Nanak was invited for a meal by a Brahmin, who in due respect, took utmost care to follow the

religious ritualistic protocol of purifying the hearth and the firewood to cook the food. Additionally, scholars engaged with Guru Nanak asking if extensive study of religious texts could help acquire spiritual upliftment. What do these varied interactions suggest about the reception of Guru Nanak's revolutionary ideas among the traditional religious establishment, and how did his approach to dialogue help him convey his message despite potential resistance?

**3. What evidence supports the historical connections between Guru Nanak and other influential spiritual figures of his time?**

The episode does not provide evidence of direct meetings between Guru Nanak and other spiritual figures mentioned, but it establishes philosophical connections through their representation as verses inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. Regarding Bhagat Ramanand, the episode states that the inclusion of Bhagat Ramanand's verse in the 'Guru Granth Sahib', the Sikh scripture, is a testimony to the overlap of his and Guru Nanak's philosophy. Similarly, for Bhagat Ravidas, it notes that there is no documented proof that Bhagat Ravidas and Guru Nanak met in person, however, they shared the attribute of fearlessness and mentions that verses of Bhagat Ravidas are inscribed in the 'Guru Granth Sahib'. What does the inclusion of these figures' writings in the Sikh scripture suggest about Guru Nanak's approach to spiritual wisdom across different traditions, and how did this inclusion help shape the inclusive nature of the emerging Sikh tradition?

**4. How did the social context of caste discrimination influence the spiritual messages of Guru Nanak and his contemporaries?**

The episode provides significant context about caste discrimination during this period. It states that during Bhagat Ramanand's times, caste differentiation had weakened the entire foundation of Indic society. He broke norms by inducting disciples from the low caste and the Muslim faith. Bhagat Ravidas, who was born in Varanasi in 1414 AD, to a family of cobblers, a community which is considered as low caste untouchables, he blatantly objected to the notion of a priestly class which proclaimed that caste plays a fundamental role in an individual's relationship with the Divine. Guru Nanak rebuked observance in the name of religion which discriminated and belittled others. He vehemently raised his voice against gender inequality. How did this shared emphasis on challenging caste discrimination create a foundation for religious reform movements, and how did each of these figures approach this challenge in their unique ways?

**5. What commemorative sites in Varanasi preserve the memory of Guru Nanak's visit, and what do they tell us about the historical impact of his journey?**

The episode mentions Gurdwara Guru Ka Bagh, which is close to the 'ghats' and describes it as being dedicated to Guru Nanak's visit to the 'ghats' of Banaras, where he had discourse with various spiritualists. This gurdwara is specifically identified as being close to the banks of the River Ganges. What does the establishment and upkeep of this commemorative site indicate about the enduring impact of Guru Nanak's

visit to Varanasi? How does it relate to the larger pattern of sites that commemorate his extensive travels across the subcontinent?

#### **6. How did the historical relationship between the followers of Bhagat Ravidas and Guru Nanak evolve over time?**

The episode states that the followers of Bhagat Ravidas in Punjab are closely associated with Guru Nanak. Historically, they would enshrine the 'Guru Granth Sahib' in their places of worship. However, the narrator notes that during their explorations, they have observed that this tradition has started diminishing. Divisions amongst communities are a collective responsibility of society. The narrator reflects that we have faltered to imbibe the essence of universality as practiced by Guru Nanak and Bhagat Ravidas. What might have caused this historical connection between these two communities, and what factors might be contributing to the fading of this relationship in contemporary times?

### **Philosophical Discussion Pointers:**

#### **1. How does Guru Nanak redefine the concept of spiritual purification in contrast to ritualistic bathing in the Ganges?**

On observing people performing ritualistic baths in the River Ganga, the episode quotes Guru Nanak's verse mentioning his message that reflections on the attributes of the Creator is his River Ganga in Banaras (Varanasi), wherein his soul takes its sacred cleansing bath. A cleansing bath is when there is a continuous regard for humanity. The episode explains that for Guru Nanak, self-reflection was more important than ritualistic practices of external cleansing at the pilgrimage centres. When pilgrims gathered around Guru Nanak, he explained, it is a misconception that salvation can be realized through mechanical external adherence to futile ritualistic practices. Only internal motives are fruitful. How does this philosophical redefinition transform understanding of purification from an external act to an internal process, and what implications might this have for spiritual practice more broadly?

