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# Naad Pargaas Newsletter

UNDERSTANDING ŚABDA TRADITION

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## Connect With Us



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# A Message From the Organization

At Naad Pargaas USA, we strive to foster an intellectually stimulating environment that enables us to apprehend and open our innate consciousness towards a comprehensive, meaningful discourse of our age. Therefore, to cultivate reflective practices, we encourage members of the community to write short essays, stories, poems, personal experiences, book reviews, literary and philosophical papers etc., that can help in the education of our present and future generations. Our vision is to produce an intellectual community from its grass roots with writers, thinkers, poets, and scholars of exceptional talent, dedication, and intellectual rigor. Our newsletter is, therefore, a step towards producing such a community of refined taste and textual material of superior quality.

Our upcoming newsletter, to be published in March of 2023, will commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Bhai Vir Singh. We look forward to submission of papers, book reviews, poems, and other literary material to review, analyze, celebrate, and redeem the treasure of Bhai Sahib's writings that can enlighten and address some of the perplexing questions for Sikhs of our age. Please submit your papers along with a brief biodata and a picture by Jan 31, 2023. We shall be very pleased to take this to a larger audience both in Punjab and diaspora. Our email address is [naadpargaasusa@gmail.com](mailto:naadpargaasusa@gmail.com)

# Celebrating the First Anniversary of Naad Pargaas USA

On the first anniversary of the incorporation of Naad Pargaas USA, the organization conducted a seminar on the future opportunities and challenges for Sikh Society at Mata Tripta Gurdwara, Plymouth Michigan. The seminar included a talk by Amandeep Singh, Director Naad Pargaas USA on "Unfolding Sikh experience in the future" followed by a presentation on "Career and Educational opportunities for Sikh Youth" by Jaspreet Singh, Vice President, DTE Energy. This was followed by poetry recitation by Satpal Goel and a presentation by Harjot Kaur, on the works done by Naad Pargaas in the first year of its incorporation. Raman Kaur concluded the program with the word of thanks towards the Gurdwara committee and Naad Pargaas USA.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CLICK ON THIS [LINK](#) TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE



# Sikh Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club is continuing to meet regularly. Different classical literary works have been reviewed by Sikh Women on a journey to develop their literary tastes.

**THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING SPEAKERS FOR PRESENTING INSIGHTFUL REVIEWS ON FOLLOWING LITERARY WORKS:**

- 1) JASWINDER KAUR: TAO TE CHING (LAO TZE)**
- 2) JASVIN SIDHU: CONFERENCE OF BIRDS (FARID UD-DIN ATTAR)**
- 3) TEJPAL WARRAICH: RELIGION OF MAN (RABINDRANATH TAGORE)**
- 4) PREET KAUR: WEAVERS OF WISDOM (ANNE BANCROFT)**
- 5) JASNOOR KAUR: ST. JOAN (GEORGE BERNARD SHAW)**
- 6) GAGAN MAHAL: GITANJLI (RABINDRANATH TAGORE)**



# Book Review: Creative Unity

BY HARLEEN KAUR

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861 and died in 1941, both in Kolkata. Tagore belonged to an esteemed family of creatives, considered some of the key influences of the Bengali Renaissance. Witnessing the rise and fall of British imperialism and colonial rule over India during his lifetime, Tagore's work discusses the encountering of East and West, the flood of Western ideologies throughout India and Asia as a whole, and the subsequent suppression of a possible fluidity of spiritual and worldly endeavors within one culture, society, or person.



Tagore's *Creative Unity* is comprised of ten essays which span the topics of folk traditions of learning, power dynamics in the home, the spirit of freedom, and the qualms of nationalism. Tagore posits that, through globalization and modernity, we have come to accept separation as natural and power as the ultimate manifestation of life. Further still, we are unable to realize divine power within us, for we only seek it in material and human form. Rather than rejecting modernity and civilization outright, Tagore complicates ideas of how humanity can coexist and the purpose for social life. As Tagore himself puts it, "For us the highest purpose of this world is not merely living in it, knowing it and making use of it, but realizing our own selves in it through expansion of sympathy; not alienating ourselves from it and dominating it, but comprehending and uniting it with ourselves in perfect union."

Discussing many modern institutions – the home, the university, religion –, Tagore explains how social life is a conduit through which the divine can be realized; an experience he names creative unity. While Tagore critiques the advances of science, modernity, and the machine, he does not deny their utility. Instead, he asks us to question our tendency to offer the machine superiority in the realm of creation. Tagore advances his thesis by explaining how separation – cultivated through human conquest – has been the main enemy of creative unity. The desire to possess, to cultivate one's sense of self and individuality above a collective, is one of the greatest suppressions offered through Western thought. Instead, Tagore pushes for a unity of Western thought which has gifted science, or the advancement of creation, and Eastern thought, which relies on the hopes of divine realization. Tagore's consistent solution is the realm of truth, embodied through sacrificial love; it is within that which creative unity is manifested and into which we absorb ourselves.



