

Guru Gobind Singh as the Liberator

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When we read about Guru Gobind Singh Ji and Guru Nanak Dev Ji or look at their portraits, we tend to form two different images, which do not appear to be congruent. We see Guru Gobind Singh Ji riding horses, carrying swords (*kirpans*), bows and arrows, wearing pearl necklace, keeping hawk and a plume on the turban like a royal warrior. In case of Guru Nanak Dev Ji we see Guru Ji dressed simple and in meditation posture. We learn about the hunting expeditions of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji and start wondering if there is a uniformity and consistency with the teachings of the first Guru or not. However, we believe that all the subsequent Gurus were the light (*jyot*) of the first Guru Nanak Dev Ji, then the teachings and the sayings of Guru Gobind Singh Ji should be exactly same, then why this issue? Let us explore and see what Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji said is congruent with Guru Nanak Dev Ji's teachings or not.

Moral Grandeur: But before going into that aspect let us try to understand the reasons for Guru Gobind Singh Ji's dress and appearance. His chosen attire was essentially motivated by the need to uphold the principles laid out by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The picture of the times as painted by the famous historian Lala Daulat Rai in his book; "**Sahibe Kamal Guru Gobind Singh**" is; "All Hindus were forbidden to keep a fine horse, house, woman, children and things with him, to ride a horse and to wear a white turban." He further adds; "It was a devilish and sustained scheme to emasculate the Hindus. The good things of life were not for them." Guru Gobind Singh Sahib decided to challenge those royal decrees that promulgated such draconian laws. Again, quoting Lala Daulat Rai, we find that "He was determined to restore the honor of the people, allay their sufferings and free them from tyranny." He challenged the veracity of such laws by defying them and encouraged others to defy them, so that the rights of freedom were not trampled upon. It was his unique way of challenging those royal decrees and to inspire others to rise and not to be cowed down. By changing his lifestyle, through dress and royal accessories, he inspired ordinary folks to rise above the tendency to resign to their fate. His adopted dress reflected all the items that were being denied to common man. In adopting them, he set a new standard for defiance.

Royal Sage: In appearance, the first Guru Ji looks like a saint and Tenth Master looks like royalty, but their observations about mankind and their solutions are exactly same. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib sees the entire world is engrossed in false rituals and practices. Guru Ji says:

"kUr ikRAw auriJE sBhl jg sRI Bgwn ko Bydu n pwieE j]"

"Koor kiriya urjhe-o sabh hee jag, shree Bhagwan ko bhed na paa-e-o"

(Tav-Prasaad Sawayie, Patshahee Dasvi)

Meaning: The whole world is entangled in false rituals/ practices; they have not realized mystery of God.

So from Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's viewpoint we are completely ignorant of what the true practices are. Now let us see what Guru Nanak Dev Ji says about it:

"AMDl rXiq igAwn ivhUxl..."

"Andhee rayat gyan vihoonee...."

(SGGS, Page 469)

Meaning: The subjects (people) are blind, without any (higher) wisdom.

In addition Guru Nanak Dev Ji has also said:

"AMDy Akll bw hry ikAw iq n isau khIAY j]"

“Andhay aklee baahray ki-aa tin si-o kahee-ai.” (SGGS, Page 229)

Meaning: What can you say, to one who is blind and without any wisdom?

We can see that Guru Nanak Dev Ji also calls us blind because of our ignorance only. If we are ignorant then what is its underlying cause and what are its resultant effects? Guru Gobind Singh Ji says:

“sovq khw mo inMdRw mY, kbhMU suicq hvY jwgoj”

“Sowat kaha moh nindraa mai, kabhoo suchit havai Jaago”

(Ramkali, Patshahee Dasvi)

Meaning: Why are you asleep, intoxicated by the worldly attachment? At least sometimes, become alert and awake.

Now let us ask Guru Nanak Dev Ji as to what his opinion is about attachment. Guru Nanak Dev Ji says:

“eyqu moih fUbw sMswru j”

“Eaeth mohe ddoobaa sansar”

(SGGS, Page No. 356)

Meaning: In this attachment, the whole world is drowning.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji further adds:

“eyqu moih iPir jUnI pwih j”

“Eaeth mohe phir joonee paahaI”

(SGGS, Page No. 356)

Meaning: It is because of this attachment one gets reincarnated over and over again.

