

**An Ideal Sikh (*Gurmukh*) In Early Sikh Literature With
Special Reference To *Varan Bhai Gurdas***

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Early Sikh literature consists of the Bani, recorded in Guru Granth Sahib, Varan Bhai Gurdas, Janamsakhi and Gurbilas literature. In this paper, I have taken up the analysis of Varan Bhai Gurdas. Bhai Gurdas was the first Sikh scholar who explained the original teachings of the Sikh Gurus to the common people in simple language. He present extraordinary explanation of the ideology of the first five Sikh Gurus compositions.

A life sketch of great personalities is useless if one cannot delve deep into the vision and thought frame of the person based on his works. Bhai Gurdas lived about almost four hundred years ago and he may be rightly termed as the first exponent of Sikh way of life rooted in the original lines of the holy scripture he had worked on as an adept amanuensis with Guru Arjan Dev.¹ It is an established fact that Bhai Gurdas was not only the first Sikh scholar but has also been the greatest scholar of Sikhism till date. Despite that there isn't much literature on his life and works available in English, though some that is obtainable in Punjabi is not very descriptive and beyond the understanding of a common man.²

I

According to Khushwant Singh, there is some uncertainty about the year of Bhai Gurdas's birth. Most historians have placed it in the time of Guru Angad Dev. Others believe that he was born after Amar Dass, succession as the third Guru. They contend that the name Gurdas was given by the third Guru and since the naming ceremony is performed soon after birth, the event could not have taken place very much earlier. He

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¹ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*(Text, Transliteration and Translation), Vol.1, Vision and Venture, Patiala, 1998, p.1.

² Shamsher Singh Puri, *Kabilt Swayye Bhai Gurdas*, (Translation), Singh Borhters, Amritsar, 2007, p.11.

was therefore born sometimes between 1540 and 1560.³ According to W.H. McLeod, Bhai Gurdas was born in 1558 at Goindwal. He was a Khatri of the Bhalla sub-caste, and was related to Guru Amar Das.⁴ J.S. Grewal states that born around 1550, Bhai Gurdas lost his parents at an early age and he was brought up and educated at Goindwal by his uncle, Guru Amar Das.⁵ Jodh Singh writes that according to Kesar Singh Chhibar's, *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian Ka*, Bhai Gurdas was born in the family of Isar Das who was the son of the uncle of Guru Amar Das. This way Bhai Gurdas was nephew of Guru Amar Das. He was the only son of his father. His father died when he was barely three years old and mother also left for her heavenly abode when he was twelve.⁶ But Khushwant Singh writes that Bhai Gurdas was the son of Datar Chand, the younger brother of the third Guru, who took the child's education into his own hands. He was quick to learn and soon became one of the chief exponents of the teachings of the gurus.⁷

Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha in his *Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh* writes that Bhai Gurdas adopted Sikhism with the blessings of Guru Ram Das, the fourth Nanak, and did an indepth study of Gurmukhi under the guidance of Guru Arjan Dev. Very soon he became proficient in the contemporary languages, particularly, Punjabi, Hindi, Sanskrit and theology of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism.⁸ In the time of Guru Ram Das he stayed in Agra, Benaras and Burhanpur to work as a missionary (*parcharak*) of the Sikh faith.⁹ On the death of Ram Das, Bhai Gurdas returned to Amritsar and presented himself before Ram Das's successor, Guru Arjan. He was first engaged in trying to appease Prithi chand, the Guru's elder brother, who had set himself up as a rival guru and had launched a campaign of vilification against Guru Arjan Dev. But he failed in his mission. His *var* (36) on Prithi Chand's attitude is full of vituperation.¹⁰

³ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963, p.310.

⁴ W.H. McLeod, *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995, p.91.

⁵ J.S. Grewal, *History, Literature and Identity: Four Centuries of Sikh Tradition*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2011, p.119.

⁶ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Vol.1, p.1.

⁷ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. 1, p.310.

⁸ Bhai Kahn Singh, *Gurshabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh*, Bhasha Vibhag Punjab, Patiala, 1960, p. 311.

⁹ J.S. Grewal, *History, Literature and Identity*, p.119.

¹⁰ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, p. 310.

