

Udasees: A Tale of Two Cities

DR. JAIDEV SINGH KOHLI*

* 41, Brochington Cr. Nepean (Ont.) K2G4k5. Canada. Email: jaidev_kohli@yahoo.ca

THE JOURNEYS OF GURU NANAK are called Udasees, a peculiar word meaning “udas” or detachment. But it was specially coined to express his idea of an outward movement of consciousness, when it is hemmed in by claustrophobia of surrounding climate of thought. [The Udasi can best be translated by word “angst” of existentialist philosophy.]

When a conscious being moves out in space he is obviously looking for something. He is collecting awareness of Truth as well as Falsehood, especially the Sachiar who directly contacted Truth, must necessarily learn untruth step by step.

Also it must collate these awareness's and intuit a singular continuum of a question, the solution of which, would solve the problem of life. Nanak did not think that the abstracted knowledge of dead books a reality as such. It need to be rotated through its angle of observation to bring it into alignment with Truth. This angle of untruth is not provided by the abstracted knowledge. A single consciousness must therefore collect all these awareness's in situ to be able to formulate the true problem of life and then intuit its solution.

“ਜੀਉ ਡਰਤੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਕੈ ਸਿਉ ਕਰੀ ਪੁਕਾਰ, ਦੁਖ ਵਿਸਾਰਣ ਸੇਵੀਏ ਸਦਾ ਸਦਾ ਦਾਤਾਰ ॥” (Dhanasri M:1p: 660)

This has been translated by wise scholars as “ *Seeing the worldly ocean full of misery and suffering I am frightened and wail for help.*” Nirbhau Nanak is beyond fear, He could not have been frightened of suffering and misery unless one looks at the verse from a different angle. Nanak has undertaken to serve the Ultimate Master to be rid of evil and suffering that fill the world ocean and He fears that there might not be some thing lacking in His service to the Master and wonders whom to call for help. This fear saddens Him and He regarded Himself as Udas (sad) on that account. There is deep sadness and anxiety, anguish, in the heart of every consciousness which “angst” drives it in toward solving the what, how and why of life. Pondering over dead books is just a practice of masturbating our urge toward finding and solving the problem of life. It is the book of nature and life which must be read in its extension, its very existence, to intuit Truth.

Rather than fidgeting about the geographical and historical deviations from events which have no record at all, one has and try to trace a general path of consciousness around the then known world, formulating the problems of life and finally solving it for ever.

In Sultanpur Guru Nanak saw the falsehood and exposed it, risking His own life. After Nanak came out of His experience with Infinity, He is alleged to have said, “Na koi Hindu Na Musalman.” This was, in fact, an assertion of humanity as a unified whole. Nanak did not consider there was any different God for Hindus or Musalmans. It was the same and One God for all.

Mulas came around and placed a conundrum before Him: “Nanak, if thou not be Hindu, then thou should have no objection to say Nimaz with us in the mosque.” This

was a logical corollary by partial abstraction of what Nanak had said, Na Hindu, Na Musalman.

To every body's surprise, Nanak immediately agreed to the proposal. It created furor amongst Hindus and Lala Jai Ram was much perturbed. Muslims contented that Nanak had agreed for conversion to Islam. Hindus flocked to the house of Jai Ram to grieve but Nankee never wavered in her faith in her brother. She proclaimed that her brother had an ideology which integrated Hindus and Muslims at a level higher than both and that Nanak will show a lesson in the situation.

Muslim community flocked to the mosque for Friday Nimaz. Nanak arrived there punctually and after ablutions stood next to Nawab, behind the Imam. Kalma was repeated and when whole Jamat (congregation) kneeled into Sajdah, Nanak stood silent and erect.

Nawab and Mula both were angry and questioned Nanak who replied " There was no one who offered Namaz, Nawab was selling and buying horses in Kabul while Imam was worrying to rush back home as he was afraid that the filly might fall into open well in his court yard." Nanak walked out of mosque with His head intact on His shoulders and without being converted to Islam. It was nothing short of a miracle, in those days men have been torn to pieces for much lesser provocations.

In 1489 Guru Nanak walked out into the world, not in search of Truth for He was whole Truth Himself. He went out in the vast world in search of falsehood (ਕੂੜ). He would confront falsehood and catch it red handed in the act, expose it fully and Truth would shine out in all its glory and become apparent. To Him travel was like walking from one room to another in His own house. Each town he visited was like another room. Guru Nanak carried no possession at all except His ill-fame, like Socrates, as a contaminator of God and a Corrupter (ਕੁਰਾਇਆ) of the youth (as Brahmins used to call Him). He was Nanak the Kurahia- who has propounded the wrong path. His sister Nanki tried to give some cash money to Mardana for the journey but Guru Nanak made him return that. He wanted to live on the bounty of His Creator and Sustainer.

