

## The Enduring Power of the Narayan Shabd

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In remembrance and in honor of the 25th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Akal Takht, sangats and individuals around the world have been reciting the Narayan shabd by Guru Arjan Devji.

In his February 6th, 1987 Akal Takht Gurdwara lecture, Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji said:

*"Akal Takht shall not be completed and restored back to its glory if we do not sing the Narayan shabd and participate to the full glory of it. This is a shabd by Guru Arjan. He personified God. Stood the test of fire and came out totally pure. That purity entitled Guru Hargobind to construct Akal Takht. The Akal Takht cannot be built by governments and the four and a half billion people in the world cannot build it. Guru Arjan has to sit again through the test of fire as Khalsa, and we shall chant that mantra which he chanted to purify himself and that is what this Narayan shabd is, and when we'll perfect it. You are building the Akal Takht. Each line of the shabd is a brick. Each breath which goes with the shabd is the gold. Each voice created is the marble. Akal Takht can only be built by Akal. Let us build it with the shabd. When your generations from here onward shall rule for 5,000 years, they will remember you for the glory you sang in the voice and in the words of Guru Arjan; your prana will become that of Guru Arjan."*

What follows is a collaborative article in which several musicians and other sangat members share their personal experiences with the Narayan shabd.

## Restoring the Glory of Khalsa



by Mukhia Singh Sahib Hari Jiwan Singh Khalsa and  
Sardarni Sahiba Sat Bachan Kaur Khalsa, Espanola, New Mexico

In his Gurdwara lecture on February 6, 1987, the Siri Singh Sahib ji said of the Narayan shabd, "This shabd has a history behind it, power behind it. You have seen the success of other shabads, haven't you? Is there anybody here who questions that? This shabd participates into the valleys of those realms where no man has a voice. This Narayan shabd will restore the glory of the Khalsa." Recently, many in the sangat have felt the pressure of these days of transition. In response, many have turned to the technology which we love and trust. For the past 40 evenings, sadh sangats have been gathering and singing the Narayan shabd. As with many of our lifestyle customs, this practice came about in a mystical manner; it took many people's input, in the spontaneous but specific sequence necessary to transform a thought into a nightly ritual. The momentum was built by a few, and grew to include many as sangat members enjoyed the experience and the langar afterwards. We have experienced the manifestation of *sukh sahej*. The innocent prayer of a single devotee grew effortlessly into a worldwide sadh sangat meditation. What an experience it has been!

First, it's a very, very cozy time. The shabd is easy to learn; everyone to sings it easily after listening only a time or two. It's a beautiful sound current with a unique vibration. Sadh sangat members have commented on feelings of unity of purpose, kindred spirit and collective elevation. In fact, it's often hard to get people to leave the Gurdwara for the langar hall afterwards. Everyone stays to relax, share time and continue the group experience. Once everyone finally does leave, the harmonious identity is carried into the langar hall for a beautiful meal and conversation (sangat and pangat). It often takes conscious effort to leave the sadh sangat and go home for the night.

The shabd itself has been enlightening beyond expectation. As we chant Narayan, the vibration of the sound current begins to penetrate the whole body. The louder we sing, the more powerful the vibration. As we concentrate more, the vibration radiates with greater force. It becomes inculcated into the whole body. As the shabd is mastered, an experience of invincibility pervades the consciousness. Success walks in front, behind and on both sides of the practitioner. One is entranced by the melody. In fact, I find myself singing the shabd at various times during the day. I have to tell people who hear me and don't have an affiliation with who I am, "Oh, don't pay attention to me; it's a song I need to sing." I can't stop. It is inevitable and involuntary. Wahe Guru.

What greater gift than to chant God's name without even trying. Thank God, Narayan is in charge and, by all accounts, doing a marvelous job. May He continue to bestow upon us His presence and protection with grace and humility as we carry out our mission. Wahe Guru ji ka Khalsa! Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh!

