

Jaap Sahib: Sri Guru Gobind Singh's Inspirational Composition

*Manohar Singh Batra**

** Former Dir. General, Akash Vani (AIR), M-211 Gr. Kailash II, New Delhi 110048.*

Jaap Sahib is one of the foremost compositions of the Tenth Guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, integral to the *Dasam Granth*, and it has its own divine flavour. In fact it is the first work of the Tenth Guru enshrined in this momentous scripture. Whereas the founder of the faith, Sri Guru Nanak Dev had described succinctly the attributes of the Almighty God in the *Mool Mantra*, Guru Gobind Singh used a myriad adjectives to enumerate the qualities of the Lord, paying obeisance to innumerable forms of His compassion and mercy, though the unity of one God has been emphasised. He has been described as the Perfect Illimitable Creator. He has no indicator, class, caste, form, colour or sign. He is self-evident with boundless light. He is the king of countless kings and the Lord of innumerable gods. He is omnipotent and omniscient. He is omnipresent and can be seen in all worldly and celestial entities.

Concept of the Divine:

Upto the Middle Ages the religious texts mostly visualised the all-powerful God as kind, compassionate, merciful, beneficent and caring Protector, but till the time of Guru Gobind Singh, significant developments had taken place including the martyrdom of two Sikh Gurus, and now the question of defence against tyranny had taken a tangible shape. A need to extricate the terrified and traumatised society towards the shores of self-respect and self-esteem had arisen. **It became all important to raise the common man from the slumbers of apathy and self-resignation to the heights of self-defence, self-evaluation and self-protection. This class of people looked up to the Supreme Lord to give them strength, courage and valour to dodge the aggressor and to thwart the evil monger in his misdeeds. The militant form of the Creator started to be combined with His compassionate image, and valour began to be juxtaposed to worship and prayer.**

According to Gita, to maintain equipoise in the world it is necessary to crush the malignant and evil powers in the form of satanic, demoniac and ominous manifestations. It also postulates the advent of a divine personage to bring an equilibrium between the damage to the righteousness and the domination by the irreligious forces. This was indicative of the inevitability of appearance of avatars, i.e. of the messengers of God. But in Jaap Sahib, instead of according recognition to prophets, valour has been attributed to the Supreme Lord Himself. Being courageous and valiant a warrior, Guru Gobind Singh saw God as an embodiment of all courage, valour and power. **He combines tenderness with intrepidity and compassion with gallantry. God is unconquerable and invincible. He is the most spectacular Being and can erase what exists. He has the strength of overpowering and annihilating the mightiest of the mighty creatures. That is how the Sikh Warriors were able to draw strength form the Almighty Lord to plunge into the battles thrust on them by ill-meaning and devious, self-perpetuating and avaricious, self-indulgent and vicious invaders and chieftains.**

Eulogy to Supreme:

In Indian literature, the *mantras* in praise of the Lord can be found in Rig Veda, with elaboration in religious and Puranic treatises. Some scholars have equated Jaap Sahib to Vishnu Sahansranama and have renamed it 'Akal Sahansranama'. But there is a marked difference between the two. Whereas Vishnu Sahansranama related to the strength, beauty and vision of Lord Vishnu, Jaap Sahib is in eulogy of the Supreme Lord Himself, whose

praises have been sung in multitudinous ways. Some variable and antithetical adjectives have also been used. On the one hand the Lord has been described as heroic and warlike, and on the other He is seen as the fountain of peace and harmony. On the one hand He envelopes His creation in mystery and gloom, but He is also a source of dazzling light and enlightenment. He is destroyer, but also preserver; He causes emptiness, but also brings fulfillment. He is purveyor of mortality, but also bestows immortality.