True Wealth: So we can see that Gurus have defined attachment as the cause, and because of it we are in cycles of birth and death. Attachment to the materials around the self – house, family, position, profession, status, etc. thwarts the possibility of rising above them. In fact if we look carefully we will find that we have defined ourselves by wealth. By getting struck in the quick sands of the attachment, the feasibility of rising above it is thwarted. Guru Ji attempts to inspire us to change, with a vision of higher possibilities above and beyond the realm of attachment. We have been called blind, ignorant, etc., because in the eyes of Gurus we are lacking the true wisdom. We have been lulled into a deep sleep, not a physical sleep but that of lack of awareness. At present, we are so wrapped up with our career and family affairs, etc. that we define life by that. Our condition is like that of a robot that has been programmed to do certain things in a days' time. We go through our motions and think that we are living a successful and a wonderful life. But Guru Ji attempts to awaken us by revealing our true potential. **We can see all our Gurus had only one objective in mind and that is to awaken us, encourage us, and inspire us to get the true wisdom. The true wisdom will be the experience of the driving force within each of us, which we call as our soul or jyot.**

Death of Ego: Usually the focus from mundane to essential in the life only takes place when we are confronted with the prospect of death or when we get a sudden jolt in life. That prospect of death awakens us up from our sleep, causing us to view life with a changed perspective. If we wake up through our sleep walking life and see what we are missing then we have listened to the Guru Ji's message. The Gurus teach us to experience the death of our ego or identification with the body and mind, so that we can experience ourselves as soul. We can learn from that experience of soul that it never dies thus the fear of death has been removed. The race in life is so engrossing that on our own we cannot see the true picture clearly. In this so called rat race we are all running from one activity to next as if we can one day take care of all of them. We may get ahead but we will still remain a rat as the management expert Lily Tomlin observed. It is only upon being probed us in that direction we shift our focus and then try to see as directed. Once the new perspective is gained in our life, we will have a purpose in life, and our living will have a new meaning.

Here is what Guru Gobind Singh Sahib is asking us to do: Guru Ji says:

“iDAwn Dro iqh ko mn mYN ijh ko Aimqoij sBY jgu CwieE]”

“*Dhyan dharo theh ko mun mai, jeh ko amitoj sabhai jag chaayao.*”

(Tav Prasaad Sawayie, Guru Gobind Singh)

Meaning: Pay attention to that (force/energy) which is within you and also completely enveloping you. Become aware of it. That power pervades in the entire universe and it never dies.

Now, let us ask Guru Ji about the benefits of becoming aware of that power. Guru Ji tells us that we will experience true happiness which is our real yearning:

“jo suK cwheo sdw sBn kO qO hir ky rs pwgo]”

“*Jo sukh ko chaaho sadhaa sabhan kau, tau Har kay raas paago*”

(Shabad Hazare, Guru Gobind Singh)

Meaning: If you seek eternal happiness, then seek shelter of all pervading Lord.

Guru Teg Bahadur Ji has echoed the same sentiments in the following line:

“jau suK kau cwheY sdw srin rwm kl lyh]”

“*Jo sukh ko chaahai sadhaa saran raam kee laeh.*”

(SGGS, Page No. 1427)

Meaning: If you yearn for eternal peace, then seek the Sanctuary of the Lord.

Thus, our Gurus have not only identified the human failings but also presented us with a picture of our true potential. In addition, they have identified that we need to move our focus towards an inward journey, the journey that will take us to the awareness of the entire new world within each of us. That will culminate in the realization that the awareness within each of us, is part of the universal awareness, manifested everywhere.

From the founding Guru Nanak Dev Ji to the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji the message is one- to awaken us from the identification with the body and to discover the real self, the soul. Guru Gobind Singh Ji simply changed the external dress, appearance to infuse a new life and to rise to the challenge of exigencies of the times. But Gurus sayings, teachings have been seamlessly one and consistently uniform. No wonder the famous historian Dr. Gokal Chand Narang had said:

“The harvest that ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors.”

Guru Gobind Singh Ji not just dressed like a warrior, but he was a warrior in spirit like the predecessor Gurus before him, he only had to make sweeping changes to the rules of the engagement to suit the prevailing conditions. He not only stood up, spoke out, but took drastic steps so that we could get inspired and develop courage to face the daunting challenges instead of meekly surrendering.

It is about time that we rid ourselves of the ideas being circulated that Guru Nanak Dev Ji's message was at variance to Guru Gobind Singh Ji and we subscribe to one over the other. Let us not divide ourselves by declaring that we are followers of a particular Guru, rather we are followers of all the Ten Gurus. They may have been physically ten but their teachings and message is one and one only.

