

# Ego foreshadows Man's downfall

**SURJAN SINGH, PBS, BA (LONDON)\***

---

\* # 547, Serangoon North Ave 3, # 15-164, Singapore 550547. Email: surjan19@yahoo.com

---

IN THE *MOOL-MANTRA* OF JAPJI SAHIB, the Creator is defined as unborn (*ajuni*). As such, God does not enter the womb of a woman and therefore does not take birth. Guru Arjun Dev ji has used even stronger words, saying, "Burnt be that mouth which says that the Lord enters into existences" (SGGS, 1136).

A question arises: if God is unborn, then how come He has come into existence. Guru Nanak's simple answer is that the Lord Himself created Himself and assumed Himself the Name – "*Aapine Aap Sajio, Aapine Rachio Nao*" (SGGS:463). In *Raag Maru*, Guru ji says that for thirty-six ages, there was pitch darkness, and abiding in the void, God sat in absolute trance, completely withdrawn from everything.

From the "*Nirgun*" state, the Lord decided to assume His "*Sargun*" state, i.e. "*Nirgun te Sargun Thia*" (940). *Nirgun* means, without attributes of Maya (illusion) and unseen, and *Sargun*, with the attributes of Maya and seen in Mother Nature.

The three attributes of Maya are described as *Satogun*, *Rajogun* and *Tammogun*. In a person, the three attributes will result in pride and ego (*Haumei*), causing not only suffering, but also push a person into the cycle of birth and death.

Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, how the three attributes tie a person with very powerful chains. A person, who is without sin and has no evil thoughts, is in the *Satogun* state. This knowledge that he is such a good person, pulls him towards pride. In the *Rajogun*, a person becomes a prisoner of fleeting enjoyments. The cause of *tammogun* is ignorance. It leads a person towards the five great evils –of lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. These three states tie up a person and cause him to go through the cycle of births and deaths.

Gurbani tells us of a fourth state, which is above the three attributes mentioned. It is known as "*turia*" state. In *Thiti Gauri* (SGGS 297), Guru Arjun says that the three qualities are harassing the world but a rare one attains the fourth state of bliss and is saved. Such a rare person has only goodness and love for everyone. He is not under the influence of greed and avarice. He is not ostentatious and what he does is purely with love and reverence and without expecting a reward.

A strange play of God occurred when the Lord transformed from *Nirgun* to *Sargun* state. He decided to sit in every part of His creation and in every person. Guru Nanak, in *Raag Sorath*, says, "*I have seen one greatness of Thine, that Thou art contained amongst all*" (SGGS :596).

But due to the three attributes, every person thinks that he is different from another. And though everybody has in him the pure light from God, a person becomes self-centred, thinking of his own goodness and vileness, causing a clash of ideas. The ego in man prevents him from seeing the pure light which is a gift from God. Guru Nanak has summed up beautifully in *Raag Ramkali* (page 877) the inability to see the light and meet God:

ਦੁਖੁ ਦਰਵਾਜਾ ਰੋਹੁ ਰਖਵਾਲਾ

ਆਸਾ ਅੰਦਸਾ ਦੁਇ ਪਟ ਜੜੇ ॥  
ਮਾਇਆ ਜਲੁ ਖਾਈ ਪਾਣੀ ਘਰੁ ਬਾਧਿਆ  
ਸਤ ਕੈ ਆਸਣਿ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਰਹੈ ॥

The pure light of God, is sitting in a fort, which is surrounded by a moat of *Maya* (illusion) in which greed and other worldly desires have made their home. A person can only reach inside where the pure light is, and reach the fort by swimming across the moat. To complicate matters, the door of the fort is made of strong wooden planks (ਪਟ) of suffering (ਦੁਖੁ) and also of hope and anxiety (ਆਸਾ ਅੰਦੇਸ਼ਾ). The guardsman at the door is Anger, who does not allow anybody to enter the fort.

In this way, the soul of an egoist is prevented from meeting the Creator. Guru Nanak says in *Raag Aasa* (pg 439) – “ਨਦੀਆਂ ਵਾਹ ਵਿਛੁੰਨਿਆ ਮੇਲਾ ਸੰਜੋਗੀ ਰਾਮ ॥”, meaning a water course separated from the main river, can meet again perchance.

Water engineers are known to build huge dams and turn the direction of the river flow. At a later stage downstream, they can re-unite the flow of the separated water with the main river.

There is hope for the egoist, who has been separated from His Lord. But this is only possible, if he meets a holy man or a saint, who is already in intimation with God. Guru Nanak was able to save sinners and murderers, such as Sajjan Thug, Kauda Rakash, and many others. Only a True Guru (ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ), can join the separated soul with the Lord.

For humanity, the strongest trammel or chain, which imprisons the soul and does not allow it to meet God, is ego.

Let's ponder on the words of Guru Angad Devji in *Raag Aasa* (pg 466) – “ਹਉਮੈ ਏਈ ਬੰਧਨਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜੋਨੀ ਪਾਹਿ ॥”



### References

Sargun Nirgun Nirankar – tract (series 342) issued by Guru Nanak Dev Mission, Patiala.  
Bhagavat Gita (Steek) – by Pandit Chakradhari Bezar.  
Translation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib – by Manmohan Singh.