

Loyalty to *Gurbani* Principles – A Liberating Force

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I am *Baikharid Ghulam* (purchased slave) of Guru Granth Sahib. My Guru ‘purchased’ me to live perpetually in slavery of the Word on the night of 10th October, 1970 and the thirty two years that I have spent in this slavery repeatedly bring home to me the veracity of Guru Nanak’s words for the Lord in the following *shabad*:

Mul kharidi lala gola mera naon Subhaga

(SGGS 991)

- I am the purchased slave of the Master and my name is the Fortunate One.

Surrender is Liberation: While I shall give the whole *shabad* later I must confess that the whole concept of Guru Nanak’s philosophy of ‘total surrender’ to the Lord indicating the clearest path for a Gursikh is - paradoxically and astonishingly - an assurance of total liberation. Since I have personally experienced it for 32 years, this piece is for re-dedication of my whole self to Guru Granth Sahib. Some years ago, when I wanted to write on the ‘silver jubilee’ of my slavery, someone got the impression that "slavery" may not be the word for devotion. Today I am reinforced in my belief that slavery alone can denote one’s total annihilation before one’s Guru and, since Guru Nanak himself confirms it, there cannot be any doubt. In any case, another concept comes out alive when we talk of Guru Ram Dasji’s words in *Asa di Var, Chhaka 18th: Jin Nanak Satgur poojiya tin Har pooj karawa* (Says Nanak: those who worship their Satguru are, in turn, entitled to be worshipped under God’s command). It is clear when Guru Nanak, our first Guru and the founder of our religion, talks of himself being the ‘purchased slave’ of his Master (God), I, as an insignificant disciple of Guru Nanak truly believe myself to be the slave of my Master, the perpetual successor of Guru Nanak.

Change of heart: I have many things to say in my tribute to my Guru, but let me first express my distress. We – or the vast majority among us – are still not clear what Guru Gobind Singh wanted us to do when he declared Guru Granth Sahib to be our perpetual Guru. We have, in general, been performing lip-service by reading casually, or in *Akhand Path*, presenting costly paraphernalia for the external attraction of the Guru, parading ourselves as *external* devotees with no *internal* change in our character and, to my horror, believing that the *Shabad* Guru is just like a human body requiring quilts in winter and air conditioner in summer. To add insult to the injury that we have caused to our religion, we have been parading 50 *akhand paath*, 100 and 101 with no devotional advantage, except for our external extravaganza. And in addition, we have been selling *Hukamnaamas* through price-tags of various kinds of *Paaths* and giving more justification to the people who have wealth, legitimate or illegitimate, to think that their money can *purchase* Grace or their external ostentation could buy them heaven. The unfortunate result has been that while purity, sanctity and practical living on the basis of Guru’s commands have been given good-bye, we have been left with a ceremonial Guru for our psychological satisfiution that our marriages and deaths have been ceremonially celebrated. And the definite

harm has been that the Sikhs have lost even the will or desire to learn, remember, understand and meditate on the Word of the Guru and then live it in practical day-to-day life.

Let us now savour the whole psychology behind the *shabad* of Guru Nanak I have referred to above (page 991, SGGS):

Mul Kharidi Laala Gola....

I am the purchased slave of my Lord and my name is the fortunate one. I have sold myself at the Master's door, in the light of his words. My Lord, what cleverness can I show? I am unable to carry out the Lord's commands. My mother is Thy slave and so is my father and I am born of these slaves. My mother dances to Thy tunes and father sings to Thy tunes and I engage myself in worshipping Thee. My Master, if you like to drink, I shall at once bring water, and if you like to eat I shall grind fresh wheat. I go on fanning you and washing your feet while I go on reciting Thy Name. My Lord, your slave, Nanak, is not true to Thy salt, but if you still forgive him, this will be Your glory. From the beginning through the ages, You are the compassionate Giver, no one can get salvation without Thee.