In the time of Guru Arjan Dev, Bhai Gurdas was associated with the administration of Ramdaspur.¹¹ In 1603, when the Guru started the great task of compiling the *Adi Granth*, he chose Bhai Gurdas as the scribe. The volume was completed in the summer of 1604 and installed in the *Harimandir*.¹² Emperor Akbar, while passing through the Punjab, desired to scrutinize the sacred volume and see for himself whether there was any truth in the allegation that it contained references derogatory to Islam and the prophet. Bhai Gurdas was entrusted with the mission of taking the *Adi Granth* to the emperor. The volume was opened at random three times, but none of the passages had anything offensive to Muslim susceptibilities; on the contrary, at least two echoed sentiments complimentary to the Islamic faith. Akbar made an offering of 51 gold *Mahurs* to the holy book and presented a pair of expensive kashmere Shawls to Bhai Gurdas.¹³

Bhai Gurdas, apart from being a learned theologian and commentator of the *Gurbani*, had a knack and skill for establishing a system. He is well known for his managerial qualities and it was he who salvaged the Sikh sangat as well as the house of the Guru from utter financial crises by asking the Guru to allow him to introduce the Daswandh system among the Sikhs. *Daswandh* means tithe or one tenth of the income of a *Gur Sikh* which should go to the *golak* of the Guru who had undertaken many projects of public weal. Thus, the financial crisis blew over with the thoughtful arrangements done by Bhai Gurdas.¹⁴ After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, Bhai Gurdas became a staunch supporter of Guru Hargobind. He was associated with the construction of *Akal Takhat* and led a body of Sikhs to Gwalior when Guru Hargobind was detained there early in the reign of Jahangir¹⁵ because during the years when Guru Hargobind was in prison in Gwalior, the affairs of the Sikh Community were left in the hands of trusted followers, among whom were Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas.¹⁶ On the Guru's release, Bhai Gurdas was sent on a mission to purchase horses from Kabul (the Guru having

¹¹ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.119.

¹² Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, p.310.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.311.

¹⁴ Jodh Singh, *Varan, Bhai Gurdas*, Vol.1, p.2.

¹⁵ J.S. Grewal, *History, Literature and Identity*, p.119.

¹⁶ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1,p.311.

decided to arm his followers and train them as soldiers). Before he could complete the deal, the money was stolen from him and the crestfallen Bhai Gurdas, being unable to face his master, fled to Benaras. He was apprehended and brought to Amritsar. The Guru forgives him, and he again resumed his duties as the chief organizer of the scattered community.¹⁷ At this time, the Guru's militant ways and his close association with Muslims who had tormented his father caused a certain amount of unrest in the Sikh community. Bhai Gurdas rose to his master's defence. To him the Guru was "the destroyer of enemy's hords, the hero of battles, the great warrior" as well as the "great benefactor".¹⁸

No mention is available of the marriage and progeny of Bhai Gurdas which suggests that perhaps Bhai Gurdas might have preferred to remain celibate throughout his life, for wholeheartedly serving the house of the Guru. But it should never be construed that he disliked household life. In his works, he openly accepts the household life as the most important duty of man.¹⁹

He died at Goindwal. There is also contradiction on the death date of Bhai Gurdas. Khushwant Singh writes that Bhai Gurdas died in 1629.²⁰ W.H. McLeod and J.S. Grewal write that he died in 1637.²¹ Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha in his *Mahan Kosh* writes that Bhai Gurdas died on Bhadon Sudi 8, Samvat 1694 (A.D. 1637) at Goindwal.²² Guru Hargobind himself performed the cremation rites of Bhai Gurdas and after consigning his ashes to Beas River and returned to Amritsar.²³

II

Among the works of Bhai Gurdas, there are six Shaloks in Sanskrit to be found in Bhai Santokh Singh's *Suraj Prakash*, and there are 675 *kabitts* and *savayyas* in Braj Bhasha. There are forty vars in Punjabi which proved to be more popular than the two.²⁴ There is

¹⁷ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁹ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, vol.1, p.2.

²⁰ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, p.311.

²¹ Kahn Singh Nabha, *Gurshabad Ratanakar Mahan Kosh*, p.311.