The vocabulary used in this composition is such that it can appeal to the followers of any faith and any denomination. It conveys a special message to the whole of humanity. **It is a specimen of lingual purity, unadulterated depiction of God's supremacy and glorification of the divine magnificence. Every word used in it is an accolade to God. Every stanza is a paean to the Almighty and an expression of surrender to the all-pervading.** Every verse is inspiring and animating. It is a confluence of valour and meditation, the qualities of a devotees and a warrior, of a saint and a soldier. That is why when Guru Gobind Singh used to give practice in swordsmanship to his soldiers, he made them recite Jaap Sahib. Every word is steeped in devotion to God and is simultaneously Spartan in nature. It is like an armed column marching in rhythm with sounds of divine notes rippling with devotion. This is a recitation of combat with forces hostile to humanity. Its language is an amalgam of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Sadhukri and Punjabi. Prakrit and Aprabhansh are used in the form of Sadhukri. One example of amalgamated languages can be cited in the word '*samastulzuban*', of which '*samast*' is from Sanskrit, *ul* has been taken from Arabic, and *zuban* is a Persian word for tongue or language. Some of the verses are without the usage of verb and consist only of adjective, e.g. *Akal, Dayal, Alekh, Abhekh, Annam, Akaam, Agaah* and *Adhaah*. Similarly Gobinde, Mukande, Udaare, Apaare, Harian, Karian, Nirnaame and Akaame are adjectives. Ten types of *Chhand* have been used in the composition and twenty-two times these chhands have been shuffled. **This keeps the mind of the devotee totally engrossed in divine exhilaration. He is transformed into ecstatic rapture and elation.** The great Guru Gobind Singh has transplanted Vigour and excitement with spirituality and saintliness. That was in keeping with the needs of the tumultuous times. The turbulent winds were tempered with holiness and piety. The use of innumerable names of the Almighty confers universality of faith on this composition inspiring religious fervour, on the whole humanity. **It is an invaluable example of all pervading emotional integration. It has also helped to combine the attributes of a saint and a soldier in the psyche of the Khalsa.**

God as Infinite:

In Jaap sahib it has been postulated that the Supreme Lord has no caste, race, denomination or sign. He is worshipped by the entire creation; to Him everyone bows in prayer and reverence. Self-existent and formless as He is, it is impossible to praise Him. He is indestructible, inviolable and invulnerable. He is without beginning and end. He is unfathomable and unbendable. He is most generous and bountiful. He is indefinable and indescribable. Salutations to Thee, O Lord, who can never be intimidated or shocked. Thou art most radiant, impenetrable and unpierceable. Thou art magnanimous and munificent. **Salutations to Thee, O Lord, who art infinite, everlasting and unending.** Thou hast one form and limitless forms too. Thou hast no country and no particular raiment. Thou art free of all bonds, all limitations, all confusions, misunderstandings and misconceptions. Thou art without any name, desire or aspiration. Salutations to Thee, O Immortal one! Thou art immovable and inexorable, unseeable and unbereavable. Thou art imperturbable and undistressable. Salutation to Thee, O Lord, who art known in all the three regions of the universe.

Adoration:

Thou giveth shelter, Thou art an ocean, Thou need no shelter, Thou need no community nor any religion. Thou art the greatest wonder, glorious royalty the greatest philanthropist. Thou art the preserver, the patron of all and the carer of all. Thou hast all the colours and hues, Thou hast the power of creating and decimating everyone. **Thou art beyond end, bounteous and the melody of love. Salutations to Thee, O Lord, Who art beyond time, beyond elements, beyond fate and beyond ambition.** Thou art the treasure for all, Thou art without birth, without any past and without any conflict. Thou art unshakable, unbreakable and unbounded. Thou art inconceivable, imperceptible, greatest of the great. Thou art peerless, loftiest and unreachable.

