

CHARACTER

Everything is lesser than TRUTH, (but) higher than truth is CHARACTER

Thoughts first arise in the mind and then those thoughts express themselves as actions or deeds. If the thoughts and deed are repeated over and over again or meditated upon, they then become our nature or habit. When thought translates itself into habit, the habit automatically expresses itself into deeds. This habit or nature gradually becomes so powerful that despite our body, mind and intelligence becoming aware of it, we are unable to free itself from the bad habit. In this way man becomes a slave to the self inflicted habit or character - just as a drunkard or addict.

This is no all. If these habits are repeated over a long period of time, then they sink into our unconscious minds. Thus the effects of such thoughts that have sunk or collected into our unconscious mind is so deep on our bodies, minds and intelligence that we get enslaved by them. In this way, by the continuous meditation or dwelling upon thoughts or actions, the colouring of these thought -

first - penetrates (into us)

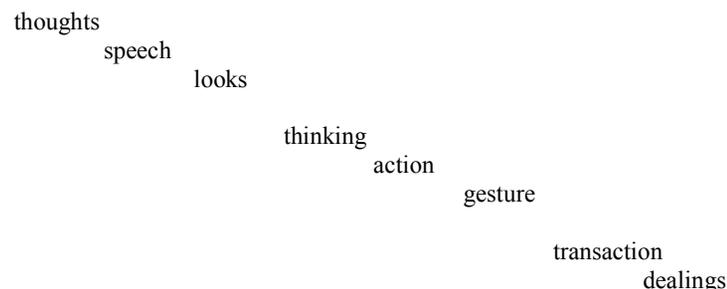
then - resides (in us)

and gradually - permeates (into us)

and finally man becomes the very embodiment of it.

As an example look at an opium addict. At first he takes opium on rare occasions, then it becomes his habit and finally after a lapse of time he becomes an addict. Despite knowing the disadvantages, he is unable to escape from its slavery. It has been seen that consuming opium all his life,

the effect of it has so profoundly diffused and permeated into his nerve cells and fibres that that addict has becomes the 'intrinsic form' of opium and in every facet of his life that is -



the reflection of opium is seen.

The 'steam' (or latent feelings) emerging spontaneously from the source of the unconscious mind of such a person is called 'character'.

The discussion thus far has shown that 'character' is the sum total of the extended practice of our thoughts, actions and habits.

Our being good or bad depends on the influence of our previous births, the present environment and our company. Under the influence of these are formed our thoughts, actions, habits, nature and 'character' or personality

Branches, leaves, fruits taste, colour, fragrance of trees grown from a variety of seeds depends on the colouring and type of the internal personality of each and every original seed.

In other words our 'character' is the result of -

1. The influence of our previous birth.
2. The influence of the company in this birth.
3. The power of acquiring (or the degree of sensitivity or conductivity to) outside influences.

The result of the practice of thoughts or actions emerging

from these bring fragrance or odour which is called 'character' or personality.

Personality is the essence of cumulative effect of our thoughts and re-actions of past and present lives.

The effect of cumulative or residual tendencies of our past births are out of our control, but, it is within our means to give right direction to the purpose of this life because Waheguru has Ji has given freedom of action to man.

If we put various coloured things in clean water it will acquire the various colours and become a compound mixture which changes in colour, taste and composition with the addition of each colour. In this way the personality of the 'solution' simultaneously continues to change.

The thoughts and actions of this life together with the cumulative effect of our past births are constantly changing the colouring of our 'life solution'.

The responsibility of this change lies with our mind, the thoughts in the mind and deeds. In this way we are ourselves making our habits, character, personality and fate, and are constantly undergoing change.

It is important to remember that the present colouring or hue of our mind or personality is the cumulative essence of -

- * The influence of residual tendencies of past births
- * The thoughts in this life
- * The present actions or deeds.

In other words our present character or personality is the result of repeated practice of the actions of many previous lives over a long period. Therefore it follows that changing our character or personality too will need continuous effort and determination over a prolonged period.

Through our sense organs we continue to acquire the influence of outside company.

We act under their influences.

The regular practice of these actions leads to habit formation.

This habit gradually enters the subconscious mind and becomes 'nature' or character.

In this process 'sangat' or company is of the greatest importance.

