

The Paradox of Clarity in Confusion

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WALKING INTO THE FOREST through the muddy path leads into a deeper grove. Dry paths and patches of green are visible. A varied range of trees, each with a character so distinctively its own, flowers where you think there should be none, suddenly, a snake, then an antelope. And amidst all the confusion, there is a moment of contemplation. There are no patterns, yet, in this existence, even in the jungle, there seems to be a meaning in this chaos. There are no straight lines like the city roads, but there is a path and there is a direction. In the confusion there is clarity.

Quality not Quantity

A few days ago an individual tried to tell me how a Sikh should be. It was interesting, as the person had done a lot of reading. There was intellect, but the heart seemed missing and the blunt attitude took me aback. I wondered, "Here is one who already knows enough to question the *Guru* and to decide what the *Khalsa Panth* should do to prosper". According to this person, the Khalsa's prosperity, progress and evolution depended upon the spread of religion in the terms of numbers. This was the only measure, in this way of thinking.

It probably seems so, when one looks at the present state of the Khalsa. There is confusion and chaos. However, to truly glean the truth, we must seek beneath the surface. The fact that a follower tries to influence the Guru is not something new, but all seeking should be a search for the divine truth, not simply logic and philosophy born out of simple convenience. Hardly a word I would like to keep before me, if I aspire to be a Sikh. Well, it is not convenient to search for truth. It is convenient to do nothing, just eat and sleep, why bother? But if one chooses the other path, we must understand, reason and trust and go all the way. What ever we do, we don't try and teach our Guru. Guru is absolute.

In 'Asa di Vaar', Sahib ji tells us:

ਸਲਾਮੁ ਜਬਾਬੁ ਦੇਵੈ ਕਰੇ ਮੁੰਢਗੁ ਘੁਥਾ ਜਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵੈ ਕੂੜੀਆ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਕਾਈ ਪਾਇ ॥੨॥ ੪੨੪

"One who asks sometimes questions (bows in respect to) the Guru and some times answers back to Guru, such a person has gone wrong from the very beginning. O Nanak, both of his actions are false; he obtains no place in the Court of the God." || 2 || [SGGS: 474]

There is what seems to be patterns of universal thinking that one encounters when one discusses religion in society today. Some of these are: religion should 'evolve', we should change with time, we should remove the hindrances for the growth of religion and that there is no incentive to become a Sikh. The one we hear ever so often is that Sikhism can spread so much more, if keeping hair were not mandatory. This is, basically what my friend had told me that morning.

These comments show a lack of clarity about Sikh ideology and also of the concept of religion. It reflects an insincere approach to seek. It's almost as though religion is a 'fashion' and what is done must be something that looks better to the person sitting next to me. The enquiry is like a wave in the ocean of mind, wait a bit

and it would just ebb with the tide. Gone, lost in the thoughts of the mind and with it is gone the chance to know, to actually be aware, religion is not about learning, it is about knowing.

The opinions, which I mentioned above, are the conclusions of logic based upon preconceived notions. Like saying, I have to reach a certain conclusion, so let me build on it a thought to justify it. The fundamental idea that the thinker is holding on to is, "I must change the things that do not suit me in the religion. I must fashion my thought process to reach the preconceived notion that I already have formed".

Thus, the individual has already denounced the Guru. This is the drawback with logic, it can be twisted and a man sees what is not in front of him but what he wants to see. The Guru's word takes a back seat and no longer is the focus.

