

Air - A Classical Element of Life in Sikh Theology

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Air is one of the five classical elements, which make all the creation. We can perceive air in the things it moves, be it leaves or hair. It is an invisible mixture of nitrogen, oxygen, and minute amounts of other gases surrounding the Earth. It is all around us. Yet, we cannot see it. Pure air has no odour. It has many uses. It provides a breath of life to all living beings. As, atmosphere, it prevents the excessive heat of the Sun from reaching us. Oxygen, one of its constituents, supports combustion. Thereby it helps us to cook food, generate heat and electricity, run industries and drive vehicles. Its other two components, nitrogen and carbon dioxide, are essential for the growth of plants. Another beneficial constituent of air is Ozone, which in the form of the Ozone layer around our planet protects us from the adverse effects of the Sun's UV rays. Compressed air is used to fill tyres. Many machines and drills work on compressed air. Wind enables the movement of sailboats and gliders. It runs windmills to generate electricity and helps in the dispersal of seeds. Guru Arjan appreciating the priceless importance of air to all of us articulates [1-2];

ਜਿਨਿ ਦੀਆ ਤੁਧੁ ਪਵਨੁ ਅਮੋਲਾ ॥

He (Creator) gave you the invaluable air. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 913)

Air - The Term

The word for air (*vāyu*) or wind (*pavana*) is one of the classical elements in Hinduism [3-4]. Vāta, an additional name for vāyu, is the root of the Sanskrit and Hindi term for "atmosphere," *vātāvaran* [5]. Vāyu-vāta or *vāta-vāyu* is the Avestan language name of a dual-natured Zoroastrian divinity [6] of the wind (vayu) and the atmosphere (vata).

Scientifically [7], the air is a mixture of several gases. Dry air, by volume, contains 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, 0.93% argon, 0.039% carbon dioxide, and minor amounts of other gases. Air also contains a variable amount of water vapour, on average around 1% at sea level and 0.4 percent over the entire atmosphere. Our atmosphere, the gaseous envelope, is retained by Earth's gravity. At the surface of the Earth, that thin, all-encompassing sphere of air weighs about 500 trillion tons.

Air - Origination

Sikh theology proclaims that the beginning of the universe and all related phenomena originated from the *Sunn* (primal void). *Sunn* is not nothingness but represents a pregnant emptiness.

The Sanskrit root 'su' also conveys the concept of being swollen with possibility. It is reported as a primal manifestation of the creative force of worldly phenomena. In holy Sikh scripture, 'sunn' is also expressed as a primal manifestation of one indescribable formless Absolute, the timeless Consciousness [8-11]. Guru Nanak propounds the origin of air and water from the primal void (*sunn*) as;

ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਸੁੰਨੈ ਤੇ ਸਾਜੇ ॥

Air and water were created from the Primal Void. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1037)

Guru Nanak further proclaims that the classical elements of Nature, air, water and fire were created per the Creator's command.

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਗੈਣਾਰੰ ॥

By the command of the Creator, air, water and fire came into being. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1037)

Origination - Evolution

According to modern science, about 13.8 billion years ago, the 'big bang' occurred. Then, approximately 5 billion years ago, swirling clouds of cosmic dust began to condense to form our solar system. At the time of its birth, our Earth was extremely hot. Under the intense heat of the Sun, great volcanic activity was happening on land. The release of gases from the Earth's womb lead to forming the gaseous envelope around it. With time clouds took shape, and then it rained on Earth for the next several hundred years. This rainwater flooded the Earth and cooled it. In the shallower parts of the Earth, the water took the form of seas.

Life is thought to have originated in the seawater as unicellular animals (e.g. amoeba and protozoa). From seawater, many organisms later invaded freshwaters and land. The present complex plants and animals have been produced in the course of ages by slow changes in the earlier simple life forms. Currently, Darwin's theory of natural selection is recognized as the main factor in plant and animal life evolution. In his hymns of 'Sri Raag,' Guru Nanak proclaims that the air was produced from the ultimate reality (primal void). From the air, water came into being, and thereafter, the whole world of living beings and things came into existence.

ਸਾਚੇ ਤੇ ਪਵਨਾ ਭਇਆ ਪਵਨੈ ਤੇ ਜਲੁ ਹੋਇ॥ਜਲ ਤੇ ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣੁ ਸਾਜਿਆ ॥

The air was born from the ultimate reality, and from the air, the water took birth. After that, the whole world was created from water. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 19)

Air and Nature

For a scientist, the word 'Nature' stands for the baffling mysteries of the universe. The universe consists of our Earth with all its living and non-living things, other planets, millions of stars and solar systems, galaxies, nebulas, black holes, dark matter and dark energy etc. [12]. Thus 'Nature' is the entire composite material universe and its phenomenon – the world.