4.1 *As is the company one associates with, so is the fruit one eats* 1369 Bh.Kabir

If we keep the company of those with low tendencies, then definitely our thoughts and actions will be low and if we keep the company of the lofty and spiritual ones, then surely we will perform good deeds and we will continue to become good natured.

1. INDIVIDUAL COMPANY - It is normally recognised that the type of company we keep determines the type of character or life we lead. Among friends, the one who has a strong mind definitely influences the others. The mental vibrations of one do influence the mind of the other. Because those with 'materialistic colouring or hue' form the majority in this world, it is necessary for the truth seeker to deal with as few people as possible while living in this world.

4.2 *Kabir, do not associate with the apostate or disbeliever, from a distance flee away from him. If you touch a black sooted vessel, then some blot must attach to you.*

1371 Bh Kabir

2. COMPANY OF THE WRITTEN WORD - There is a saying that to know someone's character it is not necessary to ask anyone; just look at the books lying near his pillow. From the books will be known his inclination or the colouring of his mind.

If one reads a given book twice then it confirms the fact that the character of the reader is of the same calibre as the thoughts or emotions of the book, although outwardly he may appear to be anything else.

In the same way the morality and character of communities, countries and the world can be evaluated. The type of literature that is read frequently in communities

and countries, or the literature they have a tendency to read, and the kind of literature that is found in abundance, determines the morality and character of such communities and countries.

In other words, literature is the test for evaluating the character and values of life of communities, countries and the world.

In this age communities, countries and the world have strong inclination for literature coloured with dirty and base desires as a result of which the world's mental and moral state is sliding towards decadence. The inclination or demand for lofty, divine literature that gives direction to life is decreasing.

According to the law of demand, the type of literature that is written depends upon the type of tendency or demand there is. For this reason the writers are forced to write literature according to the inclination of the public. For this reason the mental colour (or make-up) of the present day writers too, is becoming materialistic, polluted and sensuous.

If any gurmukh (guru orientated person) does write lofty-truthful spiritual articles, no publisher is willing to undertake their printing as the demand on the open market for such writing is minimal and their capital gets tied up.

In this way, through reading, listening, discussing and being influenced by books and religious writings, our mind exposes itself to the positive or negative company of the written word and its effect on us is deep, intense, sharp and powerful.

For this reason, instead of reading books or papers with base inclinations, it is necessary to read lofty (or uplifting) religious books or Gurbani.

5.1 *Read of the Lord's Glories and reflect upon the Lord's Glories. Listen continually to the Sermon of the Naam, the Name of the Lord, Har, Har*

95M4 L1

3. Company that creates Excitement - such as cinema, dance, sensual dancing and the relishes of the tongue and ears etc.

5.2 *You may taste the other flavors, but your thirst shall not depart, even for an instant.*

180 M5 L11

6.1 *As many as are the pleasures of the body, so many are the pains which afflict it.*

1287 M1 L13

On this matter Guru Ji has advised us thus-

6.2 *O Baba, the pleasures of other foods are false. Eating them, the body is ruined, and wickedness and corruption enter into the mind....*

Baba, the pleasures of other clothes are false. Wearing them, the body is ruined, and wickedness and corruption enter into the mind.

16 M1 L12

Together with this, it is essential to restrain the mind from witnessing scenes portraying base inclinations and cinema etc.

6.3 *O my eyes, the Lord has infused His Light into you; do not look upon any other than the Lord.*

922 M3 L3

4. **COMPANY OF PAST MEMORIES** - previous ideas and options that have descended into the folds of the mind consciousness.

When we have identified the company low or base tendencies, then only can we block our mind from such low inclinations and motivate it towards sublime and lofty company. This is the most important and sublime thing to do, which, without the leadership and help of evolved beings, is most difficult because, the mind with its 'pull towards materialism' is being automatically pull downwards.

When ever past negative memories emerge (in the mind), the easiest method is to immediately forget or replace them and connect them to loftier and better engagements. If this effort is not made immediately with determination, then that (old) tendency will once again revert to its previous flow of ideas.

In other words when the mind experiences negative memories, they should be immediately replaced with memories of positive thoughts and the mind be given loftier and better direction.

It is difficult to suppress or erase entrenched thoughts but it is easier to direct and guide them towards a more lofty and sublime direction. (It is easier to substitute our thoughts than to suppress them.)