²² W.H. McLeod, *Sikhs of the Khalsa*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003, p.32. See also J.S. Grewal, *History Literature and Identity*, p.119.

²³ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Vol. 1, p.5.

²⁴ J.S. Grewal, *History, Literature and Identity*, p.119.

also contradiction on the number of *vars* of Bhai Gurdas and other his compositions. According to Khushwant Singh, Bhai Gurdas, amanuensis who wrote the *Adi Granth* at the dictation of Guru Arjan Dev, was also the author of 39 *vars* (ballads in the heroic metre) in Punjabi and 556 *kabitts* (couplets) in Braj, of which the former are of some historical and theological importance.²⁵ According to *Mahan Kosh*, Bhai Sahib composed forty *vars* and 556 *Kabitts* and *Swayyas*.²⁶ Bhai Jodh Singh sought out that contradiction and he writes, “up to the late thirties the number of *kabitts* and *Savaiyas* by Bhai Gurdas was 556 but in the year 1940. Bhai Vir Singh searched out 119 more *Kabitts* and published them under the title ‘*kabitt Bhai Gurdas dusara Skandh*’²⁷ Out of total 675 *kabitt-savaiyas* more than 95 percent are *kabitts*. Out of the rest 8 are *Dohras*, 8 *Sorathas* and 8 *Chhants* etc. *Savaiyas* are only 3 in number and those too in the first *Skandh*; Hence the appropriate name of this collection could be ‘*kabitt Bhai Gurdas*’ only.²⁸ Number of *varan* by Bhai Gurdas is forty; one more usually appended to this collection is by some other Gurdas whose antecedents are not known. This *var* cannot be by Bhai Gurdas because in it the main theme is laudation of Guru Gobind Singh who himself is the Guru as well as the disciple.²⁹ The *vars* of Bhai Gurdas regarded as the ‘key’ to the *Guru Granth Sahib*, they relate equally well to the Sikh Panth.³⁰ They are the only really authentic references to the period of the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Gurus by a Sikh. His commentary on Sikh practices is valuable indications of the state of things at the time.³¹

Bhai Gurdas’s *vars* are of a very uneven equality and have a baffling variety of diction. Some run very smoothly and are well ordered; the vocabulary of others is both antiquated and not infrequently violate elementary rules of grammar.³² He used classical religious terminology prevalent at that time, because it was a must for him to face the

²⁵ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, p.310.

²⁶ Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, p.311.

²⁷ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, vol.1, p.6

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

²⁹ Jodh Singh *op.cit* p.7.

³⁰ J.S. Grewal, *History, Literature and Identity*, p.119.

³¹ Khushwant Singh, *op.cit.*, p.310.

³² *Ibid.*, p.312.

people in their idiom.³³ The only possible explanation of his oversights is that Bhai Gurdas's primary object was to expound certain points from the scriptures and to propagate the ideals of the Sikh way of life, not to write a book of history.³⁴ However there are several very notable and inexplicable omissions in Bhai Gurdas's writings. He has, for instance, produced a list of the important disciples of the earlier Gurus.³⁵

The range of the *vars* of Bhai Gurdas is far larger than that of the *vars* of Satta and Balwand and the *Swayyas* of the *bhatts*. This may be expected from the range of his interests and experience.³⁶ The *vars* of Bhai Gurdas provide 'an extensive commentary on the teachings of the Gurus. He mocks external observances' gently yet effectively, and describes the way of life to be followed by the devout Sikh.³⁷ He has combined in his writings religious ideals with humanistic moral precepts. His attention was incessantly focused on the moral character and conduct of man.³⁸

Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha in his *Mahan Kosh* writes that there is no code of conduct (*Rahitnama*) of more importance than the works (*varan Kabitt and Swayyas*) of Bhai Gurdas.³⁹ He was a moral genius who had reserved the energy to change his course and outlook on life in his fairly advanced years. He had worked all his life for the ethics of humility and had come to see its tragic irrelevance.⁴⁰

There is a question why the hymns of Bhai Gurdas were not included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, M.A. Macauliffe observes that the Guru, probably to make trail of his learned and able scribe, Bhai Gurdas, whose compositions he admired, offered to insert them in the *Guru Granth Sahib*; but Bhai Gurdas humbly said that they were not worthy of such honour. The Guru complimented him on his modesty as well as ability, and said that whoever read the Bhai Gurdas's writings should acquire spiritual profit and instructions and faith in the teachings of the holy Gurus.⁴¹

³³ Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.1.