Our True Self: Let us pause and analyse the Master's words. Self-realisation is the other name of Self-annihilation and Guru Nanak defines it beautifully. The problem of today's scholars is that while they display their GYAN, their intellectual grasp of *Gurbani*, their worldly greatness, their influential sweep over worldly eminence, *they are unable to understand the core of Sikh spirituality*. In the Sikh world of spirituality and its consequent humanity, there is no place for arrogance, and yet today we witness arrogance, and oneupmanship at their height in those who are supposed to enlighten us about the Guru's Word. The fact is that we rightly pay attention to various facets of our existence, our social life, our social prestige, our worldly glory, our financial position and our general situation. **But we are unfortunately not at all worried about our core issue, i.e. living in accordance with the tenets of Gurbani.** That is why even when we are well placed, rich, materially eminent, we go on quarrelling among ourselves both in Gurdwaras, in magazines, in newspapers and washing our dirty linen in public. We have not been able to keep the sanctity of our gurdwaras, the purity of our character and the sacredness of our system. No wonder that those who perpetrated 'Bluestar' have the audacity to show themselves as friends of the Sikhs, and no wonder that those who are entrenched in corruption and illegitimate deeds occupied the throne, of Punjab, unmindful of their election promises, while our youth rot in jails. No wonder, again, that when there was time for us in April 1999 to show the majesty of the Khalsa of 300 years we squandered the event with our petty rivalries and we brought our degeneration to a new low.

Since we are almost always out of tune with *Gurbani* except for ceremonial *Akhand Paath* and commercial or ritual *Hukam-Laina*, we are unable to grasp the entrenched assurances. Since we have never meditated on the need to annihilate our ego before our Lord, we have not been able to realise the truth of what Guru grants us, if we adhere to the slavery of the Word. Here is the 5th Nanak. Guru Arjun, detailing the answer in the shabad: *Jaan toun mere val hain...*

(SGGS:.1096)

- When you are on my side, my Lord, what want can I have? When I become Your slave, you hand over all that you have to me. I can never be short of money if I go on eating, spending and even saving it. All the creation is now at my service. Even the enemies have become friends and no one wishes me ill. No one now calls me to account, because the Lord has shown Grace to me. I am now in bliss and peace because I am entrenched in the love of my Guru and my God. All my tasks are taken care of, now that it pleases You.

Definition: I am always seeking the Grace of my Guru to grant me the ability to live and die like a Gursikh and the definition of a Gursikh has been given by Guru Ram Das in the *shabad* that follows (*Gur Satgur Ka jo Sikh akhaye...* (SGGS: 305). To my utter surprise and happiness, even if I am a lone Sikh here among 1200 people, at Tapovan, the humanity and the universality enjoined upon me by Guru Granth Sahib is genuinely recognized. That is why I have been able to prevail upon the Management of Tapovan to have a building housing crippled patients named as 'Guru Gobind Singh Nivas.' That is why Guru Granth Sahib charitable Society has been formed with the award money that was given to me in 1995 and 1999 worth Rs. One lakh each time.

A strange thing that has made my slavery of Guru Granth Sahib more and more entrenched is that it has given me the feeling of a 'totally liberated' person. But this is certainly no achievement. This is the natural consequence of the *shabads* mentioned above. The definition of the Sikh enjoins on him to remember the Lord 24 hours, get up at *amritvela*, engage himself in *Naam* and, finally, what Guru grants the Sikh is astounding: *Jan Nanak dhoor mange tis Gursikh ki jo aap jape avra naam japave* (Nanaks asks for the dust of the feet of the one who himself recites the Name of the Lord and make others do so).

Whether I write articles, or address gatherings outside or inside Gurdwaras, or address general meetings, I define Sikh philosophy in terms of Guru Granth Sahib's liberation schedule thus:

- i) *Amritvela* Prayers are an integrated part of Sikh religiosity and spirituality and we have no choice or exemption;
- ii) Purity of our life and adherence to Sikh principles is inseparable from the external display of Sikh.
- iii) Universality of our religion is embedded in the sermons of our Gurus;
- iv) Pleasures of the senses without the purity of means would bring pain;
- v) The honesty of earning must co-exist with our charitable intentions and we must set apart 10% of our earnings for charitable causes;
- vi) Subordination of illegitimate inclinations and superiority of our spiritual leanings must be established;
- vii) All humankind must be considered as one race and as our brothers and sisters;

viii) Love is the core point, and humility the offshoot of that Love, which demands nothing in return;

ix) Slander, backbiting, jealousy must be eradicated; and

x) The name of the Lord must remain in every breath.

