

Rising Spirit of the Sikhs: Never Surrender!

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Guru Arjun Dev Ji's martyrdom was indeed a turning point in the history of Sikhs. Supreme sacrifice is the correct term to describe the passage of Sikhs from the time Guru Nanak began his odyssey of Truth. In world history, before the mass extermination of Jews during the time of Hitler's quest for world power, it is the Sikhs who have, due to their distinctive appearance, robustness and uncommon courage, faced the brunt from all quarters, specially in India. How easy it was for Jinnah and Nehru in 1947 to demand independence from the British who decided upon the break-up of the sub-continent into Pakistan and India. But, for Sikhs, the partition opened a dark chapter. Guru Nanak's plea for unity and toleration had been lost on India's leaders.

Every year when the month of June approaches, haunting questions surface in my sub-conscious mind. "Had the Sikhs opted to go along with Jinnah's Pakistan, would the riots of 1947 have happened?" Or, "Had the Sikhs opted out of merging with India, would Punjab have been broken up into three limbs, that of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and a truncated Punjab?" Or still, "Had the Sikhs opted not to go along with Nehru and Gandhi, the pogrom of 1984 would never have been witnessed?" Or could it have been that, "Had the Sikhs opted to merge with Pakistan, would they have been either sucked into the fold of Islam or eliminated like the Jews"?

One cannot give definite answers to the above questions. But the fighting spirit of Sikhs has always surfaced, no matter wherever they settle down. The *chardi kala spirit*, of 'Never give up till your last breath' prevailed throughout history of the Sikhs, both in pre and post independence eras. This undying spirit was also observed in Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and retired Indian army Major-General Shahbeg Singh who became martyrs in June 1984.

How can a true Sikh allow the desecration of the holiest of holy Amritsar, where the eternal Guru of Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib was first installed by Guru Arjun Dev ji. Sikhs have always resisted, till their last breath, any attack on the Darbar Sahib. One need not go into the atrocities committed by Ahmed Shah Abdali's repeated intrusions to destroy the Akal Takht and Darbar Sahib, but the bouncing back spirit of Sikhs has kept the 'Nishaan Sahib' flying for centuries.

It is highly improbable that Indira Gandhi and her coterie were unaware that it was impossible for Sant-ji and Shahbeg Singh to win against the might of the Indian army, which had far superior modern weapons, while the defenders were not hardly well- equipped, as was reported later by the media. It is most likely that Sant ji and Shahbeg had the realization that they were facing **sure death**. They could have surrendered had the fear of death prevailed in them. They preferred martyrdom.

Sikh history is replete with examples, right from the era of the Gurus, that the term '**surrender**' is non-existent in the Sikh psyche. As far as physical surrender is concerned, it is not an easy affair to coerce a Sikh into giving up. Yes, Sikhs do 'surrender', not to any external force, or person, but only to their GURU. Such surrender envisages a submission of the mind. It is the *surat, matt, munn, budhi* which a Sikh surrenders at the feet of the Guru when he/she bows before Guru Granth Sahib, and in return accepts the *gur parsad* in the form of the *matt* of the Guru, the *hukumnama* to implement and practice in one's daily affairs. What a novel way that Sikhs have framed for the daily *hukumnamah* to be announced from Darbar Sahib, which is the universal Truth for all, not only for Sikhs.

Because Guru Arjun Dev ji's mind or *surati* was totally in tune with that of his grandfather,

Guru Amar Das ji, he was in total alignment with Akal Purakh. Due to his constant remembrance of God Guru Arjun, had without any rancor, faced the atrocities of the Mughal ruler, Jahangir, without showing any discomfort, anger or remorse. Thus began the saga of right to freedom for professing the religion of one's choice. He accepted the tortures stoically till he breathed his last, accepting DEATH as the sweet will of the Lord:

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਿ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਾਏ ॥ ਜਿਥੈ ਰਖੈ ਸਾ ਭਲੀ ਜਾਏ ॥ ਸੋਈ ਸਿਆਣਾ ਸੋ ਪਤਿਵੰਤਾ

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਲਗੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਮੀਠਾ ਜੀਉ ॥੧॥

MAAJH, FIFTH MEHL: **Let us do whatever the Lord inspires us to do.** Wherever He keeps us is a blessed place. That person is wise and honorable, unto whom the Lord's Command seems sweet. || 1 ||...SGGS 108, M-5.

So long as we do not accept the fact that we have to die ultimately, we cannot face death. Everyone knows this, but rarely one accepts it. There is a vast difference between **knowing and accepting**. Guru Arjun, and the countless martyrs in Sikh History, were conscious of this fact. They not only knew this fact but their minds had also accepted this reality. It is only when one has accepted the reality of physically dying, and does constant meditation, that all fear and anxieties vanish. Whosoever has overcome the fear of death can always boldly face death. To become fearless of death one has to know the technique according to Gurbani:

ਦੇਖਹੁ ਪਸਾਰਿ ਨੈਨ ਸੁਨਹੁ ਸਾਧੂ ਕੇ ਬੈਨ ਪ੍ਰਾਨਪਤਿ ਰਿਤਿ ਰਾਖੁ ਸਗਲ ਹੈ ਮਰਨਾ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Behold, with your eyes wide-open, and listen to the Words of the Holy Saints; enshrined in your consciousness the Lord of Life - **remember that all must die.** || Pause ||...SGGS 678, M-5.