³⁴ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol.1, p.312.

³⁵ *Loc.cit.*

³⁶ S.S. Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, ABS Publication, Jalandhar, 1988, p.180.

³⁷ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.120.

³⁸ Avtar Singh, *Ethics of the Sikhs*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University Patiala, 1933, p.12.

³⁹ Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.2.

⁴⁰ S.S. Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, pp. 183-84.

⁴¹ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, vol. 1, p.3.

In his *vars*, Bhai Gurdas holds firmly to the core of Sikh religion as it was expounded by Guru Nanak and his first four successors: the transcendence and immanence of God, the equation of God with the Guru, the equation of the Guru with the *Shabad*; the divinity of the *sadh-sangat* as well as the *shabad*, the unity of *Guruship*, and Sikhism not as an synthesis of Islam and Hinduism but as an alternative to both. For Bhai Gurdas, the new Order of values in Sikhism is on the point of turning into a value of new order.⁴²

III

Bhai Gurdas enunciates in his *vars* some of the most enduring themes in Sikh consciousness: faith in the Gurus and their utterances, regular visit to *dharmsal* and importance of the *sadh-sangat* as a body of the faithful.⁴³

Bhai Gurdas describes the situation in which people come to the Guru through the mediacy of Sikhs, become Sikhs and turn into *Gurmukhs* or ideal man. The ideal man forms the epitome of a religious system. In fact, the concept and characteristics of ideal man reveal the entire structure, the salient features and the world view of a religion. The Sikh of the Guru and Gurmukh are synonymous for Bhai Gurdas; all the traits of the Gurmukh are associated with the Gur Sikh too. They too are distinct from the other peoples in the world. Bhai Gurdas described their traits in details. A Sikh follows the Guru's path in association with other Sikhs (*Sadh-Sangat*); he knows no distinction of caste; his sight is better than the knowledge of all the six philosophies; his affiliation of Gur Sikhi is exclusive; he lives according to the *Shabad* and cultivates humility; he is dear to the Guru on account of his loving devotion; he adores one God as the source of liberation in life; he appropriates *Gur-updes* and becomes dust of the feets (*pa-khak*) of others; he discards *durmat*, *dubidha* and falsehood; he appropriates *gurmat*, *Shabad* and the truth; he serves the Sikhs of the Guru and regards them as mother, father, brother and friend.⁴⁴

Bhai Gurdas is not unaware of boundaries'. In his view 'Muslims miss the correct path and Hindus remain entangled in empty rituals and social inequalities. The Sikh way

⁴² S.S. Hans, *op.cit.*, p. 181.

⁴³ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.120.

⁴⁴ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.127.

of life is 'a distinctive third path to human problems'. The Gurmukh, a follower of the Sikh Gurus and their doctrines, is the ideal man.⁴⁵ Bhai Gurdas praised the God-conscious person in glorious terms. His description of the God-conscious person by itself gives a clear and concise picture of the concepts of the Guru about the goal of man, the ideal life, their value system, and the entire approach to the world and life.

Highlighting the qualities of a Gur Sikh, Bhai Gurdas says, the Gur Sikh is one who has received instructions from the Guru. He wakes up and takes his bath early in the morning for meditation. He recites the Holy name with concentration. He writes:

I am sacrifice unto those Gur Sikhs, who get up in the last quarter of night. I am sacrifice unto those Gur Sikhs who getting up in the ambrosial hours, and bathe in the holy tank. I am sacrifice unto them also who remember the Lord with single devotion.⁴⁶

He further prays those Sikhs who sing or listen to the Guru's hymns daily, The *Gurbani* or hymns of Guru which is Guru in essence, brings this enlightenment to men. It shows the way, listening to, reciting and becoming absorbed in *bani* engenders merit and helps one to overcome *haumani*, i.e. finite ego or self love which hinders understanding and realization. Bhai Gurdas eulogizes those Sikhs who find good Sikhs and befriend them. He writes:

I am sacrifice unto those Gur Sikhs who sing and listen the *Gurbani* daily. I am sacrifice unto those Gur Sikhs who meet others whole heartedly (And do not complete mere a formality).⁴⁷

The Gurmukhs regard the Guru and God as one, and know no other affiliation.⁴⁸ Bhai Gurdas equates the Guru with God. The Guru is the Perfect Brahm who shines like the sun in every being. The Sikhs seek refuge in the Guru because he is God. Bhai Gurdas equates the Guru with the true Sikh, too. The Guru became a Sikh and a Sikh became the Guru to experience the ineffable.⁴⁹ The Sikh working under the guidance of Guru, becomes humble, polite and an altruist. Though, Sikh way of life is the greatest

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.120.

⁴⁶ Jodh singh, *op.cit*, vol -1, p. 303.

⁴⁷ *Loc.cit*.

⁴⁸ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit*, p.127.

⁴⁹ S.S. Hans, *A Reconstruction of Sikh History from Sikh Literature*, pp. 181.

way yet treaders on this path are not many in number; they are the rare ones.⁵⁰ The Sikh performs manual services for the *Sadh-Sangat*; he writes *Gurbani*, compiles *pothis*; learns to play musical instruments for *kirtan*; he follows an honest profession and feels happy to give something to others; in all humility, he regards other Sikhs as far above himself; he walks a long distance to help them; he lives in accordance with the divine order (*hukam*) and remains detached in the midst of *maya* (illusion). The devotional life of the Gurmukh covers recitation of a meditation on *Gurbani*, visit to the *Dharamsal* and service of the Guru and his Sikhs.⁵¹

The importance of *Sewa* is another aspect of sharing one's resources with the fellow beings. The primary qualities of *sewa* are its voluntary nature and its inspiration from love. It is the expression towards the fellow beings of whatever one feels towards God. A Sikh counts riches for nothing. He waves a fan on the *sadh-sangat*, draws water and grinds corn for it daily. He shakes the dust off the carpets and never feels shy of feeding the oven for cooking.⁵² He further writes about the virtue of *Sewa* as:

The Sikhs become blest by the service of the Guru and progress further successfully.⁵³

Bhai Gurdas has mentioned the conduct of liberated men. He has discussed the merits or virtues of him or described how a liberated person spends his life.

A Sikh listens to the instructions of the Guru, appears simple outside, but is wise within. He linking his consciousness to the Guru's hymns, his mind becomes closed to everything else. His eyes are fixed on the Guru, and when seated in the midst of the *sadh-sangat*, he becomes oblivious of all else. As he recites "Waheguru", he quietly drinks the cup the nectar of divine love. He bows to the feet of the Guru and mentally bathes in their dust; he washes the feet of the Guru and acknowledges the new found spirituality of the water. Like the moth which loves the flame, he is in love with the presence of the Guru and remains clean in the rough and tumble

⁵⁰ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, vol.1, p.15.

⁵¹ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit*, p. 127.

⁵² *Proceedings, Punjab History Conference*, "Bhai Gurdas", (S.S Hans) Punjab historical studies Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1978. pp. 71-79

⁵³ Jodh Singh, *Op.cit.*, p. 303.

of the world. He is liberated while alive, for his life has been blessed. He has achieved salvation, which is the goal of his life.⁵⁴

There is a question who may be called a Sikh of the Guru. In the view of Jodh Singh, the life of the Gurmukh is fortunate who meeting some Sikhs of the Guru has comes to the shelter of the Guru. He bows before primeval Pursa (God) and becomes blest after having the sight of such a Guru. After circumambulation, he bows on the lotus feet of Guru becoming kind; the Guru recites true mantra *Wahiguru* for him. The Sikh with his capital of devotion falls at the feet of Guru and the whole world bows at his feet God (the Guru) eradicates his lust, anger and resistance and gets his greed, infatuation and ego erased. Instead, the Guru makes him practise truth, contentment, *dharma*, name, charity and ablution. Adopting the teachings of the Gurus, the individual is called a Sikh of the Guru.⁵⁵

Bhai Gurdas tells also about the duties performed by the Sikhs.