Fundamentally, the intellect is not where the answer to reality is. Guru Sahib says:

ਤਿਲੰਗ ਬਾਣੀ ਭਗਤਾ ਕੀ ਕਬੀਰ ਜੀ ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਇਫਤਰਾ ਭਾਈ ਦਿਲ ਕਾ ਫਿਕਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥
ਟੁਕੁ ਦਮੁ ਕਰਾਰੀ ਜਉ ਕਰਹੁ ਹਾਜਿਰ ਹਜੂਰਿ ਖੁਦਾਇ ॥੧॥
ਬੰਦੇ ਖੋਜੁ ਦਿਲ ਹਰਿ ਰੋਜ ਨਾ ਫਿਰੁ ਪਰੇਸਾਨੀ ਮਾਹਿ ॥ ਇਹ ਜੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸਿਹਰੁ ਮੇਲਾ ਦਸਤਗੀਰੀ ਨਾਹਿ ॥੧॥
ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਦਰੋਗੁ ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਖੁਸੀ ਹੋਇ ਬੇਖਬਰ ਬਾਦੁ ਬਕਾਹਿ ॥
ਹਕੁ ਸਚੁ ਖਾਲਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਮਿਆਨੇ ਸਿਆਮ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਾਹਿ ॥੨॥
ਅਸਮਾਨ ਮਯਾਨੇ ਲਹੰਗ ਦਰੀਆ ਗੁਸਲ ਕਰਦਨ ਬੂਦ ॥
ਕਰਿ ਫਕਰੁ ਦਾਇਮ ਲਾਇ ਚਸਮੇ ਜਹ ਤਹਾ ਮਉਜੂਦੁ ॥੩॥
ਅਲਾਹ ਪਾਕੰ ਪਾਕ ਹੈ ਸਕ ਕਰਉ ਜੇ ਦੂਸਰ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਕਬੀਰ ਕਰਮੁ ਕਰੀਮ ਕਾ ਉਹੁ ਕਰੈ ਜਾਨੈ ਸੋਇ ॥੪॥੧॥ ੨੨੭

"Tilang, the word of devotee Kabir ji: One Universal Creator God, By The Grace Of The True Guru: The Vedas and the Scriptures are only make-believe, O Siblings of Destiny, they do not relieve the anxiety of the heart. If you will only center yourself on God, even for just a breath, then you shall see God face-to-face, present before you. || 1 || O Human being! search your own heart every day and do not wander around in confusion. This world is just a magic-show; no one will be holding your hand. || 1 || Pause || Reading and studying falsehood, people are happy; in their ignorance, they speak nonsense. The True Creator God is diffused into creation; God is not just the dark-skinned Krishna of legends. || 2 || Through the Tenth Gate, the stream of nectar flows; take your bath in this. Serve God forever; use your eyes, and see God ever-present everywhere. || 3 || God is the purest of the pure; only through doubt could there be another. O Kabir, mercy flows from the Merciful One; God alone knows who acts." || 4 || 1 || [SGGS:727]

Relationship of Love

The relationship between the Guru and Sikh is the fundamental basis of the life of a Sikh. Guru and Sikh are tied together with the thread of love, the knots in the thread are those of commitment. I like to perceive this as a Sikh's commitment in following Guru's 'Hukam'. *Hukam*, a synonym of *bani* is absolute, and keeping hair and the other *Kakaars* is Guru's *Hukam*. Any religion of the world has to have a goal

and method. For the Sikhs, the *Jyot* (goal) is the Guru Granth Sahib and the *Jugat* (method) is the Khalsa. Guru Granth Sahib is the representation of the absolute, universal being and the Khalsa is the method to arrive there. The *kakaars* are a gift , a token , given by the Guru to his Sikh, tying them together. This brings about an association between the two. When we give to some one, we give a part of us, and when we take, we take a part of the other person. This process of 'give and take' is the expression of love and appreciation between two beings. Similar is the case of this "hukam", which the Sikh gets from the Guru. In this divine 'give and take' Guru and Sikh are abound across time , space and cause, a way of transcending them all.

The Khalsa lives by the tradition of:

ਪੁਜਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ, ਪਰਚਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਕਾ, ਦੀਦਾਰ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦਾ ।

(*Puja Akal Ki, Parcha Shabad Ka and Deedar Khalsa Da.*)

"Pray to the timeless God, let the Shabad be our guide and our physical form be that of the Khalsa. Khalsa lives in the Hukam of The Guru and in it is our love for Him."