## Mind and Soul, Breath and Bone



by Mukhia Sardarni Sahiba Guru Raj Kaur Khalsa, Vancouver, Canada

When we sing in Song of the Khalsa: "Give our lives to God and Guru, mind and soul, breath and bone," the meaning penetrates deeply in me. Over the years there have been moments when these words have held profound personal significance. One of those moments was back in 1987. The devastation of 1984 had occurred and the global Sikh Panth was still reeling from the horror of it. At the same time a great rebirth of commitment to the Dharma was taking the place of anger. Reconstruction not only of the bricks and mortar of the Akal Takhat, but of the spirit of the Khalsa was occurring; and I was pregnant with twins! At this time in the Dharma, there was a remarkable number of miscarriages and difficult pregnancies, unfulfilled births as well as several mothers carrying twins. I was carrying two beautiful girls: Nirinjan and Narayan. In those days Siri Singh Sahib ji used to ask me to record certain shabds which were needed to carry us through specific time periods. At this time he asked me to record the Narayan shabd, to invoke and carry the victory of the spirit of the Panth. I was delighted. In those years in Vancouver, we used to bring many Ragi jathas for kirtan. They would perform at the many local Gurdwaras. (By the way, that's actually how I learned kirtan. Over the years I would ask many of these jathas to teach me a shabd or two.)

At that time in 1987 there was a wonderful jatha in town -- Ragi Kalyan Singh and his angel-voiced side-walla, Meg Singh. I approached Kalyan Singh and asked if he had "a nice tune for Narayan sabh ma-eh nivaas." He replied, "Hunhji, yes." We sat right down and he opened up the space with this beautiful melody. I quickly learned it and we made a date for the ragis to come by our home for my husband Hari Singh to record us. A few days later we were sitting in our living room, recording equipment set up, ready to sing. We practiced a little, then recorded it in one take. Hari Singh commented on how completely "in the flow" it was. I remember being swept away by Meg Singh's angelic alaaps (improvisations). To this day, having listened to it thousands of times, I still am transported in the same exact way every time I hear it. And (if I may say) I experience my own voice in its powerful innocence, delivering these uplifting words with much love.

My ability to sing Gurbani kirtan was a direct answer to prayer, and that is never away from my awareness when I sing. It has always been a gift, not mine. So, the recording of the Narayan shabd (which Hari Singh reminds me was before the days of digital recording!) was made as a service to the Panth, and has sustained through these decades, uplifting the sangat to the victory of their spirit, through the very personal experience of God sustaining them through their very mind and soul, breath and bone.

I have always wondered if those difficult unfulfilled births were the souls who lost their lives in 1984 while in prayer at the Golden Temple-- coming in for just a touch of Grace, in the wombs of the mothers of the Khalsa. My Narayan Kaur and Niringan Kaur were born at only 26 weeks. Narayan Kaur lived only 12 hours outside of my womb. Hari Singh sat with her for those 12 hours, chanting. When he left, she also left. We have always felt she was fulfilled, and just needed to bring her sister in, hold her hand, deliver her to the Khalsa. Niringan Kaur spent her first three months in the "premie" unit. Against the objections of the doctors, we had a little tape recorder pasted into her incubator, which piped Gurbani kirtan into her little environment, bathing her in the healing pool of the Shabd Guru:

*Naam niranjan neel naraayan rasnaa simrat paap bilaayan*  
*The Name of the Immaculate Sustainer is like cool water.*  
*Chanting it with the tongue, all my mistakes are washed away.*

As you all know, Niringan Kaur survived, thrived and is now an awesome 21-year-old married Khalsa woman, whose voice carries the Guru's vibration, penetrating and uplifting all hearts who hear it.

*Naraayan sabh ma-eh nivaas, naraayan ghat ghat pargaas.*  
*Narayan (Sustainer) lives in everyone, Narayan illumines every heart.*  
*The Khalsa Panth prevails through time and space.*

### **The Narayan Shabd and Prosperity**



by Sardarni Sahiba Sat Kartar Kaur, Phoenix, AZ

I first heard about this shabd in the 1980's from a friend to whom the Siri Singh Sahib had given the practice of chanting Narayan. He said it was a tool to help cut through illusion and maya, and would also bring prosperity. My friend's business was growing the more she practiced it. Since that chapter of my life was somewhat confused and clouded, this sounded like a perfect remedy for that. I was looking for clarity. Narayan is associated with the water element, so I was hoping it might cleanse my perception. This is how the recording of the Narayan shabd came about for me.