They (Gurmukhs) love to spend their time in meditation, service and fear of God and they serve the Guru by observing his anniversaries. They sing the *Sodar* in the evening and heartily associate with one another. Having recited the *Sohila* and made supplication at night they distribute sacred food (*parsad*). Thus *gurmukhs* gladly taste the fruit of happiness.⁵⁶

Although a Gurmukh lives in this world, yet he is completely unattached with its attractions. He remains engrossed in Lord's remembrance and obeys Guru's command implicitly.⁵⁷ Worldly goods and powers have no attraction for the true Sikh. He is content with the wealth of the holy name gained in the company of holy men or the congregation.⁵⁸ The pleasure of body is no attraction for him. He transcends all the earthly as well as non corporeal delights and makes everybody feel wonder struck.⁵⁹

Bhai Gurdas has mentioned that there are three gradations of people in the world. One is the most superior, the other are less superior and the third who are at low level of

⁵⁴ Gobind Singh Mansukhani, *Hymns from Bhai Gurdas's Compositions*, Singh Brothers, Amritsar, 1989, p.71.

⁵⁵ Jodh Singh, *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, vol.1, p.273.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁵⁷ Shamsheer Singh Puri, *Varan Bhai Gurdas Ji*, Vol.1, p. 229.

⁵⁸ Gobind Singh Mansukhani, *op.cit.*, p.83.

⁵⁹ Jodh Singh, *op.ci.*, vol.1, p.18.

the society. But Gurmukh prefers to be known as lower than the lows. Bhai Gurdas ji states that a *Gurmukh* is above from all these gradations. He writes that a true disciple of the Guru bows the feet and feels like the dust of the feet. He sheds his self and ego and acquiring humility reaches the state of *Gurmukh*.⁶⁰

According to this the *Gurmukh* regards himself as the lowest of the low; he becomes dust of the feet and serves the *sadh-sangat*; he talks sweetly and walks in humility; he is happy to give something to others; he remains absorbed in the *shabad*; and he remains hopeless-in-hope. These traits distinguish the *Gurmukh* from all other categories of people in the world.⁶¹ Humility is also an important virtue of a true Sikh. The Sikh lives life of debilitation despite possessing all the strengths. He becomes humble despite possessing much respect and honour in the society. Bhai Gurdas has drawn a very praiseworthy picture of the Sikhs. He said I am to sacrifice into those Sikhs who are intelligent and wise but are free of cleverness, cunningness and conduct himself as a naive person; loves the will and command of his master (Lord); ardent devotee treading the path of *Gurmukh*; know that they are here in this world as a guest. Such a Sikh is authentic and genuine in the society, world and the world hereafter. He writes:

I am sacrifice unto him who being mighty considers himself powerless. I am sacrifice unto him who being grand considers himself humble. I am sacrifice into him who repudiating all cleverness becomes childlike. I am sacrifice unto him who loves the will of the Master. I am sacrifice unto him who becoming *Gurmukh* wishes to follow the way of the Guru. I am sacrifice unto him who considers himself guest in this world and keeps himself ever ready to depart from here. Such a person is acceptable here and in the hereafter.⁶²

In the views of Shamsheer Singh Puri the Sikh sees Guru and God as one in form; he does not harbour duality in his mind. He accepts and tolerates others vices and still does virtuous deeds towards them. The Sikh of the Guru does not use insipid or hurting

⁶⁰ Shamsheer Singh Puri, *op.cit*, vol.1, p.455.

⁶¹ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit*, p.127.

⁶² Jodh Singh, *Op. Cit.* p. 304.

words to anyone; suffers loss for the sake of others.⁶³ The Gurmukhs or Sikhs of the Guru are altruist. Bhai Gurdas writes;

The enlightened mind of the Sikhs drinks and digests the unbearable cup of the love of the Lord. Armed with the knowledge of the *Brahm*, they meditate upon the transcendental *Brahm*. Merging their consciousness in the word-*shabad*, they recite the indescribable story of the word-the Guru. They are competent to see incomprehensible pace of the past, present and future. Never deluding fruit of joy, the *Gurmukhs* get, and with grace of the God, kind to devotees, they rather delude the evil propensities. They work as a boat in the world-ocean and ferry across the millions who follow one *Gurmukh*, the Guru oriented person. The altruist Sikhs always come up smiling.⁶⁴