From the point of view of religion, 'Nature' is a beautiful conglomeration and ever-present consciousness. It controls five distinct but subtle classical elements; air, fire, water, earth, and space (akasha). It gives birth to a chain of beings, namely the mineral, the plant, the animals and the human beings. Guru Nanak, in his hymns, has often used the word '*Quadrat*' to depict 'Nature.' He asserts that the classical element of air is a part of Nature.

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਖਾਰੁ ॥

Nature is wind, water and fire; Nature is Earth and dust. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464)

Air and Worldly Phenomena

Air, we breathe is invisible, odourless and tasteless. It cannot be observed at all unless it moves. Generally, it is usually peaceful and still, but it is a reservoir of enormous power. The air is necessary for our life, for we quickly die without it. The air that is all around us is a mixture of several gases. One among these gases is oxygen which is critical to life. It makes up about 21% of the volume of the air that we breathe. Air is an essential part of the entire life cycle on Earth. Humans and animals must consume oxygen to live, giving off carbon dioxide as waste gas. However, plants inhale carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. It provides a continuous renewing balance in the atmosphere, ensuring that the oxygen we need is never exhausted. It also brings forth a dependable and pleasing environment of greenery, flowers and food for us. Air, in SGGS, is propounded as a powerful creative aspect of Nature. Guru Nanak proclaims that the universe's creative force produced air, fire, and water and, using these elements, created the whole worldly phenomena.

ਜਲੁ ਤਰੰਗ ਅਗਨੀ ਪਵਨੈ ਫੁਨਿ ਤੈ ਮਿਲਿ ਜਗਤੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥

The world was formed by combining the three things, e.g. the waves of water, fire, and air. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1345)

Diversity of Air

The main components of air on Earth are nitrogen, oxygen, and argon. These three gases together constitute the major gases of our atmosphere [13]. Water vapour accounts for roughly 0.25

percent of the atmosphere by mass. The remaining gases such as carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and Ozone are often referred to as trace gases. Besides, it may include dust, organic compounds, spores, pollen, volcanic ash and sea spray. Diverse industrial emissions may also be present as gases or aerosols. So there is a wide diversity in the composition of air at different places and in various seasons on Earth. Even on other planets and stars, the air is expected to have a lot of diversity. Guru Arjan describes such a fact of Nature in his hymns as:

ਕਈ ਕੋਟਿ ਪਵਣ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰ ॥

Many millions are the winds, waters and fires. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 275)

Air and Whirlwinds

A whirlwind is a vortex of rapidly swirling air in the Earth's atmosphere. It ranges from small eddies to firestorms, waterspouts, and tornadoes. The generic *whirlwind* also includes dust whirls or dust devils, sand whirls or pillars, fire, smoke, snow, and even hay whirls [14]. It is interesting to note that whirlwinds carry over 100 million tons of sand grains around the Earth every year. Guru Nanak not only depicted the existence of whirlwinds on Earth but also described their plurality in Nature as;

ਥਲ ਵਾਰੇਲੇ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਅਨੰਤੁ ॥

There are countless whirlwinds on numerous Earths. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 465)

Air and Laws of Nature

Laws of Nature [15] are the principles that govern the natural phenomena of the world. These laws are considered to be inherent in Nature and have universal application. On the surface of the Earth, wind, following the laws of Nature, flows. Similarly, planetary wind, the out-gassing of light chemical elements from a planet's atmosphere into space, is subjected to these laws. In outer space, solar wind, the movement of gases or charged particles from the Sun through space, follows these norms. Sikh theology articulates that air obeys the laws of Nature, as set by the Creator at the onset of the worldly phenomenon. Guru Nanak articulates that wind, following the command (laws of Nature, *bhae*), blows everywhere.

