

The Khalsa - Concept of the Ideal Man

DR. JAGJIT SINGH*

* Principal (Retd.), House No. 25, Phase Vii, Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar. 160061.

THE IDEALS AND TENETS OF spiritualism and universal brotherhood of man as preached by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) were consummated and brought to fruition by his Tenth manifestation, Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1661-1708) on 1st of Vaisakh (March 30, 1699). To preserve and protect the inner purity and grandeur of the Khalsa, the Tenth Master delineated and prescribed a splendid discipline of body and mind. He laid down a set of norms and prescriptions of a distinctive code of conduct for the Khalsa. For the propagation and expensive spread of the doctrine as preached by all the ten Sikh Gurus for 230 years, he gave a new direction, a new look, a new shape and a very distinctive identity by creating the Khalsa, which he honoured and glorified by saying that “Khalsa is my alter-ego” that is Khalsa is my other self (Kwlsw myro rUp hY Kws []). So much so that he recognised and honoured the five beloved ones as the Guru incarnate. He knelt before them begged from them the boon of Amrit to initiate him into the newly created Khalsa brotherhood. Bhai Gurdas, the second, aptly points out at the uniqueness of the new religious order by saying, “Himself he Guru is and himself disciple too” (Awpy guru cylw []). It was something very unique in the annals of world history. In all the religions the Guru retains his higher status and supremacy and the disciple his lower station. But Guru Gobind Singh by elevating the five beloved ones, his own disciples to the status of ‘Guru incarnate’ and by obeying and willingly submitting himself to their dictates and commands created history. Conceptually it was the creation of a new doctrine higher than that of precepts of popular democracy. Considering the birth of Khalsa as an act of Divine Grace he acclaimed and lauded it in the ‘Sarb Loh’ as “the surge of joy of the Supreme self” (Kwlsw pRgitE prmwqm kl mOj). This was no exaggeration but a concrete manifestation of truth.

Superficially, there seems to be a contradiction between Guru Nanak’s conviction of “There is but Naam only in the house of Nanak’ (ਨਾਨਕ ਕੈ ਘਰਿ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮੁ ॥) and Guru Gobind Singh’s article of faith of ‘to die fighting on the battle field in extreme circumstances’ (Aiq hl rx mih qb jUJ mroN). How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled?

No Dichotomy:

Looked at from a higher religious experience they are the twin manifestation of the same spiritual thought and ideals. The ‘twains do meet’ in the Khalsa ideals. According to Gurbani the man’s goal in life is to unite with God the Ultimate Divine as the Guru exhorts. “This is the opportunity! Your time to meet God (ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥). The way suggested is - ‘meet the sadhu and the sangat and recite only His Name’ (ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਤਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ॥). According to Gurbani Nam is the Love of God - ‘Hari Nam is Love of God’ (ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾ ਹਰਿ ਰੇਖੁ ਹੈ ਹਰਿ ਰੇਖੁ ਮਜੀਠੈ ਰੇਖੁ ॥). Guru Gobind Singh Ji also regards Love of God as the best and the most efficacious way of spiritual realisation. He says, “He who loveth attains godhead.” (ijin pyRm kIE iqn hl pRB pwieE []). The basic imperative of love is self abnegation, self surrender and self-sacrifice. According to Guru Nanak, “If you want to play the game of love

then come forward with your head on the palm of your hand.” (ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥)

Guru Nanak taught us a life of self abnegation (denial) and self-sacrifice. He was God's intrepid soldier who clasped to his bosom the whole of humanity. Instilling courage in the down trodden, he identified himself with the lowly and meek. He tore up all distinctions of caste, creed, birth and rank. He showed rare courage to call the brutal tyrannous kings as 'predatory beasts. He exposed corrupt officials as 'dogs' (ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕਦਮ ਕੁਤੇ ॥). He showed the path of righteousness and truth to the Maulvi, the Pandit, Yogi and the Sanyasi. He showed a new path to all mankind - a confluence of deep devotional love and great moral strength, power and love - as the ultimate ideal of man's destiny. Any division of humanity into religious, political and social categories was the result of misguided machinations of narrow-minded priesthood.

Sacrifice for Honour:

Guru Arjun Dev embraced martyrdom and Guru Tegh Bahadur "gave his head but not his faith (ਸਿਸ ਦਿਅੁ ਪਰਿ ਸਰੁ ਨ ਦਿਅੁ []) to protect the purity and attest the veracity and inviolability of the principles of truth. This is the game of love in which you are required to carry your head on the palm of your hand. Therefore, there is hardly anything strange about Guru Gobind Singh asking for a head with an unsheathed sword in his hand from a gathering of Indians on a Vaisakhi day, 310 years ago. This call to demand a sacrifice of head was timely and an unavaoidable necessity to create a nation of those who are willing to die for a cause.

