

# The Mystique of Number FIVE

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GURU GOBIND SINGHJI in an unprecedented move in Sikh history gave a clarion call to the nation, gifting **FIVE K's**, viz. *Kesh, Kirpan, Kangha, Kachhera* and *Kara* - the **FIVE** symbols of the Sikhs with which they are easily distinguishable among the sea of humanity. During a *Katha Vichar* session at Kalighat Gurdwara, Kolkata a few years ago, a Sikh scholar voiced his thoughts, “ *Kesh tey kudrati dain hai. Jo kudrati dain hai oh tey natural hai. Kudrati dain, jo key ik natural gift hai, osnu tusi gift kis tarah dubara kar sakdey ho? Kadi kadi mainu estrah lagda hai ki sadey historian kithey galti tey nahi kar rahe? Keski, jo key kesha dee sambhal vastey zaroori hai, galti naal keski dey badale kesh tey nahi likh ditey?*”

Keeping hair unshorn is an imperative condition mentioned in the *Rehat Maryada*. However, the practice for centuries has been that male Sikhs wear turbans while the women do not. But one sees the female followers of late Harbhajan Singh Yogiji of Espanola (U.S.A.) sporting *keskis* like their male counterparts. The rationale these women gave to Yogiji was that if women were to be treated equal to men in Sikhism, then why shouldn't the womenfolk wear *keskis* too? Indeed a rational demand, which was conceded to them by Yogiji. These women look regal, graceful and elegant, becoming the *Kaur* (literal meaning, princess). Even women belonging to the Akhand Kirtani Jatha of late Bhai Randhir Singh sport *keskis* as stipulated in their own *rehat maryada*. This trend is gradually catching on among the traditional *duppata* wearing ladies.

How many among us would be broad minded enough to listen to the full import of anything without reacting. After his session ended, a group of angry Sikhs encircled him when he emerged from the *sangat* and expressed their rage. A Sikh is a protagonist of love, truth, justice, sacrifice and freedom - the **FIVE** qualities which also distinguish a Sikh from others. But often Sikhs themselves try to curb freedom of expression in the name of religion. Religion never teaches hatred others, but history has shown that more wars took place in the name of religion than for anything else. The defensive wars which the Sikh Gurus fought were for the sake of freedom. For the Gurus freedom was the touchstone of their way of living. Freedom to act, to voice one's thoughts, to live a life at one's own will, to follow a religion of one's own choice and freedom from fear are the **FIVE** basic freedoms the Gurus taught their disciples, not only through mere words but practicing them in real life. Being a Sikh means not only listening to and reading *Gurbani* but also **experiencing** it by keeping it enshrined in one's heart. This is what *naam* is!

In 1699, on Vaisakhi day, the Tenth Master demanded:

**“Is there any amongst you who can offer his head?”**

From among the thousands assembled at Anandpur Sahib, a lone Sikh by name Daya Ram courageously stepped forward. Daya means mercy and what a coincidence that the first of Panj Piara's happened to be Daya! And the second of Panj Piara who stood up to offer his head was none other than Dharam Das, meaning duty, or religion. Without mercy one cannot be called religious and being

religious means to be merciful. Bhai Mohkam (meaning perseverance) and Bhai Sahib (master or gentleman) became the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Piaras And the fifth Piara's name happened to be Bhai Himmat meaning courage. These five Panj Piaras' names speak volumes for the Sikhs because these are the **FIVE** traits which a Sikh has to inculcate into one's way of living. Courage without mercy leads to oppression, injustice and tyranny. A person who is both merciful and courageous can only do good and never contemplate doing hurtful actions.

