

The 5 Khands – Part II

This month's Bulletin continues our discussion of the 5 Khands or 5 realms of spiritual progress highlighted in Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Japji Sahib (*Pauris* 35 – 37). Last month we focused on the first two realms - *Dharam Khand* and *Gian Khand*. This month we continue and end off with the last three realms - *Saram Khand*, *Karam Khand* and *Sach Khand*.

3. ਸਰਮ ਖੰਡ (Saram Khand) – The Stage of Hard Work and Effort

Saram Khand is the third stage on the Sikh spiritual journey towards union with the One Creator. It is the stage of hard work and effort. In this stage what is learnt in Dharam Khand and Gian Khand are put into practice. Here the consciousness, mind and intellect are moulded by Gurmat (the Guru's teachings) to become truthful, purposeful, and devoted to the Lord and His creation. In this stage, the Sikh fully understands the purpose of life and strives to achieve it with single-minded focus, passion, devotion, and mental clarity. The mind becomes free of vices and in their stead, virtues, love, devotion, and gratitude blossom. The biggest challenge in this stage is to avoid the trap of ego or to impress people. Instead, a Sikh needs to stay steadfast, resolute and courageous in focusing on loving devotion to Naam, managing his vices and imbuing virtues.

ਸਰਮ ਖੰਡ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਰੂਪੁ ॥ ਤਿਥੈ ਘਾੜਤਿ ਘੜੀਐ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਅਨੂਪੁ ॥/ Saram khand ki bani roop. Tith gharrhat gharhee bahut anoop.

The characteristic of Saram Khand is internal beauty. In that stage, consciousness is sculpted to a state of incomparable beauty. (SGGS, Ang 8)

4. ਕਰਮ ਖੰਡ (Karam Khand) – The Stage of Grace

Karam Khand is the fourth stage of spiritual development. Unlike the last three stages which require our effort to understand righteousness, gain knowledge/wisdom about His Creation and how it is maintained in a balance, and put this learning into practice in living our lives, the stages of Karam Khand and Sach Khand are blessings granted by the Divine at a time of His choosing. Karam Khand is therefore the stage of attaining His Grace. The Sikh realizes that his efforts alone cannot obtain the fruit of Naam (the Divine Name) and only God's Grace can grant him this gift. As such, he must stay on the path of virtues and be patient. Here he finds that his mind becomes fearless and fully imbued in the Lord's love, devotion and virtuous conduct. Nothing can shake the faith of a Sikh who has reached this stage, not even deception or death. The mind remains completely absorbed in the Lord's Naam intuitively despite all the ups and down in life.

ਕਰਮ ਖੰਡ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਜੋਰੁ ॥ ਤਿਥੈ ਹੋਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ਹੋਰੁ ॥/ Karam khand ki bani jor. Tith hor na koi hor.

Spiritual power characterises the realm of Karam Khand is no other except Waheguru (i.e. all duality vanishes)

5. ਸਚ ਖੰਡ (Sach Khand) – Perfect Union with the Divine

Sach Khand is the fifth and final stage of spiritual development. It is the stage of Perfection, the soul is completely merged with the Lord, like a river merging with the ocean. It is not a physical location but an accomplished spiritual state. Those brave enough to conquer their minds to overcome worldly temptations and fears are recognised and blessed to see the Creator pervading every place and in everyone. The Sikh sees everything in the universe under the perfect order of the Lord's Hukam (Command). This stage is beyond description and can only be experienced.

ਸਚ ਖੰਡ ਵਸੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ॥ ਕਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥/ Sach Khand vasse Nirankar. Kar kar vekhe nadar nihal.

In the stage of Sach Khand, the formless One resides within and one sees Him as all pervading, that He alone creates, watches over His creation, bestowing blessings through His Grace.

Conclusion: May we start our journey of spiritual development, resolutely and courageously do the hard work to transform ourselves according to Bani (managing our vices and imbibing virtues), and continuously seek His blessings to keep our ego at bay so that we become the version of ourself that Waheguru intended us to be. The mind, focussed on virtuous living, becomes the ਸਚੀ ਟਕਸਾਲ (True Mint), where the True Coin of ਸਬਦੁ (Guru's teachings) is minted.