

# India's PM cautions youth against 'Casino' Culture

*MANINI CHATTERJEE*

PRIME MINISTER MANMOHAN SINGH made a forceful intervention at the Seventh Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM-7), giving the first indications that India would take a lead role in any economic crisis-resolution mechanism.

Dr. Singh - who was listened to with rapt attention by a galaxy of world leaders - called for a "global monitoring authority to promote global supervision and co-operation in the increasingly integrated world in which we live".

Lashing out at the developed economies for "a regulatory and supervisory failure" and a failure in the "market discipline mechanism", Singh said: "The sad truth is that in this age of globalisation, we have a global economy of sorts but it is not supported by a global polity to provide effective governance."

Outlining in detail the repercussions of the escalating meltdown, Singh said: "The resulting crisis of liquidity, accumulation of bad assets, shortage of capital and collapse of confidence threatening to spill over into the real economy by way of reduced demand for goods and services, particularly exports, reduced access to trade and suppliers' credits superimposed on other crises - food and fuel price rises that have strained budgets and balance of payments, leading to rising inflation and living costs in many developing countries."

The Prime Minister was uncharacteristically harsh in his criticism in his criticism of those responsible for the current crisis and quoted John Maynard Keynes as saying: "**When the capital development of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is like to be ill-done.**"

Elaborating on the Keynesian theme, Dr. Singh said: "Clearly there has been a massive failure of regulatory and supervisory powers. Speculators have had a free run for far too long a period. International institutions like the IMF have also not covered themselves with glory. There has been an unacceptable failure of effective multilateral supervision of major developed economies and in particular of what has been going on in their financial markets."

Dr Singh's speech reflected the growing anger in the rest of the world against the irresponsible behaviour of advanced countries and international financial institutions which had so far lectured them on how to manage their economies.

India has not yet formally responded to George W. Bush's invitation to participate in the G30 summit in the US next month. But whether or not India attends the meeting, the Prime Minister made it clear that developing nations will no longer sit quietly at the high table when efforts get underway to resolve the economic crisis gripping the world.

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## Is the Youth on the Right Path?

*PAWANBIR SINGH\**

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JUST BEFORE THE TURN OF THIS century, the Khalsa Panth celebrated - on a global scale - its tercentenary. The significance of this milestone is beyond description. Its sheer emotion left us in a blissful state. Such was the magnitude and fervour in the air that an exhilarating spirit swept throughout the globe wherever Sikhs have presence. At the focal point of celebration, it seemed like a procession of exemplary compassion and humility, dedicated to *sarbat da bhala* and commitment to the omnipresent *Shabad* Guru, enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib.

Now, ten years down the line, certain incidents have come before me which, if not sorted at the earliest, might blur the path of our Panth. These need serious deliberation. At a time where the Sikh *rehat maryada* is facing constant challenges, this milestone opens the doors to not only rejuvenate our belief system, but also to strengthen the foundations laid by our glorious Gurus while nurturing the Movement.

#### **From Home to the West:**

My high school education was in a Sikh school in New Delhi where the entire flock comprised of turbaned Sikhs. From there I moved into a completely different environment where I was constantly questioned about my faith as I was the only Sikh not only in my batch but on the entire campus for almost three straight years. Further, I proceeded to the west where individuals like me are aplenty but often we are confronted with queries about the belief system we uphold and also sometimes mistaken for another set of people, and unfortunately some of my brothers have borne the brunt due to this mistaken identity. **I took on these state of affairs as challenges and tried my level best to put forth my point with utmost humility to make them understand what we strive for, and to be honest by His grace I was successful at times.** However, when I come across certain developments contrary to our Gurus teachings which have their origin within the Sikh diaspora, I feel strongly to reflect on these.

#### **Persona Embodying Principle:**

Though such developments have associated history, their visibility has increased lately due to the extensive communicative channels which have turned this planet into a global village and therefore, these incidents from different parts of the world come before us on a very regular basis. From having faith in numerous heretic misleading babas but the ultimate one to intra-community differences, from designating various scriptures as the *shabad* guru to probing the basic tenets of Sikhism, there are varied question marks in my mind and I believe of the present youth too.

Using the names of historical Sikh shrines or phrases from the Janamsakhis of our Gurus to create a *dera* and then alleging it as a distinct entity is doing nothing but misleading and confusing some of us. Further, having sects within Sikhism in itself is a deviation from the basic tenets and over it including a separate individual guru to lead us is a further divergence. We do not mind and only respect their presence however, when ideals and teachings bring in contrary statements, sentiments are hurt and it can lead to no good.

