

# GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism

Gurmat | Education | Youth | Community Development & Welfare

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## Bhagat Ravidas Ji

An important aspect of the universality of Guru Granth Sahib is its inclusion of verses of fifteen Bhagats, or mystics, belonging to different traditions, times and territories. The only yardstick for selection was their belief and practice based on the oneness of God and equality of humanity. Their philosophy of rejecting futile rituals and relying solely on devotional love, or Nam Simran, to merge with the formless, uncreated Creator was similar to that of the Gurus.

One of these Bhagats is Bhagat Ravidas ji, who like some others of the fifteen Bhagats, was born in an untouchable section of the caste-ridden Hindu society.

There is consensus that Bhagat Ravidas was born on Maghushudhi 14 Pooranmashi in Smt. 1456, i.e. February 1399 in Kashi. His parents were in the leather trade, and were very well off. He was barely five days old when Bhagat Ramanand visited his house and blessed the child. When he reached the age of discretion, his father inspired him to join the family business. But Ravidas was imbued with celestial and humane values. The money he received from his father for business, he spent in the welfare of the Saints and needy. His father was extremely perturbed and banished him from the house. By this time, Ravidas was already married. He did not resent, quietly left the house, started living in a make-shift hut with his wife, and set up a small wayside shop of mending shoes.

He did not abandon his love for the God and built a Temple of clay walls and thatched roof. He installed an idol made out of hide in the Temple. His extreme devotion and universal love induced hundreds of people of all castes to join him in worship. This resulted in enviousness among the Brahmin priests who raised the matter in the Court of Muslim Nawab of Kashi. The Nawab was a man of righteousness, and put the matter to a miraculous test. Bhagat Ravidas went into meditation and recited one of his hymns (Gauri Purbi P.346) and requested the Almighty "Take pity on me that my doubts may be dispelled." His prayer was answered, and his adoration acclaimed the triumph in the miraculous test. To express his gratitude he sang his hymn, "Thou art sandal and I am the poor castor-plant, dwelling close to thee. From a mean tree I have become sublime and Thine fragrance, exquisite fragrance, now, abides in me." (GGS 486)

A rich man tried to allure him with the charm of wealth. He gave the Bhagat a philosopher's stone by the touch of which one could change any article into gold. In spite of Bhagat's refusal the rich man left the stone hung under the ceiling. When he came back after one year, the stone was still hanging there. The rich man announced to the world the indisputable godliness of Bhagat Ravidas. This episode is considered to be an ecclesiastic test to judge Bhagat Ravidas's endurance towards the worldly love. But some accounts associate this to the devious manipulation of the Brahmin priests to discredit Ravidas, which, rather, ended in the triumph of the Bhagat.

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## Bhagat Ravidas Ji

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Ravidas's selfless devotion and casteless love for humanity spread far and wide. Maharani Jhally of Chitaur was a noble woman of benevolence and piety. Her ardency brought her to Benares on a pilgrimage. In spite of the disapproval of the Brahmin priests, she straight-away went to the Temple of Bhagat Ravidas. Ravidas was in his ecclesiastic benediction at the time, and was reciting his hymns (Rag Sorath P.658-59). Maharani was captivated. Eventually she became his disciple and abandoned all her luxurious set up. Her husband, the Maharana, had been instigated against her adopting a cobbler as her Guru. He was full of rage when she returned. He was pacified by listening to some of the hymns of Bhagat Ravidas but still wanted to put the Bhagat through a test to invalidate the allegations of the Brahmins. The Bhagat was invited to Chitaur and requested to participate in an oblation. The Brahmin priests refused to eat while a cobbler was seated in the same column of rows. Bhagat Ravidas voluntarily moved away. But, miraculously every person distributing food looked like Bhagat Ravidas to the Brahmins (Another account states when the Brahmins sat down to eat, they saw Ravidas seated between every two of them). They complained to Maharana. Maharana comprehended the hidden meaning of this marvel, and himself became an ardent devotee. Bhagat Ravidas remained in Chitaur for a long time. It is said that Mira Bai became his disciple as well during that period. As per some accounts he died at a ripe old age of nearly 120 years, in Banaras.

There are 41 verses of Bhagat Ravidas in Guru Granth Sahib. Most of them are in very clear Hindi. His poetry is brimming with ardent love for God, Universe, Nature, Guru, and the Name. His sarcasm and pique shows his closeness with God.

**Here are a few quotes culled from them:**

To worship God by offering Him clean and pure things like milk, flowers and water is not possible.

"The milk has been contaminated by the suckling calf

The flower has been defiled by the bumblebee,

The fish have polluted the water

O mother, from where should I get clean offerings to worship God?"

"Let me offer my body and mind in worship

By the grace of Guru shall I attain immaculate God." (GGSJ, p.525)

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Reality and transitory nature of human life –

"In the structure of bones, flesh and veins dwells the soul like a caged bird.

O human being, what is mine and what is yours?

Our sojourn here is like the perching of a bird on a tree." (GGSJ, p.659)

Driven by greed and pride, we act like puppets –

"Look at the way the puppet of clay dances!

It sees, hears, speaks and runs around.

It gets puffed up with pride if it attains some thing

It bursts into tears when wealth is lost." (GGS, p.487)

Merchandise of serenity vs. load of poison –

"I, a merchant of God, deal in equanimity.

I have gathered the wealth of God's name

Whereas the world hoards poison." (GGS, p.346)

The merchants of Nam Simran attain a blissful state of spirituality where they dwell in freedom from sorrows and stresses:

"That place is called the city of no sorrows

Pain and anxiety do not enter there." (GGS, p.345)

**Requesting readers of this article to print and display the same in their Gurdwara Sahib's to make Sadh-Sangat aware of same especially youth...**

**-- GurmatStudy Team**

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