#### **2. What is Guru Nanak's philosophical critique of the concept of ritualistic purity and impurity?**

The episode presents Guru Nanak's response to ritualistic concepts of purity through his verse, which explains that if one believes in impurity, then there is impurity everywhere. This was in response to a Brahmin who took utmost care to follow the religious ritualistic protocol of purifying the hearth and the firewood to cook the food. The episode also describes Guru Nanak's critique of the practice of 'Sutak' considering women impure during menstruation. As a woman has a menstrual, society deems her impure. However, impurity resides in the mouth of the untruthful, which makes them disgraceful. Pure intended are not those who act to purify themselves by merely washing their bodies. Those are pure who stay true to themselves. How does this philosophical perspective shift the focus from ritual purity to ethical purity, and what

implications might this have for addressing gender inequality and social discrimination?

**3. What is Guru Nanak's position on the value of studying religious texts without internalizing their wisdom?**

When scholars inquired whether extensive study of religious texts could lead to spiritual upliftment, Guru Nanak responded, mentioning that scriptures can be read year after year, month after month, for an entire lifetime with every breath. Righteousness is the only action that truly matters; everything else is mere talk rooted in ego. The episode emphasizes that unless acquired knowledge contributes to the spiritual upliftment of oneself and others, it is nothing more than empty words stemming from pride and conceit. Later, when asked whether the knowledge of scriptures or the intentions behind one's deeds was more critical, Guru Nanak replied that scriptures serve as merchants. Spiritual wisdom is the true capital gained through righteous actions. Beyond this capital, no other pursuit can yield genuine profit. How does this philosophical critique challenge the prevailing scholarly approach to religious texts, and what alternative relationship with sacred knowledge does Guru Nanak propose?

**4. How does Guru Nanak's perspective about death challenge conventional beliefs about liberation through dying in Varanasi?**

The episode discusses an age-old tradition in which many older adults relocate to Varanasi toward the end of their lives, believing that dying in this city leads to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. In response to the question of whether dying in Varanasi can be a pathway to emancipation, the episode cites a verse from Guru Nanak, which suggests that those who embrace wisdom never truly die. It explains that, for Guru Nanak, the death of consciousness is what should be feared, not the death of the body. How does this philosophical perspective transform understanding of death and liberation from physical to spiritual, and what implications does this have for how one should live rather than where one should die?

**5. How do Guru Nanak and Bhagat Ravidas challenge caste-based discrimination through their philosophical messages?**

The episode presents Bhagat Ravidas's verse that directly challenges caste discrimination, instructing the mind to practice contemplation to become conscious from the unconscious state. He further questions if the negative-minded can achieve emancipation, then why can't you attain liberation? The episode also notes that Bhagat Ravidas's spirit was so inspiring that many people from upper-class and royal families chose to become his disciples. Similarly, Guru Nanak courageously denounced observance in the name of religion, which discriminated and belittled others, and vehemently raised his voice against gender inequality. How do these philosophical expositions provide a foundation for challenging social hierarchies based on birth, and what alternative vision of human worth and spiritual potential do they present?

**6. What philosophical similarities exist between Guru Nanak, Bhagat Ravidas, and Bhagat Ramanand?**

This episode illustrates several shared philosophical views. The principles of Bhagat Ramanand, along with those of Bhagat Ravidas and Guru Nanak, serve as a foundation for the concept of Monism, emphasizing unity. Bhagat Ramanand rejected austerities and rituals, considering them meaningless. Bhagat Ravidas viewed no distinction between the creator and creation, leading him to see the entire human race as one. Meanwhile, Guru Nanak boldly and passionately condemned injustice, urging everyone to stand against it as he saw everyone as a manifestation of one unifying force. How do these philosophical parallels reflect broader spiritual currents in medieval India, and what might have motivated Guru Nanak to incorporate these diverse voices into what would become the Sikh tradition?

**7. How does Guru Nanak express his relationship with the divine through the metaphor of a fish in the river?**

The episode concludes with a verse from Guru Nanak, who speaks to the all-pervading force, saying that it is the river, all-knowing and all-seeing and calling himself a fish who cannot grasp the limits of the Omnipresent. In every direction he sees, he can witness its presence. If he were to separate from this unity, he would surely burst and perish. This poignant reflection emerges after the narrator's experience of engaging with individuals from varied backgrounds in Varanasi, likening his interactions to a fish trying to understand the vastness beyond the riverscape. How does this metaphor illuminate Guru Nanak's conception of the divine-human relationship, and what does it suggest about the limitations of human understanding in comprehending the divine while simultaneously emphasizing the immanence of the divine in all creation?