And, in return for such practices, the Guru assures us of a worry-free life, pain-free existence and love-all future. Then why is it that even in our Sikh homes, where Guru Granth Sahib reigns, we find life unbearable, full of conflict, full of ego and full of hatred? Before I embark upon causes that seem to me to be responsible, let me detail the title of this piece in greater elaboration. I remember distinctly when I came to my Guru on the night of 10th October 1970 in a night-long (*Ren Sabai*) *kirtan* at Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, I was literally lying precariously by the Abyss of Dejection, and today – not only today, but ever since the moment at 2 p.m. during the night of 10th – 11 th October, 1970. I feel that I am assured of perpetual protection of Guru Granth Sahib. What, then, is the basis of this total overhaul? Here are the explanations:

- Guru Granth Sahib has always assured us that, with *Naam* in our hearts, we shall experience the *rasa* of *Gurbani* and it will be like dripping of *Amrit* through *Shabad-vichar*. Since I regard, in any case, the *Vichar* as the stepping stone to the grant of bliss through *Amrit*, Guru has granted me the habit of *Vichar*.
- Not one word or one verse refers to our material possessions or material progress in terms of our success in receiving the Lord in our hearts or in the grant of bliss, peace or happiness. *Naam* alone is the basis and source of all happiness.
- Since *Seva* is the all-encompassing part of Sikh devotion, it is incumbent on every Sikh to share not only his earnings but also his heart and heart-felt sympathy with those who are less fortunate. 22 years of my stay with leprosy patients has been a great source of joy and Guru's message of love and sharing of that love with others has enhanced my loving happiness.
- Then Guru Nanak's teaching about remaining the lowliest - even when one reaches the zenith of one's material or spiritual ladder - is of great practical value; and
- All my life – not only the life in gurdwaras or at prayer – is supposed to be governed by Guru's command.

Cosmetics: One, unfortunately returns to the life of hypocrisy, external cosmetism and external conceited ignorant devotion have robbed us of internal peace and unity. There are three other aspects of our insipid life:

- *the life of Lokpachara (pleasing the people) and consequent hypocrisy;*
- inability or unwillingness to keep Guru above anything else in the world; and

- lack of faith in the writings of our Gurus because of our own weaknesses and our own degeneration.

These inadequacies have contributed to lack of love and, even when we parade religion, we remain hypocrites. When outward observances begin to give us a false feeling of being religious, we go all out to display even more external religiosity so that we remain in deep slumber about our actual position. Let me share with you Guru Arjun's beautiful step-by-step attainment of *Prem-Ras*, on (SGGS: 370): *Sunho Loka Mein Prem Ras Paya.....* Let us relish the Lord's own *Rasa*:

- My husband separated me from *Maya* (Waheguru rid me of the cruelty of my mother-in-law). Desires and wishes (brother-in-law and sister-in-law) were destroyed. My husband's brother (Dharamraj) became helpless because I never cared for him because my own husband protected me in his great wisdom. O people, listen to me, I am now in the sweet grip of Love. My enemies and my bad companions have been destroyed because my Satguru has got me the Name of the Lord from the Lord Himself. Look, how it happened: Firstly, I abandoned the love of I-am-ness. Secondly I decided not to follow the way of the world. Thirdly, I abandoned interest in *Rajo, Tamo, Sato* and even the bad elements became my friends. In the company of my Guru. I learnt to practice *Turiya*. I created place of *Sahaj* in my own inside and there I heard the unstruck music of the form of the Lord in Light. I got great ecstasy in the *Vichar* of the *Shabad*. Intertwined with the Lord in love. I became a respected *Suhagin*. Says Nanak, now the words of meditation on the Lord. Anyone who listens to them and acts on them will cross the ocean of life. He will get out of the circle of births and deaths and remain absorbed in the Lord forever.