Continuous repetition is an integral part of the methods which lead to the formation of thoughts in our mind. Our present habits or character is the result of our continuous repetition or practice and to change, it will also need continuous practice carried out with determination.

Through the repetition or practice of thoughts and actions that result from these thoughts give power to the thoughts.

It's only through the concentration and repetition of thoughts and the actions that result from these thoughts, that thoughts acquire power. (Or to put it another way) concentration and repetition develops power in our thoughts and actions.

Therefore it is very important to discuss in depth about practice. An evolved soul has put forward his views on this topic in English as follows which can help and motivate our understanding -

This point can be easily understood with another example. Water thrown on the ground creates a path with its flow. When water is thrown a second time, it will flow along the same path. Similarly repeated actions (of throwing the water) will result in the water the minor drain wider and deeper. Exactly in the same way every thought or action creates a path or groove in our mind for its flow thus creating as habit. After some time. After some time with the effect of the actions from these thoughts, our character acquires its form and colour - and gradually and unknowingly, the reflection of the colour of our character expresses itself through our thinking and actions. Thus we acquire the form of our thoughts and actions which is said to be our personality.

The whole of the above discussion is the 'play' of the thoughts of our mind, in the sphere of the three -qualities or the materialistic world.

Now we will make an effort to discuss this topic in the light of Gurbani.

According to Gurbani 'character' is stated thus-

- 9.1 *Everything is lesser than truth but higher than truth is character.* 62
- 9.2 *Meditating in remembrance on the Naam, I have become free of desire.* 1137 M5 L12
- 9.3 *God's Name for me is doing all good deeds.* 1145 M5 L18

The value of anything lies in its existence, but this value is enhanced when the thing expresses or manifests itself. As an example electricity is present in a battery in latent form but when activated it serves us by giving light thus increasing its importance with its utility

Similarly truth is a divine virtue and is superior to various other divine virtues. When this truth manifests itself in an activity, there is fulfilment of truth and its importance increases.

That is why in Gurbani 'truthful character' is said to be higher than truth just as-

character of flower		is	fragrance,
character of wood		is	fire
character of water		is	coldness
character of sun	is		heat
character of moon		is	cool light
character of love	ii		attraction
character of affection		is	cuddling
character of devotion		is	sacrificing oneself

At the beginning of this article an attempt was made to state that the preliminary causes of our 'character' are our -

thoughts
 actions arising from thoughts
 company and
 the result of the repeated practice of deeds
 or actions.

The effect of the actions of our previous lives and the total influence of the company of our present environment forms the axis of our lives around which revolve our thoughts, actions, habits and character. The test (or ability to discern) developed through our past lives, indeed becomes the basis for discerning the good company from the bad and according to this colouring or hue, thoughts emerge and actions committed.

We have no control over the effects of the actions of our past lives, but it is within our control to take stock of the sangat or company in the existing situation and facing that challenge, give direction to our lives.

The basis of this discernment and challenge, in the sphere of influence of the three (worldly) attributes, is the effect of the company and the environment, which (however) is subordinate to our egotism.

In the religions of the various countries, according to the environment and actions of past lives, prevail many different types of customs and conceptions. Something that is regarded as good in one country or religion, is considered bad or low in another country or religion.

In the same way, with time too, discernment and respect or value of thoughts that are good or bad and high or low keep changing. For this reason differences, conflicts and quarrels keep occurring among different countries, religions and people.

In other words the discernment of thoughts and the challenge of the company depends on the transient environment of the three (worldly) attributes which have no basis and no permanence. This is simply the result of our self imagined, ignorant, changing, self created thoughts. For this reason our decision, choice or conception can be

baseless
 wrong
 incomplete
 cloudy
 low
 fickle
 ignorant
 powerless and
 destructive

All around us in the world of three qualities, the materialistic environment is very dominant. This inevitably exerts retrogressive influence on our mind, intelligence, thoughts and actions. Whatever we do, we do it all with our mind's intelligence under the influence of egotism.

11.1 ***In ego thy become truthful or false.***

In ego he reflects upon virtue or vice. 466 M1L9

Power is a divine virtue - as our thoughts acquire spiritual colouring or hue, our divine thoughts become subtle and powerful.