Mardana, a Muslim folk singer or bard, accompanied Guru Nanak on his journey. Nanak used to call Himself an Udas and Niran kar. He used to refer to God as Kartar. It was not uncommon for Nanak to ask Mardana, "Just watch working of Kartar or see His colorful manifestations (ਵੇਖ ਰੰਗ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਦੇ). When He would sing praise of God He would ask Mardana to stir the strings of rebab, divine Word is coming. A Muslim, Mardana, accompanying Nanak was a great irritant to Hindu Brahmins, eating with him and taking food from his hand was even worse.

He chose to start his Udasi from Saidpur, now Eminabad. Although Lahore was a big city even then, politically Saidpur and Sultanpur were more important. Both these towns had their names linked to royalty ruling the throne of Delhi. Royal family of Sultanpur were Lodhi Pathans and Royal family of Saidpur were Sayeds, descendants of Prophet's clan. Nanak had seen corruption and falsehood in Sultanpur, now he wondered if Saidpur would be any different. Starting from Noor Mahal, Sultanpur Nanak passed through Lahore to reach Saidpur. He did not linger at Lahore but continued to push on to Saidpur.

At Saidpur Guru Nanak took His abode with Mula- a carpenter. His experience, however, did not come from Mula but from a Hindu Dewan, Malik Bhago who used to grab riches and position forcefully. He thought, perhaps, spirituality could also be coerced from Holy men like chipping off gold from ornaments. Large amount of spirituality could be collected by inviting large number of Saints. Malik Bhago sent out free invitation to all the Sadhus and Saints to bless his house with their presence, thus helping him to attain merit, on the occasion of *Shradh* in honor of his ancestors.

Guru Nanak stayed away from the feast. Bhago, being a bania, calculated that his merit falls short by one if Nanak does not come. He sent bailiff to bring Nanak. Nanak had just started his lunch of dry bread and water. The bailiff carried the dry bread along to show the enormity of Nanak's ungratefulness in preferring it to the feast provided by Malik Bhago.

When tray full of Bhago's feast was brought to Guru Nanak to partake, He took hold of Bhago's fried bread in one hand and Mula's dry bread in the other hand. When squeezed, blood flowed from Bhago's food and milk from Mula's food. It is not that Nanak squeezed the food to bring out the blood or milk but He squeezed Malik and showed the Truth that his food was nothing but made from the blood of poor oppressed whereas Mula made his bread from love and milk of kindness only. Nanak used to enjoin His Sikhs to share food with others what they had earned with their own hard labor. However Malik Bhago's food was made out of other people's sweat and that was not acceptable to Nanak. The lesson was brought home to Malik Bhago.

Guru Nanak was not interested in individuals but in group of people. In this Sakhi, Malik Bhago was a symbol of rich and influential people and is meant to cajole this group of people. The "miracle" was only incidental and was not performed with traditional view of overawing the congregation or individual with the His own divinity or his occult or supernatural powers. Value of miracle was re-oriented toward moral and ethical values rather than self aggrandizement.

Guru Nanak was not only *Sachiar* (ਸਚਿਆਰਿ) *Nirbhau* (ਨਿਰਭਉ) and *Nir vair* (ਨਿਰ ਵੈਰ) but also *Ve-parwah* (ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ). It is not difficult to understand *Sachiar*, *Nir bhau* and *Nir vair*. Was Nanak *ve-parwah* also? Does it mean that Nanak didn't care? When Nanak saw the barbarity of Babar's armies, Nanak was definitely moved and expressed His concern for the suffering people loudly and clearly. Nanak was very much agonised about inhuman suffering and addressed God in song: "ਖੁਰਾਸਾਨ ਖਸਮਾਨਾ ਕੀਆ ਹਿੰਦੁਸਤਾਨ ਡਰਾਇਆ, ਆਪੈ ਦੇਸੁ ਨ ਦੇਈ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਗਲੁ ਚੜਾਇਆ ॥ ਏਤੀ ਮਾਰ ਪਈ ਕੁਰਲਾਣੈ ਤੈਂ ਕੀ ਤਰਸ ਦਰਦੁ ਨ ਆਇਆ ॥" Herein he shared people's pain and suffering, praying to Holy Creator for compassion. □