ਵਾਜੈ ਪਵਣੁ ਆਖੈ ਸਭ ਜਾਇ ॥

Following the command, the wind blows everywhere. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 662)

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਵਣੁ ਵਹੈ ਸਦਵਾਉ ॥

Following the laws of Nature, the wind and breezes ever blow. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464)

Air and Human Beings

All beings need air for breathing. Breathing is a necessary process that delivers oxygen to where it is required in the body and removes carbon dioxide. Guru Nanak emphasizes the importance of the classical elements of life, e.g. air, water and fire (energy), for all living beings, as;

ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਅਗਨੀ ਮਿਲਿ ਜੀਆ ॥

From the union of air, water and fire, the living being is made. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1026)

Another critical (classical) element of life is Earth. It is a source of 92 natural chemical elements. An average 70 kg adult person contains [16] at least 60 chemical elements. Out of these, about 29 elements are thought to play an active role in life and health in humans. Guru Nanak points out the importance of Earth (soil or dust) for living beings as;

ਦੇਹੀ ਮਾਟੀ ਬੋਲੈ ਪਉਣੁ ॥

The body is dust; the wind speaks through it. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 152)

Guru Nanak Dev asserts that the essential elements of life are blended by the creative force in the living beings. Furthermore, the union of these elements within a body gives rise to an intellect of varying potency.

ਪਉਣੈ ਪਾਣੀ ਅਗਨੀ ਕਾ ਮੇਲੁ ॥ ਚੰਚਲ ਚਪਲ ਬੁਧਿ ਕਾ ਖੇਲੁ॥

The union of air, water and fire, the body is the play-thing of the fickle and unsteady intellect. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 152)

Air - The Breath of Life

Breathing is essential to life. By the process of breathing, beings oxygenate their blood and expel carbon dioxide. Breathing is our primary means of drawing in oxygen and prana or life force [17]. In living beings, the power of *prana* [18] is considered responsible for the body's activity, energy level, health and maintenance. With its help, we can move, think, see and hear. Prana is a vehicle through which consciousness manifests.

Guru Nanak, in his hymns, describes the importance of breath for life. He articulates that all living beings are dependent on breathing, and it is an essential law of Nature. As per the law, once the breathing stops in a being, death occurs. Therefore, at the time of death of a being, the breath of life (*prana*) flows out of him/her.

ਪਵਣੈ ਖੇਲੁ ਕੀਆ ਸਭ ਥਾਈ ਕਲਾ ਖਿੰਚਿ ਢਾਹਾਇਦਾ ॥

The play of the breath is everywhere. By withdrawal of this action, they (beings) crumble. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1033)

Air - A Medium for Communication

Air is an excellent medium of communication. Odours rise, waft, and diffuse through it. Pleasant fragrances can enhance our sense of well-being and improve our mood. For example, sandalwood is a tree with highly aromatic wood. Its pleasant fragrance spreads all around through the air. Bhagat Namdev describes this natural phenomenon as;

ਬਾਵਨ ਬੀਖੁ ਬਾਨੈ ਬੀਖੇ ਬਾਸੁ ਤੇ ਸੁਖ ਲਾਗਿਲਾ ॥

The beautiful fragrance of sandalwood emanates from the sandalwood tree and attaches to the other trees of the forest. (Bhagat Namdev, SGGS, p 1351)

Fragrances are the most widespread form of communication on the Earth, in which air plays a vital role. Flowers of many plant species produce their specific scents. These scents are essential factors in attracting pollinators. Bees and flies are attracted by sweet scents, whereas beetles are enticed by strong, musty, spicy, or fruity odours. Guru Nanak articulates this exciting feature of Nature as;

ਰਸੀਆ ਹੇਵੈ ਮੁਸਕ ਕਾ ਤਬ ਫੁਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੈ ॥

If someone savours a fragrance, then he can truly appreciate its flower. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 725)

Another form of communication in living beings is sound. It is also propagated through the air, making it the medium of every call, all language, each chant or song. The vibration of a body produces sound, and air acts as its medium of communication. Guru Amar Das proclaims that all beings get their breath of life from the air and make sound and communicate with each other with its help.

ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਪਉਣੁ ਵਹੈ ਇਕ ਰੰਗੀ ਮਿਲਿ ਪਵਣੈ ਸਭ ਵਜਾਇਦਾ ॥

The same breath (air) flows through every being. Receiving the breath, all the instruments (beings) sing (converse). (Mehl 3, SGGS, p 1061)

Air and Impermanence

Impermanence implies that everything changes, and nothing remain the same in any consecutive moment [19]. It is important to note that although things change every moment, they

cannot be accurately described as just the same or different from what they were a moment ago. Heraclitus, a noted philosopher, had said that we couldn't step into the same river twice. He was right. The water in the river today is entirely different from the water we had bathed in yesterday. Nevertheless, though, it is the same river.