The "Dasam Granth" doubtless includes the writings of Guru Gobind Singhji, but a whole lot else that is questionable not only for the coming generation, but other communities as

well. We don't want to debate the legitimacy of its entire text, let's leave it to the scholars. **But what we do want is proper respect showered to the single Scripture in which we have unconditional faith and which is our true *Shabad* Guru. Guru Gobind Singhji's Last Sermon that is at present - a part of everyday Ardas and its epilogue:**

ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਤਭੈ ਚਲਾਯੋ  
ਪੰਥ, ਸਭ ਸਿੱਖਨ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਯੋ ਗੁੰਥ ।  
ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਗੁਰਾਂ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ,  
ਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੋ ਮਿਲਬੋ ਚਹੈ ਖੋਜ ਸਬਦ ਮੇ ਲੇਹ ।

Under orders of the Immortal being the Panth was started. All the Sikhs are enjoined to accept the Granth as their Guru. Consider Guru Granth as representing Guru's body. Those who wish to meet God can find the way in its hymns

### **Let us end all controversy:**

Why do we leave any room for our Sikhs or others to question our faith? Why can't we live under His *hukam* and inculcate the similar conviction in the coming generations as well? Why can't we dig into our scripture and read the *shabad*, appreciate its message and pursue its direction to enlighten our soul? Why cannot we focus our lives around portraying our gratitude towards the relationship with Him and base our actions on our belief in the ultimate truth? Why do we have to bring out self proclaimed meanings of the teachings of our gurus and impose them on anyone to everyone? Is it because our Gurus entrusted and empowered us to reflect, deliberate and decipher His *hukam*; and through our own sound judgement make ethical decisions out of it. At present, this seems to be the most apt reason as (unlike Christianity) we have not been given a set of rules to follow. Our Guru has shown faith and he believed in us but what are we doing in return, questioning his basic teachings or rather simply overlooking. Such issues if not resolved at the earliest might lead to detrimental consequences thereby bringing disrepute to our eminent religion.

### **Futurist Vision:**

The future generations need to be educated about the Sikh tenets, along with their importance proactively, and it would be juvenile to expect them to remain under the shadow of Sikhism merely by amalgamation. The exposure which they gain from their own experiences brings forth uncertainties in their mind, which if not answered diligently might turn them in the wrong direction. The need of the hour is not just their education but to educate the global community about our identity and belief system. The education about Sikh doctrines along with its ideals is absolutely essential. This will assist in establishing the imperative feeling of our identity not just on the surface but down to the core and this identity is primarily the foremost thing which defines us. The question is not who will accomplish this but how we will accomplish it. Is it just the sole responsibility of parents or the whole community has to come forward to set a precedent?

**Why can not the highest Sikh temporal authority, the Akal Takht step up its activities to educate the youth similar to issuing the latest clarion call of respecting the environment to Sikhs around the globe to support the 'save the environment' message.** If this is our moral duty to care for the environment then it is also our devout and spiritual obligation to direct the future generations and Sikh youth on the path of our panth. There is no deficiency of Sikhs who can take up the challenge; lack of motivation and the right attitude along with self-indulgence are the real hurdles to overcome.

This is the time to work on the factors which are presently in our favour. The fact that we are dispersed over the entire globe can make things easier for us to voice our concerns and reach each and every individual. The basic principle of Sikhism can have a deepening affect irrespective of one's identity or location, and therefore should be used towards universalising the religion. However, subtlety is the key as this might complicate the situation if other communities see this as an imposition. Our belief in the single supernatural Power, meditating His *naam*, honest living and sharing has universal appeal. **The challenge, however, comes in the interpretation of these doctrines and putting them into perspective in front of the Sikh community as well as others in a way comprehensible to all.** Such intellectual understanding of what Sikhism stands for can be a way forward.

### **Let us work towards a Cohesive System:**

The need of the hour is to come forth as a cohesive unified community with a single belief system. The Gurus' teachings which impart a constitution on how to lead our lives clearly showcase, if we delve deeper, each of us have been bestowed with an individual blueprint for direction through our everyday choices and challenges. Finding the direction towards the right path towards which the panth guides is everything but easy; however a truthful and sincere effort towards getting close to Him can go a long way to make us realise the depth of our relationship with the eternal truth.

Guru Gobind Singhji declared that where we cannot uncover the truth in Guru Granth Sahib, we should resolve those concerns as a community, based on the principles laid in the eternal Scripture. Therefore, if we do not take stock of the present situation in unison, we could be facing tough times ahead.

Our destiny is in our hands, the question is do we want to return 'again' to wash our hands or want to unite with the eternal light this time itself.

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥

ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥

[SGGS: 12]

This human body has been given to you. This is your chance to meet the Lord of the Universe

