

For a better Prospective: Look Back!

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AS THE YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE, it is yet again time to take stock of the days gone by.

For self-assessment elicits self-amelioration, provided one is not a prey to complacency!

As Sikhs i.e. learners forever, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. Rather, a careful introspection “*Aatam Jinae*” may bring a glow in our hearts for tasks well accomplished and, at the same time, spur us to a worthier toil for assignments which proved that our best was not sufficient.

An honest recognition and acceptance of our failings - both of character as well as endeavours will propel us to continually strive for perfection and thus pave way for a more meaningful life in the years to come:

ਆਪੁ ਸਵਾਰਹਿ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਹਿ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਫਰੀਦਾ ਜੇ ਤੂ ਮੇਰਾ ਹੋਇ ਰਹਿ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:1382]

It was this spirit, a sense of vacuum, a quest for betterment that prompted a saintly man, in his sixties, to acquiesce servitude to Guru Angad Dev and set standards of love, service, self-effacement and humility that are unparalleled in history! We owe our existence to such precedents and inevitably, the lives of Gurus are treatises on what is pragmatic and achievable, unlike the general concept of religion being an exclusive domain of the clergy, a complex rigmarole of rituals which at times may be something beyond the layman.

The Sikh history is replete with such moments when our Gurus, who epitomized virtues and perfection led assemblies with the recitation of:

ਮੈ ਨਿਰਗੁਣਿਆਰੇ ਕੋ ਗੁਣੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਆਪੇ ਤਰਸੁ ਪਇਓਈ ॥

[SGGS:1429]

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਨੀਚੁ ਕਹੈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥ ਵਾਰਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਵਾ ਏਕ ਵਾਰ ॥ ਜੋ ਤੁਧੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸਾਈ ਭਲੀ ਕਾਰ ॥ ਤੂ ਸਦਾ ਸਲਾਮਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ॥

[SGGS:4]

ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਸਾਰ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ ਤੇਰੀ ॥

[SGGS:750]

In fact Gurbani is a compendium of such unpretentious and humble prayers by our Gurus. One wonders how Guru Nanak and his successors, who could have used their spiritual power by performing miracles, led amazingly simple lives and composed poetry brimming with love, longing, modesty, with which even the most lowly and downtrodden of men could relate, thus driving home a message, which may be termed as **the essence of Sikhi**:

ਮਤਿ ਹੋਈ ਹੋਇ ਇਆਣਾ ॥

ਤਾਣ ਹੋਏ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਤਾਣਾ ॥

[SGGS:1384]

i.e. practice humility even if you are at the top as an achiever.

Also, the ideal of

mn nlvW qy miq aucl

Humility is the essence of wisdom:

is instilled in every child born in a Sikh household. This principle assumes utmost importance as it is reinforced in the daily supplication, or the 'Ardaas'.

Generally appraising, we swell with pride on our achievements and ensure best possible means to advertise them. This is quite the trend, by all standards of modern day competitiveness. We do a number of things day in and day out to be in tune with times.

At the dawn of New Year, when we are at the verge of making new resolutions, setting new targets for ourselves, beckoning qualitative and quantitative progress, allegiance as well as adherence to the Gurus' message is extremely important for attaining bliss of both the realms: secular and spiritual.

Our heads bow in reverence reminiscing that glorious moment from the annals of history in 1699, when our multi-talented, super-accomplished, 'Sarbens-daani' Tenth Guru vested temporal as well as divine powers to the Five Beloved, the 'Panj Pyaraas', and then knelt down to partake 'Amrit' from them. This epoch making step of Guru Gobind Singh was instrumental in reversing the prevalent dictates of authority, denouncing social inequality explicitly and laying foundation of the doctrine of 'Guru-Panth'.

The Guru became the 'Sikh' and the Sikh became the Guru!

“auh swihb mYN aus kw cyrw”

thus leaving behind a rich legacy which has grown from strength to strength even after being hideously persecuted and muffled by the tyrannical rulers validating Walter Lippmann's Observation:

“The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on”.

We are all a witness to the doctrine of 'Guru Panth', which encapsulates congregational worship in Gurdwaras (sadh sangat) and maintaining community kitchen (Langar).

Before his death in 1708, Guru Gobind Singh declared 'the Eternal Word' as contained in Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru of Khalsa, also establishing the doctrine of 'Guru-Granth', according to which it is believed that the Divine Spirit that has inhabited the bodies of the Ten Gurus dwelt now in the Granth.

W.H. Mcleod remarked that the centrality of the Holy Granth in Sikh custom and the manifold uses to which it is put “leave no room for doubt concerning its enormous importance to the Panth.”

A cursory study of Sikh families today will show that this 'enormous importance' of Guru Granth is relevant and limited to only carrying out various ceremonies. We need to shake off such formal relationship with Guru Granth, and develop, in ourselves as well as our progeny, a spirit to secure a personal bond with the Guru Granth. Let us teach our children to spend more time with the 'Shabad Guru', sensitize them to the powers of self-reflection, volunteer work and community building exercises that lie at the root of 'Sikhi'.

A steady decline of joint family system, and parents showering their children with more money and less time, has seen a roll-back in the role of family. We, as parents and

educators, cannot abdicate our responsibility in character-building. Hence moral education assumes an indispensable place in a child's formative years.

The sooner we realize this, the better, for we want to see in our midst, not only good engineers and good doctors but also good citizens and, more importantly, good human beings! Leading our children to befriend the wisdom revealed in our Scriptural texts will be a fruitful exercise in the cultivation of sensitive and responsible individuals:

ਮਤਿ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਤਨ ਜਵਾਹਰ ਮਾਣਿਕ ਜੇ ਇਕ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸਿਖ ਸੁਣੀ ॥

[SGGS:2]

i.e. The intellect is enriched by being in communion with Shabad Guru

ਗੁਰੁ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਰਤਨੀ ਭਰਪੂਰੇ ॥

[SGGS:685]

The Guru is a vast repository of precious gems of wisdom

The children who grow up with this focus being central to their mentoring, will learn to be balanced individuals, their feet planted firmly in the roots and shall find answers, at all the crossroads of their lives, for, most of all, they shall have learnt the art to delve deep within the enormous recesses of their hearts; in the process, refine their intellects, conquering self-indulgence and gratification, thus experiencing true joy and sublimity. If failures surround them, they will not be dejected but turn them into stepping stones. If their efforts are crowned with success, they shall not go overboard with joy but dedicate their distinction unto the Omnipotent, remembering that PERFECTION IS AN ENDLESS STRIVING.

When Bhai Satta and Bhai Balwand the famous 'Kirtaniyas' (singers of Gurbani) during Guru Arjun Dev's times had left Harmandir Sahib with a swollen pride to prove that the proceedings in the Guru's 'Darbar' would be disrupted in the wake of their absence, they invited sorrow, and a downslide in their lives, for the Guru Himself was an accomplished musician, much to the amazement of all! Hence, our good times and achievements are to be accepted as the blessings of Waheguru.

Here Issac Newton's humble observation is relevant:

"If I have seen further, it is
by standing on the shoulders of giants".

This bears testimony to cherishing the '*elan vital*' of our predecessors.

Our Gurus have taught us by practice, and not precept alone. Let us pray that God's Grace abounds, and love for such charismatic Gurus and their Gospel fills the strains of pride in our psyche, thereby enriching us in the truest possible connotation of the word. Let us sincerely pray for such good tidings in the coming year - nay, years!

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ ॥

[SGGS:8]