A Shabad I was reading a few days ago touched me with its beauty and its intensity. Let me start from there. I give here one of the stanzas I would like to analyze with the readers.

ਵਡਹੰਸੁ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਘਰੁ ੨ ॥
 ਸੁਪਨੈ ਆਇਆ ਭੀ ਗਇਆ ਮੈ ਜਲੁ ਭਰਿਆ ਰੋਇ ॥
 ਆਇ ਨ ਸਕਾ ਤੁਝ ਕਨਿ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਭੇਜਿ ਨ ਸਕਾ ਕੋਇ ॥
 ਆਉ ਸਭਾਗੀ ਨੀਦਤੀਏ ਮਤੁ ਸਹੁ ਦੇਖਾ ਸੋਇ ॥
 ਤੈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਕੀ ਬਾਤ ਜਿ ਆਖੈ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਿਆ ਦੀਜੈ ॥
 ਸੀਸੁ ਵਢੇ ਕਰਿ ਬੈਸਣੁ ਦੀਜੈ ਵਿਣੁ ਸਿਰ ਸੇਵ ਕਰੀਜੈ ॥
 ਕਿਉ ਨ ਮਰੀਜੈ ਜੀਅੜਾ ਨ ਦੀਜੈ ਜਾ ਸਹੁ ਭਇਆ ਵਿਡਾਣਾ ॥੧॥੩॥

"In a dream, my spouse came to me, went away again; I cried so many tears. I can't come to you, O my Beloved, and I can't send anyone to you. Come to me, O blessed sleep - perhaps I will see my spouse, My Beloved again. One who brings a message of my Beloved and Master - says Nanak, what shall I give to them? Cutting off my head, I give it to the person, to sit upon; without my head, I shall serve. Why haven't I died? Why hasn't my life just ended? My spouse has become a stranger to me."

Fear - only that of separation

So immensely touching and deep are the words of *bani*. Sahib has so beautifully expressed the separation of God from an individual.

As a Sikh, I am to feel the same separation too. When I seek him with this intensity, does not all the walls of thinking break down? There remains no room for discussion, no place for divided thought to exist and take me away from my Guru. No justification is required as to why I keep long unshorn hair. There are no discussions on how will Sikhism expand. No thoughts like why don't we do away with these aspects and let the religion grow with concessions. Love drowns me, drowns my thoughts and just leaves me pure in spirit thirsting for a glimpse of Reality and a touch of *Gurshabad*. From this perspective I cease to think. I am in love with Guru. My love has expressed itself.

Unflinching Focus

What is this love that lives beyond the body and which is deeper than my thoughts? This love is surer than death, more real than life. What logic can be higher, what intellect can be superior to this love? What is convenient or easier to do as a practical thing seems so bland. It's not as though religion, the 'search for truth', is like a dress or a suit, which we can get altered to fit us.

An individual changes, but *Ek Onkaar* does not, and that is what makes it *Satnaam*. The road to *Ek Onkaar* is through Guru's grace. We receive Guru's grace by focusing on Him, not on ourselves or on our thoughts. It is only when we are receptive that we can receive. Our being receptive has to do with our being ready to listen (*suniyain*) rather than just expounding our own thought. Sahib has asked a Sikh to listen, *suniyain*. After the *Paudis* of *Suniyain* comes the stage of *munain* (practice). The practice follows receptive hearing. It is only when we listen to the true nature of life that we can realize it. The suggestions, or questioning the Guru's *Hukam*, are an exercise in futility. When we go to receive, we don't need to say anything, we don't question, we just surrender. The importance of *suniyain* is given below, from the *Japji*.