Let's ponder what Bhagat Kabir ji says on 'death' :

ਕਬੀਰ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਰਨੇ ਤੇ ਜਗੁ ਡਰੈ ਮੇਰੇ ਮਨਿ ਆਨੰਦੁ ॥ ਮਰਨੇ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਪਾਈਐ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦੁ ॥੨੨॥

Kabir, the world is afraid of death - yet that death fills my mind with bliss. It is only through death that supreme bliss is obtained. || 22 ||...(SGGS 1365, Bhagat Kabeer ji)

ਕਬੀਰ ਕਸਉਟੀ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ ਝੂਠਾ ਟਿਕੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਰਾਮ ਕਸਉਟੀ ਸੋ ਸਹੈ ਜੋ ਮਰਿ ਜੀਵਾ ਹੋਇ ॥੩੩॥

Kabir, no one who is false can withstand the Touchstone of the Lord. He alone can pass the test of the Lord's Touchstone **who accepts death while yet alive.** || 33 ||

Physical death has no significance whatsoever for true Sikhs. For a Sikh to be dead while alive is what really matters. And only the GURMUKH fulfils this criteria.

ਸਲੋਕ ॥ ਕਬੀਰਾ ਮਰਤਾ ਮਰਤਾ ਜਗੁ ਮੁਆ ਮਰਿ ਭਿ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਐਸੀ ਮਰਨੀ ਜੋ ਮਰੈ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਮਰਨਾ ਹੋਇ

॥੧॥ ਮ: ੩ ॥ ਕਿਆ ਜਾਣਾ ਕਿਵ ਮਰਹਗੇ ਕੈਸਾ ਮਰਣਾ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਜੇ ਕਰਿ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮਨਹੁ ਨ ਵੀਸਰੈ ਤਾ ਸਹਿਲਾ ਮਰਣਾ

ਹੋਇ ॥ ਮਰਣੈ ਤੇ ਜਗਤੁ ਡਰੈ ਜੀਵਿਆ ਲੋੜੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਬੁਝੈ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਐਸੀ

ਮਰਨੀ ਜੋ ਮਰੈ ਤਾ ਸਦ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥੨॥ ਪਉੜੀ ॥

SHALOK: Kabir, people die inevitably, - but no one knows how to die truly. Whoever dies, let him die such a death that he does not have to die again. || 1 || THIRD MEHL: What do I know? How will I die? What sort of death will it be? If I do not forget the Lord Master from my mind, then my death will be graceful. The world is terrified of death; everyone longs to live. **By Guru's Grace, one who 'accepts death while yet alive,' understands the Lord's Will.** O Nanak, one who dies such a death, lives forever. || 2 || PAUREE...SGGS 555, Bhagat Kabir ji.

ਅਬ ਮਨੁ ਉਲਟਿ ਸਨਾਤਨੁ ਹੁਆ ॥ ਤਬ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਜਬ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮੁਆ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਸੁਖਿ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਵਉ ॥ ਆਪਿ

ਨ ਡਰਉ ਨ ਅਵਰ ਡਰਾਵਉ ॥੩॥੧੭॥

My mind has now been restored to its original purity. **When I became dead while yet alive, only then did I come to know the Lord.** Says Kabir, I am now immersed in intuitive peace and poise. I do not fear anyone, and I do not strike fear into anyone either. || 3 || 17 ||...SGGS 327, Bhagat Kabir ji.

While Guru Arjun was being tortured to death, he was in deep meditation, in constant remembrance of God. For Him the soul was immortal. He was aware that bodily death cannot kill His soul, *atma*.

ਸਿਮਰਉ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਸੁਖ ਪਾਵਉ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਾਸਿ ਸਮਾਲੇ ॥ ਇਹ ਲੋਕਿ ਪਰਲੋਕਿ ਸੰਗਿ ਸਹਾਈ ਜਤ ਕਤ ਮੋਹਿ
ਰਖਵਾਲੇ ॥੧॥ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਬਚਨੁ ਬਸੈ ਜੀਅ ਨਾਲੇ ॥ ਜਲਿ ਨਹੀ ਡੂਬੈ ਤਸਕਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਲੇਵੈ ਭਾਹਿ ਨ ਸਾਕੈ ਜਾਲੇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ
॥ ਨਿਰਧਨ ਕਉ ਧਨੁ ਅੰਧੁਲੇ ਕਉ ਟਿਕ ਮਾਤ ਦੂਧੁ ਜੈਸੇ ਬਾਲੇ ॥ ਸਾਗਰ ਮਹਿ ਬੋਹਿਥੁ ਪਾਇਓ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ
ਕਿਰਪਾਲੇ ॥੨॥੧॥੩੨॥

Remembering, ever remembering, Him in meditation, I find peace; with each and every breath, I dwell upon Him. In this world, and in the world beyond, God is with me, as my help and support; wherever I go, He protects me. || 1 || **The Guru's Word abides with my soul. This treasure does not sink in water; thieves cannot steal it, and fire cannot burn it.** || 1 || Pause || It is like bread to the poor, support for the blind, and mother's milk for the infant. In the ocean of the world, I have found the boat of the Lord; the Merciful Lord has bestowed His Mercy upon Nanak. (SGGS 679, M-5)

In late 20th century the martyrdom of Sant Bhindranwale and Shahbeg Singh, as well as countless Sikh devotees (whose names perhaps would never appear in recorded history of India as martyrs) measures up to the same tradition. They are reminders for all Sikhs as well as fellow-Indians that, **"The true Sikh at heart only surrenders to Shabad Guru and none else"**.

1984 thus marks the renewal of that spirit of sacrifice which had been demonstrated by Guru Arjun Dev Ji in 1605.