By accepting the sacrificial offering of heads and by administering Amrit to the five he bestowed the life of spirit, leavened their life with bliss, enriched them with the treasury of *Naam* and trained them in the art of self protection and self respect. Creation of Khalsa was in fact creation of a new man, full and complete, worthy of being accepted universally. Nowadays most of the people want to discard the outward mask and the mysterious hocus-pocus of religious rituals. Now man longs for pilgrimage of the soul. All the norms, restraints and code of conduct imposed on the Khalsa, the new man, have been acknowledged and honoured internationally. Use of tobacco was forbidden to him and what we see now is restrictions being put on smoking, and its unstinted use all over the world, since this causes cancer - a terrible affliction. Adultery was condemned as the most sinful of vices and now we see how promiscuous sexuality has created the scourge of AIDS, an incurable and horrible disease, whose deadly expanse is broadening like a jungle fire everyday. Only the spriritual teaching of the Guru can annihilate the malaise and free us from its deadly grip. Out of the five K's which the Guru has enjoined upon the Khalsa to adhere to, the wearing of kachh (a short of knicker) is the symbol of virtuous celibacy. As the Guru says -

'With one woman one remains a virtual celibate. (ਏਕੁ ਨਾਰੀ ਜੀ)

In God's Image:

Khalsa was given the unshorn form of a saint soldier. Guru's own personal appearance, the physiognomy of the great Guru and a brave soldier was bestowed on the Khalsa, the Khalsa created in his own image (ਕਲਿਸੁ ਮਿਠੀ ਰੂਪੁ ਹੀ ਕਲਿਸੁ []). The second reason was that all men having faith in spirituality should accept the Divine Will and command without any stint, without hesitation, without any but's and if's and without any excuse. He has to submit

to His Will completely and absolutely. All the way-farers of the spiritual path accept the Will of God, and resign themselves to it, regarding it as God's gift even if they have to embrace martyrdom and court death, that too without reproach. As the Gurbani says -

ਉਲਾਹਨੇ ਮੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਨ ਦੀਓ ॥ ਮਨ ਮੀਠ ਤੁਹਾਰੇ ਕੀਓ ॥ None do I reproach and blame
since all Your Doings my mind regards sweet.

One who is steeped in the Divinity and submits to the Will of God accepts the form as bestowed by Him, heartily and gracefully. The hair upon the head, the beard, the moustaches on the face are the inviolable part of the human form and shape. To the human male, the hair on the head and beard on the face is a Divine Gift. If man was created in His Own Image then the human male form is a divine form. That is why Guru has regarded the shearing and cutting of the hair as a disobedience of Divine Order, hence it is considered a very serious violation of the Guru's Order, the Sikh code and the Sikh way of living.

Not to accept this natural divine form and not to conform to this appearance is to disobey God's command and violate the law of Divine Creation and doubt His intention and question His will and His gift. This unshorn appearance and form, if on one hand symbolises the pious saintliness and intellectual eminence, it also is a symbol of man's mighty manhood, his physical powers, and brave bearing of a soldier who is ever ready to join battle for self protection and preservation of self respect and to defend the oppressed -

'When the given span of life teeters on edge,
I would love to die on the battlefield fighting fiercely.'

ਜਬ ਆਵ ਕੀ ਅਉਧ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਬਨੈ
ਅਤ ਹੀ ਰਨ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋ ॥ਚੰਡੀ ਚਰਿਤ੍ਰ

This point of view can also be regarded as a manifestation of commitment to social responsibility. Eighteenth century Sikh history is brimming with happenings exemplifying such a commitment by the Khalsa.

Forever Dedicated:

To accept and appreciate the historical significance, as well as relevance, of the momentous and epoch making event, the 'Birth of Khalsa', one needs to possess a truly broad and noble mind, a liberal heart, a progressive vision and, above all, a sublime intellectual frame-work. Most of the people did not (and are not able to) understand the phenomenon: the Creation of this New Order, the Order of the Khalsa.

People with argumentative and servile mentality, conformist attitude, narrow outlook and limited vision in the past are bitterly resentful of the emergence of the new Faith; it rankled in their minds. Soon after the creation of the Khalsa in 1699, the hill Rajas of sub-Himalayan Punjab started opposing the Khalsa and Sri Dasmesh. Ever since they have been stuck up in the quagmire of discriminatory social bias, caste complex struck with the motion of untouchability. Consequently, they could not tolerate the democratic egalitarian Order of the Khalsa. In 18th Century, they sought help from the Mughal monarchs to oppose their own Guru. The newly created Khalsa at Anandgarh, Chamkaur and Mukatsar showed such feats of bravery that have no parallel in the annals of the history of warfare.

After sacrificing his sons, indeed the entire family for the sake of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, was able to strengthen and fortify the will and the determination of the Khalsa to be ever ready to die in order to uphold the convictions and the ideals they held

dear. In 1705 in his letter of victory (Zafar Nama) to Aurangzeb the Guru explained to the Emperor that 'not to submit or yield' is a victory in the real sense of the word.