ਸੁਣਿਐ ਸਿਧ ਪੀਰ ਸੁਰਿ ਨਾਥ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਧਰਤਿ ਧਵਲ ਆਕਾਸ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੀਪ ਲੋਅ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਪੋਹਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਕਾਲੁ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਭਗਤਾ ਸਦਾ ਵਿਗਾਸੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੂਖ ਪਾਪ ਕਾ ਨਾਸੁ ॥੮॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਈਸਰੁ ਬਰਮਾ ਇੰਦੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਮੁਖਿ ਸਾਲਾਹਣ ਮੰਦੁ ॥
ਸੁਣਿਐ ਜੋਗ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਤਨਿ ਭੇਦ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਸਾਸਤ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਵੇਦ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਗਤਾ ਸਦਾ ਵਿਗਾਸੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੂਖ ਪਾਪ ਕਾ ਨਾਸੁ ॥੯॥
ਸੁਣਿਐ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਅਠਸਠਿ ਕਾ ਇਸਨਾਨੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਲਾਗੈ ਸਹਜਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ
॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਗਤਾ ਸਦਾ ਵਿਗਾਸੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੂਖ ਪਾਪ ਕਾ ਨਾਸੁ ॥੧੦॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਸਰਾ ਗੁਣਾ ਕੇ ਗਾਹ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਸੇਖ ਪੀਰ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹ ॥
ਸੁਣਿਐ ਅੰਧੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਰਾਹੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਹਾਥ ਹੋਵੈ ਅਸਗਾਹੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭਗਤਾ ਸਦਾ ਵਿਗਾਸੁ ॥ ਸੁਣਿਐ ਦੂਖ ਪਾਪ ਕਾ ਨਾਸੁ ॥੧੧॥
[SGGS: 2,3]

Apna Mool Pehchan: know Thyself

It is relevant to note that though the majority may not be like us, may not think or act the way we do, this does not make our path unacceptable. And if a religion is to succumb to the will of the majority just to "expand", then the religion is no more, as it has compromised with its ideology. In doing so, it has lost its character and unique nature.

We as Sikhs are not here to count numbers, we are here to learn, live and uncover the truth. Public opinion cannot transform or influence truth, and a religion's success is not decided on the numbers that follow it, like a politician's vote bank. Then "God", by this logic, must be standing on the other side, and counting which religion has how many to reward the victor! Such logic makes me weep in shame. It is wavering minds that are not willing to seek, trust or have faith. Of course, I can understand where the thought has its inception and I quote from Sirdar Kapur Singh Ji's article as reference.

"The psychological need to look like others who are in a majority and also in a position to impose their approval-judgments on a strange minority amidst them, is all too obvious."

He adds, "one who takes this path does not show strength of moral character".

The necessary aspect of wanting to know who we are and what our true nature is, is an enquiry we must face from within ourselves and with that only does clarity walk in this world. We are not here to redefine our own religion, but to follow it.

Guru Sahib, says in Bani:

ਜੇ ਸਭਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਕੈ ਆਖਣ ਪਾਹਿ ॥ ਵਡਾ ਨ ਹੋਵੈ ਘਾਟਿ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥੨॥ ੯

“Even if everyone were to gather together and speak of God, God would not become any greater or any lesser.” || 2 || 9

Introspection leads to projection

I learnt in the company of Sant Niranjn Singh ji the few steps of *Gurmat* that I tried to take and he always told me when I fantasized about the expansion of Sikhism, “If you can learn to live like a true Sikh, you have already added to the expansion of your religion. To serve your community, first live like a Sikh and understand your within. The darkness around you can only be dispelled after the Light of God is revealed within you.”

There are no short cuts. These have always been my guiding principles and as far as I am concerned external expression should only be post introspection. We must look within first and then project what we have to the World.

