



Significance of Sangat

By Hardev Singh

Ham oopar kirpa kar suami rakh sangat tum jo pyari (666)
(Have Mercy on me, O Lord! Keep me in the congregation that You love.)

The company of santjans can transform one's life

Most faiths have laid down the role of congregation of believers in their religious practice. For instance, Muslims find it essential to pray collectively in a Mosque, particularly on every Friday. The Buddhists have Sangha of monks, who have a specific role in the organization of their Faith. Originally Sangha was the group of disciples, who renounced the worldly life to wander with the Buddha.

Gurbani however, has laid down a much bigger role for the *Sangat* of the *Gursikhs*. *Gurbani* tells the seeker to engage himself in *Naam Simran*. It helps him to get over all his pains and ills. *Gurbani* also emphasizes that the seeker must recite *Naam Simran* in the company of *Sangat*.

Sangat comprises like-minded *Gursikhs*, who collectively recite *Naam* and *Gurbani*, listen to *Kirtan* sung in the Gurdwara, and listen to the *Santjan* (holy men), who visit the Gurdwara. It is the *Sangat* that helps a *Gursikh* to understand and follow the true path of life delineated by the Guru. The singing of the *Shabad* (Guru's Word) in the company of *Sangat* transports the *Gursikh* into the realm of divine essence of spiritual realization. This guides him to a better life.

Khojat khojat sunee ih soe

Saadh Sangat bin taryo na koe (373)

(By searching and seeking have I learnt, Without the society of saints none can swim across.)

Jin Har dhiaa-i-aa tis no sarab kaliaan hoe

Nit sant jana ki Sangat jae baheei muh joreei (550)

(He, who contemplates on God, obtains all the comforts. We should go, sit and associate with the company of the pious persons.)

In the company of *Saadh Sangat* one becomes receptive to absorb positive vibrations and remains bonded to *Naam Simran* day in and day out. One acquires the qualities of *Santjan*, thereby experiencing a change in one's life. Spiritual realization helps intuition to be activated to absorb spiritual knowledge. One's conscience spreads out tentacles to assimilate the ambience of *Santjan's* purity.

Dhian (concentration) in *Naam Simran* is also essential for spiritual attainment. This becomes possible in the company of the *Saadh Sangat* as well as the blessings of the Almighty:

Saadh Sangat upjai biswaas. Baahar bheetar sadaa pargaas (343)

(In the holy company, faith arises in the mortal. Ever is the Lord's light within and without us.)

Saadh Sangat mil budh bibek (377)

(By being in the holy company, understanding is shaped)

Oothat baithat har bhajoh, saadhu sang preet.

Nanak durmat chhut gai-ee, paarbrahm basey cheet (297)

(While performing worldly chores, meditate on God and ensrine affection for the saints' company. Nanak, where the Lord abides in mind, evil intellect is annulled.)

Kaho Nanak Prabh bakhsh kareje Kar kirpa mohe Saadh sang deejee (738)

(Says Nanak, O Lord, take pity on me. Mercifully bless me the company of saints.)

Under the influence of positive rays of *Naam Simran* and *Sangat*, one becomes the member of the Nanak-family of universal brotherhood and co-operative living. Then selfless *Sewa* also becomes a part of one's life:

Santan sio meree levaadevee santan sio biohaaraa

Santan sio ham laaha khaatiaa har bhagat bhare bhandaaraa (614)

(With the saints are my dealings, with the saints is my business. From the saints have I earned Naam, my mind is filled with God's devotion)

We need the company of ever growing *Sangat*. Every day, without break, one is to be with the *Saadh Sangat* and *Santjan*, and absorb every word of the *Santjan*. Gradually, we arrive at the point of realization, knowledge and belief in the need for true *Sangat* for ever. Superfluous association with the *Sangat* is meaningless. It is necessary to get closely knit with the *Saadh Sangat*. This happens when *Sangat*, *Simran* and *Sewa* are combined in one place.

Saadh sangat kee bheer jao paaee tao Nanak har sang mireeaa (1209)

(When I joined the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, O Nanak, I met my Lord.)

Jaa din bhete saadh mohe oha din balihaaree

Tan man apno jeearaa phir phir hao waaree (810)

(The day I meet the holy, unto that day I am a sacrifice. Again and again I sacrifice my body, mind and self unto them.)

Gurbani tells us to keep the company of chosen ones engrossed in *Naam Simran*. It strengthens us to drive out the five vices from our mind. It also instructs us to talk softly and sweetly to all.

Panch chor aagai bhaage jab saadh sangat (810)

(The five thieves take to their heels, when the mortal gets into the holy company.)

Mil raheei prabh saadh janaa mil har kirtan suneeai Ram (926)

(Meet thou with the Lord's holy men and in their company bear His praise.)

Meethaa bole amrit baanee an-din har gun gao (853)

(He talks sweetly; angelic is his speech, all the time he sings God's praise.)

