

Guru Hargobind & Miri-Piri Principle: A Role Model for Youth

Onkar Singh*

* 703 Solitare, Hiranandani Gardens, Powai Mumbai 400 076.

Guru Hargobind, who became our sixth Guru (spiritual prophet), in June 1606 at the young age of ELEVEN was an extraordinary human being, a dynamic youth who combined spiritual conviction with a heroic vision, who put in place the indomitable twin doctrine of *Miri Piri*, rooted in faith, righteousness and valour. Quintessentially, a holy man given to contemplation and prayers come to end tyranny and establish peace, he had been revolted at the savage torture to death of his revered father, Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, and an apostle of peace. The thought of the same thing happening again was unbearable. The people had to be protected from the grim challenge to their Faith.

Guru Hargobind placed high value on tolerance, independence and freedom to practice one's faith. He braced himself to meet the challenge posed by the ruthless Mughal regime. Injustice and cruelty must be met. Oppression was unacceptable.

He conceptualised the authority of *Miri* (temporal) and *Piri* (spiritual), and decided to wear two swords: a sword of *Shakti* (power) and a sword of *Bhakti* (meditation). One was to smite the oppressor and the other to protect the virtuous and innocent. It offered a power boost to help the Sikhs handle any threat. Now, they were to arm themselves as they were most exposed to dangers of persecution and oppression.

Guru Hargobind had an unequivocal commitment to spur social change, and build up the morale of the people to be courageous. He encouraged them to live an active life of fearlessness. Being a keen sportsman, he interested them in horsemanship and hunting. An armed force of volunteers and vigorous youth was organised. It was primarily for self defence. His followers carried weapons, rode horses and took part in parades displaying their valour and skills. They brought him gifts of horses and weapons. They wouldn't frighten anyone nor be afraid of anybody. This was their maxim. They grew increasingly aware of the need to protect themselves. No more did they believe in self-abnegation. **It was a turning point in Sikh polity. The concept of saint-soldier had taken shape. This new orientation to Sikh polity found its finest expression in Guru Hargobind's grandson, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, who skillfully fused the peaceful and saintly heritage of Guru Nanak, the founding Prophet of the Sikh Faith, with martial spirit. He created the Khalsa. It was a fraternity of the pure in spirit, unalloyed with any pretension of class or caste. It was dedicated to peace, harmony and the service of humanity, yet willing to dare and ready to die fighting for a righteous cause. It was a fight for self-defence and against religious intolerance and human oppression.** It was never a war of aggression.

The shock of Guru Arjun Dev's martyrdom made Guru Hargobind even more ready to offer an effective challenge to the oppressive rulers of the country. He had to fight a number of battles with the militant Mughal forces. He won many battles because the cause was righteous. Every time he came out famously triumphant against heavy odds. His inspired men fought bravely and convincingly to thwart the pernicious attack, though outnumbered by the well-equipped and huge hostile forces. Nevertheless, he felt overwhelming sadness for those killed in the battlefield. He was concerned with welfare of the casualties from combat.

With a spiritual reformer's vision for the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind laid particular stress on scriptures to be read with full understanding and meaning. He told them that anyone who

could recite the *Japji*, (the celestial hymn of Guru Nanak) with undivided attention, devotion and understanding, would have his wish fulfilled. It inspired deep devotion in the Sikh sangat.

There is an irony that the Mughal Emperor Jehangir, under whose orders Guru Arjun was brutally tortured to death, became friendly to Guru Hargobind: It is legendary that the moment the king met Guru Hargobind, on being summoned to Delhi, his youthful charm and holiness completely won him over. The King posed the question: "Which religion is better, Hinduism or Islam?" The Guru replied quoting Kabir:

God first created light
All men are born out of it,
The whole world came out of a single spark.
Who is good and who is bad?
The Creator is in the Creation
And the creation in the creator,
He is everywhere.
The clay is the same, even as
The potter fashions various models.
There is nothing wrong with the clay or the potter.
God, the True One, resides in all,
Whatever happens is His doing.....

The sermon impressed the King very much. He had been told that Guru Hargobind was a great sportsman. He invited the Guru to a tiger hunt. During the hunt, the king was attacked by a ferocious tiger. Suddenly, Guru Hargobind, riding a horse, pounced on the tiger, killing it with his sword. The King admired the way the Guru risked his life to save him.

