

Legacy of Guru Gobind Singh: Its relevance in modern times

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LEGACY IS WHAT REACHES US IN general, and our responsibility towards the same in particular. So the legacy of Ten Gurus is such a spiritual gift which expects from every Sikh, first to live upto it, and then convey the same to as many people as one can, through through possible media related to space and time (*aap japai avra naam japavai.*) Guru Granth Sahib is the spirit of all the Gurus enshrined in visible body and Word, and every Sikh is supposed to meditate on holy Waheguru - glory of God¹. This is the firm commandment to the Sikhs in acceptance of SGGS as the visible body of the Guru² in letter and spirit.

Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) tenth in line of spiritual succession firmly put a seal on the Message. What was inherent in Guru Nanak became actualised in Guru Gobind Singh. The scriptural support for this view is available in SGGS:

‘The same light permeated him, the same praxis,
Only the Master his physical form had changed.’³

Some scholars are unable - or unwilling - to accept this aspect of fruition in a holistic perspective, often misunderstanding the Khalsa consciousness, manifested dramatically in 1699, in continuity of the Guru Nanak’s spirit (*joti*) and praxis (*jugati*). This earliest metaphysical necessity was laid down by Guru Nanak in his revelatory declaration of the Sikh spirit, above and beyond the bonds of denominations: *na koe Hindu na ko Musalman*.

This clarion call constitutes a historic proclamation in those divisive times, perceiving religion in a universal perspective. With this the way for transcending the geo-ethnic limitations prevalent in most religions was firmly laid down. The theory was duly translated into theology during the lifetime of ten Gurus (1469-1708) and put into practice in history. So the creation of Khalsa becomes the natural culmination of the Sikh philosophy initiated by Guru Nanak. Bhai Gurdas, a theologian of repute, records this as ‘transformation of congregation (*sangat*), into Khalsa, - the final expression of the same⁴ by the tenth Guru.

The Khalsa, therefore, embodies the total social consciousness for mankind. With this the ascetic modes of spirituality in Hinduism for the few chosen people was replaced by the monotheist Sikh spirituality made possible for all people while living in this world, thereby providing a whole life religion. Guru Gobind Singh put it across thus: the world is engrossed in pride of false rituals, ignoring the secret of the Divine⁵. Guru proclaims, in this context, one who loves God with all one’s heart attains the Lord God⁶. This love is seeing God in all. Such is the Sikh spirit of “whole life religion.” This is the basic and distinct feature of the legacy of the Gurus.

There is no doubt that the energy latent in human beings can only be made creative, in practical sense, through spiritual modes. A loving faith becomes the basic need of every human being. But the apparent contradictions in the context of religion, and the prevalent contradictions between theory and practice among all religions, lead to unrest and tension. No religion can escape this and it becomes a

part and parcel of the “religious” legacy. For example the legacy of a Sikh, in the words of Guru Arjun, is humanism, or doing good without delay and avoidance of evils. This can be achieved through *Naam Simran* (contemplating holy word).

Sadly, whatever is advised, for practice, we are unable to do in an advised manner. ‘Knowing, without doing’ thus becomes fruitless. Guru Nanak, in this context explains that religion is the ‘practice of truth’, which is forever, and for everybody.⁸ Guru Gobind Singh declares that God has no “religion”, He is universal. There is no contradiction. Both are in distinct contexts. Religion is not an end in itself. It is the medium for realizing truth. Likewise, Khalsa identity needs to be resolved in reference to God as beyond identity (*abhesai* or *adesai*). These postulates can be understood with the discriminating consciousness (*vivek*). Guru Arjun, in this context avers that if, inspite of believing and practicing the truth, the wickedness and ego persists, then the way left with human being is to realize the truth and put the same in practice. It means: when religious devices are not coming to fruit then the path of prayer must be pursued for grant of discriminating understanding - with complete surrender to Divine will:

‘My dear, by such devices comes not union; innumerable are the means I have adopted. Tired of all such, at the Lord’s portal I threw myself, praying, grant me discriminating understanding.’⁹

Keeping in view the above, the legacy of Khalsa rests in becoming the role model for resolving the contradictory situations. Khalsa consciousness is to stand for ethical values aimed at living holistically. This is the legacy of the Sikhs in general and Khalsa in particular; it is concerned with social and spiritual values, which is the mission for Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh conceived the Khalsa in his own spirit (khalsa mero roop hai khas). That is why Khalsa spirit adds up to Guru Khalsa Panth. It is inclusive consciousness, which is expected to be all embracing for concretizing Divinity on earth. Khalsa code of conduct (Rahit maryada), in this context, becomes ethico-spiritual discipline. Living with positive attitude (chardi kala) rooted in realized consciousness (vivek), is the primary concern of Khalsa for confronting social realities in modern times.

Among other concerns of Khalsa consciousness is: carrying the struggle for striking unity in diversity by transforming the mentality of the masses into Khalsa spirit which is termed in Khalsa vocabulary - *96 millions* - as ideal. These are not Guru’s words but expression of the collective consciousness of Khalsa. It has a symbolic value and not a prophecy. But this is certainly a futuristic dream of Khalsa, which is witnessed and retained as the legacy, a call for marching on. This ethico-spiritual freshness is to be infused in order to renew the ethical values. Khalsa as the religious role model is supposed to live as leader, soldier and worker in unison, by smashing all man made barriers in the name of religion. This is to re-establish that Divine path. This can be made possible only by sacrificing bodily comforts and upholding the practice and ideals laid down by the Gurus and available in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. *In short, Khalsa legacy is the pure, inclusive consciousness (gurmukh), for which one must rise above hypocrisy of a manmukh.*



References

1. Sikh congregational Prayer, published by S.G.P.C Amritsar

2. Ibid,
[Sabh sikhan ko hukam hai Guru manio Granth.]
3. SGGs, Satta & Balwand,p.966,
4. Vaaran Bhai Gurdas II, 42/1
Gursangati kini khalsa manmukhi duhela.
Wahu wahu Gobind Singh aape gur chela.
5. Tav Parsaad Swayai,10,
Koor kirya urjhio sabh hi jag sri bhagwan ko bhed na paaio.
6. Ibid,9
Saach kahon sun lihu sabhai ,jin prem kio tin hi prabh paaio.
7. SGGs,p.1354,
Nah bilambh dharamn bilambh paapn. Drirhnat naamn tajant lobhn.
8. SGGs,M.1,p.1188,
Eko dharam drirhai sachu soee. Gurmat poora jugi jugi hoee.
9. SGGs,M5,p.641,
Pyare in bidh milan na jaaeeai kiyai karam anekaa.
Haar pario suaami kai duaaraai deejai budh bibekaa.