## The Calming Effect of Narayan



by Sardarni Sahiba Dev Suroop Kaur Khalsa

It was back in 1998 when the Siri Singh Sahib gave me the assignment of recording the Narayan shabd, along with seven other mantras. I had never ventured into recording before so this was all new territory for me. I had worked with a friend to come up with the tunes for the other mantras and got that part of the project recorded pretty quickly. Actually composing and recording the Narayan shabd took a bit longer with more starts and stops along the way. One of the first steps that I had to figure out is what tune I was going to use. I could have recorded an existing composition but I wanted to try my hand at actually composing a tune. At that time, I was beginning to study classical raag kirtan and thought that was the preferred way to go. In order to get started on this new process--and fully intending to come up with a more classical composition--I took my harmonium into the small Gurdwara off of our bedroom, tuned in with Ong Namo Guru Dev Namo, and did the Tratakam meditation [on the photo of Yogi Bhajan as White Tantric master] for a while.

When using this meditation, I sometimes receive clear messages. More commonly, however, I find it to be a quiet and silent process. This time, I very clearly and distinctly heard the message right away to "go get your guitar." Knowing that the guitar meant the composition would be more Western leaning, I replied "but shouldn't it be in raag?" His response--and I swear this was the response I heard--was a strong and commanding "Raag Schmaag! Go get your guitar!" So I hopped right up and hurried to the other room to get my guitar, just as I would if he would have given me the command "in person."

I returned and settled back down to start the composition, checking in with the Tratakam picture from time to time. I played with all sorts of odd chords and transitions, experimenting with the capo to change the key, and worked in the best meditative and guided way I could muster to come up with a unique and beautiful composition. When it was time to record the shabd, Liv Singh and I employed unique approaches that added to a really lovely recording. My slowly strumming chords on a 12-string guitar with Liv Singh working the wa-wa pedal created a soft watery background. Kevin Stoller playing his childhood accordion added a light and airy quality to the recording. In the end, this recording of Narayan has actually been the one piece of music that will calm me down when all else fails. That took some getting used to -- that it was my own recording that would do that for me. The experience of composing and recording the Narayan shabd--and playing it live when I can--is something that I deeply treasure.

## Obey, Serve, Love, Excel -- Perfecting the Shabd



by Sardarni Sahiba Sangeet Kaur Khalsa, Espanola, NM

After the tragic events of 1984 Siri Singh Sahib ji instructed us to hold a wish-and-dish Gurdwara every 6th of the month and to sing the Narayan shabd. He said that 'when we'll perfect (the shabd), Akal Takht will appear by its own force.' In those early days, when Siri Singh Sahib ji gave a command it was (relatively!) easy for me to obey and serve, without questioning. And so, for many years I dutifully participated on the 6th of the month, singing the Narayan shabd. From time to time I did wonder what it would mean to "perfect" the shabd. As a musician, it was a daunting prospect. To my mind the concept was remote, abstract, unattainable, much like the concept of becoming "10 times greater" than Siri Singh Sahib ji, as was his prayer and intention for us.

In preparing for the 25th anniversary of the Martyrdom of the Akal Takht, I happened to re-read his lecture on The Power of the Narayan Shabd and understood for the first time that Guru Arjan, as a suffering human, wrote the shabd in order to purify himself, so that he could bear his own death with grace, so that his son Hargobind might become Guru and construct the Akal Takht, the "longitude and latitude of the nerve center of the universe which keeps the central movement of magnetic rotation of the shield of the planet earth." Whew! The Espanola sangat began chanting the Narayan shabd every evening for 40 days and the love for the shabd and the love to be together in the company of the Holy blossomed. Then our sangat wanted to keep going for 90 more days, until the 25th anniversary. Now, the concept of excelling and "perfecting" the shabd is not so remote to me. The Master gave us the recipe all those years ago: "Come and do nothing but participate and sing. Teach it to the children and let them sing. You sing. Then you'll become Singh! Because your Akal Takht will reappear in its own glory." To obey and serve are not enough; to love brings us to complete the cycle in excellence, in perfection.

## The Sound of Narayan



by Sardarni Sahiba SatKirin Kaur Khalsa, New York

I had been reciting the Narayan Shabd since 1984 when Akal Takht was martyred and we chanted it daily at Guru Ram Das Ashram in Los Angeles, to rebuild the Khalsa Panth. It is such a reminder of the many facets of Wahe Guru. Narayan is such a beautiful name, a Hindu name, my grandson's name and I love to roll the syllables on my tongue. The musicality of the Gurmukhi gives an additional charge when sung in Raag, adding another layer of mind that gets penetrated and released. The meaning holds special resonance for me: "The Naam of the immaculate Lord IS the Ambrosial Water and chanting it with your tongue REALLY washes away the misdeeds".