Guru Ji taught the Khalsa not only how to live but also how to die. Earnest prayer, service of mankind, right living, honest hard work is the quintessential definition of Life with honour. Indeed to be ever ready to die for the Guru ideals is real dying: *shahadat*. Just ten years after the creation of Khalsa, in 1709, under the command of Banda Singh Bahadur, the bravery and the fighting skills which the Khalsa showed in the battle of Sirhind won encomiums even from inveterate foes of Khalsa, like Qazi Nur Mohammed. Guru Ji bestowed the 'Piety of a Saint and the Royalty of a king' on the Khalsa, based firmly on the foundation of the *Gurbani*. The Amrit prepared with a double-edged sword (khanda), the amalgam of the strength of steel and sweetness of sugar, exalted and refined by the divine word (Gurbani) is the most sublime initiation and instruction which a Sikh can receive.

The Khalsa considers the Guru as **Sacha Padshah** (the true king) and all the other temporal kings as phony, ephemeral delusions. Guru Ji exhorted the Khalsa to maintain its distinctive identity and uniqueness. This distinctiveness is the very sublime projection of the inner being and outer living, the union of the sacred Word and holy Vesture.

Though the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is lauded as the prototype model of Sikh Raj and is regarded as a glorious instance of Halem Raj in which all the religions, creeds and various faiths were respected and honoured. But even such a kingdom of Sikhs falls far short of the high standard visualised in the Khalsa ideals. That is why, alienated from the Guru and the Guru-ideals, it soon degenerated, disintegrated and disappeared.

Khalsa is the community of divinely inspired God-oriented people, Gurmukh Sikhs, exalted human beings who worship God and are ever absorbed in the Ambrosial Naam.

ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਅਖਾਏ
ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ॥

He who claims himself to be the Sikh of the Guru
should early in the morning rise
And of the Name divine meditate.

The Gursikh who leads a philanthropic, altruist life is always imbued with the zeal to do good to others. Those who are truthful inwardly and outwardly, are honest optimistic people, with a tender heart, holding everyone dear and love for one and all. When such people come forward attired in the Guru-bestowed robes, they are admired and venerated by the whole world. Such a person cannot be subjugated and cannot be subjected to the life of servitude or play a subservient role. When God's grace endows him with divine power, he uses it to worship His Name and reigns supreme for the common weal and welfare of all people, since he regards the whole of humanity as the sacred creation of God almighty and accepts them as children of one father, eyk ipqw eyks ky hm bwrk [

ihMdU qurk koaU rwPjl iemwm SwPI
mwns sbY iek pY Anyk ko BRmwau hY]

Some are Hindus and some Muslims
Some Rafzi Shias and Imam Shafi, sunnis
All are human being with different shapes and mien.

In the Khalsa order nobody goes without food, nor remains unclad in penury. Khalsa is a toiler, a hard working human being imbued with a glorious sense of service to humanity -

ਘਾਲਿ ਖਾਇ ਕਿਛੁ ਹਥੁ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਰਾਗੁ ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਸੇਇ ॥

He who toils hard and gives some to others
Only he the path to spiritual realisation finds.

By the Grace of the Guru, the Khalsa enjoys the bliss of the Divine regal sovereignty.

ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਬਖਸੇ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੁ ॥

He whom He graces with Laudation of Divine
Nanak sayeth King of kings is be.

Under such a benign rule and charitable social order, all social evils: intrigue, falsehood and exploitation in the course of time.

Life of Spirit:

The Guru bestowed the nobility of character based on Naam. Without that the Sikh (disciple) does not deserve to be called a Khalsa. It is to such a sterling worth that Guru Ji alludes when he says -

vvihgurU jI kw Kwlsw vvihgurU jI kI Pqih [

Khalsa belongs to the Lord God supreme
And the victory too belongs to the God Almighty.

We need to revive this invincible spirit. We need another reawakening. But such a Khalsa cannot be revived with our dependence on numerical strength of votes. We need the glory of the Khalsa resplendent with the radiance of: jwgq joiq jpY ins bwsr ["Who worships the Living Light day and night."

Such a revival will benefit humanity. Guru Ji leaves no doubt about this. He cheerfully declares that only the life of such a man is worthy of praise who, with the Lord's Name on his lips, crusades against the evil:

DMn jIE iqh ko jg mY, muK qy hir icq mY juDu ibcwrY]

dYh Ain`q n in`q rhY, jsu nww cVY Bv swgr qwrY]

Dirj Dwm bnwie iehY qn buiD su dlpk ijau aujIAwrY]

igAwnih kl bFnl mnhu hwQ IY kwqrqw kuqvwr buhwrY

Blessed is the life which with the Lord's Name on lips,

mind brimming with thoughts of war on evil,

Since the mortal body does not last

He who in the boat of Lord's laudation goes across.

Make his body an abode of Patience,

illumined with intellectual light sublime.

With a broom in hand of divine knowledge.

he sweeps out the garbage of cowardly slime.