Let me now dwell on the issue of human evolution, or Progress. The method to measure progress is unclear to man. Are we more evolved than we were? What is the method of measuring this aspect? If it is mass production and industry, we have progressed, yes. Humans may know more than they did before about the material world, but is the human mind working to its fullest potential? It does make one think, did anything really change, or has only our way of perceiving it changed? For example, in physics, we started with Newtonian physics. The fundamental laws of motion as the laws governing motion; they were, for a long period, considered absolute. Then Einstein came up with his ‘Theory of Relativity’, where he challenged a basic postulate of Newtonian physics - *The speed of light is constant*. He saw things differently. Yet, it was not as though light had changed its nature. The true nature of light is what it is, has always been and will so remain. Truth does not change; our thoughts about it keep changing. Guru Nanak says:

ਸਹਸ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ ॥ ੧

“Hundreds of thousands of clever tricks, but not even one of them will go along with you in the end.”

God and his *darshan*, is beyond thinking, beyond the changing.

Yet, we call it evolution of man. Maybe, in a way it is evolution for humanity but not with respect to what the “Truth” is. Creation is, and will be driven by, the magnificent laws of existence and human beings, in attempting to figure them out, perceive their own sense of knowledge as evolution. But it is truth that is absolute, and different ways of looking at it does not change its reality.

The focus of life as such will always be what it was. It is necessary for us to observe that *Gurbani* is absolute and is not time, space or cause-defined. Its vibrations reverberate with the truth of creation, no matter what. It is this truth that Khalsa and a Sikh deals with. This is the trade he does, so his is the true trade and

true progress of soul. Progress is the domain of the achievers of their inner truth. To think of cutting one's hair in the name of progress is a weak excuse for the person who is in actuality questioning his own sense of identity or existence, without knowing it or living it.

ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰੇ ਲਾਇ ਭਾਵਨੀ ਇਕਨਾ ਦਸਵਾ ਦੁਆਰੁ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ ॥ [SGGS: 922]

“Through the Gurdwara, the Guru's gate, some are blessed with loving faith and the Tenth Door is revealed to them.”

ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਈਐ ਤਾ ਸਹੁ ਪਾਈਐ ਅਉਰੁ ਕੈਸੀ ਚਤੁਰਾਈ ॥ [SGGS: 722]

“Give up your selfhood and so realize God; what other clever tricks are of any use?”

Above is the *Hukam* Of Sahib Guru Amar Das, The Third Nanak.

When we go to the door of the Guru, we must go in love and in sincere prayer, willing to be received. The Guru when he opens himself to us becomes our Gurdwara , Door of Truth. Walking through this Gurdwara, we encounter the reality that has always been within us , like a gift, *Gurprasad*. For any Sikh to be a true follower, this is the only way.

From the shabad above we learn that we are to receive and that can happen when we drop our intellect and offer ourselves to the Guru. Our mind is like a page in a writing pad, which the Guru is to write on. If we fill it with our own writings and meaningless blabber there will be no room for the Guru to write.

The Sikh way of life is the way of seeking truth and it is what we call *Panth, marg*, a route. Khalsa is our method and the Guru's *Hukam* is the command to progress on this path.

It is an individual's choice to seek or not to seek, to be a Sikh or not. Before we proceed on any path, we must question the fundamentals of the Faith and enquire into its reasoning. But once a person decides to follow this path, they must follow it like a child follows his parent - trusting, believing and accepting the will of the parent.

It is not for us to redefine the essence of a faith, for in doing so we will corrupt the direction of the faith by our own narrow vision and our own limited beliefs. Then again, it is wrong to judge the condition of the Sikh community and to try and preach from the outside, or pick on the community and ask from it to do away with its very essence. There is enough flexibility in the faith to address the issues of change and what is possible to change is within the hands of the Khalsa. I think it is for the one who seeks to observe a little more, go a little deeper, for in the confusion there is clarity.

The Khalsa lives, and from its existence, the world will benefit. As for the spread of religion, the Khalsa Panth is the answer to the enquiry of the world. We have water in our well to quench our own thirst as well as those of others who are thirsty.