We are advised to keep company of good books. Read good authors, especially writings of the *Santjan*. It is important to study literature of the kind that improves the personality of readers, especially those of younger people. Similarly the magazines and other periodicals one reads, also reflect the nature of the reader. There is a plethora of low kind of writings which deprave the character of the readers by loading the mind with filthy facts of life.

It is important to select those writers, whose writings would improve the minds of the readers and widen their vision of life. It is

also significant that good writing be rewarded so that better writers are encouraged.

Dhan su kaagad kalam dhan dhan bhaanda dhan mas.

Dhan lekhaaree Nanaka jin Naam likhaa-i-aa sach (1291)

(Blessed is the paper, blessed the pen, blessed the inkpot and blessed the ink and blessed the writer, Nanak says who writes the True Name.)

Divine sight of the *Santjan* and their very presence sends out vibrations, which purify the *Sangat* sitting around them. The divine spiritual expression is shared by one and all.

Only by the grace of the Almighty will one come across good and desirable company while one is involved in the worldly affairs doing one's duty to earn a living.

Jin kao kirpa karat hai Gobind te satsang milaat (1252)

(They, unto whom the Lord shows mercy, are united with the holy company)

Wadai bhag satsangat paaee har paa-i-aa sahanand (29)

(By good fortune I have obtained the company of saints and attained God, the seat of eternal bliss.)

Nadar prabhoo sat sangat paaee nijghar hoaa waasaa.

Har mangal ras rasan rasaae Nanak Naam pargaasaa (774)

(By the Lord's gracious glance, I have obtained the holy company and gained an abode in my own home. Nanak says, my tongue enjoys the Lord's praise and the Name illumines within me.)

Only the positive thinking *Sangat* gathers around the *Santjan*. In such company, the capacity to absorb truthful life expands. The aura of the *Santjan* spreads wide. Slowly noiseless transformation takes place and personalities change for the better.

One can avoid the company of undesirable people, but how can one avoid the company of lowly thoughts emerging from one's mind. For this, one has to cultivate one's mind so that lowly thoughts do not flourish there. Reading of literature should be selective, so that the mind is shaped on the right manner.

Gurbani tells us to keep distance from the people who are involved in vices such as living beyond one's means, gambling, drinking etc. According to *Janamsakhi*, Guru Nanak preached Mian Mitha, "Faith is a friend, the faithless one is an infidel; arrogance is wrath, wrath is unlawful; sensuality is the devil, conceit is infidelity; the face of the one who slanders one behind one's back is black, the tender hearted is pure; wisdom is mildness, he who is without greed is a saint; the dishonest is not honorable, the ungrateful is shameless; truth is paradise, falsehood is hell; clemency is an oath, force is oppression; justice is Qur'an, praise of God is ablution; theft is covetousness, adultery is impurity; leading the life of a *Faqir* is patience, impatience is deceit: one without

a *Pir* is going astray. Honesty is a friend, dishonest is worthless. The sword becomes man, justice the King."

One should avoid the company of the depraved ones, who live the life of selfishness and greed. Sometimes our ego blinds us and we develop weakness for the company of selfish and self seeking persons:

Antar lobh mahaa gubaaraa, tinkai nikat na koee jaahe (652)

(In their mind is the darkness of avarice and none should go near them.)

At times we indulge in criticizing others, trying to portray them as moving on wrong path, not realizing our own faults. For this, it is necessary to hold back from indulging in small talk and do some introspection:

Aapas kao bah bhala kar jaanah manmukh mat na kaaee

Saadhu jan kee nindaa wiaape jaasan janam gavaaee (601)

(The egocentrics deem themselves very virtuous. They have no understanding what-so-ever. They indulge in slander of the holy persons. They shall depart wasting their lives.)

Bande khoj dil har roj naa phir pasesaani maahe (727)

(O man! search thy heart daily and don't wander in distraction.)

We are advised to keep away from undesirable company.

Bhalke uth nit par darb hirah harnaam churaa-i-aa

Har jeeo tin kee sangat mat karah rakh leh har raa-i-aa (1244)

(Rising every morning, they snatch and steal others' wealth and refuse to utter the God's Name. My Master, don't give the company of those and save me from them.)

It may be noted that scandalous conversation, which depraves our minds is found interesting only by inferior minds. Thus it is the easy small talk that engages such people and one should avoid such company. The blessed persons understand the negative impact of such conversation and avoid it and remain in the company of *Saadhb Sangat*.

Too much talking also brings in lowly conversation. Try not to indulge in meaningless discussion and avoid the company of talkative persons.

Har jas sunah na har gun gaavah. Baatan hee asmaan giraavah (332)

(They, who neither listen to God's praises nor sing God's excellence, but knock down the sky with their talks.)

By way of conclusion it may be pointed out that the *Sangat* as visualized by Guru Nanak is a spiritual gathering of believers for recitation of *Naam Simran* and Guru's blessings descending upon them.