Inspiration: Some things are very clear. If we had paid attention to *Gurbani* and the love it entails, we would have also succeeded in subduing *Maya*, hypocrisy and one-upmanship among ourselves and in dealing with others. Merely if we had tried to live as Sikhs of the Guru, we would have ruled the hearts of the people because, in our system, all are our brothers and sisters. Shouldn't we worry and examine ourselves where and why we went wrong? But, instead of examining ourselves, we remain entrenched in the belief that others are to blame for our degeneration. I am somehow convinced that in my life of over 70 years, when I used to work as a Government servant, or in my spiritual life which began at 40, No one has ever interfered with my life of the spirit. I am personally responsible for all my lapses before and after 1970. But today, because of the protection of Guru Granth Sahib, I am assured that even if I am entitled to 100 years of rigorous imprisonment on account of my own misdeeds, Guru's protection does not let me get disheartened. Look at the assurances of Guru Amar Das in his hymn on (SGGS:638-39): *nirgunian noun aape baksh laye.....*

I shall not detail the whole *shabad*, but the message is: that howsoever meritless we may be, Satguru forgives and embraces us. Not only that, he merges us with himself and with *Ramnaam* elevates us to his own level. Then we must be really foolish not to avail of His mercies. But unfortunately we are not aware of what Guru Granth Sahib promises because of stress on our external rituals, and lack of internal commitment.

Altruism: Guru Granth Sahib Charitable Society mentioned above is now engaged in charitable causes and aims at spreading the glory of Guru's Word through living examples. Recently, a local society in Amravati guided by Sant Achyut Maharaj, has been instrumental in setting up a Heart Hospital which is nearing completion and the Sant has been a member of the Tapovan Institution, like myself. Over a period our Society contributed Rs. 3 lakhs towards the construction expenses and I must confess that the pride I felt in my heart on visiting the hospital under construction with Sant Achyut Maharaj was boundless. With tears in my eyes, with gratitude in my heart and with the "dignity" of Guru's slave in my blood, I noted the plaques on three rooms in the name of my Gurus. On the entrance of one room, dedicated to Guru Nanak loudly proclaimed the *Vadiiai* of our first Guru, on the others, dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh produced a thrill in my feelings and on the third, a larger hall, was written: 'Dedicated to Guru Granth Sahib'. The following lines of Guru Ram Dass ran through every pore of my body:

Gursikhan ke mann bhavandi

Gur Satgur ki vadiiai

(The Guru's glory pleases the heart of Gursikhs) – (SGGS: 310)

and

Har Rakho Peij Satguru ki

nitt charhe sawai

(Lord, always protect the honour of my Satguru and let it be enhanced more and more for ever) – (*ibid*)

As I conclude, my heart-felt gratitude to Guru Granth Sahib for liberating me and for retrieving me from the abyss of dejection to permanent protection. I cannot help saying that I wasted forty years of my life in having remained ignorant of the warmth, the grace, the love, the protection and the worry-less state that *Shabad Guru* promised. I plead that since we Sikhs are endowed with such perpetual Grace, we must become the torchbearers of humanity, as Guru wanted Khalsa to be *Nirala*. And this must come out always in every field of activity of the Khalsa. Guru Granth Sahib is considered as the Guru of the Sikhs but, in fact, this *Shabad Guru* is the universal guide for every human being. Only if our own conduct showed this in practice in terms of the following *shabad*, we would be accepted as the friends of all. Our Guru openly declares that the Lord is the common father of all human beings: *Sa rutt suhawi jit tudh samali...* (Guru Arjun, SGGS 97).

"Pleasant is the season when I remember you. Comfortable is the work that I do for you. In bliss is the heart in which you reside, because you are the Giver for all of us. You are the common father, our Master, Countless treasurers and fathomless stores are Yours, but only those who receive from You are satiated and become Your devotees. Everyone looks upon you as the benefactor and in the heart of everyone you show your presence. We all are partners in one family. No one regards others as alien. You yourself

liberate the *Gurmukhs* and you yourself put the *Manmukhs* into circle of life and death. Nanak, your slave, is sacrifice unto you because to him, all this world looks to be your own play."

Let the Sikhs live these words in their own life. Let their life personify Guru's word. Let our internecine quarrels cease. Let our selfishness be replaced by universal love so that Guru Granth Sahib is looked upon by all human beings as their protector.

