

Humility: An Essential Trait in Spiritualism

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WITHOUT THE ELEMENT OF HUMILITY in Spiritualism, any progress on the path of spiritual awakening is impossible. Holy Guru Granth Sahib is replete with exhortations asking us to get rid of 'Ego' (*haumai*) in order to make any progress in the spiritual path. Ego, out of the Five Evils, is the last and the toughest to be overcome by the aspiring disciple treading on the path of Spiritualism. But one has to prepare sincerely and with single-minded determination to combat with this demon at much earlier stages of the spiritual practice. Humility is an essential tool in this direction. But one has to adopt one's own method to achieve this goal.

Guru Nanak, in one of his hymns, emphasised that humility should be 'ornamented' into one's personality, since it is a pre-requisite for the spiritual progress. In the beginning of the *shabad*, which is in the form of relationship of a bride and her beloved, Guru Nanak urges the bride - the human person - to awaken from the deep slumber of ignorance, adorn herself in humility, so that one becomes worthy of being accepted by the beloved (God):

ਏਕ ਨ ਭਰੀਆ ਗੁਣ ਕਰਿ ਧੋਵਾ ॥ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਹੁ ਜਾਗੇ ਹਉ ਨਿਸ ਭਰਿ ਸੋਵਾ ॥੧॥ ਇਉ ਕਿਉ ਕੰਤ ਪਿਆਰੀ ਹੋਵਾ ॥ ਸਹੁ
ਜਾਗੇ ਹਉ ਨਿਸ ਭਰਿ ਸੋਵਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

(Asa M:1, SGGS:356)

*"Ek na bharia gunn kar dhova
Mera shahu jagge haon nis-bhar sovan (1)
Eiu kion kant piari hovan
Shahu jagge haon nis bhar sovan (1) (Pause) "*

"Not with one fault alone am I soiled: How with merits may I then purify myself? The Lord is awake, while I the whole night keep asleep (1) How with this may I win the spouse's love, when, with the Lord awake, I the whole night keep asleep (pause 1)"

Hope and aspiration to meet God is always there, even if subtly present, in the soul of man. At times he longs with vigour, for meeting the beloved and to quench his age-long thirst for the holy communion; but not succeeding, he turns his mind deep into his own self, only to find that he has wasted the precious life for the pursuit of unnecessary worldly pleasures. He then repents, since the youth time is lost.

ਆਸ ਪਿਆਸੀ ਸੇਜੇ ਆਵਾ ॥ ਅਗੈ ਸਹ ਭਾਵਾ ਕਿ ਨ ਭਾਵਾ ॥੨॥ ਕਿਆ ਜਾਨਾ ਕਿਆ ਹੋਇਗਾ ਰੀ ਮਾਈ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਦਰਸਨ
ਬਿਨੁ ਰਹਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਪ੍ਰੇਮੁ ਨ ਚਾਖਿਆ ਮੇਰੀ ਤਿਸ ਨ ਬੁਝਾਨੀ ॥ ਗਇਆ ਸੁ ਜੋਬਨੁ ਧਨ ਪਛੁਤਾਨੀ ॥੩॥

*"Aas piyasi sejai awan
Aaage shahu bhava ke na bhanva (2)
Kia jana kia hoega ri mai
Har darshan bin rahen na jae(1) (Pause).
Prem na chakhia meri tis na bhujanee
Gaia so joban dhan pachotanee"*

(Asa M:1, SGGS:357)

“Thirsting with desire his couch I approach,
 Not knowing if I please the Lord or not?
 Mother mine! what know I, what will be my destiny?
 Without the Lord’s sight life is for me unbearable.
 His love have I not tasted:
 Unslaked Is my yearning.
 As has youth passed full of Regrets, so is the woman in repentance.”

Deep into his/her mind, the aspirant realises that the time that is wasted is gone for ever. Now, let me take guidance from Guru, so that he can save me from drowning in this avaricious ocean and lift me out of this mire. And so does the Guru enlightens his mind and he starts detaching himself from the obsessive “I-am-ness” which engrosses him in the worldly affairs; and then generates the state of ‘Vairag’ - the sublime pain every one experiences during separation from his true beloved one.

ਅਜੈ ਸੁ ਜਾਗਉ ਆਸ ਪਿਆਸੀ ॥ ਭਈਲੇ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਰਹਉ ਨਿਰਾਸੀ ॥੧॥ (Asa M:1, SGGS:357)

“Ajai so jago aas piyasi
 Bhaile udasi rahon nerasi (1 pause)”

“Even now thirsting with desire Should I wake up, from the world turn away, And of desire denude myself, O my mind, what makes you so arrogant?”

