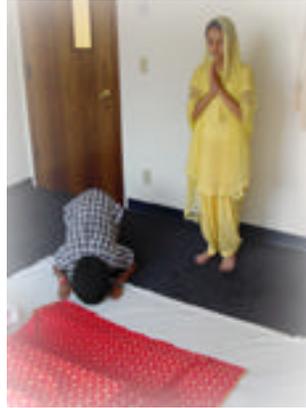


ਮੱਥਾ ਟੇਕਣਾ



Matha Tekna

There are many ways and there are many levels of paying respect to someone. There are different methods of greeting your friend, your parents, your teacher your fellow citizen etc.

Some people fold their hands in front of their chest and bend their head slightly; some bend their body at the waist with their head bending downwards and hands going backwards like the Japanese, most people handshake; some people embrace each other, etc... In India, people bow so as to touch the feet of an elderly holy person or parents, is an age-old custom to express respect. It is practiced even today as good manners. **Respecting your parents by bowing before them is not human worship.** It is a ritual to pay respect. Some religions do Matha tek to Dharti (Earth), others do matha tek to Sooraj (Sun).

To begin with matha tekna starts with our respect towards our Guru Ji. "Matha" means forehead and "Tekna" means to place or to submit. It is bowing down on the knees and touching the floor with our forehead in front of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. This is the Sikh way of paying obeisance to our living eternal Guru, Guru Granth Sahib Ji. We are required to take off our shoes, socks and cover our head before entering the prayer hall. No tobacco or intoxicants are allowed. Worshippers generally place offerings in front of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, in a box called Golak, but this is not mandatory. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but may enter and quietly join the congregation.

Utmost respect and humility is desired in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib Ji's presence in darbaar is like Guru Nanak Dev Ji or any other Guru Sahib is. **Sikhs bow before Guru Granth Sahib Ji in total submission.** In fact we bow to the Guru that is embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib, as a Shabad guru. **Sikhs are not allowed to bow before any person or shrine other than Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a Guru.**

This is not idol worship. Philosophically, this means that when we bow before Guru Ji, we make a promise to ourselves to follow the path suggested by Guru Ji. It is something similar to taking an oath to the constitution by raising our right hand. It signifies that we acknowledge our human failings in front of the Guru and ask forgiveness and His blessing. We are submitting and

surrendering ourselves to Guru Ji, i.e. giving up our "mat" (our thoughts), meaning manmat. At the same time requesting Guru Ji to guide us in all our endeavors, which is Gurmat.

As we know, we have writings about our life written by Akalpurkh (the creator) on our forehead.

I ƷyAƷr sB k0sBnWmsqk I Ʒ il KwXw]

laekhae andhur subh ko subhunaa musuthuk laekh likhaayaa

All are responsible (for their actions) and carry writ of fate on their forehead.

Only Guru's blessing can cut our sins and rearrange these writings.

nwnk iqh bDn ktygr kl crnl pwh]1]

Naanak thih ba(n)dhan kattae gur kee charanee paahi ||1|| Panna 259

O Nanak, one who falls at the Feet of the Guru, has his bonds cut away. ||1||

This gesture is not only about submitting but also receiving. A Sikh takes back Guru's blessings and His *Hukam* (the order). The *Hukam* is to be put into practice in our daily life. By doing Matha tek we get the energy from Guru Ji to fight off all evils.

kwmukDul Buqij geyipAƷrysiqgr crnl pwe]5]

kaam krodhh lobh thaj geae piaarae sathigur charanee paae ||5||

Lust, anger and greed left me, O Beloved, when I fell at the Feet of the True Guru. ||5||

Guru Angad Dev Ji emphasizes that:

j 0isrusWel nw inv'soisrudlj Yfwir]

jo sir saae naa nivai so sir kap outhaar

Chop off that head which does not bow to the Lord.

Guru Ji tells us the consequences of not submitting ourselves to Guru Ji;

an siqgr Ang'slsun bjcAƷ Eie Awih j wih ABwgy]

They have not sold their heads to the True Guru; those wretched, unfortunate ones continue coming and going in reincarnation.

On the other hand if one bows for the sake of bowing then it is merely a hollow ritual and the meaning of the act is lost. Guru Sahib says in *Asa di-var*:

"AprwDI dtkw invlj ohtqƷ imrgwih] slis invwieAƷikAƷ QIAƷj w irdYkƷDj wih]1]"

"A culprit who has an evil desire of hunting a deer has to bring himself down to his knees in order to kill a deer. What is the use of bowing if your intentions are not good or there is evil in your mind?"

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa II Waheguru Ji Ki FatehII

ਪਰਿਕ੍ਰਮਾ

Parkarma

crn AmI prdCnw krn kI]

"Those feet that do Parkarma (circumambulations)
of Guru Sahib ji are priceless." (Kabit Svaye Bhai Gurdas ji p.17)

When we attend the Gurudwara Sahib, there are many things we do, to show respect, to show our love for Guru Ji. Among these things is something called prakarma, the act of taking one or more circumambulations (going around) around the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Gursikhs normally matha tek in front of Guru Granth Sahib Ji, stand up and then do parkarma in a clockwise direction, keeping Guru Granth Sahib Ji on our right hand side and then come to the front again and do an ardaas and matha tek once more, turn around say FATEH to the sangat and sit down.

Sikhs are not the only religious people to have practiced the act of prakarma. For example, Muslims also take prakarma of their Kaaba. This act is called Tawaf. Hindus do pradakshana (prakarma) of the sacred fire, when getting married. The Jews also have a tradition of taking seven circumambulations of the synagogue platform.

Why however, do so many people practice this same act? What is the meaning of such an act? Like many other things, this also has a symbolic meaning behind it. Take the universe, for example: In our solar system, all the planets revolve around the sun. If any were to fall out of this gravitational pull, what would happen? They would fall endlessly, and no one can fathom what might then happen to them. The sun basically has a type of control over these planets. The way each of the planets in turn have control over their moons. It is submission, in a sense, to a higher power. The way the moons orbit the planets, the planets the sun, the sun orbits something else, so on and so forth, in such a way do we submit ourselves to our Guru Ji.

In the same sense, the sun provides the planets with energy, and our Guru Ji does the same with us, His Sikhs. He provides us with the spiritual energy we need on the path of Sikhi. The act or prakarma is symbolic of the fact that we are mere servants of our Guru Ji, and that we have given ourselves wholly to Him. We must stop to think.....have we submitted ourselves wholly to Him elsewhere as well? In life, in spirituality? In simple words parkarma is a pledge to Guru Ji, that where ever we go, whatever we do, everywhere, in all the directions, I stay close to Guru ji and get all the spiritual guidance from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa II Waheguru Ji Ki FatehII