The world congregation stands for the body of men and women met religiously, especially in the presence of Guru. Holy congregation is the holy refuse for a *Gur Sikh* wherefrom he gets everything. The *Gurmukh* is he who comes to holy congregation, recites hymns of the Guru, gives everything to the needy ones, practices the word of the Guru and above all, even knowing about the past and the future, never allows himself to be egotist. His perpetual attendance of holy congregation makes him fragrant with *Nam* just as sesame oil becomes fragrant when united with flowers. For happiness, comfort and peace one should remain engrossed in singing of Paeans of the Lord. In Var eight, stanza twenty four Bhai Gurdas writes:

The imperceptible fruit of delights is seen and received only by *Gurmukh*.⁶⁵

The idea of equality among the Sikhs is stressed by Bhai Gurdas, throughout the vars. The social background of the *Gurmukhs* is diverse but there are no social distinctions in the *sadh sangat*. Equally important for him is the idea that the only true relation in the world is that of a Sikh with another Sikh; the relationship of *Gurbhais* is the true relationship. Common affiliation to the Guru bound the Sikhs with one another in the local *sadh-sangat*, and the local communities with the Guru at the centre. One Sikh is

⁶³ Shamsher Singh Puri, *op.cit*, p.617.

⁶⁴ Jodh Singh, *op.cit*, p.175.

⁶⁵ Jodh Singh, *op.cit*, p.303.

an individual but two constitute *sadh-sangat*, an in five Sikhs there is God. Bhai Gurdas feels gratified that there are thousands of Sikhs in every city and lakhs in every country.⁶⁶ Bhai Gurdas sacrificed into those Sikhs who treat their *Gurbhais* (co-disciples of the Guru) as their friends, sons and God's boon to them. He write in his twelfth Var, stanza first as:

I am sacrifice unto those Gur Sikhs who prefer fellow disciplines to their sons and friends.⁶⁷

He again in the same Var, stanza second states:

I am sacrifice unto those Sikhs who are themselves emancipated and make every effort to free others from the cycle of birth and death.⁶⁸

The caste institution and its various forms are expressly rejected. The ideal of human brotherhood is based in the transcendence of the ego and social service.

A man who has one wife and calls another's wife his daughter or sister is celibate.⁶⁹ Other women are like mothers and daughters to him. The Sikh of the Guru remains detached from certain things. Bhai Gurdas has fixed some morals for a Sikh. He writes:

I love him deeply who does not go near another's wife.⁷⁰

In sixth *Var*' stanza eight he writes:

Having one woman as wife he (the Sikh) is celibate and considers any others women as his daughter or a sister.⁷¹

By celibacy is meant a chaste and faithful husband and not an unmarried or single life.

The Sikhs of the Guru does not seize other's wealth or property. The stress on this virtue shows the modernity of the faith. The Sikh Gurus forbade any violation of another man's right. They advised their followers to respect the rights of others as scrupulously as

⁶⁶ J.S. Grewal, *op.cit.*, p.127-28.

⁶⁷ Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.302

⁶⁸ Shamsheer Singh Puri, *op.cit.*, p.611.

⁶⁹ Khazan Singh, *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, vol-1,(ed. Prithipal Singh Kapur) Satvik Books, Amritsar, 2005, p.180.

⁷⁰ Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.305.

⁷¹ Jodh Singh, *op.cit.*, p.169

they observed the religious taboos. According to Bhai Gurdas others wealth is to the *Gurmukh* like the forbidden beef to a Hindu and Pork to the Muslim. It is necessary for the Sikhs not to touch the property (wealth) of another person.⁷²

Bhai Gurdas appreciates those Sikhs who avoid backbiting of others, listen to the teachings of the true Guru practices all this in actual life; they balance their daily routine life and sleep little and eat little. In twelfth Var's stanza four, Bhai Gurdas writes:

I love him deeply who becoming indifferent to the backbiting of other detaches himself. I love him deeply who listening the teaching of the true Guru practices it in actual life. I love him deeply who sleeps less and eats little.⁷³

Humility is the only asset of human personality and people of such conduct easily swim across the world ocean. He is soft spoken, humble, benevolent and feels grateful to any other who accepts his help, he also speaks little.