These worldly achievements, all are lost in this worldly gamble the moment the eyes are closed. However, the Guru has been warning us all through the life that one thing which will benefit you here and hereafter is the wealth of virtues: God is quite synonymous with a virtuous and pious living. Lift your mind from the petty praises of the self, broaden your outlook to develop humility, so as to encompass the respect of the entire creation of God. God is pleased only if you have discarded the arrogant nature of the mind and in fact through the complete surrender of ‘Ego’ :

ਹਉਮੈ ਖੋਇ ਕਰੇ ਸੀਗਾਰੁ ॥ ਤਉ ਕਾਮਣਿ ਸੇਜੈ ਰਵੈ ਭਤਾਰੁ ॥੪॥ ਤਉ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੰਤੈ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਵੈ ॥ ਛੋਡਿ ਵਡਾਈ ਅਪਣੇ
 ਖਸਮ ਸਮਾਵੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥੨੬॥

(Asa M:1, SGGS:357)

“Haumai khoe kare sigaar
 Tao kamani seje rave bhatar (4)
 Tao Nanak kante mann bhav
 Chhod wadai apne khasam samave” (1 Pause)(26)

“Should the bride discard egoism and this way deck herself,
 Shall the spouse bless her in couch (4)
 Then alone, saith Nanak, shall he
 Win the spouse’s heart,
 And, discarding pride, in Him be absorbed”.

Thus, to be accepted in the eyes of God, I must adorn myself with humility, and discarding ego discipline my mind, for absolute surrender unto His will.

Duncan Gleenlees, in his book *The Gospel of Peace According to Guru Granth Sahib* felicitously comments on a number of hymns that dwell on the theme of spiritual courtship, under the heading - ‘Union with the Beloved’. Collecting various

hymns from throughout the pages of the Guru Granth Sahib, he divides this theme into sequential suheads and enumerates them in the following order-

- The Beloved is near.
- The Bride longs for Him.
- It is He who calls and adorns her.
- How to win His love?
- A virtuous Bride's Joy.
- The spiritual marriage.
- The Bliss of Eternal Union.

Partly summarizing this theme, he says 'It is true that all God's children have equal claims upon Him, but He draws into the intimacy of perfect communion only those whom He himself has beautified with virtue, to whom He has revealed Himself as the source of all goodness and all beauty The soul who would win God's love must make herself so small that she is like a slender thread on which to thread His heart All the coarseness of the Ego must be refined away and the spirit becomes subtle (*tancemanasi*) Ever watchful of His pleasure, she does all to please Him and remain always obedient at His feet like the perfect wife; He in His turn lavishes on her richest affection of His heart, for none can be so dear to Him as the perfect devotee, who is filled with reverent love - (full of humility). (Translation of the hymn by G. S. Talib)



Our Spiritual Universe

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GOD HAS CREATED TWO DISTINCT spheres: our observed material world and the unseen spiritual world. Practically all the world's religions believe in the existence of an unseen, other spiritual dimension.

Our spiritual universe is both within and without us; whoever probes into it realizes the reality - "*Jo brahmande soi pinde, jo khoje so pave.*" Because of our preoccupation with worldly affairs and our false notion that we are merely physical bodies, we remain ignorant of our real status: we are embodiments of the Divine Light and are as such essentially spiritual.

Entry into the spiritual domain is not easy. It is largely a matter of Divine mercy and grace but some human effort is also needed. If it were not so, no prophets and gurus would have visited us and no scriptures would have been written to guide humanity. In the first six hymns of Japji, Guru Nanak called upon his followers to submit to the will and pleasure of God; to meditate on the glories of the True One at the ambrosial hours of the dawn; to remember the One Lord to imbibe godly qualities. In the hymn XIII it is said that by meditation, the soul becomes harmonized with the Divine Self. Also intuitive and intellectual attainment of inner consciousness is moulded.

When the mind awakens with the celestial combination of consciousness (*surti*), music (*dhun*) and *shabad* (*Naam*), space and time barriers are broken, vision and

perception are broadened, and the soul, like wireless waves, can travel or penetrate anywhere without restrictions. Liberated souls can draw upon spiritual archives, like the records of the legendary - Chitra-Gupt,' the hidden scribes, which contain all the information about the past, present and future events. Generally, prophets and gurus possess such supernatural powers and they can reveal heavenly visions to any person of their choice.

