

Guru Gobind Singh as People's Prophet

DR. JASWANT SINGH SACHDEV, MD*

* 4438, E. Beryl Lane, Phoenix, Arizona. 85028. (USA).

AURANGZEB, THE LAST OF POWERFUL Mogul Emperors of India, virtually wrested the throne from Shah Jahan, his father who is best known as builder of the Taj Mahal. Then he unleashed a state-sponsored repression of majority Hindu population. His *subedars* plundered their homes and hearths and violated their fundamental human rights while denying them the freedom to practice their own religion. He routinely used torture as a vehicle of coercion to convert Indian population into the Islamic fold. In order to seek protection from these relentless atrocities, a delegate of Kashmiri Pundits, under the leadership of a Brahmin, Kirpa Ram Mattan arrived at the court of the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Teg Bahadur. Upon listening to the details of torture being perpetrated upon Hindus, Guru Teg Bahadur became deeply contemplative. Once Kirpa Ram Mattan finished his heart piercing story, Guruji mentioned to his son Gobind, that in order to thwart such nefarious designs, a courageous and spiritual soul was needed to stand up to Aurangzeb. And this might entail a personal sacrifice. Child Gobind innocently suggested, "There could not be a more suitable person than you, my father, to put a halt to this torture". It was a statement of great moral conviction uttered by a child who was born with a divine awareness of human rights. The possession of such spiritual wisdom at a very early age later on showed up again in the creation of "Khalsa" or the pure ones. The Sikhs all over the world celebrated his 338th Birthday last December.

Liberty: Guru Gobind Singh's reaffirmation of his own commitment to democratic ideals of openness and accountability, so dearly sought in this modern day and age, becomes very obvious through two letters "*Fatehnamah*" and "*Zafarnamah*," or epistles of victory, that he wrote to Aurangzeb circa December 1704. These letters, written in Persian verse, truly describe his beliefs about the behavior that a ruler must follow. Very openly and without any fear he told Aurangzeb: "Your name does not become you, Aurangzeb, since your ways are deceitful" (Broadly translated, Aurangzeb means "pride of throne").⁽¹⁾ Further in the letter, he underscores the necessity for the rulers to abide by the same moral principles that they expected from the ruled. "Transparency or openness in actions and integrity of purpose are ethical convictions that must be adhered to, both by the ruler and the ruled".⁽²⁾ Guru Gobind Singh did not hesitate at all in calling a spade a spade when he said: "He alone is a cultured man, he alone is worthy of being called a human being, whose 'yes' is a 'yes' and whose 'no' means 'no'. He, who says one thing but means and intends another one, is sub-human."⁽³⁾ In fact these letters publicly indicted and admonished the Emperor for his misdeeds and evil ways. He goes on further, "You believe neither in God nor the Prophet. You do not keep your word; you lie; you keep your faith in worldly weal and not in God. You know not the value of an oath on the Quran".⁽⁴⁾

Saint as Hero: Most of the human beings depart from this earth after having a mere existence in which they primarily keep their focus on their own needs. Many live for their families, friends and relatives. One might occasionally come across a few personalities, in the pages of history who truly live by morally correct and

spiritually uplifting ways to uphold democratic principles. In doing so, at times, they had to undertake the challenge of liberating their countrymen from the clutches of unjust rulers who seek to trample and plunder the existing indigenous faith, culture and history. These unjust rulers often use all available means including torture and death to convert the poor, the helpless, the weak and the meek. It was such a point in history when a Godly man, Guru Gobind Singh appeared at the Indian scene. He first offered resistance through peaceful negotiations to those who, instead of following true codes of ruler-ship, used vehicles of torture to decimate everything Indian. As a last resort, when all peaceful measures failed, only then he opted for the use of unavoidable force through open battles to uphold and reaffirm democratic ideals.

Justice: To establish a morally correct democratic society in order to protect his birth land and the human rights of its people as well as their culture and faiths, he not only made personal sacrifice but also that of his entire family, including his great-grand father, father, mother and four young children. “It is through such sacrifices that this mortal became immortal yet he maintained extreme humility and avoided the trap of a personality cult. He was a true nationalist of India, catering only to God Almighty, his country and its people. He created a pure and fearless group of followers, the Khalsa, from amongst the ordinary downtrodden people of India who had lost hope, courage and their country to the invaders of the middle-east. He was Guru, yet declared Himself a *Chela*, or disciple, and behaved like one to his followers, a true philosophy of democratic ideals never seen before nor will ever be.”⁽⁶⁾

Equality: It fills me with great pride to quote here what has been so eloquently stated by the historian-theologian, Dr. Gopal Singh; “He abolished privilege and raised the lowest as equal in all ways to the highest and restored to man his manhood, to woman her woman-hood. To him temple and mosques were one and same. Freedom, freedom, freedom resounded from everywhere, freedom from foreign tyranny as much as from what drags man down: superstition, hypocrisy, ego, self-pity and covetousness, and worst of all, the joyless round of a living in slavery. He only lived for mere two scores and two years but in this short span of life he changed the map of India and world”⁽⁶⁾. It was he, who, over three centuries ago, started liberating his motherland from the clutches of foreign invaders and initiated the true process of democracy.

Yet his followers unfortunately failed grossly in not fully informing the people of India and the world about his extraordinary role in history. As a consequence, a few of his own countrymen, in their naivety and ignorance, labeled this true servant of God a ‘misguided patriot’. Obviously, those who said so, perhaps did it without knowing the full story.

Sacrifice: “Had this morally correct revolutionary at the early age of nine not implored his own father to lay down his life at Chandni Chowk in Delhi for pursuit of liberty and for the protection of religious freedom for the people of India in letting them keep their ‘*Tilak* and *Janehoo*’-the sacred forehead mark and sacred thread of the Hindus, the religious landscape of India would have been entirely different than what we have today.”⁽⁷⁾

Through his unparalleled sacrifices, Guru Gobind Singh sowed the seeds of freedom and democracy so that the people of India could enjoy its glow for generations to come. He knew that as time passes, people will collect enough strength to choose and follow their faiths without any fear or favor, thanks to the divine foresight of this great man of God.

That is why historians and writers glorify this King of Kings, Guru Gobind Singh Ji as “*Mard Agammrah*” or “the unfathomable man beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. In the middle of a vast ocean, under a dark and starless night, his democratic ideals now and forever will stand firm like a beacon, unaffected by dangerous tides of hurricanes and typhoons, always imparting the message of democracy through its penetrating rays of hope-filled light.



References

(1, 2, 3) Patwant Singh “*The Sikhs*, published by Alfred A. Knopf (2000)

(4) Dr. Santokh Singh, published by Spiritual Awakening Studies Canada

(5, 6, 7) Dr. Gopal Singh quoted in a pamphlet “*Darbar-E-Khalsa*” (2003)