In twenty eighth Var's fifteenth stanza Bhai Gurdas writes that a true Sikh of the Guru should be humble and free from the evils such as a ego and earn his living by honest means. He writes:

He makes a living through honest labour and gives in charity, and though respected he does not think highly of himself.⁷⁴

In the *vars* of Bhai Gurdas, a realistic contrast has been drawn between *Gurmukh* and *Manmukh*, where *Gurmukh* has been shown as a person who forsakes ego, whereas *Manmukh* burns himself continuously in the fire of egotism. A *Gurmukh* is he who has left behind all the delusions and fears. For *Gurmukh*, God is a loving father, mother and brother but for *Manmukh*, the same God is a mere abstraction who has nothing to do with his mundane affairs.⁷⁵ *Gurmukh* has been considered the creation of God and the man's life has been held as a supreme among the creatures. *Gurmukh* has a special life style. The *Gurmukh* considers this world as a guest house and he does not cultivate attachment with it and though being of this world, yet never becomes worldly. Thus, becoming the

⁷² Jodh Singh, *op.cit*, vol.1, p. 169.

⁷³ Jodh Singh, *op.cit*, p. 305

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, vol-II, p. 180

⁷⁵ Jodh Singh, *op.cit*, vol.1, p. 8.

best example of selflessness, *Gurmukh* immerses into the truth, contentment, equipoise, and compassion and becomes one with them. They have all the powers but still they prefer to look powerless. Such a *Gurmukh* earn regard in the court of the Lord.⁷⁶ The *Gurmukh* transcends all rituals and gives no importance to any particular school of thought except *Gurmat*. Good and bad omens do not govern his activities and being stable in mind. He adores the One Lord while moving on the Sikh highway-*gaddirah*.⁷⁷ The *Gurmukh* has been eulogized and his practices and routine has been delineated. He remains happy in the holy congregation, the abode of truth. As tree, even after suffering a lot does good to others, likewise the *Gurmukh* bears with the faults of people and serves them devotedly.⁷⁸ Bhai Gurdas compared *Gurmukh* with sandal wood, philosopher's stone, wish fulfilling tree (*Parijat*) and wish fulfilling cow (*Kamdhenu*). His humility has been further elucidated through the examples of feet, earth, water and tree etc. Bhai Gurdas tells the merits and demerits of *Gurmukh* and *Manmukh*. He writes that the Guru-oriented man moves upon the simple and straight way and mind oriented (*Manmukh*) goes astray on twelve ways (the twelve sects of the yogis). The *Gurmukh* get across whereas the *Manmukhs* get drowned in the world ocean. The life of *Gurmukh* is the sacred tank of liberation and the *Manmukhs* go on transmigrating and suffering the pangs of life and death. The *Gurmukh* is at ease in the court of the Lord but the *Manmukh* has to bear (pain of) the rod of *yama*, the God of death.⁷⁹ A Sikh of the Guru avoids recitations, penances, mortifications, ascetic practices because these are the acts of egoism. He also avoids fasts, rituals, pilgrimages which are done for personal use. Only the Guru-oriented get eternal happiness. They ferry across the terrible world, ocean aided by holy company and in the Guru's boat. The *Gurmukh* rejects the mind's excuse and goes all out to serve Sikhs. A person who leads such a life attains the state of spiritual bliss. He walks steadily on the royal road of salvation. Bhai Gurdas in his Var forty's stanza eleven writes:

Effacing all doubts from his mind he serves the Sikhs of the Guru.

The *Gurmukhs* tread on such a highway (of religious life).

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.155

To recapitulate, Bhai Gurdas gives an authentic account of the daily routine of the Sikhs and their ideal of service. His commentary on the Sikh practices is noteworthy. The only possible explanation of his oversights is that Bhai Gurdas's primary object was to expound certain points from the scriptures and to propagate the ideals of the Sikh way of life, Also he has combined in his writings religious ideals with humanistic moral precepts. His attention was incessantly focused on the moral character and conduct of man.