

The Concept of Ideal Man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ)

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AN IDEAL MAN FORMS THE EPITOME of the Sikh philosophy (ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ) and Sikh way of life (ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਰਹਿਣੀ), prescribed in Sri Guru Granth Sahib – the Holy Scripture, as well as the Eternal and Living Shabad Guru (ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ), of the Sikhs. Guru Nanak (founder of Sikhism) exhorts man to become an Ideal person having unique character and identity. After explaining the nature of Ultimate Reality, in the mool mantra (ਮੂਲ ਮੰਤਰ) and the opening sloka of ‘Japuji’, he at once comes to the problem of a seeker, and poses a question: “How can we become truthful and how can we break the bond of falsehood”? Then comes the answer in the same stanza (ਪਉੜੀ): “By obeying His Will (hukam), which is written along with everyone”: ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ॥ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ॥ (੧). The concept of ‘ideal man’ seems to have been derived from his metaphysical structure, which is explicitly explained in the ‘Japuji’ and other hymns (ਸ਼ਬਦ) of Guru Granth Sahib.

Almost all the religious scriptures of the world guide us how to become a ideal persons (ਆਦਰਸ਼ ਵਿਅਕਤੀ). In this context Taran Singh points out: “Man, not God, is the central figure of the scriptures and all the messengers sent by God have been looking for the Ideal Man.”¹ “An ideal man is one whose activities and pursuits in life are oriented towards achievement of an ideal of human life.”² In fact, the concept and characteristics of the ideal man reveal the entire structure, the salient features and worldview of a religion.”³

The subject of the present article is “The Concept of Ideal man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib”. Prior to discussing the topic, it is necessary to be acquainted with the connotations of the words- ‘ideal’, ‘ideal man’ or ‘gurmukh’. These terms conform to an ultimate form of perfection or excellence, exemplary, model, perfect, supreme, exemplar, model, standard, pattern, etc. Therefore, ‘Ideal man’ is a supreme and model person having ultimate form of perfection or excellence and exemplary character. At this point, we should be clear that the ‘ideal man’ includes both male and woman.

‘Gurmukh’ and other synonymous terms

Guru Granth Sahib uses different terms, which comprise their specific connotations in particular contexts. A few of these are: *sachiâr* (ਜੇ ਕੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਹੋਵੈ ਸਚਿਆਰੁ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੩), *gurmukh* (ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਹਿ...॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੧੪), *bhagat* (ਸੋਈ ਭਗਤ ਜਿਨ ਸਚਿ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੩੪੨), *sevak* (ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਸੋ ਹਰਿ ਜੇਹਾ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੭੬), *mahâpurakh* (ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵਹਿ ਸੇ ਮਹਾਪੁਰਖ ਸੰਸਾਰੇ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੬੧), *âshak* (ਨਾਨਕ ਆਸਕੁ ਕਾਂਚੀਐ ਸਦ ਹੀ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਇ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੪੭੪), *sikh* (ਸੋ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਖਾ ਬੰਧੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੬੦੧), *gursikh* (ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਧੂੜਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਕੀ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਾਵੈ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੩੦੬), *giânî* (ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੨), *brahamgiânî* (ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਬੰਧਨ ਤੇ ਮੁਕਤਾ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੨੭੩), *sâdh* (ਇਹ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਜਿਸੁ ਭੇਟਤ ਤਰੀਐ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੩੨੦), *sant* (ਪੰਨੁ ਸਿ ਸੋਈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਪੂਰਨੁ ਸੋਈ ਸੰਤੁ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੩੧੯), *jan* (ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਮਹਿ ਜਨੁ ਜਨ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੨੮੭), *dâs* (ਠਾਕੁਰ ਮਹਿ ਦਾਸੁ ਦਾਸ ਮਹਿ ਸੋਇ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੬੮੬), *sûrâ* (ਸੂਰੇ ਸੋਈ ਆਗੈ ਆਖੀਅਹਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਸਾਚੀ ਮਾਣੋ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੫੮੦), *mukt* (ਸੇ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਸੇ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਭਏ ਜਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਧਿਆਇਆ ਜੀਉ ਤਿਨ ਟੂਟੀ ਜਮ ਕੀ ਫਾਸੀ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੩੪੮), *panch* (ਪੰਚੇ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਦਰਗਹਿ ਮਾਨੁ॥

ਪੰਨਾ ੩), mukta (ਜਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੋ ਸੋ ਨਰੁ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਜਾਨੁ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੪੨੮), jīvanmukt (ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਸੋ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਸੁ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਜਾਇ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੧੦).