The true gurus did not leave the control of our invaluable lives in the sphere of influence of the three qualities, to depend upon the ego ridden environment and materialism's effect. On the other hand under Gurbani's illumination it is given lofty-pure, unerring, eternal guidance and support of guru's faith.

11.2 ***This is right conduct, and this is the correct lifestyle, to obey the Command of the Lord's Will; this is your devotional worship. One who practices this Mantra, O Nanak, swims across the terrifying world-ocean.*** 377 M5 L19

11.3 ***The many religious rituals, good deeds of karma and Dharmic worship — above all of these is the Naam, the Name of the Lord.*** 405 M5 L8

11.4 ***The Praises of the Lord are my good conduct, occupation and social class. Listening to the Kirtan of the Lord's Praises, I am in absolute ecstasy.*** 715 M5L9

Gurbani has come directly (from Waheguru) therefore it is the manifestation of Guru's consciousness. Guru's consciousness is unerring, eternal, lofty, genuine, holy and comfort giving. In this way the Satguru's have placed our lives' destination on the eternal and true foundation of the divine bani.

11.5 ***Meet the company of evolved souls and chant only the Naam*** 12 M5 L5

Our thoughts receive the correct life direction in the company of the holy, through which we have to do the meditation of the Naam.

As our mind does Naam simran in the sadhsangat (or the company of the holy), so our thoughts, actions, habits, character under the influence of the soul and acquire divine colour. In this way we can indeed free ourselves from the materialistic environment of the three worldly qualities and change the effects of our past births and our character will be coloured with divine virtues and become character that is truth.

Because our thoughts are dependent on the company we keep, Satgurus have emphatically ordered us to join the company of the spiritually elevated souls (the sadh/sangat. This company (or sangat) of -

Gurbani

Religious books

Guru orientated loved ones

blessed gursikhs

those who meditate on Gurbani

those who have cultivated the 'word' or shabad

the ones who are connected

the ones who are imbued in the colour

the holy group

the reborn ones

those who remain detached even in

worldliness

those who are emancipated while

living

those with divine

knowledge

saint soldiers

the pure ones

is necessary.

12.1 ***So, when standing up and sitting down, vibrate upon the Lord, and cherish the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy. O Nanak, evil-mindedness is eradicated, when the Supreme Lord God comes to dwell in the mind.*** 297 M5 L2

12.2 ***Those who are imbued with the Lord are accepted and respected. their company, the supreme wealth is obtained.*** 353 M1 L2

12.3 ***With each and every breath, I meditate in remembrance on my God; I live continually in the Society of the Saints. The Naam, the Name of the Lord, is my only support and wealth; O Nanak, from this, I obtain bliss.*** 533 M5 L10

12.4 ***One who meditates on the Lord obtains all pleasures and comforts; let's go, each and every day, to sit in the Society of the Saints.*** 550 M3L6

12.5 ***The Lord's Saint loves the Lord in his mind, like the lotus flower gazing at the moon.*** 975 M4 L14

12.6 ***If only some Saint, some humble Saint of the Lord, my Holy Beloved, would come, to show me the way.*** 1201 M4 L12

13.1 ***I cannot see any other way out. I seek the Sanctuary of the Lord's slaves.***

1203 M5 L14

To give our life the right spiritual direction the second command is 'Repeat only the Naam'. The chanting of this name is -

meditation

Remembrance

Repeating

meditating with every breath

Repeating while sitting /standing

Remembering while

moving, sitting or standing

Repeating all the

time

Meditating every

second, every moment.

In (the quotation) 'Repeat only the Naam' the word 'only' is important. It means that "Repeating the Naam" should be the one and only exclusive business of our lives. Besides this all other worldly business routines are of no use. Many doubts and misconceptions have been cast about this point.

In our heart there is one central point or conception around which the wheel of our lives revolves by itself. The colouring or hue of that point or character inevitably gushes out in every move of ours such as - looking, thinking, speaking etc to express itself. In other words the reflection of our character predominates or takes priority in every aspect of our lives. The rest of our thoughts or actions are also coloured by the same reflection and take on a secondary ranking.