Now, Guru Hargobind became a constant companion of the king, who would take the Guru along wherever he went. He accompanied the King to Agra, Kashmir, Amritsar and Lahore. At Amritsar, the king stayed as guest of Guru Hargobind. Queen Nur Jehan became a great admirer of the Guru. She called on him a number of times. She was fascinated to hear from him that the charm of a woman lay in her virtue and devotion to her husband. She also met the Guru's mother a couple of times.

At Agra, the King was taken seriously ill. The royal physicians couldn't cure him. His astrologers told him that as the malady was due to conjunction of stars, it could be remedied only if a holy man was sent to the Gwalior Fort to offer prayers. Who could be holier than Guru Hargobind? The Guru readily agreed to move when requested to do so. At Gwalior he found several Rajas detained in the fort. They lived in deplorable conditions. The Guru ensured their living conditions improved. They joined him in daily prayers.

Meanwhile, the king had completely recovered. But the Guru wouldn't leave the fort unless the detained Rajas were also released. Eventually, the king agreed. Guru Hargobind left the fort along with all the fifty-two Rajas, who had been languishing there for years. The spot where Guru Hargobind stayed in the Gwalior fort is well-known as *Bandi Chhor*, the liberator of the detainee. (Once, this writer had the privilege to visit this sacred spot in the fort and offered prayers to the memory of the great, benevolent Guru).

As it transpired, one wealthy and resentful Chandu Shah had conspired, in league with the astrologers, to have Guru Hargobind sent to Gwalior to seek revenge for the alleged indignity suffered by the Guru's refusal to accept his daughter's hand. He even incited the Governor of the fort, Haridas to poison the Guru, not realising that Haridas was an ardent devotee of the Guru.

When the King met Guru Hargobind in Delhi to thank him for prayers for his recovery, the

Guru disabused the King's mind about the so-called unfavourable conjunction of stars. He plainly told him about Chandu's villainy and also about his plotting the appalling torture of Guru Arjun. Perhaps, already aware of Chandu's perfidy, the King lost no time in handing over Chandu to the Guru whose escorts seized upon Chandu and paraded him in the streets of Delhi and Lahore where he met with verbal abuse and insults hurled at him. In Lahore, the violent locals beat him to death and threw his body into the river. When the Guru learnt about it, he prayed for Chandu to be pardoned for his crimes.

The *miri-piri* authority conceptualised to meet the challenge of the times, is Guru Hargobind's distinctive contribution to the Sikh ethos. It infused a new religious fervour among the Sikhs, now inspired to challenge any oppressor.

His other great contribution is the founding of *Akal Takht* (eternal Throne) to be the seat of temporal authority. It is a famous shrine facing Harmandir Sahib (the Golden temple). It has since become the seat of supreme authority in both religious and secular matters concerning the Sikhs who are enjoined to accept its decisions without demur.

□

'I am Rabbi Shergill'

Rati Chaudhary

I consider myself spiritual to some degree. I am inquisitive, I want to know the reason of my being, who I am and where I come from. I am religious but in Sikhism we don't have stringent rules so I do not necessarily go to Gurdwara every Sunday but I still believe in the Higher Power. Our religion is flexible. I pray to God but according to my convenience. I think my relationship with God is now beyond praying. It has reached a certain level where I can connect with God anytime and not only if I face a certain side or sit in a certain position.

I think of God anytime, not necessarily in the time of adversity. I connect to God best through my singing. In times of adversity I have found myself turning towards the higher Power. There have been numerous incidents like this. The philosophy by which I live my life is ***pooja akal ki, parcha sabad ka, didar khalse ka*** (I worship the timeless that is the best way of seeking purity.) My upbringing has totally influenced my spiritual beliefs. My father was a preacher and therefore I have some genetic influence of it. Like an engineer's son knows what a handle or a lever is there were certain things that I learnt without being taught. There have been instances in the past where I have felt God's presence around me but I think that they are too personal to be revealed.

[As told to *Rati Chaudhary*]

Amandeep Singh: A Talented Skier

Amandeep Singh is emerging as a talented Skier. This young Sikh student of 7th class at Akal Academy, Baru Sahib, Himachal Pradesh, started skiing at a very tender age and participated in many events. This year, he participated in the Asian Ski Federation's 16th Asian Alpine Ski-Championship (Children) from March 7th to 8th, 2007 at YongPong Resort Gangwon Province, Korea.

□