# Book Review: Religion of Man

BY TEJPAL WARRAICH

Religion of man, a collection of lectures by Rabindranath Tagore, is drawn largely from Hibbert lectures given by him at Oxford in 1930. It is the culmination of Tagore's journey in his quest for the meaning of life and man's relationship with the divine. He acknowledged that this writing is not philosophical work but a religious experience that has been growing within him. In light of this experience, Tagore discusses the idea of Divinity of a man and humanity of God in this book.



The book starts with lyrical accounts of cosmic and biological evolution before human emergence on earth. According to the author, evolution found its full meaning with the creation of a man. When an element of life, the human mind was introduced, it made evolutionary progress unlimited. It allowed for a great freedom of imagination and expression. It enabled the man to realize the freedom of the infinite.

Tagore elucidates the consciousness of the human mind which made the man realize that there is something that transcends his physical body. This inner faculty made him aware of his relationship with the supreme self of man and inspired in him a love for this ideal, urging him to realize it. According to Tagore, Man's expression of this faculty is his religion, and it reveals the divinity in a man.

In Tagore's view, the spirit of human unity is something that lies in a man and inspires him to do things that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit. He defines God as the Universal Spirit, the ideal of a man. Emphasizing the humanity of God, he says, "whatever name may have been given to the divine reality, it has found its highest place in the history of our religion owing to its human character."

Tagore regards true religion as continuous growth towards greater humaneness and universality in our outlook. His message is that religion is not about worship of a divine force but the truth of religion lies in our humanity and our ceaseless endeavor to reach the perfect, the divine.



# Dr. Manmohan Singh: A Meta-Symbolic Leader

BY AMANDEEP SINGH

The process of symbolizing political figures has significantly augmented with the rise of populist politics of our age. Since the past decade, consolidation of symbolic spaces is becoming particularly noticeable across different political circles. Theatrical and sometimes comical acts are performed by many a popular political leader of different nations, celebrating superhuman machoism and filling-up the void of symbolic space with interestingly captivating non-sense. This usurping of symbolic space has made it easy to create, divert, and wipe out public memory with advent of what I would call 'technologies of political propaganda'. Such technologies have assisted in contextualizing, centering, and decentering public figure according to swings in political conditions, espousing for formations of political cults. One figure that has stood out from the above modes of politicizing is that of Dr. Manmohan Singh.



**Dr. Manmohan Singh**

Although, the domain of history and historiography has never remained neutral of the political narratives, the question is how can a leader of his stature stand ignored in historical unfolding? To answer this perplexing question that has flabbergasted many in our times, we need to understand the forces of internal agency that build political narratives in populist politics. It is prudent at this point to draw distinction between few sub-categories of populist politics that help in understanding the role of a common agency of a centralizing political figure. Four sub-categories of populist politics can broadly be drawn here. First, politics based on addressal of economic hardships of modern-day working class, peasantry, and lower middle class; second, politics propounding conservative and racial ideology; third, ethno-religious politics of right wings and lastly, orthodoxically zealous religious politics of fringes. A common thread that ties all these forms of populist politics is that of emotional sensitivity around issues that creates symbolic void demanding a filling by a messiah figure having mass appeal.

Delving further into the political process symbolizing political leaders in populist politics, let me refer to the thoughts of the political theorist Ernesto Laclau's enumerated in important work - On Populist Reason. For Laclau, representation in democratic societies is a two-way process: "a movement from represented to representative, and a correlative one from representative to represented" (Laclau, 2018, p. 158). Completing the loop at its origin a representative is not just a symbol or an idea personified in imaginative figure, but he is also an idea maker "who forces his followers to adjust themselves to what the representative does" (p. 160). Here Laclau's argument posits for a two-step process. In the first step, the representative is envisioned as a complete idea personified into the personhood of a representative. In the second step, the personhood of this representative unfolds into expression of an idea. This



# Dr. Manmohan Singh: A Meta-Symbolic Leader (cont.)

second step creates a fanatic dogma where everything that the representative does incites unquestionable reverence for the follower, because the idea and meaning is left to be discovered for its extra-territorial meaningfulness flowing from the being of a representative, a leader, a messiah, and so forth.

Empirically speaking, such leader becomes perceivable via insights presented in Hegel's 'Absolutization of Spirit'. Removing the personhood of leader from being an historical figure, an absolute leader that I would call symbolized leader, has the distinction of being both a form and an essence, actualizing both existential and metaphysical domains. Such leader is there to be 'realized, not analyzed' by his followers. He belongs to his own being and is described by his own self and this contributes to his meta-human enunciation. Both thesis and antithesis belong to such leader. Therefore, religious-political figures are by and large revered in worldly domain because such figures acclaim a transcendental image in the followers' mind. Populist politics adulate the oratory skills of such leaders, cognizing his words as sacrosanct. So, any critical mediation on political actions of symbolized leader, regardless of his community, induces a sense of absolute horror in a followers' mind. Such mediation prompt melancholy, resentment, and sometimes even violent rage amongst the followers. From a parallax view, critical mediation into worldly actions of the symbolized leader is politically imperative to fortify his stature.