The understanding of impermanence assists us to go beyond all concepts. It helps us in going beyond the same and different, coming and going. It can be said that things don't last forever, but remembering this can be helpful when we are enmeshed in complex emotional states. Thanks to impermanence, this too shall pass, whatever this is. When we cling to the idea of things lasting forever, we shield ourselves from experiencing here and now. Guru Arjan makes us aware of the impermanence nature of air and whole of the worldly phenomena as;

ਗਿਰਿ ਬਸੁਧਾ ਜਲ ਪਵਨ ਜਾਇਗੋ.....॥

The mountains, the Earth, the water and the air, shall pass away. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1204)

Air Pollution

The addition of harmful materials into the atmosphere is called air pollution. It causes damage to all living beings. It also affects the natural or built environment in a wrong way [20-21]. Air pollution is produced from natural sources, e.g. volcanic eruptions, forest fires, and burning leaves. Besides, harmful emissions from vehicles and industries are the primary man-made sources of air pollution. These emissions include sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxides.

Air pollution has been seen as a significant cause of lung cancer, asthma, allergies, and breathing problems in humans. It is also a predominant cause of severe and irreparable damage to flora and fauna. Chlorofluorocarbons released from refrigerators and air-conditioners severely damage the Earth's protective shield - the Ozone layer, leading to global warming. Severe global warming has increased temperatures the world over. Consequently, there is an increase in sea levels and enhanced melting of ice in polar regions. It has caused wide-scale displacement and loss of habitat of several species of animals and birds, many of which are facing the danger of extinction. Bhagat Kabir alerts us to the fact that air, water and fire (e.g. radioactive thermal emission) have become contaminated, as;

ਮੈਲਾ ਪਉਨੁ ਪਾਵਕੁ ਅਰੁ ਨੀਰੁ ॥

Wind, fire and water are polluted. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p 1158)

Air pollution is not only affecting living beings but non-living things too. If left unabated, it could leave us with a planet sapped of its beauty, vitality, and diversity. Therefore, there is a dire need to control it and take apt measures to conserve the pristine glory of our natural world. To avoid air pollution's ill effects, Guru Arjan urges us to do such acts, which might help curtail it.

ਸੇ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਿ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੈਲੁ ਨ ਲਾਗੈ ॥

Do only such acts, by which no filth (pollution) shall stick to you. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 199)

Air is Divine

SGGS proclaims that the Creator pervades and permeates worldly phenomena. Thus, air, an essential part of Nature, has been granted a divine status in Sikhism. Guru Nanak expresses such a view, as;

ਆਪੇ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਆਪੇ ਮੇਲਿ ਮਿਲਾਈ ਚੇ ॥

He (God) permeates through air, water and fire; He is the cause of their union. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1020)

Declaring the universal kinship of all beings, Guru Ram Das appreciates the universal power of air as the breath of life. He reports this divine attribute of air as;

ਏਕੇ ਪਵਣੁ ਮਾਟੀ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਸਭ ਏਕਾ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਬਾਈਆ ॥

There is only one breath (air); all are made of the same clay; the same essence (life force) pervades within all. (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 96)

Air and Divinity

In religious terms, divinity is the state of things that come from a supernatural power or deity, such as a God or Creator. Therefore, such things are regarded as sacred, holy or divine due to their transcendental origins. Air gets such a status as it is proclaimed as the dwelling place of Creator in SGGS. Guru Nanak articulates it as;

ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਅਗਨੀ ਇਕ ਵਾਸਾ ॥

Within the body of air, water and fire, the One Lord (Creator) dwells. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1033)

Guru Ram Das declares that the classical elements of life (air, water, earth and sky) are the dwelling place of the Creator. Thereby air and other elements are sacred, holy and divine.

ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਧਰਤੀ ਆਕਾਸੁ ਘਰ ਮੰਦਰ ਹਰਿ ਬਨੀ ॥

Air, water, earth and sky - the Creator has made these His sacred home. (Mehl 4, SGGS, p 723)

Air and Spirituality

Spirituality is a process of personal transformation. It is achieved either by following traditional religious ideals or, increasingly, oriented on psychological growth and subjective experience independent of any specific religious context [22]. It also relates to the activity of developing beliefs around the meaning of life and connection with others. Sikh doctrines encourage the process of personal transformation (spiritual growth) by reining in worldly passions, performing philanthropic activities and having a loving dedication to the Creator. Using the analogy of air's unique characteristics of being impartial and transparent, Bhagat Kabir proclaims that by imbibing the love of God in one's life, one becomes fair-minded (impartial) and free from harsh qualities (transparent).