For example, sachiâr (ਸਚਿਆਰ) invests with the search for cardinal virtue of truthfulness, which is the supreme ideal for man. Gurmukh (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) is an ideal man of faith with complete orientation to the shabad-gurû; bhagat (ਭਗਤ) is a man of devotion, chief characteristic of sevak (ਸੇਵਕ) is complete surrender before gurû and God as well as brahamgiani (ਬ੍ਰਹਮਗਿਆਨੀ) is completely an enlightened self (a person of cosmic awareness). It seems that Gurus used these terms in Sri Guru Granth Sahib to depict the ideal image of man. We agree with Taran Singh's statement, "These epithets even are sufficient to give a glimpse of the ideal level of human existence."⁴

Avtar Singh, a noted scholar, explains: "In Japuji, this real self is termed by Guru Nanak, sachiâra (ਸਚਿਆਰ), which is the apex of self-realization.⁵ He further explains, "It may be interesting to mention here that though this ideal or real self is named here as sachiâra Guru Nanak himself has used many terms to refer to this apex of realization. For example, in his famous discourse with siddhas (included in Âdi Granth, and called Siddh Goshti), we first find the reference to realized self as sant and then in the next few stanzas, this ideal self is identified as gurmukh. When we come to the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, we find that sometimes this ideal self is called Brahamagiânî and all that was said about the gurmukh is said about Brahamagiânî in his composition Sukhmanî"⁵

Though these different terms used in Sri Guru Granth Sahib emphasize different aspects of the ideal man, yet it does not follow that other aspects are missing in his personality. Some scholars lay emphasis on theoretical and rational aspects of an ideal man's personality (ਬ੍ਰਹਮਗਿਆਨੀ). It appears that Guru gives balanced significance to all the aspects of human personality. Hence, brahamgiani is a practical person in the social context (ਬ੍ਰਹਮਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਉਮਾਹਾ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੨੨੩). He is an enlightened being who actively participates in all walks of social life. Similarly, gurmukh is not only a man with ethical personality but he utters the unutterable (ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਕਥੁ ਕਥੈ ਬੀਚਾਰਿ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੯੪੧) and knows the secrets of inner life through the Guru (ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਰਚੈ ਅੰਤਰ ਬਿਧਿ ਜਾਨੀ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੯੪੧).

In fact, the 'ideal man' of Guru Granth Sahib is an embodiment of the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of human personality. Based on these three dimensions of human personality giân mârg (ਗਿਆਨ ਮਾਰਗ) represents the cognitive aspect whereas karam mârg (ਕਰਮ ਮਾਰਗ) represents the conative dimension and bhagatî mârg (ਭਗਤੀ ਮਾਰਗ) refers to the affective one of human personality. Emphasis on one aspect of personality does not mean that other ingredients are missing. Guru Nanak wanted to develop an ideal man, who could harmoniously develop these three aspects without ignoring any one of them. Avtar Singh supporting this viewpoint says, "The self, through its cognitive, affective and conative functions, is to proceed to its ideal realization."⁶

In order to develop such an ideal man Guru Nanak seems to have selected a term gurmukh, which covers almost all the important aspects of a realized self or a perfect man. In fact, his personality traits reveal the entire structure of man as given in the compositions of Guru Granth Sahib. In this series, the 'Siddh Goshti' (ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਸਿਧ ਗੋਸਟਿ ੯੩੮-੪੬) is one of such compositions, in which concept of ideal man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) is systematically explained. Guru Nanak has adopted dialogue as the medium to portray the attributes of an ideal man

(ਗੁਰਮੁਖ). In the 'Siddh Goshti' he discloses to the siddhas that he has become 'recluse' (udâsī) in order to find out an ideal man (gurmukh) who is God-oriented:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਖੋਜਤ ਭਏ ਉਦਾਸੀ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੯੩੯.

The study of Guru Granth Sahib reveals that a word 'gurmukh' (gur= Guru; mukh= face) is employed in several distinct shades of signification. For instance, the gurmukh is the Primordial Guru (ਪਰਮਾਤਮਾ), the Guru (ਗੁਰੂ), the mystic sound (ਨਾਦ), the face of the Guru (ਗੁਰੂ ਮੁੱਖ), etc. However, the principal sense in which the word 'ਗੁਰਮੁਖ' most frequently occurs in the Guru Granth Sahib is that of the God-conscious or God-inspired man— one who follows the way of life prescribed by the Guru and acts on his precepts. In this sense, he has his "face turned towards the Guru and imbued with the Word."