Salutation to Thee, O Lord, who are accepted by all, the repository of all bounties, the God of gods and without any form; the dweller of all the worlds and the traveller to all the galaxies. Without any limb, Thou art and without a master, without a companion, the Sun of all suns and the moon of all moons. **Thou art the lyric of all the lyrics and the tune of all the tunes. Salutations to Thee who art the music of all the music, the destroyer of all evil-doers and the Master of all elements and all tangible and intangible substances.**

Salutations to Thee, O Lord, who art the wielder of all weapons, the Omniscient, O the Mother of the entire universe, above all misconceptions and the Master of all wisdom. Thou art the healer of all ills and troubles, Thou the embodiment of all love and compassion, all peace and contentment and the dweller in every soul. O the Bestower of all wisdom, the remover of all sins and the provider of all perfections, Salutations to Thee. Thou art the architect of the whole universe and art its Master. **Thou art in water and on the land, Thou art beyond comprehension, are faultless and impeccable. Thou who art the embodiment of ecstasy and peace, who art without a patron, Salutations to Thee.**

Thou art the victor of all, who can put fear in everyone, who can attract everyone and can see everyone. Thou art the life of all the living ones, thou art the seed of all seeds, thou cannot be peeved and can permeate everything, Thou whose deeds are immortalising, whose creed is everlasting, whose faith is all embracing and who is worshipable by all, Salutations to Thee. Thou art the life of everyone, the strength of everyone and integral to everyone. Thou knowest the mind of everyone, Thou art preserver and destroyer of everyone.

Mystery of Divine:

O Lord, who have been forever inscrutable; no one can know Thy mysteries, who art present in all directions as pure love. Thou have no dwelling of Thine own, Thou hast one form and myriads of forms; Thou who indulgeth in play and then returneth to Thine own form. Thou who hast no parents, no caste, no clan and goeth not through the cycle of births and deaths. Thy will is obeyed in all three regions of the universe. Thou art purest of the pure, most perfect of the perfect, Creator and demolisher of the entire universe. Thou art above all praise and adulation; Thou art without body, indestructible and without soul. **Thou art the one whose form, complexion and dimensions are out of reckoning of all Shastras of all Shastras, Vedas and Puranas.** Trillions of Smritis, Puranas and Shastras are unable to visualise Thee. Thou art emblazer of all knowledge and of long arms. Thy luster, speed and generosity are unimaginable; Thou art fearless, selfless and the source of illimitable light; all thy actions are effortless.

Salutations to thee, O Lord, who art salvation to all, Protector of all and destroyer of all. Thou have no adversary nor a friend, Thou never taketh birth nor face the any death. Thou have no reflection, no image; Thou have the purest form. Thou can take away the light from the sun, Thou art the Creator of the elements. Thou art the insignia of faiths and the

ornament for all. Thou provideth sustenance to all; Thou art the Master of thyself. **Thou forgiveth the sins of all, Thou art present everywhere, thou ruleth all. Thou art the strength of everybody, Thou art the life of everyone, Thou art present in al lands and in all forms.** Thou art the utterance of all, the wisest, the most beautiful, always secure and stable. Thou defeateth all adversaries, Thou art everywhere on land and the heavens; Thou knoweth all, Thou bestoweth attention on all, friend to all and sustainer of all. Thou art the ocean of all waves; Thou bestoweth honour and receiveth tribute. Thou art immortal and decorateth all.

In Total Devotion:

Thou have no name, no body, Thou art beyond description and art unaccountable. Thou existeth before Time, before any yug, Thou art above all worldly ties and desires. Thou art above all worries, all enumeration and art independent of everything. Thou knoweth all, Thou art present in all faiths, Thou art part of everything and free of everything. Salutation to Thee, O Master of the entire universe, Thou fulfilleth the desires of everyone, Thou the friend of all, Thou have no progeny, no father or mother, no caste, no society. Thou art the lamp of all beauty, Thou art provider and pardoner of everyone. Thou art the destroyer of hell, Thou dwelleth in heavens, Thou travelleth everywhere, Thou identifieth everyone and art beloved of everyone. Thou art present on the land and in the skies, Thou art most generous and fountain of valour. **Thou art source of immeasurable fragrance; Thy seat is immovable, Thy glory is beyond description.** Everyone worships Thee, prostrates before Thee; thy deeds are unchallengeable, Thou art endless and beyond defiance. Salutations to Thee, O Sun of the suns, Moon of the moons, King of the kings, Brightest of the of the bright, Wisest of the wise, Thou destroyeth all evil deeds and are the kindest of the kind.

□