In this way, if through simran, with the aid of the sadhsangat, the company of the holy, our lives undergoes a change with the colouring of the Naam, then Naam becomes the centre of our lives, and the colouring of Naam will reflect itself in our thoughts, thinking, habits and character. In this condition the colouring or hue of the Naam becomes the support and priority of our lives and all other thoughts revolve around Naam.

Thus the meditation of the Naam itself becomes the support, priority and the only activity of our lives.

L11.13

14.1 ***Your meditation and remembrance is life-giving, God.*** 743 M5 L13

This does not mean that we are going to neglect our worldly duties. While passing through the world we have carry out our duties according to the written command. But the important thing is that we have to give priority to the meditation of the Naam and the other duties are to be carried while being imbued in the colouring of the Naam.

But in reality we have given priority to our worldly life which is exactly opposite of the Divine Command and we carry out our duties after imbuing them with the colour of materialism. This is done to such an extent that we even assess and mould our religious pursuit or gurbani with the same materialistic colouring. In this way we have given priority to the materialistic aspect and made religious pursuit superficial by mounting materialistic colouring or hue on to it. The result of all this is clearly visible in our religious lives.

To save us from this fallacy and wrong conception, a strong warning is given to us in Gurbani -

14.2 ***They may perform all sorts of religious rituals and good actions, but without the Name, the egotistical ones are cursed and doomed.*** 162 M3 L4

14.3 ***All other rituals and customs are useless, without remembering the Lord in meditation.*** 682 M5 L16

14.4 ***This is the useless way of life of the self-willed manmukh. Forgetting the Naam, the Name of the Lord, he performs all sorts of empty rituals.*** 1277 M3 L12

14.5 ***Without the Shabad, no one achieves a lifestyle of good conduct.*** 1285M3L9

14.6 ***Without the Naam, the Name of the Lord, how can I maintain good conduct?***

1330 M1 L15

The essence of this is that without the meditation of Naam our thoughts, actions and character can be incomplete, empty, wrong, destructive and troublesome. Because of this our religious beliefs and practices are fruitless and our lives are in vain in the materialistic doubt ridden fallacy of worldliness.

14.7 ***Entangled and enmeshed in the love of false occupations, the whole world is perishing.*** 133M5 L17

14.8 ***One whose mind does not embrace love for the Naam shall go to hell, even though he may perform millions of ceremonial rituals.*** 240M5 L5

In the olden times people valued the lofty-righteous life direction,

L11.14

with which their morality and character was lofty and pure. To preserve this lofty - pure morality they had with them self discipline. Because of this they had to make unlimited sacrifices to maintain the honour of their personal, family and community morals and character.

Nowadays the effect of materialism on our lives is so profound or deep that our egotism has become very subtle and strong. This has lead our lives to be predominated by 'me-mineness' or selfishness or personal self interest in our social or business dealings. In this way our 'our ego-ridden personality' has become the centre of our lives and day and night we revolve around the axix of 'me-mineness'.

The nurturing of this 'ego ridden personality' has become our life direction and for its fulfilment -

physical and mental discipline
lofty-pure standard of life
morality
character

are set aside from our eyes or forgotten and nurturing the ego ridden personality has become our mainstay in life.

False materialism also has become

our God

our religion

our morality

our character

our life

and that is why this ego ridden me-mineness predominates and in this world

selfishness
snatching-grabbing
robbery-thievery
corruption

L11.15

cheating

lying-fabricating

jealousy - duality

enmity-opposition

fights

oppression

are on the rise.

In other words, in this dark age, instead of mental discipline or character, nurturing in legal-illegal ways the ego ridden personality of 'me-mineness' has become our morality or character.

In Gurbani we have been warned about this downfall thus -

16.1 *If I had known that I was to die, and not return again, I would not have ruined myself by clinging to the world of falsehood.* 488 Bh.Fr. L13

Despite the lack of righteous-pure character in this dark age, those Guru orientated ones who seek the protection of Gurbani and the satsangat (the company of the holy) have been referred to as

16.2 *The gurmukhs (or guru orientated) in the congregation of the holy reap the joyous fruits of living in detachment while discharging their worldly responsibilities.* V.Bh.G 15/21

But such guru orientated holy people with righteous - pure spiritual colouring of Gurbani are rare indeed.

16.3 *How rare in the world is that wise person, who is a person of true character.*

413M1 L1

L11.16