Let us ponder further over the scene when Guru Gobind Singh called, "*Hai koi jo mainu ik sirr dey sakeh?*"

Two points need to be noted here. First, that anyone who has an iota of fear for his or her life will never be able to offer his or her head. In fact the most fearful would run away immediately and those who were half-hearted will rationalize that the Guru had gone berserk and it was not worthwhile remaining in his company and would take the back lane and retreat. This is exactly what happened in 1699. By the time the fifth head, metaphorically, rolled the crowd had thinned dramatically. There had to be a stop somewhere, and what better figure to stop than at than mystical number **FIVE**. Just as the **FIVE** fingers when isolated become weak and powerless but when these same **FIVE** fingers are clenched into a fist they become strong, powerful and capable of applying force. No wonder that Guru Gobind Singh empowered the *Panj Piaras* capable of arriving at decisions and issuing *gurmattas* for the Sikh community at large.

So long as the fear factor prevails one can never attain true freedom as such. In fear one can never call oneself free and will never be able to act at one's will. Among various fears the greatest fear that man has is the fear of death. Death is something which is unknown. One does not know what happens after death. It is this not knowing death when alive that man fears death. There can hardly be anyone who does not have in some corner of their minds the lurking fear of death. The litmus test is when one actually comes face to face with death. The *Panj Piaras* who stood up at the behest and call of their loving Guru had overcome the fear of death. And a person who has overcome the fear of death is actually reborn because a transformation happens inside and one attains freedom. It is only when we associate ourselves as only the body does this misconception about death arise. The fact is that it is our soul, or *munn*, as our Gurus have said, which is residing inside the physical body. The difficulty is that this soul is not visible to the naked eye. Had the soul been visible then man would not have grappled with this dilemma.

Guru Amar Dasji has said, ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥ ..... [SGGS 441]

Our soul is like the light pervading everywhere, so recognize your intrinsic worth. This means *munn* or soul is not matter or something physical. That which is physical or consisting of matter can perish. Since *munn* or soul is not matter it is thus non-perishable. Just like light pervades everywhere and there can be differences in the intensity of light so does the souls pervade everywhere as light and are linked together.

Guru Gobind Singh asking for a head has a deeper significance which has not been highlighted by writers and scholars. Metaphorically, the head implies the mind and mind is nothing but a vessel compared to a hard disc inside a computer. Our

head or mind is nothing but matter from which the lava of thoughts arise endlessly. Incidentally, because of this influence of the thoughts arising from the mind do we erroneously begin to associate ourselves with the mind. And Guru Arjun Ji says, “ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ .....” Mind is nothing but a part of the body. But mind is not soul. Chinese saints have aptly said that whenever there is a clash between the head and the heart, follow your heart. Heart here implies the soul or *munn* as Guru Amar Das Ji calls. Following the heart's dictates demands a lot of courage-*himmat*. Whatever comes out of the head can be logic, rationales, concepts, theories and philosophies. Mind or head is nothing but a vast vessel which absorbs whatever it is fed with. Guru Nanak sang as recorded in the Holy Guru Granth in page 728 :

ਭਾਂਡਾ ਧੋਇ ਬੈਸਿ ਧੂਪੁ ਦੇਵਹੁ ਤਉ ਦੂਧੈ ਕਉ ਜਾਵਹੁ ॥

ਦੂਧੁ ਕਰਮ ਫੁਨਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਮਾਇਣੁ ਹੋਇ ਨਿਰਾਸ ਜਮਾਵਹੁ ॥੧॥ ਜਪਹੁ ਤ ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮਾ ॥ ਅਵਰਿ

ਨਿਰਾਫਲ ਕਾਮਾ ॥

*Bhanda*, here, is metaphorically used for the vessel of mind of humans which has to be cleansed of the philosophies and theories based on superstitions, rituals and illogical concepts. Once the vessel of mind is thus cleansed and subjected to the latent rays of Gurbani, even the minutest of illogical concepts are thus dried up. Only then can we hope to concentrate our efforts upon meditating on the universal soul or the one name of God. In other words Gurbani is a device or a means to *japo ta eko naamah* (*Guru Nanak, SGGS page 728*). Guru Nanak further says that all other efforts or tasks (of spiritual enlightenment) besides the task of *japo ta eko naamah* are useless and futile.