ਸੁੰਨਹਿ ਸੁੰਨੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ ਪਵਨ ਰੂਪ ਹੋਇ ਜਾਵਹਿਗੇ॥

Merging one's being into the Absolute Being, one becomes impartial and free from harsh qualities (transparent), like the air. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p 1103)

Using the air (breath) as a metaphor for thread, Guru Nanak advises us to rein in the fickleness of mind and inculcate compassion in our Nature. He asserts that by adopting such a way of life, we can imbibe the love of God in our lives.

ਮਨੁ ਮੇਤੀ ਜੇ ਗਹਣਾ ਹੋਵੈ ਪਉਣੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੂਤ ਧਾਰੀ॥ਖਿਮਾ ਸੀਗਾਰੁ ਕਾਮਣਿ ਤਨਿ ਪਹਿਰੈ ਰਾਵੈ ਲਾਲ ਪਿਆਰੀ॥

Suppose the pearl of the mind is strung like a jewel on the thread of the breath. and the soul-bride adorns her body with compassion; then the Beloved Lord will be pleased with His lovely bride. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 359)

Thus for spiritual advancement, *Gurbani* recommends to rein in our evil tendencies, inculcate compassion, taking up philanthropic activities, and imbibing the love of God in our lives.

Air - A Metaphor for Guru

Breathing is fundamental to our life and consciousness. Air provides us with the breath of life. Air has remarkable qualities of being cool, calming, playful, soothing, inspiring and life-giving. Mentally, air represents transparency, creativity, clarity of thought, peace and tranquillity. These remarkable qualities of air make it synonym with the qualities of a guru, who encourages and inspires

us to strive for greatness, live to our fullest potential and see the best in ourselves [23]. At birth, a child's first breath of life brings him out of the darkness (or womb) to the brightness of worldly life; similarly, the presence of a guru (impartor of knowledge) dispels the darkness of ignorance from one's life. Recognizing such a similarity in the qualities of a Guru and air, Guru Nanak articulates the fact as;

ਪਵਣੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਪਾਣੀ ਪਿਤਾ ਮਾਤਾ ਧਰਤਿ ਮਹਤੁ ॥

Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 8)

Air- A Metaphor for Mind

The human mind is the cognitive faculties that enable consciousness, perception, thinking, judgment, and memory. Anger, jealousy, and desirous attachment are the states of mind that disturb our inner peace. Our suffering is caused by our deluded states of mind rather than other people, poor material conditions, or society [24]. Apt spiritual practices help to reduce/eradicate our delusions and replace them with permanent inner peace. Through continued concentration and meditation on God, we draw the grace to be changed and transformed. Using wind (which is often invisible, unpredictable, unreliable, playful and destructive) as a metaphor for the human mind, Guru Nanak describes its fickleness and advises us to contemplate God to attain a steady state of inner peace.

ਮਨੁਆ ਪਉਣੁ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਸੁਖਵਾਸੀ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਸੈ ਸੁਖ ਭਾਈ ॥

O, Brother! The human mind is like the wind. But it attains peace, at the very instant when the love of God (Naam) sets in it. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 634)

Air - A Metaphor for Desires

Desire is a sense of longing or craving for a person, object, or outcome [25]. Thomas Hobbes, a noted philosopher, has asserted that human desire is the fundamental motivation of all human action. In many cultures, desire is celebrated in the form of music, art and literature. A desire for material possessions is also encouraged, and people who have earned wealth and possessions are held up as role models. Within Sikhism, desire is defined as the craving to hold on to pleasurable experiences or be separated from painful or unpleasant experiences. The Sikh tradition identifies that these desires are based on ignorance. These desires are contrasted to wholesome kinds of desire, such as the desire to serve others or follow the *Gurmat marg*. Sikh Gurus identified five evils (e.g. lust, rage, covetousness, fondness, narcissism) as a principal cause in the arising of suffering, anxiety and dissatisfaction in one's life. Using the boat as a metaphor for one's way of life, wind as a metaphor for

desires, and ocean as a metaphor for the world, Guru Nanak raises a very pertinent question of what will happen if the boat tumbles over. Thereby implicitly implying that a person engrossed in worldly desires might succumb to their peril at their hand.

ਹਮ ਡੋਲਤ ਬੇੜੀ ਪਾਪ ਭਰੀ ਹੈ ਪਵਣੁ ਲਗੈ ਮਤੁ ਜਾਈ ॥

My boat is wobbly and unsteady; it is filled with sins. The wind (of desires) is rising - what if it tips over? (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 878)

Furthermore, he elucidates that a person who has imbibed the love of God in his life loses fickleness of mind and is not troubled by desires.

