

Guru Nanak – Sabad 96
pahilai paharai rain kai vanajaariaa mitraa hukam piaa garabhaas ||
Raag Siriraag, Guru Nanak, Guru Granth Sahib, 74

pahilai paharai rain kai vanajaariaa mitraa hukam piaa garabhaas ||
auradh tap a(n)tar kare vanajaariaa mitraa khasam setee aradhaas ||
khasam setee aradhaas vakhaanai uradh dhiaan liv laagaa ||
naa marajaadh aaiaa kal bheetar baahuR jaasee naagaa ||
jaisee kalam vuRee hai masatak taisee jeeaRe paas ||
kahu naanak praanee pahilai paharai hukam piaa garabhaas ||1||

Summary: We are born with an unconditioned mind, free from beliefs and rigid patterns, holding only pure awareness and vast potential. As we journey through life, each thought leaves an imprint, subtly influencing how we perceive and respond to the world around us. These impressions lay the foundation for our choices and actions. Experiences and associations establish the initial framework, which can be reinforced or reshaped through our repeated thoughts and behaviours. They interact in a dynamic loop, guiding much of our life's path through these patterns. Cultivating mindful, attentive observation can bring these patterns into focus. What we think profoundly shapes who we become. By recognising this intricate process, we can unlock the mind's capacity for conscious renewal of our innate existence.

pahilai paharai rain kai vanajaariaa mitraa hukam piaa garabhaas ||

In the first watch of the night, O trader friend, by the command of nature's law, one enters the womb. The "first watch of the night" signifies a transformative moment when our conscience awakens. A "trader friend " represents those who exchange value fairly; they neither give nor take what is undeserved. The "womb" symbolizes our pure space where individuality has yet to take shape.

auradh tap a(n)tar kare vanajaariaa mitraa khasam setee aradhaas ||

Upside-down, within the womb, you performed austerities, O my merchant friend, and you supplicated to your beloved. The image of being “upside-down” in the womb symbolizes a state in which personal will, ego, and agency are absent. The reference to “austerities” suggests existence stripped to its bare essence. The “supplication to beloved” reflects an instinctive turning toward the source of life, the all-pervading consciousness within.

khasam setee aradhaas vakhaanai uradh dhiaan liv laagaa ||

You present a request to the beloved with an explanation, while upside-down in the womb, you are in a meditative state, engaging in contemplation. The imagery in the womb represents attentive observation in which one neither acts, decides,

nor strives, sustained by natural forces. The request reflects an innate pull toward awareness when external engagement is impossible.

naa marajaadh aaiaa kal bheetar baahuR jaasee naagaa ||

There are no social or religious customs inherent within; we arrive and depart in our natural naked state. This highlights the reality that the origin of life is devoid of customary affiliations; these are learned, adopted and conditioned over time, but in the end, we leave as we came, unclothed and free from all labels.

jaisee kalam vuRee hai masatak taisee jeeRe paas ||

What our thoughts imprint, so the mind unfolds accordingly. This concept reflects that the foundations laid by our conditioning influence our life's direction; each action and thought bears its mark on our conscience and our surroundings.

kahu naanak praanee pahilai paharai hukam paa garabhaas ||1||

Nanak says, human beings, in the first watch of the night, by the command of nature's law, one enters the womb. This reinforcement evokes self-reflection on the outcomes of a transformative moment when our conscience awakens, a pure space where individuality has yet to take shape. (1)

Essence: Guru Nanak skillfully uses metaphors such as the "watch of night" and the "womb" to convey the idea of inception that unfolds spontaneously, devoid of negotiation or intention. Through these metaphors, he highlights the primordial essence of existence, the pure state of consciousness that is untainted by roles and expectations. It represents an intrinsic part of our being that exists before we form preferences or biases. By recognizing this truth of our origin, we can come to understand that when we embrace our fundamental state of being, we can evolve into our becoming.

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