From the nursery stage to the college and university level, during the growing period of one's life, one crams a lot of information, at times useless, weighty, unnecessary and irrelevant. At least twenty years of one's life, if not more, are spent upon gathering loads of information, first from school and then from colleges and universities, which become a burden on one's self. And when one touches the peak of success in terms of material comforts, possessions and titles, a day comes when one suddenly realizes that these fail to give equipoise or bliss. A great vacuum is thus felt inside and then the journey inwards commences. Guru Nanak saying, “ਭਾਂਡਾ ਧੋਇ ਬੈਸਿ ਧੂਪੁ ਦੇਵਹੁ .....” means that one has to unlearn all that one has learnt so far.

Guru Gobind Singh says, “*Hai koi jo mainu ik sirr dey sakeh?*” Are you willing to give away your *sirr* or head or mind vessel emptying it of the thoughts shaped by the borrowed or accumulated data inside our store room called memory or brain? Are you willing to have such data discarded from your mind or head? It is only when we create space inside by deleting all useless data that one can be in a position to intake or infuse something new and fresh. Milk if collected in a dirty vessel shall soon become stale and sour. Similarly any positivity which one tries to filter inside into one's mind shall soon be cancelled by the negativity residing inside and one will not be able to inculcate feelings of love which in turn leads to the add-ons of friendliness, helpfulness, sympathy and compassion.

How to tread this path of spirituality is clearly indicated in Japuji Sahib of Guru Nanak. The *sunieye pauris* are followed by the *maniye pauris*. First it is necessary to

**listen** to what the 35 spiritual teachers say through the Holy Gurbani. Many people mistake hearing for listening. There is a vast difference between hearing and listening. In hearing there is no guarantee that the words so heard will enter the depths of one's soul. That which is heard shall soon be forgotten. Haven't you noticed that after listening to *shabad* after *shabad* in a gurdwara one often fails to recollect which shabads were so read or sung after departing from the place. This is a self-experienced truth. But if we listen to the *shabads*, then one remembers. Why? Because listening means one's *soorat* or concentration is wholly immersed into what is been sung or read without any interference of the thought processes arising inside our mind vessel.

The moment some words strike our ears whenever we hear something been said about oneself or the other, we instantly react and do judgments. Listening takes place when we are unbiased to what is been said without jumping to conclusions and judgments. Listening is hearing totally without passing any judgments. Once the *sunie* part is over, and the truth resides inside our system that the question of *maniye* comes. The *maniye* which Guru Nanak refers to is something higher and deeper in meaning than its vocabulary meaning of agreeing. Agreeing upon something without experiencing it in actual life will become a loaded belief or a weight on our system which can be shattered by the blowing wind of other contradictory beliefs. Accepting something by actually experiencing it helps in whatever has been listened, to permanently reside in our hearts and become a way of life or a way of living. This is the sole reason why both Sikh and non-Sikh scholars have commented, " Sikhi is a way of life which one adopts in day to day living."

Guru Gobind Singh, at the time of baptizing the Panj Piaras, delivered them or made them free from the following **FIVE** – *Jati Naash, Sharam Nash, Dharam Naash, Karam Nash and Bharam Naash*. He made man free from casteism ( by affixing Singhs and Kauras) and discarding the surnames connoting to one's caste ( Brahmin, Kshatriya, Shudra and Vaishya), hereditary professions ( one is free to chose the profession one likes), dropping previously held religious beliefs, burden of past deeds and lastly superstitions and illogical beliefs and concepts.

Destroying the slavery of the *janam, sharam, dharam, karam and bharam* beliefs, man was thus made free from its clutches. With the *bhaanda* ( our insides) thus cleansed of these **FIVE** loaded or borrowed beliefs of centuries old Hindu tradition, a transformed being evolved – a *niara* – a Sikh! It is also a point worth noting that humans are made up of the **FIVE** elements- earth, water, air, ether and fire. And what a coincidence it is that in the path of spirituality, one has to transcend the **FIVE** *dooths* or vices, i.e. *kaam, krodh, lobh, moh and ahankaar*. (This topic shall be taken up in a future editorial)

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