Bhagat Ravidas paints a picture of the spiritual world in one of his compositions, "*Begumpura shahr ko nao*" as under:

The city joyful is the name of that city,
Suffering and sorrow abide not there.
Neither is there worry of paying
taxes, nor does any hold property;
This place of habitation have I found:
Brother! There weal perpetually reigns. (pause)
Eternally fixed is the kingship there in
No second or third are there: all are alike
There people deport themselves as they please -
All are inmates of that mansion; none bars any.

Japji, in its hymns 36 and 37, also contains verses describing the beauty and serene atmosphere of the spiritual world:

There is in it sweet music, joy and happiness unlimited.
Mystic vision and songs elevate
Inhabitants there to a most wondrous state.
There are fashioned beautiful things
Whose excellence cannot be described.
There are heroes imbued with God's pure burning flame;
They bathe in His light and they dwell in His name.
They die not, nor are they led astray.
In whose heart dwells the Lord.

Personal Experiences:

Like many, I too have had number of experiences with the spiritual world. They may not have a scientific explanation but they were vivid occurrences and to this day have deepened my appreciation of the mysteries of our being. During my military service at Jalandhar from 1955 to 1957, I was lucky to meet two great spiritual personalities: Sant Baba Jwala Singh of Harkhowa (1890-1957), great *brahmgyani* of the twentieth century, and Bhai Vir Singh (1872-1957), a renowned Punjabi poet, writer, novelist, and mystic who shunned recognition and publicity.

Sant Babaji shed his mortal frame on the 13th of November 1957 and his body was disposed of in a river on the 14th. I was 1500 miles away in South India. In two separate visions on the 13th and 14th mornings I saw all that was happening at the time of his death in a gurdwara room: the devotees around him covering his body in a white sheet. In the second vision I saw the caravan of vehicles, three small boats which carried the coffin to the centre of the river. In both these visions I saw myself amongst his nearest devotees and listened to Babaji's last words addressed to me.

Within a few days, a letter was received intimating death of Babaji along with a notice that he had *remembered me* before he shed his mortal frame. I went on leave and, to my great astonishment the description of the gurdwara, the location of the room and the sequence of events tallied exactly with my visions. He had shed his mortal coil at Domeli, a village not seen by me before, and his body was submerged in the Sutlej river. The wonder was that, whereas the death and water-burial had happened at about noon time, the visions were flashed six hours in advance during my morning prayers. In another incident in 1965, I was asked to move to another appointment due to some differences with my superior officer. Whilst I was thinking to make a representation against the unjustified transfer, Babaji appeared in a vision and told me “to get out to avoid imminent death.” I obeyed. Sure enough, the brigadier who had replaced me was killed in a Pakistan shelling six months later. Obviously, the all knowing Babaji is one of the eternal masters of the spiritual world.

Bhai Vir Singh, in addition to being a writer and a mystic, was also a keen gardener and lover of flowers. He died in 1957. While serving in North-East India in the 1960s, I collected some rare varieties of orchids from the remote areas for presentation to his home in Dehra Dun, where his younger brother, Dr Balbir Singh was living. While traveling by train to Dehra Dun in a first class compartment all by myself, I envisioned Bhai Sahib standing before me, receiving the orchids and holding them gently in his hands. He was smiling and thanking me for the beautiful collection. It was a clear vision and not an illusion or delusion. Some of those orchids are still flourishing in that house.

In another incident, I visioned Bhai Sahib rowing a canoe in a vast blue sparkling lake surrounded by beautiful hills, gardens, and meadows. The whole scene was illuminated beyond description. Bhai Sahib was alone and so was I, waiting for him on the shore. As he approached me, with a broad smile, he beckoned me to step in to enjoy the celestial atmosphere. The scene was so brilliant and serene that it appeared to be of some other world.

Many a times one of my relatives while listening to *shabad-keertan* on the radio broadcast from the Golden Temple, Amritsar, goes into a trance. She enjoys the *keertan* in the Temple itself without actually being present there. The body back home becomes stiff and remains unaware of its surroundings until the *samadhi* experience is over.

The object of this article is to remind us that we are not on this earth to merely eat, drink and be merry. We have to fulfill our spiritual aim in this life itself, and that is to gain entry into the domain of Truth or Reality (*Such-Khand*) by prayer, love and noble deeds. The five examples cited in brief provide glimpses of the spiritual world and fortify our belief in its existence. Its perception begins from within us and culminates in visualizing God in His entire creation.

We should remember that when we are fortunate to have a vision of illuminating experience, we are reminded that our being is much larger than the physical realm we daily perceive. Perhaps these experiences are meant to help us realize the limitations of the material world with all its desires and gives us a deeper perspective into what really is important.

The spiritual - or the other - world is also associated with Dharma - the Court of True Justice where we have to render accounts of our deeds after death. That is a separate subject.

