

# GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism  
Gurmat | Education | Youth | Community Development & Welfare  
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## PIRI - MIRI DIVAS

**PIRI AND MIRI**, compound of two words, both of Perso - Arabic origin, adapted into the Sikh tradition to connote the close relationship within it between the Spiritual and the Temporal. The term represents for the Sikhs a basic principle which has influenced the Religious and Political thought and has governed the social structure, political behaviour, organisation, leadership and politics.

### **Piri:**

The word Piri has been derived from Persian "pir" literary meaning senior man, saint, holy man, spiritual guide, head of a religious order and stands for spiritual authority. The word Piri and Miri are frequently used together.

### **Miri:**

The word Miri has been derived from Persian word "miri", which itself comes from the Arabic "Amir" which literary means commander, governor, lord, prince, etc, and signifies temporal power.

The origin of the concept of Piri and Miri is usually associated with Guru Hargobind Sahib (1595 - 1644) who, unlike his five predecessors, adopted a princely style right from the time of his installation in 1606 as the Sixth Guru Sahib of the Sikhs, when as part of the investiture he wore on his person two swords, First representing - **Piri, its spiritual headship and the other - Miri or political command of the community**. For this reason, he is known as **Piri Miri de malik**, Master of piety as well as of power. This correlation between the spiritual and the mundane has in fact been conceptualized in the teachings of the founder of the faith, Guru Nanak Sahib (1469 - 1539) himself. God is posited by Guru Nanak Sahib as the Ultimate Reality. He is the creator, the ultimate ground of all that exists. The man of Guru Nanak Sahib being the creation of God, partakes of His Own Light. How does man fulfill himself in this world which, again, is posited as a reality? Not by withdrawal or renunciation, but, as says Guru Nanak Sahib in a hymn in the measure Ramkali, by "battling in the open field with one's mind perfectly in control and with one's heart poised in love all the lime" (GGSJ: 93l). Participation was made the rule.

Thus worldly structures the family, the social and economic systems were brought within the religious domain. Along with the transcendental vision, concern with existential reality was part of Guru Nanak Sahib's intuition. Guru Sahib's sacred verse reveals an acute awareness of the ills and errors of contemporary society. Equally telling was his opposition to oppressive State structures. Guru Sahib frankly censured the highhandedness of the kings and the injustices and inequalities which permeated the system. The community that grew from Guru Nanak Sahib's message had a distinct social entity and, under the succeeding Guru Sahib's, it became consolidated into a distinct political entity with features not dissimilar to those of a political state: for instance, its geographical division into Manjis each under a masand or the Guru Sahib's representative, new towns founded and developed both as religious and commercial centres, and an independent revenue administration. The Guru Sahib began to be addressed by the devotees as Sacha Patsha (True King).

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Bhai Balvand Ji and Bhai Satta Ji, sing in their hymn preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib the praise of Guru Nanak Sahib in Kingly terminology. "He constructed the castle of truth on firm foundation, established his Kingdom and had the (royal) umbrella unfurled over Lahina's (Guru Angad Sahib's) head" (GGSJ: 966). The execution in 1606, of Guru Arjan Sahib - Fifth Nanak, under the orders of Emperor Jahangir, marked the Mughal authority's response to a growing religious order asserting the principles of freedom of conscience and human justice. This event led to Guru Arjan Sahib's young successor Guru Hargobind Sahib - Sixth Nanak, formally to adopt the emblems of authority. In front of the holy Harmandir Sahib ( Darbar Sahib - Amritsar) Guru Sahib constructed the Akal Takht Sahib, Throne (Takht) of the Timeless One (Akal). Here Guru Sahib went through the investiture ceremony for which he put on a warrior's accoutrement with Two Swords symbolizing assumption of the Spiritual office as well as the control of Secular affairs for the conduct of which he specifically used this new seat. Guru Sahib also raised an armed force and asked his followers (Sikhs) to bring him presents of horses and weapons. This was a practical measure undertaken for the Defense of the nascent Community's right of freedom of faith and worship against the discriminatory religious policy of the State.

Guru Arjan Sahib himself had encouraged the military training of his son, Guru Hargobind Sahib, and other Sikhs. By founding the Akal Takht Sahib and introducing soldierly style, Guru Hargobind Sahib institutionalized the concept of Piri and Miri. His successors continued to function as temporal as well as spiritual heads of the community although there were no open clashes with the State power as had occurred during his time. Guru Harrai Sahib - Seventh Nanak, tried to help the liberal prince Dara Shukoh against his fanatic younger brother, Aurangzeb. To checkmate Emperor Aurangzeb's policies of religious monolithism, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib - Ninth Nanak toured extensively in the countryside exhorting the populace to shed fear and stand up boldly to face Oppression. Guru Sahib himself set an example by choosing to give away his life to uphold human freedom and dignity.

The blending of Piri and Miri was further formalized by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib – Tenth Nanak in the creation of the Khalsa Panth, a republican set, sovereign both religiously and political ending personal Guruship before he died, ' bestowed the stewardship of the commuty on the Khalsa functioning under the leadership of the Divine Word, Guru Granth Sahib, in perpetuity. "No one gifts away power to another; who so ever gets it gets it by his own strength." Secondly, as is evidenced by the Khalsa in practice, first briefly under Banda Singh Ji Bahadur and later under Maharaja Ranjit Singh Ji, the form of government established was religiously neutral. Religion representing Piri did provide moral guidance to the State representing Miri, and the State provided protection and support equally to the followers of different faiths along with the liberation of the individual, the Sikh faith seeks the betterment of the human state as a whole by upholding the values of freedom of belief and freedom from the oppressive authority, of man over man. Religious faith is the keeper of human conscience and the moral arbiter for guiding and regulating the exercise of political authority which must defend and ensure freedom of thought, expression and worship. "This juxtaposition of the Moral and obligations of man is the central point of the Sikh doctrine of Piri - Miri.

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