The root meaning of the term suggests that gurmukh, as an ideal man of Guru Granth Sahib, abides by the instructions (ਸਿੱਖਿਆਵਾਂ) of the spiritual Guru and acts upon these both in spirit and letter. Religious and metaphorical sense of word 'gurmukh' requires a deeper interpretation, which ensures that whatever the Guru utters is to be accepted by the disciple. Different scholars from diverse standpoints have defined the word gurmukh. Ravinder G.B. Singh gives the root and meaning of the word '*gurmukh*' as "Guru Nanak also uses the term Guramukha (Skt: *guru* [*gr+ku*] + *mukha* [*mu+khan*] for one who looks upon his *guru* for instructions and directions, as against one who is *manamukha* (Skt: *manas* [*man+asun*] + [*mukha*] or self-willed."⁷

Based on the literal meaning, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha defines the term 'gurmukh' as a person who is face-to-face with the gurû and never turns away from the gurû.⁸ According to Sohan Singh, "gurmukh is the face of the gurû or gurû's mouth by implication."⁹ G.S.Talib defines, (one facing God ward or towards the preceptor), is "...a person of deep spiritual yearning and vision and is an exalted appellation."¹⁰ The gurmukh thus embodies the acme of the personality typology assumed in Guru Granth Sahib. The God-facing man (gurmukh) is inspired by the Guru's spirit. He exactly follows the Guru's teaching, for he is "merged in the Guru's Word" (ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਮਾਰਾ ਹੇ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੫੫).

We can evolve the term gurmukh, in contrast to manmukh (ਮਨਮੁਖ) - the ego-centred one, who has turned his face away from the Guru. "Guru Nanak divides men into two categories only - the God-oriented (gurmukh) and the self-oriented (manmukh) (ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਨਮੁਖੁ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਵੇਮੁਖੀਆ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੧੩੧). God-oriented are those who, shedding all evil, practise the truth and draw closer to the Creator. The self-oriented follow the whims of their minds, practise untruth, fraud, deceit, etc. and remain involved in the worldly enjoyments."¹¹ Guru Nanak explains: The manmukh has lost and the gurmukh has gained. (ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਖੋਇਆ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਯਾ॥ ੯੩੯) Thus, in these stanzas (ਪਉੜੀਆਂ) one idea is clear that both the terms, (gurmukh and manmukh) are opposite to each other. Guru Nanak advises, to turn out to be a gurmukh, the manmukh should destroy all egoistic tendencies, do away with duality and realize oneness with the One:

ਹਉ ਹਉ ਮੈ ਮੈ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਖੋਵੈ॥

ਦੂਜਾ ਮੇਟੈ ਏਕੋ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੯੪੩).

To sum up, the term gurmukh is a general word that applies to any man, or woman, who implicitly accepts the instructions of the teacher (ਗੁਰੂ) and he entirely depends on the guru.

In Guru Granth Sahib, the connotation of gurmukh is wide and comprehensive, which has been applied to a whole continuum of the enlightened ones.

(c) The Concept of Ideal Man (Gurmukh) in Guru Granth Sahib:

The concept of ideal man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) specified in Guru Granth Sahib is dynamic. It is believed that man is potentially capable of becoming perfect as well as gurmukh. Man in the initial stages is a prisoner of his haumai (ਹਉਮੈ) and due to ignorance is also engrossed in mâyâ (ਮਾਇਆ). He wallows in the clutches of worldly desires, which hamper his ethical and spiritual progress. The progress of man implies a holistic approach towards human personality in which all the characteristics are harmoniously developed. Shabads (ਸ਼ਬਦ) of Guru Granth Sahib are an effort to project the ideal personality of guru-oriented man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ), which develops from within harmoniously and simultaneously with the continuous association of the shabad-guru. According to the hymns (ਸ਼ਬਦ) of Guru Granth Sahib, the shabad-gurû is the regulative principle for making spiritual progress as well as transforming human personality.

In Guru Granth Sahib, the ideal man (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ) is an all-round developed personality, identified with God. Guru Nanak declares: Those who have realized the self, they become the Supreme Self (ਜਿਨੀ ਆਤਮੁ ਚੀਨਿਆ ਪਰਮਾਤਮੁ ਸੋਈ॥ ਪੰਨਾ ੪੨੧). He (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ), on whom is the grace (ਨਦਰਿ) of God, sings the praise of God. He is immaculate and pure of heart and very embodiment of the Transcendent and Perfect Guru:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਜਾ ਕਉ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ॥
ਤੇ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਪੂਰੇ ਤੇ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਗੁਰ ਗੋਵਿੰਦ ਹਰੇ ॥ (ਪੰਨਾ ੧੦੧੪)



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