In contrast with the aforesaid parochial model of symbolic leadership, Dr. Manmohan Singh exuded the paradigm of meta – symbolism via his uniquely personal leadership philosophy during the course of history. Relying on his actions in history to speak for themselves, he remained nonchalant about oratory rhetoric, was disinclined towards delivering passionate speeches, and remained steadfast while being facetiously trolled for his mute stances (being Maun). This style of leadership remains to be realized in theoretical and historical terms, especially by his own community including Sikhs. No headlines regarding his humble backgrounds caught attention in broad section of media. Propaganda machinery failed to discuss his foresightedness and contributions on real issues throughout his political career. His contributions in leading the country out of economic imbroglio and eventually pulling millions of his countrymen out of poverty expressed his devotion towards human life, which stood ignored in public imagination. Perhaps his relationship with power stands eclipsed in theoretical and critical understandings of our age.

Dr. Singh's relationship with power, in certain ways, was never absolutist. Perhaps, this was a core reason for propagandas of 'weak leadership' publicized against him. To him, power invited a responsibility, a Maryada, a sense of duty, then a mere agency of self-aggrandization, self-edification or assertion of individual and collective ego. Absolute relationship with raw power becomes superfluous, self-absorbed being-in-itself, and self-possessive, reflecting a pseudo-image that one perceives and desires for one's own self. So, despite being sabotaged, both by opposition and many times by his own party members who created an alternative mechanics of parallel reporting structure during his tenure, he left the channels of self-criticism



# Dr. Manmohan Singh: A Meta-Symbolic Leader (cont.)

open. His work created productive meaning in history rather than forcing history to discover meaning in his personal existence. Taking pioneering decisions and tough actions he engaged with real challenges of social and economic justice in political domain, while taking many unwarranted criticisms stemming from political conspiracies. On occasion of signing the nuclear deal, he displayed conviction and vision for a progressive future, while demonstrating grit to push back gratuitous pressures of US administration and coalition partners in his government. In philosophical terms his relationship with power was a cautious refusal to fuse the thesis and antithesis of his political life and his being into a symbolic leader. This is perhaps a vital reason for why he was deeply respected by most renowned world leaders, while internally the political class that he represented was myopic enough to sabotage his stature of a historic leader. In many ways he led the course of history by making an engraving mark of a selfless, visionary, open, and living worldview on human soul. Although his leadership transcends conventional modes of political and worldly appreciation, it is sometimes perplexing that negligible political narratives, dismayingly not even by Sikhs, are being fostered for bestowing high recognitions, like Nobel peace prize on Dr. Singh. Nor has the Akal Takht come forward to consider bestowing honors on a Sikh of this high dignity. Perhaps, history takes its course to repent an error of an age.



# Youth Voices: Duality

BY UDAY SINGH

In the presence of infinite wisdom, one has a million avenues of thought. In this text, I will attempt to retrieve the fruit of just some of Gurbani's wisdom, and its solutions to one of the most significant problems that plagues the entire human race: that of primitive thinking. I do not claim that I am an expert in this subject, yet I certainly want to scratch the surface and look underneath to reflect upon my understandings about duality.



If we look at the human condition and its affairs with the world, our interactions are filled with hundreds of flaws. When we navigate through the world and run into any inconvenience, humans immediately fall into duality. Such a disease of self-assertion and self-importance racks even the pauper, who still has pride. This duality may manifest itself in the idea of me being awakened, and the rest being "sheep", or me being right, everyone else being wrong, etc. This tribalistic thinking, prevents us "humans" from realizing our true nature. We feign objectivity in our speech, but few notice that truly we act the same as beasts. In one of Bhai Vir Singh's works, titled Baba Naudh Singh, Bhai Vir Singh Ji eloquently describes the human condition. He asserts that the guru offers maturity, and the wisdom to transcend our animal tendencies and to become human again.

When we examine the nature of duality, we understand that it defines a great portion of our thinking. It is the basis of our ideas of good and bad, male and female, and other "opposites". We can clearly see that this is a formula, which is very suited for the human mind, allows us to construct our realities in our head this way. This philosophy, though we may be unaware of it, is also how we approach people as well. We will always isolate ourselves, or our clan, from those who are "not us". This can serve as a convenient label for the mind, but can also eventually lead to strife. Our self identities are also always isolated from reality, even within our certain groups. We always crave someone who is always completely on our plane of thought, even though that is just a fiction. This leads to self isolation and further delusion. In truth, it is our "I" which leads to our strife. The term haumai (ਹਉਮੈ) literally means 'I-I.' It has been translated as egotism, but this translation is imperfect. Haumai is a kind of false conception of oneself as singularly important, and correspondingly, a false conception of the world as revolving around oneself, as a world of objects there for one's use. The idea that we are the "main character" in the game of life is something deeply embedded into each of us. The duality we create makes us conceive of ourselves as separate from others.

What solution does Gurbani offer to this problem? Such matters are to be resolved in the next writing prompt, for that will be a complex matter in of itself.



# Picture Gallery