ਨਾ ਮਨੁ ਚਲੈ ਨ ਪਉਣੁ ਉਡਾਵੈ ਜੋਗੀ ਸਬਦੁ ਅਨਾਹਦੁ ਵਾਵੈ ॥

His mind does not waver, and the winds of desire do not buffet him. Such a Yogi is in tune with the unstruck sound current of *Shabad*. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1040)

Lessons from Air

Air, an invisible provider of breath of life to all living beings, influences our lives significantly. Due to its extraordinary qualities, Sikh Gurus have christened 'air' as 'guru' (spiritual guide or mentor). By its actions, it teaches us several valuable lessons. For example, Guru Arjan Dev propounds that we can learn equality and love for all from the air, as it provides the breath of life to all without any consideration of caste, class, colour or creed.

ਸੀਤ ਮੰਦ ਸੁਗੰਧ ਚਲਿਓ ਸਰਬ ਥਾਨ ਸਮਾਨ ॥ ਜਹਾ ਸਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਤਹਾ ਲਾਗਿਓ ਤਿਲੁ ਨ ਸੰਕਾ ਮਾਨ ॥

The calm and fragrant wind gently blows upon all places alike. It touches all the things/beings wherever these are, without even a bit of hesitation. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 1018)

Furthermore, Guru Arjan proclaims that a God-conscious being, like the wind, looks upon all alike without distinguishing one's class or social status.

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕੈ ਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਸਮਾਨਿ ॥ ਜੈਸੇ ਰਾਜ ਰੰਕ ਕਉ ਲਾਗੈ ਤੁਲਿ ਪਵਾਨ ॥

The God-conscious being looks upon all alike, like the wind, which blows equally upon the king and the poor beggar. (Mehl 5, SGGS, p 272)

Guru Nanak emphasized that the fundamental nature of air is immaculate. The addition of pollutants in it makes the air polluted. He asserts that a human soul's essential nature is divine, but worldly desires can adversely affect it. He articulates that air teaches us a great spiritual lesson, i.e. maintain our pristine, immaculate Nature.

ਜੁਠਿ ਨ ਪਉਣੈ ਮਾਹਿ ਸਮਾਈ ॥

Air, which is diffused everywhere, is not impure intrinsically. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 1240)

Moreover, we can learn true selflessness, genuine renunciation, sacrifice, and broadmindedness from the air, as it distributes the life force (breath) to all beings, without any consideration of caste, colour or creed. Gurbani proclaims that as air and water remain unaffected by the social status of beings while providing their services, a person should treat all beings with equality and broadmindedness without getting affected by their social standing or worldly gains. Guru Angad articulates it by raising a very pertinent question;

ਚੰਦ ਅਨੇਰਾ ਕਿ ਕਰੇ ਪਉਣ ਪਾਈ ਕਿਆ ਜਾਤਿ ॥

What can the darkness do to the moon? What can social status do to air and water? (Mehl 2, SGGS, p 150)

Thus, as a great teacher of ethics and spirituality, air provides practical examples of the valuable lessons to be learnt.

Air - A Source of Wonder

Air plays a variety of marvellous roles [26] in Nature. The origin of monsoons and rains, the formation of clouds and rainbows, making picturesque dunes with beautifully contoured shadows of ripples and undulating crests are just a few of the marvellous features of air. From fire rainbows to the northern lights, from morning glory clouds to mammatus, noctilucent and iridescent clouds, from tornados to supercells, from dust whirls to fire whirls, from gravity waves to mirages, there are several optical features of air, which are dynamic and charming. Appreciating the wondrous play of air in Nature, Guru Nanak exclaims in his hymns as;

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਪਉਣੁ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਪਾਈ ॥

Wonderful is the wind; remarkable is the water. (Mehl 1, SGGS, p 464)

Conclusion

Air, a mixture of several gases, is an invisible provider of breath of life to all living beings. The wind is air in motion. It affects the weather and seasons on our planet Earth. Life on Earth depends on good quality air to breathe. With the ever-increasing human population and industrial activities, the air has lost its pristine purity in recent times. There is an urgent need to preserve the excellent air quality to maintain the good health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems. Sikh

theology emphasizes that clean air is one of the most precious resources on the planet, which deserves our care and help to keep its pristine glory intact. By keeping it clean, we are not only supporting all the life on this planet but ourselves too, as we all need good quality air to breathe.

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